



Making Cheshire Safer

DRAFT

www.cheshirefire.gov.uk





Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017–18

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Introduction





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Chief Fire Officer
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Fire Authority Chair

Cheshire Fire Authority is the public body responsible for ensuring local communities are protected by an effective fire and rescue service. The Authority is accountable to local residents through the 23 elected members drawn from Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington councils.

In 2015 the Fire Authority approved a five year strategy “Planning for a Safer Cheshire” which outlined the challenges facing almost every aspect of the organisation and set out the overarching principles and direction of travel it would adopt in responding to them.

Annual action plans, like this one, set out in more detail the projects and work scheduled for the forthcoming financial year – an approach which fulfils the Authority’s statutory requirement to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) reflecting up-to-date risk information and outlining how resources will be used to improve the safety of local communities.

While 2016’s EU Referendum result and the resulting change in the UK’s political leadership presented some uncertainty, the granting of a four year funding settlement means the organisation is

now better placed to plan ahead with more certainty.

As a result, this Plan sets out a number of short, medium and longer term proposals aimed at ensuring the Authority is best placed to provide the communities it serves with a sustainable and first class fire and rescue service. Achieving that will require the support, involvement and awareness of staff, partners and communities.

The proposals set out in the draft IRMP 2017-18, which was published in September 2016, have been subject to a comprehensive 13-week public and staff consultation. The extensive feedback received has been used to develop the proposals further.

Four years ago a comprehensive review of emergency response services was carried out and, following a major consultation, the Authority approved a programme to deliver significant savings while transforming the way many aspects of the service were delivered, including:

- introducing a new blanket 10 minute response standard for life risks, with a target of achieving it on 80% of occasions



- building new fire stations at Alsager, Penketh, Powey Lane and at Lymm – where there would also be an integrated safety centre
- maintaining the same number of fire engines overall but change how the second fire engines at Runcorn, Crewe and Ellesmere Port were crewed
- moving the second fire engine at Chester to Powey Lane and the second fire engines from Warrington and Widnes to Penketh
- introducing 12 hour shifts on the Wholetime duty system and start riding four firefighters on all fire engines
- introducing a new day crewing agreement for Congleton, Northwich and Winsford
- establishing a nucleus crewing arrangement at Macclesfield
- changing the crewing and location of some of the specialist response vehicles
- setting up on-call crews at Knutsford and Stockton Heath, once the Wholetime fire station at Lymm is operational.

Once Lymm, the last of the new fire stations to open, goes live – currently scheduled for April 2017 - all of the

above elements of the programme will have been implemented, with the exception of changing the second fire engines at Crewe and Ellesmere Port to on-call – details of which are set out in section 3. Implementing all of the above will have generated around £4 million in savings.

At the same time, all other aspects of the organisation have been scrutinised to improve efficiency and maximise savings. Comprehensive value for money reviews of all support services coupled with the organisational review has produced savings of around £2 million.

All this work has ensured that the organisation has both a balanced budget and sufficient funds to invest in providing firefighters with the best possible kit, equipment and training to protect both them and the communities they serve. It has also ensured that the Service can maintain and develop its extensive community safety work, highlighted by its ground-breaking Safety Central project at Lymm.

Nevertheless, the Authority still faces ongoing challenges in how its services are provided, managed and scrutinised, which the plans set out here will address over the next few years.





Our approach to risk



Identifying key risks

The Fire Authority has a responsibility to provide an efficient and effective service that protects the communities and infrastructure of Cheshire.

Each fire authority is required to produce a local plan, known as an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), setting out how it assesses local risks to life and uses its resources, including working closely with neighbouring areas, to protect communities.

The Government's key expectations of fire authorities are set out in a document called the National Framework. This emphasises the need for authorities to engage and involve local communities, particularly in developing their prevention, protection, response and resilience activities. However, it is clear that the requirements around accountability and transparency will be increased and enhanced as a result of the Government's recently announced Fire Reform Programme.

The Framework's existing specific priorities are for fire and rescue authorities to:

- identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately
- work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service

- be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

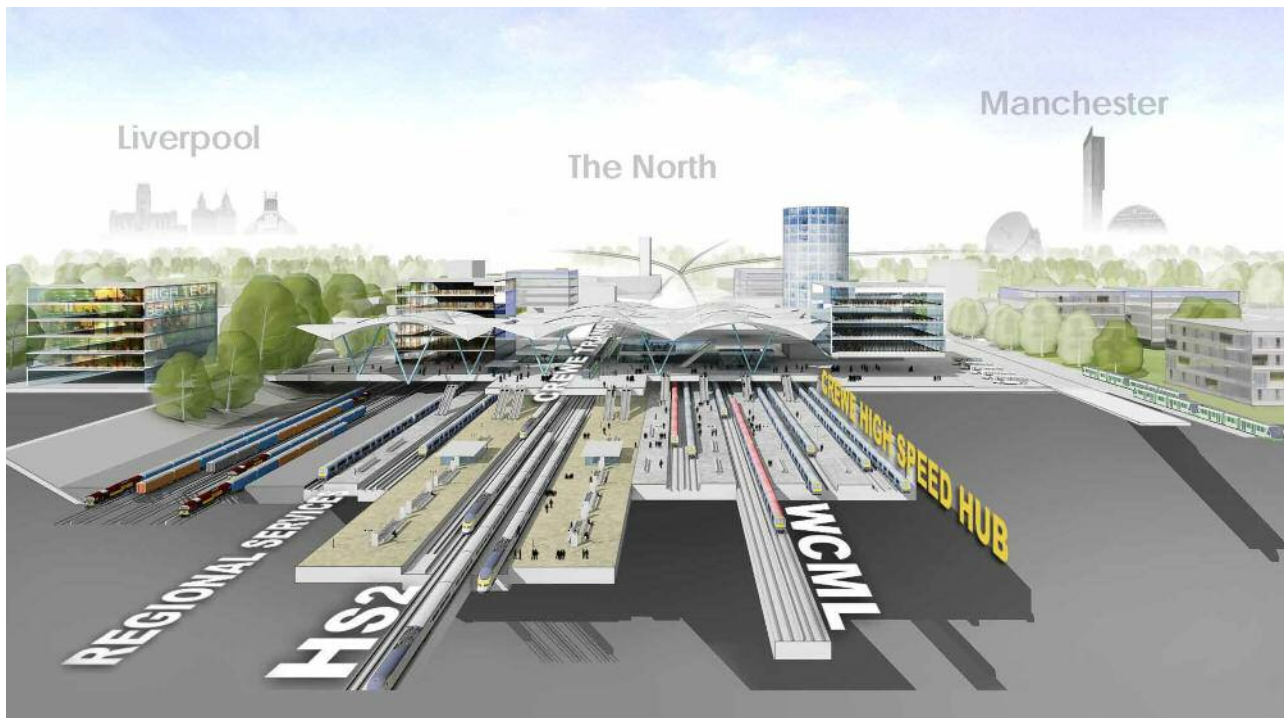
Cheshire Fire Authority has always maintained a detailed understanding of the local, sub-regional, national and international factors that could have an impact on how it can deliver its services in the future. It does this by producing an annual comprehensive and forward-looking analysis of the most important political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal issues likely to have an impact on the Authority.

In addition, the Service also carries out a detailed analysis of past incidents and activity levels to identify trends and issues. This helps to influence the development of the organisation's future emergency response service and to make sure that existing proposals remain fit for purpose.

The overall analysis is set out in the PESTELO document – (Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Environment, Legal and Organisational review) - available on the Authority's website - www.cheshirefire.gov.uk.

As well as the Service's own extensive equality monitoring data, the document also draws upon population and demographic information taken from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the most recent Census, as well as a range of data and information sources obtained from partners, to ensure the most comprehensive assessment of Cheshire and its diverse communities is compiled and considered.





New developments, housing and risk

In the aftermath of the EU Referendum, the focus on trade, economic development and growth will become an even greater priority for the Government.

There has already been a renewed focus on industry, investment in large-scale infrastructure projects and significantly increased house building. The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and local councils are responsible for working with the Government to implement these major projects locally.

The LEP's current strategy includes targeted development and regeneration in Crewe, Warrington and Chester and supporting major projects such as the High Speed 2 rail hub in Crewe, the second Mersey Crossing in Halton, the Omega development in Warrington and developments in Chester, Alderley Park and at Daresbury. There is also a major redevelopment planned for Manchester Airport, on Cheshire's north-eastern border.

Existing plans will see the sub-regional economy double in size by 2040, and deliver 131,000 new jobs and 92,000 new homes. This is more than previous unitary authority plans for over 70,000 new residential dwellings. Updated 2011 Census projections from the ONS placed Cheshire's population at mid 2014 at 1,039,171, with 218,077 (21%) aged 65 or over.

With an increase in the number of people, dwellings and development sites there is often an expectation that dwelling fires and other incidents will also increase. However, analysis



has shown that although the number of dwellings has steadily grown since 2001, dwelling fires have continued to reduce overall in England.

New homes tend to have the lowest rate of fires (0.7 per 1,000 per year) with more fires occurring in areas of high density social housing (3.3 per 1,000 per year). At the same time safety regulations around new commercial premises have also been strengthened. So even in areas of extensive new development, it is unlikely that large-scale housing and industrial sites will alter the overall risk profile of an area.

Despite the limited potential increase in house fires as a result of new housing developments across Cheshire, the Authority will continue to review the potential impact on its emergency response services in the future.

Aligning risk and resources

The Community Risk Management (CRM) model is the Service’s way of monitoring risk levels so that it can target its resources effectively in the most appropriate areas. The CRM ensures that data and information is used



Vintage Value are likely to be living by themselves
The majority are living in council flats and or small homes

Vintage Value are on low incomes, so are trying to save money whilst shopping

Vintage Value are unlikely to invest in digital technology and they rarely spend long durations surfing the internet

80% are over the age of 66

to support the delivery of fire prevention, community protection and emergency response activity.

The strategic cycle, delivered annually through the Authority’s IRMP, prioritises key issues identified through a variety of internal and external intelligence sources including:

- specialist computer modelling software
- Geographic Information Systems
- demographic data
- historical fire and rescue incident information and trends.

The CRM model involves the monitoring of intelligence and performance at least quarterly. This ensures that the Service’s activity is delivered according to local risk issues and ensures community safety initiatives can be targeted effectively.

This use of intelligence informs a range of different activities such as youth engagement, arson reduction and road safety initiatives - helping staff to understand who, where and when to target for the best results.

The risk analysis processes and methodologies are also reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain fit for purpose and reflect good practice. The CRM model ensures that areas with the longest response times are prioritised for prevention and protection activity.

Targeting our Community Safety work

Individuals and households engaged through the Authority’s Safe and Well programme are targeted using a methodology that enriches our existing data on vulnerable people, received from the NHS and local authorities, by including;

- Personal risk - based on age and sex
- Lone persons risk
- Social, economic and location factors



- Equality monitoring information
- Operational response times.

Research shows that fire-risk increases with age and the methodology uses weightings to ensure that these factors are balanced. The Authority also receives high-risk referrals including about oxygen users, domestic abuse victims and social care clients.

In order to prioritise Safe and Well visits to those at most risk of fire, the organisation aims to visit the 10,000 highest risk households.

People within this "Platinum" risk category are more likely to be older, living alone in demographic areas that are known to have more fires. They are also more likely to have longer emergency response times which ensures the Service can prioritise prevention in rural areas. The Gold category comprises the next 20,000 highest risk households who will be offered a visit. A target of 65% completion is set for both Platinum and Gold visits.

This approach is supported and underpinned by the use of extensive equality monitoring coupled with lifestyle information and mapping of diverse communities. This approach ensures campaigns have the best chance of reaching those most likely to be affected and to drive and tailor engagement and prevention work, for example working with the police to support those at risk from hate crime.

Enforcing Fire Safety

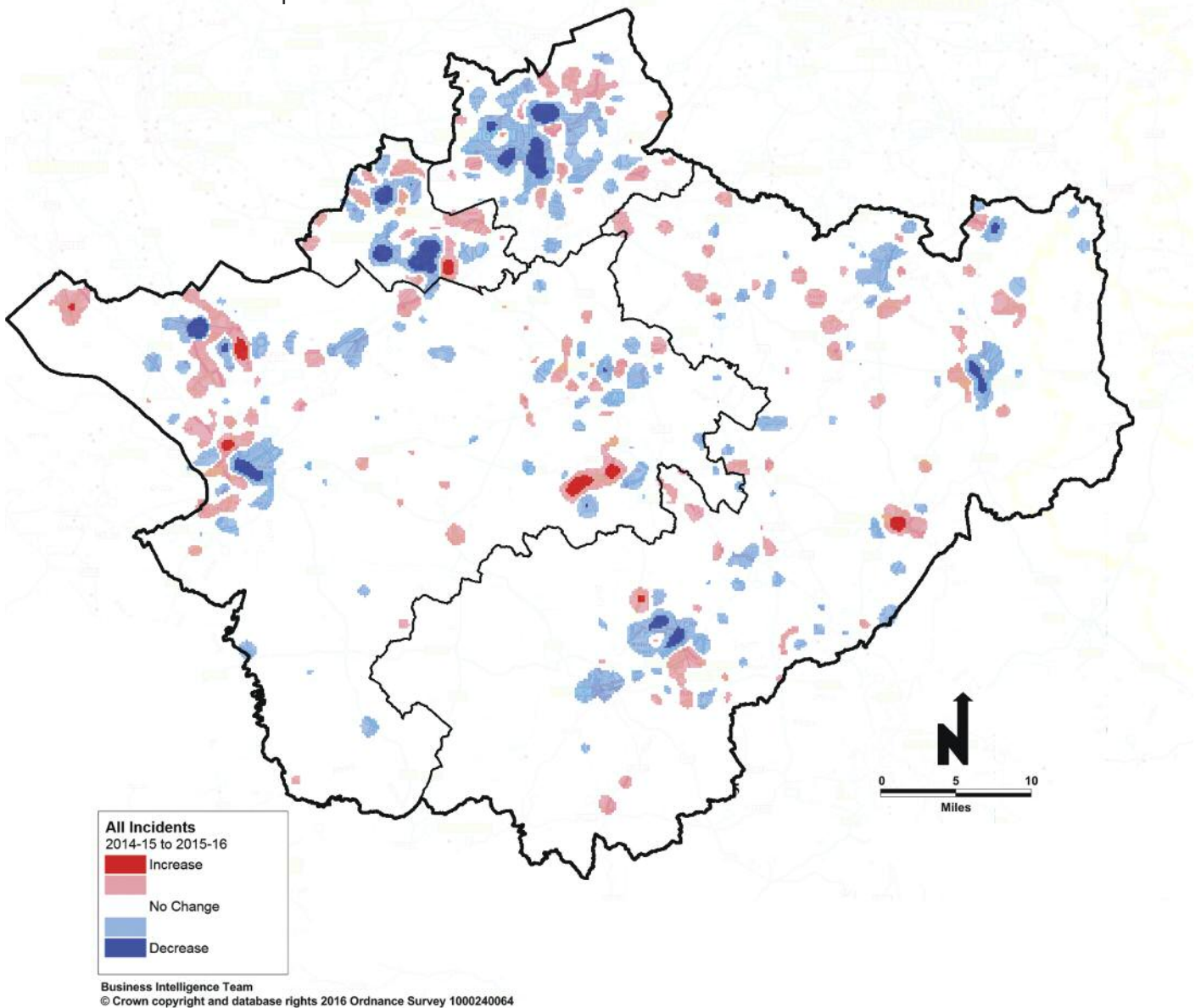
The Authority uses the same risk-based and intelligence-led approach to the regulation of businesses and other non-domestic premises. This is achieved through engagement, routine enforcement, fire investigation and arson prevention work.

The organisation works closely with key partners and groups to address specific safety concerns and to protect communities and businesses from fire. These include Black, Asian

and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community groups, Housing Associations, HM Prison Service, Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, the Health and Safety Executive, UK Border Agency, Care Quality Commission and others.

The Authority's focus is on helping businesses to fulfil their fire safety responsibilities. It has a dedicated Business Safety team which proactively supports businesses with advice to help make their premises safe from fire and arson. This balanced approach between education and enforcement has been cited as best practice by a Department for Business, Innovations & Skills report.

Where businesses fail to take their fire safety responsibilities seriously the Authority will take formal action. Sanctions can include an enforcement notice requiring certain improvements to be made or a prohibition notice restricting the use of all or part of the premises until improvements are made. The Fire Authority may prosecute for breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Several prosecutions have already resulted in fines running into many thousands of pounds.



Hotspot map - one of the tools used to monitor trends

Response and resilience

The current National Framework requires each fire and rescue authority to identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks, including those which may cross local borders or escalate into national emergencies.

To achieve this, the Fire Authority has a number of collaborative arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other national agencies in place and coordinates its approach with other emergency responders through the Cheshire Resilience Forum – the local body set up to coordinate the plans and activities of emergency responders. The Authority also works nationally to develop and embed national operational guidance, working under the principles of the joint emergency service inoperability programme (JESIP).

These arrangements enable the organisation to operate seamlessly with others, as demonstrated during major incidents, including water and motorway emergencies along the border with Merseyside and Greater Manchester and the major explosion, fire and rescue operation at the wood flour mill in Bosley in 2015.

The Framework also requires the Authority to produce an annual statement of assurance to formally demonstrate how it is meeting its statutory responsibilities. This is published on the website – www.cheshirefire.gov.uk







Projects and proposals



This section of the Plan highlights work the Authority is doing in response to the challenges it faces. To simplify the organisation's response the draft projects and proposals are set out under the following three headings:

- Developing the organisation
- Protecting local communities
- Responding to emergencies.

Developing the organisation

The organisation continues to face significant financial pressures. However, the Government recently confirmed that the Authority will receive a four year funding settlement, which provides more certainty about the extent of the savings required.

This settlement was dependent on the production of an efficiency plan, setting out how the Authority would meet the savings target. The latest version of the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan can be found in the financial update section and shows an estimated £3.9 million savings requirement.

Overall, savings and efficiencies will be secured in the following ways:

- implementing savings from the emergency response review
- undertaking reviews of all remaining areas of the organisation.

The Fire Service Reform Programme

In January 2016, responsibility for the fire and rescue service within Government transferred from the Department for Communities and Local Government to the Home Office.

In line with the commitments made in the 2015 Conservative Party General Election manifesto, this move has translated into a clear

drive for fire service reform under the following key headings:

- Efficiency and collaboration
- Accountability and transparency
- Workforce reform and diversity

Much of the detail is still to be set out in the guidance supporting the Policing and Crime Act, which has recently received Royal Assent. However, the Authority is already drawing up proposals to further improve and enhance its performance across each of these three areas.

Efficiency and collaboration

A central part of the Government's reform programme is to make the fire and rescue sector more efficient and commercially mature. Therefore, in 2017-18 the Authority will be supporting national moves to improve procurement activities across fire and rescue services through the development of a national procurement unit and the testing and purchase of firefighting equipment and kit through a research and development hub.

Over the past four years the Authority has made efficiencies across all aspects of the organisation, including an initial fundamental review of emergency response services as well as a comprehensive programme of reviews of support services.

A second emergency response review has now been completed and consulted upon and the outcomes are set out in this plan. While the Authority's Blue Light Collaboration (BLC)





programme with Cheshire Constabulary is not purely about making savings, the proposals to establish joint back-office teams and using the same systems will produce efficiencies and ensure more resilient services for supporting frontline staff.

The Policing and Crime Act will also introduce a Duty to Collaborate, which is something the Authority has always striven to do. In addition to its major Blue Light Collaboration programme, the Authority also works extensively with the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) both in responding to properties to undertake a forced entry and in the delivery of a pilot project to mobilise firefighters to respond to cardiac arrests, which it is hoped can be rolled out across the county.

The Authority will also continue to employ staff as part of multi-agency teams working within local councils under the Complex Dependencies Programme which streamlines support for those needing help from a variety of local agencies.



The Authority will continue to build on these solid examples of collaboration to ensure that vulnerable members of the community continue to receive the most efficient and effective local services.

Accountability and transparency

The Authority actively looks for opportunities to challenge and compare its performance with others and was among the first in the country to successfully go through the national Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge review following its launch in 2012.

The organisation has similarly indicated its commitment to support a new national fire service inspection regime, being drawn up by the Home Office and fire sector, as part of the reform programme. Other moves to ensure external assessment involve it entering the annual Stonewall Workplace Equality Index where it is currently ranked eighth and is the best performing emergency service in the country.

In addition, it will also seek reaccreditation for its 'Excellent' rating under the successor to the national Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework process that will emerge as part of the new inspection regime.

The Authority is keen to encourage scrutiny of its performance by the communities it serves. It does this by publishing details of its current and past performance on its website. During 2017-18 the authority intends to provide more current performance information through a newly launched website, which will make important information, including about incidents and decision-making, easier to find and interrogate.

The Government is also keen to reform the way fire and rescue services are governed and to improve accountability and the Policing and Crime Bill provides a mechanism for Policing and Crime Commissioners (PCC) to take over the running of fire and rescue services, where a local case is made.

In Cheshire, the Fire Authority and PCC already work closely together and have collaborated successfully in a number of areas. In 2017-18

the Fire Authority intends to formally invite the PCC to sit on the Fire Authority, to enable greater collaboration and joint working.

The Government's push for the devolution of key powers and budgets to local areas also has the potential to impact fire and rescue services. Recent devolution deals, such as in Greater Manchester, will see the devolution of powers over health, skills, transport, regeneration, policing and fire and rescue to an elected Metro Mayor.

Similarly, the announcement of the Liverpool City Deal, settled the question of the status of Halton Borough Council, which although part of the Liverpool area will continue to receive policing and fire and rescue services from Cheshire.

In Cheshire, a proposed devolution deal covering Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington is now being progressed and the Fire Authority will participate in discussions with these local authorities to establish a shadow combined authority prior to a final deal being agreed and powers being devolved.

Workforce reform and diversity

The Government's focus on workforce reform has raised questions about the culture of the

fire and rescue service workforce and the scale of engagement with staff and minority communities.

The independent review into fire service culture and terms and conditions undertaken by Adrian Thomas in 2015 and published in November 2016, sets out a number of recommendations that will be used by Ministers as a blueprint for reform.

The Authority is proud of its track record and approach to understanding and engaging with all of Cheshire's communities and the extent to which it works proactively to ensure its staff and volunteers feel supported in the workplace. However, it recognises that improvements can always be made and in 2017-18 will continue to prioritise equality, inclusion and wellbeing through the publication of a new over-arching strategy and action plan to ensure continued progress.

The Authority is committed to listening to and responding to its staff and has carried out regular independent surveys of staff satisfaction for nearly a decade. The results of these are always published and made available to staff, along with detailed action plans developed to address specific issues and concerns. Progress is then reported to and monitored by Members of the Fire Authority.



The staff satisfaction survey undertaken in 2015 was completed by 69% of staff – the highest figure ever recorded and the overall employee engagement ‘score’ was 74% - slightly above the average for similar organisations. The organisation is currently implementing the resultant action plan and during 2017-18 will undertake a new staff survey.

Attracting the best people and reaching out to diverse communities will also continue to be a priority in 2017-18. The first recruitment of Wholtime firefighters in nearly seven years took place in 2016. This was supported by a range of positive action events aimed at maximising interest and applications from females, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and minority communities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals, who have been traditionally under-represented.

In addition, the Service has launched a new two year firefighter apprentice scheme, which involved a successful positive action campaign to attract the best candidates. A new cohort of apprentices will be recruited in 2017-18, as well as recruitment to the High Potential Development Scheme aimed at undergraduates and further On-call and Wholtime recruitment.

The learning from these exercises will help in the development of an attraction and retention policy, as well as a more structured approach for undertaking positive action initiatives. Robust equality monitoring, both internally and externally, will also continue to be expanded and refined to ensure the Authority maintains the best possible understanding of those in receipt of its services and affected by its activities.

To better support managers and ensure they have the necessary leadership skills and



qualities to manage a more flexible workforce in the future, the Authority continues to roll-out a bespoke development programme for watch managers. In addition, a 360 degree appraisal programme has been started for all managers.

The Authority also works pro-actively with staff and its occupational health contractors on absence management and wellbeing which has been a key factor in taking staff sickness levels to record lows. It will also continue to promote and embed the Mind Blue Light initiative, which seeks to raise awareness of the impact of mental health issues and wellbeing within the emergency services.

Blue Light Collaboration

Over the past two years the Fire Authority has been working on a blue light collaboration programme with Cheshire Constabulary to bring together each organisation’s support services into single teams and establish a new joint headquarters at the police’s current site at Clemonds Hey in Winsford.

Under the original plans the Fire Authority was also going to move its operational training facilities to Clemonds Hey and sell off the whole of its current headquarters site.



However, a detailed review has shown that retaining the existing site and updating the training facilities would be more cost effective overall.

A timetable for the establishment of the new joint support teams has been agreed and a number of staff have already relocated to Clemonds Hey, with the remainder due to move by April 2018.

All staff in the new joint corporate services will be employed by Cheshire Constabulary and processes have been agreed to ensure recruitment and selection is done on a consistent, transparent and fair basis.

The Authority is clear, however, that there is no intention of a complete merger. Each organisation will keep its own identity, frontline emergency response services and governance arrangements, although the Police and Crime Commissioner will be formally invited to take a seat on the Authority.

The environment

The Authority continuously works to improve its environmental impact and performance, looking at innovative ways to minimise its energy and resource use. The organisation is still striving to meet the target of a 40% overall reduction in Carbon emissions by 2020. The addition of the four new fire stations has not affected the downward trend in emissions.

The Authority's estate is now linked to smart meters, which enables energy use to be examined in greater detail. The Authority is also now benefiting from a number of recently completed projects, including:



- The successful piloting of electric vehicles, now adopted across all stations
- Solar panels creating savings and income from our four installations
- Installation of a biomass heating system at Winsford Headquarters
- Replacement of inefficient oil-fired heating system at Winsford Fire Station

The challenge to reduce consumption is still a key focus for the Authority and current projects, such as installing LED lighting at Birchwood and Macclesfield Fire Stations as well as the Vehicle Workshops in Winsford, as part of a wider upgrade, will realise significant savings. There is also a commitment to move to a recycling target of 85% across all locations and 100% landfill diversion in 2017-18.

Protecting local communities

The Authority has always recognised that the best way of achieving its vision of a safer Cheshire is through a clear commitment and investment in prevention. That strong focus has helped to deliver major improvements in fire safety across Cheshire in recent years as well as supporting the reduction in the number of emergencies the organisation has to attend. Over the last five years (2011-12 to 2015-16), the total number of incidents attended by the Service has reduced by 15% – down to 7,718. Other key improvements over the same period include:

- The number of injuries in Accidental Dwelling Fires down 26% to just 29
- Accidental Dwelling Fires reduced by 11% to 395
- The number of fires in businesses and commercial premises down by 34% to 159
- Deliberate Fires reduced by 42% to 1,264.

There were six fire deaths (a measure defined by the Home Office) in 2015-16, with three of those as a result of the tragic explosion at Bosley Wood Flour Mill (the body of a fourth victim was sadly never recovered) and two in



accidental dwelling fires. The numbers of fire deaths have been consistently low in recent years, meaning that even slight changes often result in large percentage increases or decreases. Despite the Authority's best efforts, most deaths are difficult to prevent

Safe and Well visits

In 2017-18 the Service will continue to deliver its programme of Safe and Well assessments, following their launch in February. These visits represent a significant expansion of a firefighter's traditional role and involve fully trained staff visiting homes to give out vital safety advice, fitting free smoke and carrying out additional health checks on behalf of partners.

A minimum of 40,000 targeted visits are delivered by the organisation each year, using data about vulnerable households, shared with the Authority by the NHS. These visits are only delivered to residents aged over 65 and those who are deemed to be at heightened risk and are referred by partner agencies, rather than being a universal offer.

While traditional fire safety information is still included in the visit, there is also additional advice on slips, trips and falls prevention, bowel cancer screening, as well as offering support to those who wish to stop smoking or reduce their alcohol consumption.

Over the next year the visits will be extended further to provide extra help to people who have just been discharged from hospital after a fall and to address hypertension and blood pressure concerns.

Although these visits are targeted at those who are most at risk, anyone wanting fire safety advice can complete the new on-line Home Safety Assessment and generate their own personal safety plan. The Authority has also produced its own free 'Risk Rater' app. This is available for download from both Google Play and the AppStore.



Campaigns and youth engagement

While legislation can make a big difference by requiring people and businesses to take more safety precautions, changing people's behaviour and attitudes towards fire risk takes even more time and commitment. The continuing development of the Safe and Well programme and the many safety and awareness campaigns run each year have been a major factor in the continued improvements to the safety of local residents in recent years.

Over the past year the Authority has also engaged directly with thousands of people across Cheshire in a bid to keep people safe in their home and on the road. This has included school visits, community events and at fire station open days.

The Fire Authority values and remains committed to its comprehensive programme of youth engagement, which covers pupils in Years 5 and 6 right through to the Prince's Trust programme for older teenagers and young adults. The Authority has been working with the Prince's Trust for more than 20 years, with its 12-week programmes helping to turn round the lives of thousands of local young people.

Virtually all of the Service's fire stations have an active Fire Cadet unit, including at the new fire station at Alsager and shortly at the new station in Penketh. These units enable stations to build strong links with young people in their local area.

In November 2015 some of these cadets travelled to Nepal to build a school in the



Safety Central!

CHESHIRE'S INTERACTIVE LIFESKILLS CENTRE



Himalayas as part of a life-changing adventure, having raised over £65,000. In 2017 a new team of cadets will travel to Nepal to help finish a new school in another remote community, having raised the money they need for supplies and travel.

Safety Central

The Authority's flagship community safety facility, Safety Central – Cheshire's new interactive life skills education centre is scheduled to open its doors in September 2017. The innovative building is integrated with the new fire station planned for Lymm, near the M6 / M56 interchange.

The Centre will feature interactive scenarios designed to raise awareness of a wide range of risks and, although young people are the main audience, priority will also be given to older people and those who provide care to vulnerable people.

A number of major private sector companies and the Authority's public sector partners have already committed to support the creation and delivery of some of the Centre's key scenarios.

Sprinklers

The Authority recognises the lifesaving attributes of sprinkler systems. Over recent



years there have been a number of notable fires at schools, which can have a devastating impact on pupils and the local community. The Service acknowledges the importance of protecting such establishments and will continue to promote the need for sprinklers to be provided in all new schools buildings.

Partnerships

The Authority recognises that many of the underlying issues which increase the risk of fire and other emergencies within the community, lie in areas outside of its immediate influence.

Over the last few years, the Authority and its partners have developed various initiatives to identify and address these risks and the Authority has recently developed a new Partnership Toolkit to knit this work together.

The Authority is already a key player on a number of the local boards which bring all of the local public, private and voluntary sector bodies together and works to ensure it is recognised as a key local partner on projects and programmes designed to improve public safety and enhance wellbeing.

This includes working closely with health bodies in the development and roll out of Safe and Well visits and working with agencies and

charities such as the Alzheimer's Society to support older people living in their own homes.

The Authority also continues to support the implementation of the £5 million Government-funded Complex Dependencies Programme to integrate front-line services across the sub region of Cheshire and Warrington.

The Programme aims to tackle the causes of crisis for children, families and individuals across a range of related complex issues, which in 2017-18 will focus on mental health and domestic abuse. The Authority provides for dedicated fire service staff to work in each of the local authority areas on the programme in order to improve the lives of an estimated 10,000 individuals across the sub region.

Primary Authority Scheme

The national Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) allows businesses operating from different sites across the country to partner with a single local fire authority to ensure there is consistency in fire safety auditing and enforcement practices.

Cheshire is currently partnered with Hyde's Brewery, and is exploring options to partner with others, including Certas energy.



Responding to false alarms

Automatic fire alarm systems are a common feature in many businesses. Such systems are recognised as an important tool for detecting and alerting a building's occupants to a fire in its early stages and the need to evacuate.

Unfortunately, false alarms from these systems can be a common occurrence and often result in fire crews responding unnecessarily, resulting in them being unable to deal with real emergencies or putting the lives of other road users at risk by fire appliances travelling at speed.

As result of previous changes to the Authority's attendance policy the number of false alarms generated from such systems have reduced by about half over the last 5 years. Despite this the numbers of calls the Service needlessly attends is still significant; in 2015-16 it attended 1,048 false alarms.

To help continue with this reduction the Authority has agreed to make further changes to its attendance policy, including extending call challenge and requiring a confirmation 999 call before mobilising to an incident. The impact of the change in policy will continue to be monitored.

Responding to emergencies

During 2015-16 the Service undertook a second major review of all of its fire stations, vehicles and operational personnel.

This review built upon the findings of the first Emergency Response Programme, which the Authority has been implementing over four years, since 2013-14 and has involved the building of four new fire stations at Alsager, Lymm, Penketh and Powey Lane, at the end of the M56, near Mollington.

This second review has involved a wide-ranging look at all aspects of the Service's frontline emergency response resources and covers the period from 2017 to 2020. Key elements of this Review included:



- Assessing the impact and outcomes of previous decisions
- Options for configuring frontline resources
- Evaluating the effectiveness of duty systems in lower risk areas
- Reviewing station management arrangements and flexible duty systems
- Assessing improvements in fire fighting technology and procedures
- Examining the implications for fire crews and frontline resources of the Service's broader community safety work with health and other partners.

In doing so the following principles have been applied:

- **Risks** – ensuring the Service is best equipped to address changing risks and trends such as flood and water rescue incidents
- **Response** – examining all proposals to make sure they maintain or enhance the Service's ability to meet its 10 minute response standard on 80% of occasions
- **Resilience** – ensuring options are flexible enough to provide sufficient fire engines and staff to cope with major or multiple incidents
- **Responsibility** – providing a management structure which devolves responsibility

down to the appropriate level and is flexible enough to provide sufficient cover 24/7

- **Rewarding** – maximising the opportunities to provide firefighters with broader and more rewarding roles in both emergency response and prevention.

In developing the following plans, careful consideration was given to comprehensive incident data, as well as the extensive feedback received during the public consultation undertaken between October 2016 and January 2017. This was considered in addition to the feedback from previous annual consultations as well as the major consultation exercise undertaken in 2012, when the plans were originally signed off. Details of these previous consultations can be found on the Authority's website.

Birchwood, Macclesfield and Wilmslow

Plans to make changes to the nucleus crewing systems at Birchwood and Macclesfield will continue to be implemented, as set out in the

draft Plan. Under these proposals, the service provided to the public will not change, but the plans will involve changes to the shift system and numbers of personnel.

In light of feedback received during the consultation period, the Authority will undertake a further review of the suitability and sustainability of the current duty system at Wilmslow Fire Station.

Penketh

The draft IRMP included proposals to review the crewing system in place at the new community fire station at Penketh. This station was constructed as part of the Authority's first Emergency Response Programme and currently houses one Wholetime and one On-call fire engine. The new station went 'live' on 11 January 2017.

The draft IRMP 14 proposed to consider introducing a nucleus duty system at Penketh Community Fire Station, similar to one that operates at Birchwood, Macclesfield and Wilmslow. This station was constructed as part of the Authority's first Emergency Response Programme and opened on 11 January 2017. However, following feedback it is considered appropriate to review this proposal again in 2018/19. Any future proposal for Penketh will be subject to further public consultation.





Hydraulic Platform

During 2016-1 the Service replaced two of its three Hydraulic Platforms which allow crews to work at height. As part of the Emergency Response Review Phase Two it was proposed to move from having three of these vehicles to two, with one appliance based at Chester and the other at the new fire station at Lymm.

It is now proposed that the third vehicle will be maintained at Macclesfield until the Service can assess the impact of the move of the Hydraulic Platform from Stockton Heath to the new fire station at Lymm. These proposals will be reviewed again in 2018/19. Any resulting recommendations will be subject to further consultation.

Crewe and Ellesmere Port

In 2013 the Fire Authority approved the first Emergency Response Programme, which set out a series of proposals to be implemented over a number of years. This included a proposal to change the duty system of the

second fire engines at Crewe and Ellesmere Port, from Wholetime to on-call. The draft IRMP for 2017-18 included plans to introduce an additional fire engine during the day, at both stations to support the transition to the on-call crewing arrangements for these second fire engines.

The Fire Authority will still work towards implementing these on-call crewing arrangements, but will continue to monitor the levels of operational activity, on-call availability and progress around the recruitment of on-call firefighters, with a commitment to review the proposal if it is not deemed to be achievable or sustainable.

Training facilities and stations

As well as vehicles and shift systems, the Authority has also recently completed a review of all of its property, including fire stations and land. During 2017-18 the Authority will explore a number of proposals to develop and refurbish a number of its facilities.

By summer 2017 the Authority will have completed the building of four new fire stations at Alsager, Penketh and Powey Lane. The site at Lymm will also house the major Safety Central educational facility.

The Authority will also continue to pursue options to develop a new fire station at its existing site in Chester city centre, as well as refurbishing a number of its other sites and exploring options for providing greater public access to the Authority's heritage.

On the back of the Blue Light Collaboration, the Authority will also explore options to





extensively redevelop its operational training facilities in Winsford, including introducing state of the art virtual reality technology and lifelike facilities for firefighting and responding to road traffic collisions.

This facility will be funded using the Authority's reserves and will ensure that, as the number of real-life incidents continues to fall, access to world class training and realistic scenarios is maintained and firefighter safety remains a key priority.

Cardiac response scheme

The Service will also continue to explore options to roll out and expand a pilot scheme, currently in operation at four fire stations – Crewe, Frodsham, Holmes Chapel and Warrington that supports the North West Ambulance Service (NWS) by mobilising fire staff to cardiac incidents.

Under the scheme, when a person in those areas, dials 999 to report a suspected cardiac arrest both NWS and firefighters respond and whoever reaches the casualty first starts providing life-saving treatment.

It is hoped that the scheme will be extended to all stations by December 2017, subject to review and the agreement of staff.

Emergency services communications

In 2020 the contract for the Airwave system that is currently used by the emergency services to communicate during incidents comes to an end. Due to procurement laws it is not possible to extend this contract further.

A national Emergency Services Communications Network (ESN) programme has been launched, which will ultimately involve the procurement and implementation of new communications kit and software for all the blue light services..

For the fire and rescue service this project will be delivered on a region by region basis, with the North West, including Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside, being the first region to move to the new system. While Cheshire will play an active part, the project is currently reporting extensive delays and additional costs.

Projects and proposals 2017-18 - summary

Developing the organisation

- Respond to and support the Home Office's Fire Reform Programme, including piloting any new national inspection regime and supporting national research and procurement hubs
- Implement any actions arising in response to the new inspection regime for the successor to the fire and rescue equality framework
- As part of Blue Light Collaboration, complete the move to a joint headquarters site, including the co-location and transfer of affected staff
- Recruit a second cohort of firefighter and community safety apprentices and undertake further recruitment for On-call and Wholetime firefighters
- Continue to implement the actions arising from the 2015 staff satisfaction survey action plan and undertake a new survey in 2017



Protecting local communities

- Roll out the Authority's programme of 40,000 Safe and Well visits, delivered in partnership with health agencies and refine the targeting methodology to ensure those most at risk are prioritised
- Open and launch Safety Central, the Authority's flagship community safety facility at Lymm and continue to develop its community safety programmes
- Implement a new policy for responding to automatic and false alarms
- Work with partners and Government to ensure requirements for the installation of sprinklers in schools remain in place



Responding to emergencies

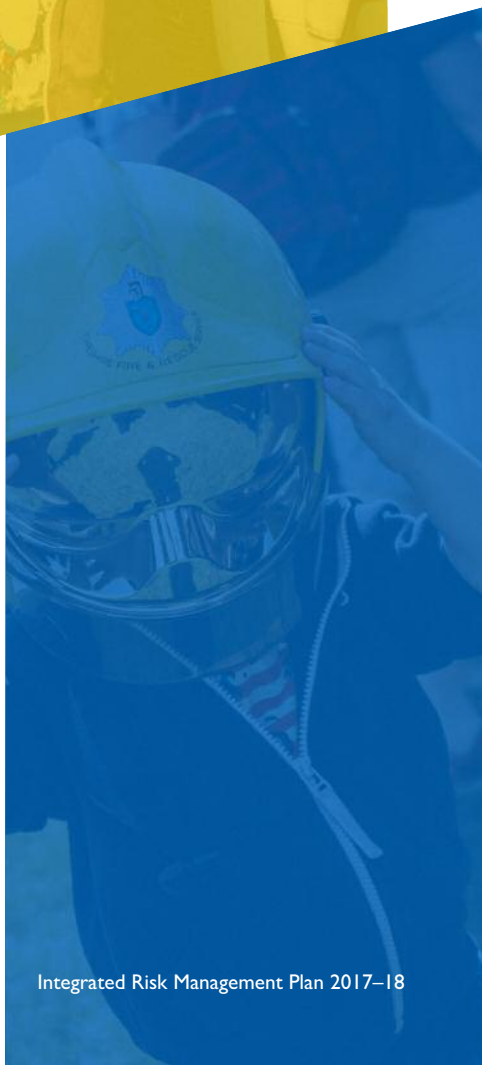
- Over the next four years, implement the outcomes of the second Emergency Response Review, including changes to duty systems and emergency and specialist vehicles
- Redevelop the operational training facilities at the Authority's training centre in Winsford and explore opportunities to develop Chester Fire Station
- Expand and roll out the programme of Cardiac Response pilots, undertaken with the North West Ambulance Service, across all fire stations
- Continue to support and participate in the regional and national programme to renew communications technology for the three emergency services





4

Consultation and engagement



Consultation and engagement

This document sets out the Authority's plans for 2017-18 and a number of other proposals – developed as part of the second emergency response programme, which will be implemented over the next four years. The plan also includes other measures setting out how the Authority aims to make savings and manage its budget in the future.

While the proposals in this plan are not as far reaching those set out as part of the first emergency response programme, approved in 2012, the Authority remains committed to ensuring that residents, businesses, partners and staff have had the opportunity to give their views and that those views have been fully considered, prior to this plan being signed off.

A comprehensive 13 week consultation and engagement programme was launched on 3 October 2016, following the launch of the draft Plan and ran until 3 January 2017.

In addition to face to face briefings and presentations for key stakeholders, the Authority also delivered 11 community consultation roadshows at venues, often supermarkets and shopping centres, across Cheshire, as well as a series of roadshows and briefings for staff. Extensive use was also made of the Service's website, intranet and social media channels.

Extensive feedback was received across all channels. In total, 632 members of the public, 137 members of staff and a range of stakeholders formally responded to the consultation. Members have received emerging feedback throughout the consultation process. However, a full feedback report was prepared and was considered by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 14 February 2017 when Members also set the organisation's budget for 2017-18.



The contact details for further information and to take part in future consultations are as follows:

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tel. 01606 868407

post: Consultation and
Engagement Officer
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Sadler Road,
Winsford,
Cheshire
CW7 2FQ

5

Financial update



Medium Term Financial Plan 2016–17 to 2020–21

| | 2016-17 £000 | 2017-18 £000 | 2018-19 £000 | 2019-20 £000 | 2020-21 £000 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Base Budget pre additions and savings | 42,382 | 42,093 | 40,725 | 40,719 | 41,245 |
| Additions: | | | | | |
| Revenue Growth | 293 | 900 | 500 | 1,000 | 300 |
| Inflation (pay 1.5% in 2016-17 and 17-18, then 1%; non pay 2%) | 677 | 659 | 511 | 522 | 543 |
| Section 31 grants Business Rates | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Contribution to PCSOs | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Other savings | (900) | (2,300) | (433) | (433) | (664) |
| IRMP/Capital reserve | (446) | (628) | (585) | (564) | (0) |
| Provision for non collection | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Revised Total Budget Requirement | 42,093 | 40,725 | 40,719 | 41,245 | 41,425 |
| Base Funding b\ fwd | | | | | |
| Council Tax | 24,513 | 25,541 | 26,314 | 27,111 | 27,931 |
| Settlement Funding Assessment | 17,436 | 16,098 | 14,411 | 13,609 | 13,314 |
| Total Base Funding | 41,949 | 41,639 | 40,725 | 40,719 | 41,245 |
| Add Increases\ (Decreases) in Funding: | | | | | |
| Increase in council tax (1.99%) | 498 | 513 | 528 | 544 | 561 |
| Increase / reduction in council taxbase | 530 | 260 | 268 | 276 | 285 |
| Surplus / (deficit) on collection fund: | | | | | |
| Council Tax | 457 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Business Rates | (152) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Additional business rates | 149 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Transition Grant | 63 | 16 | (79) | 0 | 0 |
| Settlement Funding Assessment | (1,401) | (1,703) | (723) | (295) | (666) |
| Total movement in funding | 144 | (914) | (5) | 526 | 180 |
| Total Available Funding | 42,093 | 40,725 | 40,719 | 41,245 | 41,425 |
| Total efficiencies required 2017-18 to 2020-21 | | | | | (3,830) |

The Authority produces a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which covers a five year period. The plan is subject to regular review to reflect issues at a local, regional and national level and makes informed assumptions about future pay, inflation, Government grants and Council Tax levels.

By April 2016 the Authority had achieved savings of £8.7 million in the previous five financial years to ensure it could balance its budget following changes and cuts in Government funding.

Most initial savings came from reductions in corporate budgets and support service departments. Efficiencies from the Authority's Emergency Response Programme are now making significant contributions. In addition, the value for money review of support areas has produced ongoing revenue savings of around £1.2 million.

In the Authority's financial settlement confirmed in February 2016, the Government included an estimate of the amount of funding available to the Authority from direct government grant and business rates over the next four years. This estimate has been used in the MTFP. Other assumptions include:

- a 1.99% annual increase in the Authority's Council Tax precept
- a 1.5% increase in staff costs for 2017-18 followed by annual rises of 1%
- a 2% allowance each year for non pay inflation.

The MTFP shows that the Authority will need to make around £4 million in savings in its revenue budget by 2020-21.

The Authority also has a capital spending programme for the purchase of buildings, fire engines and other specialist equipment. With the Government no longer providing annual capital grants, the Authority now pays for this spending by using its own reserves and bidding for one-off pots of central funding.

The Authority has been prudent and built up significant reserves. This has meant that the near £17.4 million capital cost of building the four new fire stations and integrated safety centre can be paid for without having to borrow money and pay back interest in the future from the Authority's day to day revenue budget.

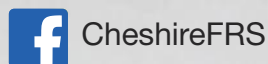


Off to bed?

You can sleep soundly knowing we're wide awake.



Test your smoke alarms once a month



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