



South Yorkshire FIRE & RESCUE

Efficiency plan

The Government has offered fire and rescue services a guaranteed four year funding settlement in order to provide increased certainty and to aid planning.

This has been offered in return for fire and rescue services providing an Efficiency Plan which sets out how they plan to improve the service they provide whilst managing with reduced funding.





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Our efficiency journey so far



As a publicly-funded organisation, people rightly expect South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue (SYFR) to use its resources responsibly and efficiently. The public, local politicians and our staff want to see that we are cutting spending where it is no longer required, and protecting frontline services as much as possible.

We believe we have been rising to this challenge since the first funding cuts were announced in 2010, and have demonstrated that we are doing everything that might be expected of us in trying to share services with others, collaborating to save time and money, and eliminating spend where it is no longer required.

In fact, we believe we have gone further, by demonstrating genuine innovation, not just to cut our costs, but by working with partners to actually improve some aspects of our service to the community whilst also delivering significant savings.

Flexible working

We have introduced alternative crewing systems and moved fire stations, helping us to save money with little impact on our core, 999 services and enabling us to align our services more closely with local risk.

Close Proximity Crewing

This has included the introduction of Close Proximity Crewing at four fire stations, whereby firefighters work at the station as normal during the day and live in standby accommodation at night. For the public, this system means we can continue to provide the same number of permanently staffed fire engines providing 24/7 cover with no change to response times. All of the firefighters working the system have volunteered to do so. The system saves around £400,000 a year per fire station because we can crew the station with fewer staff compared with traditional crewing methods.





Day Staffing

We have introduced day staffing at Barnsley fire station. Under this system, the first fire engine is permanently staffed both day and night, but the second fire engine is available during the day time only, when our demand from incidents and community safety activity is at its highest. This system saves money compared to the traditional wholetime staffing model.

Fire stations aligned to risk

We have also moved some of our fire stations so that they are better placed to respond to risk in our county. This project involved closing three fire stations which had outlived their operational lives having originally been established to respond to industrial risks within the area. The two new fire stations which replaced them have helped us to shift the focus of our emergency response, so that we are better placed to respond to residential property risk involving human life by providing an improved emergency response to new housing developments in the south and east of Sheffield.

Reducing costs

Support services

Two significant reviews of all non-operational, support departments and roles have been undertaken, with the ultimate aim of reducing costs and making savings to protect frontline services. The reviews have cut the number of support staff posts, without any need for compulsory redundancies as staff left the organisation through a voluntary redundancy scheme.

Management savings

We have removed four senior manager posts (over a quarter of the total posts), one at director level. Our senior management team has reduced from 15 to 11, saving around £370,000 per year.





Procurement

A review of our procurement contracts and non –pay budgets has further reduced our spending. Key improvements include renegotiating major procurement contracts, helping to save more than £500,000. Other cutbacks which have saved tens of thousands of pounds have included scrapping corporate uniform, stopping some publications and using new technology to reduce our energy costs.



Collaboration

We were collaborating with our emergency services partners well before the recent focus on the opportunities in this area made this a priority. The collaborative work we have developed so far means we are already sharing physical assets like buildings and IT systems, as well as responding jointly to some categories of incident.



Shared response

Gaining access to premises to assist partner agencies

Since July 2014, we have attended more than 3,600 incidents for the purpose of gaining access to premises for other agencies. A majority of these incidents are classed as ‘medical break-in’ incidents. We became the first fire service in the country to formally take on this area of work. It sees firefighters provide humanitarian assistance at emergencies where people are thought to be in need of urgent medical attention but where ambulance service paramedics cannot gain access, for example when they are locked indoors. The work used to be carried out by police officers and it is estimated to have saved tens of thousands of hours of police time each year.





Emergency First Responders

Three of our fire stations now operate an Emergency First Responder (EFR) scheme, whereby firefighters are called out to certain life-threatening incidents at the same time as an ambulance. An EFR does not replace the usual emergency medical response from Yorkshire Ambulance Service. However, their location within the local community could mean they are nearer to the scene in those first critical minutes of a medical emergency, delivering life-saving care until an ambulance arrives.

LIFE team

We have joined forces with the police and ambulance services to launch a new team to attend lower priority incidents in Sheffield, with the aim of reducing the demand on 999 responders. The Local Intervention and Falls Episodes (LIFE) team sees fire and police personnel visit hundreds of homes in the city to reduce fire risk, improve security, help people who have fallen and contribute to reducing the risk of falls.

The team also responds to help people at high volume, lower priority incidents, which can reduce police officer and paramedic availability for many hours, such as falls where people are not seriously injured but are unable to get up on their own. The LIFE team also carries out welfare visits relating to low risk missing people and vulnerable people who are risk of anti-social behaviour.

Shared resources

Joint fire and police station

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue was successful in a £560,000 Transformation Fund Bid towards a relocation of Maltby fire station to the existing South Yorkshire Police station which is situated nearby. The project has received planning permission and construction work is beginning in October 2016. The benefits of this work include shared operational learning between the two services based at this site, as well as shared running costs.





Ambulance stand-by points

Five of our fire stations are being modified to allow ambulance staff to share space. An agreement has been signed with Yorkshire Ambulance Service which sets out the proposed co-location of ambulance service resources at the sites, including office space for ambulance staff, welfare facilities and ambulance parking bays. It also allows for shared use of meeting rooms and gyms. One fire station will accommodate police staff too, making it the first tri-service facility in the county.

Lifewise

Lifewise is a jointly run interactive safety centre with South Yorkshire Police which opened in 2011 to deliver education packages to thousands of local people. The packages include sessions on First Aid CPR, fire, road and personal safety to every year six school pupil in the county. The centre also sees fire and police community safety staff work under one roof, enabling the two teams to better share intelligence and good practice.

Control room collaboration

A new control and mobilising system has been jointly procured as part of a project with West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue. The new system gives both services increased resilience and improved business continuity measures. In the event that one service suffers a temporary unavailability of control, for any reason, calls can immediately be switched to the other service, which will be able to answer their calls and mobilise staff and appliances on their behalf. This means both South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire do not need fallback control facilities within their own areas, resulting in a substantial financial saving for each service.





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Our efficiency plan for the future



Funding Assumptions

The following table sets out the assumptions we are making about funding up to 2019-20.

Funding assumptions	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Settlement Funding Assessment					
Baseline Funding - Business Rates / Top Up	£14,230,000	£14,340,000	£14,630,000	£15,060,000	£15,540,000
RSG	£14,580,000	£12,770,000	£10,420,000	£9,110,000	£8,280,000
Settlement Funding Assessment Total	£28,810,000	£27,110,000	£25,050,000	£24,170,000	£23,820,000
Council Tax Forecast					
Band D Council Tax (£)	66.32	67.63	68.96	70.32	71.71
Estimated Total Council Tax Income	£22,490,000	£23,330,000	£23,630,000	£24,260,000	£24,900,000
TOTAL	£51,300,000	£50,440,000	£48,680,000	£48,430,000	£48,720,000





Our primary objective will always be to provide the best possible service to the communities we are here to serve. The Home Office reform programme has set out further requirements to make this service as efficient and as effective as possible, and which we aim to meet in the following ways:

Flexible working practices

Recognising that we are already one of the leanest fire services in the country relative to our geographic area and population size, and that as a metropolitan service we must manage a wide and varied range of local risks, we are increasingly concerned about the impact of budget reductions thus far. We would prefer to maintain our second wholetime city centre fire engine in Sheffield if our funding allows.

However, based on our current funding assumptions, we plan to redesign our frontline, emergency response service so that our staffing is even more closely aligned to both risk and demand.

This will involve:

- Making more fire engines available during the day when we know our demand from incidents, community safety work, risk inspections and operational training is highest.
- Increasing our use of retained firefighters, by employing on-call 'resilience' crews to stand-by at night on those occasions when operational demand requires it.

Our specific proposals are to:

- Introduce a new way of staffing fire stations. The Flexible Roster System will see staffing managed on a local level with individual fire stations becoming self-sufficient and locally responsible for ensuring fire engines are adequately crewed. It will save money by reducing the number of firefighters needed to staff individual stations.





- Change our existing two fire engine stations so that only one of the fire engines is crewed under the existing wholetime staffing model. The second fire engine will become permanently staffed in the day ('day staffed') but retained at night.
- The savings this generates will enable us to increase the number of fire engines at two further fire stations in South Yorkshire. At these stations, a further day staffed fire engine will be added which also becomes retained at night. The stations for this will be selected based on a detailed analysis of our current 999 demand.

These proposals will form an essential element of our Integrated Risk Management Planning process and will be consulted upon during the remainder of 2016.

Increasing collaboration

A collaboration board has been established in South Yorkshire, which will continue to explore meaningful opportunities for working more closely with our emergency services partners. The board is jointly chaired by directors of both the police and fire services, ensuring a strategic overview of our work in this area. Work with the ambulance service is also considered by the board.

Over the period of this efficiency plan the board will continue to proactively explore opportunities for:

- Shared resources, including buildings and systems
- Shared services, including community safety work and support functions
- Improved emergency response delivery, including interoperability and shared operational learning
- Joint procurement of systems and equipment





We also believe that opportunities for collaboration should not be restricted to work with our blue light partners alone. We know that there are huge links between the people who need the help of the health services, and those who are at risk of fire. So strengthening our knowledge and referral mechanisms through collaborative working with these agencies must surely benefit our public safety objectives, as well as those of partner agencies. We will therefore continue to prioritise our work with our local health partners, to explore opportunities for improving outcomes for local people.

Use of reserves

Strong financial planning and the timely delivery of efficiency saving proposals has enabled the organisation to build up reserves to the extent that they currently amount to around £22.4 million.

We propose to use a significant proportion of these reserves (subject to Fire Authority member approval) to fund our capital spending programme over the course of both this efficiency plan and our Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Capital expenditure has traditionally been financed by a combination of capital receipts, capital grant, reserves and borrowing. Our ability to generate capital receipts is limited, and unless the government offer further transformation grant funding, so is our ability to receive capital grant. By using reserves to fund our capital programme, as opposed to borrowing, we can reduce the impact that the capital financing repayments would have on our revenue budget.

Examples of forecast capital projects over this period include the construction of a replacement fire station in Barnsley, a new tactical ventilation facility for firefighter training and spending on vehicles and equipment related to some of the operational changes outlined elsewhere in this plan.





In summary, spending our reserves on necessary capital projects will significantly reduce the amount of reserves we hold, whilst improving our medium term revenue position. We will retain a smaller amount of general reserves, forecast to be around £5 million, to provide for unexpected future costs, such as insurance and operational contingency.

Estimated financial reserves levels (£)	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
General fund balance	£5,867,000	£3,208,000	£4,166,938	£4,823,936	£5,200,189
Earmarked reserves	£19,198,000	£22,179,000	£16,604,200	£12,386,200	£4,649,200
Expected use of earmarked reserves	-£2,619,000	-£5,574,800	-£4,218,000	-£7,737,000	
Total reserves	£22,446,000	£19,812,200	£16,553,138	£9,473,136	£9,849,389





Transparency and reporting

We were early adopters of the Department for Communities & Local Government Transparency Code and already publish a wide range of information which enables people to hold our service to account.

This includes:

- Spending over £500
- Contracts over £5000
- Senior staff details, job descriptions and salaries
- Credit card spending
- Performance information including data for incidents and community safety activity
- Publication scheme, which lists all of our policies and procedures which members of the public may request copies of

We commit to publishing any further information required of us under the Home Office's reform programme over the duration of this plan and our website was recently redesigned to prioritise easy public access to the information we hold.

We already publish an annual report and an annual statement of assurance which detail our achievements and progress towards our objectives. We will enhance these to include more comparative information in areas such as workforce diversity and procurement data, as required of us by the Home Office.

Our Integrated Risk Management Plan sets out how we will manage risk to achieve our purpose. We will continue to publish annual updates to this plan so that members of the public can monitor our progress towards our stated objectives.





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Other references



This document should be considered in conjunction with our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which is [available here](#) and was approved by our Fire Authority on 28 November 2016. An earlier version of the MTFS was presented on 15 February 2016 and is [available here](#). The MTFS will be constantly updated following consultation over our forthcoming Integrated Risk Management Plan, due to be published later in 2017, and subject to any further approval of Fire Authority members that may be required.

This Efficiency Plan should also be considered in conjunction with our Operational and Strategic Plans 2013-17, our annual report and statement of assurance, corporate performance reports and community fire risk model. These documents are available on our website:

<http://www.syfire.gov.uk/performance>

