

# Recruitment Pack

## Head of Finance and Treasurer (Section 151 Officer)

March 2026



**Cheshire**  
Fire & Rescue Service

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

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## A message from the Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority



**Cllr Stef Nelson**  
Chair of Cheshire Fire  
Authority

Dear Candidate

Thank you for your interest in the role of Head of Finance and Treasurer.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has developed in recent years to become one of the most respected fire and rescue services in the United Kingdom, acknowledged by many accolades, awards and progressive initiatives. Our mission is simple: to be an outstanding Service where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires, and other emergencies.

Our core strength in achieving this is our people, as attracting the best staff to work for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is fundamental in enabling us to deliver our strategic aims while maintaining a close connection with our communities. This strength is underpinned by a strong set of values that illustrate our culture and collective desire to be inclusive, do the right thing, act with compassion and make a difference in whatever way we can, for as many people as we can.

Set against the backdrop of a range of financial and economic challenges, the need for strong leadership and a clear vision for how we continue to assign resources to engage with our communities and people has never been so important. As such we are looking for an exceptional candidate to join us on our journey towards being outstanding. As the Head of Finance and Treasurer, you will play a key role in support of the Service's ambition to be at the fore-front of the UK's blue light services through the delivery of robust planning, management and oversight of the Authority's finances whilst fulfilling the statutory obligations of the Treasurer and Section 151 officer.

The role will also require you to lead, develop and set the strategic direction for our highly committed Finance team in order to ensure that regularity, propriety and value for money is achieved in all the Fire Authority's financial activities whilst supporting and progressing the strategic priorities of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

To be successful you will need to demonstrate a strong track record of visible leadership and delivering results as well as a wholehearted commitment to inclusion, staff engagement and the ability to maximise the performance and potential of our staff and services. You will also need to demonstrate your understanding of the strategic and political issues affecting the Service and be willing to work flexibly as a member of the Senior Leadership Team. This role provides an exciting opportunity for an experienced finance professional with a proven track record of achievement.

If you think you are ready for this new challenge, then we would welcome an application from you and wish you every success in the selection process.

Yours sincerely

**Cllr Stef Nelson**  
Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority

## Living and leading in Cheshire

**Cheshire is a county of contrasts, making it not only one of the most rewarding and exciting areas to lead a fire and rescue service, but also one of the best places in the country to live.**

### Operational landscape

Your challenge as Head of Finance and Treasurer will be to help keep everyone who lives, works and spends time in Cheshire safe. The county's rich industrial, agricultural and social heritage brings with it a unique and complex set of response, prevention, protection and resilience demands, including:

- the highest number of Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites in the UK, including major petrochemical, chemical, nuclear and pharmaceutical manufacturing and processing plants
- critical national energy infrastructure, including oil and gas supply lines, the huge oil refinery at Stanlow, gas, coal and waste fired power stations, onshore windfarms and solar installations
- some the country's most important heritage assets, including more than 140 Grade I listed buildings and countless other sites of historic importance
- significant transport and distribution infrastructure, including the M6, M62, M56 and M53 motorways and 877km of urban and rural A roads handling 5.9bn vehicles a year, the West Coast mainline and HS2 route and the approaches to two international airports



- flooding and water rescue risks posed by the rivers Mersey, Dee, Weaver, Dane and Bollin. There is also the Manchester Ship Canal, a wider canal network covering 92 miles and other expanses of inland water
- the expansive Cheshire plain, Dee estuary marshes, forests at Delamere and Macclesfield and parts of the Peak District National Park at increasing risk of fires driven by climate change
- mass visitor attractions such as Chester Zoo, and shopping, leisure and theme parks, as well as major social and sporting events like Creamfields, Car Fest North, Chester Races and the Cheshire Show
- diverse social needs and a prevention plan that recognises an ageing population in the relatively affluent rural parts of the county, at the same time as pockets of high deprivation and disadvantage in industrial and urban areas.

## Quality of life

Although the operational landscape might present challenges, living in Cheshire will reward you in lots of different ways. With its vibrant city and bustling towns, stunning natural landscape and wealth of things to do, there is no better place to enjoy your free time.

### Cheshire boasts:

- the UK's biggest and most visited zoo at Chester, as well as leisure centres, country parks, museums, the UK's only complete circuit of medieval city walls, National Trust properties and other attractions to keep all the family entertained
- a rich cultural programme with countless festivals and venues in Chester, Warrington, Crewe and Macclesfield staging plays, touring productions and events all year round
- a lively social scene with cafes, bars and restaurants lining high streets and squares and excellent country pubs throughout the county
- miles of walks through breathtaking countryside and forests
- major horse racing and equestrian events, football and rugby league games, golf tournaments and several half and full marathons
- first class shopping at the Cheshire Oaks designer outlet, Chester's unique two-tiered city centre rows and at Warrington
- excellent road and rail links, with Liverpool, Manchester and North Wales on your doorstep and London and the Lake District less than two hours away
- a thriving sub-regional economy and employment opportunities for anyone relocating to Cheshire with you, with leading manufacturers, major distribution hubs, financial institutions and a growing science and research community.

## Advertisement

### Appointment of Head of Finance and Treasurer (Section 151 Officer)

Based at Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service HQ, Winsford, Cheshire, with scope for some agile working.

Salary: £83k - £91k (pay award due on 1st April) - subject to experience

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is a high performing, innovative and progressive organisation that has high ambitions for the service that it provides to the communities and people of Cheshire.

We are looking for a new Head of Finance and Treasurer (section 151 officer), reporting directly to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive and as a member of the Service Leadership Team, this influential senior role is an exciting and varied opportunity for an experienced finance professional to help the Service ensure long term financial sustainability whilst ensuring robust financial systems are in place to provide appropriate governance and assurance.

The successful candidate will be responsible for delivering a highly effective finance and treasury function that supports the strategic priorities of the Service and help to navigate the Service through the challenging financial times ahead. They will also operate as the senior principal advisor to the Service and Cheshire Fire Authority on all matters relating to the achievement and approval of a balanced budget together with reserve, capital and treasury management strategies. Whilst the primary focus of the role is strategic finance, the role will also have oversight and responsibility for other key strategic functions as delegated.

You will need to be an exceptional and adaptable leader who has a strong background in finance, ideally in the public sector, coupled with a proven track record of driving efficiencies and value for money. You should be able to demonstrate an aptitude towards ensuring prudent financial management whilst also challenging the status quo to help deliver organisation-wide improvements. The role will be demanding but rewarding and we are seeking individuals with sound judgement, and the ability to assimilate and explain complex information and provide constructive challenge and fresh thinking.

We are committed to advancing diversity at all levels of our organisation and would encourage applications from women and people from a minority ethnic background, particularly for senior leadership roles where representation remains limited across the fire and rescue service. We recognise that talent and potential are not defined solely by traditional career paths or checklists of experience, and we welcome all applicants who can bring strategic vision, inclusive leadership, and a fresh perspective to this position. Please note, all applications received will be assessed purely on merit.

We can offer a generous benefits package which includes 35 days annual leave plus public holidays, membership of a defined benefit pension scheme with employer pension contributions of around 20%, various personal and professional development opportunities, Blue Light Card discount scheme, on site gym facilities and free parking, amongst other benefits.

To apply candidates are required to submit a CV accompanied by a supporting statement of up to 2,000 words, that demonstrates suitability and provides relevant examples against the job description and person specification. These should be emailed to **[recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk)** quoting job reference number **69 26 HOF**

For an informal discussion about the role please contact the Executive Support team via [executive.support@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:executive.support@cheshirefire.gov.uk) to arrange a telephone call with the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive.

Closing date for applications: **09:00hrs Thursday 19 March 2026.**

Full details about the post are available in a Recruitment Pack available on the [Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service website.](#)

### **Workplace adjustments and accommodations**

It is important that you consider at an early stage of the process if you would like to request arrangements that will assist you in completing the selection process. For example, in relation to disability; a neurodiverse condition such as dyslexia; pregnancy; religion or belief; or injury etc. Any requests for workplace adjustments will be treated with the utmost confidence. For support or further information please email: [recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk)

Appointment to this post is subject to a satisfactory Standard Disclosure and Barring Service check, medical and satisfactory references.

## Selection Process Overview

The selection of the Head of Finance and Treasurer (Section 151 Officer) will be undertaken by Members of Cheshire Fire Authority's Staffing Committee. The process will also involve members of the Senior Leadership Team.

To apply candidates are required to submit a CV accompanied by a supporting statement of 2,000 words that demonstrates suitability against the job description and person specification.

Closing date for applications will be 09:00hrs on Thursday 19 March 2026.

### Stage One – Thursday 26 March 2026

- Presentation (10 minutes) - 'What will you bring to the role of Head of Finance and Treasurer and how will you measure your success?'
- Interview with the Chief Fire Officer and Head of People and Organisational Development

### Stage Two – Friday 27 March 2026

- Presentation (10 minutes) - 'What will you bring to the role of Head of Finance and Treasurer and how will you measure your success?'
- Interview with Members of the Staffing Committee

### Reasonable Adjustments and Accommodations

It is important that you consider at an early stage of the process if you would like to request arrangements that will assist you in completing the selection process. For example, in relation to disability; a neurodiverse condition such as dyslexia; pregnancy; religion or belief; or injury etc. Any requests for reasonable adjustments will be treated with the utmost confidence.

For support or further information please email: [recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@cheshirefire.gov.uk)

### Post Process

The successful candidate will be issued with a conditional offer and will undergo pre-employment checks including standard DBS check, medical and references prior to the issue of a formal offer of appointment.

Feedback will be available to both successful and unsuccessful candidates upon request after the process has concluded.

# Job Description and Person Specification Head of Finance and Treasurer (Section 151 Officer)

## Job Description

<b>Job Title:</b>	<b>Head of Finance and Treasurer (Section 151 Officer)</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters Winsford, Cheshire</b>
<b>Post Number:</b>	<b>F019</b>
<b>Grade/Role:</b>	<b>SM8</b>
<b>Responsible to:</b>	<b>Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive</b>

## Job Purpose

To fulfil the statutory obligations of the Treasurer to the Cheshire Fire Authority, as set out in Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Sections 112, 113 and 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, ensuring that the financial affairs of the Authority are properly administered.

To act as senior advisor for all financial, budgetary, monetary, taxation and investment matters on behalf of the Authority, and to lead the Finance Department in ensuring robust planning, management and oversight of the Authority's finances across the organisation. To lead on and have strategic oversight of a range of corporate responsibilities/functions, as allocated.

Lead and maintain a fit for purpose Finance function which is able to deliver a high quality financial service in line with regulations, standards and policies. Provide an effective financial management service, linking to the strategic aims and objectives of the Authority and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

## Principal Responsibilities

- 1 To have oversight of the financial affairs of the Authority and to take appropriate action to ensure that they are properly administered by the relevant officers.
- 2 To ensure that regularity, propriety and value for money is achieved in all the Fire Authority's financial activities.

- 3** To ensure that the Authority maintains a robust financial control framework and that financial regulations are observed and updated, and the requirements of the financial scheme of delegation are observed.

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- 4** To ensure that the Fire Authority maintains a Medium Term Financial Plan and that this is approved by the Fire Authority at least annually.

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- 5** To ensure that the Fire Authority approves a balanced budget together with reserve, capital and treasury management strategies, fulfilling all statutory requirements in relation to the budget approval.

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- 6** To ensure that the Fire Authority prepares an annual Statement of Accounts in accordance with the statutory and regulatory framework, to sign those accounts for external audit, and to present for the Fire Authority's approval once the External Auditor has issued their opinion.

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- 7** To ensure that the Authority has in place a robust system of budget management, and that accurate, complete and timely financial information is provided to the Authority.

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- 8** To be responsible for the implementation, management and development of the Authority's financial IT systems and processes to maximise effective and efficient ways of working.

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- 9** To ensure that all financial statutory and non-statutory returns (for example to the Government and CIPFA) are completed when required.

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- 10** To secure appropriate external and internal audit arrangements and manage the relationship with the auditors, including acting as lead officer in respect of the Audit Committee.

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- 11** To report to the Authority and external auditor any unlawful or potentially unlawful expenditure by the Authority or the Fire Authority's Officers, or when expenditure is likely to exceed resources.

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- 12** To advise the Fire Authority in writing and in person (checking the accuracy of reports and ensuring that financial implications are properly explained), and to highlight circumstances where independent advice should be sought.

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- 13** To lead, manage, develop and motivate the Finance department through effective leadership, professional supervision, feedback, performance management, and coaching/mentoring.

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- 14** To secure effective treasury management, including loans and investments and ensure that treasury management functions are managed in accordance with statutory obligations, the annually approved Treasury Management Strategy, and Treasury Management Practices.

- 15** To provide guidance and expertise in the development and implementation of transformation projects and initiatives, ensuring relevant financial implications are addressed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan and annual budget process.

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- 16** To be the strategic lead for a range of complex corporate function to be determined and as delegated by the Chief Fire Officer, ensuring that each function provides an effective and efficient service in order to deliver the organisation's strategic objectives.

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- 17** To contribute effectively to the corporate objectives of the Service as a member of the Service Leadership Team and take on strategic responsibilities as determined by the Chief Fire Officer.

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- 18** Undertake continuing professional development in order to maintain competence in the role by maintaining technical knowledge as well as participating and contributing to relevant professional networks

## Core Responsibilities of All Staff

<b>Personal Performance</b>	To take responsibility for personal performance (including personal fitness) and the development of personal skills to ensure the required skills, knowledge and competence to fulfil the role.
<b>Personal Accountability</b>	To manage the areas of responsibility attached to the post or commensurate with the role in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.
<b>Core Values and Behaviours</b>	To exemplify and promote the Core Values of Cheshire Fire Authority, and the Fire and Rescue Service's Core Code of Ethics by acting with integrity and honesty and complying with the required standards of conduct.
<b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</b>	To promote, adhere to and implement the Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and to work consistently to embed equality, diversity and inclusion within the Service.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	To promote, adhere to and implement the Service's Safeguarding Strategy/Policy and to work consistently to embed Safeguarding within the Service. Including fulfilling your responsibility to report and record any safeguarding concerns you become aware of.
<b>Health and Safety</b>	<p>To work in compliance with Service Health and Safety Policy to ensure that hazards are identified and risks assessed and controlled.</p> <p>To be proactive in managing your personal health, safety and wellbeing and that of your colleagues.</p>
<b>Environment</b>	<p>To promote the Service's Environment Policy/Strategy by implementing working practices and procedures that ensure a sustainable approach to the use of resources and that resources are disposed of in an efficient and environmentally friendly way.</p> <p>To work consistently to embed environmental considerations, energy efficiency and compliance with the Environment Management System (EMS) within the Service.</p>

**N.B.** Notwithstanding the detail in this job description, in accordance with the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's flexibility policy the job holder will undertake such work as may be determined by the Chief Fire Officer/Line Manager from time to time, up to or at a level consistent with the principal responsibilities of the job and in any location within the area covered by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

## Person Specification

### Job Title: Head of Finance and Treasurer (Section 151 Officer)

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES REQUIRED	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
<b>Qualifications/Experience</b>		
Member of one of the CCAB bodies, preferably CIPFA.	●	
Significant post-qualification experience with proven managerial and financial experience, with substantial experience at a senior management level in a complex organisation	●	
Experience of working in a finance setting within a public sector organisation		●
Experience of financial planning, budgeting and budget management in a complex organisation at a strategic level	●	
Experience of leading on the preparation of the Statement of Accounts in a complex organisation	●	
Experience of advising and informing senior officials (e.g. Elected Members) and gaining their confidence	●	
Experience of working closely with internal and external audit, both planning and reporting	●	
Experience of dealing with transformation, modernisation and change programmes	●	
Experience of Treasury Management in complex organisations	●	
Experience of managing and developing high performing teams, across a range of different functions	●	
<b>Knowledge and Skills</b>		
An understanding of the role of a Section 151 Officer and relevant statutory requirements	●	
Ability to build complex financial strategies and plans	●	

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES REQUIRED	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Highly effective communication skills, including the ability to produce complex reports, adapt style to engage different audiences and deliver financial information in an accessible manner	●	
Good negotiation and consultation skills	●	
Ability to balance competing priorities effectively across the delivery of different services	●	
Ability to build effective and productive relationships with colleagues, partners and key stakeholders, and confidence to challenge where necessary	●	
Demonstrable commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion within the workplace	●	
Knowledge of the national and local government financial environment	●	
Knowledge of the strategic challenges and issues facing the Fire & Rescue Service		●
Knowledge of complex financial IT systems	●	
Knowledge of procurement in a complex organisation	●	

# Integrated Risk Management Plan 2024-2028



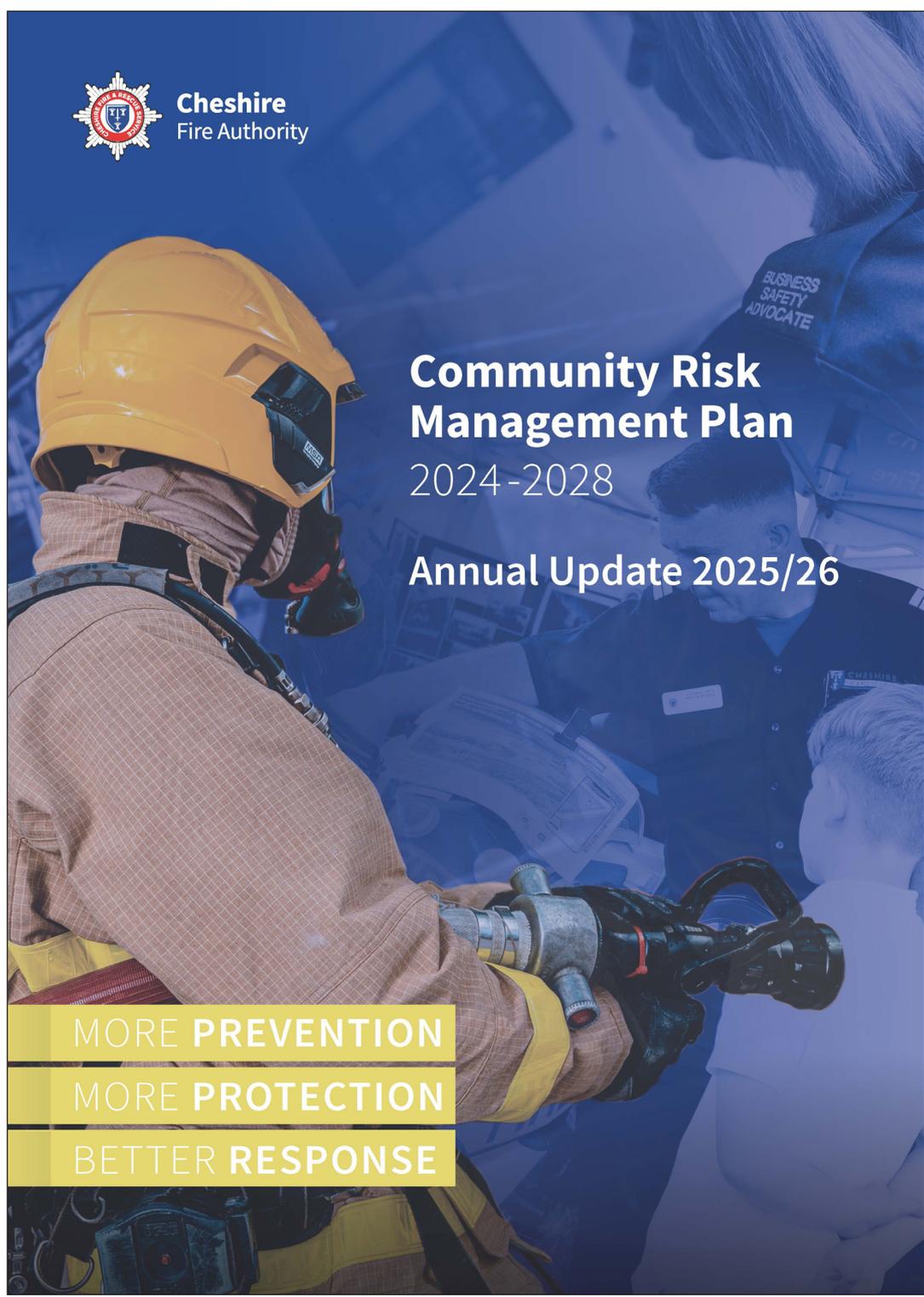
**Cheshire**  
Fire Authority

## Community Risk Management Plan 2024-2028

**MORE PREVENTION**  
**MORE PROTECTION**  
**BETTER RESPONSE**

[Community Risk Management Plan 2024-2028](#)

# Annual Action Plan 2024-2028



[CRMP Annual Update 2024-2028](#)

# HMICFRS Inspection Report 2023-2025



## Fire & Rescue Service 2023–25

### Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service

[HMICFRS Inspection Report 2023 - 2025](#)

# Budget Report 2026-2027

## CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

**MEETING OF:** CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY  
**DATE:** 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026  
**REPORT OF:** TREASURER AND HEAD OF FINANCE  
**AUTHOR:** JAMES CUNNINGHAM

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**SUBJECT:** DRAFT 2026-27 BUDGET;  
 COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT; AND  
 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026-31

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### Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to allow Members to scrutinise and review the information provided, seeking further detail and providing challenge and when satisfied:
  - a. Approve the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan 2026-31
  - b. Agree the Authority's 2026-27 budget (including the Net Budget Requirement);
  - c. Agree the Authority's 2026-27 council tax precept as required by law;
  - d. Approve the Authority's Capital Programme and funding;
  - e. Approve the Authority's Capital Strategy; and
  - f. Approve the Authority's Reserves Strategy.

### Recommended: That Members

- [1] Approve the Medium-Term Financial Plan as set out in Appendix 1;
- [2] Agree the 2026-27 budget, including the Net Budget Requirement of £61,715k (as set out in Table 1 paragraph 48) which takes account of adjustments for inflation, growth, one off-items and savings;
- [3] Agree the proposed council tax increase of £5.00 at Band D and set a Band D council tax precept of £100.09 for 2026-27;
- [4] Agree the levels of council tax precept set out in Tables 2 and 3, paragraph 63;
- [5] Approve the proposed capital programme for 2026-27 and to 2031 set out in Table 4, paragraph 64 together with its associated funding;
- [6] Approve the Capital Strategy set out in Appendix 2;

[Budget Report 2026 - 2027](#)

# Treasury Management Strategy 2026-2027

## CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY  
 DATE: 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026  
 REPORT OF: TREASURER AND HEAD OF FINANCE  
 AUTHOR: JAMES CUNNINGHAM

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SUBJECT: TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2026-27

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### Purpose of Report

1. This report seeks approval of the Treasury Management Strategy for the year 2026-27. This is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2003, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Investment Guidance, DLUHC Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Guidance, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code. DLUHC was replaced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

### Recommended: That Members

- [1] approve the Treasury Management Strategy for 2026-27 (in doing so Members are confirming the Authorised Borrowing Limit of £27.9m at paragraph 5.2.7 of the Strategy).

### Treasury Management Strategy for 2026-27

2. The Treasury Management Strategy which is attached to this report in Appendix 1 is a comprehensive document, this report seeks to summarise the key points from the 4 elements of the strategy:
  - Capital Expenditure Plans
  - Borrowing Strategy
  - Annual Investment Strategy
  - Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement
3. **Capital expenditure** means expenditure on items that will provide use over many years, e.g. kit and appliance replacement programmes, house modernisation, station modernisation and station re-build. During 2025-26 there was no requirement to replace any of the fire appliances. The Authority is committed to completing the station modernisation programme over the remaining life of the CRMP 2024-28. The Authority is also committed to the modernisation of Ellesmere Port and Warrington Fire Stations. A progress update paper is being presented at this meeting. Members will recall that placeholder estimates for this work last year stood at £16m. Following extensive review officers believe the work can be achieved at no more than £10.5m and will continue to work to reduce this further where possible. The work will be funded through a mix of capital receipts, capital reserves and borrowings. A key consideration will be when to commit to the loan funding required and the interest rates available at that time.

[Treasury Management Strategy 2026 - 2027](#)

# Statement of Assurance 2024-2025

## CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE  
 DATE: 23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL 2025  
 REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE  
 AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

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SUBJECT: DRAFT STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2024-25

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### Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an opportunity to review the draft Statement of Assurance for 2024-25.

### Recommended: That

- [1] The contents of the report be noted; and
- [2] Subject to Members' comments, the draft Statement of Assurance be recommended to the Fire Authority for approval.

### Background

2. Members will be aware that one of the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (the Framework) is the publication of Statement of Assurance (the Statement).
3. The Statement should:
 

*"...outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard to this National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan and to any strategic plan prepared by the authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters."*

### Information

4. The draft Statement for 2024-25 is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
5. The draft Statement has been prepared in accordance with national guidance. It includes sections on financial assurance, governance and operational assurance. It also outlines the way in which the Authority has had regard to the Framework. There is also a section on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

[Statement of Assurance 2024 - 2025](#)

# Statement of Accounts 2024-2025



**Cheshire**  
Fire Authority

Statement of Accounts  
Draft 2024-25

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









**Our Vision** is a Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires and other emergencies.

**Our Mission** is to help create safer communities, to rescue people and protect economic, environmental and community interests.

We will deliver this through our  
**Core Values**

**Being Inclusive**

By acting fairly, with integrity, respect and without prejudice.

**Doing the Right Thing**

By holding each other to account for ensuring high standards of professionalism in everything we do.

**Acting with Compassion**

By being understanding and offering help to each other and to our communities with warmth, patience and kindness.

**Making a Difference**

By making an impact in our organisation and in our communities in whatever ways we can, for as many people as we can.



Recognising the Fire and  
Rescue Service's  
**Code of Ethics**



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council