

**Item No. 5 (i)****Report to the Police Fire and Crime Panel****Copy to ETAP Public Fire meeting 27 February 2024****Fire Revenue Budget Report (incl. MTFS and Precept)**

Report of the Staffordshire Commissioner

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed revenue budget and precept proposals for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority for 2024/25. This is the third budget report and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the Staffordshire Commissioner. This report delivers one of the Commissioner's key responsibilities as laid out within the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The report sets out the following:

- Net revenue budget requirement for 2024/25
- Proposed precept for the fire element of the council tax 2024/25
- Proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Outline Capital Budget for 2024/25 to 2026/27

The report should be read in conjunction with the accompanying:

- Treasury Management Strategy
- Capital Strategy and Capital Programme Report
- Reserves Strategy Report

Recommendations

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel is asked to:

- a) Examine the information presented in this report, including:
 - The Total 2024/25 net revenue budget requirement of £50.065m, including
 - A council tax requirement for 2024/25 of £31.746m before collection fund surplus/deficits are taken into account (**see Appendix 6**)
- b) Note that the funding for 2024/25 is based upon the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, and includes the estimated business rates information for the nine billing authorities.

- c) Support the Commissioner's proposal to increase the 2024/25 precept for the fire element of the council tax bill by 2.99% or £2.52 per annum which is equivalent to 4.8p per week, increasing the council tax to £86.77 for a Band D Property **(see Appendix 6)**
- d) To note that the Council Tax base has increased to 365,868 properties **(see Appendix 5)** equivalent to an increase of 1.5%. The Council Tax collection fund has also been finalised delivering a surplus of £401k **(see Appendix 4)**
- e) To note the MTFS summary financials **(Appendix 7)** and MTFS assumptions contained within the report (see page 16)
- f) To note the MTFS shows a balanced position into the medium term and includes the use of reserves in 2024/25 (£0.1m), and 2025/26 (£0.4m)
- g) Support the proposed three year Capital Investment Programme **(see Appendix 8)**. Note there is a Capital Strategy to accompany the programme
- h) To note the business rates for 2024/25 is based upon the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. This will be adjusted within the Earmarked Business Rates adjustment reserve when compared to the actual Non-Domestic Rates Income Returns (NNDR returns) from the nine billing authorities.
- i) Note the outcome of The Staffordshire Commissioner's budget consultation
- j) Support the delegation to the S151 Officer for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority to make any necessary adjustments to the budget as a result of late changes to central government funding (including changes due to the final funding settlement being announced) via an appropriation to or from the general fund reserve
- k) To note the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 **(see Appendix 10)**
- l) To note the Statement from the S151 Officer for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority on the robustness of the Budget and adequacy of the proposed financial reserves

Ben Adams
Staffordshire Commissioner

Contact Officer: David Greensmith
Telephone: 01785 898690
Email: david.greensmith@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Commissioner's Foreword



This is my third budget and council tax precept proposal for Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority as Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner. Since my election in May 2021, the professionalism and commitment of our Fire officers and staff has helped to ensure good progress has been made to deliver the ambition I set out within my Fire and Rescue Plan. I would like to thank them for this and particularly for their ongoing commitment and dedication ensuring the safety of the communities we serve.

This 2024/25 budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is set against this backdrop that includes some significant uncertainties. The combined 2022 and 2023 pay awards for Firefighters' at 12% has impacted upon budgets in addition to the assumption that pay increases for 2024 will continue to be at a challenging level. Since the last budget was set we have also seen the further unrest within Israel in addition to the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine which continues to challenge western economies.

In December 2021 I published my local Fire and Rescue Plan which sets out priorities and service expectations on behalf of Staffordshire residents. These include a flexible and responsive Service, protecting people and places, helping people most at risk stay safe and ensuring that we have a Fire and Rescue Service fit for tomorrow. I have reported progress against my plan to the Police Fire and Crime Panel and also challenged the performance of the Service by questioning the Chief Fire Officer during a number of Public Performance Meetings held during the last year.

I have worked with Staffordshire Fire to address future years' budget gaps through a number of planning sessions, and I am pleased to present a five-year budget and MTFS that has incorporated around £1.3 million of cash savings as part of this transformation work. However, there is still more to do as we look at options to improve efficiency and productivity into the medium term and allow for some investment into key areas of the Service. The commitment by the Service to deliver savings and the funding guarantee provided by Government within the provisional settlement has helped to present a more positive financial position.

I am also very pleased with the excellent work being done by the Fire and Rescue Service to support the local health economy through two initiatives; firstly, providing a falls response service and more recently the Home from Hospital initiative. These are both excellent examples of how the Service can add real value and support the communities we serve, but in different ways.

HMICFRS recognised that following their inspection carried out in 2021 there were 20 areas for improvement identified by the Inspectorate and good progress has been made by the Service and I remain confident with the next inspection commencing in February 2024 there will be tangible improvements in many areas.

This MTFS will ensure that the Chief Fire Officer has the resources needed to deliver on the local plan and national government priorities. With this, inflation and wage pressures in mind, I have concluded that the 2024/25 Fire and Rescue council tax precept should increase by 2.99%, equivalent to £2.52 per year or 5p per week for a band D property.

The proposed increase in the Fire and Rescue council tax precept over the four-year period of this MTFS is once again lower than the forecast cumulative rate of inflation and wage growth. I will always aim to keep council tax as low as possible without compromising safety. The Council Tax proposal is in line with the referendum limit which was set at 3% for Fire & Rescue Authorities in 2024/25.

I am acutely aware that household budgets are tight, so I expect every pound of taxpayer's money invested in Fire and Rescue to be spent wisely and for Staffordshire Fire to continually seek efficiencies and look at areas where productivity can be improved and savings achieved without compromising of the safety of our firefighters or communities we are here to serve.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue continue to perform well and with your support and the continued investment set out in this MTFS it is my expectation that our Chief Fire Officer, Rob Barber, will continue to keep us safe.

<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/new-document/fire-and-rescue-plan-2021-24/>

Executive Summary

This report advises the Panel on the revenue budget for 2024/25, and the proposed level of council tax for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority. It also presents an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for the following four year period to 2028/29.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, presented his 2023 Autumn Statement to Parliament on 22 November 2023 and the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) published updated forecasts for the UK's economic and fiscal outlook. UK economic growth has been weak since early 2022 with high inflation and rising interest rates have constricted household budgets and consumer and business spending. The OBR forecasts that the economy will grow more slowly than it had forecast in March 2023. Inflation is now forecast to be more persistent and domestically driven. Higher domestically driven inflation improves the outlook for the public finances, boosting tax revenues by more than it raises public spending. The Chancellor used much of the improvement in the public finances to fund business and personal tax cuts.

On 18 December 2023 the Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP, set out the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25 in the form of a written ministerial statement. Alongside the statement, details of the provisional settlement have been published on the Gov.uk website. The statement recognised that providing councils with greater certainty on key aspects of their funding is vital for the budget setting process. The Provisional Settlement publication marked the start of the four-week consultation which closed on 15 January 2024. The Settlement Funding assumptions contained within this report are based upon the Provisional Settlement and also updated to include the announcement regarding additional funding.

The Secretary of State also confirmed on 24 January that there will be additional funding within the Final Local Government Settlement for 2024-25. Specifically:

- £500m of additional funding for social care
- £15m additional rural services delivery grant
- Funding guarantee increased from 3% to 4%.
The additional funding for announced specifically for Fire is £111m, of which £21.2m is for stand-alone FRA's, and £1.1m (5% of the £21.2m) for Staffordshire
- Additional funding for loW and loS TBC at Final Settlement.

Following the receipt of the draft local government finance settlement which included the referendum limits reducing from £5 (6.2% for this authority) to 3% (£2.52) for Council Tax increases, the Commissioner has considered; current and future funding requirements, together with the factors included within his Fire and Rescue Plan, the results of the survey with local residents, as well as actual and expected cost pressures and expected efficiency savings available to the Service as part of its ongoing savings programme.

The Commissioner has considered the adequacy and level of reserves and the impact of future financial challenges and opportunities in the MTFs. This paper is accompanied by a revised Reserves Strategy which is supported by the Commissioner.

As at Quarter 3 2023/24, the forecast outturn for 2023/24 is in line with budget at £46.5m, however savings achieved in year as part the review of Prevention and Protection, where vacancies have been held, in addition to additional S31 grant funding and higher receipts from cash investment has resulted in a lower level of planned reserve utilisation. This positive financial position for the current year has helped support the improved financial picture into the medium term.

The Settlement Funding for 2024/25 includes an inflationary increase in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) set at 6.6%, increasing by £359k. The business rates top-up has also been increased by 4.5%, and the 4% Funding Guarantee which is expected to be increased to £1,489k within the Final Settlement.

The Commissioner is proposing a 2.99% increase in Council Tax equivalent to an additional £2.52 per annum (5 pence per week) and will increase the Band D Council Tax for the Staffordshire Commissioner FRA to £86.77.

For 2024/25 in support of this recommendation the online precept consultation with residents undertaken by the Commissioner shows that overall, 60% of all respondents supported the proposed level of increase in precept for the Fire and Rescue Service. The resident's survey generated 1966 responses and shows that 1182 of individuals favoured an increase, with 784 not supporting any increase at all.

The budget process for 2024/25 involved full consultation with all budget holders and calculated from a zero base. Where possible all recurring efficiencies and savings achieved to date have been incorporated into the base budget.

The Commissioner has considered the adequacy and level of reserves and the impact of future financial challenges and opportunities in the MTFs. The MTFs assumes a net draw on reserves of £0.2m to support the MTFs revenue budget over the five year planning window. This paper is accompanied by a revised Reserves Strategy. There are significant risks and uncertainties beyond 2024/25 that are reflected and narrated within this paper which include the uncertainty regarding pay awards, the impact of increasing pension contributions and future certainty for the 2024/25 4% Funding Guarantee expected within the Final Settlement.

In summary, when considering the settlement funding position, additional grants offered by Government and the precept proposal from the Commissioner a balance budget position is presented for the budget year 2024/25 and into the medium term, however the continuing uncertainty beyond next year, not helped by a further single year settlement, continues to make planning beyond 2024/25 challenging.

Background

1. The budget proposals contained within this report are based upon the provisional 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement received on 18 December 2023.
2. Settlement Funding comprises of three funding streams shown below. The Revenue Support Grant (RSG), Business Rates top-up the 1% share of local business rates shown as extracted from the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.

	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	Movement £m
1% share of Local Business Rates	4.070	3.935	(0.135)
Business Rates Top-up	6.212	6.494	0.282
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	5.422	5.781	0.359
Firefighters' Pension Grant (now rolled into RSG) from 24/25	1.707	1.707	
Total Settlement Funding	17.411	17.917	0.506

3. The Total Settlement Funding for 2023/24 has been restated and includes the Firefighters' Pension Grant which has been rolled into the RSG from 2024/25. This ensures that the year on year comparison is accurate as shown above. The Firefighters pension grant of £115m was introduced in 2019/20 with grants allocated to Fire and Rescue Authorities to cover 90% of the 12.6% increase in employer pension contributions following the scheme valuation undertaken based upon the 2016 position. The grant allocated to the Staffordshire Commissioner was £1.707m as shown above.

Business Rates / Business Rates Top-up

4. The Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority receives a 1% share of local business rates, in addition to a business rates top-up. The Panel should note that the 1% share of local business for 2024/25 has been estimated based upon the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.
5. The actual 1% share of the district/boroughs and city council's NNDR forms (Non-Domestic Rating Income Calculation and Estimate of Collection Fund Surpluses and Deficits), will be calculated with any surplus/deficit transferred to the new business rates earmarked reserve.
6. Dialogue with the nine billing authorities will be undertaken during the year to ensure any impact of the future business rates reset is understood and included within future updates of the MTFS.
7. S31 grants are also received as part of the NNDR1 returns and have been included as estimates within the budget for 2024/25 and maintained at this level for the MTFS period. The S31 Grants are shown as income for the Authority. This is in addition to the tariff/top-up adjustment of 124/499 that is applied to the Business Rates Top-up and again shown as income for the Authority.
8. The S31 grants included within the district/boroughs and city council's NNDR forms (Non-Domestic Rating Income Calculation and Estimate of Collection Fund Surpluses and Deficits) have been estimated; any surplus/deficit for S31 grants will be transferred to the new Business Rates Earmarked Reserve.

Council Tax

9. The setting of Council Tax is under the control of the Staffordshire Commissioner. The process for issuing the precept is aligned to the setting of the Staffordshire Police precept following the change in governance arrangements in 2018. This process is laid out within Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
10. From 1 August 2018, the Staffordshire Commissioner assumed the functions of the former Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority, including the power to issue a fire precept from 2019/20.
11. The Band D Council Tax for the Authority was approved at £84.25 for 2023/24, this report includes the proposal by the Commissioner to increase Council Tax by 2.99% to £86.77 in 2024/25.
12. The referendum limit for 2024/25 has been reduced to 3% (£2.52) for 2024/25 from £5 (6.2%). This is for a single year as announced within the settlement. The MTFs assumes an increase of 2.99% for 2025/26 and 1.99% thereafter.
13. A 2.99% increase in Council Tax is equivalent to an increase in Band D of £2.52 per annum (5 pence per week), and will increase Band D to £86.77. This proposed increase is in line with the referendum limit.
14. The Council Tax base shown in **Appendix 5** has increased to 365,868 from 360,299 properties in 2023/24, which is equivalent to an increase of 1.5%. The Council Tax collection fund is also in surplus by £401k, shown in **Appendix 4**. Both the Council Tax base and the surplus on the collection fund have been finalised and agreed with the billing authorities.
15. A 1% sensitivity in precept for the Staffordshire Commissioner is equivalent to £0.3m.
16. Based upon a 2.99% increase, the total budgeted precept (including collection fund) has increased by £1.322m, as follows:

Council Tax Amount 2023/24	£30.761m
Increase in Council Tax Base by 1.5%	£0.469m
Movement in Council tax Surplus	(£0.004m)
Increase in Council Tax by 2.99%	£0.922m
Council Tax Amount 2024/25	£32.148m

17. The Staffordshire Commissioner issued a budget consultation document in December which concluded on 4 January 2024 which also included a survey regarding options for the local precept. The results of this consultation show that over 60% of the 1966 that responded supported an increase in Council Tax of above £2.50.

18. The table below illustrates the financial impact of the precept changes on the Council Band D rate and increase in funding for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority:

Council Tax (Fire Element)	2023/24	2024/25
Band D Council Tax Proposed	£84.25	£86.77
Increase on Prior Year	£3.90	£2.52
Percentage increase on Prior Year	4.85%	2.99%
Council Tax Increase*	£1,822,896	£1,376,901
Total Precept Levied (Band D)	£30,355,199	£31,746,378
Council Tax surplus (Deficit)	£405,402	£401,125
Total Council Tax	£30,760,601	£32,147,503
Weekly Increase	£0.075p	£0.05p

*This includes changes in the tax base as well as precept rate changes

Revenue Budget 2024/25

19. The Revenue Budget sets out to support the recently extended Corporate Safety Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan issued by the Staffordshire Commissioner.
20. **Appendix 1** sets out the proposed revenue budget of £50.065m for 2024/25 based upon a Council Tax Increase of 2.99% and the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and the estimated 1% share of local business rates from the nine billing authorities within Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
21. The key features of the budget, are as follows:

Pay costs

The overall pay costs budget for 2024/25 at £34.1m, shows an increase of £1.5m more than last year's budget after restatement for the consolidation of the firefighter's pension grant of £1.7m.

The budget for 2023/24 included the finalised 5% pay award for 2023/24 and the 7% pay award for 2022/23. The latest budget assumption assumes that the pay award for 2024/25 will again be 5%, despite overall levels of key inflation measures reducing during 2023 there remains significant pressure on public sector pay.

There is, therefore, some risk associated with the assumed level of pay award for 2024/25 and the assumptions included within the updated MTFS. Pay awards for 2024/25 could also come in lower than this assumption.

The following bridge explains the net increase in pay costs:

	<u>£m</u>
Pay Budget – 2023/24	31.0
Adjusted for Firefighters' Pension Grant	1.7
Pay Budget – 2023/24 Adjusted	32.7
Pay Award Provision (2024/25 at 5%)	1.2
Other Employee Costs	0.2
New Posts (incl. temporary investment and re-grades)	0.2
Restructure and efficiency savings (transformation)	(0.3)
Non Recurring Pay Funded (e.g. Secondments, Falls Response, Home from Hospital)	0.4
Pension – estimated additional cost	0.1
Other factors (incl. vacancy factor review)	(0.3)
Pay Budget – 2024/25	34.2

Non-pay costs

Non-pay costs are budgeted to increase by over £1.3 million year on year. Some of the main movements in non-pay costs are as follows:

- Premises costs have reduced by £0.1m and includes additional Business Rates of £0.3m following the 2023 revaluation by the Valuations Office Agency (VOA) which came into effect in England and Wales on 1 April 2023, this has been mitigated by a revised budget for electricity costs. Total electricity costs have not increased to the level expected during 2023
- Transport costs are showing an increase in the budget year of £0.27m which reflects the additional costs for fuel, oil, tyres and external repairs experienced during 2023/24
- Non-Pay includes a charge of £1.3m payable to West Midlands Fire Service, this represents 30% of the budgeted cost of running the Joint Fire Control. Costs have increased by £0.1m and reflects the additional pay rates and assumptions discussed above
- Non-pay includes impact of contract renews etc. reflecting the general increase in prices for goods and services, and additional requirements for response equipment purchased by the Emergency Response Team, £0.3m
- Collaboration (shared service charges), overall costs have increased by £0.4m and includes pay awards for Police Staff (7% award for 2023). In addition there is further investment included within restructure of the Property and Estates team in order to provide greater resilience and additional resource across the Police and Fire estate

- Firelink/Airwave costs (Emergency Services network) have also increased significantly based upon the current contractual arrangement with the Home Office. In addition, all grant funding for Airwave will be removed by 2025/26, representing a cash reduction of £0.3m per annum

Income

Income for 2024/25 is budgeted to increase by £2.4m to £6.8m

- The Commissioner is expecting to receive a Funding Guarantee as part of the Final Settlement of £1,489k. This ensures that there is at least a 4% increase in Core Spending Power before any decision is made regarding Council Tax or the use of reserves. This will be incorporated into the Final Settlement and is assumed to continue into the medium term
- The Special Services Grant has been reduced as part of the Provisional Settlement from £344k to £61k (nationally there has been a 84% reduction)
- The S31 Grant for Business Rates is assumed to increase by £0.4m as additional business rates relief has been committed within the Provisional Settlement. This includes the small business rate multiplier increasing to 124/499
- The budgeted income also reflects the income received to support the Falls Response initiative and also Home from Hospital trial, in addition to secondment opportunities that have been supported by the Chief Fire Officer, £0.4m
- The returns received from cash invested by the Authority (see Treasury Management Strategy), are now headlining interest returns in excess of 5%, driving a further £0.3m benefit

Capital Charges

Total capital charges are budgeted to increase by £0.5m to £7.1m

- The £1.6m minimum revenue provision requirement for 2024/25 is in line with the MRP Policy. This is based upon the capital investment programme and strategy and remains at the same level as the 2023/24 budget
- The budgeted level of interest on the existing long terms loans of £16.700m is 4.31% (Budget 2024/25, £0.720m). In total £550,000 in loans are due to be repaid in year reducing long term loans to £16.150m by 31 March 2025
- The budget includes a proportion of direct funding for the replacement of operational vehicles (including appliances) cars and vans
- The unitary charge will increase by RPIx applied to the variable elements of both PFI contracts. The RPIx rate led to increases of 8.2% in 2022/23 and 12.9% for 2023/24 and is estimated at estimated at 4.8% for 2024/25. Total impact of high inflation in the last three years is £1.1m by March 2025

Budget Monitoring 2024/25

22. A budget monitoring report will be considered by the Strategic Governance Board on a quarterly basis. A monthly Finance Report will be issued to members of the Service Delivery Board (SDB) and all budget holders. In addition, the Finance System (Integra) issues automated monthly reports to budget holders.
23. The Finance Panel, which is a sub-group of the Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel (ETAP) will continue to review the budget monitoring reports on a quarterly basis with a summary report submitted to ETAP by the Finance Panel Chair.

Service Transformation Programme

24. Service Transformation has been necessary to ensure that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service can continue to deliver 'a modern, efficient, and sustainable level of service to the public' that prioritises the safety of both our staff and our communities. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer oversees the Service's Transformation Programme, which aligns to our Safety Plan 2020-2024 priority of 'Service Reform' and the Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan 2021-2024, which prioritises a 'flexible and responsive service' and a 'fire service for tomorrow'.
25. The Service Transformation Board was formed in Feb 2022, with representatives from various areas of the Service. Its purpose is to investigate ways to transform the Service and ensure its financial sustainability. The Board has met regularly to monitor and evaluate progress through an action plan, while also providing recommendations through the relevant governance channels.
26. A number of the work streams that are aligned with the current Service's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) have already been considered and completed such as a high-level management restructure, the change to a minimum of four staff on whole-time fire engines, a review of operational exercises, review of incident command and outreach training and the 'On-call Nine-Point Plan' to improve availability of fire engines and crews.
27. Service Transformation has also taken into account additional work streams. For instance, working on a 'Clean Concept' initiative to minimise operational staff's exposure to contaminants from fires. Additionally, a project to review the standards and accreditation for fire investigation officers.
28. This work is transforming the Service to ensure that it delivers even better outcomes for the communities of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent and at the same time means that the Service is working more efficiently.
29. It is estimated that the delivery of the transformation programme will achieve a recurring saving of circa £1.3 million for the Service, of which all savings have been incorporated into the updated MTFS. Of the £1.3m, £1.1m of recurring savings have been delivered.
30. As a result of the updated MTFS the Transformation Board has now moved into the next phase and will be reviewing options to further transform the Service in order to increase

productivity and drive efficiency. This will include a review to ensure that risk and demand are considered fully and are proportionate when reviewing existing station locations and current shift patterns.

31. The updated MTFs includes the use of £0.2m of reserves but incorporated a balance position over the next five years.

Firefighters' Pension Schemes

32. Pensions Grant

Following the results of the 2016 Valuation of the Firefighter's Pension Schemes employer contribution rates were increased by an average of 12.6% (to an average 30.2%), resulting in additional costs for Staffordshire of around £1.8m per year. A pension grant has been received for the last five years' from the Home Office covering 90% of this increase.

For 2024/25 this grant has been rolled into RSG (see paragraphs 2 and 3). This means that in future years this funding will also increase by the increase in the small business rate multiplier (or compensated if the rate is frozen or capped) and could also be subject to reduction should RSG face cuts into the medium term beyond 2024/25.

The Home Office have announced that there will be a further £85.3m Fire Pensions Grant in 2024/25, and £6m towards the admin costs, to compensate for the increased Firefighters' Pension Scheme employer contribution rate. This is following the results of the actuarial valuation of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes (England) (the 'scheme') as at 31st March 2020 undertaken by the Government Actuarial Department (GAD). The results have incorporated changes in the economic and demographic factors and mortality rates in addition to incorporating the estimated impact of Sargeant/McCloud remedy and also the second options exercise following the Matthews ruling.

This has resulted in a 8.5% increase in employer pension contributions into the scheme with rates rising from 28.8% to 37.6% to be implemented from 1 April 2024.

A separate grant allocation is expected in January 2024 which should cover the estimated £1.5m of additional annual employer pension contributions into the Scheme. The Home Office have only guaranteed to fund the additional costs for 2024/25 and the Commissioner has adjusted the earmarked pension grant to £1.5m should this grant not be made available for 2025/26. There is therefore a significant risk into the medium term. It has been assumed within the medium term, to be prudent, that the grant will cover 90% of the additional cost when it is announced.

33. Firefighters' Pension Scheme Update – impact of Sargeant/McCloud judgement

The Police Fire and Crime Panel will be aware that as a result of legal cases brought in respect of the Firefighters Pension Reforms, it has been found that the implementation of

the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015 was discriminatory as outlined in the McCloud/Sargeant judgement.

The Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022 (PSPJOA) provided an overarching framework to allow public service pension schemes to remedy the impact of this unlawful age discrimination. That discrimination arose due to certain transitional arrangements put in place when public service pension schemes (including the fire schemes) were reformed between 2014 and 2016. Secondary legislation has been laid to amend the rules of each affected public service pension scheme to implement the remedy for their members. The remedy was designed to be delivered in two stages: the first, to bring the discrimination to an end (the prospective remedy) from 1 April 2022, and the second, to be implemented by 1 October 2023, to remedy the discrimination that had taken place between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the retrospective remedy). The legislation to remedy this discrimination was enacted in October 2023 and Authorities have 18 months to implement and remedy members who have suffered the impact of this unlawful discrimination.

As individual members' circumstances will differ, the impact of implementing the remedy will vary. The firefighters' pension scheme manager must provide all eligible members and member representatives with information about the benefits available to them under the remedy and to enable them to make a choice of benefits with a remedial services statement (RSS). This will provide the member with an option to take benefits based upon the legacy pension scheme or the reformed pension scheme for the remedy period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2022.

34. Firefighters' Pension Scheme Update – Matthews second option exercise

The Board will be aware of the category of members of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 (FPS 2006) known as "special members" was introduced in 2014, following *Matthews v Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority & others*, which allowed retained firefighters employed between 1 July 2000 and 5 April 2006 to join the 2006 Scheme with retrospective effect to 1 July 2000.

This judgment was later challenged at the European Court of Justice in relation to fee-paid judges (*O'Brien v Ministry of Justice*). The Court ruled in that case that service going back to the start of employment could be taken into account. The government accepted that the same principles apply to certain retained firefighters, whether they have made a legal claim or not.

A second options exercise is now taking place allowing those who have retained service between 7 April 2000 and 30 June 2000 to backdate their membership to 7 April 2000 and before (to the start of their employment), providing that the retained service is continuous.

The Service has issued formal notification to over 400 current and deferred on-call firefighters who are eligible for the second options exercise. The Home Office have been approached in order to provide funding upfront for this exercise as the cash outflow implications could result in cash flow issues for the Authority and a loss of interest due to reduced cash availability.

Reserves and Balances

35. The Authority holds two reserves, a Specific/Earmarked Reserve which is built up through any surplus within the Income and Expenditure account. The utilisation of this fund has been established with the approved Reserves Strategy that was last updated in February 2023; and a General Reserve which is held to protect against any spate or emergency conditions that may arise, **(see Appendix 3)**.
36. At 1 April 2023 the Authority held £1.9m in General Reserves and a risk assessment for this reserve was undertaken as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25 and the overall provision of £1.9m has remained unchanged for a number of years and represents less than 4% of the proposed revenue budget for the year.
37. At 1 April 2023 the Authority held £7.5m in Earmarked Reserves. **Appendix 2** demonstrates the impact on Specific Reserves for the Council Tax proposal included within this paper. The schedule also assumes utilisation of capital spend as incorporated within the Reserves Strategy. It does not assume use of reserves for other contingency areas that are incorporated within the Reserves Strategy.
38. The Earmarked Reserved is forecast to reduce to £5.0m by 2027/28 in line with the MTFS assumptions
39. The forecast balance on the Earmarked Reserves is detailed within the Reserves Strategy update paper and shown below **(see Appendix 2)**.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

40. The MTFS has been updated to reflect the budget proposals for 2024/25 and incorporates the assumptions contained with the Provisional Local Government Settlement, which includes the assumed increase in Council Tax of 2.99%. A summary of the financials covering the medium term period 2024/25 to 2028/29 are included within **Appendix 7**.
41. Should the overall funding for the Authority not be in line with the assumptions incorporated within this report following the Final Settlement, saving targets and use of reserves will need to be re-visited.
42. The budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26 shows a balanced position, and includes the utilisation of £0.2m of budget reserve by 2028/29.
43. There remains a significant level of financial uncertainty regarding the funding position for the Authority beyond and including 2024/25, this unfortunately results in a higher level of risk associated with the funding assumptions contained within the updated MTFS.

44. The main areas of uncertainty must be considered when reviewing this MTFS:

- The likely impact of pay awards for 2024/25 and beyond above the budgeted 5% and MTFS levels – see paragraph 46 below.
- The Impact of Inflation on all costs which could be impacted upon events outside of the control of the Authority
- The impact on Firefighter pension costs after 2024/25, should funding not be included within the next Comprehensive Spending Review
- The impact on funding should the 2024/25 funding guarantee be removed
- The impact of economic and political uncertainty into the medium term

45. A 1% sensitivity across key budget areas is reflected below:

Cost / Income Area	Change	£000s
Pay Costs	+/- 1%	315
Premises Costs (incl utilities)	+/- 1%	30
Vehicles	+/- 1%	10
Supplies and Services	+/- 1%	92
Employer Pension Contributions	+/- 1%	233
Business Rates	+/- 1%	22
Revenue Support Grant	+/- 1%	58
Precept	+/- 1%	321
Council Tax Base	+/- 1%	317

46. A summary of the main MTFS assumptions are shown below for consideration:

	2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan	2028/29 Plan
<u>PAY COSTS</u>					
Pay Award Operational Staff	5.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Pay Award Non Operational Staff	5.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Other Pay Costs	5.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Pension Costs - Firefighters' Pension Schemes	+£1.5m	+£1.5m	+£1.5m	+£1.5m	+£1.5m
Pension Costs - Fire Fighters Pension Grant (Est)	(£1.4m)	(£1.4m)	(£1.4m)	(£1.4m)	(£1.4m)
<u>NON PAY COSTS</u>					
Electricity	-26.7%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Gas	-7.8%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Business Rates	21.1%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Water and Sewerage	2.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
General Supplies and Services	2.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
<u>INTEREST RATES</u>					
Interest on Investments	5.0%	3.1%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Interest on Debt	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%
<u>GENERAL FUNDING</u>					
Council Tax Increases	2.99%	2.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%
Council Tax Base Growth	1.55%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%
Revenue Support Grant	6.7%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Local Business Rates	2.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Business rates Top-up grant	2.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%

Capital Programme

47. The three year Capital Programme and Capital Strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27 has been developed and is reviewed within the Capital Strategy.
48. The Capital Programme has been developed by the operational budget holders with all plans submitted to the Capital Review Group chaired by the Director of Finance.
49. The total programme of £5.7m for 2024/25 includes an element of carry-over from the current year. Whilst this delay has not impacted upon service delivery to date, it has culminated in a challenging but deliverable programme for 2024/25.
50. The revenue consequences of the proposed programme have been considered in the development of the revenue budget and the required prudential indicators are set out within the Treasury Management Strategy.
51. As part of the capital programme for 2024/25 the Commissioner has committed the use of £0.5m of reserves to support the station refurbishment work at Brewood, with a further £0.5m earmarked for Tutbury Fire Station in 2025/26.
52. The summary capital programme for the next three years is shown within **Appendix 8**.
53. The detailed programme for 2024/25 is shown within **Appendix 9**.

Statement from the Director of Finance / S151 Officer on the robustness of the Budget and adequacy of the proposed financial reserves

54. The Local Government Act 2003, Part 2, Section 25, as amended by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2013, requires the Commissioner's CFO to report on the robustness of the estimates used for the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. The Commissioner is required to have regard to the report of the Chief Financial Officer and the report must be given to the Police Fire and Crime Panel.
55. I can confirm that the budget for 2024/25 is balanced and has been produced on a robust basis. Whilst there remains some uncertainty with regard to future settlement funding, increased pay awards and the costs of Firefighter's pensions, estimates have been included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and appropriate provision made within Earmarked Reserves.

Report Author: - David Greensmith ACMA CGMA

Telephone: - 01785-898690

Email:- d.greensmith@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Appendix 1

Revenue Budget Summary 2024/25

	Budget 2023/24	Budget Proposal 2024/25	Year on Year Change
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Pay			
Pay Costs	30,323	31,653	1,331
Other Employee Costs	2,389	2,600	211
Total Pay	32,711	34,253	1,542
Non Pay			
Premises Costs	5,154	5,092	(63)
Transport Costs	775	1,044	269
Supplies & Services Costs	7,941	9,050	1,108
CFS Costs and Initiatives	323	340	17
Total Non Pay	14,193	15,525	1,332
Income			
Income - General	(4,081)	(6,226)	(2,145)
Interest Receivable	(285)	(541)	(256)
Total Income	(4,366)	(6,767)	(2,401)
Capital charges	2,108	2,343	235
Interest Payable	732	720	(12)
PFI Unitary Charge	3,776	4,114	338
Total Capital Charges	6,616	7,176	560
Total Revenue before Reserves	49,155	50,188	1,033
Transfer to/(from) Reserves	(983)	(123)	860
Budget Gap in Year			
Total Revenue Budget	48,172	50,065	1,893
FINANCED BY:			
Settlement Funding			
Revenue Support Grant	7,130	7,489	359
Local Business Rates (1%)	4,070	3,935	(135)
Government Top-up (business rates)	6,212	6,494	281
Total Settlement Funding	17,411	17,917	506
Council Tax	30,761	32,148	1,387
Total Financing	48,172	50,065	1,893

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Appendix 2

Earmarked and General Reserves Summary to 2028/29

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	Actual	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
General Fund	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9
<u>Earmarked Reserves</u>							
PFI Reserve (Project Reserve Deductions)	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Reserve - Brewood Refurbishment	0.5	0.5					
Operational Budget Holder Reserves	0.5	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.2
Insurance Reserve	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Budget and MTFS Support Reserve	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.7
Capital Reserves	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3		
Pension Reserve	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Collaboration Reserve	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Future Funding and Investment Reserve	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
Total Earmarked Reserve	7.5	7.1	6.6	5.6	5.4	5.0	5.0
Total Reserves Available (Useable)	9.4	9.0	8.5	7.5	7.3	6.9	6.9
Percentage of Revenue Budget							
General Reserve	4.5%	4.0%	3.8%	3.7%	3.6%	3.5%	3.4%
Earmarked Reserve	17.7%	14.7%	13.2%	10.7%	10.1%	9.1%	8.8%
Total	22.1%	18.7%	17.0%	14.4%	13.7%	12.6%	12.2%

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority

Appendix 3

Risk Assessment of General Reserves for 2024/25

CIPFA guidance indicates that a well-managed authority with a prudent approach to budgeting should be able to operate with a relatively low level of general reserves and that chief financial officers should take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the authority.

A risk assessment for general reserves was undertaken as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25 and the overall provision of £1.9m has remained unchanged for a number of years and represents 3.8% of the revenue budget set for the year.

Whilst not a complete list of all the financial risks, the assessment focused on those most likely (High and Medium risks) to have a significant impact on the budget year.

Area of Expenditure	Level of Risk *	Explanation of risk/justification of reserves	2024/25 Provision £000
Loss of Employees / additional pay costs	High	Spate conditions caused by for example; prolonged severe weather conditions (e.g. hot weather or flooding), unexpected loss of staff through COVID-19, Avian Flu / Ebola etc.	650
Insurance loss / impact of data breach	Medium	Risk of incurring uninsured losses Risk of breach due to inappropriate information sharing / failure to implement EU GDPR	550
Ill health retirement costs	Medium	Risk of the number of ill health retirements being greater than anticipated due to ageing workforce	300
Other unforeseen costs	Medium	Risk of unforeseen event: emergency incident, waste fires / tipping	300
Other costs	Medium	Risk of failure of strategic partnership / collaboration initiatives	100
TOTAL			1,900

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority

Appendix 4

Council Tax Report 2024/25**Council Tax Surplus / (Deficit) by Authority**

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Cannock Chase	112,486	(46,934)	(12,031)	34,903
East Staffordshire	48,291	74,054	20,909	(53,145)
Lichfield	(14,191)	21,029	35,000	13,971
Newcastle	11,107	22,674	2,364	(20,310)
South Staffordshire	53,244	70,810	55,514	(15,296)
Stafford	21,882	109,918	(6,416)	(116,333)
Staffordshire Moorlands	22,740	37,539	(3,760)	(41,299)
Stoke	1,000	91,542	297,961	206,419
Tamworth	31,345	24,770	11,584	(13,186)
Budget Adjustment				
Total (per budget paper)	287,904	405,402	401,125	(4,277)

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Appendix 5

Council Tax Report 2024/25Taxbase by Authority

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Var	YOY %
Cannock Chase	29,458	29,851	30,015	164	0.5%
East Staffordshire	39,059	40,060	40,935	875	2.2%
Lichfield	39,695	40,534	41,116	581	1.4%
Newcastle	37,668	38,099	38,738	639	1.7%
South Staffordshire	39,066	39,609	39,914	305	0.8%
Stafford	48,490	48,864	49,303	439	0.9%
Staffordshire Moorlands	33,510	33,374	33,737	363	1.1%
Stoke	65,185	66,532	68,632	2,100	3.2%
Tamworth	22,968	23,376	23,479	103	0.4%
Total	355,100	360,299	365,868	5,569	1.5%

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Appendix 6

Council Tax Report 2024/25Council Bands for Each Band and District PreceptsBased upon a Band D Increase of 2.99%STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITYCouncil Tax Band Figures

	2023/24	2024/25	Increase	Per Week
Band	£	£	£	Pence
A	56.17	57.85	1.68	3.2
B	65.53	67.49	1.96	3.8
C	74.89	77.13	2.24	4.3
D	84.25	86.77	2.52	4.8
E	102.97	106.05	3.08	5.9
F	121.69	125.33	3.64	7.0
G	140.42	144.62	4.20	8.1
H	168.50	173.54	5.04	9.7

Precept Payable

	2023/24	2024/25	Variation	
	£	£	£	%
Cannock Chase	2,514,951	2,604,381	89,430	3.78%
East Staffordshire	3,375,055	3,551,930	176,875	5.64%
Lichfield	3,415,023	3,567,618	152,595	4.78%
Newcastle	3,209,841	3,361,296	151,456	5.00%
South Staffordshire	3,337,058	3,463,341	126,283	4.02%
Stafford	4,116,754	4,277,998	161,244	4.14%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2,811,760	2,927,359	115,600	4.29%
Stoke	5,605,329	5,955,181	349,852	6.68%
Tamworth	1,969,428	2,037,273	67,845	3.68%
Total	30,355,199	31,746,378	1,391,178	4.88%

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Appendix 7

MTFS Summary Financials to 2028/29

	2024/25 Budget £000s	2025/26 Plan £000s	2026/27 Plan £000s	2027/28 Plan £000s	2028/29 Plan £000s
Pay					
Pay Costs	31,653	32,381	32,876	33,380	33,891
Other Employee Costs	2,600	2,658	2,698	2,739	2,780
Total Pay	34,253	35,039	35,575	36,118	36,670
Non Pay					
Premises Costs	5,092	5,283	5,449	5,622	5,802
Transport Costs	1,044	1,075	1,097	1,119	1,141
Supplies & Services Costs	9,050	9,321	9,508	9,698	9,892
CFS Costs and Initiatives	340	350	357	364	372
Total Non Pay	15,525	16,029	16,411	16,803	17,206
Income					
Income - General	(6,226)	(6,164)	(6,167)	(6,167)	(6,217)
Interest Receivable	(541)	(318)	(139)	(89)	(89)
Total Income	(6,767)	(6,481)	(6,306)	(6,256)	(6,306)
Capital charges	2,343	2,806	2,685	3,079	3,554
Interest Payable	720	720	720	800	880
PFI Unitary Charge	4,114	4,237	4,322	4,408	4,496
Total Capital Charges	7,176	7,763	7,726	8,287	8,931
Total Revenue	50,187	52,350	53,406	54,952	56,500
Use of Reserves	(123)	(429)	52	90	175
Total Revenue	50,065	51,921	53,458	55,041	56,676
FINANCED BY:					
Settlement Funding					
Revenue Support Grant	7,489	7,662	7,815	7,972	8,131
Local Business Rates (1%)	3,935	4,053	4,134	4,217	4,301
Government Top-up (business rates)	6,494	6,688	6,822	6,959	7,098
Total Settlement Funding	17,917	18,403	18,771	19,147	19,530
Council Tax	32,148	33,518	34,686	35,894	37,146
Total Financing	50,065	51,921	53,458	55,041	56,676

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority

Appendix 8

Capital Programme Summary 2024/25 to 2026/27

	2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
	£	£	£
Building & Infrastructure Works			
Refurbishment Programme	619,000	550,000	100,000
Improvement Works	1,160,000	545,000	450,000
Total	1,779,000	1,095,000	550,000
Operational Equipment	854,696	146,000	210,000
Appliances & Vehicles			
Appliances & Specialist Vehicles	1,260,904	2,005,000	1,050,000
Vans & Cars	840,000	430,000	371,000
Total	2,100,904	2,435,000	1,421,000
Information Technology			
ICT Hardware, Software Systems & Installations	970,000	1,275,000	645,000
Total	970,000	1,275,000	645,000
Total Capital Programme	5,704,600	4,951,000	2,826,000
Funding			
Direct Revenue Funding	782,952	947,500	522,500
Unsupported Borrowing	4,421,648	3,453,500	2,303,500
Earmarked Reserves	500,000	550,000	
Total Funding	5,704,600	4,951,000	2,826,000

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority

Appendix 9

Capital Programme Detail - 2024/25

Scheme Description	Detail	2024/25 Capital Programme £
IADS		
Brewood Refurbishment	Mnror refurbishment of Brewewood FS	519,000
Abbots Bromley Tower	Demolish tower and replace training facility	100,000
		619,000
<u>Building Works - Improvements</u>		
PV Panels Installation	Feasibility study to undertake solar installation at Pirehill	100,000
HQ - Resurfacing Works	Phase 3 - Control building and Portakabin/stores	70,000
HQ - Lighting replacement programme	Phase 3 - Replace lighting with Energy Efficient LED to Stores + L&D + Appliance Bay	50,000
HQ - Control / Old House - Welfare Facilities	Phase 1 - Carry out refurbishment works to toilet facilities in the Control building and Old House	70,000
HQ - Control Building - Fire Doors	Replacement of fire doors - Current doors are compliant with regulations	60,000
Stations - Lighting replacement programme	Phase 4 - Replace lighting with Energy Efficient LED at Biddulph(Old Part) & Gnosall	50,000
BEMS installation - Stations	Intelligent Heating / Sustainable Controls - Stations	60,000
Stores Expansion	Undertake work to provide further storage capacity	100,000
Ipstones - Resurfacing Works	Resurface drill yard	40,000
Eccleshall - Gym Area Refurb	Removal of asbestos, replacement of floor/ceiling finishes, upgrading of lighting	40,000
Stafford Fire Station - Minor Refurb	Phase 1 - Undertake further improvement works	150,000
FBT - Resurfacing Works	Remove current stone and replace with hard wearing surface	70,000
L&D Remodelling	Remodel L&D - Gender neutral facilities	300,000
		1,160,000
<u>Operational Equipment</u>		
Operational Equipment Pool	Miscellaneous	25,000
BA compressors x 2	To be replaced in line with BA Project	50,000
Body Worn Cameras	Equipment is due for replacement - Cameras will be upgraded	45,000
Hydraulic Cutting Equipment	For the roll out to all appliances	494,696
Lighting Replacement	Service wide	35,000
Asset Tracking System	Software & hardware implementation	40,000
RTC Stabilisation		15,000
Electric PPV Fans		25,000
BA Set Washing Machine	1 machine - In line with Clean Concept Initiative	60,000
Cobra System Equipment	Misting Equipment	65,000
		854,696
<u>Appliances & Vehicles</u>		
Unmarked Response Cars x 3	Group Managers	75,000
Marked Standard Response Cars x 5	Station Managers	125,000
Marked 4x4 Response Vehicles x 3	£35k per vehicle	105,000
Utility Vans x 3	SDG Vans - Small/ Medium - £25k per vehicle	75,000
Marked Non-Response Van x 1	CFS Van - £30k per vehicle	30,000
BA Vehicle		35,000
Utility Van x 1	Crew Cab	30,000
L&D Minibus	Replace existing mini bus due to age	45,000
Mobile Workshops Van		50,000
ERPs	ERP 1 / ERP 2 - Body Build Payments - £255,452 per vehicle	510,904
PRLs	PRL 3 / PRL 4 / PRL 5 - Chassis Payments - £150k per vehicle	450,000
PRLs	PRL 1 / PRL 2 - Chassis Payments - £150k per vehicle - New tender process	300,000
Godiva Pumps x 2	To extend the working life of appliances where the chassis and cabs are not causing issues with breakdown and repairs	60,000
BA Stowage	Upgrade the BA stowage to accommodate the new MSA BA sets - 41 appliances at £4,000 per vehicle	160,000
Cobra System Vehicle		50,000
		2,100,904
<u>Information Technology</u>		
ICT Rolling Programme - Desktop	Ongoing replacement programme	150,000
ICT Rolling Programme - Infrastructure	Ongoing replacement programme	200,000
Stations/L&D Teams Rooms Enablement	Completing the activities started in 2023/24	125,000
MDT Replacement - Software	MDT Replacement 4 Year Investment	150,000
MDT Replacement - Hardware	MDT Replacement 4 Year Investment	100,000
MS Enablement		50,000
Station End	Station End equipment replacement	125,000
Mobile Phone Replacement	Replacement programme	70,000
		970,000
Total Programme 2024/25		5,704,600

Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Appendix 10

	Current (Net of VAT) £	Charges from 1st April 2024 (Net of VAT) £	VAT Status
(a) Special Service Charges			
Attendance per Appliance per hour* (Including crew) <i>*£388.31 for the first hour and £97.08 per ¼ hour thereafter. e.g. between 1-6 mins round down, or 7-15 mins round up to the nearest ¼ hour interval.</i>	372.66	388.31	Standard
Professional services per hour <i>e.g. Officer interviews, provision of advice</i>	97.96	102.07	Standard
Fire investigation Interviews <i>£100.10 per hour or part hour</i>	125.37	130.64	Standard
Fire Investigator detailed Fire report	438.79	457.22	Standard

(b) Other charges

Extract of Fire reports	103.73	103.73	Exempt
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Some information retrieval may incur an additional administration charge of £48.36 ex VAT per search.

Photographic/digital images	Price on Application	P.O.A	Standard
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c) Conference Suite
Scale of Charges from 1st April 2024

	Room Hire Only Monday – Friday Whole-day £
Conference Suite	
Room 1	322.88
Room 2	220.56
Room 3 - break out area	138.26
Room 4 (VDR)	220.56
Rooms 1 and 2	454.76
Rooms 1, 2 and 3	568.44

Catering Charges

Prices will be quoted to clients on request taking into account their requirements, location and current food costs.

Charges quoted are subject to VAT at prevailing rates

A 50% charge of the total cost of the Room Hire Booking will be made if a cancellation is not received within 10 working days of the date of the hire.

Half day rates will be charged on a 25% reduction on a whole day rate.

The full charge for catering will be made if a cancellation is not received within 48 hours of the date of the hire. A charge of 25% of the total food cost will be made if the cancellation falls in the period of 5 working days to 48 hours prior to the booking.

The full cost of any damage or breakages inclusive of any consequential financial losses which such damage may incur whilst repairs or replacement of equipment is arranged, will be charged to the hirer