

County Durham and Darlington Combined Fire Authority Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2024 - 2025



Introduction

The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire requires all standalone Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) to produce an Efficiency and Productivity Plan for 2024/25, in line with guidance issued by the Home Office (HO) in December 2023.

This Efficiency and Productivity Plan sets out how County Durham and Darlington

Fire Authority (CDDFRA) aims to manage efficiencies within County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS), whilst also aiming to increase productivity where it is practical to do so in line with national targets, set within the most recent spending review period.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in conjunction with the Local Government Association (LGA) have proposed that Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) in England should aim to create 2% of non-pay efficiencies as well increase productivity by 3%.

Our Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2024/25 provides a breakdown of progress made against the national goals. The plan also contains links to several CDDFRS strategic documents and should therefore be used as a conduit towards accessing other relevant information in support of the plan itself.

The Authority's strategic plans for the next three years are set out within our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The CRMP and other associated strategic documents and plans are written in accordance with Government guidelines. <https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/CDDFRS%20Community%20Risk%20Management%20Plan%202024-2027.pdf>

All our Service plans and strategies are available to view on the CDDFRS website.

[Service Plans and Strategies | County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service \(ddfire.gov.uk\)](https://www.ddfire.gov.uk)

These plans are underpinned by our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which sets out the Authority’s financial position for the four-year period 2024/25 to 2027/28. The Authority’s MTFP is readily accessible on our website.

[Budget Report 2024-25 \(ddfire.gov.uk\)](https://ddfire.gov.uk)

Section 1: Primary information

Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan

The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was approved by the Combined Fire Authority on 16 February 2024 and covers the four-year period 2024/25 to 2027/28. The MTFP is based on assumptions which are set out in Table 1 below. At this stage, the assumptions are considered to be reasonable based upon the information that is available.

Table 1: MTFP Assumptions

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Income Assumptions				
Council Tax Base	+0.79%	+0.90%	+0.90%	+0.90%
Council Tax Level	+2.99%	+1.99%	+1.99%	+1.99%
Settlement Funding Assessment	+6.70%	+2.00%	+2.00%	+2.00%
Expenditure Assumptions				
Pay Awards	+3.00%	+3.00%	+2.00%	+2.00%
Inflation	+3.00%	+2.00%	+2.00%	+2.00%

The MTFP is set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Medium-Term Financial Plan

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Net Expenditure	35.450	36.117	37.809	38,344
Government Funding	11.962	12.202	12.446	12.695
Local Non-Domestic Rates	1.549	1.549	1.549	1.549
Council Tax	21.492	22.118	22.766	23.432
Services Grant	0.050	0.050	0.051	0.052
Funding Guarantee	0.530	0.198	0.198	0.198
Deficit on Collection Fund	(0.133)	0		
Total Funding	35.450	36.117	37.010	37.926
Surplus/ (Shortfall)	0	0	(0.799)	(0.418)

The MTFP in Table 2 above shows a balanced budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26 and a shortfall in funding of 0.799M in 2026/27 falling to £0.418M in 2027/28. The reduced shortfall in 2027/28 is a result of a planned move to alternative headquarters accommodation during the year.

Reserves

The Authority has a policy to maintain the general reserve at 5% of net expenditure. A risk assessment of the adequacy of the Authority's general reserve is carried out at the end of each financial year and any necessary adjustments are made as part of the final accounts process. The Authority believe a general reserve of 5% of net expenditure is adequate taking account of the risks associated with the MTFP, the level of earmarked reserves and the Authority's track record of delivering efficiency savings and sound budget management.

The estimated reserves position for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 is set out in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Estimated Reserves Position 2023/24 – 2027/28

Reserve	31.03.24	31.03.2	31.03.26	31.03.27	31.03.28
	£m	5 £m	£m	£m	£m
General Reserve	1.605	1.605	1.605	1.605	1.605
Earmarked Reserves	2.756	2.157	2.157	2.157	2.157
TOTAL RESERVES	4.361	3.762	3.762	3.762	3.762

The Authority currently holds the following earmarked reserves to meet known or predicted liabilities:

Pensions Reserve (General Contingency)

The purpose of the pensions reserve is to meet any unforeseen pension costs which may arise due to changes to pension schemes, or any increase in the level of ill-health retirements over and above the level included in the revenue budget. Each higher tier ill-health retirement can cost in the region of £125K therefore the pensions reserve equates to the equivalent of an additional 4 higher tier ill-health retirements over the four-year MTFP period.

Insurance Reserve (General Contingency)

The excess levels on the Authority’s insurance policies are significant and the purpose of this reserve is to meet any unexpected increase in the level of claims excesses that may arise over and above the sums included in the revenue budget. Provision has not been made in the revenue budget to cover the payment of policy excesses which are £50K on the vehicle insurance policy and £100K on the public and employer’s liability policies.

Resilience Reserve (General Contingency)

The National Framework requires the Authority to maintain national resilience capabilities in a high state of operational readiness. The funds in this reserve have been set aside to meet any unforeseen costs which may arise to meet this obligation and any costs associated with a business continuity event such as a prolonged period of industrial action or the need to support a significant operational incident over a prolonged period, either within our area or elsewhere.

Modernisation Reserve (Funding for projects)

The funds in this reserve are earmarked to fund expenditure on future improvements to the Authority's estate. This balance is expected to be fully utilised during 2023/24.

Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (Grant funding for a planned project)

The reserve comprises of the balance of unspent grant, earmarked to fund the replacement national mobile communications systems. Whilst the funds in this reserve are not legally or contractually committed at this stage, they will be fully utilised over the MTFP period to finance the replacement systems.

Community Safety Reserve (Funding for Projects)

This reserve is made up of the balance of unspent grant to enable specific community safety improvements to be undertaken. This balance is expected to be fully utilised during 2023/24.

Training Reserve (Funding for Projects)

This reserve holds the balance of unspent income, earmarked to fund future training programmes. This balance is expected to be fully utilised during 2023/24.

Strategic Finance Reserve (General Contingency)

This reserve holds funds to ensure the continuity of service provision, in the event of future funding pressures.

The estimated movement on each of the earmarked reserves during the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 is set out in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Earmarked Reserves 2023/24 to 2027/28

Earmarked Reserve	Estimated Balance at 31.03.24 £m	Transfers to Reserves £m	Use of Reserves £m	Estimated Balance 31.03.28 £m
Pensions	0.500	0	0	0.500
Insurance	0.285	0	0	0.285
Resilience	1.000	0	0	1.000
Strategic Finance	0.372	0	0	0.372
ESMCP	0.599	0	-0.599	0
TOTAL	2.756	0	-0.599	2.157

The Authorities reserves strategy can be viewed here:

<https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/reserves-strategy>

Council Tax

The Fire Authority agreed to increase council tax by 2.99% in 2024/25 in order to protect front line services.

Historically, the Authority received an equal amount of funding from government and council tax. However, over time this has changed, with two thirds of our funding now being received from council tax. Reliance on council tax also brings with it challenges in an area such as ours where a significant number of the properties are in council tax Band A or Band B. A 1% increase in council tax raises an additional £208,000 for the Authority whereas in other areas of the country 1% raises significantly more. To further illustrate the problem a 1% pay

award costs the Authority over £270,000 per year and other inflationary pressures are adding significant costs to the Service.

Our revenue budget has reduced considerably since austerity measures began in 2010 and the council tax referendum limit has placed considerable pressure on our finances. We know we are facing further financial pressures in the future including increases in costs for the services we buy due to high inflation, the demand on our budget due to unfunded pay awards to staff, limited revenue from council tax and significant increases to our energy and fuel bills.

In line with Government guidance, we hold limited financial reserves, the majority of which are earmarked for specific purposes such as the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP). Our reserve strategy is robust, supporting limited investment to replace equipment and uneconomic buildings and practices however our low levels of reserves are not substantial enough to fund our revenue budget on an ongoing basis.

Efficiency

During the preparation of the 2024/25 budget and MTFP, budgets have been reviewed with an emphasis on the identification of efficiency savings. Where savings have been identified based on historic and predicted future spend the relevant amount has been removed from the 2024/25 budget.

We are continuing to explore opportunities for making savings which includes reducing spending on items other than pay, scrutinising every job vacancy which arises to ensure that the position is genuinely required and collaborating with other public services to save money when we buy services and equipment. We have also invested heavily in digital technology to modernise and automate paper-based processes, which has increased productivity and enabled us to become more efficient and, ultimately, saved money.

In the last three years we have:

- Restructured departments by redistributing tasks and removing posts.

- Reduced the number of senior managers we employ, by reviewing the Service Leadership Team (SLT), removing 2 senior posts, and restructuring]the remaining team.
- Revised our wholetime (WT) crewing model to ride with a crew of 4 from July 2023 on all fire appliances saving £780,000 in a full year.
- Reviewed our support service functions, reducing our salary costs by offering Early Retirement, Voluntary Redundancy or where unavoidable, redundancies.
- Reduced our expenditure on areas other than staff pay through a comprehensive review of departmental spend.
- Saved money by buying equipment or sharing resources in collaboration with other FRS, these include sharing specialist vehicles and specialist posts.

Whilst the efficiency savings achieved during this spending review period have not affected service delivery, the reality is that, with around three quarters of our budget spent on firefighter’s salaries the only realistic options left will involve changes to the way we provide our frontline service to the public.

The efficiency savings expressed as a percentage of revenue expenditure and non-payroll budgets for the three years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 are summarised in Table 5 table below and further detail is provided in Appendix A.

Table 5 Summary of Efficiency Savings

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Efficiency Savings (£000)	606	828	448
% of Revenue Expenditure	2.01%	2.58%	1.25%
% of Non-Payroll Budgets	12.82%	17.56%	6.70%

Section 2: Secondary information

Collaboration

CDDFRS acknowledges the statutory obligations placed on it through the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England and the Policing and Crime Act 2017 which are intended to drive greater collaboration between the emergency services and also recognise the benefits of collaboration with our partners in our local area and beyond.

In County Durham and Darlington, we have several collaborative arrangements in place between our Service and other emergency services. We are co-terminus with Durham Constabulary and work well with other regional FRS operating together at both a strategic and tactical level. We continue to explore all opportunities for collaboration that improve value for money, improve outcomes, reduce risk for our communities and reduce demand on our Service. This ensures we provide cost effective services and helps us to reduce demand and risks within our communities.

Our strategy is to identify willing strategic partners who have a compelling common purpose for collaboration to ensure mutual commitment is given towards shared goals. Although we have a duty to collaborate, we will only do so when it provides benefit to the communities we serve.

Durham Constabulary, the Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS), Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) and other partners use our state-of-the-art training centre at Bowburn, and we share several of our Service estates' premises with Durham Constabulary and North East Ambulance Service (NEAS).

In Barnard Castle, we have built a quad emergency service station, housing Fire, Police, Ambulance and Mountain Rescue personnel. This has provided greater opportunities for emergency service interaction and is a central emergency service point for this rural community.

We use a collaborative approach with our police colleagues for Fire Investigation, implementing the International Standardisation Organisation

(ISO)17020 standard and we attend the Police and Fire Collaboration Board as well as the North East Regional JESIP meeting.

We have formal agreements with our neighbouring FRSs for sharing special appliances and officers, an example being the use of Cleveland Fire Brigade's command vehicle and we have formal agreements in place with other FRS Control Rooms to ensure resilience. We also support national resilience across the sector and host specialist appliances and officers for deployment across the UK.

Our Community Safety Responders (CSRs) provide joint cover for CDDFRS and Durham Constabulary. They CSRs play a crucial role in engaging with members of Stanhope, Crook and Barnard Castle, to ensure an effective two-way process for gathering and sharing local information, and that effective action is taken to address issues raised. As such they will continue to have an important role to play in supporting community resilience and ensuring local accountability.

In the past 2 years we have embarked upon further estates collaboration opportunities, sharing service premises at Darlington Fire Station with NEAS and we have carried out the modernisation of Sedgefield station which involves some shared facilities with NEAS.

In 2021 we also explored opportunities to share administrative support for maintenance of duties associated with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and this is now being done in collaboration with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

We are also working with colleagues in neighbouring FRS's, the Local Authority, Police and Academia to reduce the opportunity and consequences of deliberate fires and antisocial behaviour across the North East as well as being among leading members of emergency services in assisting the HO to deliver new technological solutions for emergency services.

We have recently entered into contract for a collaborative control room solution along with Hereford & Worcester FRS, Shropshire FRS and Cleveland Fire Brigade. This collaboration will deliver estimated savings of £1.8m over the life of the contract to CDDFRS. Furthermore, through defining shared infrastructure and system configuration, this should lead to closer ways of working that will allow each service to support each other for resilience purposes.

In summary, our various collaborations have not only resulted in improved services for our local communities but have produced real capital savings in excess of £5m (excluding capital savings from collaboration on the integrated command and control project) and ongoing revenue savings in the order of £270k p.a. (including anticipated revenue savings from command and control collaboration).

Transformation Plans

CDDFRS recently increased the capacity and capability needed to achieve sustainable transformation, including the recruitment of a project manager who manages our robust change programme. We routinely seek opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency and provide better services to our community through a range of transformational change projects all of which are monitored and scrutinised through our Project Board.

The projects that we have commissioned aim to achieve the same or increased level of performance at a reduced cost whilst also enabling us to make better use of our resources. Our processes and services are being streamlined to deliver more efficient ways of working in order to increase community confidence.

Charging policies

Automatic Fire Alarms

The Service has a successful charging policy in place for premises that have 3 or more unwanted fire signals in a 12-month period which has led to fewer calls because of this work. The charging process for automatic fire alarms is used to

recovers costs only. Since the policy was introduced, the authority has received £47,808 in cost recovery charges. Our 'Service Response to Automatic Fire Alarm Systems policy' is available to view on our website via the following link: [False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals | County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service \(ddfire.gov.uk\)](https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/false-alarms-and-unwanted-fire-signals)

Special Service Calls

The Service has a discretionary process in place to recharge for special service calls where requests for assistance do not fall within our normal statutory duties. Cost recovery charges relate to personnel, appliances and equipment time and usage. A full list of the categories and charges applied to each are available on our website via the following link:

[Incident Types We Attend | County Durham and Darlington FRS \(ddfire.gov.uk\)](https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/incident-types-we-attend)

Asset Management and Investment in Technology

The Service is at the forefront of innovation in technology within our sector, embracing forthcoming technologies such as the Emergency Services Network (ESN), being one of the first emergency services in the UK to equip frontline fleet with equipment capable of connecting to this new critical infrastructure network. While the ESMCP project has been significantly delayed the Service is still exploring the use of the technology deployed to exploit our connected appliance concept. This has been scoped within our 'Shaping CDDFRS's Mobility Strategy' project which has identified benefits that can be derived from technology implemented to date, and furthermore, how to make best use of developing communications infrastructure that ESN should have delivered.

The Service makes use of modern tablet technologies to enable greater and productive interactions with the communities we serve. In 2024/25, through use of the Protection Grant, the Service plans to upgrade the software on the tablets to allow Fire Safety Audits to be completed live on them, to reduce paper based recording which is required to be re-entered into Service systems upon return to home base. Furthermore, our appliances are equipped with

technology that places all critical risk and incident management information at the hands of firefighters at the incident ground.

Where possible we continue to collaborate, including through NFCC national research and development, to identify, develop and evaluate new and innovative vehicle and equipment technologies to continue to improve our effectiveness, value for money and firefighter safety. To reaffirm our commitment in this area our Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Steve Helps leads on fleet procurement on behalf of the NFCC.

Our primary focus is on building upon our strong foundations of accessing cloud-based technology, driving efficiency through investing in new technologies and further hardening the organisations security position.

We continue to invest more in digital technology in a bid to modernise and automate paper-based processes, which we believe will help improve productivity and help us become more efficient whilst saving money at the same time. Recent examples of innovative practice include the introduction of iPads on all front-line fire appliances for our operational crews to utilise during prevention and protection work as well as for gathering essential risk information and recording their workloads enabling us to be as productive and efficient as possible. We have invested in an asset management software solution that allows us to undertake equipment, appliance checks and inventories more efficiently and effectively on a daily basis to ensure the safety of our workforce as well as extending the life of our assets.

The decision to move away from a paper-based approach to a digital solution has meant the freeing up of valuable time and resources. The system tracks the movement, usage and condition of our assets, each of which are identified through a unique asset ID. It also logs any defective equipment which ensures it can be removed from operational use immediately and a replacement provided without delay.

Prior to adopting a digital approach, assets that had moved location would need to be moved back to their original location, however the item can now remain in

its new location with all historical life cycle information linked to the asset securely recorded on the system.

Another example is the use of a Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) which is based on accurate data and business intelligence about premises in our area so that we target our fire safety audits according to risk. We have developed the software to use with existing technology to improve the quality of data at source and trained staff to collect risk information during an audit.

A breakdown of efficiency savings as a result of the modernisation work, we continue to undertake with our assets and technology can be viewed at Appendix B.

Estates

As well as collaborating with partners to share proportions and costs for part of the Service estate, the Combined Fire Authority has continued to invest in the Estates improvement programme.

In the most recent years this has included the demolition and rebuild of Darlington Fire Station and modernisation of Sedgefield and Wheatley Hill RDS stations. In each of these schemes we have invested in improved efficiency and renewable energy technologies.

Furthermore, in 2023/24, responding to rapidly increasing energy prices, the Service invested minor works improvement funds in a range of 'invest to save' programmes on further renewable energy schemes with several solar PV installations.

The forecast ROI of each of these schemes is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6 ROI Forecast

Station	Installed Capacity	System Price	Energy from Solar	Payback
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High Handenhold	15.48 kw on-roof	£23 200.00	27%	6 Years 4 Months
Consett	18.27 kw in-roof	£29 000.00	30%	5 Years
Seaham	13.48 kw in-roof	£24 850.00	26%	7 Years 4 Months
Newton Aycliffe	37.4 kw on-roof	£29 175.00	57%	3 Years 5 Months

Fleet

The Service's current strategy on fleet investment is clearly linked to the CRMP with the intention of investing almost £1.5 million in 2023/24 to update its fleet of vehicles which in turn will ensure the best possible resources are provided to our staff to assist in protecting the communities we serve. For example, over the next 5 years we are looking to invest in 12 new fire appliances at an approx. cost of £3.6M which will result in more efficient running costs that will also save money on maintenance required on our older vehicles.

Through a review of the Special Rescue Unit, the Service has identified the option to introduce Enhanced Rescue Tenders (ERTs). These will realise savings of approximately £150k within its capital budget. Additionally, through a reduction in WT staffing requirements for these new ERT vehicles, the Service will utilise this WT staffing capacity to support on call staffing to increase appliance availability and realise savings with the on-call staffing budget.

We aim to replace three vehicles we currently use for water rescue purposes with two new state of the art water rescue vehicles at an estimated cost of £170k. Through reducing the number of water rescue vehicles down to one the Service will realise a saving of £60k within its capital budget.

The Service are reviewing the use of Targeted Response Vehicles (TRVs) to reduce the need for mobilisation of our frontline fire appliances to smaller, less significant incidents that can be dealt with using less resource such as secondary fires or attendance at unwanted fire alarms. The aim is to ensure

that fully crewed fire appliances are available for life risk incidents ensuring that the most appropriate resources are allocated to risk.

Not only does this piece of work further increase the opportunity for the crewed appliances to undertake other productive activities it also supports CDDFRS continuation of being recognised as the fastest predominately rural FRS to respond to primary fires.

The Service has upgraded 12 of our older officer blue light response vehicles in 2023/24, at a cost of £300k. These new vehicles replace some of our older response cars that are coming towards the end of their life cycle. The Service are exploring the option of replacing the remaining officer blue light response vehicles with a greener EV vehicle. The Service are undertaking a full in-depth review of its current fleet of non-blue light vehicles with a view to reducing the number down to a practicable level.

Resourcing

Our strategic workforce plan enables our managers to ensure that the Service has the right people, with the right skills, at the right time, to meet future demands and make sure skills and capabilities align with what is needed to effectively deliver the CRMP.

The Service has undertaken a number of changes to its organisational structure to ensure it is well placed to address the challenges faced over the medium term such as the uncertainty surrounding future funding for the sector, ensuring internal skills and capacity to address areas of improvement identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Effectiveness, Efficiency and People report, 2021/2022 and delivering considered responses to feedback received throughout our internal staff surveys.

Structural changes have allowed us the opportunity for reinvestment into key support functions and our front-line response. Over the past 10 years our operational establishment has reduced through various changes to our

emergency response delivery models, yet we still have the fastest response times in any predominantly rural Service.

Duty Systems

CDDFRS utilise a flexible approach to working patterns to maximise the efficient and effective use of operational personnel, balancing risk and operational demand. These operational duty systems include, Retained Duty System, WT 2-2-4 shift system, Self-Rostering Day Duty System, Day Duty System, Flexible Duty System, and a Continuous Duty System for senior managers.

Recruitment

Our WT recruitment utilises 4 key strands - traditional recruitment, apprentices, on-call to WT and transferees. Each of the recruitment methods has its benefits and shortfalls and the Service will use a mix of all of the above depending on needs and demands at the time. We acknowledge the impact that transferring firefighters from on-call to WT can have on availability of our on-call appliances therefore consideration is given prior to any decisions being made.

Where possible, either WT or the apprenticeship route will be used in the first instance with a cohort of 10 – 12 planned in for each financial year. The apprenticeship scheme, which the Service anticipate will save in excess of £1m on training costs over the next 5 years, has helped us achieve a greater diverse workforce since its creation in 2017 and continues to evolve year on year.

The service was recognised by HMICFRS during our most recent inspection as having an effective and successful apprenticeship programme which they also identified as being an innovative practice across the fire sector as a whole and we recently achieved the Investors in Apprenticeship award

Degradation Plan

The Service recognises the requirement for an operational degradation plan as part of its overall emergency response strategy. The plan has been developed to help CDDFRS deal with a range of events that require intervention when there are limited resources. The degradation plan identifies the number of appliances which represent a steady state, namely a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 26 (day shift) and 24 (night shift), heightened state when appliance availability is between 10-14 appliances and a critical state when appliance availability is 9 appliances or less.

The plan can be implemented through a range of events including staffing deficiencies, national identified risks, a single operational commitment, multiple operational commitments or in spite weather conditions. This plan will also take into consideration a reasonable worst-case scenario impact of two simultaneous incidents of 5 pumps or one large incident of ten pumps. To generate the rationale behind the detail of this plan a comprehensive profile of each station area was carried out. This profile assessment also compliments the current CRP. Both documents cover these areas in significant detail.

In addition to the operational degradation plan the Service also has a Fire Control degradation plan in place to ensure resource levels can be maintained within our control room at all times.

Resilience Planning

The Authority take cognisance of the Fire and Rescue Service, Minimum Service Level (MSL) Regulations and the statutory requirements within them and are in the process of identifying a suitable approach that is in line with national guidance on how the MSL can be operationalised.

The Service has a robust resilience plan in place which deals with these business continuity arrangements as well as other chronic staffing shortages due to unexpected events. Our business continuity arrangements are put through stringent testing regimes to guarantee the continuation of an emergency response provision to our communities. Our provision also consists of several national resilience assets including High Volume Pump (HVP),

Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) and Detection Identification and Monitoring (DIM) capabilities readily available for deployment should the need arise for them to be called upon.

Working Routines and Shift Patterns

In order to utilise additional capacity within station-based shift systems the Service took the decision to modernise station based work routines and shift patterns. In depth analysis into productivity identified that there was an opportunity to increase capacity by 33%. This was achieved through altering start and finish times slightly by reducing the hours on a night shift including the removal of all sleeping accommodation on fire stations and increasing the number of positive hours on a day shift whilst also introducing a more structured approach to work routines.

The move ensured we were more efficient and effective in our prevention and protection work through transferring work from headquarters based functions to station based personnel. As a result of these transformational changes, we were also able to protect front-line posts, avoid station closures and negate the need to reduce the number of fire appliances protecting our communities whilst at the same time benefitting from a significant increase in productivity.

More recently the Service have undertaken a WT shift system review in conjunction with the NFCC working pattern self-assessment tool to ensure improved efficiency and effectiveness, whilst maintaining an appropriate community response.

Operational Cover Contracts & On-Call Detachments

The Service's introduction of Operational Cover Contracts (OCC) and on-call detachments have addressed staff shortages by offering staff the opportunity to undertake additional work over their contracted hours. This enables staff to commit more time to the Service and increase earnings if they wish and has proved to be successful. We pay our staff their standard hourly rate plus 10 percent as an incentive and we believe this efficient use of resources has

resulted in the Service's use of overtime being lower than the national rate across England.

They are an efficient use of the existing workforce and provide flexibility to meet changes in demand without the financial burden of overtime. It also assists to manage WT turnover and reductions in associated staffing as it is cost effective compared to employing a full-time firefighter. We will continue to monitor the approach to ensure available shifts are covered and operational ridership levels are maintained.

Community Safety Responders

The Service employ two CSRs; a post that combines the roles of an on-call firefighter and a police community support officer. We have found that this is an effective way for the Service to share information with other emergency services as well as providing a swift response to incidents particularly in our more rural communities such as Stanhope, Crook and Barnard Castle.

Hybrid working

As a Service we chose to adapt our working practices for corporate members of staff during the pandemic, including the option of hybrid working, which allowed them to work more flexibly. Due to the success of this and there being no detrimental effect on productivity we took the decision to continue with this flexible approach which was very well received by staff.

On-call Liaison Officers

CDDFRS are heavily dependent on on-call Firefighters to deliver its statutory duties detailed within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England. Within CDDFRS, 6 of the 15 fire stations are solely staffed by on-call Firefighters and 15 of the total 26 fire appliances across the Service are staffed by on-call Firefighters.

The Service employs 2 on-call liaison officer roles to offer support and advice to our on-call staff. The liaison officers also support other workstreams focused on on-call availability, recruitment, retention and terms and conditions. We acknowledge that on-call availability, recruitment and retention is an ongoing process and therefore remains part of our Emergency Response Strategy.

Resourcing to risk

Another good example of how we use our resources effectively to manage risk is through the relocation of our WT fire appliances to strategically placed positions across the Service area to ensure the most effective and quickest response to incidents. Fire Control continuously monitor the movement of our resources to ensure they are made available to respond to our greatest risks in a well-timed manner.

Procurement

The Service access several national frameworks to ensure we make the most of procurement opportunities that lead to efficiencies. Through the utilisation of these frameworks we have seen a reduction in the time and administrative tasks it takes our staff to procure items which in turn frees up internal resources to focus on work elsewhere. We have also developed long term relationships with our suppliers which has led to creating greater value for money and identifying best practice techniques when dealing with all aspects of our procurement.

A list of the most recent frameworks that we have accessed for procurement process including a more prescriptive breakdown of the area and chosen supplier can be viewed at Appendix C.

Local Initiatives

Making Every Contact Count

As an organisation we believe in making every contact count (MECC), which is why through our prevention work, we actively promote and target the wellbeing of the most vulnerable members of our communities. The Service have utilised and enhanced its skill and competency base locally to enable it to act as an advocate for a greater role in the wellness agenda. Our HFSVs which are carried out by both operational and non-operational staff now have a significant focus on health as well as fire.

In line with the core health issues identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Health and Well Being Strategy for County Durham and Darlington, notably Cardio Vascular Disease (smoking and alcohol), Mental health (dementia and social isolation) and Excess Winter Deaths/ Cold related ill health (slips, trips falls, flu immunisation) the Service offer support and refer to partner agencies to ensure the people we come in to contact with can access the appropriate type and level of professional support they need.

Through the continuation of our MECC initiative we are ensuring local people with complex needs get the personalised, integrated care and support they need to live full lives, sustain their independence for longer and as a result reduce preventable hospital admissions and avoidable winter pressures/deaths.

Fire Cadets

The Service run a number of Fire Cadet schemes across our stations which offer children from our local communities the opportunity to learn what it entails to be a firefighter but more so in building practical life skills and confidence to support their journey as they progress into adulthood.

In order to the run the schemes which are predominantly funded through local grants and partnerships we utilise a plethora of volunteers from across the Service as well as members of the public. This in turn also offers themselves the opportunity to develop their own learning and development skills as well as being able to give something back to the communities they live and work in.

One of the main benefits of the Fire Cadet schemes we run is that it offers a real opportunity for CDDFRS to widen the diversity of the Service through offering our cadets the chance to apply for our award winning firefighter apprenticeship scheme at the age of 16. It also bridges the gap between the age of 16 and 18 which is currently the minimum age at which anyone can join the fire service nationally.

Car washes, open days and other charitable events

Our fire stations host an annual car wash and open day which attracts countless local residents on to our estates. As well as providing a unique opportunity to promote our prevention work it also helps them understand the activities we undertake on their behalf.

Productivity

CDDFRS have been recognised by HMICFRS as being a productive FRS. The 2023 round 2 report states that CDDFRS respond to 11.66 incidents per 1,000 population against the England average of 9.82. In relation to Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV), CDDFRS carryout 7.56 per 1000 population against an England average of 4.47 and 6.12 fire safety audits per 100 known premises against an England average of 1.70.

The outcome of the high productivity for prevention and protection activity is that benchmarking shows a comparable low number of incidents in our area despite high levels of deprivation which traditionally aligns to increased incidents.

Furthermore, average appliance availability in CDDFRS is 89.1% against an England average of 86.4%.

We also have in excess of 1,000 site specific risk information (SSRI) records all of which are in date and readily available to our operational staff on our mobile data terminals (MDT) on our frontline fire appliances and TRVs.

Having considered the contribution we can make towards the national productivity target we are fully committed to pursuing in excess of 3% increase in productivity.

In fact, we have gone further in the work we are doing around productivity and efficiency in that the Service have developed an internal IT based application that captures the workload of our WT firefighters whilst on shift. A gap analysis was carried out between internal activities and the HO FF Utilisation Survey categories to ensure this piece of work was constructed in such a way that it aligned to the data requirements within survey. See Appendix D

CDDFRS productivity application has been shared nationally with the HO Fire Funding Team and Productivity & Efficiency Fire Forum with the view of exploring the possibility of using it to adopt a standardised approach centrally across the Fire sector. See Appendix E

All of the activities we undertake as an Authority are led by the most accurate data we have and fully align to the risks identified within our Community Risk Profile (CRP) 2023-2026.

[https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/CDDFRS Community Risk Profile 2023-2026.pdf](https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/CDDFRS%20Community%20Risk%20Profile%202023-2026.pdf)

Not only has our technological approach to monitoring and improving greater productivity resulted in an effective standardised, evidence based reporting measure, it has also given our managers greater transparency and empowerment in order to analyse the data to ensure community engagement during core hours is maximised leading to a reduction in incident attendance.

The next steps in the Authority's work on productivity and efficiency is to undertake a whole system review including a full cost analysis of all front-line activities to ensure taxpayers money is being spend on the most appropriate activities. We intend to continue working closely with the HO to support and further enhance a standardised approach to the way in which productivity is

reported across the fire sector whilst also exploring the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to interpret the data.

Work has also already begun in utilising our productivity application in other areas of the organisation such as to future proof efficiencies of are on-call staff through alignment of pay codes to HO, FF activity categories as well as within our Prevention & Protection teams and Fire Control to ensure our employees are being as productive as they possibly can be.

In summary, further to the already recognised high levels of productivity in protection and prevention activity undertaken by our front line WT firefighters, there are a number of key highlights where we are measuring how our WT firefighters are conducting activity differently.

The Service doesn't have large central prevention or protection teams as our philosophy is to maximise the capacity and skills within our operational based staff within Emergency Response to deliver prevention and protection activity. We aim to use our resources effectively to meet our performance targets which in turn ensures we achieve what is set out within our CRMP and strategic priorities. See Appendix F

County Durham and Darlington Fire Authority commits to publishing an annual report on the progress of the Efficiency and Productivity Plan. This will be published on the CDDFRS website, alongside our Annual Statement of Assurance, in April of each year.



**Steve Helps
Chief Fire Officer**



**Tony Hope
Deputy Chief Executive and Treasurer**

Appendix A

	Actual 2022-23	Forecast 2023-24	Forecast 2024-25	CSR
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	30,202	32,101	35,898	
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	25,474	27,385	29,216	
Non Pay Budget	4,728	4,716	6,682	
Efficiency Target (2% of non-pay budget)	95	94	134	
Efficiency Savings				
<u>Direct Employee</u>				
Reduction in Prevention/Protection/Response Staff		-608	-172	
Reduction in Support Staff				
<u>Indirect Employee (e.g. training, travel etc.)</u>				
All Indirect Employee Costs			-5	
<u>Premises</u>				
Utilities				
Rent/Rates	-100	-105	-11	
Other Premises Costs	-17		-2	
Shared Premises				
<u>Transport</u>				
Fleet				
Fuel		-115		
Other Transport Costs			-3	
<u>Supplies and Services</u>				
National Procurement Savings				
Local Procurement Savings	-265		-7	
Other Technology Improvements				
Decreased Usage	-56		-248	
<u>Capital Financing</u>				
Revenue Expenditure Charged to Capital				
Net Borrowing Costs				
<u>Other</u>				
Other Savings 1 (Please Specify)				
Other Savings 2 - reduction in contingencies	-168			
Other Savings 3 (Please Specify)				
Please specify the other savings and any other comments:				
Total Efficiency Savings	-606	-828	-448	
Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets	12.82%	17.56%	6.70%	12.36%
Efficiency Savings Target	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Over/(Under)	10.82%	15.56%	4.70%	10.36%

Asset Management and Investment in Technology

	Capital Savings	Revenue Savings
Hybrid Cloud / Server room hardware removal	£500k	£60k
Microsoft 365 Consolidation (Cancellation of duplicate software)		£60k
Printer rationalisation		£30k
Mobile Phone Contracts		£20k
Unified Communications		£75k
Revised MDT Support		£25k
Extended hardware lifecycle	£20k	
Increased social value from managed service contract		£30k
Software licences		£30k
Total Savings	£477k	£175k

National Frameworks Utilised

CDDFRS Department	Description	Supplier	Framework
Estates	Office Furniture and Home Work	Levant Office Interiors Ltd	NEPO
ICT	Microsoft Enterprise	Phoenix Software	Crown Commercial Services
Assets	Medical Supplies	Aero Healthcare	Police and Crime Commission
Assets	Supply of Gases	BOC	YPO
HR	Fitness Equipment	Life Fitness	ESPO
ICT	Provision of Mobile Voice and Data Services	British Telecommunications PLC	Crown Commercial Services
Assets	Cargo Pants		ESPO
Transport	Provision of Fuel Cards	Allstar Business Solutions	NFCC
ICT	Nintex Support	Synergi	Crown Commercial Services
Community Safety	Safe and Wellbeing Equipment	Thomas Kneale	West Midlands Fire Service
Estates	Water Coolers	Cooleraid	ESPO
Training	Trauma Instruction and Clinical Governance	Trauma and Resuscitation Services	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority
Transport	Supply and Fit Tyres	Michelin	Crown Commercial Services
Estates	Waste and Recycling Collection	Suez	ESPO

Community Safety	Supply of Smoke Alarms	FireAngel	West Midlands Fire Service
Estates	Hand Dryers and Washroom Services	PHS	ESPO
Assets	Softshell Jackets	Greenhams	ESPO
Assets	Various Emergency Response Equip	Various	West Midlands Fire Service
ICT	Wide Area Network	DCC	YPO
Estates	Road Marking and Resurfacing	Tarmac Trading	YPO
Assets	Managed Care - Uniform cleaning and repair	Elis	YPO
Finance	Fixed Asset Valuation Service	Align Property	ESPO
Estates	General Builders Works	Cole Construction	YPO
Finance	Green Vehicle Salary Sacrifice Scheme	Lex Autolease	Crown Commercial Services
Assets	Janitorial Supplies	Greenhams	NEPO
Assets	PPE Uniform	Bristol Uniforms	Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority
Transport	Supply of Vehicle Parts	Fleet Factors	NEPO
Transport	Supply of lubricants and oils	GB Lubricants	NEPO
Transport	Heating oil and Fuel	Your NRG	NEPO
HR	SIFT and FRS Ability Test	HR Solutions	COMIT
Finance	Travel Management Service	Click Travel	NEPO
Assets	Stationery	Lyreco	NEPO

Estates	Sanitary Disposal Units	Citron Hygiene	ESPO
Estates	Supply of Gas	Corona Energy	NEPO
Assets	Provision of Breathing Apparatus	Draeger	Devon and Somerset FR
Estates	Supply of Electricity	EDF	NEPO
Estates	Light Fittings, Lamps etc	Edmundson Electrical	NEPO
Estates	Confidential Shredding	Riverdale Paper	NEPO
Assets	Provision of Water Rescue PPE	Safequip Ltd	YPO
Training	Modular Buildings	Integra	ESPO
Estates	Portable Electrical Testing	PHS	ESPO

Gap Analysis of Firefighter Utilisation Survey against CDDFRS internal productivity survey

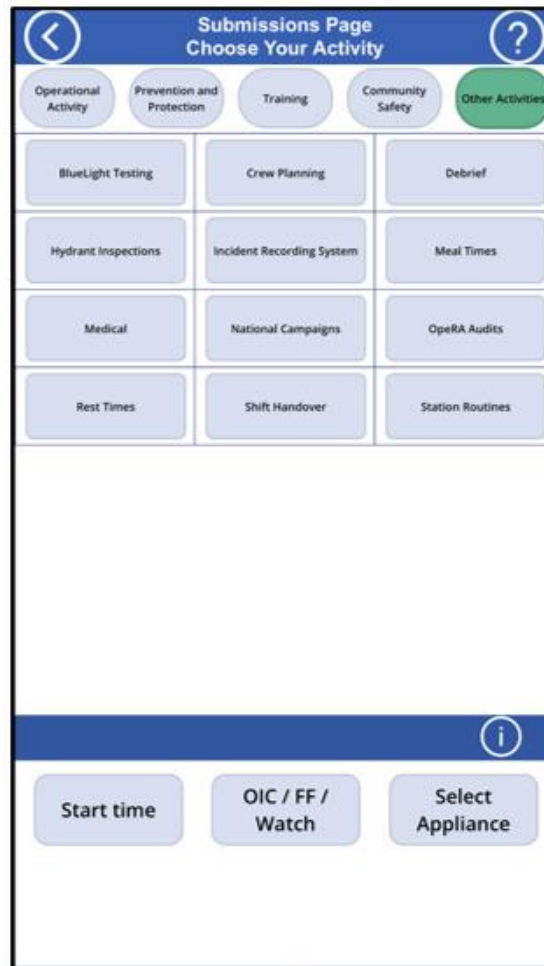
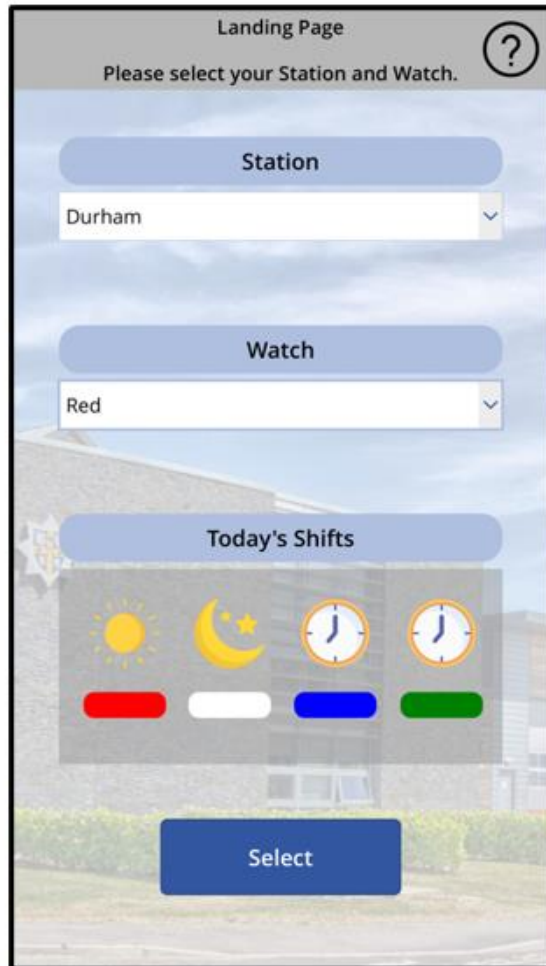
HO Survey location	FF Utilisation HO Survey Category	Internal activity captured	Internal users guide
Page 2	Operational Activity (Fire inc/FA/Non fire inc)	Incidents	Incidents, travel, recording, false alarms, UFS, recording decisions, debriefs
Page 2	Standby callouts	Standbys	Incident standbys, prearranged, travel time
Page 3	Prevention visits (completed/ unable to complete)	Home Fire Safety Visit	Planning, travel, HFSV, recording
Page 3	Fire safety audits (completed/ unable to complete)	Fire safety audits	Planning, travel, audits, recording
	7 2(d) visits	ORI & familiarisation	7(2)d familiarisation

	Enforcement & prosecution activity	N/A	N/A
Page 4	Practical Training (excluding fitness) – (station specific, cross service, external multi agency exercises)	Mandatory courses	BA, RTC, W@H, IC, HGV, EFAD driving
		Tactical Exercises	Planning, attending, neighbouring services, national resilience, multi-agency, debriefs
		Core Ops Training	Practical & Equipment
		Specialist training	L2 & L3 W@H, water rescue, boat, ALP, HVP, animal rescue, MDU, HMEPU, water bowser, MTA, wildfire, foam, welfare vehicle
Page 4	E-learning	Core ops training	Theory & learn pro, sharing, operational guidance, JESIP, recording
Page 4	Fitness	Physical Training	Gym Time
Page 4	Other training	N/A	N/A

Page 5	Incident recording system (IRS) admin	Station Routines	IRS
Page 5	Other admin	Station routines	admin recording, FireWatch, Business Continuity, finance, consumables
		People development	Appraisals & reviews, mentoring, apprentice support, IFE study
Page 5	Equipment checks and testing	Blue Light Testing	Appliances, equipment, PPE
Page 5	Crew Planning	Station routines	Watch planning
Page 5	Meal Times	Staff welfare	Meal breaks
Page 5	Rest times (including stand down)	Staff welfare	Rest periods
Page 5	Other station routines conducted on a shift	Community Engagement	School visits, partnership working, community groups, safeguarding
		National campaigns	Water, Home Fire Safety week, road safety

		Arson reduction	EVAs, blue light runs, education, recording
		ORI & familiarisation	Planning, ORI gathering, recording
		Station routines	Station routines, watch references, meetings, H&S audits, premises, sharing comms, sharing learning
		Hydrant Inspections	Planning, travel, inspecting, recording
		Staff Welfare	Trauma support

Productivity Application Front End Interface



CDDFRS Performance Indicators 2024/25

PI 01 Deaths Arising from Accidental Fires in Dwellings
PI 02 Primary Fires
PI 03 Accidental Dwelling Fires
PI 04 Injuries Arising from Accidental Fires in Dwellings
PI 05 Total Secondary Fires
PI 06 Number of Response Standards Met
PI 06a Dwelling Fires Attended within 8 Minutes
PI 06b Non Domestic Property Fires Attendance within 9 Minutes
PI 06c Road Traffic Collisions Attended within 10 Minutes
PI 07 Number of Home Fire Safety Visits
PI 09a Deliberate Primary Fires
PI 09b Deliberate Secondary Fires
PI 10a Primary Fires in Non Domestic Premises
PI 10b Primary Fires in Non Domestic Premises (enforceable under the FSO by CDDFRS)
PI 11a Fire Control Calls Received and Mobilised within 90 Seconds
PI 11c(i) Number of times an appliance was unable to proceed to an incident
PI 13 Percentage of Building Regulations completed within required time period (15 working days)
PI 14 False Alarms Caused by Automatic Fire Detection Apparatus
PI 15 Percentage of Licensing Applications completed within required time period (28 days)
PI 16a Availability of on call appliances - 1st pump
PI 17 Number of Fire Safety Audits Undertaken
PI 42 Percentage of Home Fire Safety Visits To High Risk People/Properties
PI 70 Number of Hydrants Inspections
PI 81 Percentage of station based operational personnel maintaining competence
PI 18b Complaints Upheld
PI 18c Formal Complaints Progressed to the Local Government Ombudsman (and upheld)
PI 20 % of Formal Complaints Completed and Responded to within 20 Working Days

PI 19 Freedom of Information Progressed to the Information Commissioner and Upheld
PI 24 % of Freedom of Information Completed and Responded to within 20 Working Days
PI 30 % of Emergency Estates Repairs Responded to on Time
PI 38 All Staff Sickness Excluding Retained Personnel
PI 40 All Staff Sickness
PI 41 Staff Sickness Wholetime and Control Personnel
PI 43 % of operational new starters from underrepresented groups
PI 44 Retention of Under Represented Groups
PI 46 Percentage of completed Annual Reviews
PI 47 Percentage of vacancies against authorised establishment for all staff
PI 62 Network Availability
PI 63 ICT Service Availability - Mobilisation
PI 65 % Support Calls Fixed in SLA
PI 69 Total Number of accidents to personnel
PI 72 Number of vehicle accidents classified as CDDFRS driver's fault
PI 73 Number of local H&S investigations incomplete after 28 days
PI 74 Number of H&S investigation actions overdue their specified completion date
PI 36 % of operational personnel passing a fitness test
PI 37 % of operational personnel with an in date fitness assessment
PI 82 Percentage of risk critical personal development plans (PDPs) actioned within 6 weeks
PI 90 Percentage of station based operational drivers maintaining their driving competence
PI 88 Transport LGV Inspection Compliance
PI 89a Availability of Pumping Appliances on Station (mechanical/ electrical reliability)
PI 89c Availability of Special Appliances on Station (mechanical/ electrical reliability)