Item 26/24 Appendix C

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service

OUR MODERNISATION PROGRAMME 2026-29

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) has delivered significant and sustained reform over recent years, most recently through its Response & Savings programme. Achieving over £15m of recurring savings since combination while continuing to improve operational effectiveness and outcomes for the communities it serves. The Service has demonstrated a clear ability to modernise, innovate and deliver value for money, operating as one of the most efficient fire and rescue services in the country.

Despite this strong track record, the Service now faces a growing financial sustainability challenge driven by constrained funding settlements, increasing costs, and evolving risk and demand. Without greater funding stability, the pace and nature of change will be driven by the need to address an immediate revenue deficit, rather than enabling a more measured and sustainable programme of modernisation.

Our Service Modernisation programme builds upon, and replaces, our previous Resource & Savings programme and represents the next phase of structured transformation to be undertaken by the Service, building on the successful delivery of the previous programmes. It provides a comprehensive and disciplined framework to deliver further efficiencies, strengthen resilience, and support long-term financial sustainability, while continuing to improve how the Service protects its communities.

Central to this programme is a balanced approach that aligns financial sustainability with service effectiveness. Modernisation is not a single initiative, but an ongoing and deliberate process, requiring careful prioritisation, innovation, and strong organisational commitment. It will be delivered in a way that supports our people, strengthens organisational culture, and ensures that prevention, protection and response capabilities remain resilient and adaptable to future risks.

Through disciplined implementation and ongoing review, this programme will act as a cornerstone document, alongside our Community Safety Plan, guiding the Service through a period of financial constraint while continuing its transition to a more efficient, effective and future-ready fire and rescue service.

Strategic Risks

This programme is essential to ensure the Service can effectively respond to and mitigate its strategic risks in a coordinated and sustainable way. It provides a structured approach to managing change, enabling the organisation to improve efficiency, strengthen resilience, and maintain financial and operational sustainability. In doing so, it will ensure that the Service remains adaptable, compliant, and fit for the future, while continuing to deliver effective frontline services.

Strategic Risk	Description
Inability to secure financial sustainability that ensures and maintains effective service provision	The current funding model makes it increasingly difficult to achieve financial sustainability by relying on efficiency savings alone. Significant changes to service delivery are needed to secure further reductions in spending plans to set balanced budgets over the medium term.
Inability to have a robust and financially sustainable on-call duty system to meet the needs of the Service.	The emergency response of the Service is predominantly discharged by on-call firefighters. The Service needs to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage the establishment levels, recruitment, and retention to successfully meet response standards and community needs. Insufficient arrangements could result in a delay, or failure, to meet statutory duties. This would have a negative effect on the communities and open the Authority to scrutiny and adverse financial, legal, political, and reputational impacts.
Inability to protect the Service against cyber threats and attacks	Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Service is required to have robust and resilient business continuity arrangements in place. ICT security arrangements are central to the Service delivering this and maintaining its critical functions. Both nationally and locally there is an increase in threats of cyber-attacks to organisations. The Service needs to ensure full alignment to new security standards to help mitigate cyber risk and demonstrate compliance to external organisations.
Service Culture	Establishing and developing a positive culture is critical to future success. All staff should be able to be themselves and thrive within the workplace with behaviours aligned to the Code of Ethics.

Programme Objectives

The following objectives will be delivered through a prioritised and sustainable programme of change, aligned to organisational capacity and capability. Delivery will be sequenced to maintain service delivery, support workforce wellbeing, and strengthen organisational resilience, ensuring change is implemented at a pace that is achievable, effective, and does not place undue pressure on teams.

- **Ensure long-term financial sustainability** by maintaining a balanced and resilient financial position, delivering sustainable efficiencies, and aligning resources to operational priorities, risk, and community needs.
- **Deliver a modern, sustainable capital programme** that prioritises investment, maximises value, and ensures our assets, estates, and infrastructure are fit for the future.
- **Optimise our operating model by aligning crewing arrangements to risk, demand, and value for money,** including amalgamating and transitioning selected stations to different crewing models, where this improves service resilience, efficiencies and effectiveness to deliver better outcomes for more of our communities, and reduces risk for greater numbers of the population.
- **Optimise crewing models across wholetime and day-crewed stations to improve efficiency, productivity, resilience, and operational effectiveness**, including the development of more wholetime flexible working systems and duty patterns aligned to service demand and risk.
- **Rationalise, modernise and optimise our estate** by maximising the use of owned assets, reducing reliance on leased accommodation, and ensuring our buildings are strategically aligned to operational risk, response standards, and future service need.
- **Modernise and invest in a future-ready fleet that aligns to operational risk and demand,** maximises efficiency, enhances crew safety and wellbeing, and supports sustainability through innovative vehicle technologies and improved contaminant protection.
- **Deliver a transformational approach to data, digital, and technology** that enables smarter decision-making, improves service delivery, enhances operational efficiency, and builds a secure, modern, and future-ready organisation.
- **Strengthen workforce engagement and wellbeing** by listening to, involving, and supporting our people through modernisation, ensuring change is informed by feedback, communicated openly, and delivered in a way that promotes inclusion.
- **Sustain a high-standards, values-led culture** that consistently promotes positive behaviours, upholds clear expectations, and ensures people are treated with fairness, respect, and dignity across the organisation.

KEY MESSAGES

1. **Fire Service modernisation is essential to ensure we move beyond established ways of working and deliberately challenge the status quo**. Continuing to operate as we have always done is no longer sufficient in the context of changing risks, increasing demand, and financial pressures. Instead, we must focus on building a modern, resilient service that is designed for the future, one that is adaptable, evidence-led, and capable of responding effectively to evolving community needs. Modernisation provides the opportunity to redesign how we deliver services, make better use of our resources, and invest in the capabilities required for the next decade and beyond, ensuring we remain effective, efficient, and sustainable.
2. **It is essential that we ensure public money is spent in the most effective, efficient, and transparent way possible.** As a publicly funded service, we have a responsibility to maximise value for money, making informed and evidence-based decisions that prioritise community safety and operational effectiveness. This means continually reviewing how resources are allocated, challenging existing practices, and seeking opportunities to improve efficiency without compromising service delivery. By doing so, we ensure that every penny is used wisely and supports the delivery of high-quality emergency services and maintains public trust and confidence in how we manage and invest public funds.
3. **We will optimise the use of our operational resources to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.** To ensure the Service remains effective, efficient, and aligned with evolving risk and demand, it will continue to review and modernise its operational response model. This includes the ongoing assessment of station locations, crewing models, vehicle types, and appliance deployment, ensuring resources are positioned to deliver maximum impact, particularly in higher-risk and growing communities. This programme will focus on strengthening operational resilience and maintaining robust response standards across as much of the service area as possible, while making best use of available staffing models, including wholetime, on-call, and day-crewed arrangements. This will include consideration of fire station amalgamations and mergers where these support a more stable, resilient, and better-aligned service for a wider community. Modern operational response will be underpinned by data-led decision making, enabling the Service to more accurately match resources to risk, improve availability, and reduce duplication and inefficiency, ultimately delivering a safer, more sustainable, and effective response for the communities it serves.
4. **It is essential that the Service maintains the right mix of roles across both operational and corporate functions to ensure it can deliver effectively and sustainably.** Operational and corporate staff are equally vital to the success of the organisation, each playing a distinct but interconnected role in supporting frontline service delivery and organisational capability. Historically the Service has made the deliberate decision to retain corporate functions within the organisation rather than enter costly contracting arrangements. This will remain central to the Service's planning, with opportunities considered to deliver corporate functions in the most efficient and effective way where this represents value for money. We must ensure that our structure is appropriately balanced, with roles clearly aligned to current and future needs, eliminating duplication and maximising efficiency. By regularly reviewing and evolving our workforce model, we can ensure that all roles add value, support organisational priorities, and enable the Service to remain resilient, effective, and fit for the future.

5. **The Service must ensure that its technology, equipment, vehicles, and estates are modern, fit for purpose.** These assets form the backbone of effective service delivery and must be managed in a coordinated way to maximise efficiency, resilience, and value for money. Regular review and investment are required to ensure that our infrastructure, technology and operational assets remain sustainable, reduce risk, and support high-quality emergency response. By taking a strategic and integrated approach to these areas, the Service can ensure it is well equipped to meet evolving demand and continue delivering safe, effective, and efficient services to the communities it serves

Projects and Activities

A number of ongoing projects from the 2024–2026 Resource & Savings programme will be carried forward into this new programme.

- **Station Reviews (Pending Fire Authority decision June 2026)**

  Following the Fire Authority's decision, the Service will implement any approved changes, in a planned and responsible manner. With a clear focus on treating our staff fairly, supporting them through transition, and ensuring processes are managed with care, respect, and due diligence

- **On-call station rationalisation and disposal (Pending Fire Authority decision June 2026)**

  The future use of the site and wider estate will be carefully reviewed, aligned to the Authority's decision, including engagement with local communities and partners, and consideration of options for continued Service use, alternative uses, redevelopment opportunities, and, where appropriate, preparation for disposal. This will include securing planning consent where required and ensuring best value for the public purse.

- **Introduction of rapid response vehicles (RRV's)**

  The Service will implement Rapid Response Vehicles at appropriate fire stations. This approach will be considered across the Service aligned to local risk, demand, the specific needs of each station ground and where it is deemed operationally beneficial. The introduction of these vehicles is intended to strengthen overall resilience, improve station availability, and ensure resources are deployed in the most effective way. Ultimately, this will enhance our ability to respond to incidents and improve the quality and consistency of service provided to our communities.

- **On-call review**

  The Service will undertake a comprehensive review of the On-Call firefighter model and supporting fire station arrangements to strengthen recruitment, retention, and availability, ensuring the role remains fit for the evolving demands of modern service delivery. This will include reviewing duty systems, availability standards, contractual arrangements, incentives, training pathways, and community engagement approaches, alongside operational requirements at on-call stations. The review will also consider work-life balance, flexibility, barriers to participation, and opportunities to improve employer engagement and community integration.

The following projects form part of this new modernisation programme

- **Estate Rationalisation Plan**

  To ensure the long-term sustainability of the Service, our estate must evolve beyond legacy provisions to meet the changing landscape of risk, demand, and community vulnerability. With financial pressures intensifying, it is essential to maximise the efficient use of existing facilities, reduce reliance on leased properties, and maintain direct control over our estate. This proactive approach will not only support operational resilience and flexibility but also enable the Service to invest strategically in infrastructure that aligns with future needs, ensuring safe, effective, and sustainable service delivery.

- **Second White Fleet Review**

  The Service will undertake a further assessment of the white fleet, building on the initial review and considering the introduction of telematics across vehicles, which now provides valuable data and insight into utilisation, efficiency, and operational need. This enhanced evidence base will support more informed decision-making around fleet size, composition, deployment, and replacement cycles, ensuring resources are appropriately matched to demand and organisational requirements. The review will also consider opportunities to improve safety, reduce environmental impact, and optimise whole-life costs. This data-led approach will strengthen future fleet planning and support a more efficient, sustainable, and effective service.

- **Wholetime Flexible working**

  The Service will undertake a Wholetime Flexible Working project to assess and develop a range of duty systems beyond those currently in place. This will include consideration of models used more widely across the sector, as well as emerging and innovative approaches that better meet the needs of the Service and our staff. The focus of this work is to modernise wholetime duty systems for the contemporary fire and rescue environment, ensuring time and productivity are optimised, and that arrangements are effective, efficient, and aligned to risk and demand.

- **Station Optimisation Programme**

  The Station Optimisation Programme will review and reshape the fire station estate to ensure it is aligned to current and future risk, demand, and service delivery requirements. The programme will consider opportunities for station mergers, amalgamations, relocation, and changes to operational configuration where these improve resilience, efficiency, and coverage for communities. It will take a data-led approach to assessing station performance, response standards, and geographic demand, alongside consideration of estate utilisation and long-term sustainability. The aim is to create a more coherent and effective station network that strengthens operational capability, supports modern ways of working, and ensures resources are positioned to deliver the best possible outcomes for public safety. This will begin in West Wiltshire.

- **Wider Second Aways Review**

  The Service will undertake a second appliance review, building on the previous phase which removed lower-utilisation fire engines from stations with multiple appliances. This next stage will focus on on-call stations where second appliances remain in place, assessing whether they continue to be required or whether alternative arrangements would provide greater operational benefit. The review will be informed by an analysis of risk, incident demand, appliance availability, and overall station resilience, ensuring resources are appropriately aligned to need. The aim is to ensure that appliance provision is efficient, effective, and sustainable, while maintaining appropriate levels of service to communities.

- **Special Appliance Review**

  The Special Appliance Review will continue, taking a comprehensive look at specialist vehicles across the organisation, including wildfire units, technical rescue appliances, water first responder assets, Unimogs, and other capabilities required to meet current and emerging risks. This phase will assess existing provision, utilisation, distribution, and operational effectiveness, alongside whether current numbers and types of vehicles remain appropriate and where they are best located. It will also consider gaps in capability and future requirements to ensure the Service is prepared for evolving risk and demand. The overarching aim is to develop a more coherent, efficient, and resilient specialist fleet that strengthens operational response and supports a modern fire and rescue service.

A number of important strategic projects will also be undertaken across the Service, that sit outside of this programme. These will continue to be managed through the Service's established project management and governance arrangements. The projects identified below have clear interdependencies with this modernisation programme and will therefore receive enhanced corporate oversight, through the Strategic Leadership Team, to ensure alignment, coordination, and effective delivery across all related areas of work. These are:

- **Operational Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Modernisation**

  This will be to modernise operational PPE in response to the expiry of the current supply contract, providing an opportunity to reassess and secure a new arrangement that better reflects the types of incidents attended. This work will ensure PPE is appropriately specified, safe, and fit for purpose for current and emerging operational risks, while also supporting firefighter wellbeing, performance, and long-term sustainability.

- **Contaminant Risk Reduction**

  We will take a service-wide approach to reducing firefighter exposure to harmful contaminants from operational activity. It will review current practices, fleet, estate, equipment, and procedures to strengthen standards and minimise risk, supporting the health, safety, and wellbeing of our workforce.

- **Next Generation Breathing Apparatus (BA)**

  This will deliver the procurement of new BA equipment in response to the expiry of the current contract. It will ensure the Service is equipped with safe, reliable, and modern respiratory protection that meets operational needs and supports firefighter safety in line with current and emerging risks.

- **Command & Control System**

  The project will deliver the implementation of the new system procured through the Networked Fire Service Partnership with three other fire and rescue services. It will ensure a safe, effective transition to a modern, resilient platform that improves operational coordination, information sharing, and incident management across partner services.

- **Annual Corporate Department Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability**

  The Annual Corporate Department Review will continue its established cycle of assessing efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability across corporate services, building on work undertaken over the past three years. The review ensures that corporate functions are streamlined and aligned to modern fire and rescue service requirements, enabling and supporting effective operational delivery to our communities. It examines capacity against changes in legislation, national direction, changing risk and service resilience, alongside succession planning for improved efficiency and organisational effectiveness.

- **Training Provision Delivery**

  The Training Provision Project will deliver two Service-owned training centres on existing owned sites, providing a modern, fit-for-purpose environment to meet statutory training requirements and support the development and wellbeing of our staff. The project will also enable a more sustainable and cost-effective training model, reducing reliance on leased facilities and delivering ongoing revenue savings while improving the quality and consistency of training provision.

- **Digital, Data and Technology**

  The Digital, Data and Technology Projects will modernise systems and improve the use of data and technology across the Service to support better decision-making, efficiency, and resilience. It will streamline processes, improve connectivity and data quality, and strengthen cyber security, enabling a more agile, effective, and data-driven organisation that delivers improved outcomes for our communities.

- **Future Governance and Devolution Programme**

  It is important that the Service remains closely engaged with the Government's Devolution programme to ensure it is well placed to respond to any changes in local governance, regional collaboration, and funding arrangements. Active involvement will enable the Service to help shape emerging local proposals and the wider region, while safeguarding operational effectiveness and maintaining strong local accountability. This will ensure that any future arrangements continue to support public safety and meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Governance arrangements

This programme is designed to support the Service's ambition to modernise and meet the current and future demands of a fire and rescue service and will remain flexible to reflect any changes arising from future financial sustainability.

The pace, scale, and decisions for change are currently influenced by the Service's financial position. Greater funding stability would continue a more measured, structured, and sustainable approach to change, allowing ongoing modernisation in operational effectiveness and efficiency, while delivering required savings in a planned and controlled way.

The delivery of this programme will be led by the Service Support Directorate, with projects governed through the Service's well-established practice, overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team.

Active project updates will be reported through the Service's internal Service Delivery Team for awareness, on a quarterly basis.

Updates on this modernisation programme will be provided to Authority Members as part of the six-and-12-month performance presentations, in December and June annually.

Programme Management Principles

These programme management principles will ensure that all projects provide:

- **Clear strategic alignment –** Every project must directly support the programme and Service priorities and long-term objectives.
- **Strong governance and accountability –** Defined decision-making structures, clear roles, and transparent accountability at every level.
- **Defined outcomes and benefits –** Focus on delivering measurable benefits, not just completing activities or projects.
- **Robust planning and prioritisation –** Realistic, well-sequenced plans that prioritise the most critical work within available capacity and resources.
- **Risk-based approach –** Active identification, assessment, and management of risks, with clear mitigation and escalation routes.
- **Benefits realisation focus –** Ongoing tracking of intended benefits delivery and long-term sustainability.
- **Effective stakeholder engagement –** Early and regular involvement of key stakeholders, ensuring shared understanding and involvement.
- **Data-led decision making –** Use of evidence, performance data, and insight to guide recommendations and decisions.
- **Integrated delivery approach –** Coordination across related projects to avoid duplication and ensure coherence.
- **Change management and culture focus –** A focus on effective change management supported by a positive organisational culture that enables people, behaviours, and leadership to deliver sustainable transformation.
- **Transparent reporting and assurance –** Regular, honest reporting of progress, risks, and issues to support informed oversight.
- **Flexibility and adaptability –** Ability to adjust to changing circumstances while maintaining focus on core outcomes.
- **Continuous improvement –** Learning from experience and applying lessons to improve delivery throughout the programme lifecycle.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Area Manager, Service Improvement	Programme Lead: • Line management of the team • Delivery and maintenance of programme governance • Delivery of the projects aligned to the objectives of the programme and the project mandates • R&S programme meeting management - agenda, papers, business cases, etc (includes R&S and Member working group meetings) • Develop, deliver and monitor project communication and engagement plans aligned to the overarching programme • Ensure feedback from staff engagement activities are understood and appropriately disseminated • Report risks and issues from this to inform additional actions or changes to the stakeholder management plan
Director of Service Support	Strategic Lead: • Setting and maintaining strategic direction, • Defining and owning the programme vision, outcomes, and benefits • Providing senior leadership and decision-making • Ensuring effective governance • Overseeing programme delivery performance • Managing risks and dependencies • Ensuring benefits realisation • Ensuring resources and capacity are aligned.
Strategic Leadership Team (All)	• Provide strategic oversight and direction for the delivery of the programme, ensuring alignment with the Service's priorities and statutory responsibilities • Make informed decisions on programme scope, pace, and prioritisation to support effective and sustainable transformation • Monitor progress against agreed outcomes, ensuring delivery is on track and risks are identified and managed appropriately • Ensure resources are effectively allocated to support delivery and maximise impact • Champion the programme across the organisation, promoting engagement, accountability, and a consistent leadership approach to change
Specific Additional SLT Programme roles	
Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Response	• Representative Bodies consultation • Negotiation and engagement with stations and operational managers • Ensure the delivery of communications and engagement with stations and operational managers
Director of People	• Employee Relations advice, support and coordination

	• Representative Body consultation, negotiation and engagement coordination • Consider and advise on People issues arising from stakeholder activity and feedback
Director of Corporate Services	• Securing and maintaining stakeholder engagement, including senior internal leaders, elected members, and external partners where relevant • Stakeholder management advice, coordination and oversight. To include public consultation and internal communication and engagement • Sign off proposals for communication and engagement activity, ensuring dependencies and impacts are considered • Ensure continued legal compliance across the programme and obtain appropriate advice to support appropriate delivery
Director of Financial Services	• Financial oversight, approving financial aspects of all papers and business cases • Maintain records for savings and efficiencies
Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Prevention, Protection & Compliance	• Provide professional oversight and assurance to ensure programme activity complies with relevant health and safety legislation, regulatory requirements, Service policies, and agreed standards • Ensure continued organisational compliance across the Service as change is implemented
Chief Fire Officer	• Provides ultimate leadership and accountability for programme delivery • Political and external strategic stakeholder engagement • Final decision-maker

MEETING STRUCTURE

Meeting	Attendance	Frequency
SLT – Strategic Focus (Programme Board)	CFO (Chair) All SLT Programme Lead Meeting supported by – Executive Support Team	Monthly
Programme Meeting	ACO Service Support (Chair) Programme Lead - Area Manager Service Improvement (Vice Chair) Head of Assets Group Manager RSP Group Manager Programme and Projects Workstream Leads (as identified) Head of Communications & Engagement Meeting supported by – Productivity & Programmes Co-ordinator (Service Improvement)	Monthly

Project Oversight	Programme Lead (Chair) ACO Service Support RSP Team (Service Improvement) Programmes & Project Team (Service Improvement Estate Rationalisation Team Meeting supported by – Productivity & Programmes Co-ordinator (Service Improvement)	Monthly
Service Delivery Team	AM Service Improvement SLT Head of Department Area Managers Identified Service Managers	Quarterly
Fire Authority	Fire Authority Members SLT	6-Monthly

ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

The programme will have a comprehensive communications and engagement plan that will help to ensure that staff, representative bodies and all relevant external stakeholders are appropriately engaged. The plan will be monitored monthly to ensure that the communications and engagement are regular, tailored and understood by the intended audience.

Where public consultation is required, it will be tailored to each proposal with a full report made publicly available to support decision making.

In terms of the engagement of Representative Bodies, this will continue through the Liaison Meetings and project dependent there may be a need for a Joint Working Group (as with Station Reviews). This will be a matter for appropriate members of SLT to decide the best way forward.

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

To ensure a sound audit trail and to support any legal challenges, all documents associated with the programme will be managed with a focus on complying with good information management practices.

The Services project management governance must be used for all projects and appropriate documents developed and maintained.

Documents and supporting evidence/ appendices will be appropriately marked, retained and made available in an ordered and structured manner.

Version	**Page & Par Ref**	**Date**	**Changes Made**	**Approved**
1.0	Original Document	01/04/2026	N/A	Approved 21/5/2026 (SLT)