



Financial Strategy 2020-21 to 2024-25

First Annual Update



Buckinghamshire
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
we save lives



Progress to date

against the implementation plan



Buckinghamshire
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
we save lives

First Year 2020-21

Progress against the implementation plan

Activities

- Continue to lobby for an increase in the Council Tax Referendum Limit and for other grants to become part of the Settlement Funding Assessment (slide 10)
- Value for Money (VFM) initial review by external provider (slides 5-6)
- Review estate footprint (slide 13)
- Review of Partnership arrangements
- Establishment of Portfolio Management Office (slide 17)
- Recruit Pensions Officer

Second Year 2021-22

Progress against the implementation plan

Activities

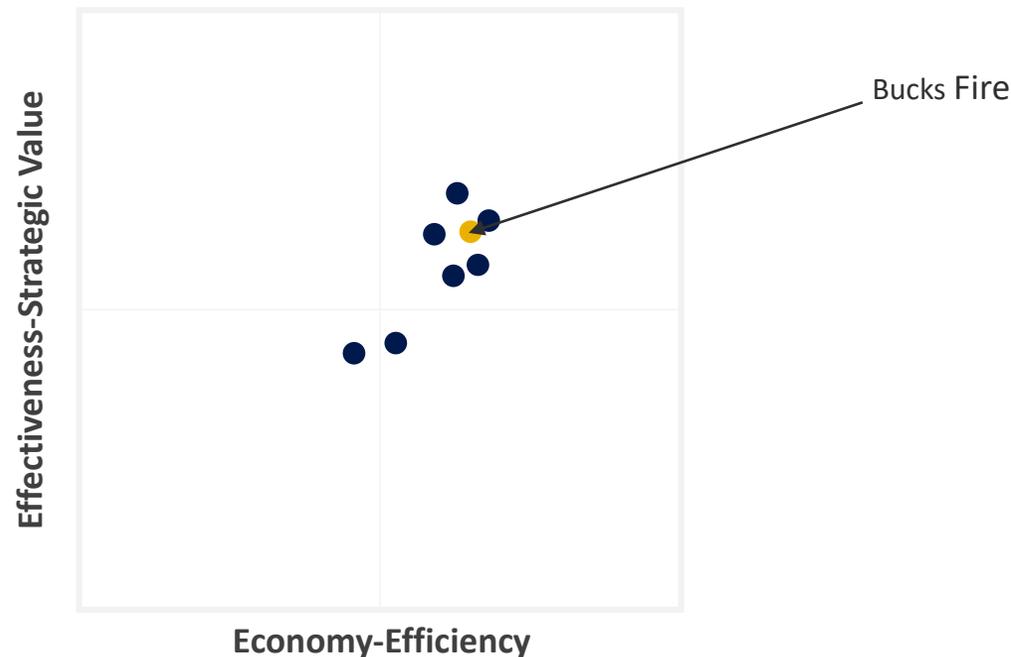
- Review of system requirements and processes and upgrade/replace system
- Review of budget monitoring and performance reporting arrangements (slide 7)
- Review skillset of non-Finance staff and elected Members

Value for Money Review

Key Findings

“Bucks FRS performs as strongly as any in terms of economy and efficiency”

“Bucks FRS also performs similarly to the better performing services in terms of outcomes”



Value for Money Review

Areas for improvement

Key Points

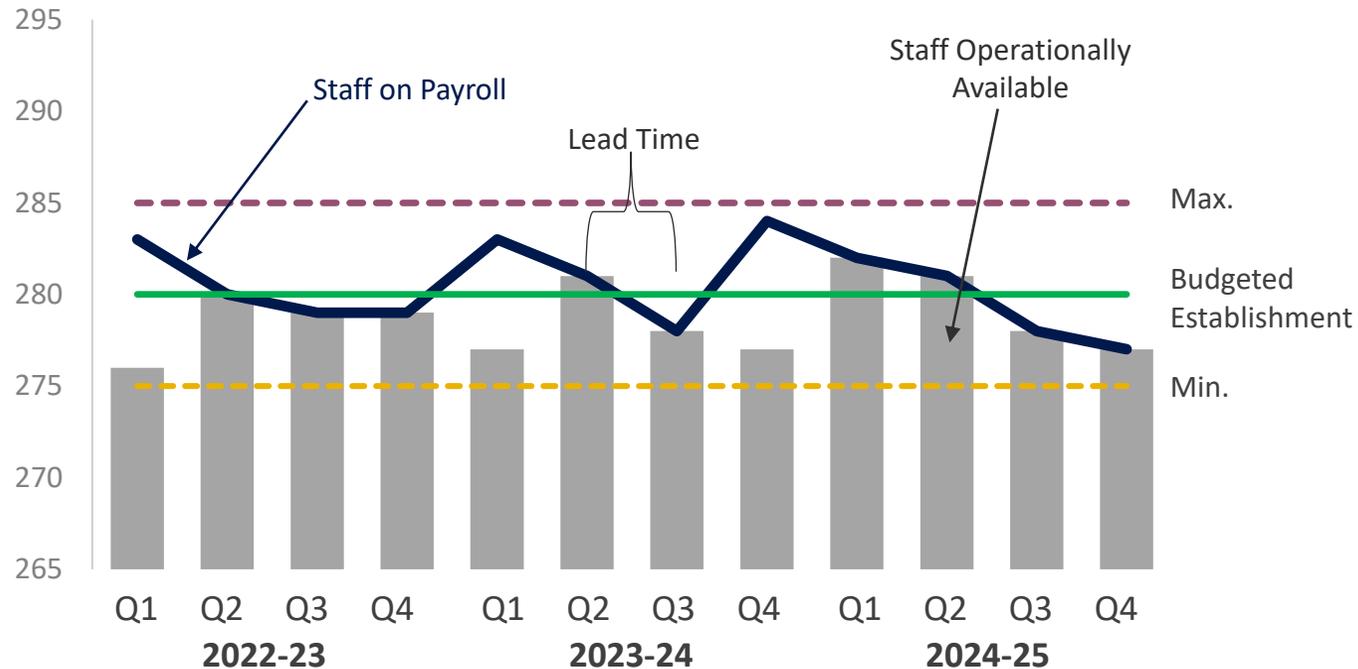
- **Performance Management Framework** – complete the work now commenced to affirm the core objectives of the service
- **Stakeholder Engagement** – prioritise the work now being planned and resourced to improve customer engagement
- **Staff Productivity**
 - better utilise staff to contribute to prevention and protection activities
 - deliver the leadership development and cultural change programmes necessary to help middle managers support change

Budget Monitoring

and Performance Reporting Arrangements

Wider review of our performance framework underway

Initial step will be to combine reports on workforce planning with our financial reporting (this chart is an illustrative example)





Progress to date

against the aims in the Strategy



Buckinghamshire
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
we save lives

Our aims

Categorised into four areas



- Performance



- People



- Governance



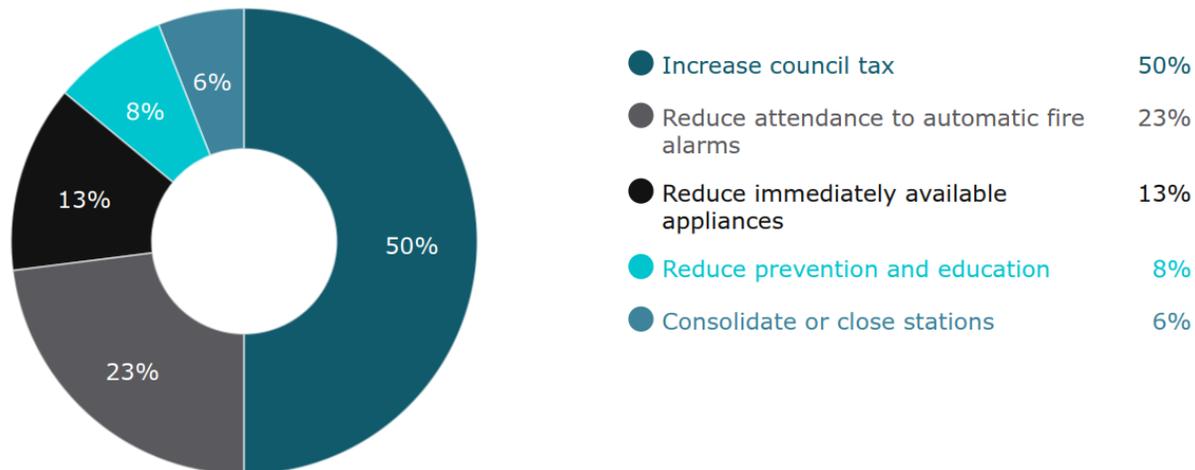
- External

Performance

Ability to increase Council Tax above the current limit of 2%

Key Points

- Budget 2021 – indicative limit remained 2%
- Engaged with the public – increasing council tax is their preferred option to address the financial challenge



Performance

Other grant funding to be brought within our core Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)

Key Points

- Pensions funding to be included in SFA from 2022-23 (£1.2m per year)
- Firelink (Airwave) and New Dimensions (USAR) still outside of SFA
- Firelink funding to be discontinued in 2025-26
- Timing of upcoming USAR review still uncertain
- Investing in USAR training facility at Aylesbury to put ourselves in the best position possible for any review

Performance

Increase expenditure on frontline staff as a percentage of total expenditure

Key Points

- Not been able to do this yet as not had additional flexibility on Council Tax
- Where we would look to spend the money if we could increase Council Tax by £5
 - Firefighters (including Flexi-Firefighters)
 - Prevention and Protection staff
 - Improving availability of on-call stations

Performance

Further reduce overhead costs by reducing the size of the estate

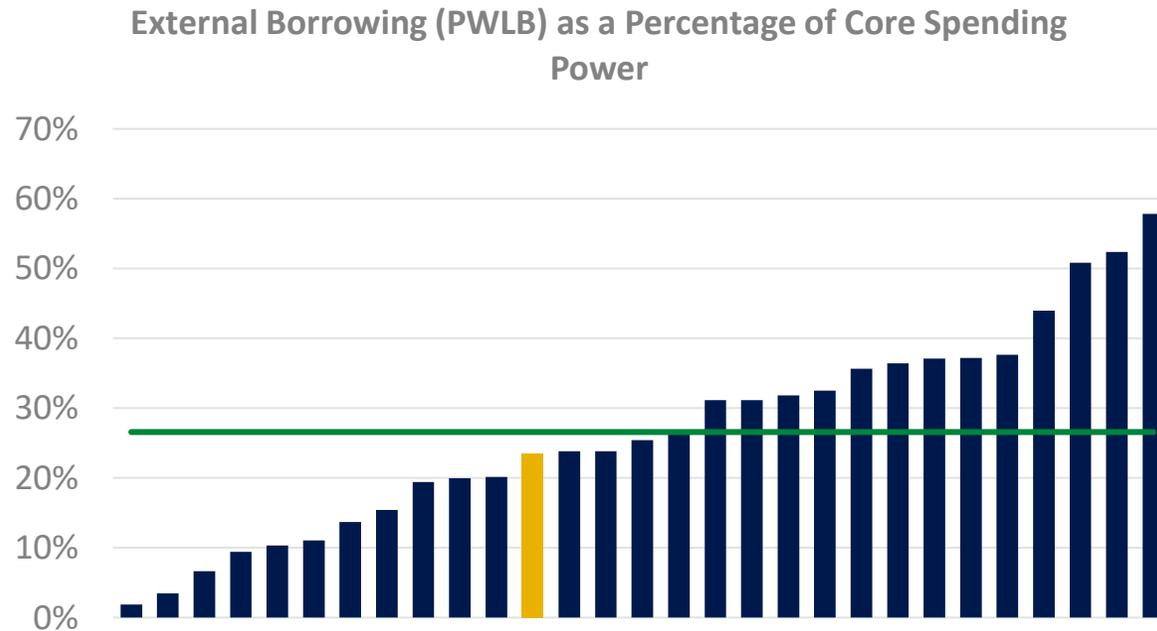
Key Points

- Looking to realise benefits of increased working from home
- Longer-term project to exit Unit 7 but large amount of work to relocate stores and USAR
- Sharing our estate to share costs
- Successfully challenged rateable values on a number of our sites
- Environment and Climate Action Plan to help reduce energy usage

Performance

No additional borrowing and repay deals that mature

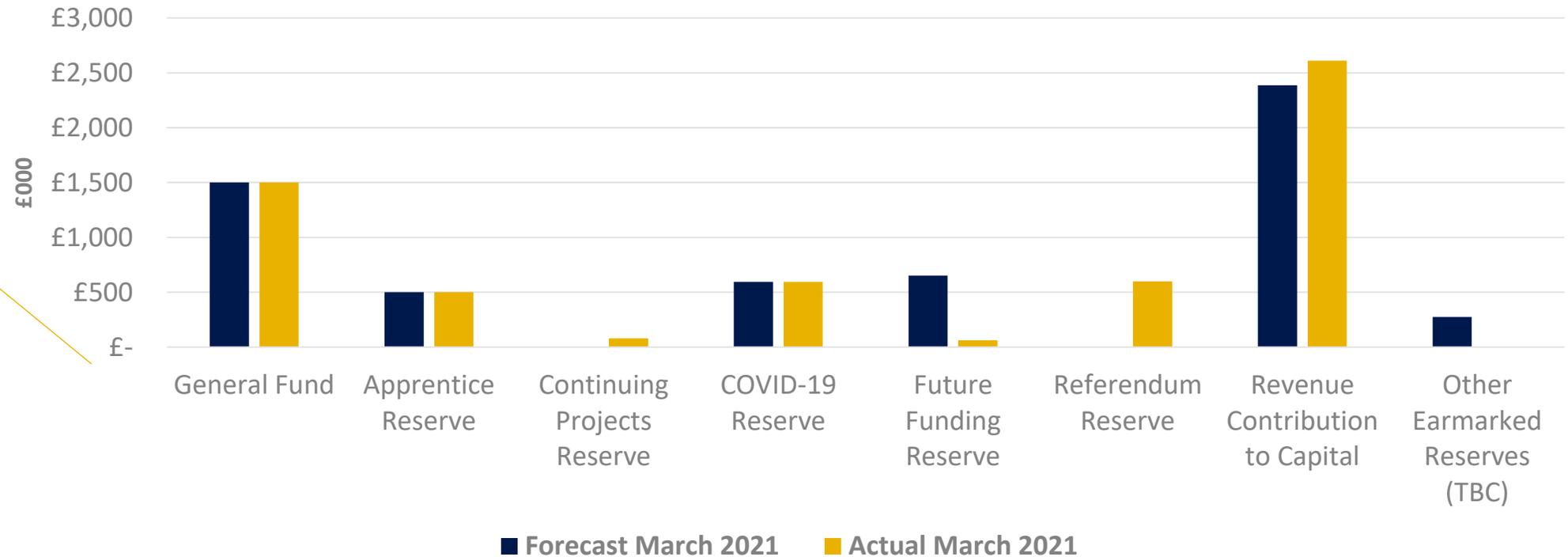
We have not yet had to increase borrowing, but if we cannot raise Council Tax by £5 one option is to consider future borrowing



Performance

Reserves maintained at current levels

Position at 31 March 2021 was close to the forecast within the Strategy:



People

Progress against the implementation plan

All aims

- Minor change to staff structure to incorporate dedicated pensions expertise
- No overall increase in the number of Finance, Procurement or Payroll staff
- Retain existing staff expertise, knowledge and skills as far as possible
- Continue to work closely with Lead Member
- The Chief Finance Officer remains a member of the Senior Management Team.

Governance

Portfolio Management Office supports Finance and the wider organisation to deliver transformational change

Key Points

- Prioritising what to focus on in conjunction with the work on the performance management framework



Governance

Progress against the implementation plan

Other aims

- Non-Finance staff and elected Members assessed as having a high level of financial expertise
- Systems and processes further optimised, especially with regards to the end-to-end processes for payments to staff
- Policies updated to reflect changes in legislation and best practice

External

Pensions remedy to be fully implemented

Key Points

- Legislation not due until October 2023
- Made decision to pay prospective cases in March 2021
- Adopted framework to make payment to retirees in November 2021
- All retrospective cases targeted to be remedied by April 2022
- Continue to process prospective cases (these will be ongoing until the last person with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 retires)
- Will need to revisit all cases when legislation introduced

External

Other aims

Key Points

- Finances able to respond to changes in user demand/profile
- Ensure external partners maintain the same high standards of conduct with regard to financial administration and corporate governance that apply throughout the Authority and that they contribute to the achievement of the Authority's objectives

External

HMICFRS to note improvements to efficiency in their report

Key Points

- Last report - HMICFRS said we don't have enough money because of the funding situation we find ourselves in
- Will not receive second report until later this month
- Since the cause for concern was raised our funding position hasn't improved significantly (except for additional certainty regarding continuation of pensions funding)

External

Influence within the NFCC and with Home Office secures a good funding settlement for the Service

Key Points

- Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement expected w/c 13 December 2021
- Headline increases of circa 3% per year for Local Government announced at Budget 2021
- Likely fire sector will be lower than this
- Expected three-year settlement will give some certainty to help us plan going forward



Summary of key points of First Annual Update



Buckinghamshire
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
we save lives

Summary

of First Annual Update

Key Points

- Funding position has not improved significantly since HMICFRS raised their cause for concern
- Three-year Comprehensive Spending Review will give more certainty
- Council Tax referendum limits to be announced at Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement later this month
- The outcome of the Settlement will determine how many firefighters and appliances we can afford



Any questions?



Buckinghamshire
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
we save lives