Fire Productivity and Efficiency Plan – Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service

Primary Information

BUDGET (£000)					
Revenue Expenditure	**2024-2025**	**2025-2026**	**2026-2027**	**2027-2028**	**2028-2029**
Direct Employee	41325	43483	45978	47571	48751
Indirect Employee	584	535	534	570	586
Premises	4186	4334	4099	4222	4344
Transport	1383	1319	1367	1408	1447
Supplies and Services	9363	9561	9343	9628	9905
Capital Financing	1714	1913	2084	2084	2084
Other	159	-135	180	187	191
Total	58,714	61,010	63,585	65,670	67,308
Income	**2024-2025**	**2025-2026**	**2026-2027**	**2027-2028**	**2028-2029**
Actual Received from Precept	35798	38428	40792	43219	45687
Local Government Finance Settlement	19835	20693	20933	20945	20873
Other Grants	946	1756	1756	1756	1756
Income Raised Locally		1278	1278	1278	1278
Total	56,579	62,155	64,759	67,198	69,594

RESERVES (£000)					
	2024-2025	**2025-2026**	**2026-2027**	**2027-2028**	**2028-2029**
General Reserves	4911	3078	3038	2960	3004
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	7497	6440	5163	3283	3008
of which MRP reserve					
Earmarked Capital Reserves	11774	9455	1703	447	1091
Other Reserves					
of which revenue					
of which capital		932			
Total	24,182	19,905	9,904	6,690	7,103

Efficiency

EFFICIENCY DATA (£000)

Cheshire	Actual 2024-25		Actual 2025-26		Forecast 2026-27		Forecast 2027-28		Forecast 2028-29	
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	58,982		61371		61715		64205		66638	
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	- 40,300		-44195		-45978		-47571		-48751	
Non Pay Budget	18,091		17176		15737		16634		17887	
Efficiency Savings	**Recurrent**	**Non-recurren**	**Recurrent**	**Non-recurren**	**Recurrent**	**Non-recurren**	**Recurrent**	**Non-recurren**	**Recurrent**	**Non-recurren**
Direct Employee				183						
Reduction in Prevention/Protection/Response Staff	-	-			200	200				
Reduction in Support Staff	-	-								
Indirect Employee (e.g. training, travel etc.)										
All Indirect Employee Costs	0	0								
Premises										
Utilities	0	179		319	319					
Rent/Rates	0	61			100					
Other Premises Costs	0	0		90						
Shared Premises	0	0								
Transport										
Fleet	0	0								
Fuel	0	0								
Other Transport Costs	0	24		7						
Supplies and Services										
National Procurement Savings	0	0		274						
Local Procurement Savings	0	194		233						
Other Technology Improvements	0	0								
Decreased Usage	0	0								
Capital Financing										
Revenue Expenditure Charged to Capital	0	0								
Net Borrowing Costs	0	592		799						
Other										
Other Savings 1 (Please Specify)	0	0		118		500				
Other Savings 2 (Please Specify)	0	0			61		173		163	
Other Savings 3 (Please Specify)	0	0				203				
Total Efficiency Savings (excluding direct employee saving	**1,050**		**1,840**		**1,183**		**173**		**163**	
Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets	**5.80%**		**10.71%**		**7.52%**		**1.04%**		**0.91%**	

INCOME

£000

	Actual 2024-25		Actual 2025-26		Forecast 2026-27		Forecast 2027-28		Forecast 2028-29	
	Recurrent	Non-recurren	Recurrent	Non-recurren	Recurrent	Non-recurren	Recurrent	Non-recurren	Recurrent	Non-recurren
Income generated from charging policies		57,053		90,706		43,100		43,100		43,100
Income generated from trading operations		1,033,160		853,456		899,200		899,200		899,200
Income generated from shared premises		204,943		170,389		111,800		111,800		111,800
Income generated from interest on investments		752,608		687,445		1,000		1,000		1,000
Income generated from other sources		899,802		521,727		87,000		87,000		87,000
Total	0	2,947,566	0	2,323,723	0	1,142,100	0	1,142,100	0	1,142,100

Efficiency Narrative

Direct Employee

Savings generated through vacant positions and are non-recurring

Premises

Savings generated through Utilities purchasing via West Mercia Energy. Water rate charges were challenged and refund generated. Business rates, on new build fire station were challenged generating a saving.

Transport

Minor saving generated on fuel purchasing.

Supplies and Services

National procurement savings generated from Competitions and markets agency legal action on Motorola pricing of Airwave provision.
Local procurement savings relate to the acquisition of Command software through a local North West procurement arrangement.

Capital Financing

Saving generated from deferring budgeted PWLB loans required for the capital plan – this represents the saved interest cost. Deferring loans is an active Treasury management policy whilst we have cash reserves and PWLB long term rates are high.

Other

Savings generated from underspend on contracted services- blue collaboration and other contracts.

Collaboration

CFRS provides accommodation to Cheshire Constabulary at the following fire stations- Poynton, Frodsham, Birchwood. Probation services- Ministry of Justices are provided accommodation at Macclesfield Fire station. North West Ambulance Service also have bases at Birchwood, Sandbach and Poynton.
CFRS- provided the use of meeting rooms at Safety Centre (Lymm) for use by NHS Warrington- for midwifery and health visitor appointments (over 1000)
CFRS engages with Cheshire Constabulary for the provision of the following services, Estates, stores, IT, legal. The organisations have decided to end the collaboration and disaggregate the services in 2026. This follows reviews of each function, whilst savings had been achieved in the past, The review demonstrated a more effective service would be delivered in a disaggregated form, with "buy-back" of certain service provisions to provide efficiencies.

Productivity

Collaboration

Please provide a narrative outlining initiatives starting in/having effect in this category for 25/26 onwards structured using the points outlined in section 4.5 in the guidance.

Asset Management and IT Investment

Asset and IT management are provided through a collaboration with Cheshire Constabulary.

Income Generation

The single largest source of income is the provision of the Kings Trust training programme (this is cost neutral)- the Service support 15 cohorts of 14 trainees aged between 16-25 who are not in employment, education or training, undertake a 12 week engagement programme running throughout the year.
Active treasury management contributes to interest earnings- this is passed to capital reserves to fund the significant capital program.
Secondment income has generated significant other income, this is mainly a one-off income, and offsets salary cost paid through CFRS

Outcome-based Activities

4.9 Outcome-based Activities
a) Which wholetime firefighter activities are measured?
We measure all wholetime firefighter delivery of prevention, protection, operational preparedness and response activity. This includes Safe and Well visits, Fire Safety Health Checks, Site Specific Risk Information visits, hydrant inspections, thematic inspections, specialist training, station training, operational incidents, appliance availability and response standards.

b) Which on-call firefighter activities are measured?
On-call activity is primarily measured through fire engine availability, including availability by station and shift period. The Service also monitors operational response activity and competency/training requirements.

c) Are targets set for these activities?
Yes. Key 2025/26 targets included:

Activity	***2025/26 target***
Safe and Well visits	*30,000*
% Safe and Well visits in heightened-risk addresses	*80%*
Fire Safety Health Checks by firefighters	*2,128*
Total Fire Safety Audits	*1,800*
RBIP audits	*1,240*
SSRI completed within target	*95%*
Wholetime fire engine availability	*98%*
On-call fire engine availability	*52%*

Minimum fire cover – critical level	*100% / 14 engines*
Minimum fire cover – optimum level	*98% / 18 engines*

d) How many were performed in each Spending Review year?

Activity	***22/23***	***23/24***	***24/25***	***25/26***
Safe and Well visits	*To confirm*	*To confirm*	*29,280*	*32,286*
Fire Safety Health Checks by firefighters	*To confirm*	*To confirm*	*2,187*	*2,435*
RBIP audits	*To confirm*	*To confirm*	*796*	*1,697*
Total Fire Safety Audits	*To confirm*	*To confirm*	*2,042*	*2,483*

e) How does the service record and analyse the data?
Data is recorded through core corporate systems including IRS, Saffire Prevention, Saffire Protection, Gartan, North West Fire Control and iNet Viewer. Performance is reviewed through the quarterly Performance Health Report and scrutinised by the Performance and Programme Board.

f) Do you record the outcome or assess quality?
Yes, outcome and quality are assessed in several ways. Safe and Well visits are categorised by risk source, including targeted data, agency referrals, other heightened risk and non-heightened risk. Protection activity is linked to risk-based inspection activity and compliance. Response activity is assessed against standards including mobilisation, response time, appliance availability and SSRI completion.

g) Do you have plans to increase this activity?
Yes. In 2026/27 the Service plans to deliver 30,500 Safe and Well visits, continue around 5,000 business safety visits and fire safety health checks each year, improve protection data automation, and provide accredited protection training to all operational staff.

Workforce Capacity

a) Do you measure workforce capacity?
Yes. Capacity is measured through appliance availability, duty-system modelling, annual hours, shift hours, operational incident demand, planned activity, training requirements and estimated latent productivity per shift. The 2026/27 productivity workbook models remaining capacity by station and duty system.

b) How robust is the data and how will robustness improve?
The data is reasonably robust for appliance availability, incident data and recorded prevention/protection activity because it is drawn from established systems. Productivity modelling is developing and will become more robust as activity recording is standardised and linked more directly to duty system, station and watch-level outputs. Planned IT automation in Protection will also improve risk-level, compliance and inspection data.

c) Has measuring capacity enabled productivity increases?
Yes. CRMP changes increased the number of guaranteed weekday fire engines from 17 to 22. This released capacity for additional prevention and protection activity, including additional Safe and Well visits and 260 additional business inspections during 2025/26.

d) Has measuring capacity released extra hours?
Yes. Additional weekday appliance capacity has been allocated to Safe and Well visits, fire safety health checks, business safety activity, SSRI work, training and operational preparedness. The 2026/27 model proposes further uplift, including increasing Safe and Well activity from 19,324 to 23,420 and thematic inspection activity from 2,356 to 2,626.

Increasing Productivity

a) How has productivity increased?
Productivity increased through CRMP-driven duty-system changes, particularly the introduction of weekday fire engines and revised crewing arrangements. In 2025/26, operational firefighters completed 21,103 Safe and Well visits, contributing to a total of 32,286 visits against a target of 30,000. Firefighters also completed 2,435 Fire Safety Health Checks against a target of 2,128.

b) Where has extra capacity been spent?
Extra capacity has been directed to prevention, protection and response resilience. This includes Safe and Well visits, fire safety checks, targeted deliberate fire reduction, SSRI activity, specialist training, hydrants, operational learning and improved appliance availability.

Service Changes and Achievements

What is the service doing differently this year?

During 2025/26 the Service continued to implement the CRMP 2024–2028, focused on more prevention, more protection and better response. Key changes included piloting a new on-call retainer fee system, reviewing special appliance locations and crewing, introducing new specialist vehicles, launching an Operational Learning Board, completing the Prevention Department review, refining Safe and Well targeting, beginning a Protection Department review, and continuing preparations for changes in fire safety legislation.
The main drivers were CRMP risk analysis, the need to improve weekday response capacity, HMICFRS and national learning, community risk, changing protection legislation, workforce sustainability and the need to improve productivity from operational crews.
The most significant achievement was improving public value through the CRMP crewing changes. These increased guaranteed weekday fire engines from 17 to 22, improved average response times in on-call areas, and enabled additional prevention and protection activity, including more Safe and Well visits and additional business inspections. This approach will inform future plans for 2026/27, including reviewing duty systems, continuing productivity modelling, increasing prevention activity and further automating protection risk data.

Why are these changes being made?

Changes were made as part of our Community Risk Management Plan 2024-28. This I spart of our commitment to our community on delivering more prevention, more protection and better response within the approved budget envelope and as par to four continuous improvement model.

What is the service's biggest success this year?

Creation of fifth duty system – weekday pumps- 4 wholetime appliances at no material additional cost. This has created additional capacity for prevention and protection activity as well as improving the level of guaranteed fire cover in Cheshire.
Restructure of Prevention department to create dedicated "persons at heighten risk team" and increased road and water safety team. At no additional budget. The water safety team have visited every school in Cheshire providing water safety talks to over 20,000 school children.