



Cheshire
Fire Authority

SAVING LIVES

CHANGING LIVES

PROTECTING LIVES

**Annual
Action Plan**
2022-2023

www.cheshirefire.gov.uk



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

SAVING LIVES
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PROTECTING LIVES

Annual Action Plan for 2022-2023



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Foreword



Councillor Bob Rudd
Chair,
Cheshire Fire Authority



Mark Cashin
Chief Fire Officer
and Chief Executive
Cheshire Fire and
Rescue Service

In July 2020, Cheshire Fire Authority approved and published its four year Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), which outlines the key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire and details how the Authority plans to address these risks and improve Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to ensure it continues to deliver an exceptional service to the communities we serve.

This draft annual action plan marks the mid-point of the IRMP cycle and an opportune point in time to reflect on our progress to date and appraise our future direction in light of the changes we have experienced over the past 18 months.

Clearly, the world in which we live in has witnessed fundamental change as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are proud and thankful of our staff for rising to the challenge to support our community when it needed them most. The work they have undertaken is provided in more detail further in this document. Despite Covid, we have continued to progress and implement our plans in many areas.

There are, of course, other risks and challenges we need to meet such as the climate emergency, inequality and deprivation within our society and facing an ageing population. Many of these risks have a direct impact on your fire and rescue service and equally, we can have a significant part to play in addressing them.

Our IRMP, which is available on our website www.cheshirefire.gov.uk, outlines these risks in more detail and our plans to make Cheshire a safer place to live and work. Ultimately our IRMP and this annual plan which sits under it will enable us to deliver on our vision to save lives, change lives and protect lives.

Covid-19

The emergence of the Covid-19 Pandemic saw a significant change in the way that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service operated in order to keep our staff safe, minimise the risk of infection and help our community.

We have undertaken a huge amount of work in supporting our partner agencies to help our communities stay safe during the pandemic. This has included a wide range of activities to support both residents and our front-line colleagues, such as:

- Providing over 100,000 Covid vaccines across Cheshire to date.
- Delivering prescription medicines to vulnerable residents.
- Using our FireBikes to help transport vital blood and tissue samples.
- Transporting food parcels to help those in need.
- Supporting the mass distribution of personal protection equipment to health and care colleagues.
- Helping our local authority partners identify extremely vulnerable people so that necessary support could be put in place.

We also introduced significant changes to how we operate as a Service. We introduced changes to many aspects of day-to-day working practices to comply with Government guidance and minimise the risk of infection to our staff, their families and the wider community.

Staff engagement and welfare has sat at the heart of our decision making and changes introduced through the Pandemic. We brought together working groups of staff to help the formulation of changes to our working procedures, sought feedback through a dedicated staff survey, online forum and via virtual meetings, and launched specific guidance to support our staff and those managing them. The Pandemic also saw the launch of a staff-led wellbeing community, which goes from strength to strength.

As we move out of the Pandemic and return to a more normal way of working, we will review our activities to take account our learning during the Pandemic. Already this has resulted in the introduction of an agile working policy, enabling staff to choose to undertake more remote and home working where they are able to. However, there is wider learning that we will look to incorporate in areas such as training, staff engagement and our prevention work in the community.





Our progress

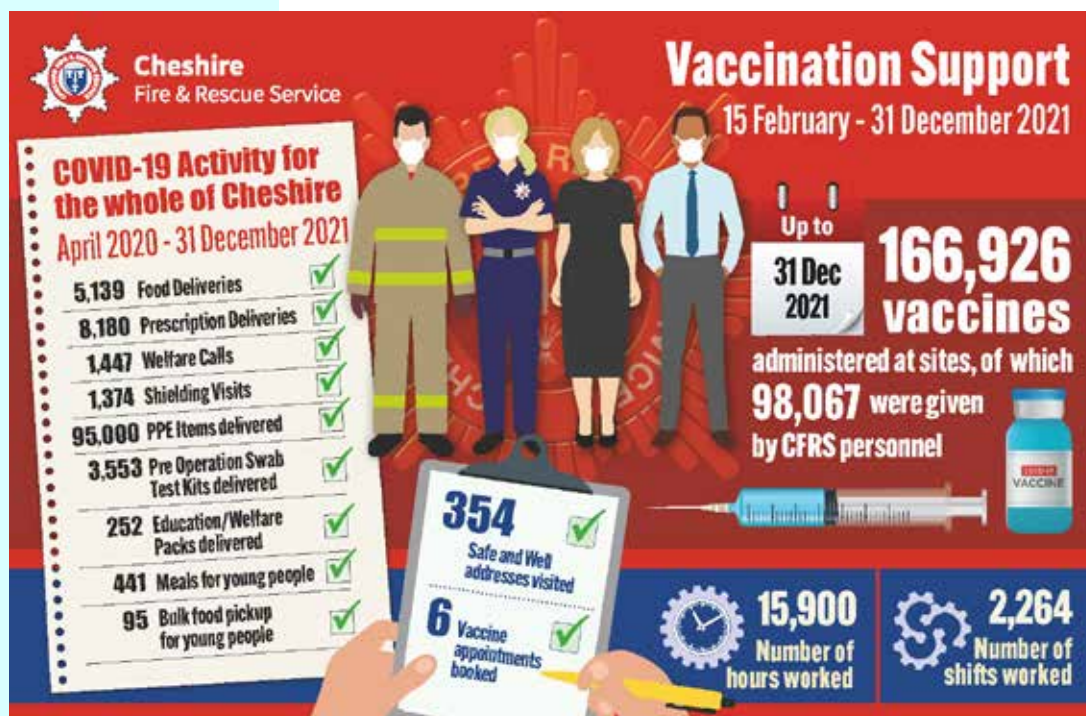
Since approving the 2020-2024 IRMP, the Authority has been hard at work implementing the Plan. Although the Covid pandemic has had a significant impact, work has progressed in many areas.

Since publication of the IRMP in July 2020, the Authority has either completed or is progressing in many areas, which will be explained through this next section.

Prevention

Through the Pandemic, much of our community facing prevention work had to be suspended. This included much of our safe and well activity (except for referrals from partners and high-risk individuals) and our youth engagement work. However, our prevention staff have been at the heart of our Covid response in providing support into the community. They have been involved in a wide range of activities, highlights of which are provided on the previous page and in the infographic below. This support has been invaluable to both local residents and our partner agencies.

As we move out of the Pandemic, we have begun to resume the delivery of our Safe and well programme and our range of youth engagement activities. We will take into account the learning from the Pandemic and explore how we can use additional data we have accessed to further refine our targeting of activity, ultimately helping keep more vulnerable people safe.



Our progress

Protection

Keeping Non-Domestic Properties Safe

The Authority has legal responsibilities to enforce fire safety legislation in non-domestic premises. It uses a Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) to prioritise its audit and inspection work towards the premises which present the highest risk to life in the event of fire. Its RBIP is developed in line with national guidance and using local intelligence. A review of the RBIP has been carried out which has further refined how risks are prioritised, to make the programme of activity under the RBIP more effective and efficient. Inspecting officers have also been upskilled to enable more inspections of the highest risk premises. Over the coming year the outcomes of this review will be implemented.



Improving Safety In HMOs

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are properties where 3 or more tenants are living in them as more than one household, but share common facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom. For example, this could be a house converted into separate flats or a house share. HMOs present particular fire safety risks as they contain more than one household and in some cases it is not readily apparent that a property is a HMO, especially smaller HMOs which may not require a license from the local council to operate. In the event of a fire in such a property, firefighters are placed at greater risk as they need to quickly adapt plans and procedures to deal with the fact that the property is a HMO and not a standard single household premise.

The Authority has been working with the housing departments in each of Cheshire's four local authority areas to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU). This MOU includes agreeing a joint inspection approach for a number of HMO premises each year. The Authority is now also sharing risk information with local partners and jointly badged information has been produced to distribute to HMO owners and operators.



Our progress

Protecting Our Heritage

Cheshire contains a wealth of heritage premises. These are key elements of our cultural identity and local economy, but could be lost or irreparably damaged in the event of fire. The Authority has recruited a dedicated officer to coordinate its approach to managing heritage risks. The role involves completing fire safety audits in heritage premises and providing detailed technical advice, guidance and support on the relevant statutory and regulatory requirements and standards in order to minimise fire risks and hazards in high risk and heritage buildings.

Over the coming years the role will aim to develop effective partnerships with other regulators, stakeholders, partners and businesses to formulate and implement effective heritage protection and prevention initiatives and activities.

Promoting the use of Sprinklers

The Authority is a strong advocate for the use of sprinklers. In the event of a fire, they can play a crucial role in minimising loss and damage. This can mean the difference between a fire that could damage a single room in a property with sprinklers, to much more significant damage in a property without sprinklers, meaning the loss of treasured possessions and placing people at higher risk of death or injury. In the case of a business, sprinklers could mean the difference between some short term disruption or the complete loss of a company.

The Authority also believes that sprinklers are crucially important in buildings where a fire has the potential to lead to a significant loss of life, such as in schools or high-rise residential premises. For several years the Authority has worked with housing providers to encourage and part-fund the take up of sprinkler systems in high-rise properties within Cheshire. To date it has worked to install systems in 17 of Cheshire's 21 high-rise residential premises. Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Authority again emphasised the importance of sprinklers in these premises and is continuing to work with housing providers to encourage the installation of sprinklers.

The "Sprinklers Save Lives" campaign was launched in April 2021. The initiative will not only highlight the benefit that sprinkler systems bring to a business, but also encourage decision makers to consider fitting sprinkler systems in all new builds, as well as retrofitting of the devices in older premises. For more information on sprinklers please visit the dedicated section of our website: <https://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/business-safety/sprinklers-the-facts>





Our progress

Response

Improve how we match our resources to risk and demand

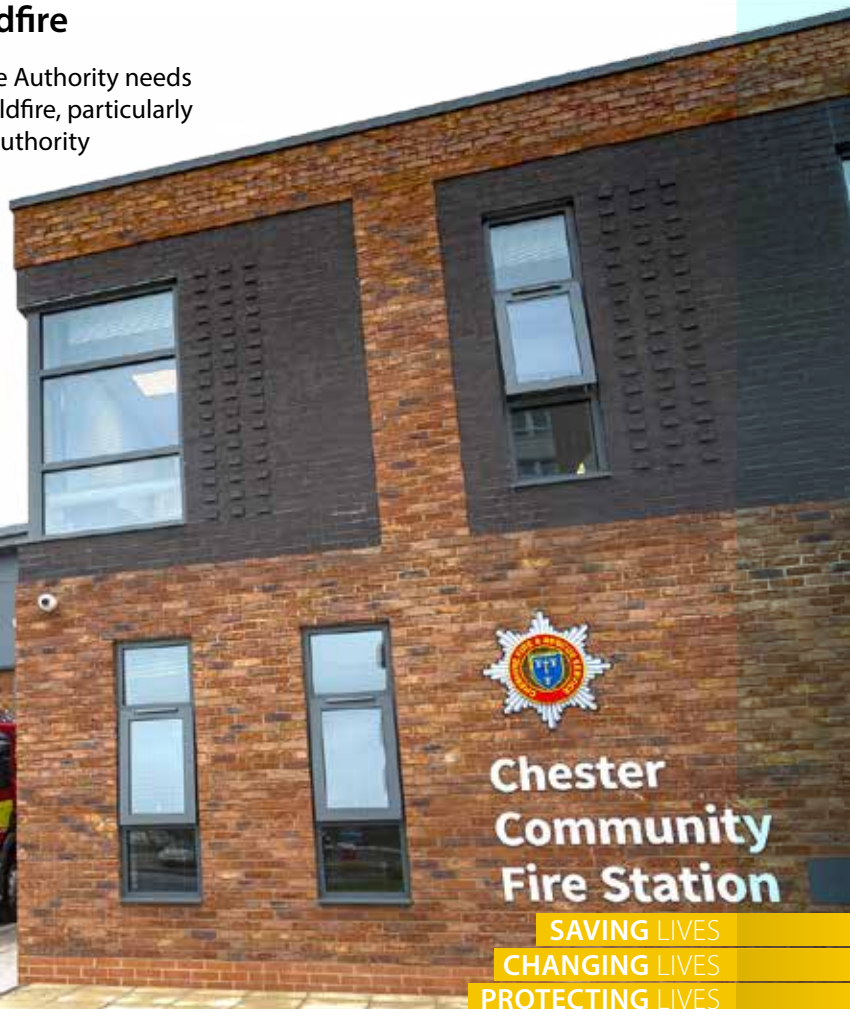
In February 2021 the Authority moved the second fire engine at Ellesmere Port Fire Station to the nearby station at Powey Lane. It also moved the fire engine from Powey Lane to Chester, resulting in two fire engines being located at Chester Fire Station. This has provided the Authority with a balance of resources across Cheshire West and Chester to more effectively respond to risks and demands. This complements our resources across Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington.

Improving our response to road traffic collisions

The Authority's IRMP committed to expanding our fleet of Rapid Response Rescue Units (RRRUs) across each of Cheshire's 13 on-call fire stations, building on existing RRRU capability at Sandbach and Holmes Chapel. This capability will enhance our response to road traffic collisions and also allow us to address other local risks. Staff have been engaged in the process to tailor RRRUs to meet these specific risks, such as animal rescues or wildfires, and the Authority is now rolling out the fleet of RRRUs.

Improving our response to wildfire

The effects of climate change means that the Authority needs to adapt to more frequent occurrences of wildfire, particularly in remote moorland areas of Cheshire. The Authority has worked with staff to procure specialist protective equipment and tools to improve our capability to fight wildfires. We have also procured a specialist all-terrain vehicle, which will be housed at Poynton Fire Station. This will enable firefighters to tackle fires on difficult or inaccessible terrain such as exposed moorland.



Chester
Community
Fire Station

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Our progress

Investing in New Technology

A High Reach Fire Engine, also known as a High-Reach Extendable Turret (HRET) operates as a normal fire engine but also houses a large extendable boom which can provide water from height. This has now been purchased and has been delivered to the Authority ready for crews to begin training and familiarisation ahead of it becoming operational in early 2022.

The Authority is progressing its plans to introduce a water carrier to provide large amounts of water to aid firefighting operations. The vehicle is currently being manufactured prior to its introduction into service, where it will be based at Ellesmere Port Fire Station.

Research has also been undertaken into the use of high pressure lances, which emit water at high pressure to pierce building materials – removing the need for firefighters to enter a building and place themselves at risk. Following this evaluation, quick release high-pressure lances and drills will be provided on each fire engine, allowing crews to alter conditions within a fire compartment prior to entry and to apply water into roof and wall cavities.





Our progress

Training Centre

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

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

The training centre provides this environment. It comprises multiple zones that reflect the real risks within Cheshire, such as a petrochemical rig, a rural area, and transport networks, as well as traditional housing and commercial scenarios. The centre also has a dedicated area for command training, with operational commanders having access to world class facilities. The site also offers training in other important aspects such as fire investigation, the identification of hazardous materials and in trauma care. This allows our staff to experience the full range of scenarios they are likely to come across within Cheshire.



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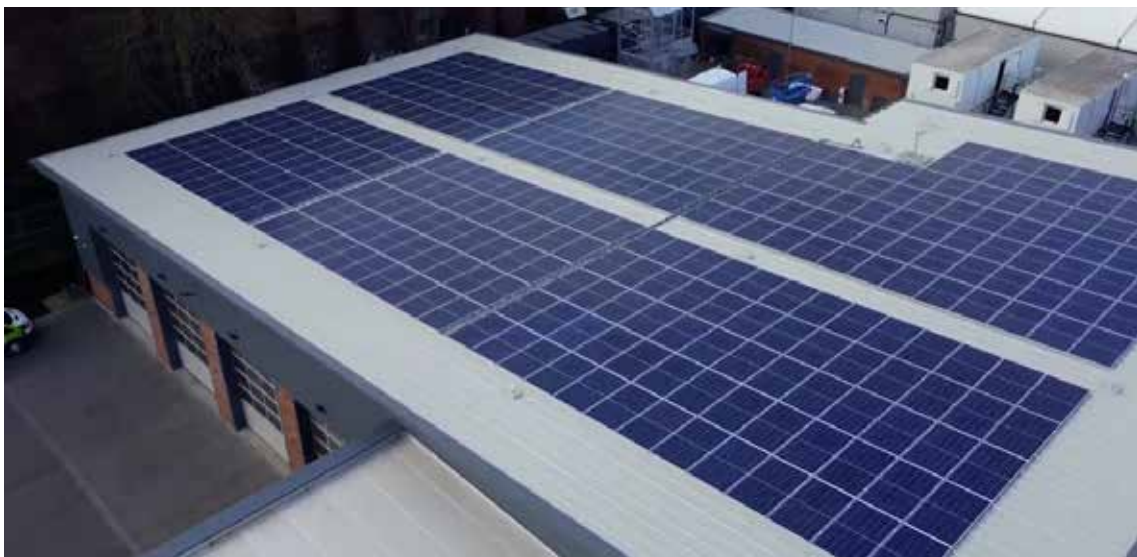
Our progress

Estates Modernisation

The Authority has an extensive programme of modernisation underway for its estate covering most of its fire stations and its housing stock. Many of our fire stations are of dated building stock and our modernisation programme has brought our premises up to date to meet the needs of a 21st century fire and rescue service, improve our environmental efficiency and provide better access arrangements into our buildings.

Despite the pandemic, progress has continued at several locations across Cheshire. The coming year will see the completion of work at our fire stations in Ellesmere Port, Knutsford, Malpas and Congleton. We will also begin renovation of our fire stations in Winsford, Frodsham, Poynton and Macclesfield.

Over the coming year work will begin in earnest on the construction of a new fire station in Crewe. We will also begin to develop options for modernising our fire station on Winwick Road, Warrington.



Our next steps

As we enter the second half of our IRMP cycle, we have a number of plans that we will be commencing over the next two years.

Some of these plans are contained in the Authority's 2020-2024 IRMP

Prevention

Reducing Fire Safety Risks in the Home

In 2017, the Authority began to offer Safe and Well visits to residents in the community who were at risk from fire. Alongside fire safety advice, firefighters and advocates provide householders with signposting information on how to keep healthy and prevent key risks related to fire, such as slips, trips and falls; smoking cessation and reducing alcohol intake.

Our Safe and Well programme has primarily been focused on the over-65s, as they were shown to be more at risk from fire, and we have now nearly covered all of these households in Cheshire, making them safer from fire. Over the past year we have refined our targeting methodology and will now begin to use this to direct our Safe and Well visits to lone parent and single adult households, which statistics have shown are at a higher risk of fire occurring in the premises than other demographic groups.

Making Our Roads Safer

Road traffic collisions are a key priority for the Authority. While the number of road users decreased during the imposition of Covid restrictions and lockdowns, the long term trend has seen a continual increase in road users. There are sadly hundreds of people killed or seriously injured on our roads each year. We will work with our emergency service and local authority partners across Cheshire to develop a plan to make a real difference in reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads.



#FATAL5



X CARELESS DRIVING



X DRINK /DRUG DRIVING



X NOT WEARING A SEATBELT



X DISTRACTED using a mobile phone whilst driving



X SPEEDING

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PROTECTING LIVES



Our next steps

Promoting Water Safety

Cheshire is home to several rivers and waterways as well as lakes, pools and man-made watercourses. Sadly, we see each year that people have died after entering the water and getting into difficulty. We will consider how we can evolve our prevention work to raise awareness of the hazards presented by open water.

Improving Our Fire Safety Education Programmes

Firefighters and fire staff undertake various fire safety education programmes throughout Cheshire. In addition, we utilise our innovative safety and life skills centre, Safety Central, to deliver a range of interventions for school children and other groups. The centre adopts an interactive, hands-on approach to educating about fire safety.

Given the wide range of interventions we now provide, we will review our programmes to ensure that they are delivered in a consistent, engaging and informative way that is relevant to the particular age group or audience in question.



Our next steps

Protection

Reducing False Alarms

A significant number of calls which firefighters attend are false alarms. False alarms are an inconvenience for the premises owners and operators but also mean that while in attendance, crews are not available to respond to genuine emergencies.

In some cases there are frequent automatic false alarm calls from the same location, such as commercial premises and complex sites e.g. hospitals. We class these as non-domestic premises. They are often triggered by the fire alarm system.

The Authority has worked closely with owners and operators of non-domestic premises to drive down the number of false alarms, as well as implementing policies to help filter out genuine emergency calls from false alarms. Over the past five years this has helped to significantly reduce the numbers of false alarms in non-domestic premises which we attend.

However, false alarms in general still account for almost 3,500 incidents we attend. This is nearly 40% of the total operational incidents we attend. Many of these are from domestic premises, which include individual houses, blocks of flats and sheltered accommodation. Most commonly this is due to cooking – and, yes, burnt toast – or a faulty alarm.

In the coming year we will work to reduce the number of false alarms we receive from domestic premises.



Our next steps



Learning From Grenfell Tower

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

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, officers inspected and audited all of the high-rise premises within Cheshire to ensure the safety of residents and to for the presence of any cladding of a similar construction to that which was present at Grenfell.

As the Inquiry into the fire has progressed, the Authority has kept abreast of developments and has implemented any relevant recommendations that have emerged to date from the Phase One Report.

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

As Phase Two of the Inquiry continues, the Authority will implement the relevant outcomes as they emerge.

Our next steps

Response

Response to Floods and Rescues From Water

The impact of climate change means that the Service responds to more frequent flooding incidents. In addition the Service is regularly called to rescue people from water. In line with the IRMP commitment we have reviewed our capability and response to the full range of water incidents, from small-scale domestic floods right through to wide area flooding and rescues from fast flowing water. The review findings will be reported shortly with the aim of commencing implementation in 2022. The focus is on ensuring that we have optimal capabilities located in the best position to serve the public, whilst also ensuring that our crews have appropriate training and equipment, including personal protective equipment.





Our next steps

Review our Special Appliances

The Authority has a range of specialist resources in addition to its traditional fire engines. These include aerial appliances, rescue boats, a command unit, a major rescue unit, a high volume pump, an animal rescue unit and a technical rescue unit. These are county-wide resources that enhance our firefighting capability and enable firefighters to undertake a wider range of incidents including flooding, complex road traffic collisions and rescuing trapped people and animals.

Within the IRMP we committed to undertake a Service-wide strategic review of our special appliances to inform future opportunities to improve frontline service delivery. Over the coming year we will conclude this review and implement the outcomes. The Authority will also look to take the lead on developing bespoke mobile facilities to help reduce firefighters' exposure to materials such as gases and particulates generated by fires while they are dealing with incidents.

While thankfully rare, major incidents are often the most complex to manage safely and effectively. They are often long running and require the co-ordination of many resources from different areas over an elongated period of time. In such incidents, a firefighting presence may be required at the scene for many hours continuously, in some cases even days and weeks at a time and sometimes involving neighbouring fire and rescue services. The Authority will invest in a dedicated unit to provide support at major incidents, as well as providing welfare facilities for firefighters during protracted incidents.



Our next steps

Keeping Our Staff Safe

Ensuring the health and safety of our firefighters is of the upmost importance to the Authority, which has invested significant resources into ensuring our staff are provided with the best personal protective equipment (PPE) available.



The Deputy Chief Fire Officer chairs the Service's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee; which has representation from Fire

Authority Members, staff and trade unions. Within this structure is a dedicated group tasked with reviewing procedures and equipment to reduce the risk of contamination.

We will continue to work with staff and representative bodies to refine our procedures and, where necessary, invest in new equipment to minimise the risk that firefighters face from contaminants that they encounter carrying out their role.

Risks from Emerging Technology

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

The growth of renewable technology is also leading to more premises using battery energy storage systems. These systems allow for excess energy generated by things like solar panels and wind turbines to be stored for use at a later date when the energy is required. Again, these can present new risks from a fire safety perspective. Further into the future, the use of hydrogen technology is expected to develop and therefore there will be a need to understand the risks presented to both residents and firefighters as this technology becomes more widely used.

Therefore the Authority will undertake more work to understand the risks presented by emerging technologies, particularly battery technology and electric vehicles, and develop associated operational procedures. We will also develop our protection work regarding battery energy storage systems.



Our next steps

Wilmslow Fire Station

Our IRMP outlines the plan to change staffing arrangements at Wilmslow Fire Station. This involves changing from the existing nucleus crewing system to a day crewing system. Under the current nucleus system, the station is staffed by firefighters during daytime hours (07:00-19:00). Outside of these hours emergency response is provided by on-call firefighters who live or work within five minutes of the station.

A day crewing system sees the Fire Station staffed during weekday daytime hours (09:00-19:00) but with firefighters paid a supplement to provide guaranteed on-call cover outside of these hours. This system is in place elsewhere in Cheshire and is extremely efficient and effective. For Wilmslow, the Authority believes this is an appropriate model to meet local risks and demands. It also ensures 24/7 availability of the fire engine at Wilmslow in a sustainable way without needing to bring in supporting resources from elsewhere in Cheshire, which happens under the current crewing system.

The Authority has been pursuing options to redevelop Wilmslow Fire Station with its emergency service partners to create a multi-agency hub. This was intended to release land to build the housing required for firefighters working the day crewing system. However, agreement could not be reached on a solution that provided the necessary benefits for all parties involved. Therefore the Authority will now explore options to buy suitable properties near to the fire station. It is anticipated that the cost of repaying the borrowing to buy nine houses could be covered by the revenue savings from changing the crewing system.

As the houses will not be directly adjacent to the fire station there will be an impact upon response times during the day at weekends. There will be minimal difference during the week. Overall, the average attendance time of 6min 59sec would increase by around 47 seconds to 7min 46 sec.

However, this time would still be well within the Authority's response standard of attending life risk incidents within 10 minutes on at least 80% of occasions. Furthermore, it would mean that Wilmslow would be provided with guaranteed on-call cover overnight without the need to bring in supporting resources.



Our next steps

Emergency Cardiac Response

In the case of a cardiac arrest, time is of the essence. The quicker that medical intervention can be provided, for example using a defibrillator, the better the chance of survival for a casualty.

This is why the Authority has supported providing public use defibrillators at all its locations and in having the devices on its fire engines. The more widely they are available, the more chance they can be used to save life. It has been the long held ambition of the Authority to have firefighters in Cheshire respond to incidents of cardiac arrest. This is because our staff are trained to provide casualty care and in many areas, particularly rural parts of Cheshire, firefighters can be on scene providing assistance before paramedics arrive.

Attending cardiac incidents has formed part of broader discussions at national level between employers and representative bodies about the future role and remuneration of firefighters. However these negotiations have now been ongoing for over five years, with no effective agreement or resolution in sight.

The Authority is determined to press ahead. We believe that having firefighters provide emergency cardiac response can deliver the crucial early intervention that can save lives. In the coming year we will therefore look to engage partners, such as the North West Ambulance Service, our staff and trade unions in relation to the introduction of cardiac response at a local level within Cheshire.





Our next steps

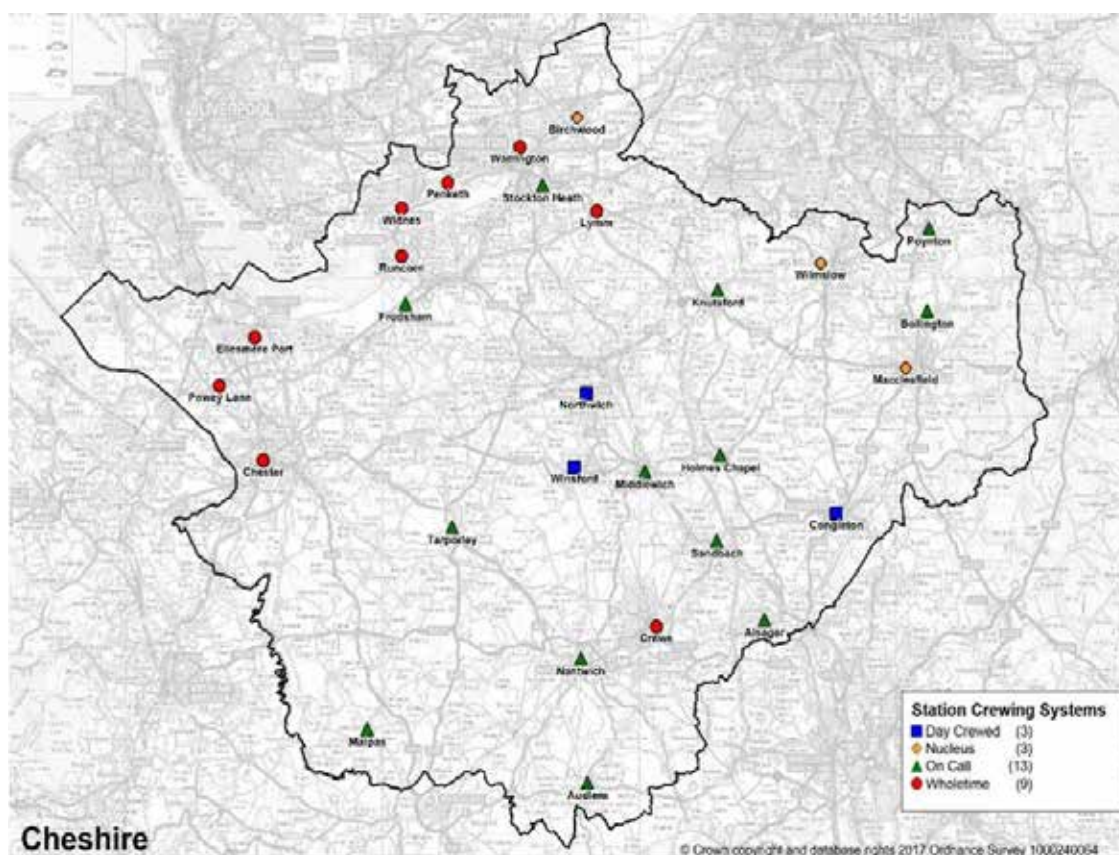
Fire Cover Review

As part of the Authority's Community Risk Management (CRM) process, officers undertake periodic reviews of the provision of fire cover across Cheshire. These comprehensive reviews consider the resources available to the Authority and how these are spread to ensure we can provide the most effective and efficient fire cover to meet the risks and demands we face.

These reviews incorporate a wide range of data and information, including activity levels, performance data and computer modelling. This data is then used to determine the optimum way to staff our fire engines and place our specialist resources to address the risks of each local area and Cheshire as a whole.

In the coming year, we will commence a review of our fire cover to ensure that we are providing our emergency response functions as efficiently and effectively throughout Cheshire with the resources we have available.

The outcomes of this review will feed into the development of proposals within the Authority's next Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) which will cover the period beyond 2024. This will be subject to public consultation during Autumn of 2023, as part of the development of the next IRMP.



Looking after our people

Engaging with, supporting and developing our people has been a fundamental aspect of our work through the course of this IRMP. Using our Steps Framework, we have designed a range of interventions to support and develop our people through the employee life cycle, from initial recruitment through to retirement.

Our approach will be further underpinned by the production of a new People Strategy in the year ahead.



Engaging with staff is a central element to our workplace culture. Senior leaders conduct regular visits with teams and staff are encouraged to feedback their ideas and thoughts through a range of platforms such as conferences, surveys, a suggestion scheme and a Staff Engagement Forum. This emphasis has led to improvements in staff feeling engaged and valued, which we measure through regular staff engagement surveys. In the coming year we will develop an action plan to address the findings of our latest survey.

The Authority has prioritised the development of a culture of openness around mental health and wellbeing. This has seen the introduction of a dedicated mental health and wellbeing advisor; the creation of a steering group to direct our efforts; and the launch of a specific strategy to embed a culture of openness and support regarding mental health. We will continue to develop this field of work, with the aim of becoming a beacon of excellence with regards to mental health support and provision.

We are immensely proud of our work to promote inclusion within the fire and rescue service and have a strong track record of success, ranking as the highest performing emergency service in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for several years. Our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy aims to build on this success and broaden our EDI work to ensure we can attract and retain the best staff from a diverse range of backgrounds which reflect our community.





Our Efficiency and Effectiveness

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

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

Over the coming year we will commission a programme of service improvement reviews to continue our drive to improve our efficiency and effectiveness.

As well as our people, efficiency and effectiveness are the key pillars by which we are assessed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Earlier this year, the Authority received its second inspection from HMICFRS. This examined how we had built on the findings of our first inspection in 2018.

Our report from this latest inspection was published in December 2021 and can be viewed here: <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/frs-assessment-2021-22-cheshire/>. We are pleased to have been graded as "Good" across each of the main inspection criteria of our effectiveness and efficiency at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks; and how we look after our people. Over the next year an action plan will be developed to address the findings of the inspection and drive further improvement.

Finally, the Government has announced that it will publish a White Paper which will outline its plans for future reforms of fire and rescue services across England. The Paper is expected to outline changes to our governance and other aspects of how the Authority operates. The Authority will consider the potential implications of the Paper once it has been published.





Our finances

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

The Authority agreed a revenue budget of £46.2m and capital spending of £8.2m for 2021/22. In terms of how we expect to spend the revenue budget, this is shown in the graphic below. Further details can be found on the Authority's Statement of Accounts, available on our website www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

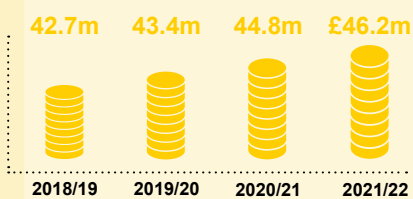
As part of its budget management, the Authority produces a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), covering a five year period. The MTFP is updated regularly to reflect emerging, local, regional and national issues and makes informed assumptions about issues such as future pay, inflation, government funding and council tax levels. Current assumptions include an annual increase in its precept of 1.99%, a 3% pay award for staff for 2022/2023 and 2% thereafter, plus 2% for non-pay inflation; with higher rates being used in certain areas e.g. energy to reflect market conditions. The latest MTFP can be viewed on our website.

Over the past year the Authority has undertaken a comprehensive exercise to more effectively and efficiently align resources to deliver against its key aims and objectives, a process known as priority based budgeting. It will continue with this approach over coming years to ensure funding is allocated towards priority areas and make our community safer.

As with other public sector organisations, the Authority is impacted by spending decisions taken by Government. The Government outlines its key spending priorities through its annual Budget announcement and, longer-term, through Comprehensive Spending Reviews (CSR).

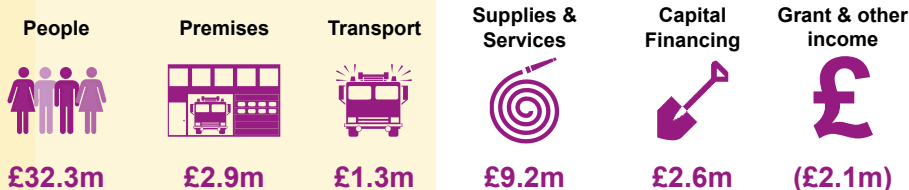
There is a considerable amount of uncertainty regarding the future outlook for public spending, as a result of the external political environment and the impact of coronavirus. More clarity may emerge from the next CSR, the outcomes of which may require the Authority to revise its plans as necessary to ensure it fulfils its legal duty to deliver a balanced budget.

Our funding



What we spend it on

2021/22 budgeted spend:



SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES
PROTECTING LIVES



In Summary

Projects completed

- Move the second fire engine at Ellesmere Port Fire Station to Powey Lane, moving the current fire engine at Powey Lane back to Chester.
- Review our firefighting water provision and our response to water incidents.
- Review our Risk Based Inspection Programme and implement outcomes.
- Expand our 'Sprinklers Save Lives' campaign, promoting the use of sprinklers in business premises and high rise residential properties.
- Change our approach to how we manage heritage risks.

Projects in progress

- Replace the aerial appliance and a fire engine at Macclesfield with a High-Reach Fire Engine.
- Provide Rapid Response Rescue Units on all of our primary on-call fire stations.
- Develop our wildfire capability.
- Review the need for new equipment to improve the effectiveness of our response.
- Launch a Cheshire-wide campaign aimed at owners and occupiers of Houses in Multiple Occupation.
- Extend Safe and Well home visits to focus interventions for a broader range of vulnerable people.
- Review our specialist resources and implement outcomes.
- Work with partners to develop a strategic road safety plan.

Revisions to existing projects

- Introduction of the day crewing duty system at Wilmslow Fire Station. This is proposed to be achieved using a different approach to that within the IRMP, through purchasing nearby housing rather than constructing on the adjacent site (see p.20).
- Work to develop an emergency cardiac response capability. Due to the absence of a resolution to national discussions, the Authority will now focus on a locally developed capability within Cheshire (see p.21).

New projects

- Develop further prevention work to raise awareness of water safety.
- Review its range of fire safety education programmes to ensure content is consistent, engaging and relevant to the intended audience.
- Work to reduce the number of false alarms within domestic premises.

In addition

The Authority has already set out its intention to undertake a comprehensive review of existing plans and procedures to adapt to changes as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, to ensure the safety of staff and the wider community. It will also commence a review of fire cover across Cheshire to ensure its resources are best aligned to meet risks and demands. Both of these programmes will feed into the development of the Authority's new IRMP.



Developing our Plan

To support the development of the 2022-2023 Annual Action Plan, a consultation programme was carried out between October 2021 and January 2022 and this sought views from residents, staff and the various stakeholders we work with such as trade unions and partner agencies. The results of this consultation were considered by Members of Cheshire Fire Authority at its meeting of 9 February 2022.

Further details on the consultation programme and the Authority meeting of 9 February can be found on our website www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

As explained earlier in this document, as we approach the end of the current 2020-2024 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) planning will commence on the development of a new IRMP. Please visit our website to be kept up to date of further information in the future. If you would like to get involved in future consultations, please use the contact details below:

Email: consultation@cheshirefire.gov.uk

Facebook: [@CheshireFRS](https://www.facebook.com/CheshireFRS)

Twitter: [@CheshireFire](https://twitter.com/CheshireFire)

Or in writing to:

Freepost Cheshire Fire Consultation



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