

Fire and Rescue Plan

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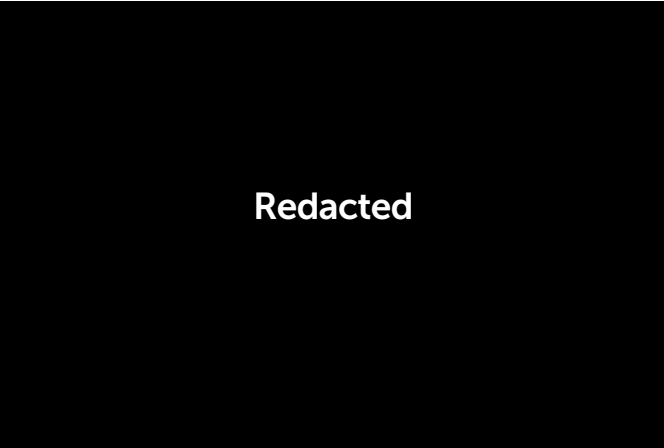
2024 – 2028

Staffordshire &
Stoke-on-Trent



STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER
Police | Fire and Rescue | Crime

Introduction



Staffordshire Fire & Rescue has developed specialist capabilities to enable it to meet new operational challenges, some of which are a consequence of climate change or new battery and energy storage technologies that are rapidly developing in response to it. To support this, I have invested in new appliances to equip the service at the most challenging incidents.

Prevention and protection work are as important as the ability to respond

effectively. Alongside specialist staff, more firefighters, staff and volunteers are engaged in prevention work that is ever more focused on those most at risk.

The service is now also more effective at identifying and reducing the risk of fire in the built environment through technical fire safety audits, inspections of premises and the use of enforcement powers. I have invested in this area to enable the service to enhance their team of highly qualified fire safety officers, however, there is a challenge in attracting and retaining them (due to external factors) which is a priority for the service.

I am very supportive of the service’s ambition to help other agencies to keep people safe, even outside the traditional parameters of Fire & Rescue. Working across Staffordshire with local NHS partners and West Midlands Ambulance Service to respond when people have fallen or need assistance returning home from hospital has helped to keep hundreds of people out of hospital and freed up valuable health resources.

I am always impressed with the professionalism and enthusiasm of Fire & Rescue staff in Staffordshire, who often go above and beyond what is expected of them and have embraced change. It is, however, frustrating that progress in reforming governance, modernising working practices and extending the reach of the sector nationally has been so slow.

A White Paper on Fire Reform was published by the previous Government in 2021 but has yet to be progressed into legislation.

Its intention is to build on the existing framework to ensure Fire & Rescue services operate effectively and efficiently, put the public first and meet community needs, while adapting to societal changes. It focuses on new governance arrangements, drawing on lessons learned from the first cycle of governance transfers to Police, Fire & Crime Commissioners, of which Staffordshire was one of the first. Importantly, it could legislate to create operational independence for Chief Fire Officers which I very much support. It could also bring much-needed flexibility to firefighters’ terms and conditions to ensure they can be deployed to meet local needs and appropriately compensated for it.

This is echoed in the Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services’ most recent State of Fire report, which acknowledges the sector’s good progress in response to previous recommendations but urges the Government to press ahead with reforms.

The report also calls for urgent improvements in values, culture and the management of misconduct across the sector. Inspections found examples of racist, homophobic and misogynistic behaviour in a quarter of services in England. In a survey, staff from every service reported bullying, harassment and discrimination. This is a damning reflection on the sector, and I welcome the progress made nationally in establishing a core code of ethics, improving background checks on staff and introducing new national standards for identifying and dealing with misconduct.

While I recognise the progress Staffordshire has made in tackling these issues, including its openness to HMICFRS scrutiny as part of its inspection of the handling of misconduct in Fire & Rescue services, I will not be complacent. I will continue to hold the Chief Fire Officer and his senior leadership team to account for delivering the required improvements in organisational culture, diversity and inclusion which are essential to ensure the trust and confidence of our staff and our communities.

Linked to this, HMICFRS highlights that service leaders must take a strategic approach to transformation and service improvement. In Staffordshire, the service has made excellent progress in piloting flexible crewing and other initiatives leading to improved availability of our teams. Keeping firefighters safe is vitally important so the service will also introduce new equipment and processes to protect them from contaminants. I want to ensure that these initiatives continue to be developed as part of a cohesive and coherent transformation programme, and that the service has the capacity and capability to deliver it.

Thanks to careful financial management, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service, unlike many others, is well placed to continue to invest, improve and do more, which I feel sure central government and council tax payers across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent will wish to continue to support.

Ben Adams
Staffordshire Commissioner

Our aim

Keep Staffordshire safe

Our priorities

An outstanding Fire & Rescue service

Ensure your local Fire & Rescue service continues to be accessible and responsive to changing demands so that risk is appropriately and proportionally managed, community and firefighter safety remains paramount and high levels of public confidence and trust in the service are maintained.

Preventing

Deliver effective and targeted prevention work that provides early help to individuals, families and communities so that we keep people safe from fires and other incidents, they feel safer and there is less pressure on fire response services.

Protecting

Protect people, premises and the environment through the right balance of education, advice and support and the use of regulatory and enforcement powers to keep people safe.

Our aim

Keep Staffordshire safe

Our approach

Community focused

Understanding communities and recognising their different needs is essential to delivering services in their local area that build relationships, tackle the right problems and increase public confidence. I will listen to communities and ensure public expectations and concerns, alongside the service’s professional assessment of risk, shape the Community Risk Management Plan. I will encourage people to get more involved through shaping priorities and services, volunteering, scrutinising the service and helping to solve problems in their community. I will challenge, scrutinise and share performance data publicly to demonstrate my expectation of the highest standards of public service.

Prevention and early intervention

Preventing fires, road traffic collisions and other incidents from happening in the first place reduces demand on our Fire & Rescue and other services, and reduces harm. By intelligently targeting interventions at the most vulnerable people and locations and intervening as early as possible we can prevent issues from happening in the first place or escalating so that they become even more damaging, complex and costly. So, prevention and early intervention will be central to delivering all aspects of this plan.

Supported and equipped

Our Fire & Rescue service must have the equipment, vehicles, buildings and technology it needs to be able to improve services, help protect the public and deliver real value for money. Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service’s most important resource is its people, and firefighters and support staff must have the right leadership, management, training and wellbeing support, underpinned by the right organisational culture. Recognising the Government’s climate change commitment, I will also work with the service to do everything we can to reduce our impact on the environment without compromising operational effectiveness.

Solving problems together

The issues affecting individuals, families and communities are often complex and rarely solved by one organisation alone so we need to bring organisations together to prevent problems from escalating and protect people from harm. This means sharing resources and knowledge and aligning services to deliver more efficient and comprehensive solutions. Even better collaboration between partners including neighbouring fire & rescue services, other blue light services, councils, health authorities, business and the voluntary and community sector is essential. I will work with communities to address their local safety concerns and ensure that partners have the skills to intervene early, recognise and address vulnerability.

Value for money

Wherever possible, every penny in Fire & Rescue should be directed towards their core purpose of keeping people safe. This is not about cost cutting but changing the way the service works by listening to the people doing the job and learning from other organisations.



Finance and Resources

Budget
£50m

12 pence

per person per day



33
fire stations

39
fire appliances



8
full time

2
day shift

29
on call

About Staffordshire



1.16m
people

488,600
households



1,049 square miles

Motorways

64.5 miles

A roads

543.5 miles

Minor roads

3,895.5 miles

30

Officers and Staff

313
wholtime
firefighters

279
on-call
firefighters

126
support
staff



Over the past year there were:



29,000 calls
for service



8,000
incidents attended

400
accidental
dwelling fires



1,450
small outdoor
fires



130
accidental
business fires

790
road traffic
collisions attended



15,000
safe and well visits



350
fire safety audits



16
enforcement
notices issued

12
prohibition
notices issued



About Staffordshire

Shaping the Plan

To help inform and develop this plan, a number of considerations have been made. This includes reviewing national guidance, understanding and assessing local fire safety and broader community safety needs and importantly seeking and listening to professional and community opinion.

The following section outlines the main findings.

Public Concerns

When I talk to local communities it is clear that what they want from their Fire & Rescue service is quite straightforward – to be confident that there will be a rapid response if they faced an emergency. Our priority will always be to maintain high standards of service.

People also expect the service to plan for the future to ensure they can meet current and emerging risks.

My challenge, and the challenge for Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service, is to get the balance right in meeting the traditional expectations of communities whilst also making the reforms needed to ensure the service is prepared for future challenges.

I will continue to listen to and consult with people across Staffordshire as your concerns will always be foremost in my local Fire and Rescue Plans.

Local Needs

Staffordshire is a relatively safe place to live, visit and work and the risk of fire and other incidents that require a response remain very low. This is due to years of prevention work, changes in behaviour and improvements to the design of buildings, vehicles and appliances to minimise risk.

In addition to the national priorities set out above, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service conduct detailed assessments of demand, threat and risk to provide a sound evidence base to inform decisions on how resources are allocated. This process has informed the priorities set out in this plan.

Safe Buildings and Infrastructure

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017, there have been major changes to building regulations and fire safety to keep people living in multi-occupancy buildings safe in their homes. This has placed greater responsibilities on all Fire & Rescue services

to engage with and influence the planning process. Doing so relies on skilled, specialist staff for audit and inspection work and to take enforcement action when required. I have supported investment to grow these teams and it remains a priority to ensure that Staffordshire Fire & Rescue continue to attract, develop and retain staff for this vital work.

Community protection work has to respond to changing risks. The rapid uptake of electric vehicles (EVs), battery energy storage systems (BESS) and the move to renewable energy sources creates new challenges. When fires do occur with EVs and battery systems, they can be difficult to extinguish properly and safely with traditional methods. Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service need to be close to these developments and have the right equipment, training and other resources to deal with such incidents but also provide safety advice and guidance to individuals, businesses and planners.

The service also has a major role in the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership, contributing to its broader remit of working towards safe roads, safe vehicles, safe road use, safe speeds and post-crash care to reduce road casualties.

Climate Change

Severe weather events have become more frequent and continue to put enormous pressure on the service, from wildfires in rural areas during hot, dry periods to floods and storm damage.

The service is currently not statutorily required to respond to floods but does so willingly to protect and rescue people and minimise the damage caused to properties and public spaces. Through the national Fire reform agenda, my ambition is to ensure that this is properly and formally recognised as a responsibility of the sector and reflected in firefighters' roles, terms and conditions.

People Most at Risk

The leading causes of accidental fires in the home are cooking, heating appliances, electrical fires, smoking and candles. The primary human factors that contribute to injuries and deaths from these incidents in Staffordshire have been identified by the service as smoking, alcohol and drug use, mobility and the elderly. The population is increasing and is aging. More houses are being built and more people are being supported to live at home independently for longer. Household inflation and internationally higher energy costs has increased the risk to those in fuel poverty who may use unsafe heating and cooking methods, for example. We also know that motorcyclists, pedal cyclists, pedestrians and young drivers are at most risk of becoming a casualty on our roads. It's important to identify those that are at most risk, engage with them and provide practical help and advice to prevent fires, road traffic collisions and other incidents from happening.

Terrorism

In response to findings of the inquiry into the preparedness for, and the response to the terrorist attack at Manchester Arena in 2017, emergency services have been required to continually assess their operational readiness for such events, develop specialist capabilities and carry out regular multi-agency training exercises. This ensures Staffordshire Fire & Rescue are prepared to respond effectively to local terrorist incidents and provide capacity and capability to support other areas.

National Fire & Rescue Priorities



The Fire & Rescue National Framework for England was designed to “make Fire & Rescue more accountable, more effective and more professional than ever before... building on the great strides in prevention and collaboration that Fire & Rescue services have already made” and included:

- transforming the local governance of Fire & Rescue by enabling mayors and Police & Crime Commissioners to take on responsibility for their Fire & Rescue service where a local case is made;
- establishing His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) as an independent inspection regime for Fire & Rescue services;

- developing a comprehensive set of professional standards to drive sector improvement;
- supporting services to transform commercially with more efficient procurement and collaboration;
- increasing the transparency of services with the publication of greater performance data and the creation of a new national fire website;
- driving forward an ambitious programme for workforce reform including through enhancing: professionalism; management and leadership; training and development; equality and diversity; culture; and options for flexible working.

The framework itself sets out five priorities for Fire & Rescue Authorities:

- make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to Fire & Rescue-related incidents;
- identify and assess the full range of foreseeable Fire & Rescue-related risks their areas face;
- collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide;
- be accountable to communities for the service they provide; and
- develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

The findings of HMICFRS’ 2023 inspection of Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service are due to be published in September 2024 when this section will be updated with confirmed gradings.



Understanding fires and other risks
Preventing fires and other risks
Protecting the public through fire regulation
Responding to fires and other emergencies
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents
Making best use of resources
Future affordability
Promoting the right values and culture
Getting the right people with the right skills
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity
Managing performance and developing leaders

An outstanding Fire & Rescue service

Redacted

Ensure your local Fire & Rescue service continues to be accessible and responsive to changing demands so that risk is appropriately and proportionally managed, community and firefighter safety remains paramount and high levels of public confidence and trust in the service are maintained.

I will:

- Ensure the service carries out ongoing, thorough analysis to fully understand demand, risk, productivity, outcomes, resource utilisation and value for money across the service.
- Use this evidence base to develop an operating model that puts the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time to respond to fires and other incidents and deliver the services which will prevent incidents and reduce risk even further.
- Ensure the right resources are available to respond to fires and other incidents, considering the balance between wholtime and on-call firefighters, generalist and specialist roles, shift patterns and working locations. Reviewing the vehicle fleet mix and associated crewing arrangements will form part of this process.
- Ensure our operating model enables the service to assist other areas in line with our mutual aid commitments, regionally and nationally.
- Ensure the service takes a strategic approach to transformation and service improvement and has sufficient capacity and capability to deliver change programmes and monitor their benefits.
- Expect the service to meet approved National Fire Standards and contribute to their development.
- Expect service leadership, standards, systems, culture and training to be focused on providing high-quality services.
- Expect Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service to have a rigorous approach to, and a low tolerance of, unacceptable behaviour by their firefighters and staff, ensuring they meet the required standards, including the Core Code of Ethics.
- Increase the diversity of the workforce to better reflect the community we serve, promoting inclusion and addressing any organisational or cultural barriers to achieving this.



- Building on our successful collaboration with Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (SSOTICB), explore more opportunities to keep people safe by Fire & Rescue teams responding to incidents which might be initially reported to other agencies.
- Increase engagement with rural communities to understand their concerns and ensure effective preparation and response to risks specific to rural areas so that people, livestock, wildlife and the environment can be rescued and protected.
- Ensure appropriate resources and services are available to provide practical and emotional support to people and businesses affected by fire, and other emergencies.
- Develop plans and capabilities to be able to respond to fire risks associated with rapidly growing technologies including electric vehicles and power storage systems.
- Continue to develop the 'clean cab' approach, to safeguard firefighters from the risk of chemicals and other contaminants being transferred from the scene into fire appliances and stations.
- Drive further collaboration between Police and Fire services to deliver effective, efficient and resilient support services with an early focus on finance and IT support.
- Continue the modernisation of the Fire estate and make better use of our best buildings by sharing space with Police colleagues.

Police/Fire Collaboration

Staffordshire was the second area in England where governance of Fire & Rescue was transferred to an elected Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner. Collaborative work has brought real benefits to how Fire and Police work together to keep communities safe and delivered significant financial benefits. There are now five Police, Fire & Crime Commissioners and the Government is encouraging more coterminous Police and Fire areas to consider the benefits of collaboration.

A bold joint estates plan has seen Fire and Police teams brought together in modern facilities in Hanley, Tamworth, Penkridge, Stone, Uttoxeter and Kinver, with public money no longer misspent on separate buildings for each team. There are plans for similar arrangements in other locations across Staffordshire.

Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service now share a number of vital support services including vehicle fleet management, estates management, corporate communications, financial services, supplies and logistics, HR, occupational health and equality, diversity & inclusion. This saves money that is redirected to front line services.

Work is being carried out to scope the opportunities for a joint approach to IT which shares expertise, networks and systems where appropriate, improves resilience and delivers efficiencies through better procurement. This would also be a sound basis for taking full advantage of advances in automation and artificial intelligence.

In addition to financial savings, closer working between Fire and Police is bringing benefits such as joined-up approaches to protecting vulnerable people, and missing persons searches that take advantage of both services' resources and skills.

Preventing

Deliver effective and targeted prevention work that provides early help to individuals, families and communities so that we keep people safe from fires, road traffic collisions and other incidents, they feel safer and there is less pressure on fire response services.

I will:

- Adopt NFCC criteria and improve the data available on multiple risk factors to better identify those most at risk of fire in the home.
- Target safe and well checks at those at most risk to enable prompt intervention to provide the support people need to prevent fires and identify underlying issues which contribute to fire risks.
- Follow up safe and well interventions and other prevention activity to ensure improvements are sustained, the impact is evaluated and any learning is applied to other cases.
- Ensure referral pathways are in place between Fire & Rescue and health services so that people get the help they need to reduce the risk of fire and other incidents in the home such as mental and physical health, and drug and alcohol support.
- Share data appropriately to ensure services are targeted towards people and places most at risk.
- Work with schools and alternative education providers to develop and deliver consistent, good quality personal, social, health and economic education to help children make informed, positive and safe choices.
- Increase engagement with groups of people most at risk through targeted education programmes, volunteering, open days and other events.
- Divert children away from harm through a range of personal development programmes and positive diversionary activities and ensure that they are brought together with similar activities in policing in a cohesive and coordinated way.



Protecting

Protect people, premises and the environment through the right balance of education, advice and support and the use of regulatory and enforcement powers to keep people safe.

I will:

- Adopt NFCC guidance and processes for the identification, mapping and monitoring of high-risk premises to ensure inspection activity is properly targeted. This will be enhanced by better information sharing and joint analysis with partners.
- Ensure the service recruits and retains the required specialist staff to undertake risk-based audit and inspection of premises and the application of regulatory powers.
- Strike the right balance between advising and supporting co-operative businesses to achieve compliance and robust enforcement where it's needed.
- Ensure the service is properly engaged by planners when considering applications for renewable energy developments and the installation of Battery Energy Storage Systems.
- As part of the Staffordshire Local Resilience Forum, continue to take an active role in planning and preparing responses to disruptive events including those arising from adverse weather conditions, public health crises, industrial incidents, transport incidents and terrorist attacks.
- In light of tragic events at Grenfell and Manchester Arena, further develop work between Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service, Staffordshire Police and other emergency services in examining their approach to managing incidents where multiple services attend.
- Ensure the service engages with planners, regulators and businesses under the Protect Duty, or Martyn's Law, designed to ensure premises and events prepare for and are protected from a potential terrorist attack.
- Place expectations on developers to maintain high standards in the installation of sprinklers and other fire protection systems to new multi-occupancy residential buildings.
- Continue to work with the Environment Agency, Staffordshire Police, Local Authorities and other partners to ensure co-operation in investigation and enforcement activity related to cannabis grows, fly-tipping, waste and environmental crime.

- Intensify the activity of Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) so that Police, Fire & Rescue, local authorities and National Highways work jointly to drive down casualties.
- Engage communities more in understanding the work of the service and volunteering to support prevention work in activities such as Community Speed Watch and the Safe + Sound programme.



Delivering the Plan

Finance and Resources

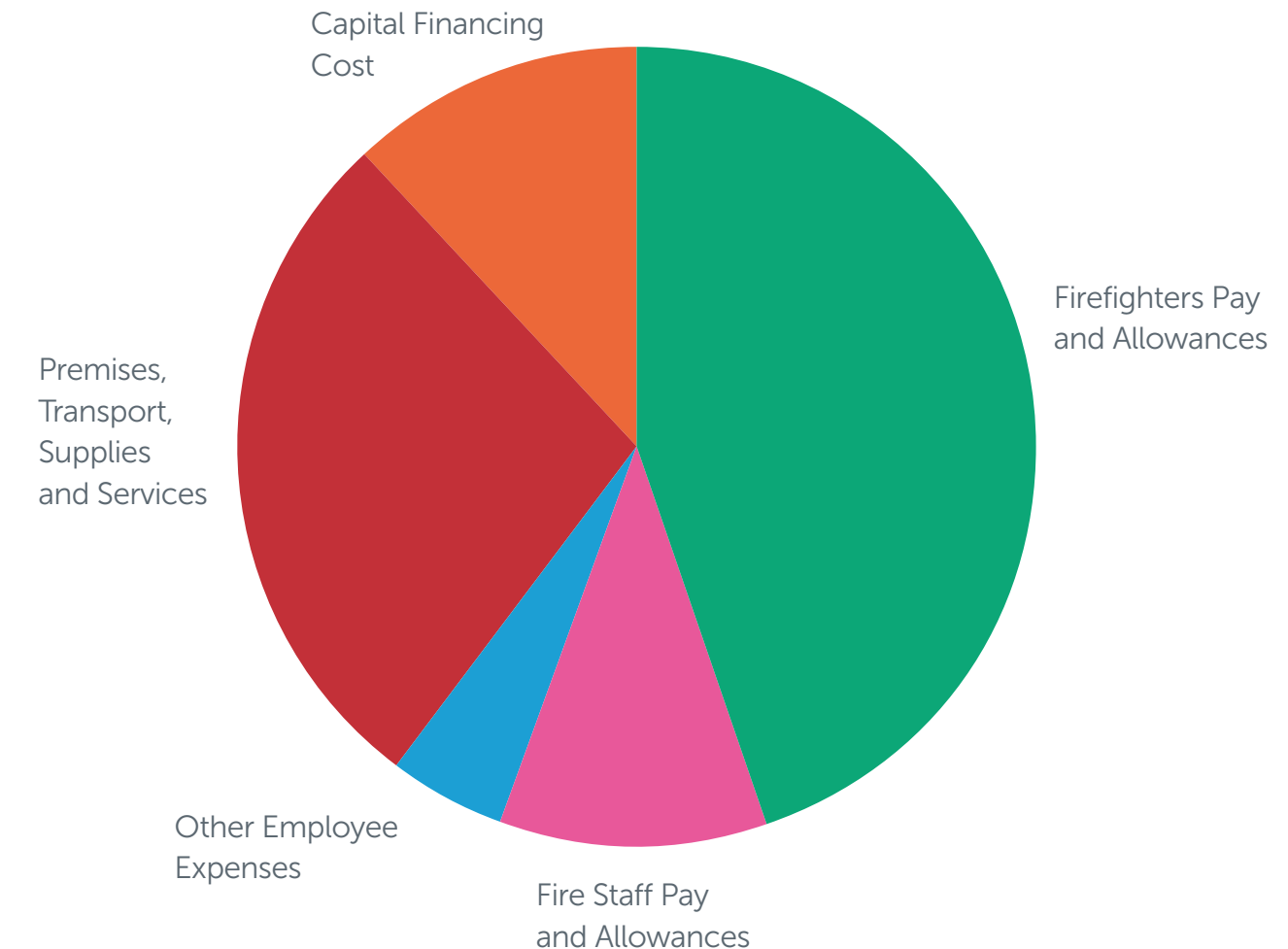
The total revenue budget for 2024/25 was set at £50.1m. The funding for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority comes from three main sources; 64% comes from council tax, 21% from business rates with the remaining 15% coming from central Government in the form of a Revenue Support Grant. The service also generates a small amount of income through rents, fees and charges, investments, and sharing sites with Staffordshire Police. How the budget is spent is shown on the next page.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the basis of our current assumptions for the future and looks ahead in order to predict the overall funding position for Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service for the next few years.

I recognise that, as pressures on household budgets continue, council tax payers will demand value for money and a service that is evolving to meet their needs. I aim to put every penny of the budget to the best use possible, and I expect every pound of taxpayers' money invested in Fire & Rescue to be spent wisely and for the service to continue to seek efficiencies.

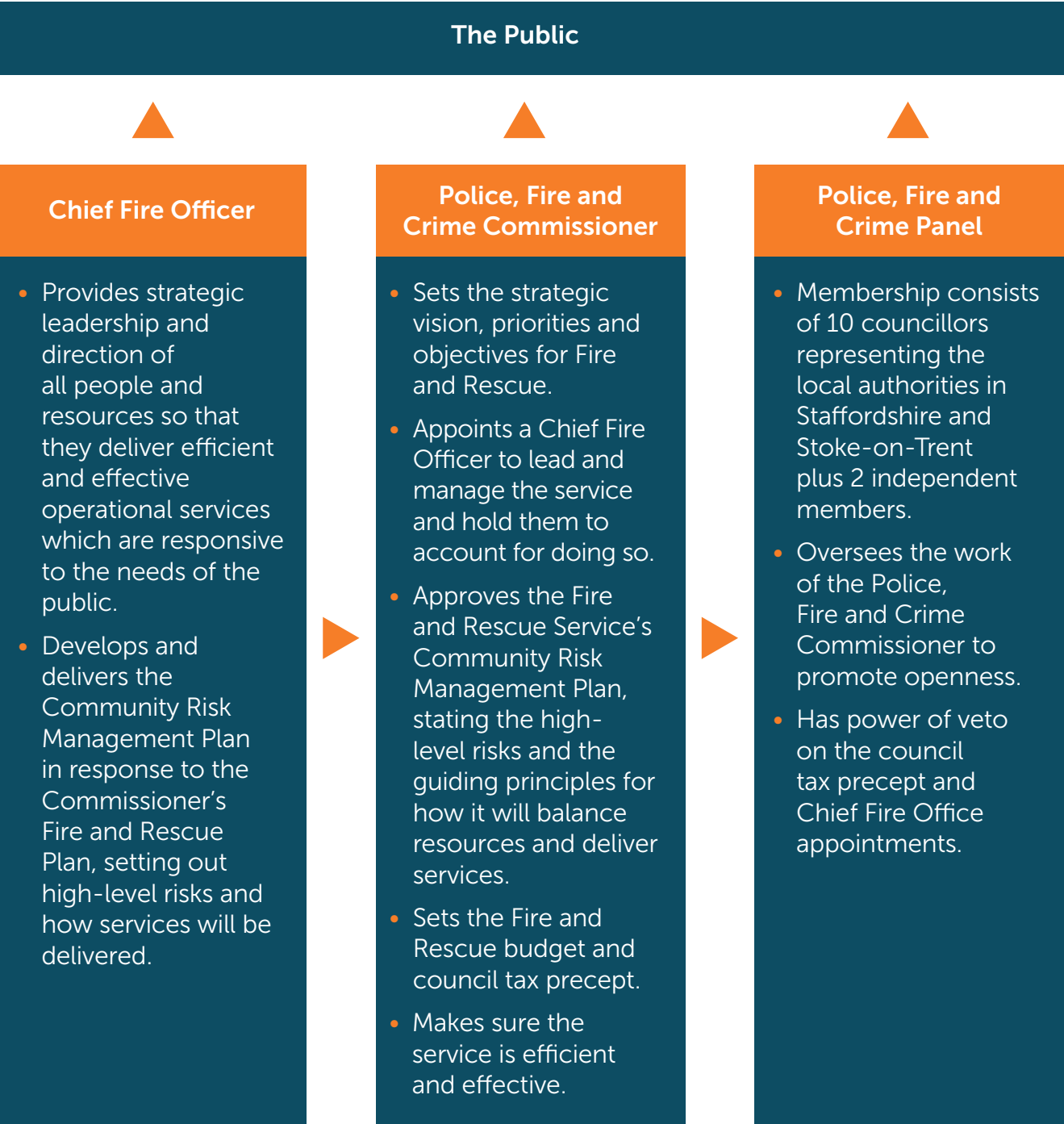
The service continues to develop its transformation plan to meet new financial and operational challenges with value for money being a key priority. The plan will need to be flexible to allow for changes in assumptions and the overall funding position.

Future funding considerations will of course influence any proposals that I put forward regarding the level of council tax increases required for 2025/26 and beyond. Increases in council tax for the Fire & Rescue Authority have been kept very low during my term of office and, as with policing, I will only ask for funding above the level of inflation where I consider the increase necessary to protect services and keep our communities safe.



Expenditure	£m	Income	£m
Firefighters Pay and Allowances	24.9	Income	5.4
Fire Staff Pay and Allowances	6.0		
Other Employee Expenses	2.6		
Premises, Transport, Supplies and Services	15.5		
Capital Financing Costs	6.5		
		Net Cost of Service	50.1
Total Gross Fire and Rescue Expenditure	55.5		

Performance and Accountability



The relationship between my role and Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service differs slightly from that with Staffordshire Police in that, as the law currently stands, the Fire & Rescue service is not operationally independent. As the Fire & Rescue Authority, I am ultimately responsible for ensuring that provision is made to extinguish fires, protect life and property in the event of such fires, protect life and property in the event of fires and rescuing and protecting people in the event of road traffic collision and other emergencies.

I expect the Chief Fire Officer to develop a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) that demonstrates the service's understanding of the risks faced by communities and provide assurance that it is taking the appropriate action to reduce and deal with those risks. The CRMP will also set out the service's responses to each of the priorities set out in this plan.

Evidence on progress will be gathered from a number of sources including the service's own performance data, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) reports, government reports and datasets, audit findings, data from partners and public surveys.

I sit on the national Fire Standards Board, which has been established to develop professional standards for Fire & Rescue services across England.

HMICFRS use these standards as a basis for their inspection of the service. Standards are now in place covering:

- Core Code of Ethics
- Communication and Engagement
- Community Risk Management Planning
- Data Management
- Emergency Preparedness and Resilience
- Emergency Response Driving
- Fire Control
- Fire Investigation
- Internal Governance and Assurance
- Leading the Service
- Leading and Developing People
- Operational Competence
- Operational Learning
- Operational Preparedness
- Prevention
- Protection
- Safeguarding

I will be completely open about performance against the measures I will monitor locally to ensure our priorities are being delivered. I will publish performance data and hold Public Performance Meetings where I will hold the Chief Fire Officer to account for delivery and which will be available online.

Governance statements, policies and procedures, decision records and details of expenditure and contracts are all accessible on the Commissioner's Office website.

Progress against this plan will be regularly reported to the Police, Fire & Crime Panel and an annual report will be published. This plan will be kept under review and refreshed to take account of finances, changes in national policy or major events.

My office is separate to the Fire & Rescue service and the Police service and works closely with partners, businesses and communities to support me in implementing this plan. It also undertakes public engagement, the scrutiny of the Fire & Rescue service and the Police, and commissions services to support community safety.



My office is specifically responsible for:

- Monitoring and scrutinising the performance of Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Staffordshire Police.
- Seeking public views on fire safety, road safety and broader community safety decisions that affect them directly.
- Keeping the public up-to-date and informed about Fire & Rescue service performance, my work and that of my office.
- Publishing easy-to-access and transparent information about decisions, budgets, performance and governance.
- Working with partners to co-ordinate community safety and prevention activities across Staffordshire.



Get involved

As your Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire, I welcome your feedback. By letting me know the issues that matter to you most, you will be directly shaping Fire & Rescue and broader community safety decisions both now and in the future.

You can contact my office to give feedback or ask questions about your fire and rescue service.

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