



**Cheshire**  
Fire Authority

Appendix 1 to Item 6  
Fire Authority  
15 February 2023

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**PROTECTING LIVES**

**Annual  
Action Plan**  
2023 -2024

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



Ultimately our IRMP and this annual plan which sits under it will enable us to deliver on our vision to save lives, change lives and protect lives.

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Annual Action Plan for 2023-2024



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## Foreword



**Councillor Bob Rudd**  
Chair, Cheshire Fire  
Authority

In July 2020, Cheshire Fire Authority approved and published its four-year [Integrated Risk Management Plan \(IRMP\)](#) following extensive consultation with the public, fire and rescue service staff and stakeholders.

The IRMP set out to address the key fire and rescue service risks facing Cheshire at the time and how Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service would develop its capability to manage and respond to them. Each year since, we have published an annual action plan to report on our progress in implementing the IRMP and explain any changes we have made to our objectives.



**Alex Waller**  
Chief Fire Officer  
and Chief Executive,  
Cheshire Fire and  
Rescue Service

We are pleased to present this, our final action plan of this IRMP, summarising our progress so far and setting out our remaining actions for 2023/24.

The past three years have been among the most turbulent in living memory. For the first two years of our plan, the Covid-19 pandemic fundamentally changed the way we worked. The ensuing cost-of-living crisis, fuelled by soaring global energy prices, means many in our communities continue to be at risk of additional harm.

In July 2022 we experienced our busiest ever days when an unprecedented heatwave caused dozens of wildfires in our county, serving as a reminder of the impact of climate change.

The regulatory and political environment in which we operate is fast moving. The outcomes of the Grenfell Tower and Manchester Arena tragedies of 2017 will shape future fire policy for years to come. The Government and our sector, through the National Fire Chiefs Council, have tabled comprehensive proposals for reforming the way fire and rescue services operate.

Where possible, we have adapted our objectives in light of these new and emerging developments.

They will also be at the forefront of our minds as we develop our proposals for the next four years (2024-28). These will be set out in a draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which will be consulted on later this year. We invite anyone with an interest in shaping the future of their fire and rescue service to share their views and get involved when the time comes.



# Summary of progress and projects to complete

## IRMP 2020-24 projects now completed

- Moved the second fire engine at Ellesmere Port to Powey Lane, enabling a fire engine to be moved from Powey Lane back to Chester.
- Reviewed our firefighting water provision
- Reviewed our flood/water response provision across Cheshire to ensure that it meets emerging risks. This included investing in the provision of bespoke flood suits for all non-specialist responders.
- Reviewed our Risk-based Inspection Programme for businesses and implement outcomes.
- Expanded our Sprinklers Save Lives campaign, promoting the use of sprinklers in businesses and high-rise residential properties.
- Changed our approach to how we manage heritage risks.
- Launched a Cheshire-wide campaign aimed at owners and occupiers of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs).
- Replaced the aerial appliance and a fire engine at Macclesfield with a high reach extendable turret (HRET) fire engine.
- Provided Rapid Response Rescue Units (RRRUs) on all of our primary on-call fire stations.
- Developed a new, specialist wildfire capability.
- Extended Safe and Well home visits to a broader range of people at risk.

## IRMP 2020-24 projects to complete in 2023/24

- Review the need for new equipment to improve the effectiveness of our response.
- Review our specialist vehicles and resources and implement outcomes.
- Work with partners to develop a strategic road safety plan.

## New and revised projects to complete in 2023/24

- We will introduce a day crewing system at Wilmslow in April 2023 following the purchase of nine houses for the firefighters who will provide 24/7 cover.
- Develop an emergency cardiac response capability.
- Reduce the number of false alarms within domestic premises.
- Review the range of education programmes to ensure content is consistent, engaging and relevant to its audience.
- Undertake a Service Improvement Review of the Prevention Department.
- Further develop prevention work to raise awareness of water safety.
- Review our wholetime optimum crewing duty system agreement.



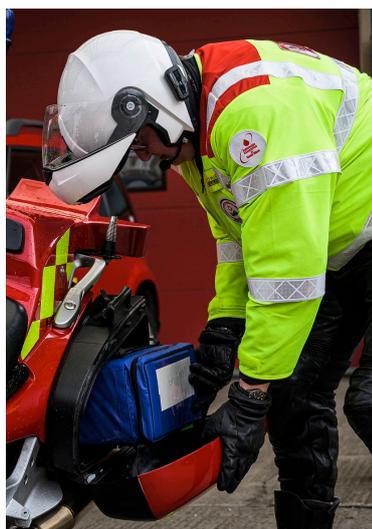
# Our progress

Since approving the 2020-24 IRMP, the Authority has been hard at work implementing the Plan. Although the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact, work has progressed in many areas, which will be explained through this next section.

## Prevention

### Covid-19 pandemic

Our Prevention Department was at the heart of the Service's response to the Covid-19 pandemic between 2020-2022. The department coordinated the organisation's actions in the community to support those in need; including the delivery of food parcels, prescription medicines, blood and breast milk, welfare checks and supporting our health partners by administering over 100,000 Covid-19 vaccinations.





# Our progress

## Safe and Well targeting

In 2021/22 we refined the methodology we use to target Safe and Well visits at the people most at risk of having a fire in the home. Over the last 12 months we have successfully extended our over 65's programme to ensure advocates and firefighters now visit lone parent and single adult households, which statistics show are also particularly vulnerable. This strategy will remain under regular review.

During the first year of using the new targeting methodology we anticipate we will visit over 20,000 at risk households providing fire safety advice as well as identifying and offering support for other health related issues where applicable. This new approach will be reviewed prior to its continuation in 2023/24.

## Water safety

Although rescuing people from water is not one of our statutory duties, we frequently do so and, as such, are committed to working with our partners to prevent drowning. Our trusted brand and our reach into the community means we have an important role to play in highlighting risks and lifesaving. This year we have led on the establishment and development of a Cheshire multi-agency water safety group alongside all relevant partners. The group is now developing a multi-agency strategy to improve and promote water safety in Cheshire.



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# Our progress

## Protection

### Risk Based Inspection Programme

The Authority uses a Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) to prioritise its audit and inspection work towards the highest risk premises. This is developed in line with national guidance and using local intelligence. The RBIP has been reviewed to further refine how we prioritise risk and we have upskilled our inspecting officers to enable them to effectively inspect the most high-risk premises.



### Heritage risks

The Authority has recruited a Heritage Fire Safety Inspector to coordinate its approach to managing heritage risks. The role involves completing fire safety audits in heritage premises and providing detailed technical advice, guidance and support on relevant statutory and regulatory requirements and standards in order to minimise fire risks and hazards in high-risk and heritage buildings.

In addition, officers have undertaken large-scale training exercises to test our response plans in places like the Chester Rows.

The Service works in close partnership with other regulators, local authorities and stakeholders to develop and implement heritage protection and prevention initiatives and activities. Work will continue to develop and improve partnership working and identify new ways to protect the heritage of Cheshire.



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Annual Action Plan for 2023-2024



# Our progress

## Sprinkler campaign

Our Sprinklers Save Lives campaign was launched in April 2021. The initiative not only highlighted the benefits sprinkler systems bring to a business, but also encouraged decision makers to consider fitting sprinkler systems in all new builds, as well as the retrospective fitting of the devices in older premises. For more information on sprinklers please visit the dedicated section of our [website](#).

The Authority is also working with housing providers to encourage the take up of sprinkler systems in high-rise properties within Cheshire. We have worked to secure the installation of systems in 18 of Cheshire's 21 high-rise residential premises.

In addition, the Authority continues to advocate for the installation of sprinklers in premises such as schools and residential care buildings. Within each of the four unitary authorities covering Cheshire, Fire Authority Members have introduced motions supporting the use of sprinkler systems and the Authority will continue to press local and national decision makers to amend or introduce new regulations and guidance in order to promote the installation of sprinklers which will save lives.





# Our progress

## Operational Response

### Returning a second fire engine to Chester

The second fire engine was returned to Chester Fire Station in February 2020 following a reconfiguration of fire cover across Chester, Ellesmere Port and Powey Lane fire stations. This has provided the Authority with a balance of resources across Cheshire West and Chester to effectively respond to its risks and demands.

### Rapid Response Rescue Units (RRRUs)

The Authority has introduced a fleet of Rapid Response Rescue Units (RRRUs), with one placed on each of Cheshire's 13 on-call fire stations. The smaller 4x4 vehicles enable firefighters to respond to incidents such as road traffic collisions ahead of the main fire engine and begin lifesaving casualty care. They also provide blue light transport for firefighters so they can follow the fire engine to incidents, therefore increasing capacity.

Staff have also been engaged through the process to tailor the RRRUs to meet specific local risks, for example animal rescue or wildfires. In these areas, the units will contain more specialist equipment to help firefighters respond to these types of incident.

### Wildfire capability

The Authority has worked with staff to procure specialist protective equipment and tools to improve our capability to fight wildfires. It has also invested in a specialist all-terrain vehicle, which is housed at Poynton Fire Station. This unit, known as 'Roly', enables firefighters to tackle fires on difficult or inaccessible terrain such as exposed moorland, and was used to good effect during the extreme heatwave in summer 2022.



# Our progress

## High reach fire engine

A high reach fire engine, also known as the High Reach Extendable Turret (HRET) operates as a normal fire engine but also houses a large extendable boom which can provide a jet of water from high above on to the fire. This resource is based at Macclesfield and has been operational since early 2022, attending several large scale incidents to provide additional capability to assist firefighters.



## Water carrier

The Authority has introduced a water carrier into service, providing large amounts of water to aid firefighting operations. The unit, which carries 9,000 litres of water (the equivalent of five fire engines), is based at Ellesmere Port Fire Station.



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# Our progress

## Training Centre

The Authority's new Training Centre in Winsford was completed in December 2020, with work progressing despite the pandemic. The facility boasts state-of-the-art training environments to provide our firefighters and staff with the most realistic and immersive scenarios possible to reflect the risks within Cheshire.

At £11.5m, this was the single biggest investment that the Authority has made to-date, but it is a crucial part of the Service's obligation to keep staff safe and provide a first-class service to the public. Thanks to the success of our prevention work in the community, the number of fires has been steadily reducing year-on-year. While this makes our communities safer, it means our firefighters have less 'hands-on' experience to learn and develop their craft. This places greater emphasis on the use of realistic training to equip crews with the skills and knowledge to do their jobs as effectively as possible.

The Training Centre provides this environment. It comprises multiple zones that reflect the real risk within Cheshire, such as a petrochemical rig, a rural area, and road traffic scenarios, as well as traditional housing and commercial scenarios. The Centre also has a dedicated area for command training, with operational commanders having access to world-class facilities. In addition, the site offers training in other important aspects such as fire investigation, the identification of hazardous materials and in trauma care. This year we will implement a new duty system for the training centre staff which will ensure the centre can best meet the needs of all staff and users, including our on-call firefighters.



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# New and emerging risks

Fire and rescue services work in an ever-changing environment and must adapt to new and emerging risks to keep the community safe.

This next section outlines some of the new and emerging risks facing us.

## Industrial action

It is increasingly likely that members of the Fire Brigades Union will strike during 2023/24 due to a dispute over pay. Pay is negotiated on a national basis and not by individual fire authorities. Industrial action could significantly impact our response to emergency incidents. Our prevention teams will work closely with partner agencies to reaffirm measures to protect those most at risk of fire in the event of our response being delayed. Working with our Communications and Engagement Department, they will also help to share important home fire safety messages.



## Cost of living

As a result of unprecedented increases in the cost of gas and electricity, there is evidence that some people are resorting to cheaper but potentially more dangerous ways of heating their homes and increased levels of poverty will inevitably mean increased risks from fire. Our firefighters are now recording any incidents where fuel poverty might be a factor, to enable our prevention team to provide appropriate follow-up support and signposting to suitable help. We are also highlighting unsafe methods of heating on our social media channels.



# New and emerging risks

## Mental health

We see the impact of mental ill health almost every day, either during Safe and Well visits, in our work with children and young people, or when called to incidents involving people attempting to take their own lives. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, one in six adults now report moderate to severe depression (ONS, December 2022). We will continue to consider mental health as a key risk factor in all our community work as we review our strategy for the years ahead.

**In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, one in six adults now report moderate to severe depression.**

(ONS, December 2022)



## Contaminants

Research highlights that firefighters face an increased risk of cancer and other diseases through their occupation and exposure to toxic and carcinogenic contaminants.

Reducing the risk from contaminants has been a long standing priority for the Service. Four years ago, we worked with the Fire Brigades Union to set-up a successful Contaminants Group, which continues to reduce risk through cultural and behavioural change and securing investment in the best available protective equipment and training for our firefighters. Contaminants will be a top priority this year and we will continue to work closely with staff and trade unions.



## New and emerging risks

Ensuring the health and safety of our firefighters is of the utmost importance to the Authority, which has invested significant resources into ensuring staff are provided with the best protective equipment available. An Assistant Chief Fire Officer chairs the Service's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee; which has representation from Authority Members, staff and trade unions. Within this structure is a dedicated group tasked with reviewing procedures and equipment to reduce the risk of contamination.



We will continue to work with staff and trade unions to refine our procedures and, where necessary, invest in new equipment and vehicles to minimise the risk that firefighters face from contaminants as a result of their actions.

### Battery technology

As the ban on internal combustion engines draws nearer, the number of battery powered electric vehicles on our roads is expected to increase significantly. A fire involving one of these vehicles behaves in different ways to a petrol or diesel vehicle thus presenting new risks to firefighters.

The growth of renewable technology is also leading to more premises using battery energy storage systems. These systems allow for excess energy generated by equipment like solar panels and wind turbines to be stored for use at a later time/date when the energy is required. Again, these can present new fire safety risks.

The Authority will therefore undertake more work to understand the risk presented by battery technology, particularly in electric vehicles, and develop associated operational procedures. We will also develop our protection work regarding battery energy storage systems.



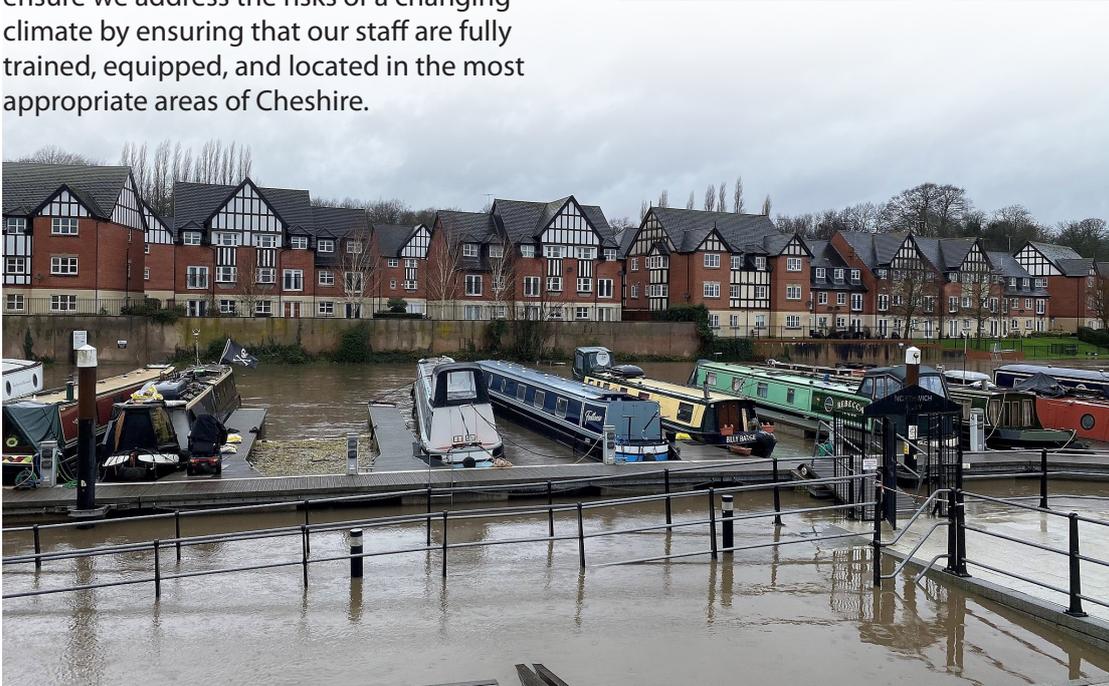
# New and emerging risks

## Climate change

Last summer (2022) saw an extreme, record-breaking heatwave across the country. This led to unprecedented demand on fire and rescue services, including Cheshire. In recent years, firefighters have also responded to significant flooding events in several areas of the county.

Clearly the longer-term impact of climate change means more extreme weather events are likely. Not only does this mean more spells of hot weather, but also an increased likelihood of severe flooding which could place additional demands on fire and rescue resources.

While the Authority has invested in a new wildfire capability and in enhancing its water rescue response through new kit and training, there is a continuing need to ensure we address the risks of a changing climate by ensuring that our staff are fully trained, equipped, and located in the most appropriate areas of Cheshire.





# New and emerging risks

## Outcomes from Hackitt Review and Grenfell Inquiry

The Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017 saw the tragic loss of 72 lives and was a watershed moment for fire and rescue services in the United Kingdom. Like other fire and rescue services, we are determined to take all the necessary action so that an event such as this cannot be repeated.

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, a review into building regulations and fire safety was conducted, led by Dame Judith Hackitt. A formal inquiry into the fire itself was also launched.

In response to the fire, officers inspected and audited all of the high-rise premises in Cheshire to ensure the safety of residents and to identify the presence of any cladding of a similar type to that which was present at Grenfell. As the Inquiry into the fire has progressed, the Authority has kept abreast of developments and has implemented relevant recommendations that have emerged to date, as well as introducing training packages specifically related to high-rise premises and building evacuations.

We have also responded to consultations on subsequent changes to the building regulations regime and have incorporated any associated guidance that has been issued from Government or the National Fire Chiefs Council.

### Building a Safer Future

Independent Review of Building  
Regulations and Fire Safety:  
Final Report



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# Plans for 2023-2024

As we enter the final year of our IRMP, we have several plans that we will be progressing.

## Implement the Day Crewing Duty System at Wilmslow Fire Station

Our current IRMP and our [2022/23 action plan](#) outlines our plan to change the crewing arrangements at Wilmslow Fire Station from a nucleus duty system to a day crewing duty system. This change will mean that Wilmslow will be provided with guaranteed fire cover overnight without the need to bring in supporting resources from elsewhere in the county, as currently happens under the nucleus duty system.

The Authority had initially pursued plans to redevelop Wilmslow fire station with its emergency service partners. However, a mutually satisfactory agreement could not be reached. Therefore the Authority consulted on, and approved, a change that would see the purchase of firefighter housing near to the fire station to enable the duty system to be introduced.

All of the required housing has now been purchased, which will allow the new duty system to be introduced from April 2023.

## Emergency cardiac response

In the case of a cardiac arrest, time is of the essence. Therefore, the Authority has provided public-use defibrillators at all its locations and on all its fire engines. The more widely they are available, the more chance they can be used to save lives.

It has been the long-held ambition of the Authority for firefighters in Cheshire to respond to cardiac arrest emergencies along with ambulance colleagues to help save lives. Right now, in Cheshire only 1 in 13 people will survive an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, which is behind the UK average of 1 in 10. Survival depends on speed of treatment. Every minute without cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation reduces the chance of survival by up to 10 per cent. And in some cases, CPR can more than double the chances of survival.



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## Plans for 2023-2024

Fire crews are trained and skilled at performing CPR, they also carry defibrillators and can respond swiftly, in some cases arriving before an ambulance. But currently firefighters are not mobilised to cardiac arrest (even if they are very close by) because agreement has not yet been reached through national negotiations on broadening the role of a firefighter and associated pay. The national negotiations have been ongoing for over five years, with no satisfactory settlement.

Therefore, within its IRMP, the Authority committed to roll out cardiac response and is intent on securing a locally agreed solution. The Authority has made a provisional local pay offer to enable a 12-month pilot. During the pilot firefighters across all 28 fire stations would respond to cardiac arrests emergencies. In recognition that these mobilisations will increase operational workload and responsibility, each firefighter would receive an allowance, which is equivalent to 2% of a firefighter's annual salary. While the Fire Brigades Union has - to date - not accepted this offer, the Authority remains committed and will continue to support negotiations with the aim of securing a local agreement.

### Reviewing our Wholetime Duty System Agreement

Within Cheshire, firefighters on our fire stations that are crewed full time work to the Wholetime Optimum Crewing Duty System Agreement, which outlines their terms and conditions and general working arrangements. This Agreement, which came into effect from 2016, was locally agreed by the Authority and Fire Brigades Union and is based on the requirement for staff to volunteer to work an average of 6 shifts of overtime each year. The Agreement has been partly reviewed over the years but it will be subject to a detailed review this year. The review will involve staff and trade unions and will explore the Agreement to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Any changes to the Agreement will be subject to consultation and/or negotiation prior to implementation.

### Major incident support and welfare facilities

Following large-scale and major incidents, the Authority routinely seeks feedback through operational learning and debriefs to continually learn lessons and make future improvements. Points raised by staff over more recent incidents have highlighted that enhanced incident command support and welfare facilities would be beneficial, particularly when dealing with an incident that takes a large number of resources and significant amount of time to resolve.

Over the coming year the Authority will progress plans to improve its incident command support facilities for major incidents and provide enhanced welfare facilities for firefighters to use when dealing with protracted incidents.



# Plans for 2023-2024

## Prevention review

Our Prevention Department co-ordinates one of the most innovative and successful community safety programmes in the UK fire and rescue service. Over the years we have led the way in delivering Safe and Well visits, working with children and young people, delivering road safety awareness and engaging volunteers. To ensure our Department remains fit for purpose and focussed on new and emerging risks, we will be undertaking a comprehensive review of all our activities and the departmental structure over the next 12 months.

This review will encompass the original 2020-24 IRMP objectives to look at our education programmes and how we continue to support the development and implementation of Cheshire's road and water safety strategies.

## Fire safety legislation

Parliament has recently passed two pieces of legislation to address the outcomes of the Review and Inquiry after the Grenfell Tower fire. The Fire Safety Act 2021 and Fire Safety Regulations 2022 introduce changes to fire safety laws regarding both multi-occupied residential buildings and high rise premises. The Authority will work with relevant partners and responsible persons to assist, and where necessary enforce, compliance with the new legislation.



## Develop our next Community Risk Management Plan

As the lifespan of this IRMP draws to a close, we will embark on the planning and development of a new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) covering the four year period from 2024. This is outlined in further detail on page 27.



# Looking after our people

Engaging with, supporting and developing our people has been a fundamental aspect of our work through the course of the IRMP. Using our Steps Framework, we have designed a range of interventions to support and develop our people through the employee life cycle, from initial recruitment through to retirement. This approach is encapsulated within the Authority's recently published People Strategy 2022-2025.

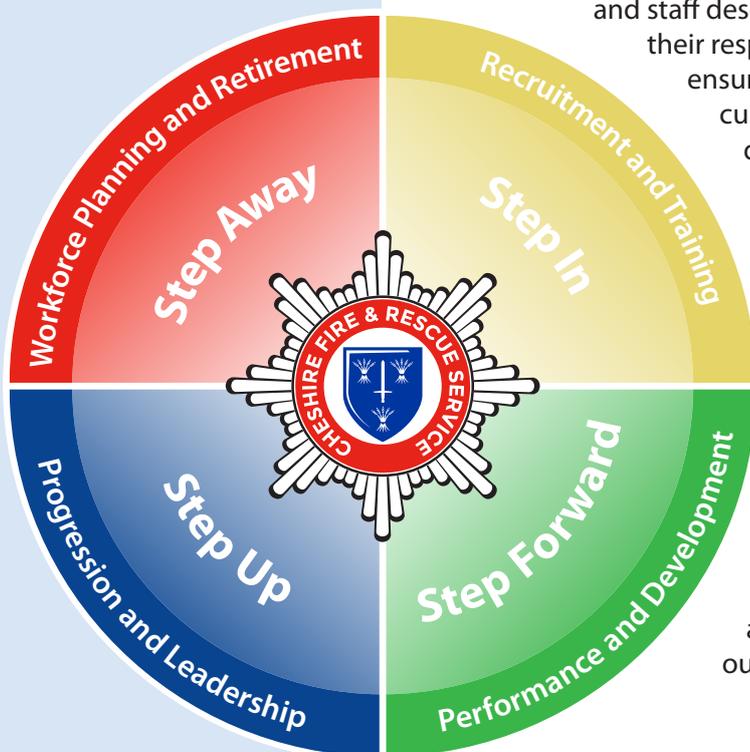
## Building an inclusive culture

Engaging with staff is a central element to our workplace culture, helping to create an environment where staff feel included and an organisation in which employees feel a sense of belonging. Senior leaders conduct regular visits with teams and staff are encouraged to feedback their ideas and thoughts through a range of platforms such as conferences, surveys, a suggestion scheme and a Staff Engagement Forum. Over the next year this work will be further developed through the production and implementation of a new Engagement Framework, which will underpin the engagement with staff through the development of the next Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

The focus on engagement is especially important as the fire and rescue sector enters a period of uncertainty regarding industrial relations and the prospect of industrial action in relation to national disputes over pay and conditions. The

Authority has been clear it believes that its firefighters and staff deserve fair pay that is commensurate to their respective roles and it will endeavour to ensure that the work to create a positive culture and environment continues both during and after any industrial dispute.

The Authority is immensely proud of its work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within the fire and rescue service and has a strong track record of success, ranking as the highest performing emergency service in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for several years. Our [EDI Strategy 2021-24](#) aims to ensure we attract and retain the best staff from a diverse range of backgrounds, and understand the diversity of risk in our communities.





# Looking after our people

## Future challenges

Given the retirement profile of the organisation, the coming years provide a unique opportunity to increase the diversity of the Service's workforce due to the natural turnover of operational staff as they end their careers. The next recruitment campaign for wholetime firefighters will get underway in 2023, part of a multi-year recruitment programme.

Recent reports into the workplace culture of some fire and rescue services have raised worrying and difficult issues that the sector must address. While these reports do not refer to Cheshire, the Authority will nonetheless continue to promote a positive working culture based around its Core Values.

The Government's response to its consultation on its proposed reforms of the fire and rescue sector, as outlined in its White Paper, is also likely to make reference to these findings and the Authority will respond to the final outcomes of the consultation once published.



**New year  
New you  
New beginning**

Wholetime firefighter recruitment window opening soon for September 2023 start.



for *everyone*



# Our efficiency and effectiveness

Over the course of several years, the Authority has implemented a range of changes to its operations and functions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services it provides and to make our workforce more productive.



This has included the introduction of 12 hour shifts; riding with four firefighters per fire engine; investing in new fire stations and technologies; the development of Safe and Well visits; collaborating with our partner agencies (both police and other fire and rescue services) and adopting a priority based budgeting process so that our resources are aligned to our key priorities.

People, efficiency and effectiveness are the key pillars by which Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is assessed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). In 2021, the Service received its second inspection from HMICFRS and was rated "Good" in its effectiveness and efficiency in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks; and in how it looks after its people. Cheshire was one of the few fire and rescue services to improve on its grading from the first round of inspection in 2018. A third inspection is planned for 2023.

## Continuous improvement

The re-establishment of in-house Communications and Engagement and People and Organisational Development, departments will provide additional resilience to the Authority and further ensure that the Authority is equipped with the right people and skills to meet future challenges and deliver an improved service for our workforce and the wider community.

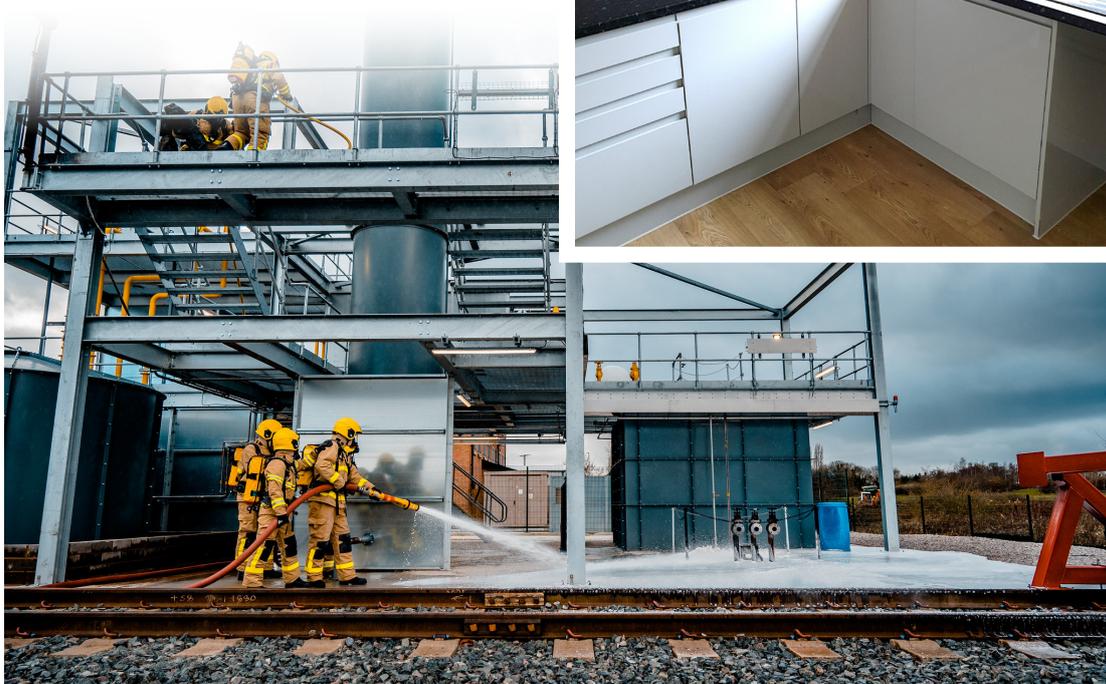




# Our efficiency and effectiveness

## Modernising our estate

Through the course of this IRMP, the Authority has invested a significant amount of capital funding to enhance its buildings. This has resulted in the development of a state of the art operational training centre in Winsford; a ground-breaking new, zero carbon, fire station in Chester; and a new flagship fire station in Crewe (due to complete this year) as well as the refurbishment of many fire stations and other properties. This affords staff and the community premises that befit a modern fire and rescue service. With the significant increase in building, material and supply costs over the past 18 months, the Authority is now re-examining the remainder of its modernisation programme to ensure that it is both achievable and affordable.





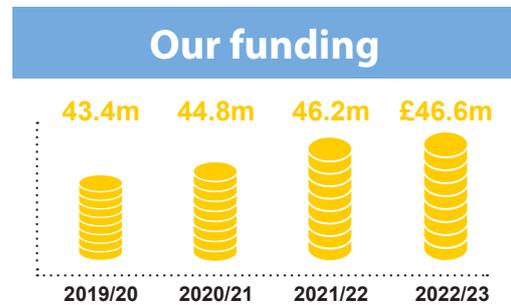
# Our finances

Cheshire Fire Authority is funded through two main sources of income: funding from central government and through its share of council tax, called its precept. Council tax makes up around 67 per cent of the Authority's funding with government grants and distribution of business rates comprising the other 33 per cent.

The Authority has a legal duty to provide a balanced budget, which means matching its income with its outgoings. These outgoings include staff wages, investing in new or replacement firefighting equipment, improving or maintaining premises and paying for things like energy and fuel.

For the last full financial year (2022-23 at the time of writing), the Authority had a revenue budget of £46.6m to provide a fire and rescue service to the communities of Cheshire, as well as a budget of £16.2m for its capital spending. The graphic below outlines how we spend our budget. Further details can be found in the Authority's Statement of Accounts, available on our website [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk).

As part of its budget management, the Authority produces a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), covering a five-year period. The MTFP is updated regularly to reflect emerging, local, regional and national issues and makes informed assumptions about issues such as future pay, inflation, government funding and council tax levels.



## What we spend it on

2022/23 budgeted spend:



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## Our finances

In spite of the impact of austerity and with no capital funding from Government since 2014, in recent years the Authority has been able to invest in its staff and services through careful financial management and planning. This has enabled the Authority to maintain its equipment, invest in new technology, improve training and modernise its estate. This has resulted in the Authority becoming one of the most effective and efficient in the country.

However, it faces significant financial pressures as a result of increases in the cost of energy, fuel, other goods and services it purchases and because of pay rises for staff (which are negotiated on a national basis, rather than by the Authority itself). The Authority has identified significant savings of almost £1m in its 2023-24 budget, but the outcome of the pay dispute affecting firefighters remains unknown and could further increase the funding challenge which it faces.

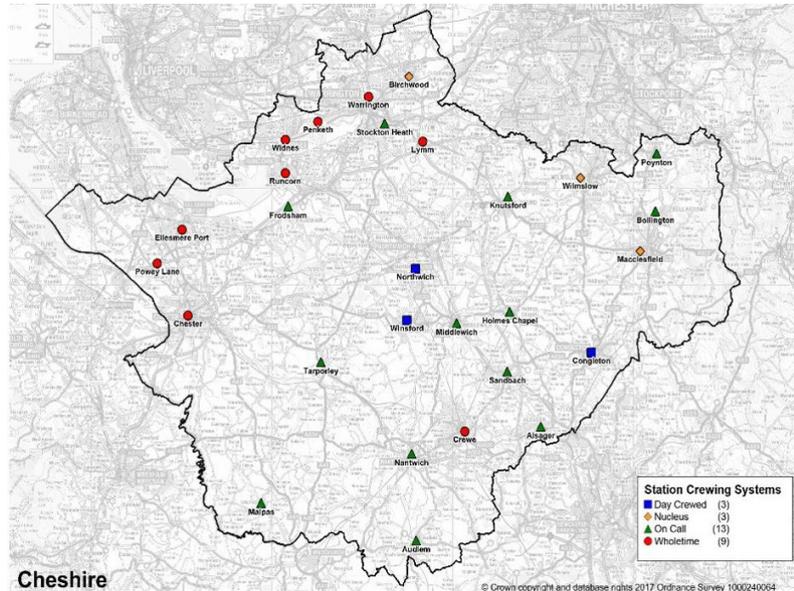
This is why the Authority is consulting on whether to utilise the additional flexibility afforded by central government and increase its share of council tax by £5.00 (or 6.06%) for a Band D property for the 2023-24 financial year (other council tax bands would pay proportionately more or less than this).

Looking further ahead over the duration of the next four-year Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2024-2028, the Government has indicated there will be limited growth in public spending. Therefore, given cost pressures such as inflation, this is likely to require the Authority to further review its efficiency and effectiveness and potentially make savings in order to continue delivering a balanced budget. This will be considered in more detail during the course of the development and implementation of the next CRMP.



# The next four years

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England requires fire and rescue authorities to produce an **Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)** which outlines the fire and rescue related risks in their community and how the authority's prevention, protection and operational responses will seek to mitigate and address those risks. Each CRMP must cover at least a three-year timespan.



Cheshire Fire Authority approved its current IRMP in July 2020 and this document covers the period to April 2024. Over the coming year the Authority will commence work to develop a suite of proposals to improve the services it provides and mitigate fire and rescue related risks in the community over the next four years (2024-2028) and beyond. These proposals will be subject to formal consultation over the Autumn/Winter of 2023/2024.

The work to develop these proposals is already underway and consists of a comprehensive review of fire cover across Cheshire, and a wider assessment of existing and potential risks to life and injury in the community. The fire cover review is a process undertaken periodically by the Authority which considers how best to arrange its resources to provide emergency cover across Cheshire to address the various risks and demands we face. This encompasses a comprehensive examination of a range of data sources and information to determine the most appropriate use of resources with the budget available to us. The options and proposals that are developed through the review may then feature in the 2024-2028 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

Prior to consultation, the Authority will be undertaking a programme of engagement with the community, staff and stakeholders to help inform our fire cover review and further information will be made available via [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk).

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