



# Making Cheshire Safer

[www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk)



# Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017–18

## Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Our approach to risk	5
3.	Projects and proposals	13
4.	Consultation and engagement	25
5.	Financial update	27
6.	Performance management	31





# 1

# Introduction





Paul Hancock  
Chief Fire Officer  
and Chief Executive



Cllr. Bob Rudd  
Fire Authority Chair

Last year the Fire Authority approved a new five year strategy “Planning for a safer Cheshire” which outlined the unprecedented challenges facing almost every aspect of the organisation and set out the principles we would adopt in responding.

While the recent Brexit referendum result and subsequent change in political leadership of the country raise some further questions, we are now better placed to plan ahead with more certainty.

As a result, this draft plan sets out some 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 up to 2020 and beyond.

Achieving that will require the support, involvement and awareness of staff, partners and communities.

That’s why we would urge everyone to give their views on the organisation’s future plans and help the Authority realise its vision of “a Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires or other emergencies.”



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

So that it can continue to protect communities and maintain major improvements in public safety in the future, it has to identify key risks and challenges and ensure that it has the resources and plans to respond effectively.

Four years ago a comprehensive review of emergency response services was carried out and following a major consultation, the Authority approved a programme to:

- introduce a new blanket 10 minute response standard for life risks with a target of achieving it on 80% of occasions
- build new fire stations at Alsager, Penketh, Powey Lane and at Lymm – where there would also be an integrated safety centre
- maintain the same number of fire engines overall but change how the second fire engines at Runcorn, Crewe and Ellesmere Port were crewed
- move the second fire engine at Chester to Powey Lane and the second fire engines from Warrington and Widnes to Penketh
- introduce 12 hour shifts on the wholetime duty system and start riding four firefighters on all fire engines
- introduce a new day crewing agreement for Congleton, Northwich and Winsford
- establish a nucleus crewing arrangement at Macclesfield
- change the crewing and location of some of the specialist response vehicles
- set up on-call crews at Knutsford and Stockton Heath once the wholetime fire station at Lymm is operational.

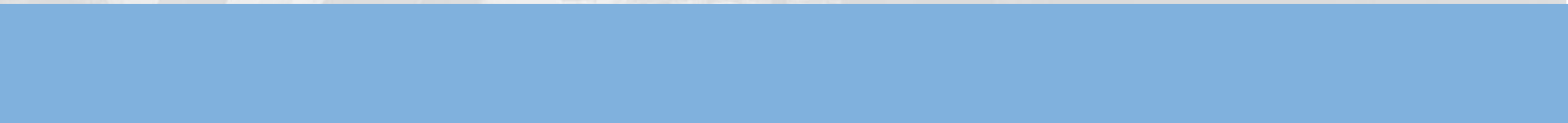
Once the new fire stations are open – currently scheduled before the end of March 2017 - all of the above elements of the programme will have been implemented, with the exception of changing the second fire engines at Crewe and Ellesmere Port to on-call. Implementing all of the above will have helped generate 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 kit and equipment 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 groundbreaking Safety Central project at Lymm.

Nevertheless, as the next section highlights, the Authority faces ongoing reductions in its central funding as well as challenges in how its services are provided, managed and scrutinised in the future.







# 2

## 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 setting out how it assesses local risks to life and uses its resources, including working closely with neighbouring areas, to protect communities. Known as Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs), these are still regarded as essential to effective local planning, even though there is no longer any prescriptive national guidance on what they should contain.

The Authority fulfils its statutory responsibilities through a high level five year strategy "Making Cheshire Safer" supported by annual IRMPs which reflect up-to-date risk information and outline how resources will be used to reduce the potential risks facing local 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](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk).

As well as the Service's own equality data, the document also draws upon population and demographic information taken from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the most recent 2011 Census, as well as a range of data and information obtained from partners, to ensure the most comprehensive picture of Cheshire and its diverse communities.



## National and local issues

The outcome of the recent referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union has created a degree of political and economic uncertainty.

Over the next few years, fire authorities, along with all local government bodies, will have to navigate the challenges and opportunities resulting from the UK's decision to leave the EU and the resulting exit negotiations.

Aside from immediate changes in political leadership, including a new Prime Minister, it is not clear at this stage how these issues will materialise or whether they will materially impact the sector. However, the Authority will continue to work within the agenda for fire and rescue services set by the Home Office, as well as an ongoing programme of financial austerity.

The Government's spending review, announced in July 2015, set out future funding allocations for all Government Departments and covered the four years 2016-2020. In order to receive this money, fire authorities, like other local authorities will be required to publish an efficiency plan setting out how they will meet the savings targets set over four years and continue to deliver key services. This plan will be published in autumn 2016.

The Department for Communities and Local Government - which oversaw the work of fire and rescue services, before responsibility passed to the Home Office – was not a protected Government Department and received cuts of around 27%. This places even more importance on Cheshire's ability to achieve efficiencies across the organisation. An updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) setting out the savings needed up to 2019-20 is included in section 5.

In June 2016, Theresa May, as Home Secretary, set out a comprehensive Fire Reform Programme, which detailed how the Conservative's manifesto commitments on fire reform would be delivered. This focussed on a number of key areas, which were



accountability, efficiency, standards, tools and workforce reform.

The focus on workforce and culture also raised major questions about the diversity of fire and rescue services and engagement with minority communities. It builds upon the independent review into culture and terms and conditions completed by Adrian Thomas in February 2015. While publication of the review's findings has not taken place they are likely to be used by Ministers as a blueprint for wider reform and to encourage greater workforce and operational flexibility, including delivering further savings.

The Government has also made it clear that it wants to see much greater police and fire collaboration, resilience and interoperability, as well as improved governance of the emergency services.



The Policing and Crime Bill, which continues to make its way through Parliament, includes a new legal duty for fire, the police and ambulance services to collaborate and enables Police and Crime Commissioners to take over the running of Fire Authorities where a local case is made.

Cheshire Fire Authority has been actively exploring options to collaborate with Cheshire Constabulary, to generate efficiencies and work better together. An update on the collaboration's progress is included in the next section, however, the Authority is clear that it does not see a need to change existing responsibilities and governance arrangements.

The Government's push for the devolution of key powers and budgets to local areas also has the potential to impact the fire and rescue service. This is demonstrated by devolution deals recently agreed, most notably in Greater Manchester, where the election of a Mayor in May 2017 will enable the devolution of powers over health, skills, transport, regeneration, policing and the fire and rescue service.

The announcement of the Liverpool Combined Authority, 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 still being considered.

The next few years will also continue to see a wider focus on the way all public services are

delivered, including those provided jointly by local and national agencies in the areas of health, wellbeing and social care.

This includes experts from different agencies sharing data, the use of new and digital technology and working together in joint teams to tackle vulnerable individuals and collective issues, such as anti-social behaviour, the effects of poor mental health and alcohol misuse.

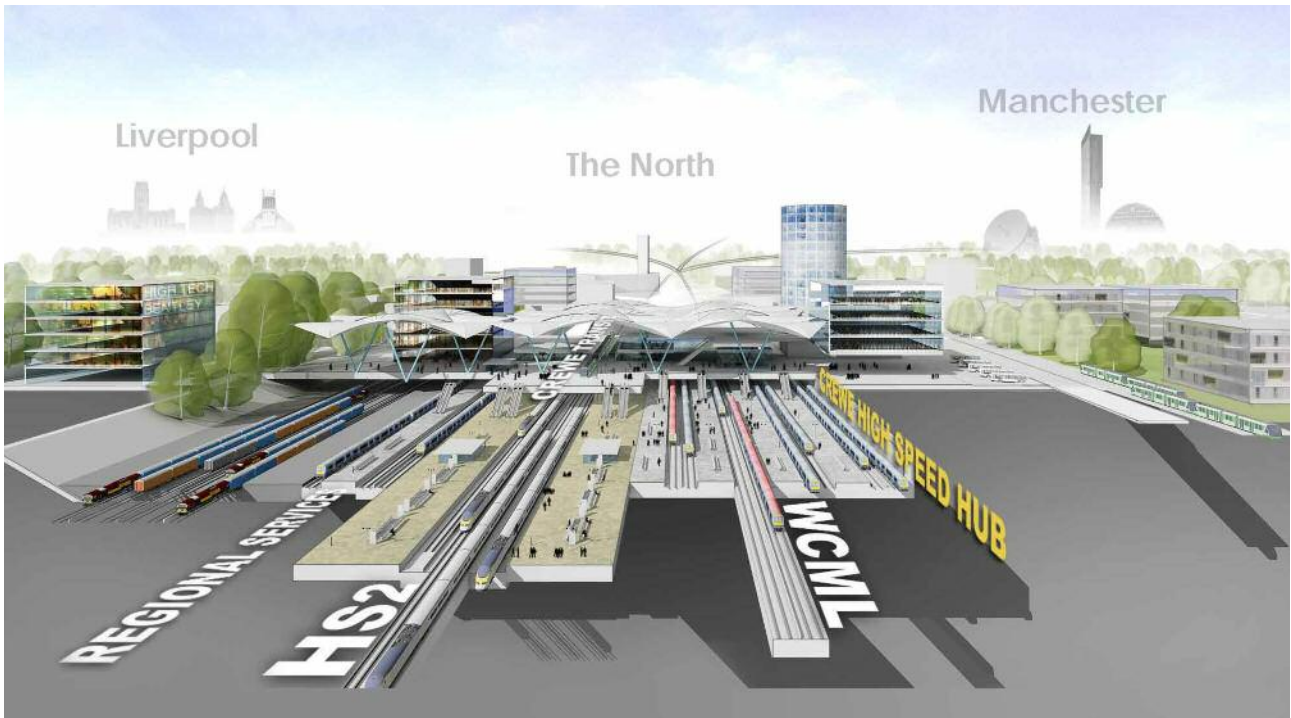
The fire and rescue service has a strong track record in prevention and demand reduction, which is why the Service has played a key role in a number of local pilots, including leading the Transforming Community Safety programme. It is also a key supporter of the £5m programme to tackle Complex Dependency and developing its programme of Safe and Well Assessments will support the work to build stronger links between health, public health and social care.

The Fire Authority intends to influence these national and local issues and participate in the debates to ensure any changes do not compromise the provision of an effective fire and rescue service for communities across Cheshire.

## New developments

It is likely that economic growth will remain a key priority for the Government, with a continued focus on large infrastructure projects and significantly increased house building. The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and local councils are responsible for implementing these major projects locally.





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

Plans under consideration would 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 might be 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 reduced in England.

New homes tend to have the lowest rate of fires (0.7 per 1,000 per year) with more fires occur in areas of high density social housing (3.3 per 1,000 per year).

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.



## Targeting those most at risk

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 data and information is used to support the delivery of the organisation's 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 Service was the first in the country to be given health data to help develop a picture of those most at risk which supports its targeting methodology.



**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

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 ignore this 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 also ensures that areas with the longest response times are prioritised for prevention and protection activity.

## Targeting our Community Safety work

This financial year the Fire Authority will launch its Safe and Well programme. This builds upon the successful Home Safety Assessment programme and offers a wider array of interventions than fire prevention including falls prevention, bowel cancer screening, alcohol reduction and smoking cessation. The Service has committed to undertaking a minimum of 40,000 targeted Safe and Well visits a year in the most vulnerable households.

This is based upon a fire-targeting methodology which centres on enriching our existing data on vulnerable people, with data that the NHS and local authorities share with the Authority, 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 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 Service 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 by April 2017. A target of 65% completion is set for both Platinum and Gold visits.

Lower risk households are targeted through other routes, such as local and national

campaigns as well as online approaches through the Authority's website. Kitchen fire safety has been identified as a key demand-reduction issue and demographic data is used to identify the types of people who experience the most cooking and kitchen fires.

This approach is supported and underpinned by the use of extensive equality monitoring coupled with life-style 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.

The Service's staff also identify emerging activity hotspots to make sure visits are made to all areas of demand across, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington.

## Enforcing Fire Safety work

The Authority uses the same risk-based and intelligence-led approach to the regulation of businesses, commercial and other non-domestic premises. This is achieved through a business safety team, routine enforcement, fire investigation and arson reduction.

The Service also works closely with key partners and groups to address specific safety concerns and to protect communities and businesses from fire. These include Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community groups, Housing Associations, HM Prison Service, the Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, the Health and Safety Executive, United Kingdom Border Agency, Care Quality Commission and others.

The Authority's focus is always on helping businesses to fulfil their fire safety responsibilities in the first instance. Its approach of having a dedicated business safety

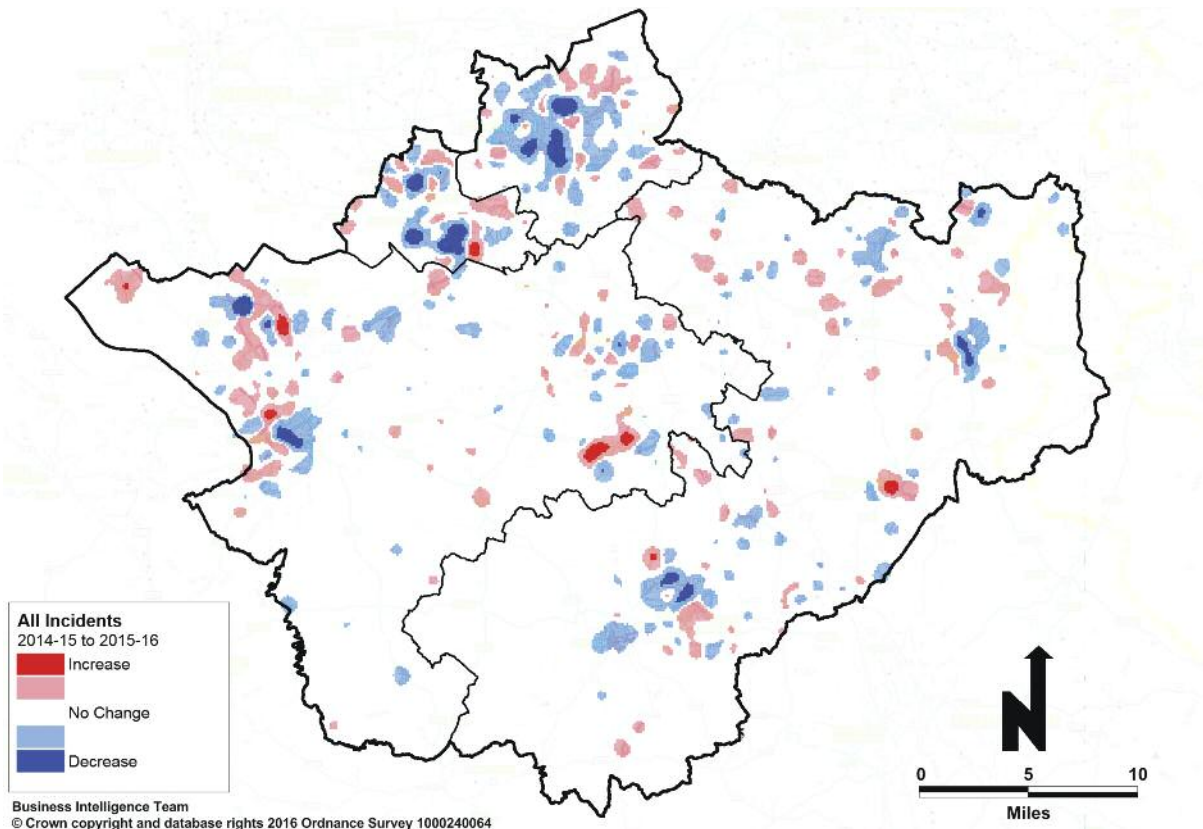
team which engages with local firms was cited as best practice in a recent Review of Enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 carried out by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

If firms fail to respond to issues or concerns which have been raised with them, then the Service will, as a last resort, commence court action. Several prosecutions have already resulted in fines running into many thousands of pounds.

## Response and resilience

The current National Framework requires each fire and rescue authority to identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its communities, 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



*Hotspot map - one of the tools used to monitor trends*



other national agencies in place and coordinates its approach with local emergency responders through the Cheshire Resilience Forum – the local body set up to coordinate the plans and activities of emergency responders.

These arrangements enable the Service 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, which occurred 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.

## 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 Hydes Brewery, and is exploring options to partner with others.

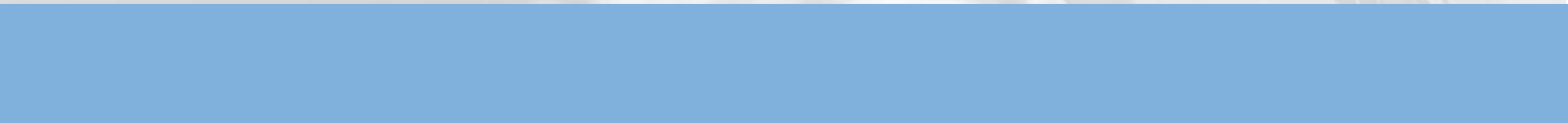
## North West Fire Control

The joint North West Fire Control in Warrington went live in May 2014, handling all 999 calls and mobilising crews and fire engines on behalf of the fire and rescue services in Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

Since then the Service has continued to work closely with the centre and colleagues in the other fire and rescue services to ensure the system is working effectively and best use is being made of the new technology.

Work continues to identify further opportunities for collaboration between the four services and to explore the potential for the centre to take on additional services.







# Projects and proposals



This section of the Plan highlights work the Authority is doing in response to some of the challenges previously highlighted, but more importantly it sets out some of its future plans for protecting the communities it serves.

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

Clearly financial pressure remains as one of the most significant issue the Authority has to address, however, there is now more certainty about the extent of savings needed over the next four years.

The Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) has been revised.

Savings and efficiencies will be secured in the following ways:

- implementing the outcomes from a comprehensive frontline emergency response review
- implementing the blue light collaboration programme with Cheshire Constabulary to bring together support services



- undertaking value for money (VFM) reviews of all remaining areas of the organisation.

A breakdown of how the Authority proposes to meet the estimated £3.8 million savings required up to 2021 is set out in the financial update section.

## Fire Service Reform

As previously highlighted, the transfer of the fire and rescue service from the Department of Communities and Local Government to the Home Office has seen a clear drive for fire service reform under the following key headings:

- Accountability
- Standards
- Efficiency
- Tools
- Workforce and culture

While much of the detail is still to be set out in forthcoming legislation, the Authority is already drawing up proposals to improve and enhance across each of these five areas.

## Accountability

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 Peer Review following its launch in 2012.

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

In addition, it is currently seeking reaccreditation under the National Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework after becoming one of the first fire authorities in the country to gain the 'Excellent' rating.

The Authority is keen to encourage scrutiny of its performance by the communities it serves. It does so by publishing details of its current and past performance on its website and by publishing a newspaper-style annual report which is distributed to all households in its area.



During 2017-18 the authority intends to provide more current performance information through its website.

Moves to provide live online access to the Authority’s meetings will also be explored as will opportunities to further increase information and data about the organisation on the Service’s website.

### Standards

The organisation’s six core values include commitments to promoting equality and diversity, putting customers first, and aiming for excellence. These ensure the Authority has a strong focus on setting standards against which it can be judged on both the management and delivery of its services.



The key public expectation of a fire and rescue service is concerned with frontline emergency response. Following extensive public consultation, the Authority introduced a new emergency response standard at the start of 2013-14 financial year.

This is a blanket 10 minute response standard to all life-risk incidents - house fires and road traffic collisions - on 80% of occasions. The standard is monitored and reported on quarterly and has been used as a key factor in agreeing the location of the Service’s four new fire stations.

The Service also uses standards and targets to drive the delivery of its fire prevention and protection services. It has a current target of carrying out 40,000 Safe and Well visits a year, with further targets around visiting the 10,000 highest risk households in the first six months of the year with a completion target of 65%.

Targets are also set for the number of audits of business premises carried out by fire protection staff with the Service aiming to exceed the current target of 1,600 in 2017-18.

The Service also carries out, quarterly user satisfaction surveys covering home safety visits, business audits and incidents, with satisfaction levels consistently above 95%.

### Efficiency

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

A second emergency response review has now been completed and a range of options are outlined in this plan. The outcomes from a second round of VFM reviews will be implemented in 2017-18 in all areas not included in the Blue Light Collaboration (BLC) programme with Cheshire Constabulary.

While the BLC programme is not purely about making savings, establishing joint corporate service teams site and using the same systems will clearly produce efficiencies and ensure

more resilient services to support frontline staff.

In 2017-18 the Authority will also be supporting national moves to improve procurement across the fire and rescue sector through the development of initiatives such as a national research and development hub.

Details of the Authority's overall approach to efficiency is set out in a formal statement which will be published on its website. This has also been submitted to the Home Office as part of a bid by the Authority to get confirmation of its funding arrangements for the next four years.



## Tools

The BLC programme means the Authority will benefit from the support of a joint IT department with greater resilience and flexibility. This will particularly help on the rollout of initiatives such as the national Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme aimed at improving communications across blue light services.

The Authority will also continue to employ staff as part of the joint teams working with the Complex Dependencies Programme which streamlines support for those needing help from multiple agencies.

## Workforce reform

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 Authority's staff satisfaction survey in 2015 was completed by 69% of staff – the highest

figure ever recorded. The overall employee engagement 'score' for employee engagement was 74% - slightly above the average for similar organisations. The organisation is currently completing the resultant action plan and in 2017-18 will identify options for further staff surveys following implementation of the BLC programme.

The first recruitment of full-time firefighters in nearly seven years began in September 2016. This was supported by a range of positive action events aimed at improving diversity and maximising interest and applications from females and minority communities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, who have been traditionally under-represented.

In addition, the Service has launched a new two year firefighter apprentice scheme with up to 12 places available. Those who successfully complete the course will be offered the opportunity to take on a full-time role. A new cohort will be recruited in 2017-18.

To support managers and ensure they have the necessary leadership skills and qualities to manage a more flexible workforce in the future, the Service is rolling out a bespoke development programme for watch managers. In addition, a 360 degree appraisal programme has been started for managers across the Service.

The Service also works pro-actively with staff and its Occupational Health contractors on absence management and this has been a key factor in staff sickness levels reaching record lows. In 2015-16 there was an average of just 3.46 days or shifts lost per person. This is the lowest figure ever recorded and only one other fire authority is known to have recorded a lower figure.

## Diversity and inclusion

The Authority is proud of its track record and approach to understand and engage 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.

Having been externally assessed under the Fire and Rescue Equality Framework, the Authority will seek to maintain its current Excellent rating and will implement any actions arising from the process.

The Authority will also seek to build upon its major success in Stonewall's internationally recognised Workplace Equality Index, which assesses organisations for their commitment to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities and staff.

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 within the emergency services.

### Blue Light Collaboration

Over the past two years the Authority has been working on a blue light collaboration programme with the two other emergency services responsible for protecting the communities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington.

The main element of this is a major project with Cheshire Constabulary to bring together each organisation's support services into a single team and establish a new joint headquarters at the police's current site at Clemonds Hey near Winsford.



Under initial plans the Authority was also going to move its operational training facilities up to Clemonds Hey and sell off the whole of its current site. A detailed review has shown, however, that retaining the existing site and updating the training facilities there 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 before the end of the current financial year.

Detailed agreements are being drawn up to ensure there is clarity about the level of support the Authority will receive under the new arrangements. All staff in the new joint corporate services will be employed by



Cheshire Constabulary and processes have been agreed to ensure staff 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.

## The environment

The Authority has an existing carbon reduction target of 40% by 2020 (compared to its 2009-10 consumption). This is equivalent to a cut of 1,189 tonnes.

Significant progress has been made over the last few years and at the same time the Authority has continued to improve the way in which it measures and records its use of energy across the organisation.

As a result it is now clear that to date the organisation has achieved a carbon reduction of 752 tonnes – over 60% of its target. While this means that only 1,031 tonnes now need to be saved, the addition of the four new fire stations creates a significant challenge.

To help minimise their impact, all the new stations include features such as solar photovoltaic panels and environmentally efficient heating systems while also ensuring the impact on local biodiversity is minimised.

The Authority is continuing to pilot the use of electric vehicles in its fleet with the help of a grant from the Office of Low Emission Vehicles



(OLEV) which met 75% of the cost of leasing 12 electric vehicles for two years and installing 10 dual charging posts at key fire stations.

## 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 the Authority's area in recent years as well as supporting the reduction in the number of emergencies the Service 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 in 2015-16, with three of those as a result of the tragic explosion at Bosley Wood Mill and two in accidental dwelling fires. The numbers have been consistently low in recent years, with most involving older people who are most at risk.

## Safe and well

The Service has continued to develop its Home Safety Assessment (HSA) programme where staff visit homes and give out vital safety advice and free smoke alarms if needed. It is now only delivered to those residents who have been identified as most at risk rather than being a universal offer with older people, particularly those living alone, among the most vulnerable.

Those same vulnerable households are also key target groups for other agencies, particularly





health, and the next development of the HSA programme will see it relaunched as a 'Safe and Well' visit, with firefighters and community safety advocates carrying out additional health checks.

The visits are being offered to residents who are aged over 65 or who are referred to the Service by partner agencies. While the traditional fire safety information is still included, there is also additional advice on slips, trips and fall prevention; bowel cancer screening as well as offering additional support to those who wish to stop smoking or reduce their alcohol consumption.

It is expected that 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.

Safe and Well visits are carried out by fully trained firefighters and prevention staff. Although these visits are targeted at those who are most at risk, anyone wanting fire safety

advice can complete the Service's new on-line Home Safety Assessment and generate their own personal safety plan.

The Service has also produced its own free 'Risk Rater' app. This is available for download from both Google Play and AppStore.



### Campaigns

While legislation can make a big difference by requiring people and businesses to take more safety precautions, changing people's behaviour and attitude towards fire risk takes even more time and commitment. The continuing development of the Service's Home

Safety programme has been a major factor in the improvements to the safety of local residents in recent years.

Over the past year we have engaged 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 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 over 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 also have an active Fire Cadet unit, which enables them 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 Himalayas as part of a life-changing adventure, having raised over £65,000. A new team of cadets will travel to Nepal in 2017 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



# Safety Central!

CHESHIRE'S INTERACTIVE LIFESKILLS CENTRE



2017. The innovative circular building is integrated with the new fire station planned for Lymm, near the M6 / M56 interchange.

The Centre will feature 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.

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 also 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 is also continuing to support the implementation of a £5 million Government-funded programme to integrate front-line services across the sub region of Cheshire and Warrington.

The Complex Dependencies Programme aims to tackle the causes of crisis for children, families and individuals across a range of related complex issues. The Service is providing dedicated staff to work in each of

the local authority areas on the programme to improve the lives of an estimated 10,000 individuals across the sub region.

## 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 of 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.

As result of the Service's previous changes to its 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 we attended 3,465 false alarms.

To continue with our reduction the Service plans to make changes to its attendance policy.



## Enforcing fire regulations

The Authority has a duty to enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 but always tries to work with businesses to help them fulfil their responsibilities in the first instance. Its dedicated business safety team goes out to meet and discuss issues with local firms as well as staging specific events to highlight key issues or risks, such as arson.

While the Service prefers to work with firms, it will take court action as a last resort. To date the Service has always been successful in its prosecutions, leading to fines and costs totalling many thousands of pounds.

The Service will ensure any prosecutions are highlighted and publicised to encourage firms to work with the Service and avoid court costs and damage to their reputation.

## Responding to emergencies

During 2015-16 the Service has undertaken a second major review of all of its fire stations, vehicles and operational personnel. This review builds 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, near the M56.

In developing the Authority's plans for the future careful consideration was given to comprehensive incident data, as well as feedback from previous annual consultations as well as the major consultation exercise undertaken in 2012. Details of previous consultation exercises can be found on the Authority's website.

This second major 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 have 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.

As the Service moves to having more fire stations with a single fire engine, it is vital that there is resilience both in terms of specialist skills and the ability to deal with major and multiple incidents.

To recognise the impact of flooding and water rescue incidents, all fire engines are being fitted with rescue 'sledges' while the number of firefighters trained as swift water technicians will increase from 103 to 172.

Apart from the rope rescue unit which will be based at Lymm, every fire station which is responsible for a specialist service will have a back-up station where staff are trained up to the same standard and can provide cover when needed. These include Foam Unit, High Volume Pump, Incident Command Unit, Large Animal Rescue (AR2), Major Rescue Unit and Rapid Response Rescue Unit.

Over the next four years, the following proposals, which have been developed as part of the second Emergency Response Review, will be implemented to ensure the Authority is able to make the savings it needs while changing service delivery to fit the local risk



profile. The proposals will be subject to ongoing review, and further consultation, but include;

- Changes in senior and middle management structures, including the removal of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer post (£94k) and moving to a new flexi duty system for station managers (£240k)
- Implement the review of special appliances, which will see the removal of the aerial appliance from Macclesfield Fire Station with the remaining two to be housed at Chester and Lymm (£188k)
- Change to nucleus crewing at Birchwood, Macclesfield and Wilmslow (£240k) and consider the case for introducing the system at the new fire station at Penketh (£370k)
- Implement the proposals outlined in 2012 (and in subsequent plans) to make the second fire engines at Crewe and Ellesmere Port on-call, but pilot the crewing of a fire engine during the day at both stations at an additional cost of £200k per station, to provide Service-wide resilience and support for prevention activities and training





## Crewing and shift systems

In January 2016, Wholetime crews started working two 12 hour days and two 12 hour nights followed by four days off, instead of the existing two 9 hour days, two 15 hour nights and four days off.

The Service has also undertaken a comprehensive review of its nucleus duty system to ensure that it supports the other shift systems, is fit for purpose and provides value for money. The outcomes of this review are currently being implemented.

To improve the flexibility of its emergency response service the organisation currently operates four different crewing systems. In



2017-18 it is looking to introduce a fifth involving a Monday to Friday daytime only shift which will provide increased flexibility for the Service and more choice for staff.

## Review of emergency vehicles

The Service regularly reviews its fleet of emergency vehicles to ensure they continue to meet current and anticipated emergency response requirements.

During 2016-17 the Service replaced two of its three aerial appliances which allow crews to work at height. As part of the Emergency Response Review Phase Two, it is proposed to move from having three of these vehicles to two, with the two appliances based at Chester and the new fire station at Lymm. These locations will enable the vehicles to be deployed effectively around Cheshire, when they are required.

It will also be moving some of its specialist equipment to the new Powey Lane fire station near the M56. This will involve transferring the Foam and Environmental Protection Units from Ellesmere Port, the Incident Response Unit from Chester and potentially the High Volume Pump from Congleton.

## Stations and training facilities

As well as vehicles and shift systems, the Authority has also recently reviewed 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.

The Authority has already completed new fire station at Alsager, Penketh and Powey Lane. The new fire station and safety centre at Lymm will be completed during 2017.

The Authority will also consider options to develop a new fire station at the existing site in Chester city centre, as well as 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 using 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 firefighter safety remains a key priority.

## Cardiac response scheme

The Service will also look 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 communication system that is currently used by the blue light emergency services comes to an end. Due to procurement laws it is not possible to extend this contract further.

A national Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme has been launched, which will involve the procurement and implementation of new communications kit and software for all the blue light services, along with the other public service users.

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. It is expected the region will start to transition onto the new system in September 2017 and go live by late 2018.



## Projects and proposals 2016-17 - summary

### Developing the organisation

- As part of Bluelight Collaboration, move to a single, joint headquarters site, including the transfer and co-location of staff
- Implement any actions arising in response to the reaccreditation process for the Fire and Rescue Equality Framework
- 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
- Redevelop the Service's website to ensure up to date performance information is more easily available and accessible
- Continue to deliver the initial two-year firefighter Apprenticeship scheme and recruit a second cohort in 2017-18
- Implement the actions arising from the 2016 Staff Satisfaction Survey Action Plan



### 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 Service's targeting methodology to ensure those most at risk are prioritised
- Continue to develop community safety programmes at Safety Central, the Authority's flagship community safety facility at Lymm
- Build a second school in Nepal through the partnership between Cheshire Fire Cadets and Classrooms in the Clouds
- Launch a new policy for responding to automatic and false alarms
- Work with partners and Government to ensure that requirements for the installation of sprinklers in schools remain in place
- Engage with relevant sectors to explore opportunities to partner under the Primary Authority Scheme for fire safety inspections



### 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
- Expand and roll out the programme of Cardiac Response pilots, undertaken with the North West Ambulance Service, to all fire stations
- Redevelop the operational training facilities at the Authority's training centre in Winsford and explore opportunities to redevelop Chester fire station
- Continue to support and participate in the regional and national programme to renew communications technology for the three emergency services

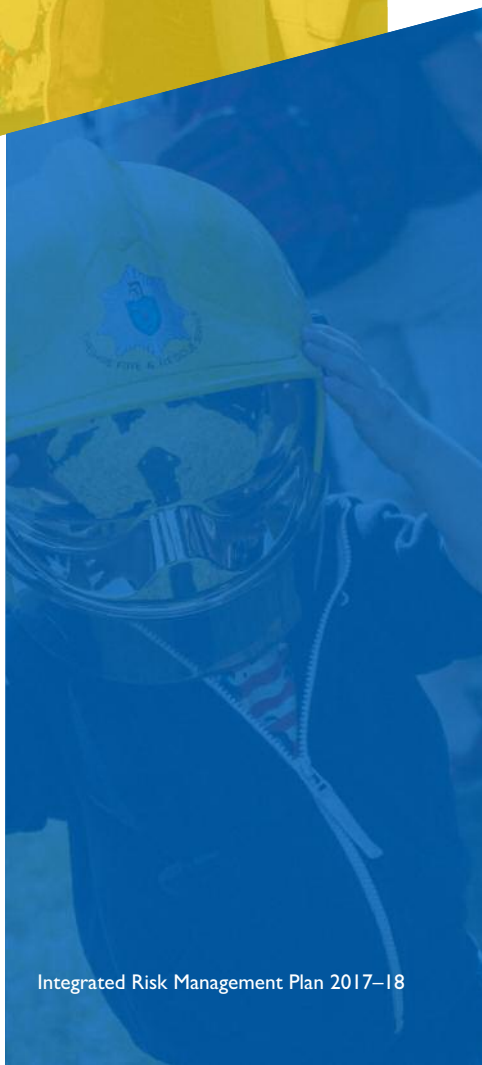






# 4

## Consultation and engagement



## Consultation and engagement

This plan sets out the proposals that the Authority will pursue in order to achieve financial savings and adapt its emergency response to address the risks faced by Cheshire's communities and businesses.

While the majority of the proposals in this plan relate to 2017/18 other proposals, as part of the second Emergency Response Review will be implemented over the next four years.

The Authority remains committed to ensuring residents, businesses, partners and staff have the opportunity to give their views. A formal 12 week consultation and engagement programme will run from 3 October 2016 to 3 January 2017.

In addition to face to face briefings and presentations for key stakeholders, there will be a number of community consultation roadshows for residents and briefings for staff. The consultation will also be promoted on Service's website, Intranet and social media channels.



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

e-mail: [consultation@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@cheshirefire.gov.uk)

tel. 01606 868407

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Engagement Officer  
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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
<b>Base Budget pre additions and savings</b>	<b>42,382</b>	<b>42,093</b>	<b>40,725</b>	<b>40,719</b>	<b>41,245</b>
<b>Additions:</b>					
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
<b>Revised Total Budget Requirement</b>	<b>42,093</b>	<b>40,725</b>	<b>40,719</b>	<b>41,245</b>	<b>41,425</b>
<b>Base Funding b\ fwd</b>					
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
<b>Total Base Funding</b>	<b>41,949</b>	<b>41,639</b>	<b>40,725</b>	<b>40,719</b>	<b>41,245</b>
<b>Add Increases\ (Decreases) in Funding:</b>					
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
<b>Total Available Funding</b>	<b>42,093</b>	<b>40,725</b>	<b>40,719</b>	<b>41,245</b>	<b>41,425</b>
<b>Total efficiencies required 2017-18 to 2020-21</b>					<b>(3,830)</b>

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.





# SMOKE ALARMS IN RENTED PROPERTIES



## New laws now approved

From October 1st 2015 landlords are required to:

- Fit at least one smoke alarm on each floor of their premises
- Fit a carbon monoxide alarm in rooms containing a solid fuel appliance
- Check that all alarms are working when a new tenancy starts.

To help landlords prepare for the new laws the Government provided 500,000 free alarms to Fire and Rescue Services across England.

If you are a landlord with property in the Fire Authority's area, visit [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk) to see if you are eligible to receive your free alarms.

Don't wait – **act now** and request your free alarm. It could save someone's life. #alarms4life