

**Tyne and Wear Fire  
and Rescue Service**



**Efficiency and  
Productivity Plan  
2026/27**

**April 2026**



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## 1. Introduction and sign-off

- 1.1 The National Framework sets a requirement that fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) produce and publish annual efficiency plans. There is a specific ask from the Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Democracy that, in 2026/27, FRAs produce plans that cover their efficiencies and productivity initiatives in 2025/26, and their intentions for continuing efficiencies and productivity into 2026/27 and onwards.
- 1.2 As part of the 2021/22 Spending Review, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA) proposed that Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in England could deliver 2% of non-pay efficiencies and increase productivity of wholetime firefighters by 3% for each year of the Spending Review period. The 2026/27 Productivity and Efficiency Plans will help the NFCC, LGA and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to collate evidence and to assess likely progress at a national level against the agreed Spending Review goals.
- 1.3 It is a requirement that the Productivity and Efficiency plans are signed off by the relevant Section 151 Officer. Plans should be sent to the MHCLG and published on FRA websites, in a format that is easy for the public to access, by 30 April 2026.
- 1.4 This 2026/27 Efficiency and Productivity Plan has been prepared in line with the letter and guidance issued by MHCLG in February 2026.
- 1.5 The Authority's Director of Finance, Estates and Facilities has signed below to approve this Plan on behalf of the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority and will put arrangements in place to regularly monitor progress throughout 2026/27.

**Signed:**



**Name:** Michelle Ronan  
Director of Finance, Estates and Facilities and S151 Officer

**Date:** 30 April 2026

## 2. Financial information

### Budget

- 2.1 The 2026/27 Revenue Budget was approved by the Authority on 19 February 2026. This budget, plus actuals/forecasts for previous years and estimates for future years are set out below:

	2024/25 ACTUAL	2025/26 FORECAST	2026/27 BUDGET	2027/28 ESTIMATE	2028/29 ESTIMATE
<b>Revenue expenditure</b>					
Direct employee	47,519	46,459	54,556	55,920	57,318
Indirect employee	842	790	4,024	4,125	4,228
Premises	2,596	2,671	3,093	3,170	3,250
Transport	410	408	1,183	1,213	1,243
Supplies and Services	8,995	9,520	12,471	12,783	13,102
Capital financing	2,812	2,796	1,142	1,171	1,200
Other	7,737	10,550	1,862	1,371	643
<b>Total</b>	<b>70,911</b>	<b>73,194</b>	<b>78,331</b>	<b>79,752</b>	<b>80,983</b>
<b>Revenue income</b>					
Precepts	28,720	30,657	32,935	34,306	35,863
LG finance settlement	34,653	35,325	35,324	34,617	33,813
Other grants	0	0	6,365	6,365	6,365
Income raised locally	7,538	7,212	3,707	4,464	4,942
<b>Total</b>	<b>70,911</b>	<b>73,194</b>	<b>78,331</b>	<b>79,752</b>	<b>80,983</b>

### Reserves

- 2.2 Earmarked Reserves are estimated to total c.£21.784m as at 31 March 2026. This was the projected position when the Authority approved the budget on 19 February 2026, but this is subject to change upon finalisation of the 2025/26 outturn position.
- 2.3 Estimated reserve movements to 2028/29 are presented below:

	31/3/25	31/3/26	31/3/27	31/3/28	31/3/29
General Reserve	4,073	4,073	4,073	4,073	4,073
Earmarked revenue reserves	24,415	21,784	15,534	8,128	6,201
of which MRP reserve	0	0	0	0	0
Earmarked capital reserves	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469
Other reserves					
of which revenue	0	0	0	0	0
of which capital	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,957</b>	<b>27,326</b>	<b>21,076</b>	<b>13,670</b>	<b>11,743</b>

- 2.4 In addition to the earmarked reserves, the Authority has a General Fund of £4.073m. The review as part of the budget examined if the level of the General Fund balance was set at an appropriate amount, taking into account the financial risks being faced by the Authority. The financial cover provided is 5.97% of the Authority's 2026/27 Net Budget Requirement, and this is considered reasonable and justifiable by the Director of Finance, Estates and Facilities.

## Precept

- 2.5 The Authority made the decision to use the £5 Band D precept flexibility to support the 2026/27 revenue budget due to the estimated cost pressures as a result of estimated pay awards and inflation. This increase was necessary in order to set a balanced budget. Without the increase, savings would have had to be made to front line services which would have also seen previous CRMP actions implemented having to be reversed (and a weakening of the response provision of the service) when demand for services is increasing.

## Efficiency

- 2.6 Although a balanced budget has been set for 2026/27, this has been set on the basis of estimations and assumptions regarding pay awards and inflation. If actuals are higher than estimates there will be an in-year gap which will have to be managed through reserves and in year additional savings / efficiencies.
- 2.7 Savings and efficiencies are also required in order to release funding for investment in priority activities. This has been the case for the latest CRMP 2024-2027 approved by Authority in the March 2024.
- 2.8 The 2026/27 budget also included the estimated Medium-Term Financial Strategy position for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30. This outlined an estimated gap of £2.924m over the medium term, although this is showing a worst-case scenario. This is indicative and the context is that the Authority will always produce a balanced revenue budget and take the necessary steps to ensure this is achieved.
- 2.9 The Authority is therefore looking at efficiencies in order to bridge the potential budget gap outlined above to avoid utilising limited reserves in order to balance the budget in future years and to release funding for investment in priority activities. There are a number of areas being explored by the service both achieved and potential developments which are detailed in this Plan.

## Procurement monitoring and savings delivery

- 2.10 A rolling spend analysis report is produced and maintained to identify areas of increased or uncommon expenditure. This report is shared with departments and reviewed collaboratively to understand the underlying causes. Where appropriate, this process leads to the consolidation of spend across a reduced supplier base and/or the identification of opportunities to undertake a competitive tender exercise.
- 2.11 For all tender opportunities, the procurement team undertakes a review of available routes to market. This includes consideration of collaborative procurement opportunities, the use of national or regional frameworks, and alternative sourcing options to ensure compliance, value for money and efficiency.
- 2.12 The procurement team operates against an annual savings target and has a consistently strong track record of delivery. The savings achieved are cashable and are reinvested back into services each year, directly supporting operational priorities and service improvement.
- 2.13 Recent examples of this approach include the procurement of breathing apparatus, smoke alarms and professional services for the *all hazards village* project which were

sourced through national frameworks to maximise value, ensure regulatory compliance, and reduce procurement risks.

### Meeting the 2% efficiency target

- 2.14 The completed Efficiency Plan, attached in Appendix A, shows that the 2% efficiency target has been achieved historically and will continue to be achieved. In 2026/27, the target is expected to be achieved through a variety of initiatives including increased income, procurement savings and the initiation of the Unwanted Fire Signals project (non-cashable savings). The service has a strong track record of achieving efficiencies through procurement activity and carrying out reviews of all areas of its service.
- 2.15 The Plan shows planned efficiencies of over £1.24m for 2025/26, £0.926m of which are non-staff savings (3.5% against the 2% target) in addition to the recurrent savings disclosed for 2024/25. Planned non-staff efficiencies for 2026/27 identified to date total £1.15m (4.8% against the 2% target). For the remaining period, a low level of procurement savings have been assumed, which result in achievement of the 2% target.
- 2.16 Regular quarterly reviews of the budget are reported to Authority throughout the financial year and updates on the Efficiency and Productivity Plan are now embedded and included in those budget monitoring reports for 2026/27 for Members' awareness and comment.
- 2.17 The Efficiency Plan produced has strictly followed the template that was provided by MHCLG.

## 3. Productivity plan and activities

- 3.1 This section outlines the service developments and working practices throughout the Authority to show how it will make efficiencies and to continue to increase productivity for 2025/26 and beyond.
- 3.2 The processes are already fully embedded into the service as it has had to make significant efficiencies since 2010/11 in order to manage funding reductions during the long period of austerity. Despite funding reductions the service has improved productivity of its workforce significantly over this period as it has had to reduce staffing numbers (both operational and support staff) and yet has still maintained and improved service levels and outputs. In recent years, the service has begun investing heavily in new technology to allow staff to work more agile and access systems in a cyber secure way, remote from our buildings.

### Collaboration

- 3.3 The Service takes collaboration very seriously and has numerous examples of joint working with other blue light services. One of the success stories of the Authority is its partnership working and co-location of the majority of our property portfolio where collaborative arrangements are well established and are being constantly reviewed and developed. This ensures joint working can flourish and that reasonable income can be generated for parts of our stations that are no longer required operationally. The Authority generates over £0.5m per annum from those arrangements.

3.4 Some further examples of collaboration are outlined below:

- Shared CCTV footage is available in Fire Control from Newcastle and Sunderland Council;
- Joint working with local authorities and Northumbria Police to regulate the sale and storage of fireworks;
- In collaboration with North Tyneside and Sunderland councils, the Service delivers falls prevention advice and provide equipment for residents within those local authority areas. This is usually conducted at the same time as delivering our own Safe and Well checks. This generates an income through cost recovery for the staff time and equipment issued for every engagement that meets the agreed criteria in those authority areas;
- Canine search and rescue capability is covered by Search and Rescue MOU with Northumbria Police whereby a high percentage of canine training and exercising is provided free of charge;
- The NFRS SLA has been in place now for over 15 years. We provide fleet and operational equipment maintenance as well as PPE and uniform for NFRS
- Regional collaboration for the BA compressor maintenance contract on the national framework which resulted in a 39% saving on the annual contract spend;
- PPE is procured through a collaborative national framework; and
- Tyres are procured through the NEPO regional contract.

### [Asset management and investment in technology](#)

3.5 The Service has invested in the following areas since 2025:

#### [Fire Control Room: Mobilising System Replacement.](#)

- 3.6 The Service replaced its Fire Control Room Mobilising System moving to a cloud-based system utilising the latest in digital technology which ensures that the system remains cyber resilient enabling patching and updating of ICT systems can take place remotely.
- 3.7 The Fire Control System first line maintenance and support is provided through the existing ICT Out of Hours Support Contract utilising TWFRS staff.
- 3.8 Previously, the Service has utilised external contractors for the installation and maintenance of mobile data terminal devices on the fire appliances, utilising the FireLink Contract. Efficiencies were created by sourcing the mobile data terminals directly from the manufacturer and installing the devices ourselves.
- 3.9 The Service has invested in the training of its own staff at its Technical Services Centre and within ICT resulting in both financial efficiencies in the reduction of direct costs but also an improvement in productivity as TWFRS had greater control of the timing of the installations of equipment that were factored in to take place during regular appliance maintenance rather than additional down time, thus minimising the 'off the run' time for the appliance. This prevented unnecessary vehicle movements and maximised availability of appliances.
- 3.10 As part of the technology project, ageing dot matrix printers installed on fire stations that were used to print out incident information were removed and replaced with a digital screen. The turn out system itself was replaced and incorporates voice over

technology so that the firefighters are made aware of the type of incident and which appliance is being mobilised verbally at the point of mobilising. This ensures that incident commanders can begin formulating their incident plan at the earliest possible opportunity. This was incorporated into a technology known as pre alerting. Pre Alerting enables a fire station to be alerted to an emergency at the same time that the fire control room answers the call allowing firefighters to prepare to mobilise and don their personal protective equipment ahead of being mobilised. This then reduces attendance times to improve community outcomes for the public.

- 3.11 The station end equipment which alerts our firefighters to emergency calls, was installed by Service staff which enabled a significant financial saving to be achieved in the procurement, installation and maintenance of the equipment.
- 3.12 The TWFRS Mobilising system specification was produced after learning from the procurements of other fire and rescue services which allowed an outcome-based specification to be utilised, this made the evaluation of the tenders easier to evaluate. The contract itself was written in such a way that other fire and rescue services could adopt it and join our 'hub'. As a result, Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service have subsequently utilised this contract and the Service has benefited from a reduction in revenue costs over the course of the contract. The Service continues to explore identifying partners to join our hub to realise further efficiencies going forward.
- 3.13 Working with end users on fire stations through working groups, it was established that the installation of an additional mobile data terminal on the fire appliance would allow the firefighters to become more productive on the incident ground and also whilst in the community. A secondary, 5G-enabled Windows-based mobile data terminal (MDT) has been installed on all fire appliances across the Service. This MDT can be demounted and utilised like a tablet PC. By being connected to the internet, this device enables firefighters to access risk information in real time for incidents such as road traffic collisions and is allowing them to be more productive in the community. Previously the service has recorded the outcomes of safe and well visits and other community events manually on paper, to be inputted on return to the fire station. The demountable MDT has the feature of a digital overlay on the mapping system that identifies those houses that are the highest targeting priority for safety messages whilst also allowing the outcome of the engagement to be seamlessly captured using a web form that is incorporated into the device. Over 2026/27 it is expected that the number of forms that can be completed on the demountable device will increase and this device will aid firefighter productivity in the community setting.
- 3.14 To ensure a joined-up approach to the management and publication of risk information, fire safety staff and prevention staff have been provided with access to a web browser version of the mobile data terminal. This allows them to be more productive by ensuring that they can confirm the latest risk information for a premises that has been shared with firefighters from their laptop. This assists in minimising the number of visits to a premises to collect information whilst ensuring when they do visit that all risk information is up to date and accurate.

#### [Use of Artificial Intelligence](#)

- 3.15 The Service is in the process of introducing a new policy around the use of artificial intelligence. Utilising the Microsoft Copilot software, staff are beginning to work more

productively utilising Copilot software within the Service's information governance procedures.

- 3.16 The Service has also utilised AI technology to develop several systems which would have previously relied on significant ICT developer time or the purchase of novel software. Using AI technology, the service has successfully created a range of applications including a vehicle booking system, an organisational learning system and an productivity application to allow staff to record time allocated to tasks within their role. The productivity application is being utilised as a trial across a number of departments and fire stations and it is hoped that this will be rolled out further subject to a successful evaluation of the trial.

### Organisational reviews

- 3.17 The Service has conducted several organisational reviews over 2025/26 relating to the use of vehicles (small fleet), the provision of administrative services and also a review of the way that staffing is maintained for fire appliances. These reviews will be implemented over the course of 2026/27.
- 3.18 Within a Fire Station context, structured work routines have been reviewed and updated to improve productivity across all fire stations.

### Productivity Framework

- 3.19 The Service has an existing productivity framework which has been enhanced over 2025/26 culminating in an application being created for staff across the service to be able utilise and provide greater awareness and monitoring of productivity across the organisation. On conclusion of the current trial of the application that was developed in house using AI generating tools, it is planned to roll out the application across the service, subject to a positive evaluation.

### Targeting of Prevention and Protection Activities

- 3.20 During 2025/26, the Service reviewed and enhanced its targeting methodology for home fire safety and community risk reduction activities. This ensures that staff focus on households and individuals presenting the highest risk of fire, vulnerability, or harm. The introduction of demountable Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) has further strengthened this approach. These devices provide a digital overlay identifying high-priority households and allow outcomes to be recorded in real time, replacing previous paper-based systems. This has improved both productivity and data quality, enabling more accurate monitoring of Prevention activity and outcomes.
- 3.21 The Service maintains a comprehensive RBIP that prioritises premises based on fire risk, vulnerability, occupancy type, and intelligence from incidents and partners. During 2025/26, the Service reviewed and refined its targeting methodology for business fire safety visits, ensuring that "staff are more productive by visiting the premises that present the greatest risk". This has strengthened the alignment between Protection activity and the CRMP risk profile.
- 3.22 Additionally, the Service has continued to work towards its sustainability ambitions with investing in more sustainable ICT equipment which will reduce our carbon footprint along with reduced energy consumption.

3.23 The Service has a number of other ongoing projects that will generate long-term efficiencies.

## Resourcing

3.24 Some examples are outlined below:

- Control Support have the resilience to cover short term absence, which eliminates the need for shortages to be filled by overtime;
- Operational firefighters and P&E personnel undertake safe and well visits;
- Operational firefighters and P&E personnel undertake community engagement and schools' education activities;
- Operational firefighters and P&E personnel undertake community open days hosted on community fire stations;
- Operational firefighters and RNLi personnel delivering water safety and awareness training
- Operational firefighters undertake fire safety compliance checks in a number of premises, known as operational health checks (OHCs), allowing inspection frequencies of those premises to be extended, providing greater capacity for the fire safety department; and
- Operational crews undertake mental health first aid training to enable support and provide welfare to staff on station.

## Workforce capacity

3.25 CRMP 2024-27: in an effort to evolve the Service's operational response, increasing effectiveness and identifying efficiencies one action approved was to introduce a day crewing shift system at Wallsend Community Fire Station and reinvest the released resources efficiently and effectively by increasing water rescue capability by having a fire boat and water rescue available at all times. A second action was to rationalise staffing levels across the Service to enable us to increase availability to respond to line rescue incidents, building collapses and large vehicle crashes. This will see an additional two specialist appliances available 24/7 from our existing establishment. This is in addition to our previous IRMP 2021-24 which saw an additional 54 posts introduced into the Service. The Service is in the early stages of developing the next iteration of the CRMP to cover the period 2027-2030.

3.26 Unwanted fire signals (UwFS) is a call made to the Service, usually as part of an automated system, which did not originate from a genuine fire. Attending these calls takes front-line staff away from other vital activities such as training, safe and well visits, fire safety activities as well as attending more important incidents. The Service already has a Risk-Based Attendance Policy (RBAP) that puts the emphasis on the premises in investigating the cause of an alarm properly. The project commenced on 1 April 2025 and is already seeing a dramatic reduction in responses, with an anticipated annual saving in the region of £1.4m (non-cashable).

3.27 The Service's RBAP removes the automatic initial attendance to automatic fire alarms (AFAs) to non-residential premises between 06:00 – 20:00 hours Monday to Friday, unless a backup call is received confirming a fire or physical signs of fire exists, or the premises has an exemption in place. This has been broadened out now to extend the time periods involved, combined with greater prioritisation of this area by fire safety teams supporting business. In 2025/26, this refined focus has led to a 29% (447) reduction of fire service attendances to commercial premises. As a

consequence, this has in turn reduced road risk from unnecessary blue light journeys, fuel consumption, wear and tear of vehicles, whilst releasing substantial operational capacity. This additional capacity has been reinvested in safe and well visits, operational health checks, community engagement and training. This enables the service to focus resources on higher risk activities in line with CRMP.

### Training

- 3.28 The table at Appendix C outlines the training, inspections and audits completed by Service Delivery in 2025/26 which is a result of increased productivity of our firefighter establishment.

### Other

- 3.29 Operational risk information is gathered by the Service to ensure that it fulfils its obligations under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This data is collected using an inspection process known as a site-specific risk information (SSRI) inspection. The Service has an annual quota which is populated with the identified premises within the service area, and these are resourced using data collected to deliver the CRMP.

## 4. Service Changes

- 4.1 No major Service changes are planned during 2026/27.

**Appendix A: Efficiency data**  
**Figures in £000s**

	Actual 2024-25		Actual 2025-26		Forecast 2026-27		Forecast 2027-28		Forecast 2028-29	
Opening revenue expenditure budget (net)	70,911		73,194		78,331		79,752		80,983	
Less total direct employee costs	47,519		46,459		54,556		55,920		57,318	
Non pay budget	23,392		26,735		23,775		23,832		23,665	
Efficiency Savings	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
<u>Direct employee</u>										
Reduction in prevention/protection/response staff	319		288							
Reduction in support staff	47									
<u>Indirect employee (e.g. training, travel etc)</u>										
All indirect employee costs										
<u>Premises</u>										
Utilities										
Rent/rates										
Other premises costs										
Shared premises										
<u>Transport</u>										
Fleet						150				
Fuel										
Other transport costs										
<u>Supplies and services</u>										
National procurement savings										
Local procurement savings		1,385		926		500		500		500
Other technology improvements						500				
Decreased usage										
<u>Capital financing</u>										
Revenue expenditure charged to capital										
Net borrowing costs										
<u>Other</u>										
Other savings 1 (please specify)	250									
Other savings 2 (please specify)	1600									
Other savings 3 (please specify)										
<b>Total efficiency savings (excl. direct employee savings)</b>	<b>3,235</b>		<b>926</b>		<b>1,150</b>		<b>500</b>		<b>500</b>	
Efficiency savings as a % of non-payroll budgets	<b>13.83%</b>		<b>3.46%</b>		<b>4.84%</b>		<b>2.10%</b>		<b>2.11%</b>	



## Appendix C: Training courses in 2025/26

Course	No.
T1	547
IEC /FREC	134
EFAD REF	61
ALP REF	13
EFAD Initial	29
LGV Initial	27
Moffett Initial	4
Prime Mover Initial	3
Moffett Ref	1
Prime Mover Ref	8
Trailer Training	2
ALP Initial	2
LGV Assessment	6
24 Monthly Assessment	24
SFJ End Point Assessment	24
Level 1 Acting Crew Manager	23
Phase 2 Development 12-month assessment	18
Level 1 Incident command CMMI	35

Initial trainee BA Phase	23
Supervisory & Middle Manager Development	37
Supervisory commander development Course	19
IOSH Managing Safely Initial	22
IOSH Refresher	11
Trauma Support refresher	4
Trauma Support initial	10
Mod 2 Initial	16
Team Commander	12
MOD 3 Instructors practical assessment	5
Rescue 3 online assessment/conference	4
MOD 4 Re-certification	2
MOD 2 Biannual dip	38
RYA Powerboat Level 2 instructor	5
MOD 4 instructor planning day	4
MOD 3 Instructor CPD	14
MOD 3 Biannual Dip	97

Mod 4 Instructor Training	2
Command Validations	126
HVP Refresher training	15
USAR Timber Shoring Initial	3
MDU Instructor prep	6
MDU Initial Acquisition	30
USAR Confined space	5
HVP Hose Support Training	6
Enhanced Logistics Support Operator	9
USAR SWAH /LACE	113
ROPE CPD	8
Rope Rescue instructing	3
Rope Rescue Initial	8
Rope Rescue Watch Inst Ref	8
Rope Service Inst Annual Validation	4
Biker Down	4
Multi Agency JESIP commander	12
Large Animal Rescue responder accredited inst.	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,648</b>