

**TO:** Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

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## **FIRE AUTHORITY PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY RETURN AND FINANCIAL BUSINESS CONTINITY PLANNING UPDATE**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Fire Authority with an update about the Service's productivity and efficiency return (completed for the Home Office) and the Service's financial business continuity planning.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Fire Authority is asked to;

- 2.1.1 note the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) Productivity and Efficiency Report April 2025, attached at Appendix 1,  
2.1.2 note the update on financial business continuity planning for 2025/26,  
2.1.3 approve the financial business continuity plans for 2026/27.

### **3. Risk Assessment**

- 3.1 **Economic** – CFRS must deliver its services within a balanced budget. Financial business continuity planning supports the Service to achieve this through early identification of where savings could be made, if required, in a considered and measured way whilst also understanding what the impact of such savings would be on service delivery.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1 Over many years CFRS has continuously strived to work more efficiently and effectively whilst maintaining a good, if not outstanding, service to its communities and demonstrating value for money.

- 4.2 Each year we have seen unpredictable increases in costs, nationally negotiated pay settlements not being finalised until after budget setting activities as well as single year settlements. The Service has concentrated even more to see where further efficiencies can be made and put contingency plans in place should costs outweigh our funding.
- 4.3 To do we have in place robust financial planning, including financial business continuity planning, that is reported regularly to the Fire Authority and its Policy and Resources Committee. The Service also completes annual statutory returns as well as productivity and efficiency returns requested by the Home Office.

## **5. Productivity and Efficiency Plans**

- 5.1 As part of the 2021 Spending Review, the National Fire Chiefs Council and Local Government Association agreed that between 2022/23 and 2024/25, fire and rescue services in England would increase wholetime firefighter productivity by 3% and create 2% of non-pay related efficiency savings.
- 5.2 The 2024 Spending Review included a re-commitment to these targets for 2025/26. As part of this all fire and rescue services were requested to draft and publish productivity and efficiency plans for 2024/25 and again for 2025/26.
- 5.3 CFRS plans provide an update on all efficiencies both cashable and non-cashable as well as updates on the productivity of our wholetime firefighters.
- 5.4 As a lean and one of the lowest funded services in the sector, CFRS puts considerable focus on efficiencies, looking for opportunities to improve and provide value for money. Our reports have always shown CFRS to be highly effective in making efficiencies, challenging ourselves and making savings in one area to reinvest in another.
- 5.5 Examples of how we achieve these are through collaboration activities, challenging supplier costs, reviewing how we deliver activities, and reviewing our financial business continuity plans.
- 5.6 We have been on this journey to make the Service as lean as possible since the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. However, with the growth that we are currently experiencing and expected to experience in this county, we need to look for other ways to meet our changing population and risks. This is highlighted in our current Productivity and Efficiency Report April 2025, attached at Appendix 1.

## **6. Financial Business Continuity Planning 2025/26**

- 6.1 In His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services report for Cambridgeshire 2023/25, CFRS is graded as 'Outstanding' and highlighted for Innovative practice in 'Making best use of resources'. It states;

## **“Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service’s financial and resource planning is agile and flexible**

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service has comprehensive financial and resourcing plans. These are aligned with its strategic [integrated risk management plan](#)’s priorities and sustainability strategy. The service uses its resources efficiently and gets value for money by making:

- cashable savings, which it then reinvests;
- non-cashable savings (by doing more with the resources it already has);
- cost-avoidance savings (by carrying out thorough and effective contract negotiation); and
- good use of new ways of working to make sure the services it provides are proportionate to risk and public safety.

These financial plans help provide a sustainable service to the public and are continuously updated and improved”

- 6.2 To mitigate against the impact of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service withdrawing from the highly successful Combined Fire Control collaboration, leaving a circa £1.2 million funding gap, CFRS has increased precepts for this financial year by £4.95. This has supported us in managing areas of increasing costs.
- 6.3 The Government continues to provide additional funding to authorities to compensate for the impact of previous caps on the increase in the business rate multipliers and other business reliefs given. This is known as a Section 31 Grant and this year the Service has received £1,907,050 which will enable investment and growth in some areas to match the risk and demand of our communities. However, some of this funding (£443,000) was only confirmed later in the year post budget setting processes.
- 6.4 As well as this the Service has invested a small amount in professional support, which includes resource to bid for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) grants. Utilising this support, we were successful in our first bid with Huntingdonshire District Council CIL fund securing £700,000 for the renovations to Saint Neots fire station that are now in progress.
- 6.5 The Section 31 Grant along with the CIL Grant have provided capacity in the budget to invest in growth, meaning that for this year, should there be unexpected expenses where we would need to invoke financial business continuity, this can be done without making significant impact(s) to core service delivery.

## 7. Plans For Financial Business Continuity 2026/27

- 7.1 The grants detailed above cannot be relied upon year on year, however we will continue to utilise the professional support employed to seek further CIL and Section 106 funding to allow for continued investment in the Service to make it fit for the future.
- 7.2 The risk from annual funding settlements remains into the next financial year, along with increasing costs, unknown nationally negotiated pay settlements and the future projected growth of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. As we commence the budget setting process in October 2025, we will also carry out an in-depth financial business continuity review. The outcomes of this work will be presented to the Fire Authority in conjunction with the budget setting late 2025/early 2026.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact Officer
April 2025 Productivity and Efficiency Plan  <a href="#">Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service 2023–2025 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire &amp; Rescue Services</a>	Hinchingbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon  <a href="#">Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service 2023–2025 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire &amp; Rescue Services</a>	Tamsin Mirfin Assistant Director Service Transformation <a href="mailto:tamsin.mirfin@cambsfire.gov.uk">tamsin.mirfin@cambsfire.gov.uk</a>