



Efficiency and Productivity Plan

2026-27



Buckinghamshire
Fire & Rescue Service
Making a difference together

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Budget

The following table shows the sources of income and planned spending for the financial years 2024-25 through to 2028-29:

Revenue Expenditure	2024-25 £000	2025-26 £000	2026-27 £000	2027-28 £000	2028-29 £000
Direct Employee	28,855	30,737	32,007	33,008	34,100
Indirect Employee	938	1,126	1,183	1,183	1,183
Premises	2,324	2,368	2,771	2,864	2,959
Transport	1,256	1,337	1,307	1,351	1,396
Supplies and Services	6,066	6,410	6,485	7,085	8,005
Capital Financing	1,693	2,661	1,930	894	1
Other	670	-501	-240	0	-100
Total	41,802	44,138	45,443	46,385	47,544
Income	2024-25 £000	2025-26 £000	2026-27 £000	2027-28 £000	2028-29 £000
Actual Received from Precept	-26,192	-28,530	-30,471	-32,509	-34,768
Local Government Finance Settlement	-13,010	-13,081	-11,400	-10,600	-9,700
Other Grants	-933	-877	-1,769	-1,769	-1,769
Income Raised Locally	-1,667	-1,650	-1,803	-1,507	-1,307
Total	-41,802	-44,138	-45,443	-46,385	-47,544

Based on the anticipated cost pressures, planned efficiency savings, and forecast funding, the Service is showing a balanced budget position for 2026-27 through to 2028-29.

Reserves

The table below shows the forecast usable reserve levels over the life of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP):

Usable Reserves	2024-25 £000	2025-26 £000	2026-2027 £000	2027-28 £000	2028-29 £000
General Reserves	2,040	2,040	2,040	2,040	2,040
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	5,290	241	-	-	-
Earmarked Capital Reserves	6,221	11,840	5,283	2,907	1,687
Total	13,551	14,121	7,323	4,947	3,627

As can be seen from the table, at the end of 2024-25 approximately half of the total usable reserves are held for investment in the capital programme, which consists predominately of investment in our estate, fleet, and ICT capabilities. The amount to be held in the General Fund to mitigate the risk of unforeseen circumstances and major one-off events is set at just over £2m.

On 1 April 2025 the Service launched its new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and this funding will be used to help achieve the objectives identified within that Plan. The Plan will focus on several key areas that require significant capital investment, including:

- Optimising the use of assets to improve response and resilience, including to the increasing threat of extreme weather events such as wildfire and flooding.
- Investment in local training facilities to further enhance the service provided to the public.
- Maximising opportunities to improve productivity, efficiency and effectiveness through innovation and the use of up-to-date technology.
- A significant refurbishment/rebuild of High Wycombe fire station.

Efficiency

The table below summarises the cashable efficiency savings in non-pay budget costs the Service has made during 2024-25 and 2025-26:

	Actual 2024-25 £000		Actual 2025-26 £000	
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	39,470		42,989	
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	28,855		30,737	
Non Pay Budget	10,615		12,252	
Efficiency Savings	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
Rent/Rates	150			
Other Technology Improvements	43			
Decreased Usage	20			
Net Borrowing Costs	25			
Other – Reduction in Bank Costs			311	
Other – Reduction in Cross Border Charges			30	
Total Efficiency Savings		238		341
Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets		2.24%		2.78%

An outline of the efficiencies delivered within each category is as follows:

- Rent/Rates – the Service vacated its leasehold property that accommodated the USAR capability, central stores, office accommodation and main meeting room. This has been enabled by the increase in remote office working and optimising the wider use of our estate.
- Other Technology Improvements – the investment in Office 365 and remote working has enabled efficiencies in courses and conference fees, mileage, subsistence, and travel budgets across the Service.
- Decreased usage – smaller improvements across a range of activities, including reducing the use of consultancy and third-party legal services.
- Net Borrowing Costs – the planned repayment of historic borrowing will reduce the cost of interest payments in future years. Further savings were realised because of the early repayment of another loan.
- Bank Costs – improved workforce planning, introduction of new roles, and increasing skill levels across key areas has reduced the number of additional (bank) shifts that are required to maintain the same number of frontline pumping appliances.
- Cross Border Costs – the actions taken to reduce bank costs have also seen a reduction in the number of times the Service has required support from neighbouring fire and rescue services.

The table below summarises the cashable efficiency savings in non-pay budget costs the Service forecasts to make during 2026-27 and 2027-28:

	Forecast 2026-27 £000		Forecast 2027-28 £000	
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	43,880		44,878	
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	32,006		33,007	
Non Pay Budget	11,874		11,871	
Efficiency Savings	<i>Recurrent</i>	<i>Non-recurrent</i>	<i>Recurrent</i>	<i>Non-recurrent</i>
Fleet			40	
Other Transport Costs	25			
National Procurement Savings		255		
Revenue Expenditure Charged to Capital			133	300
Total Efficiency Savings	280		473	
Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets	2.36%		3.98%	

An outline of the efficiencies to be delivered within each category are as follows:

- Fleet – As part of its On-Call Improvement Programme the Service reviewed and modernised its response arrangements where historic or elements of the existing model no longer reflected current risk, demand or workforce realities. This line shows the savings that will be made from servicing and maintaining fewer On-Call fire engines.
- Other Transport Costs – actions taken to reduce vehicle related insurance claims and improvements to the claims handling process have resulted in a lower insurance premium.
- National Procurement Savings – the Competition and Markets Authority imposed a charge control order capping the price Motorola could charge for the use of the Airwave Network, reducing the charge payable. This saving will not recur for more than two to three years as all services will be required to transfer to the Emergency Services Network (ESN).
- Revenue Expenditure Charged to Capital – this line shows the savings from the On-Call Improvement Programme resulting from the need to purchase fewer fire engines and associated equipment (recurrent savings) and the avoidance of future capital expenditure at two sites that are to be closed (non-recurrent).

It should be noted that all efficiency savings resulting from the On-Call Improvement Programme will be reinvested into the On-Call service to further enhance effectiveness and resilience.

Detailed plans for the efficiency savings to be realised in 2028-29 will be developed during 2026-27 and 2027-28.

Income

The table below summarises the income the Service has generated during 2024-25 and 2025-25:

Category	Actual 2024-25 £000		Actual 2025-26 £000	
	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
Income generated from charging policies	643		780	
Income generated from shared premises	472		457	
Income generated from interest on investments	1,229		1,324	
Income generated from other sources		141		218
Total Efficiency Savings	2,344	141	2,561	218

The table below summarises the income the Service forecasts to generate during 2026-27 through to 2028-29:

Category	Forecast 2026-27 £000		Forecast 2027-28 £000		Forecast 2028-29 £000	
	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
Income generated from charging policies	546		450		450	
Income generated from shared premises	457		457		457	
Income generated from interest on investments	800		600		400	
Income generated from other sources	-		-		-	
Total Efficiency Savings	1,803		1,507		1,307	

An outline of the income delivered within each category is as follows:

- Charging policies – covers a range of services for which the Service charges third parties. An element of this relates to charges made to telecommunications providers for siting their equipment on our drill towers, which is forecast to reduce in future years as contracts end.
- Share premises – the Service acts as a landlord for other public bodies on a number of our sites. The most significant income here relates to the income received from Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service for their use of the tri-service Blue Light Hub in Milton Keynes.
- Interest on investments – this is generated from the in-house treasury management of the Service’s cash balances. The income generated is significantly affected by market rates.
- Other sources – ah-hoc income generated throughout the year, for example, costs recovered from seconding officers to other organisations

Productivity

Collaboration

The Service has long established collaboration with Thames Valley FRS partners, including a shared control room which mobilises the quickest assets to an incident, irrespective of Service geography. Alongside this, there is strong operational alignment in relation to policy, procedure, breathing apparatus and wider fleet and equipment. We also share with TVFRS partners and TVP a joint forensic fire investigation unit. The Service also collaborates extensively with Thames Valley Police and South-Central Ambulance Service, notably at the West Ashland Blue Light Hub.

Asset Management and IT Investment

The Service continues to invest in its assets to ensure they support the modern workforce while improving its use of technology. This has included investment in a fixed-term ICT trainer and one of the key items on the Annual Delivery Plan 2026-27 is to develop a roadmap for AI integration across key functions and define next steps for implementation.

Resourcing

A key part of the CRMP 2025-2030 that was launched on 1 April 2025 was the updated response model to ensure that resourcing is aligned to risk and demand. Further refinements to our operational leave guidance aim to further reduce the number of bank shifts required to support the model.

Income Generation

A significant proportion of the Service's income is generated through the in-house Treasury Management team, which continues to outperform the relevant industry benchmarks and comparator services.

Outcome-based Activities

The Service continues to exceed its targets for the number of home fire safety visits completed, and just as importantly, ensuring these are targeted at the most vulnerable. The partnership with hazard alley in Milton Keynes continues to be highly productive and efficient in delivering fire safety education to children across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Although the number of fire safety audits delivered is slightly below the target, it demonstrates a significant increase in the level of activity from the previous year.

Workforce Capacity

The Service has invested in a number of fixed-term roles to ensure that capacity can be flexed as required to effectively support key organisational priorities.

Increasing Productivity

The Service continues to set itself stretching targets and hold itself to account through both internal governance reporting of KPIs as well as effective Member scrutiny.

In 2024-25 the Service updated its attendance policy for non-domestic automatic fire alarms (AFAs). The extract from our most recent quarterly KPI report shows that the number of attendances to AFAs is approximately half of the previous five-year average:

		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly	Prev 5 year	114	115	117	121	122	140	147	139	131	120	100	109	B < 10%
	2025/2026	62	62	46	65	66	66	71	78	56				G Within 10%
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B				A > 10%
														R > 20%
Cumulative	Prev 5 year	114	229	346	467	589	729	877	1016	1147	1267	1366	1476	What is good
	2025/2026	62	124	170	235	301	367	438	516	572				
	Status	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B				

This policy change has enabled more productive use of working time, contributing to improved capacity for undertaking prevention work and training activities, as well as enabling capacity to improve Protection/Fire Safety activity undertaken by response crews.

Service Changes and Achievements

What is the Service doing differently this year?

The Service has completed phase 1 of its On-Call Improvement Programme.

Why are these changes being made?

To ensure that resources are aligned to the risks identified in our CRMP, and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service.

What is the Service's biggest success this year?

The Service has successfully embedded enhanced performance reporting and governance arrangements, ensuring that KPIs and key project milestones are monitored and appropriate action is taken to ensure that the Service is delivering on its promise to the public:

1. **We are committed...** to providing an excellent, modern and agile Fire & Rescue Service for our community.
2. **We are dedicated...** to having the right people, at the right time with the right skills to keep you safe.
3. **Together...**we will work to protect and safeguard people and places.