

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

A meeting of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel will be held in the Maybin Room, One Angel Square, Angel Street, Northampton NN1 1ED on Thursday 3 February 2022 at 1.00pm.

Agenda

1.	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members
2.	Notification of requests from members of the public to address the meeting Any requests to speak on an item on the agenda should be notified to the Chair (c/o the Committee Manager) by 12 noon two working days before the date of the meeting.
3.	Declarations of Interest Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.
4.	Chair's Announcements To receive communications from the Chair.
5.	Minutes (Pages 5 - 18) To confirm the minutes of the Panel meeting held on 16 th December 2021.
SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER	
6.	Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's proposed Police Precept for 2022/23 Guide time: 1.15 – 2.15pm
a)	Police, Fire & Crime Panel statutory responsibilities (Pages 19 - 22)
b)	Proposed Police Precept for 2022/23 (Pages 23 - 76)
7.	Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's proposed Fire Precept for 2022/23 Guide time: 2.15 – 3.15pm

a)	Police, Fire & Crime Panel statutory responsibilities (Pages 77 - 80)
b)	Proposed Fire Precept for 2022/23 (Pages 81 - 130)
PANEL OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT	
8.	Police, Fire & Crime Panel Work Programme 2021/22 (Pages 131 - 138) Guide time: 3.15 – 3.30pm
9.	Police, Fire & Crime Panel meeting dates 2022/23 (Pages 139 - 142) Guide time: 3.30 – 3.45pm
10.	Urgent Business The Chair to advise whether they have agreed to any items of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.
11.	Exclusion of Press and Public In respect of the following items the Chair may move the resolution set out below, on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information (information regarded as private for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972) would be disclosed to them: The Panel is requested to resolve: “That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act of the descriptions against each item would be disclosed to them.”

Catherine Whitehead
Proper Officer
26 January 2022

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Members:

Councillor Gill Mercer (Chair)	Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Jon-Paul Carr	Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
Councillor Zoe McGhee	Councillor Russell Roberts
Councillor Anna King	Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor David Smith	Councillor Winston Strachan
Mrs Anita Shields	Miss Pauline Woodhouse

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence and the appointment of substitute Members should be notified to democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare that fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

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Queries Regarding this Agenda

If you have any queries about this agenda please contact James Edmunds, Democratic Services via the following:

Tel: 07500 605276

Email: democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk

Or by writing to:

West Northamptonshire Council
One Angel Square
Angel Street
Northampton
NN1 1ED

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Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of a meeting of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel held at the Maybin Room, One Angel Square, Angel Street, Northampton NN1 1ED on Thursday 16 December 2021 at 1.00pm.

Present Councillor Gill Mercer (Chair)
 Councillor Jon-Paul Carr
 Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
 Councillor Zoe McGhee
 Councillor Russell Roberts
 Councillor Winston Strachan
 Mrs Anita Shields [except for part of item 30]
 Miss Pauline Woodhouse

Also in attendance Stephen Mold, Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner
 James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council
 Helen King, Chief Finance Officer, Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner
 Nicci Marzec, Director for Early Intervention, Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer, Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

25. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Gonzalez De Savage, Pritchard and Smith.

26. Notification of requests from members of the public to address the meeting

None received.

27. Declarations of Interest

None declared.

28. Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting and made the following points:

- The meeting was being webcast live and participants were asked to use their microphones.
- The Chair had attended the annual national conference for Police & Crime Panels on 2nd November 2021 and had circulated a summary of proceedings to Panel members.

29. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that: the minutes of the Police, Fire & Crime Panel meeting held on 9th September 2021 be approved, subject to the addition of Councillor Russell Roberts to the list of Panel members who gave apologies for non-attendance.

Matters arising from the minutes

18/21 Police & Crime Plan Delivery Update

The Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) confirmed that since the previous Panel meeting the Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) had secured £300,000 funding from round three of the Safer Streets Fund.

21-09/09/2021 Joint Independent Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/21

In response to a question the PFCC advised that the recent recruitment of two members of the Joint Independent Audit Committee was to fill vacancies resulting from existing appointments coming to an end, not to increase the size of the body.

30. **Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's Draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2021-2026**

The PFCC presented the draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan, highlighting the following points:

- This was the first combined Police, Fire & Crime Plan for Northamptonshire but also in the country as a whole.
- The draft Plan set out his strategic priorities, not an exhaustive list of future actions.
- The strategic priorities in the draft Plan sought to protect and build on previous work and to give a renewed focus to the core objective of making Northamptonshire a safer place.
- The draft Plan identified key priorities for Northamptonshire Police, for Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS), for joint working between the two services and for work with other partners. This reflected the PFCC's experience that some of the issues affecting safety in the county could not be solved by a single organisation.
- He was confident in the level of consultation carried out on the draft Plan and that the feedback obtained supported his proposed priorities.
- The new Plan would support continuing improvement in local services by challenging the force and NFRS to raise the bar still further. Previous investment had put the force on course to have more than 1,500 officers by 2023, the highest number ever, and had stabilised NFRS. The new Plan would help to use resources more effectively to meet the challenges of the future.
- He was confident that with effective working between organisations Northamptonshire would be made a safer place.

The Panel considered the draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan.

The Panel questioned the PFCC about the level of public support for the priorities set out in the draft Plan. Panel members made the following points:

- The 1,103 people who responded to the consultation survey on the draft Plan represented approximately 0.2 per cent of the population of Northamptonshire aged 20 years and over. The PFCC was questioned about whether he was confident that this represented an adequate sample size and how it could be increased in future.
- The PEEL 2021/22 inspection report on Northamptonshire Police had concluded that the force needed to improve its own community engagement.
- The demographic breakdown of responses to the consultation survey raised concerns about the level of engagement with people living in 'left behind' neighbourhoods in areas such as Corby and with people from black and minority ethnic community groups.

The PFCC made the following points in response:

- There was not a simple answer to improving public engagement. The OPFCC continued to look for new ways to do so and reviewed past consultation exercises to identify opportunities to improve.
- The priorities in the draft Plan reflected commitments he had made when standing for election in 2021. These had had been supported by over 102,000 voters in addition to the responses to the latest consultation exercise.

Panel members emphasised the increasing risk of cyber-related crime and fraud. This could be a hidden issue, which some victims were reluctant to report. There was scope to provide more information and support to people who were potentially vulnerable, such as older people living alone or people who were not confident using technology. The PFCC was challenged about whether cyber-related fraud should be more prominent in his new priorities.

The PFCC made the following points:

- The draft Plan did make specific reference to fraud rather than just general cyber-related crime. This continued to be an area of attention in Northamptonshire both in terms of enforcement and crime prevention. More general activity such as work to improve the force's digital capability would assist in this.
- Prospective changes to the law in 2022 requiring banks to reimburse people who have been victims of scams were also likely to increase the national focus on cyber-related fraud still further.

A Panel member emphasised that there was an increasingly blurred line between being a victim and a perpetrator of crime, particularly in relation to young people: a young person who had suffered from crime was at greater risk of becoming a perpetrator. Robust enforcement action by Northamptonshire Police on an issue such as knife crime should be done in way that would encourage members of the public to speak to the force. Generally, police officers should treat people in the way that they would want to be treated themselves.

The PFCC made the following points:

- He agreed with the principle that police officers should treat people in the way that they would want to be treated. This informed the priority to strengthen neighbourhood policing in the county.
- Neighbourhood policing aimed to work together with local communities. Linking youth teams with neighbourhood policing teams would also assist in this. This approach would help to support more locally-led, collaborative action on issues such as knife crime.
- Even once it had 1,500 officers the force could not make Northamptonshire a safer place without support and input from the community.

Panel members commented on the presentation of the Plan, making the following points:

- The 'Plan on a Page' graphic included in previous plans was helpful and the PFCC was encouraged to continue this approach.
- Confirmation was sought that the final version of the Plan would be available on the web and in accessible formats.

The PFCC advised that the format used for this draft Plan reflected that it included linked priorities for both the force and NFRS, which needed to be set out clearly. Once the final Plan had been approved it would be made available to members of the public on the OPFCC website, including in accessible formats.

A Panel member sought reassurance about how the PFCC was supporting the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer to enable the make-up of their respective organisations to become more representative of the communities they served. The PFCC made the following points:

- He did hold the two chiefs to account robustly on matters relating to recruitment, supported by better information that was now available to the OPFCC.
- He was satisfied that the force and NFRS were making genuine progress with regards to reflecting the communities that they served. Female officers made up 80 per cent of the force's latest intake of detectives and 40 per cent of the total number of officers recruited by the force in the current year: one of the highest percentages in the country.

A Panel member noted that the focus on prevention, partnership working and community engagement reflected in the draft Plan was welcome but would have resource implications and sought reassurance about how these would be met. The PFCC made the following points:

- He had previously been able to increase the resources available to support community safety in Northamptonshire, from both local and national sources. As an example, the budget for policing had risen from approximately £110m when he was elected in 2016 to approximately £150m in 2021.
- He would be able to raise the police precept by up to £10 for 2022/23; the Home Office was also in the process of reviewing the police funding formula.

- The draft Plan did not reflect an approach based solely on securing more money for Northamptonshire. It was essential that the force and NFRS worked as effectively as possible to make best use of available resources.

The Panel considered how the PFCC's priorities would contribute to support for vulnerable young people in Northamptonshire. Panel members made the following points:

- Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) represented a particularly vulnerable group in society. It was important that all relevant organisations, including the police, played a part in supporting their wellbeing.
- Work experience or employment opportunities for young people with the emergency services produced a benefit both for the individuals concerned but also by strengthening the relationship between those organisations and the wider community that they served.
- There were examples of good work being done in Northamptonshire but effective communication about available opportunities was essential: a young person in the NEET group, for example, needed to be engaged quickly with a view to understanding their interests.

The PFCC made the following points:

- Local authorities held the primary responsibility for safeguarding children. However, the OPFCC made various contributions to partnership working on this matter. The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) team worked with schools to provide support to young people. Youth Services carried out community-based work that could help to identify and support young people who were not in school.
- The force carried out a range of activity that contributed directly or indirectly to the wellbeing of vulnerable young people.
- There could be many reasons for young people being in the NEET group and this was a complex issue. However, he remained committed to participating in the collective response to it in Northamptonshire.
- The age profile of Northamptonshire Police recruits tended to be slanted towards younger ages. The force currently had a significant proportion of young recruits and it could be counterproductive to go further in this direction: the attrition rate for younger recruits could be higher than for those coming into the police with more life experience. The force should also try to reflect the community in terms of including people at different ages as well as in other ways.
- The Emergency Services Cadets made a valuable contribution to build links with the local community.

[Mrs Shields left the meeting for part of the preceding section of the discussion].

The Panel considered its potential conclusions on the draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan. Panel members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The draft Plan should be welcomed.
- The draft Plan would support a fresh approach that recognised the importance of partnership working and prevention activity in securing a safer community.

- If local communities were engaged appropriately they should be able to support activities intended to deliver the strategic priorities set out in the draft Plan.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The Panel endorses the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2021-26.**
- b) The Panel welcomes the focus on prevention and partnership working reflected in the draft Police, Fire & Crime Plan 2021-26.**

31. Fire & Rescue Plan Delivery Update

The PFCC presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- NFRS had increased its public-facing activity as the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic had improved. It had increased home fire safety checks four-fold, re-started visits to schools and provided fire safety advice to new students at the University of Northampton (UoN).
- The force and NFRS performance teams had just jointly purchased a new demographic data system. This was another example of the greater collaboration permitted by co-location at Darby House, which in-turn maximised the resources available for frontline services.

The Panel considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The report was very positive and activities detailed such as the provision of advice to students and the introduction of an accredited fire service wellbeing dog were excellent ideas.
- It was questioned whether there was scope to operate an emergency services cadets scheme for UoN students, given the range of other organisations and activities in which students could participate.
- The report demonstrated emerging improvements in local services, which were very welcome.
- The improvement in response times that had been achieved was impressive and those involved should be congratulated. The report also gave a positive picture on appliance availability.
- The new joint arson reduction strategy between the force and NFRS was impressive. It was questioned whether this would include communication with youth workers to help to address the issue of young people setting fires.
- It was questioned that NFRS did not seem to have the same level of engagement with the local authority building control function as in the past, which could increase fire safety risk in properties. The emergency services needed to be informed about proposals to avoid this situation.

The PFCC provided additional information in response to points raised by members during the course of discussion as follows:

- NFRS currently had two high-rise appliances and two more were on-order, although the current world situation would affect when they would be delivered.
- The provision of fire safety advice to students in conjunction with UoN was a good example of some simple partnership working that produced tangible benefits.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) would review NFRS performance in detail but it was maintaining performance levels despite the challenges of the pandemic. The PFCC thanked the Northamptonshire MPs who had made representations to the government concerning the need for additional resources. The government now proposed to permit Fire & Rescue authorities in the lowest charging quartile to raise the precept by up to £5 at Band D in 2022/23.
- He sought to learn from the examples of wider joint working in other areas. He would be visiting Cornwall during the winter to see its tri-service emergency response scheme, which involved police community support officers, Fire & Rescue and ambulance service personnel. He would also be visiting Wales to see examples of well-established joint police and Fire & Rescue control rooms.
- Members should highlight any specific cases where NFRS had not been engaged in the building control process and he would look into these. A new White Paper on this matter was also due to be produced in the near future.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.

32. **Police & Crime Plan Delivery Update**

The PFCC presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- A range of significant work continued to support the delivery of his Police & Crime Plan priorities.
- The OPFCC had secured £300,000 from the Home Office Safety of Women at Night Fund to support local crime-fighting projects. This was the latest in a series of successful funding bids.
- The OPFCC had introduced a Safer Nights Out (SNO) van in Northampton in the previous week. The SNOvan provided support to people out at night-time and had engaged with other 100 people on its first night of operation.
- The breadth of early intervention activity in the county continued to deliver benefits. The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) team had helped to support 1,800 young people from over 1,000 families since it was established in January 2021. This activity helped to prevent crime and to support young people to make better life choices.
- Two new neighbourhood Beat Buses now operating in the county were helping to support visible policing, public engagement with and confidence in the force.
- The OPFCC had obtained nearly £3m funding for Northamptonshire from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund. The resulting projects demonstrated the value of targeted work done in partnership with the force.

The Panel considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The new retail crime investigator post funded by the OPFCC was a positive development for Northamptonshire. Actions to enhance the local response to people with mental health needs were also welcome.
- The PFCC should seek to broaden the funding streams providing resources for Northamptonshire as far as possible.
- The focus on safety for women reflected in the report was supported.
- It was questioned how the issue of 'spiking' was being addressed in Northamptonshire. Brighton was an example of an area that seemed to employ more safety measures, such as metal detectors on the doors of licensed premises and the operation of a safety word scheme. It was questioned whether the PFCC was able to enforce good practice in this regard.
- Performance against the Police & Crime Plan outcome for victim satisfaction showed a 76.2 per cent overall satisfaction rate for the last 12-month period compared to 76.6 per cent for the same period in the previous year. Reassurance was sought that action was being taken to address this decrease.
- Reassurance was sought that the PFCC was holding to account the Chief Constable for the quality of court files produced by the force, given concerns on this point connected with the fact that the first-time guilty plea rate at Northampton Magistrates Court in September 2021 had been at the lowest level since 2018.
- The PEEL 2021/22 inspection report on Northamptonshire Police had raised the need for more investment in digital capability to address delays in investigating devices involved in crimes. It was questioned whether more additional resources were being provided for this purpose.
- Concern was raised that the PEEL 2021/22 inspection report stated that 42 per cent of Northamptonshire Police officers had left voluntarily before their expected retirement date compared to a national average of 28.3 per cent. The PFCC was challenged about what action he was taking to help the Chief Constable to retain officers.
- The employment package offered by the Metropolitan Police represented a challenge for Northamptonshire, given its proximity to London.
- It was questioned what impact the development of HMP Five Wells in Wellingborough would have on community safety in Northamptonshire.

The PFCC provided additional information in response to points raised by members during the course of discussion as follows:

- The force carried out targeted operations that would help to address 'spiking'. He was confident that the force had a robust strategy.
- His vision for the force since he had been elected was that it should make Northamptonshire a place in which a young woman could go out and about in safety.
- Pubwatch was quite well-supported in Northamptonshire but was a voluntary scheme. Local discussion about safety in the night-time economy had identified

those additional measures used in other areas. However, these could not be imposed by the force.

- The SNOvan was a trial project and he would aim to roll it out to other parts of Northamptonshire if it was successful in Northampton.
- One of his current concerns was regarding the issue of victim and witness attrition. The backlog in the justice system could encourage some defendants to enter a not guilty plea with a view just to lengthening proceedings. This could create a difficult situation for victims and witnesses who wanted to be able to move on with their lives. He considered that a defendant who took this approach and was convicted should receive a higher tariff.
- Factors contributing to victim satisfaction needed to be kept under constant review to ensure an effective approach. At the same time, the PFCC was not solely responsible for issues that could have an effect: the OPFCC was currently providing additional resources for the Sunflower Centre as local authority funding had not been increased despite a previous agreement to do so.
- HMICFRS had previously concluded that Northamptonshire Police did not have enough qualified detectives but he was confident that the force was now in a better position. He did challenge the Chief Constable robustly to improve performance in areas where this was shown to be necessary.
- The PEEL 2021/22 inspection report on the force had been frustrating as it did not seem to acknowledge improvements that had already been made in areas including digital capability. The force had just made the largest ever drugs bust in its history. This had resulted from an effective proactive approach to intelligence-gathering and the use of digital capability.
- The PEEL 2021/22 inspection report was based on a particular point in time. The force had faced challenges in 2019 relating to attrition that were no longer the case. This related to the Police Education Qualifications Framework lowering the age of recruits.
- He was very conscious of how police recruitment in Northamptonshire could be affected by the proximity to London and had raised this in discussions with the Home Office about the funding formula. The fact that Northamptonshire had good transport links not only assisted people to work in other areas but could also bring crime into the county. He was currently working with West Northamptonshire Council on a future residential accommodation facility for police officers working in Northamptonshire.
- He commended the approach being taken by the HMP Five Wells management team and was working with them to manage the effect it would have on the county.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.

33. **Fire & Rescue Authority Budget Update**

The PFCC presented the report setting out the latest forecast outturn position and future financial challenges, highlighting the following points:

- He continued to work with Northamptonshire MPs and the Home Office to highlight the challenges relating to the Fire & Rescue Authority budget. The fact that the PFCC would be permitted to raise the Fire precept by up to £5 at Band D in 2022/23 demonstrated that this effort was having an effect.
- Further funding was still being sought for the capital programme. The Home Office had responded positively to the case being made.

The Panel considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- Reassurance was sought about the budget provision for firefighters' protective equipment in the county. NFRS should be able to provide its personnel with the best possible safety equipment.
- Further information was sought about the provision in the Fire & Rescue Authority budget for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme and costs arising from firefighters being injured on duty. It was noted that the Spending Review 2021 did not address the potential future impact of actuarial reviews.
- Northamptonshire had set a good example as one of the first areas that had implemented the Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority model.
- The report gave confidence that a good service was being provided to Northamptonshire even with a low level of funding.
- It was questioned whether any work was being done in Northamptonshire to remove unsafe cladding using funding announced by the government.

The PFCC made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The Police and Firefighters' pension schemes were both very good unfunded schemes. Pensions was a complex and emotive area. Legislation was due in the next year. The implications of this would need to be addressed: pensions contributions represented a significant portion of the police and Fire & Rescue authority budgets.
- He agreed that NFRS personnel needed to be well-equipped, but he had to operate within finite resources. He was committed to firefighter safety and would like to hear of any specific concerns in this regard.
- Fire & Rescue services were not responsible for work to remove unsafe cladding. He considered that houses in multiple occupation represented a greater risk area in Northamptonshire than high rise buildings.

In response to questions the Chief Finance Officer advised the Panel that the opportunity to raise the Fire precept by £5 at Band D would make a significant difference to financial challenges in 2022/23 outlined in the report. However, inflation would remain a significant pressure in the medium term.

The PFCC subsequently returned to a point raised earlier in the meeting, clarifying that the reference in the PEEL 2021/22 inspection report on the force to 42 per cent of officers leaving before their expected retirement age related to a particular group of 46 officers, not to officers as a whole.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.

34. **Policing Budget Update**

The PFCC presented the report setting out the latest forecast outturn position and future financial challenges, highlighting the following points:

- The current forecast outturn was for an underspend of £733,000. If there was an underspend at the end of the financial year he would consider options for using this, including to support the capital programme, investment or one-off pressures.
- He was underwhelmed by the prospective financial settlement from the government based on current information. He continued to make the case for fairer funding for Northamptonshire that better reflected local population growth.

The Panel considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- Further information was sought about the budget for police vehicles in Northamptonshire, the size of the force's vehicle fleet and the costs of accidents and maintenance. The number of vehicles available to the force contributed to its ability to identify crime and to carry out visible policing.
- Auditors would consider that the current forecast outturn effectively represented a balanced position at this point in the financial year.
- The PFCC was challenged on the relationship between the positive position presented in the report and issues such as the continuing level of knife crime in the county. Residents did not see crime as decreasing but could see examples of it happening widely in the open. Wholesale social change was needed to address this.

The PFCC made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The current forecast underspend was a one-off underspend relating to the timing of spending in one area. The overall medium term financial position showed a structural deficit in future years.
- Further information could be provided about the budget for the force's vehicle fleet if requested. The roll-out of telematics vehicle tracking to the fleet was 50 per cent complete and gave good data about vehicle usage. The force was also able to monitor and manage accidents effectively. The force currently had approximately 450 vehicles but it was essential to ensure that this was the right number to meet future demands. A briefing on the police fleet and the telematics system might be helpful for the Panel.
- Decisions on vehicle purchasing considered reliability as a key factor. However, this could be a complex and changing area: petrol and diesel vehicles would not be sold from 2030 but it currently took less energy to run Darby House than to charge to full some electric cars.

- The forecast overspend of £35,000 on the force budget was a fraction of the overall total and represented commendable performance that other forces were challenged to emulate.
- The forecast underspend on the reducing reoffending budget resulted from government requirements not being implemented when anticipated. This was a case where a saving might be re-used and this would be considered as part of the development of 2022/23 budget proposals.
- The £351,000 forecast pressure on the force control room budget reflected that budget delivery was affected by any differences between anticipated and actual staff departures. Staffing needed to be managed to ensure that the control room was never under-staffed, particularly given increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It was important that members of the public felt confident to report crime. Crime statistics also did not convey the impact of different types of offences. The most meaningful performance measures were the number of victims of crime and the seriousness of harm from crime, as used in the Cambridge Harm Index.

RESOLVED that: the Panel notes the report.

35. Police, Fire & Crime Panel Work Programme 2021/22

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager presented the report setting out the latest version of the Panel's work programme, highlighting the following points:

- Briefing sessions with the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer and the tour of Darby House originally due to take place on 22nd November 2021 needed to be rescheduled.
- The Panel had not yet set a date for the requested report on action being taken in Northamptonshire in response to the outcomes of the Kerslake Report and Public Inquiry on the Manchester Arena attack.

The Panel considered the report.

The Chair noted that the PFCC had highlighted fire safety risks connected with HMOs as an area of concern in Northamptonshire. The Panel could consider adding an item on home fire safety risks, including those relating to HMOs, to its work programme.

The Panel considered the potential to request a workshop session with the PFCC on performance against key priorities, to provide more time to raise questions on the latest update reports. It was subsequently highlighted that there was scope for members to request information from, or ask questions to, the PFCC between Panel meetings in order to support scrutiny at formal meetings. This should be centrally coordinated appropriately through the Secretariat.

The Chair raised the need for the Panel to take further action regarding the appointment of substitute members by the constituent local authorities. The Chair could play a role in liaising with political groups regarding substitution but had better

contacts at North Northamptonshire Council than West Northamptonshire Council. The Democratic Services Assistant Manager subsequently made the following points:

- The current state of the pandemic did increase practical issues relating to attendance and substitution at committee meetings.
- The Panel would need to take account of the constituent authorities' approach to substitution. West Northamptonshire Council did not currently appoint specific substitutes for committees.
- The Panel's Rules of Procedure meant that if the Chair and Deputy Chair were both councillor members they would each come from a different constituent authority.

The Panel considered the potential for it to carry out some in-depth scrutiny work on the issue of young people's involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour in Northamptonshire. Panel members made the following points during discussion:

- The risk to young people of becoming involved in crime was growing. Vulnerable young people needed to be supported effectively and not fall through the gaps between different services.
- The Panel could consider holding an information-gathering workshop with young people, youth service representatives and the PFCC. Scrutiny by the Panel could help to ensure that local services were joined-up.
- Local authorities were primarily responsible for safeguarding young people. Any work on this topic should reflect that the Panel's role was to scrutinise and support the PFCC.
- It could be helpful for members to set out the particular issues that they thought the Panel should scrutinise. These could be raised with the PFCC in the first instance. The Panel might then hold a workshop if it was not satisfied with the response.
- Some young people who needed support had been missed by service providers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- An information-gathering workshop could represent a different way for the Panel to consider an issue affecting Northamptonshire.

The Democratic Services Assistant Manager made the following points:

- The Panel's remit in its broadest sense included scrutinising decisions and actions by the PFCC. Proposed work would need to reflect this focus. However, the PFCC did have priorities in his Police, Fire & Crime Plan relating to young people and anti-social behaviour. The proposed work could therefore be done in principle. The key task would be to define the purpose and scope.
- A topic such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people in Northamptonshire would be a massive one to scrutinise. The Panel should consider the practicalities involved in any potential in-depth scrutiny work.

A Panel member suggested that it could be helpful for future Panel meeting agendas to include guide times for individual items, to assist in managing business.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **The Panel requests to receive a report to its meeting on 14th April 2022 on priorities in Northamptonshire with regard to managing fire safety risks in residential properties, to include risks associated with houses in multiple occupation.**
- b) **The Panel agrees that Panel members should be able to make requests for information to the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner between Panel meetings, on the following basis:**
 - **Requests should be sent to the Panel Secretariat to forward to the Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner**
 - **Requests should be circulated by the Secretariat to all Panel members and substitute members for information.**
- c) **The Panel identifies the involvement of children and young people in crime and anti-social behaviour in Northamptonshire as a potential topic for scrutiny as part of its future work programme, subject to further consideration of the practicalities involved.**
- d) **The Panel agrees that its meeting agendas should include guide timings for individual agenda items in future.**

36. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The Chair offered best wishes to Panel members for Christmas and the New Year.

The meeting closed at 4.40pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

3 FEBRUARY 2022

Report Title	Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel's statutory responsibilities relating to scrutiny of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioners' proposed Police Precept 2022/23.
Report Author	James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers		
West MO (for West and joint papers)	Catherine Whitehead	26/01/2022
West S151 (for West and joint papers)	Martin Henry	26/01/2022

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to set out the statutory requirements on the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel regarding scrutiny of the proposed Police Precept for 2022/23 produced by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report summarises the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel's statutory responsibilities relating to reviewing and making a report on the proposed Police Precept for 2022/23 produced by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire. The proposed Police Precept appears on the agenda for the current Panel meeting as the next item of business.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel reviews the proposed Police Precept for 2022/23 produced by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire.
- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendation is intended to enable the Panel to carry out its statutory responsibilities relating to scrutiny of the proposed Police Precept effectively at the current meeting.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 A Police & Crime Commissioner is a major precepting authority under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011. A Police & Crime Commissioner may not issue a precept under Section 40 of the 1992 Act until it has been subject to scrutiny by the relevant Police (Fire) & Crime Panel according to the process specified in Schedule 5 of the 2011 Act.
- 4.2 Schedule 5 of the 2011 Act, supporting Regulations, and the Rules of Procedure for the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel require:
 - a) The Commissioner to notify the Panel of the Commissioner's proposed precept by 1st February of the relevant financial year
 - b) The Panel to review the proposed precept
 - c) The Panel to resolve to:
 - i) Support the proposed precept without additional qualification or comment; or
 - ii) Support the proposed precept and make additional recommendations on it; or
 - iii) Veto the proposed precept provided that the Panel makes that decision by the required majority, which is that at least two thirds of the persons who are members of the Panel at the time when the decision is made vote for it.
 - d) The Panel to make a report to the Commissioner on the proposed precept, setting out the results of its review, by 8th February of the relevant financial year. If the Panel votes to veto the proposed precept the report must state that the Panel has done so and set out its reasons for doing so.
- 4.3 If the Panel does not veto the proposed precept the Commissioner must:
 - a) Have regard to the report made by the Panel
 - b) Give the Panel a response to its report and to any recommendations in the report
 - c) Publish the response in a manner determined by the Panel.
- 4.4 The scrutiny process concludes at this point. The Commissioner may then issue the proposed precept as the precept for the next financial year, or issue a different precept but only if it would be in accordance with a recommendation made in the Panel's report.
- 4.5 If the Panel vetoes the proposed precept the Commissioner must not issue it as the precept for the next year. By 15th February of the relevant financial year the Commissioner must:
 - a) Have regard to the report by the Panel

- b) Give the Panel a response to its report setting out the precept that the Commissioner now proposes to issue (referred to as the 'revised precept'). If the Panel vetoed the original proposed precept because it was considered to be too high the revised precept shall be lower; if the Panel vetoed the original proposed precept because it was considered to be too low the revised precept shall be higher.
- c) Publish the response in a matter determined by the Panel.

4.6 The Panel is required to review the revised precept and to make a report on it to the Commissioner (referred to as the 'second report'). The second report may indicate whether the Panel accepts or rejects the revised precept and may make recommendations on it, including recommendations as to the precept that should be issued for the next year. The Panel must complete these actions by 22nd February of the relevant financial year. A reserve meeting of the Panel is scheduled if required for this purpose. The Panel does not have the power to veto the revised precept.

- 4.7 If the Commissioner receives a second report from the Panel, by 1st March of the relevant financial year the Commissioner must:
- a) Have regard to the second report by the Panel
 - b) Give the Panel a response to the second report
 - c) Publish the response.

4.8 The scrutiny process concludes at this point. The Commissioner may then issue the revised precept as the precept for the next financial year, or issue a different precept but only if in accordance with a recommendation made in the Panel's second report.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1 Reviewing and reporting on the proposed Police Precept is a statutory task for the Panel. Local Government Association guidance for panels on policing and fire governance gives the following advice on good practice in this regard:

A panel's questioning plan in relation to the commissioner's precept should focus on strategy, not numerical details and be used to seek clarification, test evidence and assumptions and explore options best able to deliver the police and crime plan through the proposed precept. Questions panels might ask their commissioner could include whether the precept enables funding to follow priorities; whether value for money is being secured; and whether there is a robust monitoring framework.

Panels have the power of veto over the precept. However, this a longstop, use of which should be very rare and needs to be justified. Panels should also recognise that the veto can only act as a delay; it will not prevent the commissioner from being able to re-present, and enact, a precept that is not materially different from that to which the veto has been applied.

If the veto is used, the panel should be prepared to provide detailed reasoning to back up why.

- 5.2 The Panel should seek to carry out the task of reviewing and reporting on the proposed Police precept in accordance with its overall role of scrutinising and supporting the effective exercise by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner of his responsibilities.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 There are no resources or financial implications arising from the proposal.

6.2 Legal

- 6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposal.

6.3 Risk

- 6.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendation in this report.

7. Background Papers

Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011

Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Terms of Reference.

Policing and fire governance – Local Government Association guidance for police and crime panels (2019)



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

3 February 2022

**REPORT BY THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER (PFCC)
AND THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

PFCC PROPOSED POLICE PRECEPT 2022/23

Purpose of the Report

1. To propose the 2022/23 Police Precept Proposal.
2. The revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and medium term plan are included within the report to provide context for the precept proposal.

Recommendation

3. The Police Fire and Crime Panel is **RECOMMENDED** to endorse:

The proposal to increase the 2022/23 Police Precept by £10 per annum (3.7%) for a Band D Council Tax to £278.04 (from £268.04 in 2021/22), 19 pence per week for policing purposes.

4. Note the information presented in this report, including:
 - a. The statement of the Section 151, Chief Finance Officer as required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 regarding the robustness of the Budget, the Medium Term Financial Plan and the adequacy of financial reserves, together with the other associated statutory safeguards (Appendix C).
 - b. The total 2022/23 net budget requirement of **£160.364m**, including:
 - i. The intention of the PFCC to set a Council Tax Precept Requirement for 2022/23 of **£70.247m** (£66.852m in 2020/21).

- ii. The future risks, challenges, uncertainties and opportunities included in the precept proposal, together with the financial and operational mitigations and additional considerations identified.
- iii. That any changes required, either by Government grant alterations or through amended council tax base and surplus/deficit notifications received from the collecting authorities, may be balanced either through Force Efficiency Savings or through a transfer to or from Reserves.
- iv. The current MTFP and the anticipated savings required.
- v. The Capital Programme and the review of the ICT element within it.
- vi. The Reserves Strategy and proposed use of reserves.

Executive Summary

- 5. This report and proposal, is the culmination of several months' work by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC), supported by Force colleagues, public and stakeholder consultation and key government announcements.
- 6. Following the announcement of the provisional Police Grant settlement, the PFCC has considered current and future funding levels, together with his Police, Fire and Crime Plan, the consultation, and the Spending Review (SR2021).
- 7. The PFCC has received briefings from the Minister and acknowledges the expectation that PFCCs will increase their precept locally by £10 (3.7%) in 2022/23 and the following two years.
- 8. In considering the budget for 2022/23 and the proposed level of Police precept, the PFCC has been informed by a consultation of 1,404 residents of Northamptonshire.
- 9. The budget for 2022/23 is the final year of the local and national increase for Police Officers. As such, **By 31 March 2023, the force is on target to have an establishment of 1500 Police Officers, an increase of 330 over the past six years.**
- 10. The PFCC has listened to the views of Northamptonshire residents and has worked with the Chief Constable to ensure a significant number of these officers have been allocated to neighbourhoods, supported by the local Beat Busses introduced in 2021//22, further increasing visibility.

11. Furthermore, following the responses from the public to the Police, Fire and Crime Plan and the priorities contained within it, in addition to his commitment to increase Police Officers to 1500, the PFCC has ring fenced funding from within the budget to target the following areas:
 - Prevention that keeps the County Safe
 - Effective and efficient response
 - Protect and support those who are vulnerable
 - Effective justice
 - Modern services that are fit for the future

12. The PFCC has ring fenced the following funding in the budget:
 - a. The sum of £1m for ongoing investment with future years costs funded from the base budget and the savings programme. The Chief Constable has prepared a range of proposals which support the priorities above which the PFCC is currently considering and will finalise any agreement at the February 2022 Accountability Board.

 - b. The sum of £1m from within the PFCC initiatives reserve in 2022/23 and in principle a similar amount for the following two years. He is currently finalising his considerations in the following areas:
 - Prevention and support for Violence against Women and Girls
 - Supporting victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence
 - Crime Prevention
 - Working together with partners to tackle and reduce knife crime
 - Increased investment in Youth and Early Intervention work

13. The PFCC has always endeavoured to ensure that the cost of staffing the OPFCC is around 1% of the Chief Constable's force budget. In 2022/23 OPFCC staffing remains at approximately 0.6% of the total force budget for the year.

14. Within the OPFCC Commissioning and Delivery Budget, the PFCC has provided additional investment into Early Intervention and Youth Work teams in 2022/23 and will continue to support and embed the investments made in previous years, which includes to:
 - Prioritise work to support victims and the vulnerable,
 - Take forward initiatives to reduce domestic violence,
 - Work with partners to take forward initiatives to reduce re-offending,
 - With increased investment to continue to prioritise Early Intervention and engagement work,
 - With the increased investment to continue to prioritise targeted Youth Intervention and engagement work, including increasing capacity in neighbourhoods
 - Continue to take forward work on crime prevention and

- Continue to take forward work with the Road Safety Alliance, including the conclusion of the roll out of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras and other initiatives.
15. The PFCC has reviewed the adequacy and level of reserves to ensure that funds are still available to support investment in innovative solutions and ensure the level is adequate to meet one off short term funding shortfalls from 2025/26 if savings and efficiencies are not identified.
 16. The policing budget and precept also takes forward the statutory duty to collaborate for the emergency services and means the services should be actively seeking opportunities to work together to deliver more efficient and effective public services. As such, both Fire and Police Budget agreements for 2022/23 will again demonstrate the PFCC commitment to collaboration, including greater integration between police and fire and rescue to reinvest in frontline services. It is the PFCC's expectation that, over time, the following areas will be delivered:
 - Shared Services
 - Shared Estates Strategy
 - Shared Prevention Approaches
 - Operational Interoperability
 - Control Room
 17. The PFCC has been briefed on the current and emerging operational and demand challenges and these have informed discussion on the budget allocation to the Force for 2022/23 and future years.
 18. The PFCC feels that Northamptonshire is not served well by the current grant funding formula; that the county is not fairly funded in comparison to both regional and national peers and that local residents should not pay more for their services than other counties. Every year the formula is not update, Northamptonshire is detrimentally affected. He has and will continue to make national representation in this regard.

After careful consideration of the factors included within this report, the PFCC is very much aware of the financial impact on households in the current time. He is, therefore, proposing a precept increase of £10 a year (19 pence per week) for 2022/23 in order to continue to increase and invest in police officers, continue to build a sustainable base budget to maintain and safeguard policing services in Northamptonshire.

Background

19. In considering his precept proposal for 2022/23, the PFCC has reviewed a wide number of factors, including (but not limited to):
 - The significant population increase in Northamptonshire over the period 2002 to 2020. With the opportunities that an increase in population brings there is also an impact on demand for public services, especially the police.

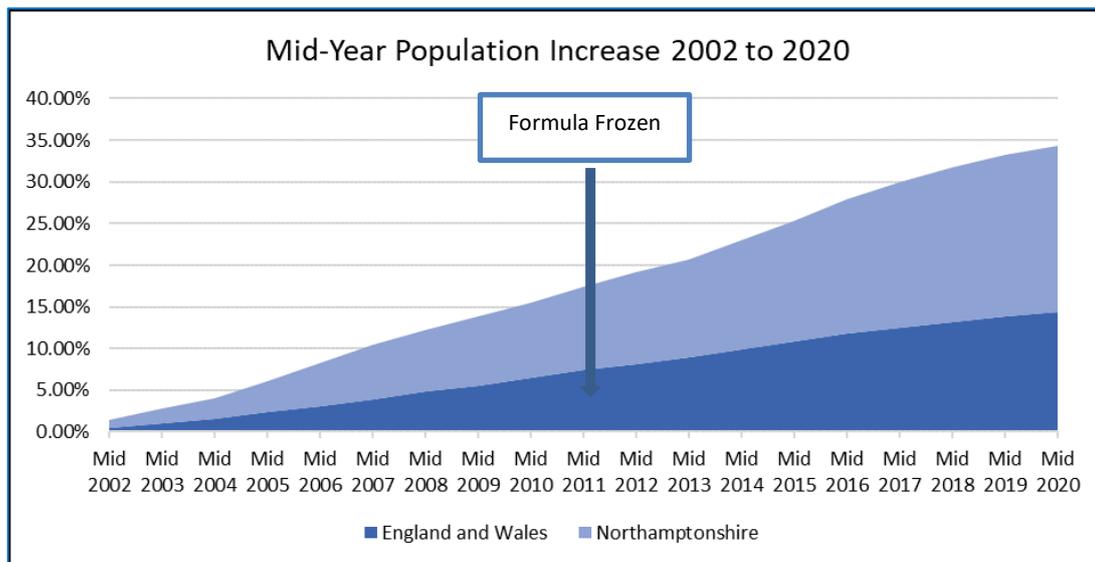
- The views of Northamptonshire residents.
- The spending review 2021; the provisional finance settlement for 2022/23 and indicative allocations for future years.
- The impact of the additional police officers on the base budget.
- The current financial climate and levels of inflation running at 5.4%.
- The level of reserves and balances held.

Funding Formula and Population

20. The National Police Funding Formula which accounts for around 57% of Northamptonshire's funding includes population as a key factor in the allocations. However, the formula was "frozen" in 2011/12 and annual increases have been on the basis of inflation and additional officers since that time.
21. Work had been underway on a review of the formula with an initial view of implementation in 2018/19 and in his letter to PFCCs on the 19 December 2017 on the Provisional Police Grant Settlement for 2018/19, the then Minister advised:

"In the context of changing demand and following my engagement with Police leaders, providing funding certainty for 2021/22 is my immediate priority. We will revisit the funding formula at the next spending review."
22. Whilst the formula has not been reviewed in the current spending review (SR2021), work on the long awaited funding formula review is now underway and the PFCC, together with Bedfordshire and Lincolnshire PCC's have met with the Home Office lead to ensure the voice of Northamptonshire has been heard.
23. A significant part of the current formula is based on population. In 2002, Northamptonshire's population growth was 0.5% more than the national average.
24. By mid-2020, the gap between the county and the national average had increased to 5.64%.
25. At the time the formula was frozen, Northamptonshire's population had increased by 10%, compared to the national average increase of 7.4%, a gap of 2.6%. By 2020, whilst the gap has doubled, the funding formula population factor has remained static.

26. The graph below demonstrates this population increase for the period 2001 to 2020.



Source: Mid Year Population Office of National statistics

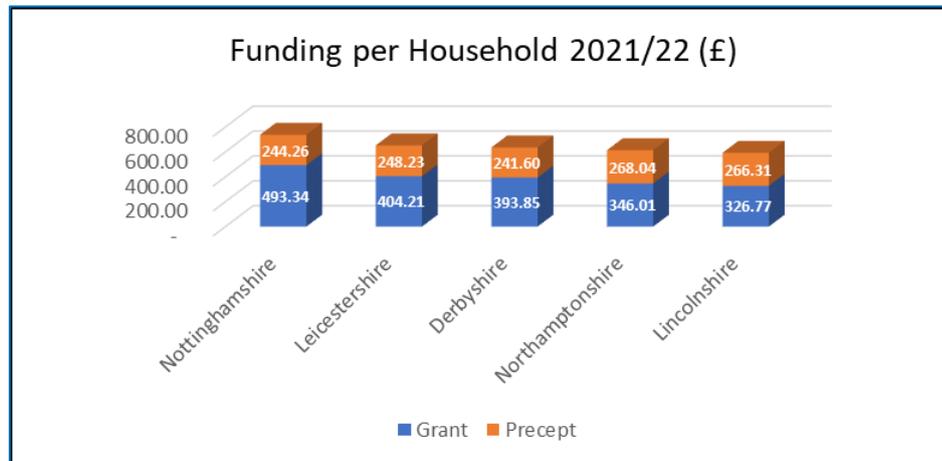
27. Police central funding has not kept pace with this population increase and whilst historical local council taxbase increases have contributed to total funding, central government grants, have not.
28. This means that 57% of Northamptonshire Police’s funding is allocated on the basis of a funding formula which has not been updated for over 10 years; therefore, does not reflect current demands; does not reflect modern policing and does not reflect the significant growth in the county.
29. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Demography Insight Pack 2019 outlines that Northamptonshire’s population has increased by 29.9% over the 30 years, compared with 17.7% across England. It also estimates this will increase by a further 14% by 2041.
30. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Policing and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) advised in 2021 that:

“.....The force’s financial plans are set on realistic and conservative assumptions.”

31. In 2019, the HMICFRS also highlighted:

“it has been subject to decades of underfunding.....”

32. Recent analysis undertaken by the PFCC highlights the inequity of the current funding formula in the East Midlands Region and how taxpayers in the smaller forces of Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire are penalised by the lower government grants per household than their regional peers, as follows:



33. For illustrative purposes, the PFCC has calculated that if Northamptonshire received government grant at a similar level to Nottinghamshire, the county would receive an additional £36.7m per annum. Furthermore, Nottinghamshire has 29% more residents yet receives 84% more grant funding.
34. Band D Council Tax levels vary significantly for Police and Crime Commissioners across the country and the PFCC strongly believes that the current funding formula does not best serve the residents of Northamptonshire, meaning that local residents are required to fund a higher level of the policing bill than they would in other areas.
35. He will continue to engage on the review and lobby to seek a fairer funding settlement on behalf of the residents of Northamptonshire.

Budget Strategy

36. Since being elected into office, the PFCC has sought to maximise the allocation provided to the Chief Constable from within his funding envelope.
37. This is balanced with maintaining sufficient resources to fund the capital programme, maintain the PFCC office and provide over £4m in commissioning and delivery activities for the public of Northamptonshire.
38. In 2022/23, before investments, the PFCC will allocate 93.6% of funding available to the Chief Constable, this is an increase of 0.7% on the allocation in 2021/22 and 2.5% since 2016/17.
39. In 2022/23, the Chief Constable's budget (before investments) will increase by £7.1m on the previous year. A cash increase of £38.6m since 2016/17.

Police Grant Settlement – Precept and Police Officer Uplift (PUP) Expectations

40. Due to the recency and detail of local government finance settlements at the 2021 Spending Review (SR2021), the majority of the provisional settlement was already known. The Technical Support Team provided the headlines below.
41. The 2022/23 Police Provisional Settlement was announced on 16 December in a written statement by the Crime and Policing Minister, Kit Malthouse. Full details of the Settlement can be found on the Home Office office website.
42. The deadline for submissions to the provisional settlement is 14 January 2022. The PFCC has responded to the consultation.
43. This settlement follows the first three-year SR for several years. Despite the economic landscape improving, there are still significant difficulties within the economy. Inflation is of particular concern with the Bank of England’s prediction of a CPI figure of over 5% in 2022 coming to fruition.
44. Prior to the publication of settlement, the sector was expecting a continuation of additional Police Officer Uplift funding for the recruitment of 8,000 officers (towards the 20,000 total). In a follow up meeting, Kit Malthouse confirmed that policing would receive an extra £550m in 2022-23, £650m in 2023-24 and £800m by 2024-25. At the time of SR, how this money was to be distributed was unknown, however, it was suggested that as well as PUP funding this would also give forces enough resource to fund a pay rise, in line with the end of the public sector pay freeze.
45. The settlement also provided Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in England with the flexibility and expectation to increase funding in each year of the SR21 period with a £10 council tax referendum limit. According to the SR, if all PCCs in England and Wales were to take full advantage of this flexibility, this would raise up to an additional £774m by 2024/25 based on current HO forecasts.
46. Spending Review 21 Headlines included:
 - £10 Precept Flexibility for PCCs over the course of SR21.
 - GDP Forecasts up and Debt forecasts down compared with Spring Budget 2021.
 - The Home Office settlement provides £4.2 billion over the Parliament, increasing from £12.3bn in 2019/20, (14.6bn in 2021/22) to £16.5bn in 2024/25
 - Public Sector Pay Freeze to end in 2022
 - An end to Capital Grant allocations – all funding is now provided in the funding envelope.
47. Core Funding, which is defined as the sum of Police Grant, Rule 1, the Welsh Grants and Ex-CLG funding has increased by 5.7%. The smallest increases in core funding were seen in City of London and Dorset with an increase of 4.8%, followed by Gloucestershire at 4.9%. In contrast, Northumbria and Gwent had the largest increase at 6.1%, followed by South Wales at 6%.

48. Reallocations (top slices) are taken from the grant before it is allocated to PCCs in line with the funding formula.
49. A table comparing 2021/22 and 2022/23 reallocations is below which shows the increase of £340m. Of this amount, £188m relates to the capital allocations no longer distributed with the settlement.

Reallocations	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m
Special Grant	54.8	62.4
PFI	71.6	71.6
Arms Length Bodies	70.5	68.7
Police Uplift Programme	14.5	12.0
Police Technology Programmes	484.7	606.5
National Operational Units	2.9	2.9
Bluelight Commercial	5.0	-
Precharge Bail	2.0	-
National Capability programmes	38.7	65.0
Forensics	25.6	25.6
Police Now	7.0	7.0
Serious Violence	38.9	50.1
Safer Streets Fund	20.0	-
Counter Terrorism programmes	32.5	32.5
Serious Organised Crime Strategy Implementation	146.3	-
Regional Organised Crime units (21/2 Top Up)	4.9	33.2
Science, Technology and Research	5.2	-
NPCc Programmes	3.2	10.6
International Crime Coordination Centre	5.0	-
Police and CJS performance	-	13.0
Crime Reduction programmes	-	45.8
Capital Reallocations	-	188.1
Drugs/County Lines	-	30.0
Rape Review	-	12.0
Crime Reduction Capabilities	-	13.5
Fraud	-	23.1
Total Reallocations	1033.5	1373.5

50. Whilst some reallocations can be readily compared between years, others may be new initiatives or replace previous initiatives such as the Safer Streets Fund. Details of these initiatives, such as Crime Reduction Programmes are awaited.
51. Currently PCCs have no influence on the scale or scope of national reallocations prior in informing the provisional settlement. It is important to highlight that these reallocations do impact at a local level as resources are being allocated to meet nationally determined priorities rather than based on local needs and requirements.

52. A summary of the final core settlement assuming that the maximum precept increase is to be levied, compared to the 2021/22 actual position is as follows:

Funding Source	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23
	Actual £m	Core Settlement £m	Actual £m
Police Grants and ex-DCLG funding	77.5	81.7	81.7
Ring fenced additional officer funding 2022/23	1.0	1.3	1.3
Legacy Council tax grants	6.6	6.6	6.6
Additional pension grant	1.3	1.3	1.3
Council Tax Grant	0.9	0	0.0
Total Home office Revenue Allocations	87.3	90.9	90.9
Council Tax (Core Settlement assumption £10)	66.9	70.1	70.2
Collection Fund Deficit	(0.6)	0.0	(0.7)
Total 2020/21 Actual and 2021/22 Core Settlement	153.6	161.0	160.4

Note: The Core Settlement is based on the Home Office Council Tax assumptions, not the actual position

53. The variation between core and actual spending power is based on the following:
- The core settlement is based on estimated council tax receipts which are at a lower level than actual levels
 - The collection fund deficit is not reflected in core spending power.
54. Therefore, Northamptonshire's actual funding is £0.6m lower than the published core spending power.
55. Consistent with 2021/22, a sum of £1.3m additional officer funding has been ring fenced and will only be paid on delivery of uplift officers.

Police Officer Recruitment and Police Uplift Programme (PUP)

56. In September 2019, the Government launched the national recruitment of 20,000 Police Officers, referred to as the Police Uplift Programme (PUP). This was in addition to the 83 officers already provided by the PFCC in that year and additional officers in previous years.
57. The PFCC listened to the views of Northamptonshire residents and has worked closely with the Chief Constable to increase Police Officers wherever possible and affordable. As such, The force has grown from 1,170 police officers and by March 2023 they are still on target to have 1,500. This is an increase of 330 officers (over 28%) and the most officers the county has ever had.

58. The force is on target to achieve the agreed 1,500 police officer establishment by March 2023. The remaining establishment profiles are as follows:

Milestone	FTE
March 2021	1,367
March 2022	1,460
March 2023	1,500

Council Taxbase and Council Tax Precept Income

59. The Council Tax and the level of precept is a fundamental part of the local government finance settlement.
60. Income generated from the precept depends on both the level of the Band D precept and the tax base – the latter being effectively the number of properties who are required to pay Council Tax.
61. In Police, the precept accounts for over 43% of funding, therefore any variations can be a significant impact. Historically, the taxbase has increased year on year, however, due to the impact of COVID, in 2021/22 the taxbase reduced by 0.41%. due to COVID-19.
62. The North and West Unitary Councils have advised the PFCC of their proposed taxbases for 2022/23.
63. A comparison of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 figures reflects an average 1.3% taxbase increase as follows:

	2021/22	2022/23	Change	
	(number)	(number)	(number)	%
North	111,892.00	113,047.00	1,155.00	1.03%
West	137,520.22	139,604.04	2,083.82	1.52%
Taxbase (Band D)	249,412.22	252,651.04	3,238.82	1.30%
CSP DLUHC Estimate		253,333.74	3,921.52	1.57%
CSP Home Office Estimate		252,205.64	2,793.42	1.12%

64. As with previous years, the estimated taxbase in CSP Power estimated by DLUHC is significantly higher than the estimate used by the Home Office for Policing. It is interesting to note that the actual taxbase is between the two estimates.
65. Moving forwards, the MTFP assumes average increases which align with Unitary Councils taxbase assumptions.

66. The total precept funding is a combination of the taxbase increase and the precept increase as follows:

2021/22 £	Variation	2022/23 £
	Impact from Taxbase Changes	
244,328	- North	309,586
(335,084)	- West	558,547
(90,756)		868,133
	Impact from Precept Increase £10	
1,454,596	- North	1,130,470
1,787,763	- West	1,396,040
3,242,359		2,526,510
3,151,603	Total Precept Change	3,394,644

67. The 2022/23 proposed precept increase of £10, together with the increased taxbase will generate an additional £3.395m on the base budget.

Council Tax Collection Fund

68. Each year the billing authorities estimate how much of the total potential Council Tax income liability of taxpayers they will collect. They advise precepting authorities of any projected surplus or deficit on the "Collection Fund" in January of each year.
69. The PFCC is very appreciative of the hard work undertaken by the North and West Northamptonshire Unitary Authorities in providing the deficit information to enable their inclusion in his budget and precept considerations.
70. Despite high collection rates within Northamptonshire, COVID-19 impacted on this area. Collection fund positions vary significantly throughout the country with some Authorities achieving surpluses and many others having significantly worse deficit positions.
71. The Unitary Authorities have advised the PFCC of their collection fund deficit positions for 2022/23 for Police as follows:

	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
North	(312,674)	(531,502)
West	(317,492)	(175,988)
Collection Fund Deficit	(630,166)	(707,490)

72. To mitigate this future impact, given the uncertainty at the time of setting the 2021/22 precept, the first instalment of the Council Tax Income Guarantee Grant was intentionally not budgeted for in 2021/22 and was added to reserves. It will therefore be drawn from reserves in 2022/23. No further instalments have been budgeted for,

therefore, if any are received they will be added to reserves and considered alongside the position in 2023/24 and future years

73. The S151 Officer will work closely with the Unitary Authorities throughout the year to monitor and understand any impact on the collection fund deficit position for 2023/24 and future years.

Public Consultation on the Level of the Precept

74. For this year's precept, over the period 20 December 2021 to 16 January 2022, the PFCC undertook as wide a range of consultation as possible to obtain the views of Northamptonshire residents. The survey was sent out to more than 200,000 contacts and using many different approaches, the main ones are set out in Appendix A. This wide reach is set within the challenges of the limited timescale of the government funding settlement and the current COVID climate over the festive season.
75. As consultation has recently taken place on the Police, Fire and Crime Plan priorities, the online survey was targeted specifically in relation to the precept and communicated to as many stakeholders as possible, to enable any Northamptonshire resident to share their views on the level of the precept.
76. The online survey received a response from 1,404 for Policing which is classed as a statistically relevant sample size for the County with a 95% level of confidence.
77. Furthermore, the PFCC personally undertook the following specific targeted engagement:
 - An annual Parish Councillor Budget and Precept meeting was held on the 19 January 2022, 274 Parish Clerks were contacted and asked to disseminate to all their Parish Councillors. 14 Parish Councillors attended and received a briefing on the budget and precept considerations for both Fire and Policing. All councillors attending were also invited to undertake the summarised online survey. The PFCC has considered their responses and is grateful to those who attended the meeting and found their engagement extremely useful.
 - The PFCC held a Police Fire and Crime Panel workshop on the budget and precept considerations for 2022/23, which was attended by eight members. The annual workshops commenced in January 2021 and the PFCC has found this approach and member input invaluable. The PFCC is grateful to all panel members who attended, and subject to the views of the Panel wishes to continue to offer the budget workshop as an annual event for consideration.
 - The PFCC would like to give particular appreciation to the commitment and engagement of MPs, Members of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel and Parish Councillors; as he recognises they have been contacted multiple times during the survey period and asked to disseminate the survey amongst their local residents and contacts.

78. The PFCC has considered the results of the 1,404 responses, the results of which were:

That around 50.3% of residents were prepared to pay £10 or more if they were able to for Police services. Around 45.3% were not prepared to pay any more than they do now and 4.4% said they did not know.

79. Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the consultation, together with stating how good a job the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service did. 1,379 residents replied. **Approximately 42.9% of residents thought Police were doing a good or excellent role**, 21.8% of residents advising poor or very poor. 27.6% of residents thought they were doing a fair job and 7.7% did not know.

80. The PFCC will consider the narrative comments in and the report which will be published on the PFCC website in due course.

The Financial Challenge – Future Risks, Challenges and Uncertainties

81. When modelled at the government's £10 precept expectation for three years, the MTFP shows that the PFCC has produced a balanced budget for 2022/23 a further two years.

82. The impact of a different inflation assumptions to that estimated in the MTFP are as follows:

- Every 1% reduction in grant equates to circa £0.9m per annum
- Every 1% in Council Tax equates to circa £0.7m per annum
- Every £1 in Council Tax equates to £0.3m per annum
- Every 1% in Pay equates to circa £1.3m in a full year
- Every 1% non-pay inflation equates to £0.3m per annum

83. Prudent forecasts have been included where information which has not yet been finalised. Any variations between the provisional and final local government settlements, business rates, council tax or the collection fund will be balanced with reserves.

84. Some further financial and operational risks and challenges are as follows:

- a. The unknown impact of the Funding Formula Review on Future Funding Settlements.
- b. There is a national and a regional move to consider the charging of costs in line with a Net Revenue Expenditure (NRE) rather than a funding formula methodology. This disproportionately affects forces such as Northamptonshire who have a lower than average grant allocation and bears no correlation to increasing population or households as can be seen earlier in the report. Any movement of regional or national charging to NRE will result in cost increases to Northamptonshire.

- c. The impact of a different core grant assumption to that estimated in the MTFP for the years after 2022/23.
- d. Some costs in relation to the Emergency Services Network (ESN) changes, have been assumed in the capital programme and MTFP, however, it is recognised that nationally these have not been finalised and may be subject to variation.
- e. The operational and financial impact of new, emerging and increasing areas of threat and demand, including, but not limited to, child sexual exploitation, adult and child sexual and domestic violent crimes and increasing cybercrime. It is anticipated that the additional officers will assist in the challenge of meeting such demands.
- f. It is anticipated that the impact of national grants reducing or ceasing for regional developments and activities would have a significant impact.
- g. The capital programme requirements and the investment required to take any business as usual, innovative or collaborative work forward in advance of the timings of savings. The reduction in capital grant since 2020/21 and now removed entirely has had an impact on the revenue costs of the capital programme and this is built into the MTFP.
- h. The impact of partners' spending decisions which may affect services provided by the Force or PFCC.

Other Financial Risks and Uncertainties - Pensions

- 85. The Government introduced reforms to public service pensions in 2015 which resulted in most public sector workers being moved into new pension schemes. In December 2018, the Court of Appeal ruled that the 'transitional protection' offered to some members gave rise to unlawful discrimination on the basis of age. In July 2019, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury made a written ministerial statement confirming that, as 'transitional protection' was offered to members of all the main public service pension schemes, the difference in treatment will need to be removed across all those schemes for members with relevant service.
- 86. It is expected that the on-going cost of higher pension benefits will arise from two main areas:
 - Costs arising from the above case, and;
 - The as yet unknown results of the next actuarial valuations for unfunded schemes such as Firefighters and Police which will be built into the scheme valuation process and reflected in the 2024/25 employer and employee contribution rates.

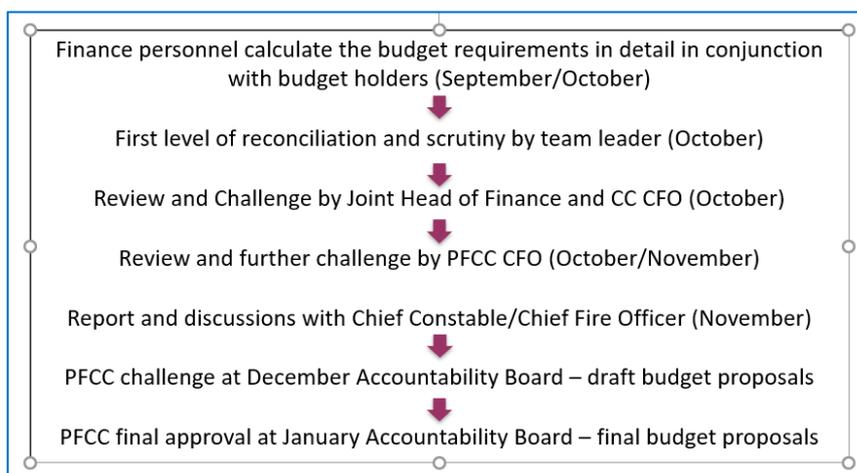
These issues could lead to employer contribution rates increasing by up to 10.0% from 2024/25. Such an increase could equate to £6.4m per annum.

87. The government has provided additional grant funding for pension increases in the past for both Fire and Police but there is a risk that authorities may need to meet some or all of this increase.
88. Whilst assumptions vary between 0% and 30% impact, a potential impact is modelled as scenario in the MTFP assuming a 10% increase and also with a modelling assumption that 75% of that cost would be funded by Home Office grant.
89. Whilst this was not addressed in the SR2021; in January 2022, James Cartlidge MP , Parliamentary Under Secretary for State (Ministry of Justice) and Assistant Government Whip stated that cost of remedy for the above when legislation is in place would fall on the Exchequer (source: Hansard). Whilst this indication is welcome, no details are currently available and this would only contribute to part of the additional costs. However, the Home Office are alive to this issue and are already in discussions with the Treasury.
90. The PFCC will continue to make representation and seek updates and assurances from the Home Office in this regard. The MTFP will continue to be updated as discussions continue. At this time, it is highlighted as a potential risk and modelled in both the Police and Fire MTFPs.

2022/23 – Base Budget preparation, approach and scrutiny

91. The budget is the second budget prepared under the recently established joint Finance team and has brought an approach which has provided consistency across Fire and Police. This has enabled comparability of assumptions and principles, together with best practice, resilience and a more efficient approach applied to budgeting for all services.
92. The budget has been prepared on a zero-base where possible, in full consultation with budget holders, aligned to the Police, Fire and Rescue Plan and tested against the MTFP.
93. The zero based approach ensures that efficiencies are taken from this process where possible that only approved increases, inflation and unavoidable pressures are built in. Detailed workings are prepared and the format of the budget models are consistent and have built in checks and balances to ensure the correct information is fed through. This approach also enables resilience within the finance team.
94. Following the preparation of the Budget Strategy and approach in September, briefing sessions took place with all budget holders and it the strategy was shared with the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) for further scrutiny and review.
95. The table below sets out the preparation and scrutiny elements which culminated in the December Accountability Board where the Chief Constable presented his initial budget proposals which were scrutinised and challenged by the PFCC.

96. The budget has been prepared on a zero-base where possible, in full consultation with budget holders, aligned to the Police, Fire and Crime Plan and FP25 Policing Priorities and tested against the MTFP.
97. Efficiencies are taken from this process where possible and it ensures that only approved increases, inflation and unavoidable pressures are built in. Detailed workings are prepared, the format of the budget models is consistent and has built in checks and balances to ensure the correct information is fed through. This approach also enables resilience within the team.
98. Following the preparation of the Budget Strategy and approach in September, briefing sessions took place with all budget holders and the Strategy was shared with the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) for further scrutiny and review.
99. The table below sets out the preparation and scrutiny elements which culminated in the December and January Accountability Boards where the Chief Constable set out his budget proposals, and were scrutinised and challenged by the PFCC.



100. At the December Accountability Board the PFCC asked for the budget work to be extended and provide an additional budget proposal for a provisional three year balanced budget for policing (excluding potential pension uncertainties), based on £10 precept across the first three years in line with government expectation.
101. A provisional three year balanced budget has been produced, which includes a proposed savings programme and includes an agreed capital programme. This will enable a level of planning and continuity. After further scrutiny and challenge, the PFCC considered the Chief Constable's budget proposal at the January 2022 Accountability Board and ring fenced the sum of £1m for investment in line with Police, Fire and Crime Plan priorities.

102. These elements have resulted in the PFCC setting the following budget for policing:

2021/22 £m	Budget Breakdown	2022/23 £m
119.494	Force	125.363
23.187	Enabling Services	24.448
142.681	Indicative Force Budget	149.811
1.120	OPFCC (Office)	1.154
4.749	Commissioning and Delivery (OPFCC)	4.463
5.869	Budgets Managed By PFCC	5.617
4.663	Capital Financing Costs	3.849
(0.141)	Transfers to (from) reserves	0.438
1.000	Investment	1.025
(0.540)	Savings already Identified	-
-	Savings to be identified	(0.376)
153.532	Total Budget	160.364

103. The budget summary above reflects the following joint working with Fire:

Joint support service arrangements for the Assistant Chief Officer, HR, Finance, estates, fleet and digital arrangements and are now delivered by Police employed staff rather than in house or from LGSS. Included in this area are:

- Shared services costs between Fire and Police £2.22m most of which relate to staffing transferred from Fire to Police employ under TUPE and some have been the result of previous LGSS charge reductions.
- The OPFCC charge to Fire for governance and strategic support has reduced from £232K to £209K.
- The Fire element of the Joint Communications Team with the PFCC is £170K. It also reflects services which were previously undertaken internally within Fire or by the Police.

2022/23 Budget Consented to the Chief Constable

104. Key Headlines are as follows:

- a. The budget for 2022/23 takes account of the impact in recruiting the final tranche of police officers and achieving an establishment of 1500 by March 2023.
- b. The police officer budget requested by the Chief Constable follows a zero based review and reflects the planned retirement and recruitment profile.
- c. The additional cost of the NI levy has been built into the budget.

- d. Enabling Services Costs include the £2.2m charge to Fire and the cost of taking in-house from April 2022 services which were previously undertaken by the Multi-Force Shared Services (e.g. Finance, HR, Payroll) and included within Third Party/Collaborative arrangements.
- e. Other non-Pay costs cover equipment, uniforms and forensic and pathology costs. Increased costs for 2022/23 include:
- Increased gas and electricity pressures
 - Increased fuel pressures
 - Increased Insurance costs
- f. Furthermore, within other non-pay is a contingency of £1.2m set aside within the revenue budget to meet any above inflation increases or operational pressures which cannot be met within budgeted provision.
105. There has been a significant amount of scrutiny and challenge on the Force budget for 2022/23, and as part of these discussions and negotiations, the PFCC has sought and received assurances on how the assumptions and budgets have been calculated. The budget for the force for 2022/23 is £149.811m, an increase of £7.13m on 2021/22 and is broken down as follows:

2021/22 £m	Budget Breakdown	2022/23 £m
77.686	Police Officers	81.792
26.229	Police Staff	27.385
3.739	PCSOs	3.842
0.835	Other Pension Costs	0.958
0.489	Other Employee Expenses	0.500
1.196	National ICT Charges	1.306
9.313	Third Party Collaborative Arrangements	9.303
6.685	Other non-pay	7.669
(6.678)	Income	(7.392)
119.494		125.363
23.187	Enabling Services	24.448
142.681	Total Budget	149.811

2022/23 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner – Office Budget

106. The PFCC manages two separate budget areas:
- The cost of running his office, the OPFCC, and
 - Commissioning and Delivery areas - which directly provide services to Northamptonshire residents and/or with other services.

107. Total OPFCC managed budgets have reduced by £252K from 2021/22 as set out further below:

OPFCC Office

108. The office budget for 2022/23, has an increase of £34K which mainly reflects the reduced charging to Fire for joint posts and services as follows:

OPFCC Office Budget						
2021/22				2022/23		
OPFCC £m	NCFRA £m	Total £m		OPFCC £m	NCFRA £m	Total £m
0.874	0.210	1.084	Staff Costs	0.905	0.191	1.096
0.246	0.022	0.268	Other Office Costs	0.249	0.018	0.267
1.120	0.232	1.352	Total OPFCC Office	1.154	0.209	1.363

Key: NCFRA: Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

109. Staff costs have increased overall due to the cost of annual increments, no additional posts have been added to the structure. Furthermore, the recharge to Fire has reduced to reflect the anticipated reduced time spent on Fire Governance after the three year stability period and is now reflecting a business as usual level.

110. Whilst non-pay office costs have increased by £3K overall, this is a combination of increased external audit fees and cost of subscriptions (£23K), offset by £20K reductions in mileage and other staff costs, recognising the reduced costs of office based costs from different ways of working during the pandemic.

111. The PFCC has always endeavoured to ensure that the cost of staffing his office is less than 1% of the Chief Constable's force budget. His 2022/23 budget continues with that commitment and OPFCC staffing equates to approximately 0.6% of the total force budget for 2022/23.

112. The OPFCC provides statutory governance services (for example the Monitoring Officer, PFCC and S151 officer) to NCFRA. In keeping with the updated Home Office Financial Management Code of Practice; where Fire costs can be reasonably estimated, they have been; otherwise, a pro-rata funding allocation has been used, to ensure integrity and transparency of both Fire and policing funds in line with the Treasury's "Managing Public Money" requirements.

2022/23 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner – Commissioning and Delivery Budgets

113. The OPFCC undertake a wide range of delivery activities, providing services directly to residents of Northamptonshire.

114. Furthermore, the OPFCC commission services from partners and other organisations. This includes Voice for Victims who deliver services directly to victims.

115. Excluding Fire elements, Commissioning and Delivery budgets have reduced by a net £286K as follows:

Commissioning and Delivery Budgets						
2021/22				2022/23		
OPFCC	NCFRA	TOTAL		OPFCC	NCFRA	TOTAL
£m	£m	£m		£m	£m	£m
0.737		0.737	Commissioning incl Victims Support Services	0.752		0.752
0.619		0.619	PADS, YOS and Safeguarding	0.043		0.043
1.027		1.027	Early Intervention and Domestic Abuse Initiatives	1.388		1.388
0.250		0.250	Crime Prevention	0.250		0.250
0.125		0.125	Customer Services - Complaints	0.161		0.161
0.124		0.124	Delivery and Accountability	0.114		0.114
0.240		0.240	EI Counselling Support	0.200		0.200
0.015		0.015	ICT and Digital	0.015		0.015
0.166	0.129	0.295	Joint Communications Team with Fire	0.118	0.170	0.288
0.250		0.250	Police, Fire and Crime Plan Delivery Fund	0.250		0.250
0.665		0.665	Reducing Reoffending	0.350		0.350
0.531		0.531	Youth Work Provision	0.822		0.822
4.749	0.129	4.878	Total Commissioning and Delivery	4.463	0.170	4.633

116. The main variations are as follows:

- The Increase in Commissioning reflects that the MOJ Grant allocations for 2022/23 are not yet known, therefore no grant increase has been assumed to offset the additional inflationary costs in Voice and other commissioning.
- Funding transferred to Voice is based on existing partner allocations for Sunflower. However, these contributions are lower than the cost of Sunflower and any shortfall met from the Sunflower ring fenced element of the victims reserve which will be fully utilised in 2022/23.
- Further to discussions with the Children's Trust in 2021/22, no budgets have been provided for the YOS or the Youth Grant Work (PADS).
- Additional investment has been made to increase the number of Youth Workers and additional Early Intervention officers to support delivery in local neighbourhoods.
- The PFCC is in discussion with the Children's Trust regarding future investments in Youth and Early Intervention services in 2022/23. Whilst these discussions have not yet been finalised, any transitional support costs if provided by the PFCC, will be met as a one off from the PFCC initiatives reserve.
- A Joint Communications Team is shared between OPFCC and Fire as part of the Enabling Services approach, ensuring a comprehensive support to both organisations, linking in closely with the force Communications and ensuring consistency. Fire's contribution to the team has increased in 2022/23 to reflect the scope and coverage they wish to have in the coming year.

- Customer Services relates to the team set up in early 2020 to meet the legislative changes that give the Commissioner a greater role in police complaints, strengthening the independence of the process and increasing public confidence. Resources have been increased to reflect the volume of work in the team.
- Crime Prevention investments will continue and it is anticipated this will continue to increase the initiatives in Northamptonshire initially implemented as part of the national Safer Streets work. This area will also continue to build on the initiatives put in place during the year in response to fly tipping.
- Reducing Reoffending reflects the joint work with partners to take forward initiatives to reduce offending. The Ministry of Justice have directly funded a number of initiatives being taken forward by Probation, which the PFCC had originally intended to support, therefore, this budget has been reduced in 2022/23.
- Within the Police, Fire and Crime plan Delivery Fund, the PFCC supports initiatives which are in the early stages of planning or which arise during the year, which have not been included within 2022/23 budgets. After launching his initiative in 2018/19, he has decided to continue to ring fence the sum of £0.250m and with the grant schemes currently in place.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

117. The Medium Term Financial Plan has been updated to 2026/27 to provide a longer term view which will enable informed decision making to take place for the period of the plan. This is not without its challenges, given that the current economic climate, and that it is anticipated there will be a future funding formula after this time.
118. The MTFP is attached in more detail at Appendix B and key assumptions that have been included in seeking to outline the financial challenge for the medium term are:
- Precept will increase by £10 in 2022/23 to , 2023/24 and 2024/25 and thereafter on a 1.99% increase thereafter. (source: Police Provisional settlement assumptions).
 - Prudent funding assumptions have been made in respect of government funding, taxbase levels, and council tax deficits (source: professional assumptions).
 - Prudent Pay increase estimates are assumed at an average of 2% (source: National professional assumptions).
 - Investment requirements can be prioritised and met from within the revenue budget or capital programme.
 - Further borrowing beyond the capital programme is not required.
 - Funding for regional collaborations will remain consistent.

119. The MTFP based on key assumptions detailed below, is attached at Appendix B and summarised as follows:

2021/22 £'000		2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
154,072	Expenditure	160,740	166,108	171,687	179,831	183,909
(540)	Savings identified	0	0	0	0	0
0	Savings requirement	(376)	(736)	(736)	(736)	(736)
153,532		160,364	165,372	170,951	179,095	183,173
153,532	Funding	160,364	165,372	170,951	175,166	179,510
0	(Shortfall)	0	0	0	(3,929)	(3,663)

120. The plan demonstrates that with the additional £1.025m investment built into the base budget, based on current assumptions, within current plans, and excluding potential pension implications, the budget can be balanced until 2025/26.

121. This timescale exceeds the current external audit value for money assessment which considers the ability of an organisation to balance its budget over a three year period.

122. The Chief Constable has established a savings programme with the intention of identifying savings needed to balance the 2025/26 and 2026/27 budgets.

123. Whilst the MTFP currently assumes that no additional unfunded priorities or responsibilities are given to the PFCC, this will be reviewed on the conclusion of the national PCC review.

124. As set out earlier in the report, the MTFP also models a potential impact of increased pension contributions and if some grant were provided.

Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2022/23

125. A Capital Programme has been approved as part of the budget setting process, which has identified significant requirements across Fleet, Estates, ICT and Operational equipment.

126. The approved Capital Programme is as follows:

Programme	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
Estates	4.4	5.7	6.7	5.3	2.9
ICT & Digital	11.5	10.7	5.3	7.2	4.5
Vehicles & Operational Equipment	1.9	1.5	1.8	1.3	1.4
Total	17.8	17.9	13.8	13.8	8.8

127. A Joint Estates Strategy is in place which promotes joint sharing of buildings and progress has already been made with the enabling developments of the shared administration and joint fleet workshops which will enable further changes to the estate. This will realise efficiencies over time when disposals are realised and over time there it is envisaged will reduce running costs for both Fire and Police.

128. Costs are often incurred ahead of any efficiencies being released, therefore, the PFCC will continue to push to ensure that any disposals are made in a timely and efficient manner to ensure the full benefits can be realised.
129. The S151 Officer will continue to work with the Chief Constable's S151 Officer and will advise the PFCC as to the most effective way to fund capital expenditure and minimise cost on the revenue budget moving forwards. This includes considering the appropriate use of earmarked reserves, revenue contributions and unapplied grants.
130. Furthermore, all opportunities to seek and apply for other grants are taken.
131. The Commissioner is required to approve a "Treasury Management Strategy" each year, setting out the detail of his policy and approach to managing investments, borrowing and cash management.
132. This is required by the Code of Treasury Management published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Prudential Code to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable. A further key objective is to ensure that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice.
133. The Treasury Management Strategy will be considered at the February 2022 Accountability Board and where possible will be available on the PFCC website by April 2021 as it is usual practice for the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) to consider this key document at their March meeting prior to being placed on the website.

Use of Reserves

134. In considering the budget, the MTFP and level of precept options, it is important to look closely at the size, level and type of reserves held by the PFCC to ensure that they are adequate to cover the purposes for which they are held and to provide some safeguards against the future risks identified within the budget.
135. There is also a need to ensure they are not excessive. In 2018 the Home Office announced the intention to review reserves and provide greater transparency for the public. In meeting this requirement, the updated Reserves Strategy is attached at Appendix D, and will be published on the PFCC's website for transparency.

136. Two types of Reserve are held. These, together with estimated balances are:

General Reserve

137. There is a General Reserve which is estimated at 31/3/22 at £5m. This represents over 3% of total funding for 2022/23 and is in keeping with the PFCC's guideline level. On current forecasts the General Reserve will remain within guideline levels until 2024/25, when it is on or above minimum levels. It is prudent to have such a reserve at this level to enable the organisation to withstand unexpected events which may have financial implications.

Earmarked Reserves

138. As at the 31/3/2022 it is estimated that the PFCC will hold **£10.441m** in Earmarked Reserves. These are detailed in the Strategy.

139. Within the Earmarked reserves, the PFCC established a PFCC initiatives reserve with an expected balance as at 31/3/22 of £3.871m. It is the PFCC intention to ring fence the sum of £1m from within this reserve in 2022/23 and in principle a similar amount for the following two years. He is currently finalising his considerations in the following areas:

- Prevention and support for Violence against Women and Girls
- Supporting victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Crime Prevention
- Working together with partners to tackle and reduce knife crime
- Increased investment in Youth and Early Intervention work

140. As a number of projects will be delivered in the next few years, the PFCC will continue to review the reserves held and determine whether they are still required.

Precept proposal

141. After careful consideration of the factors included within this report, the PFCC is proposing a precept increase of £10 (3.7%) for the 2022/23 financial year in order to continue to increase and invest in police officers, build a sustainable base budget to maintain and safeguard policing services across the force area, together with additional investment into essential and evolving demand areas for policing.

142. The PFCC appreciates is the impact on households at this time and recognises that in 2021/22 he was able to set a precept at £13 and not the £15 that was expected by the government.

143. Whilst this is a pressure on households, it is a lower increase than current inflation levels and he needs to ensure that Policing has the increase it needs to meet the current and future spending challenges, but also reflects the current financial climate and the views of those who took part in the precept surveys.

144. The PFCC is grateful to all those who took part in the consultation and their willingness to pay more in order to safeguard and develop policing in the county and he will continue to push the government for a fairer funding position for Northamptonshire.

Robustness of the Budget –Statement of the S151 Chief Finance Officer

145. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, places a duty on the S151 to make a report to the authority on:

- The robustness of the estimates included within the budget
- The adequacy of the reserves and balances

146. The PFCC must have regard to this when considering the budget and the report must be shared with the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

147. In her considerations, the S151 Officer is mindful of other associated statutory safeguards designed to support the authority:

- Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires the authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and that the chief financial officer has personal responsibility for such administration.
- Sections 32, 43 & 93 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 which requires the authority to set a balanced budget
- The Prudential Code introduced as part of the Local Government Act 2003 which sets out the framework within which the authority must manage its investments, including adequate planning and budget estimates
- The external auditor's duty to assess the adequacy of the authority's proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness ('value for money')

148. To reinforce these obligations, Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the S151 Officer to report in consultation with the Monitoring Officer; if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget.

149. This report has set out the detailed budget setting process that has taken place and the work undertaken to ensure the budget is as realistic, deliverable and achievable as possible.

150. The Chief Constable's Section 151 Officer has worked closely with the Chief Constable's Executive team, budget holders and the finance team to deliver the draft budget and savings plan, ensuring that effective scrutiny and challenge has taken place throughout. The PFCC's 151 officer has worked closely with the Chief Constable's S151 Officer throughout. The PFCC has undertaken scrutiny and strategic review of the proposals on

two occasions and has been updated regularly throughout the budget cycle as appropriate.

151. The estimates and assumptions are based on the best information available at the time of formulating the budget in line with the fundamental accounting concepts and are reasonable and prudent.
152. The Section 25 Statement of the S151 Chief Finance Officer for Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is included at Appendix C.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS	The budget and proposed precept provide the resources for the delivery of the Police, Fire and Crime Plan. Additionally, the survey is comprised of a representative sample of Northamptonshire residents.
HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS	
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS	None
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	Risks and mitigations have been highlighted in the report.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	The PFCC is required to notify a precept to the billing authorities by the 1 st March each year. In doing so, he must set a realistic revenue budget, informed by the report of the Chief Finance Officer

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Consultation on the Precept
Appendix B - Medium Term Financial Plan
Appendix C - Section 25 Report of the Section 151 Chief Finance Officer
Appendix D - Reserves Strategy

Background Papers

Police Grant Report – 16 December 2021

Persons to Contact

Mrs H King, Chief Finance Officer,
Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

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Consultation on the Precept

An online consultation was carried out with the intention of reaching as many people as possible to obtain the views of a demographically representative group of the county's population.

The survey was open over the period - 20 December 2021 -16 January 2022 in order to meet the statutory timescales where the PFCC needs to publish his proposed Police and Fire Precept proposals by 31/1/22.

The online survey received 1,484 responses (although respondents did not respond to every question) and the full report will be published on the PFCC website by the end of February 2022.

Challenges

To achieve an informed consultation based on the proposed settlements, we have no alternative but to consult over the Christmas period because of the timetable that is determined by the Government's release of the financial settlement, and the deadline for setting our budget.

Recognising the impact of the Omicron strain of COVID-19 during the festive season, in person face to face survey groups were not carried out with the public for 2022/23. Meetings for the Commissioner to brief and discuss with three diverse groups were unfortunately cancelled because of illness and the effect of Omicron.

In person surveys were carried out for the 2022/23 in October and November at Rushden and all Northants visits of the Beat Bus – however, take up and engagement from these was extremely low.

The Commissioner's Youth Team did, however, hold a facilitated session with a group of young people and the results were fed into the survey responses.

This is compounded by the fact that public views are being sought on a number of issues by a number of organisations during this period: The PFCC consulted on his 2022/23 just weeks ago, and both West and North Northamptonshire Council are consulting on their council tax at the same time as the Commissioner is consulting on his precept.

We will continue to engage with our Unitary contacts and see how we can use maximise survey responses for all parties in future years.

How the consultation was carried out:

Despite these challenges, the survey was able to reach many residents through many different forums and media as follows:

We used four main communications channels to seek public views and encourage people to take part in our consultation:

- Mainstream media
- Partner and stakeholder and database marketing
- Digital and social
- Paid for advertising

Survey communication

Audience	Reach
<p>Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Alert • Parish Councils and Town Councils • Councillors in North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire • Police, Fire and Crime Panel members • MPs • Chief Executives and Leaders of Local Authorities • Neighbourhood Watch Management Committee • Community Safety Managers for Northamptonshire North and Northamptonshire West • Diversity Forums of West Northamptonshire Council • Northamptonshire Police Community Engagement managers • Independent Advisory Group members • Independent Custody Visitors • Businesses via the Chamber of Commerce, Northampton BID and the Northamptonshire Business Forums • Secondary Schools • Joint Action Groups • Northamptonshire Association of Local Councils • Various voluntary and third sector organisations 	<p>The survey was sent to more than 25,000 stakeholders, with a request that they further cascade.</p> <p>The Commissioner wrote personally to Panel members, MPs and Leaders of local authorities to ask for their support in sharing and encouraging response to the consultation</p> <p>The invitation to take part in the consultation was repeated twice – at the launch in December and then again as a last call, on January 4</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural interest groups • Facilitated work with the PFCCs Youth Commissions • The Police Liaison Representatives on every parish and town council 	
<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News item on ForceNet – The Northamptonshire Police intranet viewed by all officers and staff – repeated twice during survey period • News item on Northants Fire and Rescue Service intranet for Firefighters and staff – repeated twice during the survey period • Daily Orders – link to item on ForceNet directing staff to survey • Chief Officer Vlogs in both Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service – repeated twice during the survey period 	<p>The survey potentially reached 3,279 people (2,778 police officers, staff and volunteers, and 501 firefighters and NFRS staff members), with a request that they further cascade</p>
<p>Key Internal Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northamptonshire Police Chief Officers • Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) Senior Fire Officers • Directors in the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) • OPFCC Customer Service team • Police Federation • Unison • Police Superintendents’ Association • Fire Brigades Union • Police contact centre should residents call in about it • Police Community Engagement Officers • Voice • Youth Commission • Youth Team 	<p>Email request to cascade to their members/contacts</p> <p>The Youth Team carried out a facilitated session with a group of young people and their responses were fed into the survey</p>

<p>Mainstream media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two news releases were issued during the consultation, to all local and regional media across Northamptonshire • News release was sent to hyper local publications • The survey was trailed in the December edition of the PFCC newsletter and was the lead story on the January newsletter 	<p>The news release went to over 60 newsrooms (print and broadcast including the Northants Telegraph and BBC Radio Northampton), plus individual reporters and other local news sites.</p>
<p>Digital and Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter OPFCC account • Twitter NFRS account • Facebook OPFCC account • OPFCC Website views - 4 different pages / news stories • LinkedIn – OPFCC and NFRS 	<p>77,413 impressions 979 engagements</p> <p>13,351 impressions 142 engagements</p> <p>59,390 impressions 195 engagements 2910 clicks</p> <p>14,927 views</p> <p>OPFCC - 132 Impressions NFRS - 114 impressions</p>
<p>Paid for advertising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online with the Johnston Press series of newspapers (the website of every newspaper in Northamptonshire advertised the survey) • Google Ads/ Youtube 	<p>300,021 impressions 182 clicks</p> <p>135,000 impressions 61,674 views on YouTube</p>

<p>Budget Survey published Dec 20 2021</p> <p>Budget reminder January 10 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook OPFCC account - Paid for (All Meta platforms) 	<p>3.3% CTR from Youtube</p> <p>17,500 impressions</p> <p>7,575 views on Youtube</p> <p>4.4% CTR from Youtube</p> <p>43,126 reach</p> <p>898 engagement</p> <p>780 Clicks</p> <p>2.03% CTR</p>
<p>Targeted briefings and Forums</p> <p>Annual Parish Council Budget and Precept Briefing by PGCC, Chief Fire Officer, Chief Constable and S151 Officer and targeted survey</p> <p>Annual Police, Fire and Crime Panel Budget and Precept Workshop</p>	<p>274 Parish Council Clerks contacted to disseminate to all Parish Councils</p> <p>46 requested contact details</p> <p>14 attended</p> <p>4 targeted survey responses</p> <p>8 members attended</p>

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Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23-2026/27

2021/22 £'000		£10 Precept Increase			1.99% Increase	
		2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
77,686	Police Officers	81,791	84,900	86,673	89,533	91,488
26,229	Police Staff	27,385	28,457	29,267	29,880	30,506
3,739	PCSOs	3,842	3,953	4,043	4,104	4,166
835	Other Pension Costs	958	968	986	1,004	1,023
489	Other Employee Expenses	500	507	517	527	538
1,196	National ICT Charges (inc. PNC)	1,306	1,445	1,574	1,706	1,840
9,313	Third Party/Collaborative Arrangements	9,303	9,560	9,751	9,946	10,016
6,685	Other Non-Pay (excl. Enabling Services)	7,669	7,905	9,078	9,246	9,416
(6,678)	Income	(7,392)	(7,977)	(8,348)	(8,518)	(9,532)
119,494	CHIEF CONSTABLE - OPERATIONAL	125,362	129,718	133,541	137,428	139,460
23,187	ENABLING SERVICES	24,448	25,116	25,657	26,589	27,770
-	Ring-Fenced Budgets	-	-	-	-	-
142,681	TOTAL CHIEF CONSTABLE BUDGET	149,811	154,834	159,198	164,016	167,230
1,120	OPFCC (Office)	1,154	1,204	1,204	1,254	1,254
4,749	OPFCC (Commissioning & Delivery)	4,463	4,713	4,713	4,963	4,963
2,640	Capital Financing - MRP	1,247	3,954	5,748	6,662	7,213
630	Capital Financing - Interest	330	649	1,004	1,248	1,545
1,393	Capital Financing - RCCO	2,272	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100
100	Transfer to Reserves	100	100	100	100	100
(241)	Transfer from Reserves	(2,167)	(646)	(402)	(402)	(402)
-	Transfer to/from Smoothing Reserve	2,505	(654)	(1,850)	-	-
10,391	OTHER (Inc. OPFCC & Capital Financing)	9,904	10,420	11,617	14,925	15,773
1,000	Investment as per 21/22 precept uplift	-	-	-	-	-
-	New Investment Proposals (Gold+Silver)	1,025	854	872	889	906
(540)	Savings identified	-	-	-	-	-
0	Savings Requirement	(376)	(736)	(736)	(736)	(736)
153,532	TOTAL GROUP	160,364	165,372	170,951	179,095	183,173
	Funding					
(77,471)	Main Police Grant	(81,620)	(83,843)	(85,267)	(86,546)	(87,845)
-	Social Care Levy (NI) Funding	-	-	-	-	-
(1,272)	Pension Grant	(1,272)	(1,272)	(1,272)	(1,272)	(1,272)
(1,000)	Officer Uplift Grant	(1,288)	-	-	-	-
(6,644)	Legacy Grants	(6,644)	(6,644)	(6,644)	(6,644)	(6,644)
(922)	New Council Tax Grants	-	-	-	-	-
(66,852)	Precept	(70,247)	(73,865)	(77,767)	(80,703)	(83,749)
630	Collection Fund Deficit/(Surplus)	707	253	-	-	-
(153,532)	TOTAL FUNDING	(160,364)	(165,372)	(170,951)	(175,166)	(179,510)
(0)	FUNDING (SURPLUS) / DEFICIT	-	-	-	3,929	3,662
-	Pension Costs - ERs increase			6,366	6,441	6,569
-	Funding assumed at 75%			(4,775)	(4,830)	(4,927)
-	FUNDING (SURPLUS) / DEFICIT After Pension ERs Impact	-	-	1,592	5,539	5,305
	Precept					
£268.04	Band D Council Tax	£278.04	£288.04	£298.04	£303.97	£310.02

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

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Section 25 Report of the Section 151 PFCC Chief Finance Officer

The PFCC's final precept intentions of £10 takes into account public consultation alongside prudent assumptions based on the best information available, the MTFP and the reserves position and still enables an element to be ring fenced for investment.

At the meetings with the Force in December 2021 and January 2022, I attended, together with the Force S151 Chief Finance Officer to provide assurance to the PFCC and the CC that these factors have been considered. The CC and his team have been fully involved in the budget discussions and they have discussed revenue and capital requirements for 2022/23 and future years with the PFCC.

At the meetings and since those dates, dialogue, scrutiny and challenge has continued where new factors or information have been highlighted and discussed.

Under the newly established Joint Finance Team, the process has progressed for the 2022/23 budget. During the preparation of the budget I have been given full access to the budget model and have been consulted on the assumptions being made and methodologies and where possible aligned these with national PAACTS colleagues.

The budget for 2022/23 has been a zero-based budget approach and only previously agreed growth, contractual commitments or unavoidable pressures have been built in. It is a structured and consistent process and I have received responses to queries and/or points of clarification. Where I have sought changes, they have been incorporated.

I have worked with the PFCC to agree or require changes to base budget pressures proposed by the Force.

I will work with the PFCC and the Force to review and consider any set aside proposals for investment when they have been agreed and monitor the implementation and allocate resources to meet these costs when required.

In preparing the MTFP, working with the Force S151 Officer we modelled several best mid and worst case scenarios across council taxbase assumptions and precept increases ranging from 1.99% to £10 to help inform the PFCC considerations in determining his precept proposal for 2022/23. As the information from the settlement and taxbase became clearer, we continued to review and refine the MTFP.

Whilst Police grant allocations were lower than anticipated for 2022/23, this was due to the allocation meeting additional costs such as the NI levy. The three year settlement indications give some assurance that the current levels will be maintained in future years. However, the cost of inflation will have a significant impact if costs vary from those assumed and I am aware that the PFCC has written to the Policing Minister seeking assurance that any pay award costs in excess of budget will be funded nationally. No assurance has been provided, therefore, this remains an uncertainty which could significantly impact on the forecasts.

At a £10 precept for three years, there will be a revenue shortfall of just under £4m by 2025/26 on the budget (equating to approximately 2%).

Reserves are sufficient to meet this shortfall supplemented by the savings programme being introduced by the Chief Constable which is intended to achieve efficiencies to meet these challenges.

I am assured that the Force budget for 2021/22 is forecast to come in on or close to budget and as such will not place any pressure on 2022/23 or future years.

However the uncertainty challenges are mitigated in part by the PFCC's continued commitment to investing in technology that provides efficiencies and supporting the work of the enabling services programme.

I am supportive of the further developments in the finance area, with particular attention to the preparations required for leaving the Multi Force Shared Service in 2022 and the work involved with new system arrangements from April 2022. I am updated regularly on progress and attend the Future systems board to gain assurance on the plans and timescales. I have not been made aware of any critical issues at this stage and will continue to seek assurances until after implementation.

I am assured by the commitment to the collaboration and enabling services work and the Joint Estates Strategy which will assist in identifying future savings; but it is essential that estate disposals and activities are undertaken in a timely manner to enable benefits and savings to be realised.

I have reviewed the detailed calculations in arriving at the budget requirement and Council Tax precept and options and find these to be robust. I also have sought and received authorisations from billing authorities in relation to taxbase and Council Tax surplus/deficits and I am grateful to all partners for their support in doing so.

It has been possible for the PFCC to develop a budget that supports most of the Force operational pressures and demands, balances the views of the public from the consultation and gives the opportunity for further investment to support the delivery of the priorities set out in the Police, Fire and Crime Plan.

There is an operational contingency available to the Chief Constable, and sufficient general reserves available should operational demands require access to these. Earmarked reserves are in place for specific requirements and in his budget the PFCC has identified further priority areas for earmarked reserves, in line with Police Fire and Crime Plan priorities.

The sections in this report on "Future Risks, Challenges and Uncertainties", "Pensions" and the "MTFP" highlight significant unknown issues moving forwards in the medium term. The continuing impact of COVID-19, the impact of a future funding formula and the future economic climate are currently unknown. Where possible forecasts and estimates are included within the MTFP and all opportunities for government funding are pursued to ensure any financial impact on Policing is minimised.

In coming to my conclusion on the robustness of the budget I have also reviewed the Capital Programme and Reserves Strategy.

The Capital Programme is regularly reviewed and all opportunities are taken to rephase the programme, seek external funding and apply for grants. All of these would assist in mitigating costs on the revenue budget.

General Reserves are established at £5m above the guideline level and as at the 31 March 2025, it is estimated that there will be over £10m of revenue reserves available to support the budget and mitigate challenges if required.

Whilst a balanced budget is available for the next three years, after that time, the landscape is less certain and it is reasonable to assume that the operational and financial challenges will continue and these are reflected as best estimates in the MTFP.

I conclude, therefore, that the budget for 2022/23:

- 1. Has been prepared on a robust basis, and*
- 2. Continues with the intention to recruit additional police officers in line with the national uplift, increasing to over 1500 by March 2023.*
- 3. Includes investment to help manage demand and increase efficiency and/or capacity.*
- 4. The budget can be balanced for the next three financial years, with a savings plan and work is already underway by the Chief Constable to identify the balance after that time. Furthermore, reserves are adequate to mitigate the impact of the shortfalls in the MTFP over the five year period if full savings are not forthcoming.*
- 5. The financial landscape after 2022/23 is less certain and the PFCC will continue to push for certainty. The MTFP will be under regular review as savings plans progress.*

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER RESERVES STRATEGY (REVISED JANUARY 2022)

1. Reserves Strategy

- 1.1. Reserves are a key part of medium-term financial planning – other components include revenue spending plans, income forecasts, potential liabilities, capital investment plans, borrowing and council tax levels. Decisions on these are inter-linked. Consequently, some organisations will need to maintain reserves at higher levels than others.
- 1.2 All publicly funded organisations should have a reserves strategy to demonstrate transparency and accountability, to comply with best practice financial management and to justify the levels of reserves held.
- 1.3 The PFCC maintains reserves to provide a measure of protection against risk. Without this protection, any unforeseen expenditure would have to be met either by increases in Council Tax or immediate savings (potentially through reductions in service levels).
- 1.4 The term "reserves" has a variety of technical and everyday meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. For the purposes of this Strategy it is taken to mean funds set-aside at the PFCC's discretion for general or specific future purposes.
- 1.5 Reserves are required to protect and enhance the financial viability and in particular:
 - To maintain a degree of in-year financial flexibility;
 - To enable the PFCC to deal with unforeseen circumstances and incidents;
 - To set aside monies to fund major developments in future years;
 - To enable the PFCC to invest to transform and achieve improved service effectiveness and efficiency;
 - To set aside sums for known and potential liabilities;
 - To provide an operational contingency at service level.
- 1.6 Reserves should not be held to fund ongoing revenue expenditure as this is unsustainable in the long term; however, they may be important in smoothing a major financial imbalance (revenue or capital) over a longer timescale. CIPFA guidance LAAP 99 published July 2014 states:

“Balancing the annual budget by drawing on general reserves may be viewed as a legitimate short-term option. However, it is not normally prudent for reserves to be deployed to finance recurrent expenditure. CIPFA has commented that Councils should be particularly wary about using one off reserves to deal with shortfalls in current funding. Where such action is to be taken, this should be made explicit, and an explanation given as to how such expenditure will be funded in the medium to long term”

- 1.7 The Reserves Strategy assumes that the Medium Term Financial Plan [MTFP] is broadly balanced on a sustainable basis across the five year planning period. If the financial impact of the COVID pandemic continues to impact on taxbase and council tax levels over the medium term then this could impact on those assumptions.
- 1.8 Reserves should reflect the agreed financial strategy and should represent the quantified impact of risks and opportunities over the planning period, weighted for their probability.

2. National Guidance and Compliance with Home Office Guidance on Police Reserves

- 2.1 The 2014, CIPFA guidance included the establishment and maintenance of local authority reserves and balances, setting out the key factors that should be taken into account locally in making an assessment of the appropriate level of reserves and balances to be held.
- 2.2 In the written statement that accompanied the Provisional Police Grant report on 19th December 2017, the Minister stated

“you may be aware that police reserves currently stand at around £1.6bn, which compares to £1.4bn in 2011. We will be changing guidance to PFCCs to ensure that police officers and the public have access to more detailed information on how PFCCs intend to use this public money.”

This strategy complies with the Ministerial requirement.

- 2.3 On 31 March 2018, the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service published new guidance on the information that each PFCC must publish in terms of Police Reserves. One of the key requirements is that the information on each reserve should make clear how much of the funding falls into each of the following three categories:
 - Funding for planned expenditure on projects and programmes over the period of the current medium term financial plan.
 - Funding for specific projects and programmes beyond the current planning period.
 - As a general contingency to meet other expenditure needs held in accordance with sound principles of good financial management.

2.4 The forecast reserves as at 31/3/2022 and proposed usage are summarised as across the Home Office headings as follows:

Reserve	Actual Balance as at 31/3/2022	Additional Contributions to 24/25	Planned Expenditure on Projects and Programmes over the next 3 years (22/23-24/25)	Additional Contributions from 25/26	Funding for Specific projects and Programmes Beyond 2024/25	Held as a general Reserve, Contingency or Resource to meet other expenditure or pressures
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
General	5.000	-	-	-	-	5.000
Earmarked:						
Insurance	1.724	-	-	-	-	1.724
Operational Equipment	0.400	0.300	(0.416)	0.200	(0.200)	0.284
Earmarked Funding	1.064	-	(0.962)	-	-	0.102
Victims	0.481	-	(0.260)	-	(0.050)	0.171
Pension	0.430	-	(0.145)	-	-	0.285
Developer Contributions	0.319	-	(0.319)	-	-	0.000
Smoothing Reserve	-	2.505	(2.505)	-	-	-
PFCC Initiatives Reserve	3.871	0.110	(0.246)	-	-	3.735
Transformation Reserve	1.370	0.169	(1.451)	-	-	0.088
Safer Roads Reserve	0.136	-	(0.136)	-	-	0.000
Collaboration	0.646	-	(0.076)	-	-	0.570
Total Earmarked	10.441	3.084	(6.516)	0.200	- 0.250	6.960
Total Reserves	15.441	3.084	(6.516)	0.200	- 0.250	11.960

Note: numbers may not sum due to rounding

3. General Reserve

3.1 In order to assess the adequacy of the unallocated general reserve when setting the budget, the PFCC, on the advice of the two Chief Finance Officers, should take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the authority. This assessment of risk should include external risks, as well as internal risks, for example the ability to deliver planned efficiency savings.

3.2 Whilst there is no prescribed level of reserves that PFCCs should hold; it is influenced by individual discretion, local circumstances, and advice from external auditors, risk management arrangements and risk appetite. CIPFA guidance in LAAP Bulletin 99 (2014) specifically cautions against prescriptive national guidance for a minimum or maximum level of reserves and states:

“The many factors involved when considering appropriate levels of reserves can only be assessed properly at a local level. A considerable degree of professional judgement is required. The chief finance officer may choose to express advice on the level of balances in cash and/or as a percentage of budget (to aid understanding) so long as that advice is tailored to the circumstances of the authority”

3.3 However, the minimum level of reserves may be set for the authority by the Ministers in England and Wales where an authority doesn't act prudently, disregards the advice of its chief finance officer or is heading for financial difficulties. LAAP Bulletin 99 (2014) specifies that minimum level of reserves can be imposed on specific circumstances:

“Minimum level of reserves will only be imposed where an authority is not following best financial practice”

- 3.4 CIPFA indicate a general reserve level is typically between 2% and 3% of net budget requirement and this is consistent with the results of a survey by the PACCTS Technical Support Team where the majority of PFCC’s across the country report a Strategy of holding minimum general reserves at around 3% of net revenue expenditure.
- 3.5 In determining the PFCC’s position, Annexe 1 outlines how Northamptonshire currently comply with the 7 key CIPFA principles which can be used to assess the adequacy of reserves.
- 3.6 Given that the PFCC is required to meet the first 1% of any special grant requirement, and the level and range of earmarked reserves available to the PFCC, it seems prudent that the current policy is to maintain general reserves at a guideline level of 3% of annual net revenue expenditure, with a minimum of 2.5%.
- 3.7 At present, there are no plans to use the General Reserve during the period of the MTFP. However, with forecast budget increases, there is a need to ensure the level of general reserves keeps pace to ensure minimum and guideline levels are achieved as follows:
- 3.8 These levels change each year and forecast general reserve plans are above the minimum level in all years and above or on the guideline level until 2024/25.

Year	Budget (£m)	£m	
		2.50%	3%
2021/22	153.53	3.8	4.6
2022/23	160.36	4.0	4.8
2023/24	165.37	4.1	5.0
2024/25	170.95	4.3	5.1
2025/26	175.17	4.4	5.3
2026/27	179.51	4.5	5.4

- 3.9 Where appropriate and if the budget levels are higher than those forecast in the MTFP, the PFCC will endeavor to increase general reserves from 2024/25.

4. Earmarked Reserves

- 4.1 In addition to the General reserve, the PFCC holds a number of reserves which are earmarked for specific purposes.
- 4.2 The predicted position for each earmarked reserve as at 31/3/2022, together with an outline of its specific purpose is attached at Annexe 2.

4.3 At the 31/3/2022, it is estimated that the PFCC will hold **£10.441m** in Earmarked Reserves which are as follows:

Insurance – This reserve holds funds set aside where considered prudent for Civil Claims (Public and Employer liability) in line with professional advice.

Operational Equipment – this is a reserve to smooth the impact on the revenue budget in respect of the cost of replacing operational equipment, rather than impacting disproportionately on the budget in any one year.

Earmarked Funding – This reserve relates to previous years underspends which are ring fences and carried forward or funding received which is earmarked for specific purposes in the medium term.

Victims Services – this is to support investment and projects for victims services in future years. This reserve also holds any balances transferred in from Victims Voice at year end.

Pensions – This reserve is used to smooth the impact of ill-health retirements and to meet the costs of any ill—health or injury retirements in excess of budget provision across years.

Developer Contributions – this is a reserve to collect the drawn down developer contributions awarded to the PFCC in line with S106 planning arrangements. These funds will be released in accordance with the terms of the agreements. The reserve only accounts for the estimates once they have been drawn down.

Smoothing Reserve – This is a new reserve created to enable the savings generated from the savings programme to be realised and released over future years as needed, smoothing the impact of timing variations on the revenue budget.

PFCC Initiatives – this is to deliver funding towards the specific initiatives of the Commissioner arising from the Police, Fire and Crime Plan.

Transformation Reserve – This reserve is intended to support initiatives and transformative activities such as the future systems programme and enabling services initiatives.

Safer Roads – this reserve relates to funds in excess of expenditure for use in line with specific criteria for equipment or road safety initiatives. Following the 2018/19 budget initiatives, a Road Safety Alliance has been set up with partners which will produce priorities and the PFCC's reserve is used to fund specific road safety grants and is used to fund the policing priorities from this.

Collaboration – this reserve relates to previous years underspends on regional collaboration and funds held for regional asset replacements. Each PCC holds their share of the regional reserves and is set aside to meet future regional costs.

4.4 The forecast balance on the reserves, taking into account a prudent estimate of timings for proposals which are currently being developed is detailed within Annexe 3.

5. Provisions

- 5.1 The CIPFA Statement of Recommended Practice is prescriptive about when provisions are required (and when they are not permitted). Basically, a provision must be established for any material liabilities of uncertain timings or amount, to be settled by the transfer of economic benefits. In accordance with this statutory guidance, Northamptonshire established an 'Insurance Provision' which is reviewed as part of the closedown process for each year.

6. Procedures for management and control

- 6.1 Any drawdown from Reserves is subject to the approval of the PFCC, on advice from the PFCC's Chief Finance Officer (CFO); or under the delegated authority of the OPFCC CFO.
- 6.2 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the s151 officer to report annually on the adequacy of the reserves and this is included within the statement on the robustness of the estimates used for the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- 6.3 The Strategy will be reviewed annually by the OPFCC CFO as part of the Budget and Precept process.

Northamptonshire Compliance with the 7 Key CIPFA Principles to assess the adequacy of reserves

Budget Assumptions (CIPFA Principles)	2022/23 Situation in Northamptonshire
The treatment of inflation and interest rates	Northamptonshire makes full and appropriate provision for pay and price increases, informed by benchmarking with peers. An informed assessment is made in the Treasury Management Strategy of interest rate movements. All income and expenditure in the budget is prepared and published at outturn prices.
Estimates of the level and timing of capital receipts	Northamptonshire has recently reviewed its estates strategy as a fundamental part of the capital programme and has made a prudent assumption of future capital receipts across the programme which are being used to fund capital expenditure and minimise the impact of borrowing on the budget.
The treatment of demand led pressures	<p>The Force is required to operate and manage within its annual budget allocation. Overtime budgets are devolved within the Force to enable operational leaders to make decisions and the Chief Constable retains an operational contingency to support additional major incidents.</p> <p>On an exceptional basis, agreement is sought from the PFCC to utilise carry forwards to meet one off demand led pressures and demand led pressures are scrutinised and built into the budget set by the PFCC.</p> <p>Northamptonshire have identified savings in previous years which mean that opportunities for efficiencies are less than in previous years. However, the PFCC will support investment in areas that reduce demand or which increase efficiency/capacity to deal with demand. General reserves are used as a last resort to manage and fund demand led pressures.</p>
The treatment of Planned Efficiency Savings/Productivity Gains	<p>The Chief Constable has commenced a savings programme for 2022/23 to 2024/25, these movements are assumed within the reserves strategy.</p> <p>The Force operates a Change Steering Group which monitors investments, savings and efficiencies and is attended by OPFCC representatives.</p>

<p>The financial risks inherent in any significant new funding partnerships, collaboration, major outsourcing arrangements or major capital developments.</p>	<p>The financial consequences of partnership collaboration working, outsourcing arrangements or capital investment are reported to the PFCC as part of the medium term planning process. Where relevant, any additional costs are incorporated into the annual revenue budget and/or capital programme.</p> <p>There is a risk that partners will withdraw funding as their own budgets are squeezed, or that the continued viability of private sector commercial partners will be exposed to risk in the face of an economic recession.</p>
<p>The availability of reserves, government grants and other funds to deal with major contingencies and the adequacy of provisions.</p>	<p>Northamptonshire have created a number of earmarked reserves and provisions to meet specific expenditure items and have added to these further in this strategy. Their use and balances as at 31/3/2022 are detailed in Annexe 3.</p> <p>Northamptonshire maintains an insurance provision, the adequacy of which is monitored in detail by the legal services insurance advisors, together with our insurance advisors. The access criteria for special grants state that PFCCS may be required to fund up to 1% of their net budget requirement themselves before the Government considers GrantAid. This applies on an annual basis.</p> <p>Northamptonshire's General Reserve provides sufficient scope to cover this eventuality.</p>
<p>The general financial climate to which the Authority is subject</p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the Police funding for 2022/23 and future years and reasonable assumptions have been built into the MTFP.</p> <p>Since March 2017, the PFCC has endeavoured to increase police officers by 330 to 1500 by March 2023. This will be met by the revenue budget and not by the use of reserves. The year 2022/23 is the final year of recruitment to this level and all police officer costs are within the base budget.</p> <p>There are shortfalls in the future MTFP and the Chief Constable has set in train a savings programme to help meet and mitigate these, in addition to providing resources for further investment</p> <p>SR2021, provided three year indicative funding and the MTFP will be regularly updated to support operational decision making.</p>

**RESERVES OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
2022/23 to 2026/27**

	Rationale	How and when used	Level	Management and control	Risk	Review
GENERAL RESERVE	<p>To maintain a degree of in-year financial flexibility;</p> <p>To enable the Commission to deal with unforeseen circumstances and incidents;</p> <p>To set aside sums for known and potential liabilities;</p> <p>To provide an operational contingency at service level.</p>	<p>To meet exceptional spending needs or overspends which are unable to be otherwise financed at the year end.</p> <p>To smooth the profile of funding revenue over a medium term financial period</p> <p>To allow higher spending without raising council tax on a one-off basis</p>	<p>General principle of 3% of net budget requirement, with a minimum level of 2.5%</p>	<p>PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO</p>	<p>May be inadequate for major catastrophe, which could jeopardise financial status and reputation of the Commission.</p> <p>The Commissioner would have recourse to Home Office discretionary special grant if costs exceed 1% of budget or CLG Bellwin scheme for natural disasters</p>	<p>Annual</p>
PENSIONS	<p>To meet the costs of any ill—health or injury retirements which are unbudgeted and fall directly on the Commission.</p> <p>Also, to cover any significant overspend on the employer contributions to the Pension Account</p>	<p>Annually as required.</p> <p>Transfers out depend on the amount resulted from successful claims during the year.</p> <p>Historically there has been budget provided within the Force revenue budget for approximately 6 claims in a year. Any unused budget within a year would represent transfers in.</p> <p>The consideration of utilising this reserve towards the reduction on actuarial is currently in progress</p>	<p>Will vary according to annual risk assessment</p>	<p>PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO</p>	<p>Significant ill health or injury awards beyond normal profile create pressure on reserve or leave excess funds unused.</p> <p>Significant change in officer numbers or grades lead to unbudgeted employer pension contributions in-year.</p>	<p>Annual</p>

	Rationale	How and when used	Level	Management and control	Risk	Review
INSURANCE	To cover the potential and contingent liabilities of uninsured risks as assessed annually by our insurers based on claims outstanding.	Balance will increase or reduce annually dependent on the Commission's outstanding claims record. Currently excess limit is £150k per claim. Higher excess levels are being reviewed which may require higher reserve levels. Increased in 2017/18 following advice from external audit	Will vary according to annual risk assessment	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If no reserve is held the Commission is potentially open to significant excess and claims payments in year beyond available revenue budgets. Assessment by insurers needs to be realistic not unduly pessimistic.	Annual
SMOOTHING RESERVE	To collect efficiency savings realised to smooth the impact on future years budgets.	Balance will increase or reduce annually dependent on budget levels and the savings programme.	Will vary according to usage and annual risk assessment.	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If funds were not maintained there significant variations each year in the revenue budget whilst the timing of efficiency savings occur– this smoothing reserve will assist in mitigating that.	Annual
COLLABORATION	Transfers in relate to underspend on regional collaboration. Transfers out represent contribution towards regional decisions	Upon requirement on decision made to contribute towards projects in relation to regional collaborations. Decisions made on East Midlands PFCC and CC Boards	Will vary according to usage and annual risk assessment.	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If funds were not maintained, there would be a risk of regional projects not being supported.	Annual

EARMARKED FUNDING	To fund specific expenditure requested by the force from previous year underspends or earmarked funding received.	Business cases provided as part of the outturn report or specific funding conditions.	Will vary according to financial outturn..	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If funds were not provided, the risk is that projects or planned expenditure would need to be found from current year's budget.	Annual
SAFER ROADS	For surpluses of fines and speed awareness course income over expenditure that is reinvested in replacement equipment and road safety initiatives. The reserve is influenced by the work of the Road Safety Alliance formed in 2018/19	As required – typically informed by approved business cases for bids on the Fund.	Will vary according to outturn and annual risk assessment.	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If Fund was not maintained then safety initiatives would have to be funded from the revenue budget or not implemented.	Annual
PFCC INITIATIVES	To deliver funding to for specific initiatives of the Commission arising from the Police, Fire and Crime Plan To provide funding to deliver radical solutions to deliver the Police, Fire and Crime Plan	As required – typically informed by approved business cases for bids on the Fund.	Will vary according to outturn and annual risk assessment.	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	Initiatives not adequately defined or delivered hence poor VFM	Annual
VICTIMS SERVICES	To fund specific programmes or schemes to support victims services	To access the funds business cases, have to be provided.	Will vary according to outturn and annual risk assessment.	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If funds were not provided, the risk is that projects or planned expenditure would need to be found from current year's budget.	Annual
OPERATIONAL EQUIPMENT	To smooth the impact of operational equipment purchases on the revenue budget	To access the funds a costed request has to be provided.	Will vary according to usage and annual risk assessment.	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If funds were not provided, the risk is that equipment would have to be replaced from the current year's budget.	Annual
DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS	To meet the additional cost of operational requirements	To access the funds a costed request has to be provided which is consistent with the conditions of the developer contribution.	Will vary according to usage and annual risk assessment.	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If funds were not provided, the risk is that the additional costs would have to be replaced from the current year's capital programme.	Annual

TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME	To fund transformative activities and opportunities and meet initial and upfront costs of enabling services projects.	To access the funds a costed request has to be provided.	Will vary according to outturn and annual risk assessment.	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If funds were not provided, the risk is that equipment would have to be replaced from the current year's budget.	Annual
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Summary of Revenue and Capital Reserves 2021/22 to 2026/27

	Balance at 31 March 2021 £m	Balance at 31 March 2022 £m	Balance at 31 March 2023 £m	Balance at 31 March 2024 £m	Balance at 31 March 2025 £m	Balance at 31 March 2026 £m	Balance at 31 March 2027 £m
<u>Held to meet budgetary risks</u>							
Insurance	1.724	1.724	1.724	1.724	1.724	1.724	1.724
Operational Equipment	0.300	0.400	0.284	0.284	0.284	0.284	0.284
	2.024	2.124	2.008	2.008	2.008	2.008	2.008
<u>Held to support the medium term budget</u>							
Earmarked Funding	2.011	1.064	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102
Victims Reserve	0.568	0.481	0.321	0.271	0.221	0.171	0.171
Pensions Reserve	0.430	0.430	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.285
Developer Contributions	0.519	0.319	0.209	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.000
Smoothing Reserve	0.000	0.000	2.505	1.851	0.000	0.000	0.000
	3.528	2.294	3.422	2.608	0.608	0.558	0.558
<u>Held to facilitate change programmes</u>							
PFCC Initiatives Reserve	2.945	3.871	3.773	3.735	3.735	3.735	3.735
Transformation Reserve	2.622	1.370	0.375	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088
Safer Roads Reserve	1.176	0.136	0.070	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000
	6.743	5.377	4.218	3.827	3.823	3.823	3.823
<u>Held on behalf of others</u>							
Collaboration Reserves	0.657	0.646	0.571	0.571	0.571	0.571	0.571
	0.657	0.646	0.571	0.571	0.571	0.571	0.571
Total Earmarked Reserves	12.952	10.441	10.219	9.014	7.010	6.960	6.960
General Fund	5.000						
Total Reserves	17.952	15.441	15.219	14.014	12.010	11.960	11.960

Note: numbers may not sum due to rounding

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

3 FEBRUARY 2022

Report Title	Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel's statutory responsibilities relating to scrutiny of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioners' proposed Fire Precept 2022/23.
Report Author	James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers		
West MO (for West and joint papers)	Catherine Whitehead	26/01/2022
West S151 (for West and joint papers)	Martin Henry	26/01/2022

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to set out the statutory requirements on the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel regarding scrutiny of the proposed Fire Precept for 2022/23 produced by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report summarises the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel's statutory responsibilities relating to reviewing and making a report on the proposed Fire Precept for 2022/23 produced by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire. The proposed Fire Precept appears on the agenda for the current Panel meeting as the next item of business.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel reviews the proposed Fire Precept for 2022/23 produced by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire.
- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendation is intended to enable the Panel to carry out its statutory responsibilities relating to scrutiny of the proposed Fire Precept effectively at the current meeting.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 A fire and rescue authority is a major precepting authority under the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner is the fire and rescue authority for the county under the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire (Fire and Rescue Authority) Order 2018. A Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner may not issue a precept under Section 40 of the 1992 Act until it has been subject to scrutiny by the relevant Police, Fire & Crime Panel according to the process specified in Schedule 5 of the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011, as amended by the Policing & Crime Act 2017.
- 4.2 Schedule 5 of the 2011 Act, supporting Regulations, and the Rules of Procedure for the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel require:
 - a) The Commissioner to notify the Panel of the Commissioner's proposed precept by 1st February of the relevant financial year
 - b) The Panel to review the proposed precept
 - c) The Panel to resolve to:
 - i) Support the proposed precept without additional qualification or comment; or
 - ii) Support the proposed precept and make additional recommendations on it; or
 - iii) Veto the proposed precept provided that the Panel makes that decision by the required majority, which is that at least two thirds of the persons who are members of the Panel at the time when the decision is made vote for it.
 - d) The Panel to make a report to the Commissioner on the proposed precept, setting out the results of its review, by 8th February of the relevant financial year. If the Panel votes to veto the proposed precept the report must state that the Panel has done so and set out its reasons for doing so.
- 4.3 If the Panel does not veto the proposed precept the Commissioner must:
 - a) Have regard to the report made by the Panel
 - b) Give the Panel a response to its report and to any recommendations in the report
 - c) Publish the response in a manner determined by the Panel.
- 4.4 The scrutiny process concludes at this point. The Commissioner may then issue the proposed precept as the precept for the next financial year, or issue a different precept but only if it would be in accordance with a recommendation made in the Panel's report.

- 4.5 If the Panel vetoes the proposed precept the Commissioner must not issue it as the precept for the next year. By 15th February of the relevant financial year the Commissioner must:
- a) Have regard to the report by the Panel
 - b) Give the Panel a response to its report setting out the precept that the Commissioner now proposes to issue (referred to as the 'revised precept'). If the Panel vetoed the original proposed precept because it was considered to be too high the revised precept shall be lower; if the Panel vetoed the original proposed precept because it was considered to be too low the revised precept shall be higher.
 - c) Publish the response in a matter determined by the Panel.
- 4.6 The Panel is required to review the revised precept and to make a report on it to the Commissioner (referred to as the 'second report'). The second report may indicate whether the Panel accepts or rejects the revised precept and may make recommendations on it, including recommendations as to the precept that should be issued for the next year. The Panel must complete these actions by 22nd February of the relevant financial year. A reserve meeting of the Panel is scheduled if required for this purpose. The Panel does not have the power to veto the revised precept.
- 4.7 If the Commissioner receives a second report from the Panel, by 1st March of the relevant financial year the Commissioner must:
- a) Have regard to the second report by the Panel
 - b) Give the Panel a response to the second report
 - c) Publish the response.
- 4.8 The scrutiny process concludes at this point. The Commissioner may then issue the revised precept as the precept for the next financial year, or issue a different precept but only if in accordance with a recommendation made in the Panel's second report.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 Reviewing and reporting on the proposed Fire Precept is a statutory task for the Panel. The Panel should seek to carry it out in accordance with its overall role of scrutinising and supporting the effective exercise by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner of his responsibilities.
- 5.2 Local Government Association guidance for panels on policing and fire governance gives advice on good practice in relation to scrutiny of a proposed Police Precept that is also applicable to scrutiny of the proposed Fire Precept:

A panel's questioning plan in relation to the commissioner's precept should focus on strategy, not numerical details and be used to seek clarification, test evidence and assumptions and explore options best able to deliver [the fire and rescue plan] through the proposed precept. Questions panels might ask their commissioner could include whether the precept enables funding to follow priorities; whether value for money is being secured; and whether there is a robust monitoring framework.

Panels have the power of veto over the precept. However, this a longstop, use of which should be very rare and needs to be justified. Panels should also recognise that the veto can only act as a delay; it will not prevent the commissioner from being able to re-present, and enact, a precept that is not materially different from that to which the veto has been applied.

If the veto is used, the panel should be prepared to provide detailed reasoning to back up why.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 There are no resources or financial implications arising from the proposal.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposal.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendation in this report.

7. Background Papers

Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011

Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Terms of Reference.

Policing and fire governance – Local Government Association guidance for police and crime panels (2019)



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

3 February 2022

REPORT BY THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER (PFCC) AND THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

PFCC PROPOSED FIRE PRECEPT 2022/23

Purpose of the Report

1. To propose the 2022/23 Fire Precept Proposal.
2. The revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and medium term plan are included within the report to provide context for the precept proposal.

Recommendation

3. The Police, Fire and Crime Panel is **RECOMMENDED** to endorse:

The proposal to increase the Fire Precept by £5 per annum (7.9%) for a Band D Council Tax to £68.20 (from £63.20 in 2021/22), 10 pence per week for Fire purposes.

4. Note the information presented in this report, including:
 - a. The statement of the Section 151, Chief Finance Officer as required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 regarding the robustness of the Budget, the Medium Term Financial Plan and the adequacy of financial reserves (Appendix C).
 - b. At a £5 precept this gives a total 2022/23 net budget requirement of **£27.092m**, including:
 - The intention of the PFCC to set the Council Tax Precept Requirement for Northamptonshire Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Authority for 2022/23 of **£17.231m**.

- The current and future risks, challenges, uncertainties and opportunities included in the precept proposal, together with the financial and operational mitigations and additional considerations identified.
- That any changes required, either by Government grant alterations notified through the final settlement, amended Council Tax base and surplus/deficit notifications received from the collecting authorities, after the precept has been set, may be balanced by efficiency savings or through a transfer to or from reserves.
- The current MTFP and the anticipated savings required.
- The Capital programme
- The Reserves Strategy and proposed use of reserves.

Executive Summary

5. This report details the fourth precept proposal for the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (NCFRA) which was established on the 1 January 2019.
6. The report is the culmination of several months' work by the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC), supported by the Joint Finance Team and Fire colleagues and taking account of public and stakeholder consultation and key government announcements.
7. Following the announcement of the provisional settlement, the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (NCFRA) has considered current and future funding levels, the locally negotiated agreed business case for Fire Governance, the outcome of the public consultation and the Spending Review (SR2021).
8. The Fire funding position in the governance transfer was based on a negotiated position between the PFCC and the former Northamptonshire County Council in line with CIPFA guidance. Given the challenging financial position of NCC at the time, this negotiated position was extremely tight. The main priority for the new Fire Authority was to build financial stability and resilience whilst investing in services and infrastructure where possible.
9. The PFCC set in place a three year programme to build a sustainable base budget, a realistic capital programme and establish a reasonable level of reserves. This three year programme has included active lobbying to secure appropriate grants for the service and to secure a permanent increase in the base budget funding for Northamptonshire Fire.

10. As a result of this precept proposal, a balanced budget has been achieved for the three financial years of 2022/23 to 2024/25. The proposed budgets continue with the investments made in the service since the governance transfer, including an essential equipment replacement and capital programme.
11. The PFCC has approved a capital programme which aligns with the MTFP. The costs are budgeted for, however, a significant value relate to short life assets and/or legacy requirements dating back to the time of the governance transfer. As such, the PFCC has actively lobbied, and written to the Fire Minister seeking a contribution towards these capital costs which would reduce the costs on the revenue budget.
12. The Chief Fire Officer has reviewed the findings of the Grenfell enquiry and investment requirements and priorities continue to be considered as part of the capital programme and essential investment requirements.
13. The S151 officer has reviewed the adequacy and level of reserves following the work undertaken since the governance transfer and has concluded that reserves are currently at an adequate level to manage risk.
14. However, to enable future transformation and investment it is prudent to set aside funding in reserves to facilitate this. Therefore, the MTFP plans that some transfers to reserves will take place from 2025/26.
15. In considering the Fire budget and proposed precept for 2022/23, the PFCC considered the national context and NCFRA's lower precept, core spending power and reserves position relative to other Fire and Rescue Authorities.
16. Furthermore, the PFCC has conducted, and been informed by, a consultation of 1,484 residents of Northamptonshire. The results of the surveys are summarised in this report and will be available on the PFCC website in due course.
17. Additionally, the budget and precept recognise the importance of collaborative working with Police and the OPFCC. The following enabling services areas are now embedded across Fire and Policing:
 - The Joint Assistant Chief Officer for Fire and Police Support Services
 - Joint Teams for Estates, Finance, HR, Fleet and Digital
 - A Joint Communications team between the OPFCC and Fire who work closely with the Police Communications team.
 - A Joint Estates Strategy has been published. The joint administration building has brought together Chief Officer teams from Fire and Policing, the OPFCC and the joint support services. Furthermore, a joint fleet workshop will be implemented later in the year. Once disposals are taken forwards, this will enable benefits and efficiencies to start to be realised.

- Requiring the services to actively seek opportunities to work together to deliver more efficient and effective public services.

In 2022/23 it is intended that opportunities bring together further support services teams will be progressed.

18. Both Fire and Police Budget agreements for 2022/23 will continue to demonstrate the PFCC commitment to collaboration, particularly highlighted greater integration between police and fire and rescue to reinvest in frontline services. It remains the PFCC's expectation that, over time, the following areas will be delivered:

- Shared Services
- Shared Estates Strategy
- Shared Prevention Approaches
- Interoperability
- Control Room

19. With only a one year settlement and no indication of future funding for Fire and Rescue Authorities, the MTFP shows that even with a £5 precept increase there are financial challenges ahead in future years. The Chief Fire Officer has already prepared savings plans to meet these shortfalls.

After careful consideration of the factors included within this report, the PFCC is very much aware of the financial impact on households in the current time. However, he is extremely grateful for the support Northamptonshire residents have demonstrated for these proposals. As such, given the financial challenges facing NCFRA, this requires him to propose a precept of £5 (10 pence per week).

This will enable Fire to have a sustainable base budget, maintain an adequate level of reserves and maintain and safeguard Fire and Rescue Services in Northamptonshire.

National Context

20. The Fire Governance Business Case was predicated on a three year financial stability plan to establish a sustainable revenue budget, develop an affordable capital programme and build reserves to an adequate and resilient level.
21. The PFCC and Chief Finance Officer keep the budget and MTFP under regular review and this highlights any issues at an early stage . In 2020/21 these reviews identified at an early stage the potential impact of COVID-19 on the Fire budget. As such, the PFCC successfully sought and received both Northamptonshire specific and Fire sector funding above the levels they would have received from national funding formula.
22. COVID-19 impacted significantly on the stability plan both in terms of additional unfunded pressures and reduced funding receipts over the medium term. Fire have limited resilience or flexibility to withstand such variances and since early 2020, have

been in discussions with and lobbied the Home Office and DLUHC to secure additional funding and a permanent increase in the Fire as Budget.

23. In addition to sector specific grants, the Home Office supported Northamptonshire Fire with one off funding grants for COVID-19, £1m to build a resilient level of reserves and a further £1m to be used towards the Base Budget in 2021/22.
24. The PFCC has been in regular contact with Northamptonshire MPs on the financial challenges and; building on the 2021/22 budget engagement, he wrote to and held MP briefings in October and November 2021 respectively, seeking their support for a permanent base budget solution for Fire. He is immensely grateful to all MPs for their engagement and support.
25. The £5 precept flexibility included in the 2022/23 provisional settlement reflects the intense lobbying by Northamptonshire MP's, the PFCC and other Fire Authorities to secure permanent base funding.
26. Following active lobbying and discussions with the Home Office, the PFCC wrote to the Fire Minister in December 2021 seeking one off financial support towards legacy capital programme requirements. The Fire Minister is currently considering this request.
27. The S151 Officer is very appreciative of the regular updates provided by colleagues in the Unitary Authorities in respect of the impact on the taxbase and the council tax and business rate receipts for 2022/23 and future years.
28. The provisional settlement also includes special grant of £372K. Whilst welcome, this is a one off and as evidenced in the MTFP, there is still a need for some savings over the medium term.
29. These savings have already been identified by and agreed with the Chief Fire Officer and, based on current assumptions enables the budget to be balanced over the next three years.

Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

30. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove MP in a written ministerial statement on Thursday 16 December 2021. The announcements set out provisional allocations for 2022/23.
31. The Provisional Settlement publication marks the start of the four-week consultation which closed on 13 January 2021. At the time of writing, the date of the final settlement is unknown.
32. Due to the recency and detail of local government finance settlements at the 2021 Spending Review (SR2021), the majority of the provisional settlement was already known.

33. The national Technical Team undertook an analysis of the day's main announcements and the following headlines were available for Fire:
- Confirmation that Core Spending Power increases by an average of 4.7% (£71m) for standalone Fire Authorities.
 - Precept – 1.99% (under the 2% referendum limit) for Fire and Rescue Authorities but £5 precept flexibility for the lowest eight FRA's (which include Northamptonshire).
 - Core Spending Power includes an estimated taxbase for each authority and was calculated prior to the £5 - so is based on a 1.99% precept increase for all FRAs.
 - £822m Services Grant for which standalone FRAs receive £21.3m. This is a one off grant expected to cover additional costs due to pay, inflation, the increased NI levy and all other pressures.
 - The Fire Pensions Grant is not included in the Provisional Settlement – allocations are expected to be unchanged from 2021/22.
 - It is unknown at this time whether separate Protection Grant will be available in 2022/23 as with previous years. If so, this grant is circa £127K in the current year.
34. The 2022/23 Draft Referendum Principles (and Council Tax: Local Referendums Briefing Paper) were issued alongside the settlement and for 2022/23 the proposed referendum limit has been set at 2% for Fire, but £5 one-off precept flexibility increase for the eight lowest charging Fire authorities. This includes Northamptonshire.
35. Northamptonshire have responded to the provisional settlement consultation, welcoming the settlement, supporting flexibility and requesting continuation of the special services grant.

36. A summary of the provisional settlement for Fire demonstrates that funding has increased by £1.83m (7.25%) from 2021/22, as follows:

2021/22 £m		2022/23 £m
2.278	Revenue Support Grant	2.347
2.814	Top Up Grant	2.814
-	Special Grant	0.372
0.281	S31 Grant	0.444
2.867	Business Rates & S31 Grant	2.867
8.240		8.844
15.763	Council Tax	17.231
0.224	Local Council Tax Support	-
(0.153)	Council Tax Surplus (Deficit)	(0.169)
24.074	Total Funding	25.906
1.186	Pensions Grant	1.186
25.260	Total	27.092

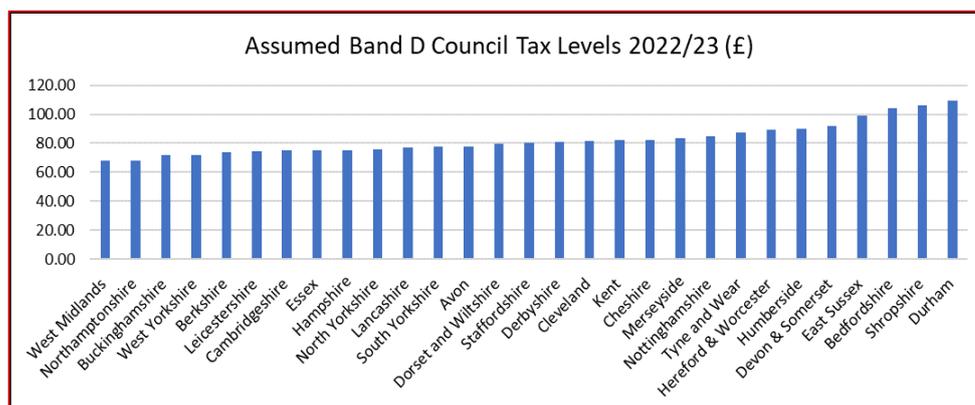
37. The 2022/23 budget will be approximately £4.6m more than the budget transferred as part of the governance arrangements. This equates to a revenue budget increase of 20% since 2018/19 and whilst savings are still required, puts the NCFRA revenue budget and the service on a much more resilient footing.

Comparative Information with Other Standalone Fire Authorities

38. A review of other Fire and Rescue Authorities has highlighted the following:

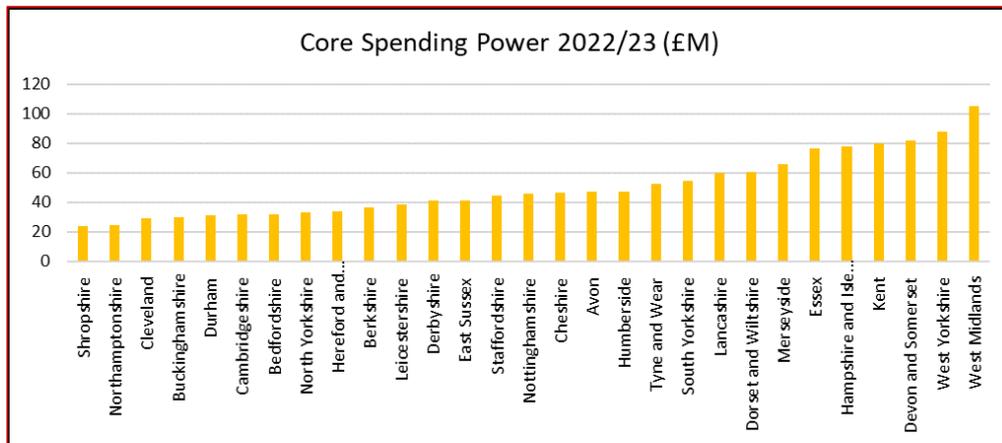
Comparative Council Tax Levels

39. If all eight FRAs take up the precept flexibility, Band D Council Tax levels for Fire and Rescue Authorities will range between £68.04 in the West Midlands and £109.69 in Durham, with an average of £82.66 per Band D property (as compared to £80.06 in 2021/22).
40. At £68.20 Northamptonshire will still be the second lowest Fire preceptor in 2022/23 and will be 17% below the average precept in England and Wales. However, this will be an improvement on the 2021/22 position where Northamptonshire was 21% below the average precept.



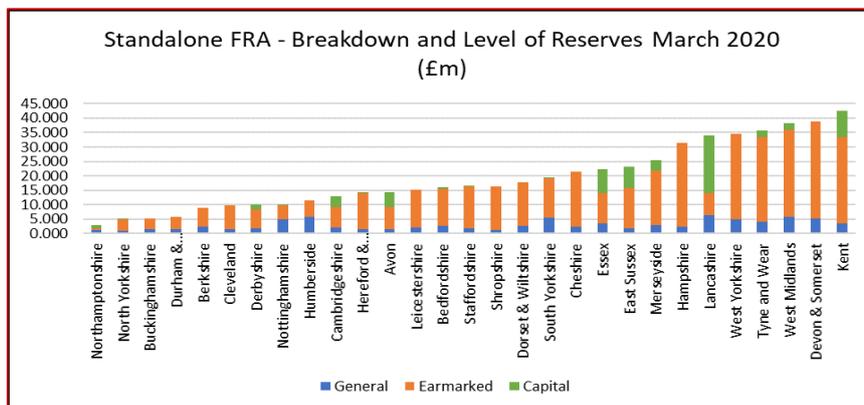
Comparative Core Spending Power

41. Core Spending Power (CSP) is set out in the provisional settlement and includes central settlements as well as business rates and assumed council tax receipts at DLUHC estimated levels.
42. The provisional CSP tables do not include the £5 precept flexibility for authorities. Furthermore, CSP includes estimated, rather than the actual taxbase for authorities and does not include collection fund surplus or deficits nor pension grant.
43. As an indication of Northamptonshire's position in relation to other Authorities, the CSP per standalone authority for 2022/23 ranges between £24.2m in Shropshire to £105m in West Midlands. At 1.99%, Northamptonshire CSP at £24.9m is second lowest and will increase by £1m if precept flexibility is utilised. Even then it will remain the second lowest although it is envisaged the gap to Cleveland (the third lowest Authority) will reduce by £1m to £3.3m.



Comparative Level of Reserves

44. The Home Office will shortly publish their updated analysis of the reserve levels for Fire and Rescue Authorities as at 31/3/20 (based on the audited accounts for 2019/20 and prior to the additional £1m for Northamptonshire). This analysis highlights that total reserves ranged from £2.911m in Northamptonshire to £42.643m in Kent.



45. As a result, and following representation by the PFCC, in 2020/21, the Home Office provided the sum of £1m to augment reserves. Despite this, whilst March 2021 reserve levels have not yet been published, it is envisaged Northamptonshire will still be amongst the lowest levels nationally.

Council Taxbase and Council Tax Precept Income

46. The Council Tax and the level of precept is a fundamental part of the local government finance settlement.
47. Income generated from the precept depends on both the level of the Band D precept and the taxbase – the latter being effectively the number of properties who are required to pay Council Tax.
48. In Fire, the precept accounts for over 63% of funding, therefore any variations can have a significant impact. Historically, the taxbase has increased year on year, however, due to the impact of COVID, as reported to the Panel in 2021/22 the taxbase reduced by 0.41%.
49. The North and West Unitary Councils have advised the PFCC of their proposed taxbases for 2022/23.
50. A comparison of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 figures reflects an average 1.3% taxbase increase as follows:

	2021/22 (number)	2022/23 (number)	Change	
			(number)	%
North	111,892.00	113,047.00	1,155.00	1.03%
West	137,520.22	139,604.04	2,083.82	1.52%
Taxbase (Band D)	249,412.22	252,651.04	3,238.82	1.30%
CSP DLUHC Estimate		253,333.74	3,921.52	1.57%
CSP Home Office Estimate		252,205.64	2,793.42	1.12%

51. As with previous years, the estimated taxbase in CSP Power estimated by DLUHC is significantly higher than the estimate used by the Home Office for Policing. It is interesting to note that the actual taxbase is between the two estimates.
52. Moving forwards, the MTFP assumes average increases which align with Unitary Councils taxbase assumptions.

53. The total precept funding is a combination of the taxbase increase and the precept increase as follows:

2021/22 £	Variation	2022/23 £
	Taxbase Changes	
59,367	- North	72,996
(81,419)	- West	131,697
(22,052)		204,693
	Precept Increase	
137,627	- North	565,235
169,150	- West	698,020
306,777		1,263,255
284,725	Total Precept Change	1,467,948

54. The 2022/23 proposed precept increase of £5, together with the increased taxbase will generate an additional £1.468m on the base budget.

Council Tax Collection Fund

55. Each year the billing authorities estimate how much of the total potential Council Tax income liability of taxpayers they will collect. They advise precepting authorities of any projected surplus or deficit on the “Collection Fund” in January of each year.
56. The PFCC is very appreciative of the hard work undertaken by the North and West Northamptonshire Unitary Authorities in providing the deficit information to enable their inclusion in his budget and precept considerations.
57. Despite high collection rates within Northamptonshire, COVID-19 impacted on this area. collection fund positions vary significantly throughout the country with some Authorities achieving surpluses and many others having significantly worse deficit positions.
58. The Unitary Authorities have advised the PFCC of their collection fund deficit positions for 2022/23 for Fire as follows:

	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
North	75,974	125,898
West	77,145	42,762
Collection Fund Deficit	153,119	168,660

59. To mitigate this, given the uncertainty at the time of setting the 2021/22 precept, the first instalment of the Council Tax Income Guarantee Grant (£91K) was intentionally not budgeted for in 2021/22 and was added to reserves which will be drawn from reserves in 2022/23. No further instalments have been budgeted for, therefore, if any are received they will be added to reserves and considered alongside the position in 2023/24 and future years

60. The S151 Officer will work closely with the Unitary Authorities throughout the year to monitor and understand any impact on the collection fund deficit position for 2023/24 and future years.

Public Consultation on the Level of the Precept

61. For this year's precept, over the period 20 December 2021 to 16 January 2022, the PFCC undertook as wide a range of consultation as possible to obtain the views of Northamptonshire residents. The survey was sent out to more than 200,000 contacts and using many different approaches, the main ones are set out in Appendix A. This wide reach is set within the challenges of the limited timescale of the government funding settlement and the current COVID climate over the festive season.
62. As consultation has recently taken place on the Police, Fire and Crime Plan priorities, the online survey was targeted specifically in relation to the precept and communicated to as many stakeholders as possible, to enable any Northamptonshire resident to share their views on the level of the precept.
63. The online survey received a response from 1,484, all of whom responded for Fire and which is classed as a statistically relevant sample size for the County based on a 95% level of confidence.
64. Furthermore, the PFCC personally undertook the following specific targeted engagement:
- An annual Parish Councillor Budget and Precept meeting was held on the 19 January 2022, 274 Parish Clerks were contacted and asked to disseminate to all their Parish Councillors. 14 Parish Councillors attended and received a briefing on the budget and precept considerations for both Fire and Policing. All councillors attending were also invited to undertake the summarised online survey. The PFCC has considered their responses and is grateful to those who attended the meeting and found their engagement extremely useful.
 - The PFCC held a Police Fire and Crime Panel workshop on the budget and precept considerations for 2022/23, which was attended by eight members. The annual workshops commenced in January 2021 and the PFCC has again found this approach and member input invaluable. The PFCC is grateful to all panel members who attended, and subject to the views of the Panel wishes to continue to offer the budget workshop as an annual event for consideration.
 - The PFCC would like to give particular appreciation to the commitment and engagement of MPs, Members of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel and Parish Councillors; as he recognises they have been contacted multiple times during the survey period and asked to disseminate the survey amongst their local residents and contacts.

65. The PFCC has considered the results of the 1,484 responses, which were:

That around 61.3% of residents were prepared to pay £5 or more if they were able to for Fire services. Around 34.5% were not prepared to pay any more than they do now and 4.2% said they did not know.

66. Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on how good a job the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service did. For Fire, 1,439 residents replied. **Approximately 63.7% of residents thought Fire were doing a good or excellent role**, 3.3% of residents advising poor or very poor. 11.7% of residents thought they were doing a fair job and around 21.3% did not know.

67. The PFCC will consider the narrative comments in the report which will be published on the PFCC website in due course.

The Financial Challenge – Future Risks, Challenges and Uncertainties

68. The impact of a different inflation assumptions to that estimated in the MTFP are as follows:

- Every 1% in Council Tax equates to circa £172K per annum
- Every £1 in Council Tax equates to £252K per annum
- Every 1% in Pay equates to circa £190K in a full year
- Every 1% non-pay inflation equates to £9k per annum

69. Prudent forecasts have been included where information which has not yet been finalised. Any variations between the provisional and final local government settlements, business rates, council tax or the collection fund will be balanced with reserves.

70. Each year since the governance transfer, a better understanding has been developed in respect of the operational and budgetary pressures facing NCFRA. A lot of these pressures required investment to ensure resources, premises and equipment is at an appropriate level.

71. These challenges, where known have now been built into the revenue budget and capital programmes to enable Fire to have a base budget which reflects their business requirements and takes account of current and future demands and opportunities.

72. Pressures have been significant and, together with mitigations, have included:

- Strategies for: Estates, Fleet, Digital and Operational equipment have been developed and reviewed, which inform the Capital programme and Revenue budgets.
- An essential new Command and Control System has been procured, together with Warwickshire, the current partner in Joint arrangements which provides stability and

resilience across both Authorities. The system will provide much needed functionality and resilience and will be Emergency Services Network (ESN) compliant.

- Condition surveys for the Fire estate have informed the production of maintenance and repair programmes for all Fire sites.
 - Work on ICT systems has identified significant capital and revenue investment requirements. Those known have been built into the financial plans but it is anticipated the requirements will increase further as this understanding continues.
 - Developing a prioritised comprehensive rolling operational equipment maintenance and replacement programme. The operational equipment reserve assists in mitigating this impact.
 - Ensuring all relevant factors are considered when making decisions and supporting procurement processes to ensure that they are informed and evidenced based.
 - Joint Support services with Police and managed by a Joint Assistant Chief officer have been established to ensure that the Authority has the right range and resilience of skills and expertise to build capacity and support transformative as well as business as usual activities.
 - An Internal Audit Plan has been in place from 2019/20 which provides much needed assurance of key areas and internal controls for the PFCC and Statutory Officers.
73. Some costs in relation to the Emergency Services Network (ESN) changes, have been assumed in the capital programme and MTFP, however, it is recognised that nationally these have not been finalised and may be subject to variation.
74. Any potential for industrial action requires contingency arrangements which have previously been managed within year or from reserves. That position remains and any alternative options would need to be costed, determined and funding set aside.

Other Financial Risks and Uncertainties - Pensions

75. The Government introduced reforms to public service pensions in 2015 which resulted in most public sector workers being moved into new pension schemes. In December 2018, the Court of Appeal ruled that the 'transitional protection' offered to some members gave rise to unlawful discrimination on the basis of age. In July 2019, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury made a written ministerial statement confirming that, as 'transitional protection' was offered to members of all the main public service pension schemes, the difference in treatment will need to be removed across all those schemes for members with relevant service.

76. It is expected that the on-going cost of higher pension benefits will arise from two main areas:

- Costs arising from the above case, and;
- The as yet unknown results of the next actuarial valuations for unfunded schemes such as Firefighters and Police which will be built into the scheme valuation process and reflected in the 2024/25 employer and employee contribution rates.

We have assumed that these issues could lead to employer contribution rates increasing by up to 10.0% from 2024/25 (£1m per annum).

77. The government has provided additional grant funding for pension increases in the past for both Fire and Police but there is a risk that authorities may need to meet some or all of this increase.

78. Whilst assumptions vary between 0% and 30% impact, a potential impact is modelled as scenario in the MTFP assuming a 10% increase and also with a modelling assumption that 75% of that cost would be funded by Home Office grant.

79. Whilst this was not addressed in the SR2021; in January 2022, James Cartlidge MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary for State (Ministry of Justice) and Assistant Government Whip stated that cost of remedy for the above when legislation is in place would fall on the Exchequer (source: Hansard). Whilst this indication is welcome, no details are currently available and this would only contribute to part of the additional costs. However, the Home Office are alive to this issue and are already in discussions with the Treasury.

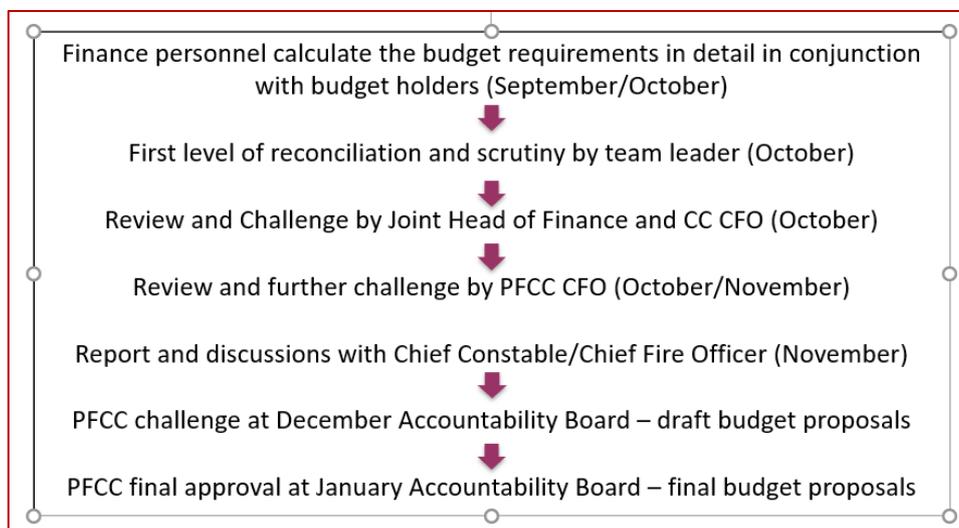
80. The PFCC will continue to make representation and seek updates and assurances from the Home Office in this regard. The MTFP will continue to be updated as discussions continue. At this time, it is highlighted as a potential risk and modelled in both the Police and Fire MTFPs.

2022/23 – Base Budget preparation, approach and scrutiny

81. The budget is the second budget prepared under the recently established joint Finance team and has brought an approach which has provided consistency across Fire and Police. This has enabled comparability of assumptions and principles, together with best practice, resilience and a more efficient approach applied to budgeting for all services.

82. The budget has been prepared on a zero-base where possible, in full consultation with budget holders, aligned to the Police, Fire and Crime Plan and tested against the MTFP.

83. The zero based approach ensures that efficiencies are taken from this process where possible that only approved increases, inflation and unavoidable pressures are built in. Detailed workings are prepared and the format of the budget models are consistent and have built in checks and balances to ensure the correct information is fed through. This approach also enables resilience within the finance team.
84. Following the preparation of the Budget Strategy and approach in September, briefing sessions took place with all budget holders and it the strategy was shared with the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) for further scrutiny and review.
85. The table below sets out the preparation and scrutiny elements which culminated in the December Accountability Board where the Chief Fire Officer presented his initial budget proposals which were scrutinised and challenged by the PFCC.



86. At the December Accountability Board the PFCC asked for the budget work to be extended and provide an additional budget proposal for a provisional three year balanced budget for the service (excluding potential pension uncertainties), based on £5 precept flexibility in 2022/23 and 1.99% thereafter..
87. A provisional three year balanced budget has been produced, which includes a proposed savings plan by the service and includes an agreed capital programme. This will enable a level of planning and continuity for the service.
88. After further scrutiny and challenge, the PFCC considered the Chief Fire Officer’s budget proposal at the January 2022 Accountability Board

89. These elements have resulted in the PFCC setting the following budget for NCFRA as follows:

2021/22 £m	Budget Heading	2021/22 £m
14.934	Fire Fighters	15.309
3.284	Staff	3.619
0.862	Other Employee Expenses	1.038
1.661	IT & Communications	1.516
1.563	Estates & Facilities	1.664
0.498	Transport	0.515
1.432	Supplies & Services	1.582
2.476	Enabling Services/LGSS	2.796
(0.747)	Income	(0.714)
25.963	Total Service	27.325
0.029	Capital Financing - MRP	0.179
0.068	Capital Financing - Interest	0.092
0.150	Capital Financing - RCCO	0.300
-	Transfer to Reserves	0.030
(0.950)	Transfer from Reserves	(0.484)
25.260	TOTAL	27.442
-	Savings identified	(0.350)
25.260	TOTAL	27.092

90. Key Headlines are as follows:

- a. The firefighter budget follows a zero based review and reflects the planned retirement and recruitment profile.
- b. Twelve new firefighters are being recruited from April 2022 which is estimated will be over establishment for some of the year. Provision has also been set aside for transferees to be appointed if required.
- c. Other employee expenses include the allowances for call out arrangements to provide resilience, overtime, training and bank arrangements and are based on a zero based budget review.
- d. The additional cost of the NI levy has been built into the budget, alongside the full year impact of the excess 2021 pay award.
- e. Staff costs relate to operational non-firefighter posts such as control, prevention and protection.
- f. Changes in Other non-Pay costs include:
 - Additional requirements from reviewing all fire ICT systems and as highlighted earlier in the report.
 - Increased gas and electricity pressures
 - Increased fuel pressures

- g. Joint support service arrangements for the Assistant Chief Officer, HR, Finance, estates, fleet and digital arrangements and are now delivered by Police employed staff rather than in house or from LGSS. Included in this area are:
- Shared services costs between Fire and Police £2.22m most of which relate to staffing transferred from Fire to Police employ under TUPE and some have been the result of previous LGSS charge reductions.
 - The OPFCC charge for governance and strategic support has reduced from £232K to £209K.
 - The Fire element of the Joint Communications Team with the PFCC is £170K. It also reflects services which were previously undertaken internally within Fire or by the Police.
- h. Capital Financing costs reflect the costs of financing the capital programme introduced following the governance transfer.
- i. Reserves transfers out reflect:
- Agreed implementation costs of the digital restructure and extra pension administrative support, shared with Policing.
 - The Council Tax Income Guarantee Grant received in 2020/21 which will be drawn down in 2022/23. Any future grants will be added to reserves and used to support 2023/24.
 - A contribution of £30K has been made to the operational equipment reserve to help smooth the impact of replacing essential equipment.
- j. Efficiency savings have been identified, mainly from shared joint team efficiencies which will be implemented in 2022/23, operational overtime following the appointment of additional firefighters and managing the risk of unplanned and unexpected fire injury awards from reserves.
- k. A contingency of £120K is set aside within the revenue budget to meet any above inflation increases which cannot be met within budgeted provision or to support in year transformation or innovation opportunities.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

91. This is the first Fire MTFP produced after the period covered by the three year stability plan to build a sustainable budget. The current MTFP covers a five year period.
92. Most of the challenges associated with the revenue budget and capital programme have now been identified and addressed which is less subject to reactive and historic

challenges, is balanced over three years is based on realistic plans and is considered both deliverable and affordable.

93. Whilst the MTFP does include efficiency savings of up to a cumulative level of £1.1m by year 5 (2026/27); a savings plan to cover this has already been proposed by the service, supported by the PFCC and work is already underway to realise these efficiencies, most of which in 2022/23 have resulted from shared services.
94. One of the main impacts on the MTFP is the revenue costs of financing capital, mainly as a result of legacy items from the governance transfer in the capital programme. As such, the PFCC has written to Lord Greenhalgh, the Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and Communities, seeking one off capital funding support to mitigate these cost.
95. The MTFP based on key assumptions detailed below, is attached at Appendix B and summarised as follows:

2021/22		2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
25,259	Expenditure	27,442	28,420	29,360	30,380	31,279
-	Savings identified	(350)	(964)	(1,093)	(1,112)	(1,131)
25,259		27,092	27,456	28,267	29,268	30,148
25,259	Funding	27,092	27,456	28,267	29,042	29,845
-	(Shortfall)	0	0	0	(226)	(303)

96. The plan demonstrates that without any additional growth, based on current assumptions, within current plans, and excluding potential pension implications, the budget can be balanced until 2025/26.
97. This exceeds the current external audit value for money assessment which considers the ability of an organisation to balance its budget over a three year period.
98. Of particular note is that by 2026/27, the cost of funding the capital programme, will equate to approximately £1.2m per annum. Any capital funding received from the Home Office will be used to mitigate these costs.
99. It is assumed that no additional unfunded priorities or responsibilities are given to the PFCC and Chief Fire Officer.
100. Key assumptions that have been included in seeking to outline the financial challenge for the medium term are:
 - Precept will increase by £5 in 2022/23 and thereafter a 1.99% increase. (source: National professional assumptions).
 - Prudent funding assumptions have been made in respect of government funding, business rates, taxbase levels, and council tax deficits (source: professional assumptions).

- Prudent Pay increase estimates are assumed at an average of 2% (source: National professional assumptions).
- Investment requirements can be prioritised and met from within the revenue budget or capital programme.
- Further borrowing beyond the capital programme is not required.

101. As set out earlier in the report, the MTFP also models a potential impact of increased pension contributions and if some grant were provided.

Capital Programme

102. The Capital programme is now an integral part of Fire’s operational and financial plans and organisational awareness and governance arrangements are continuing to develop to ensure that appropriate scrutiny and challenge of investment proposals takes place and that the affordability and deliverability of them is fully considered. An updated Capital programme has been approved as part of the budget setting process.

103. The approved capital programme is as follows:

Programme	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Estates	4.8	0.9	0.3	0.1
Vehicles	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.5
ICT	2.8	0.5	0.7	1.1
Equipment	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Total	8.8	1.9	1.4	1.9

104. Estates costs in 2022/23 include essential condition survey refurbishments and ensuring appropriate welfare facilities in Fire buildings in addition to the cost of refurbishing the recently acquired shared vehicle fleet workshop with Police which will become operational in the near future. Following representation, the Home Office approved the reallocation of the unused Fire transformation grant towards the cost of the Joint Fleet Workshop.

105. ICT and Operational costs particularly as short life assets in nature, as such the cost of financing them can be significant. Furthermore, legacy costs of the capital programme are forecast to be approximately £11m. Throughout the year the PFCC has actively lobbied and has now written to the Minister seeking some one off financial support to mitigate the revenue costs of these.

106. The S151 Officer will continue to seek all available funding and advise the PFCC as to the most effective way to fund capital expenditure and minimise cost on the revenue budget moving forwards. This includes considering the appropriate use of earmarked reserves and unapplied grants.

107. A Joint Estates Strategy is in place which promotes joint sharing of buildings and progress has already been made with the enabling developments of the shared administration and joint fleet workshops which will enable further changes to the estate and realise efficiencies over time for both Fire and Police.
108. Costs are often occurred ahead of any efficiencies, therefore, the PFCC will continue to push to ensure that any disposals are made in a timely an efficient manner to ensure the full benefits can be realised.
109. The Commissioner is required to approve a “Treasury Management Strategy” each year, setting out the detail of his policy and approach to managing investments, borrowing and cash management.
110. This is required by the Code of Treasury Management published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Prudential Code to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable. A further key objective is to ensure that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice.
111. The Treasury Management Strategy will be considered at the February 2022 Accountability Board and where possible will be available on the PFCC website by April 2021 as it is usual practice for the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) to consider this key document at their March meeting prior to being placed on the website.

Use of Reserves

112. In considering the budget, the MTFP and level of precept options, it is important to look closely at the size, level and type of reserves to ensure that they are adequate to cover the purposes for which they are held and to provide some safeguards against the future risks identified within the budget. Whilst ensuring that reserves are adequate, there is also a need to ensure they are not excessive.
113. NCFRA transferred on the 1 January 2019 with no reserves and set in place a three year financial stability plan to build reserves and made good progress in doing so. By 2021/22 they had exceeded the minimum level of general reserves as set out in the financial plans forecast at the time of the governance transfer.
114. With the impact of COVID-19 on funding levels, the PFCC made early representation to Lord Greenhalgh, seeking one off support to bolster reserves and provide some resilience. As a result, £1m was provided to Northamptonshire to support general reserves.
115. This has enabled general reserves to be increased above the minimum level and to be stabilised at a level of £2m or 5% (whichever is the higher). This level reflects both the current uncertain environment and the minimal levels of earmarked reserves held to meet other purposes.

116. As a result, general reserves are not excessive but are adequate and the authority is better placed to meet any challenges.
117. It is the intention of the PFCC to continue to create earmarked reserves to meet where the opportunity arises, such as in year underspends. Such opportunities will be used to augment the funding smoothing reserve, meet potential risks or support transformative or innovative activities.
118. The reserves strategy sets out planned use of reserves across the MTFP. Of note is the use of S106, capital receipts and transformation reserves, which, alongside revenue contributions will be applied against capital expenditure to minimise and mitigate future borrowing costs where possible.
119. Types of reserves and planning assumptions are detailed within the Reserves Strategy which is attached to this report. Headlines of which are as follows:

General Reserve

120. Following the additional allocation from the Home Office, the S151 Officer has advised that it would be prudent to maintain general reserves at a sustainable level of £2.0m or 5% (whichever is the higher). As of 31 March 2022, the balance on the general reserve is forecast to be £2.0m which equates to approx. 8% of the current revenue budget.
121. Additionally, it is prudent to have in place earmarked reserves to better smooth the impact of replacement of essential operational equipment, to mitigate year on year funding variations and take forward transformation priorities.

Earmarked Reserves

122. NCFRA plan to hold a number of earmarked reserves which are set out in detail within the reserves strategy at Appendix D.
123. As at 31 March 2022, the balance on the earmarked capital and revenue reserves totals £2.433m (approx. 9.6% of total current budget) and they are summarised below as follows:
 - Insurance Reserve
 - Operational Equipment
 - Funding
 - Transformation
 - S106
 - Capital and ESN Reserve
 - Capital Grants Unapplied
124. Reserve levels are better than forecast, and over time, some earmarked reserves will continue to be built within the reserves strategy.

125. Challenges and uncertainties which will be considered as part of a future review of the reserves strategy are:

- NCFRA do not currently have any financial provision for industrial action contingency arrangements as historically costs have been met from revenue budgets. It is recommended that, in time, a reserve is created for this purpose.

126. NCFRA has made good progress in establishing reserves and, following the contribution from the Home Office, it is the view of the S151 officer that whilst general reserves are now at an adequate level, it is prudent to increase earmarked reserves where appropriate. This will assist in smoothing potential funding impacts and to support the funding of equipment and transformation activities.

127. Furthermore, as general reserves have been stabilised and resilience has now been improved, it is essential that they are used in exceptional circumstances and if used, are rebuilt to the sustainable level in a timely manner.

Robustness of the Budget –Statement of the S151 Chief Finance Officer

128. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, places a duty on the S151 to make a report to the authority on:

- The robustness of the estimates included within the budget
- The adequacy of the reserves and balances

129. The PFCC must have regard to this when considering the budget and the report must be shared with the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

130. In her considerations, the S151 Officer is mindful of other associated statutory safeguards designed to support the authority:

- Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires the authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and that the chief financial officer has personal responsibility for such administration.
- Sections 32, 43 & 93 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 which requires the authority to set a balanced budget
- The Prudential Code introduced as part of the Local Government Act 2003 which sets out the framework within which the authority must manage its investments, including adequate planning and budget estimates
- The external auditor's duty to assess the adequacy of the authority's proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness ('value for money')

131. To reinforce these obligations, section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the S151 Officer to report in consultation with the Monitoring Officer if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget.
132. This report has set out the detailed budget setting process that has taken place and the work undertaken to ensure the budget is as realistic, deliverable and achievable as possible.
133. The Fire Joint Head of Finance has worked closely with the Fire Executive team, budget holders and the finance team to deliver the draft budget and savings plan, ensuring that effective scrutiny and challenge has taken place throughout. The S151 officer has worked closely with the Joint Head of Finance and Chief Fire Officer throughout. The PFCC has undertaken scrutiny and strategic review of the proposals on two occasions and has been updated regularly throughout the budget cycle as appropriate.
134. The estimates and assumptions are based on the best information available at the time of formulating the budget in line with the fundamental accounting concepts and are reasonable and prudent.
135. The Section 25 Statement of the S151 Chief Finance Officer for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Authority is included at Appendix C.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The budget and proposed precept provide the resources for the delivery of Fire and the priorities set out in the Police, Fire and Crime Plan.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

Additionally, the survey is comprised of a representative sample of Northamptonshire residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Environmental implications are considered as part of Fire delivery.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Risks and mitigations have been highlighted in the report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The PFCC is required to notify a precept to the billing authorities by the 1st March each year. In doing so, he must set a realistic revenue budget, informed by the report of the Chief Finance Officer

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Consultation on the Precept

Appendix B - Budget and MTFP

Appendix C - Section 25 Statement of the Chief Finance officer

Appendix D - Reserves Strategy - NCFRA

Persons to Contact

Mrs H King,

Chief Finance Officer, Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and

Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Consultation on the Precept

An online consultation was carried out with the intention of reaching as many people as possible to obtain the views of a demographically representative group of the county's population.

The survey was open over the period - 20 December 2021 -16 January 2022 in order to meet the statutory timescales where the PFCC needs to publish his proposed Police and Fire Precept proposals by 31/1/22.

The online survey received 1,484 responses (although respondents did not respond to every question) and the full report will be published on the PFCC website by the end of February 2022.

Challenges

To achieve an informed consultation based on the proposed settlements, we have no alternative but to consult over the Christmas period because of the timetable that is determined by the Government's release of the financial settlement, and the deadline for setting our budget.

Recognising the impact of the Omicron strain of COVID-19 during the festive season, in person face to face survey groups were not carried out with the public for 2022/23. Meetings for the Commissioner to brief and discuss with three diverse groups were unfortunately cancelled because of illness and the effect of Omicron.

In person surveys were carried out for the Police, Fire and Crime Plan in October and November at Rushden and all Northants visits of the Beat Bus – however, take up and engagement from these was extremely low.

The Commissioner's Youth Team did, however, hold a facilitated session with a group of young people and the results were fed into the survey responses.

The challenges however were compounded by the fact that public views are being sought on a number of issues by a number of organisations during this period: The PFCC consulted on his Police, Fire and Crime Plan just weeks prior, and both West and North Northamptonshire Council were consulting on their council tax at the same time as the Commissioner is consulting on his precept.

We will continue to engage with our Unitary contacts and see how we can use maximise survey responses for all parties in future years.

How the consultation was carried out:

Despite these challenges, the survey was able to reach many residents through many different forums and media as follows:

We used four main communications channels to seek public views and encourage people to take part in our consultation:

- Mainstream media
- Partner and stakeholder and database marketing
- Digital and social
- Paid for advertising

Survey communication

Audience	Reach
<p>Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Alert • Parish Councils and Town Councils • Councillors in North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire • Police, Fire and Crime Panel members • MPs • Chief Executives and Leaders of Local Authorities • Neighbourhood Watch Management Committee • Community Safety Managers for Northamptonshire North and Northamptonshire West • Diversity Forums of West Northamptonshire Council • Northamptonshire Police Community Engagement managers • Independent Advisory Group members • Independent Custody Visitors • Businesses via the Chamber of Commerce, Northampton BID and the Northamptonshire Business Forums • Secondary Schools • Joint Action Groups • Northamptonshire Association of Local Councils 	<p>The survey was sent to more than 25,000 stakeholders, with a request that they further cascade.</p> <p>The Commissioner wrote personally to Panel members, MPs and Leaders of local authorities to ask for their support in sharing and encouraging response to the consultation</p> <p>The invitation to take part in the consultation was repeated twice – at the launch in December and then again as a last call, on January 4</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various voluntary and third sector organisations • Rural interest groups • Facilitated work with the PFCCs Youth Commissions • The Police Liaison Representatives on every parish and town council 	
<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News item on ForceNet – The Northamptonshire Police intranet viewed by all officers and staff – repeated twice during survey period • News item on Northants Fire and Rescue Service intranet for Firefighters and staff – repeated twice during the survey period • Daily Orders – link to item on ForceNet directing staff to survey • Chief Officer Vlogs in both Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service – repeated twice during the survey period 	<p>The survey potentially reached 3,279 people (2,778 police officers, staff and volunteers, and 501 firefighters and NFRS staff members), with a request that they further cascade</p>
<p>Key Internal Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northamptonshire Police Chief Officers • Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) Senior Fire Officers • Directors in the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) • OPFCC Customer Service team • Police Federation • Unison • Police Superintendents’ Association • Fire Brigades Union • Police contact centre should residents call in about it • Police Community Engagement Officers • Voice • Youth Commission • Youth Team 	<p>Email request to cascade to their members/contacts</p> <p>The Youth Team carried out a facilitated session with a group of young people and their responses were fed in to the survey</p>

<p>Mainstream media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two news releases were issued during the consultation, to all local and regional media across Northamptonshire • News release was sent to hyper local publications • The survey was trailed in the December edition of the PFCC newsletter and was the lead story on the January newsletter 	<p>The news release went to over 60 newsrooms (print and broadcast including the Northants Telegraph and BBC Radio Northampton), plus individual reporters and other local news sites.</p>
<p>Digital and Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter OPFCC account • Twitter NFRS account • Facebook OPFCC account • OPFCC Website views - 4 different pages / news stories • LinkedIn – OPFCC and NFRS 	<p>77,413 impressions 979 engagements</p> <p>13,351 impressions 142 engagements</p> <p>59,390 impressions 195 engagements 2910 clicks</p> <p>14,927 views</p> <p>OPFCC - 132 Impressions NFRS - 114 impressions</p>
<p>Paid for advertising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online with the Johnston Press series of newspapers (the website of every newspaper in Northamptonshire advertised the survey) 	<p>300,021 impressions 182 clicks</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Ads/ Youtube <p>Budget Survey published Dec 20 2021</p> <p>Budget reminder January 10 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook OPFCC account - Paid for (All Meta platforms) 	<p>135,000 impressions</p> <p>61,674 views on YouTube</p> <p>3.3% CTR from Youtube</p> <p>17,500 impressions</p> <p>7,575 views on Youtube</p> <p>4.4% CTR from Youtube</p> <p>43,126 reach</p> <p>898 engagement</p> <p>780 Clicks</p> <p>2.03% CTR</p>
<p>Targeted briefings and Forums</p> <p>Annual Parish Council Budget and Precept Briefing by PGCC, Chief Fire Officer, Chief Constable and S151 Officer and targeted survey</p> <p>Annual Police, Fire and Crime Panel Budget and Precept Workshop</p>	<p>274 Parish Council Clerks contacted to disseminate to all Parish Councils</p> <p>46 requested contact details</p> <p>14 attended</p> <p>4 targeted survey responses</p> <p>8 members attended</p>

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NCFRA 2022/23 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

2021/22 £'000		1.99%				
		£5				
		2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
14,934	Fire Fighters	15,309	15,598	15,903	16,214	16,532
3,284	Staff	3,619	3,687	3,757	3,851	3,948
95	Other Pension Costs	91	94	97	100	103
767	Other Employee Expenses	947	959	974	983	993
1,563	Estates	1,664	1,713	1,714	1,727	1,739
1,661	ICT	1,516	1,581	1,613	1,714	1,946
498	Vehicles	515	530	541	552	563
702	Equipment and Clothing	766	789	805	821	837
730	Other Non-Pay	816	749	1,099	1,174	1,113
(747)	Income	(714)	(731)	(746)	(758)	(770)
2,476	OPFCC/LGSS/ Fleet, Estates, Digital Services & Enabling Service	2,796	2,976	2,795	2,815	2,974
25,963	OPERATIONAL BUDGET	27,325	27,945	28,552	29,193	29,978
29	Capital Financing - MRP	179	351	428	529	625
68	Capital Financing - Interest	92	254	230	258	276
150	Capital Financing - RCCO	300	150	150	300	300
-	Transfer to Reserves	30	-	-	100	100
(950)	Transfer from Reserves	(484)	(280)	-	-	-
(703)	OTHER	117	475	808	1,187	1,301
-	New Investment Proposals	-	-	-	-	-
-	Savings identified	(350)	(964)	(1,093)	(1,112)	(1,131)
25,260	TOTAL	27,092	27,456	28,267	29,268	30,148
	Funding					
(2,814)	Top Up Grant	(2,814)	(2,814)	(2,814)	(2,814)	(2,814)
(1,186)	Pension Grant	(1,186)	(1,186)	(1,186)	(1,186)	(1,186)
(2,278)	Revenue Support Grant	(2,347)	(2,370)	(2,394)	(2,418)	(2,442)
(2,587)	Business Rates	(2,587)	(2,587)	(2,638)	(2,691)	(2,745)
(280)	Local Business Rates	(280)	(280)	(280)	(280)	(280)
(281)	S31 Grant - Compensation	(444)	(444)	(444)	(444)	(444)
-	One Off Special Grant	(372)	-	-	-	-
(224)	New Council Tax Grants	-	-	-	-	-
(15,763)	Precept	(17,231)	(17,837)	(18,511)	(19,209)	(19,934)
153	Collection Fund Surplus/ (Deficit)	169	62	-	-	-
(25,260)	TOTAL FUNDING	(27,092)	(27,456)	(28,267)	(29,042)	(29,845)
-	FUNDING (SURPLUS) / DEFICIT	-	-	-	226	303
	Impact of Potential Future Increase In Employers Pension Contributions					
-	ERs Pension increase cost	-	-	1,029	1,051	1,072
-	ERs Pension increase funded at 75%	-	-	(772)	(788)	(804)
-	FUNDING (SURPLUS) / DEFICIT excl. Pension ERs Funding	-	-	257	489	571
	Precept					
£63.20	Band D Council Tax	£68.20	£69.56	£70.94	£72.35	£73.79

Note: Totals may not sum due to roundings

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Section 25 Statement of the S151 Chief Finance Officer for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Authority:

“Working closely with the Force S151 Officer and the Joint Head of Finance, I have been assured by how the Joint Finance Team for Fire and Police have further refined and developed the Fire budget model from 2022/23. I am grateful for their hard work, scrutiny and challenge throughout this process and am assured by how they have continued to take forward and make improvements to it every year following the governance transfer.

The Chief Fire Officer and his Executive team have been fully involved in the budget discussions and in identifying and proposing a savings plan across the MTFP. I am grateful to him and his team for their engagement and commitment in this process.

I attended meetings with the Chief Fire Officer Team and Joint Head of Finance prior to and throughout the budget process and development of the capital programme, ensuring I have been fully briefed and informed and been party to all key assumptions and decisions. Assumptions included have been based on professional estimates, peer knowledge and advice and using where appropriate assumptions included in the business case. Where possible, I have aligned these with national Fire and technical colleagues.

At both meetings of the Accountability Board with the PFCC, the Joint Head of Finance and the Fire Chief officer team on the 14 December 2021 and the 11 January 2022, I attended as the S151 Officer to provide assurance that these factors have been considered. At those meetings and since that date, dialogue, scrutiny and challenge has continued where new factors or information have been highlighted, discussed and further work continues.

Since the date of the governance transfer, I have worked closely with the PFCC and Joint Head of Finance in setting out the financial challenges for Northamptonshire and requesting funding support. I am grateful too for the support, scrutiny and engagement of the Home Office and Ministers in considering these requests, together with the invaluable contributions from MPs, Councillors and Panel members in this process.

It is my recommendation that financially it is essential to take forward the £5 precept flexibility afforded to Northamptonshire for 2022/23. This will be built into the base budget and help provide a resilient position for the medium term. Whilst Northamptonshire Fire will still be funded relatively lower than its national peers, it’s revenue budget for 2022/23 will be around 20% higher than that transferred at the time of the governance change, and is supported by an adequate level of reserve and a funded capital programme.

However, there are still efficiency savings needed to ensure the budget is balanced and any transformation and investment requirements will need to be considered within the overall Fire funding envelope moving forwards. Plans and strategies are now in place and there is a provisional three year balanced budget which places NCFRA on a good basis. The volatility experienced in the first three years on the Fire revenue and capital budgets is reducing each

year and the governance structures in place better identify financial uncertainties and potential challenges at an earlier stage, enabling them to be considered in future plans.

Whilst the capital programme is approved and funded, and whilst some transformation is included, given the legacy investments within it, it is still a significant value, especially with regard to short life assets and as such there is an impact of both deliverability and financial cost on the revenue budget. Whilst the costs are included within the MTFP, any changes in specifications or slippage in timescales can have an impact in terms of cost and could affect the deliverability of other priorities within the programme. Therefore, it is essential that the programme is regularly reviewed; that proposed expenditure is taken forward on the basis of evidence based business cases and that delivery timescales are realistic, in full recognition of other competing priorities.

It is essential that the Chief Fire Officer and the Joint Head of Finance continue to work closely to ensure all pressures and challenges are identified at an early stage so they can be included within operational and financial plans. I will continue to support the Chief Fire Officer and the Joint Head of Finance in doing so.

The Internal Control Framework continues to improve, however, it is essential that compliance with procedures, policies and regulations continue to develop and embed across all the service. The first three years of Internal Audits identified a number of areas where policies and procedures are in place which have been developed and work is underway to embed them.

Some progress has been made and the Joint Head of Finance and I will continue to work with the Chief Fire Officer and Monitoring Officer to take these recommendations forward and ensure robust internal controls and assurances are in place, supported by an Internal Audit Plan; and contribute to Fire achieving Best Value by following procurement and purchasing policies and procedures and effective asset management arrangements; which meet operational requirements and stand up to external scrutiny.

Given the need to ensure and build stability and resilience, whilst some zero based operational pressures have been built into the budget model, any growth or changes will need to be accommodated from within the cash limited budget set for the year. I am assured by the commitment to the joint services work and the Joint Estates Strategy which has and will continue to assist in identifying future savings; but it is essential that disposals and activities are undertaken in a timely manner to enable benefits and savings to be realised.

I have reviewed the detailed calculations in arriving at the budget requirement and Council Tax precept and options and find these to be robust. I also have sought and received information from both Unitary Authorities in relation to taxbase and Council Tax deficits and I am grateful to all partners for their support in doing so.

I have highlighted some uncertainties within this report and the PFCC is aware of these and their potential impact and as such has ring fenced an allocation as a contingency within the revenue budget to mitigate risk. The PFCC has adequate levels of general and earmarked reserves (in particular the funding reserve) to mitigate any in year or medium term risks and unforeseen financial pressures.

The reserves position is much better than anticipated and general reserves are now at an adequate and sustainable level. Whilst earmarked reserves are currently sufficient, there are plans in place to use most of them, therefore, it is prudent to take opportunities to rebuild them and ensure there are optimum levels available to smooth unforeseen funding gaps, meet budget challenges, or to invest or meet one off pressures.

The MTFP does require efficiencies to be made to ensure the budget can be balanced across the medium term. I am assured that the Chief Fire Officer has already identified a plan and will continue to support the PFCC in ensuring the Chief Fire Officer and Joint Head of Finance provide regular updates to the Accountability Board to ensure that progress can be monitored and efficiencies realised in line with timescales.

The sections in this report on “Future Risks, Challenges and Uncertainties”, “Pensions” and the “MTFP” highlight significant unknown issues moving forwards in the medium term. Where possible forecasts and estimates are included within the MTFP and all opportunities for government funding in particular in relation to any potential pension impact will be pursued to ensure any financial impact on NCFRA is minimised.

The precept flexibility if taken will enable a balanced budget to be achieved for 2022/23 and in principle the two following years. This would not be possible at a 1.99% increase. The landscape after 2023/24 is less certain and it is reasonable to assume that the operational and financial challenges will continue and these are reflected as best estimates in the MTFP.

I conclude, therefore, that the budget for 2022/23:

- 1. Has been prepared on a robust basis, and*
- 2. In 2022/23, the budget is balanced with an identified and agreed efficiency savings plan in place. Furthermore there are provisional balanced budgets for 2023/24 and 2024/25.*
- 3. General reserves are adequate and sufficient to meet essential risks and challenges and earmarked reserves will continue to be built where it is appropriate and prudent to do so.*
- 4. The Fire revenue budget and reserves are now more resilient and it is important that the budget is managed within the funding envelope each year and earmarked reserves are used where appropriate to support unforeseen issues or additional investment, not to balance the annual budget.*
- 5. The future financial landscape is uncertain and whilst the MTFP is balanced for three years, it does require the identified efficiencies to be taken forward. The MTFP will continue to be kept under regular review as the efficiency savings plan progresses.”*

Helen King
Section 151 and Chief Finance Officer
Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COMMISSIONER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY RESERVES STRATEGY – UPDATED JANUARY 2022

1. Reserves Strategy

- 1.1. Reserves are a key part of medium-term financial planning – other components include revenue spending plans, income forecasts, potential liabilities, capital investment plans, borrowing and council tax levels. Decisions on these are inter-linked. Consequently, some organisations will need to maintain reserves at higher levels than others.
- 1.2 All publicly funded organisations should have a reserves strategy to demonstrate transparency and accountability, to comply with best practice financial management and to justify the levels of reserves held.
- 1.3 The PFCC maintains reserves to provide a measure of protection against risk. Without this protection, any unforeseen expenditure would have to be met either by increases in Council Tax or immediate savings (potentially through reductions in service levels).
- 1.4 The term "reserves" has a variety of technical and everyday meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. For the purposes of this strategy it is taken to mean funds set-aside at the PFCC's discretion for general or specific future purposes.
- 1.5 Reserves are required to protect and enhance the financial viability and in particular:
 - To maintain a degree of in-year financial flexibility;
 - To enable the PFCC to deal with unforeseen circumstances and incidents;
 - To set aside monies to fund major developments in future years;
 - To enable the PFCC to invest to transform and achieve improved service effectiveness and efficiency;
 - To set aside sums for known and potential liabilities;
 - To provide an operational contingency at service level.

1.6 Reserves should not be held to fund ongoing revenue expenditure as this is unsustainable in the long term; however, they may be important in smoothing a major financial imbalance (revenue or capital) over a longer timescale. CIPFA guidance LAAP 99 published July 2014 states:

“Balancing the annual budget by drawing on general reserves may be viewed as a legitimate short-term option. However, it is not normally prudent for reserves to be deployed to finance recurrent expenditure. CIPFA has commented that Councils should be particularly wary about using one off reserves to deal with shortfalls in current funding. Where such action is to be taken, this should be made explicit, and an explanation given as to how such expenditure will be funded in the medium to long term”

1.7 The Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (NCFRA) was established on the 1 January 2019 with no transfer of reserves agreed as part of the business case.

1.8 Agreement was reached for any Fire Operational budget underspend achieved between 1 April 2018 and 31 December 2018 to transfer to NCFRA as part of the balance sheet disaggregation. This reserves strategy reflects the final position, which was higher than originally envisaged.

1.9 The strategy was updated in the summer of 2021, following the 2020/21 outturn and this is the fifth review of the reserves strategy for NCFRA. It is produced at the end of the three year financial stability period set out in the governance transfer and reflects the PFCC’s stated intention to build reserves over the short term to ensure a stable financial position for NCFRA moving forwards.

1.10 However, the financial impact of the COVID pandemic has been detrimental to the financial position for NCFRA with the main impact from the reduction on council tax and business rate receipts, compared to previous years and the future forecasts.

1.11 Despite this, the reserve strategy reflects that intention has now been met and reserves are now at an adequate position.

1.12 The more positive reserves position has been influenced by the PFCC representation to the Fire Minister and the Home Office in 2020 where the Home Office awarded an additional £1m to NCFRA to help provide resilience in reserves. This additional funding was transferred to the General Reserve.

1.13 The reserves strategy assumes that the Medium Term Financial Plan [MTFP] will be broadly balanced across the five year planning period.

1.14 This is recognised as a risk as when taking into account the projected shortfalls on the MTFP from 2025/26 where savings will need to be achieved to facilitate balancing the budget.

1.15 If savings cannot bridge the full gap, whilst not preferred, based on current estimates, reserves can balance the gap over the remainder of the five year MTFP.

- 1.16 Due to the lack of investment over many years during the County Council Governance, NCFRA have identified an increasing capital programme requirement. This is financially significant, therefore, it is continually reviewed to ensure it is deliverable and affordable.
- 1.17 Following these reviews, the capital programme has been built into the MTFP; however, given the significant level of short-life assets such as ICT and operational equipment in the plan, the costs still place a challenge on the revenue budget.
- 1.18 All efforts to fund short life assets differently are explored and the PFCC has made representation to the Home Office seeking funding to support historic capital programme investment. Any funding would be directed to funding the short life assets in the most appropriate way to reduce financing costs of the programme.
- 1.19 Reserves should reflect the agreed financial strategy and should represent the quantified impact of risks and opportunities over the planning period, weighted for their probability.

2. National Guidance and Compliance with Home Office Guidance

- 2.1 The 2014, CIPFA guidance included the establishment and maintenance of local authority reserves and balances, setting out the key factors that should be taken into account locally in making an assessment of the appropriate level of reserves and balances to be held. This is applicable to Police and Fire corporation soles.
- 2.2 On 31 March 2018, the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service published new guidance on the information that each PFCC must publish in terms of Police Reserves. This guidance has been adopted for NCFRA to ensure consistency and once the precept has been set following the Police, Fire and Crime Panel, the NCFRA reserves strategy is available on the PFCC website.
- 2.3 One of the key requirements is that the information on each reserve should make clear how much of the funding falls into each of the following three categories:
- Funding for planned expenditure on projects and programmes over the period of the current medium term financial plan.
 - Funding for specific projects and programmes beyond the current planning period.
 - As a general contingency to meet other expenditure needs held in accordance with sound principles of good financial management.

- 2.4 This information is summarised across the Home Office headings as at 31/3/2022, together with the current proposed use of reserves held at that date as follows:

Reserve	Actual Balance as at 31/3/2022	Additional Contributions to 24/25	Planned Expenditure on Projects and Programmes over the next 3 years (22/23-24/25)	Additional Contributions from 25/26	Funding for Specific projects and Programmes Beyond 2024/25	Held as a general Reserve, Contingency or Resource to meet other expenditure or pressures
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
General	2.000	-	-	-	-	2.000
Earmarked:						
Insurance	0.250	-	-	-	-	0.250
Operational Equipment	0.030	0.030	0.060	-	-	-
Earmarked Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-
Funding	0.441	-	0.441	-	-	-
Transformation	0.558	-	0.506	0.200	-	0.252
Capital Receipts	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital and ESN Reserve	0.387	-	0.326	-	-	0.061
S106 Developer Contributions	0.362	-	0.305	-	0.050	0.007
Capital Grants Unapplied	0.405	0.369	0.774	-	-	-
Total Earmarked	2.433	0.399	2.412	-	0.050	0.570
Total Reserves	4.433	0.399	2.412	-	0.050	2.570

3. General Reserve

- 3.1 In order to assess the adequacy of the unallocated general reserve when setting the budget, the PFCC, on the advice of the Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer), should take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the authority. This assessment of risk should include external risks, as well as internal risks, for example the ability to deliver planned efficiency savings.
- 3.2 Whilst there is no prescribed level of reserves that PFCCs should hold; it is influenced by individual discretion, local circumstances, advice from external auditors, risk management arrangements and risk appetite.
- 3.3 CIPFA guidance in LAAP Bulletin 99 (2014) specifically cautions against prescriptive national guidance for a minimum or maximum level of reserves and states:

“The many factors involved when considering appropriate levels of reserves can only be assessed properly at a local level. A considerable degree of professional judgement is required. The chief finance officer may choose to express advice on the level of balances in cash and/or as a percentage of budget (to aid understanding) so long as that advice is tailored to the circumstances of the authority”

3.4 However, the minimum level of reserves may be set for the authority by the Ministers in England and Wales where an authority doesn't act prudently, disregards the advice of its chief finance officer or is heading for financial difficulties. LAAP Bulletin 99 (2014) specifies that minimum level of reserves can be imposed on specific circumstances:

“Minimum level of reserves will only be imposed where an authority is not following best financial practice”

3.5 CIPFA indicate a general reserve level is typically between 2% and 3% of net budget requirement and this is consistent with the results of a survey by the PACCTS Technical Support Team where the majority of PCCs (and PFCCs) across the country reporting a Strategy of holding minimum general reserves at 3% net revenue expenditure, average general reserve levels are nearer 5%.

3.6 In Fire, there are even higher level of reserves held nationally and recent Home Office publications still reflect that NCFRA have the lowest level of reserves per core spending power across all Fire and Rescue Authorities in England and Wales.

3.7 The PFCC wishes to hold an adequate but not excessive level of reserve and in determining this position, Annexe 1 outlines how NCFRA complies with the 7 key CIPFA principles which can be used to assess the adequacy of reserves.

3.8 Given that NCFRA are required to meet the first 1% of any special grant requirement and the NCFRA was established without the transfer of any reserves, it remains prudent to hold reserves at a reasonable level to provide a realistic and comfortable buffer to meet any eventualities, such as potential industrial action.

3.9 Considering the impact of the COVID pandemic on the vast majority of NCFRA's funding streams, it is essential to ensure there are sufficient reserves set aside to meet any volatility in funding streams. In 2020/21 a funding reserve was set up for this purpose.

3.10 Given the minimal levels of earmarked reserves held; the special grant requirement; the significant potential requirements of the capital programme; the relative size of the NCFRA revenue budget; the impact of the COVID pandemic on funding receipts; together with the budget volatility experienced by NCFRA in its financial stability period, NCFRA can be disproportionately impacted by any of these changes. This would result in significant unplanned in-year changes to be required and it is imperative that the General Reserve is held at a sufficient level to mitigate such financial risks alongside any earmarked reserves.

3.11 Whilst good progress had already been made, the allocation of funding from the Home Office has enabled NCFRA to build and provide resilience in general reserves. As such, given this opportunity, the Chief Finance Officer advises that it would be prudent to maintain a sustainable and resilient level of general reserves at £2.0m or 5% (whichever is the higher).

- 3.12 This approach enables 1% to be available for any significant incidents which are below the threshold which can be claimed under the Bellwin Scheme, together with funding set aside to meet unexpected or unforeseen other financial risks which may arise.
- 3.13 Currently, the general reserve also holds the financial risk of any potential industrial action requirements and would be the reserve used in such eventualities. In time, a separate reserve may be considered.
- 3.14 It is prudent to have in place separate earmarked reserves to mitigate year on year funding variations and take forward transformation priorities.
- 3.15 The Home Office contribution has enabled the General Reserves to be stabilised and the planned level of reserves equate to the following (at forecast MTFP budget levels):
- 2022/23 £2.000m (7.4% sustainable level maintained)
 - 2023/24 £2.000m (7.3% sustainable level maintained)
 - 2024/25 £2.000m (7.1% sustainable level maintained)
 - 2025/26 £2.000m (6.9% sustainable level maintained)
 - 2026/27 £2.000m (6.7% sustainable level maintained)
- 3.16 As NCFRA also have significant operational pressures, it is essential to hold a sufficient level of general reserves to ensure a stable financial basis for the authority moving forwards.
- 3.17 These levels will be reviewed on a regular basis and opportunities to set aside earmarked reserves to support targeted expenditure and investment, taken where appropriate.

4. Earmarked Reserves

- 4.1 In addition to the General reserve, the PFCC holds several reserves which are earmarked for specific purposes.
- 4.2 Each earmarked reserve as at 31/3/2022, together with an outline of its specific purpose is attached at Annexe 2.
- 4.3 At the 31/3/2022, it is estimated that the PFCC will hold **£2.433m** in Earmarked Reserves which are as follows:

Insurance £0.250m – this reserve needs to be established to hold funds set aside where considered prudent for Civil Claims (Public and Employer liability) in line with professional advice. This advice has identified a reserve requirement of £0.250m and will be reviewed regularly.

Operational Equipment £0.030m – given the age and condition of equipment transferred as part of the governance transfer, an annual operational equipment reserve contribution was established to smooth the impact and mitigate the costs of essential operational equipment replacement. This will be utilised in 2023/24 and in a move to rationale the number of reserves held, the transformation and replacement reserve will be used as needed thereafter.

Funding Reserve £0.441m - the impact of the COVID pandemic on future council tax and business rates receipts has highlighted the importance of a reserve to mitigate such eventualities. Whilst it is assumed that the reserve will be fully utilised in 2022/23, where appropriate, opportunities will be taken to allocate additional funding above those budgeted in any one year to this reserve to assist in smoothing funding volatility on the revenue budget in future years.

Transformation Reserve £0.558m – This reserve assists in meeting any one-off investments or smoothing the implementation of transformative or investment requirements on the revenue budget.

Capital Reserves and Unapplied Capital Grants £1.154m – these relate to S106 Developer contributions which will be used in accordance with the conditions of the award, capital receipts, and an ESN/Capital Reserve has been established to mitigate the future impact of ESN, together with Capital Grants unapplied brought forward.

4.4 The actual balance and forecast balance on the reserves, taking into account a prudent estimate of timings for proposals which are currently being developed is detailed within Annexe 3.

5. Provisions

5.1 The CIPFA Statement of Recommended Practice is prescriptive about when provisions are required (and when they are not permitted). Basically, a provision must be established for any material liabilities of uncertain timings or amount, to be settled by the transfer of economic benefits.

5.2 Northamptonshire establish provisions as appropriate and review as part of the closedown process each year. There are currently no material provisions established.

6. Procedures for management and control

6.1 Any drawdown from Reserves is subject to the approval of the PFCC, on advice from the PFCC's Chief Finance Officer (CFO, S151) or the deputy S151; under the delegated authority of the OPFCC CFO.

6.2 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the S151 officer to report annually on the adequacy of the reserves and this is undertaken within the Section 25 statement on the robustness of the estimates used for the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves and considered at the Police, Fire and Crime Panel alongside the budget and precept.

6.3 The Strategy will be reviewed at least annually by the OPFCC CFO as part of the Budget and Precept process and where there are material changes, the Reserve Strategy will also be updated following the closure of accounts.

Northamptonshire Compliance with the 7 Key CIPFA Principles to assess the adequacy of reserves

Budget Assumptions (CIPFA Principles)	2022/23 Situation in Northamptonshire
The treatment of inflation and interest rates	<p>NCFRA makes full and appropriate provision for pay and price increases, informed by benchmarking with peers. It is recognised that any 1% variation on Pay inflation equates to circa £190K. There is a pay and inflation contingency held by the PFCC to mitigate such eventualities.</p> <p>An informed assessment is made in the Treasury Management Strategy of interest rate movements.</p> <p>All income and expenditure in the budget is prepared and published at outturn prices.</p>
Estimates of the level and timing of capital receipts	<p>NCFRA has reviewed its estates strategy as a fundamental part of the capital programme and has made assumptions of future capital receipts.</p> <p>The capital programme considerations require significant investment and until this has been concluded, only essential capital investment has been approved. The achievement of capital receipts in line with the proposed timings is essential to ensuring that prioritised capital investments can be progressed.</p>
The treatment of demand led pressures	<p>NCFRA is required to operate and manage within its annual budget allocation.</p> <p>All budgets except Firefighters are devolved and managed by trained budget holders. The Firefighters budget is managed by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer in conjunction with the Chief Fire Officer and Head of Joint Finance.</p> <p>On an exceptional basis, once a stable position has been established for reserves, agreement may be sought from the PFCC to utilise carry forwards to meet one off demand led pressures. Additionally, demand led pressures are scrutinised and built into the budget set by the PFCC.</p> <p>NCFRA have historically identified savings over the years to manage within a cash limited budget provided by NCC. However, depending on funding availability, the PFCC will support investment in areas that reduce demand or which</p>

	<p>increase efficiency/capacity to deal with demand.</p> <p>General reserves are only used as a last resort to manage and fund demand led pressures.</p>
<p>The treatment of Planned Efficiency Savings/Productivity Gains</p>	<p>NCFRA met all financial savings and challenges required by NCC and the PFCC in previous years.</p> <p>In the years post transfer, NCFRA has underspent each year, often from one off benefits of grants provided towards year end of the slippage in timing of activities and plans and used the opportunity to increase reserves as a result.</p> <p>There is a savings plan aligned to the MTFP and any identified savings and efficiencies from service or governance transfers will be monitored and reviewed regularly by the service and are only included as achieved in budgets when confirmed and verified.</p>
<p>The financial risks inherent in any significant new funding partnerships, collaboration, major outsourcing arrangements or major capital developments.</p>	<p>The financial consequences of partnership collaboration working, outsourcing arrangements or capital investment will be reported to the PFCC as part of the medium term planning process. Where relevant, any additional costs are incorporated into the annual revenue budget and/or capital programme.</p> <p>There is a risk that partners will withdraw funding as their own budgets are squeezed, or that the continued viability of private sector commercial partners will be exposed to risk in the face of an economic recession.</p>
<p>The availability of reserves, government grants and other funds to deal with major contingencies and the adequacy of provisions.</p>	<p>NCFRA have built and continue to build appropriate reserves from a zero base to have available a stable range of earmarked reserves and provisions to meet specific expenditure items. Their use and balances are detailed in the attached appendix.</p> <p>NCFRA maintain an insurance reserve, the adequacy of which is reviewed annually and monitored in detail by the legal services insurance advisors.</p> <p>NCFRA have in place a General Reserve to cover any major unforeseen circumstances, supported by earmarked reserves where appropriate to meet targeted investment in a planned manner which does not disproportionately impact on the revenue budget each year.</p>

	<p>Given the COVID pandemic, the PFCC has established a funding reserve to mitigate the impact of reduced council and business rate receipts on the revenue budget.</p>
<p>The general financial climate to which the Authority is subject</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the financial climate will be challenging and the medium term financial plan will reflect the “best estimate” of future inflation rates and increases in government grants and contributions.</p>

**RESERVES OF THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COMMISSIONER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
2022/23 to 2026/27**

	Rationale	How and when used	Level	Management and control	Risk	Review
GENERAL RESERVE	<p>To maintain a degree of in-year financial flexibility;</p> <p>To enable NCFRA to deal with unforeseen circumstances and incidents;</p> <p>To manage and meet financial risks of any industrial action requirements,</p> <p>To set aside sums for known and potential liabilities;</p> <p>To provide an operational contingency at service level.</p>	<p>To meet exceptional spending needs or overspends which are unable to be otherwise financed at the year end.</p> <p>To smooth the profile of revenue over a medium term financial period</p> <p>To allow higher spending without raising council tax on a one-off basis</p>	<p>To maintain a sustainable level of £2.0m of 5% (whichever is the higher)</p>	<p>PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO</p>	<p>May be inadequate for major catastrophe, which could jeopardise financial status and reputation of NCFRA.</p> <p>The PFCC would have recourse to discretionary special grant if costs exceed 1% of budget or CLG Bellwin scheme for natural disasters</p> <p>There is sufficient reserve to meet other risks in addition to the Bellwin threshold.</p>	<p>Annual</p>
EARMARKED - INSURANCE	<p>To cover the potential and contingent liabilities of uninsured risks as assessed annually by our insurers based on claims outstanding.</p>	<p>Balance will increase or reduce annually dependent on the NCFRA outstanding claims record.</p> <p>Established in 2018/19 following advice from legal service advisors.</p>	<p>Will vary according to annual risk assessment</p>	<p>PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO</p>	<p>If no reserve is held the NCFRA is potentially open to significant excess and claims payments in year beyond available revenue budgets.</p> <p>Assessment by insurers needs to be realistic not unduly pessimistic.</p>	<p>Annual</p>

	Rationale	How and when used	Level	Management and control	Risk	Review
EARMARKED – OPERATIONAL EQUIPMENT	To smooth the impact on the revenue budget of lower value, high volume essential operational equipment in conjunction with the operational equipment budget already included within the overall revenue budget.	Balance will increase or reduce annually dependent on the workforce planning requirements. From 2022/23 reserve will be combined with Transformation Reserve	Will vary according to annual risk assessment	PFCC, on advice from PFCC CFO	If no reserve is held NCFRA are required to meet the timing and phasing of replacing all essential equipment from the annual revenue budget.	Annual
EARMARKED – FUNDING	To smooth the impact of fluctuations in the funding receipts from council tax and business rates and	Balance will increase or decrease annually, dependent on council tax and business rate receipts.	Will vary according to annual risk assessment.	PFCC, on advice from CFO	If no reserve is held, NCFRA are required to balance the budget through savings and reserves. This reserve enables short term fluctuations to be managed more smoothly.	Annual
EARMARKED TRANSFORMATION RESERVE	To build and maintain a reserve sufficient to support invest to save initiatives and provide initial funding to set up transformational activities.	To undertake initiatives and transformation without needing to use the annual operational budget.	Will vary according to activities.	PFCC, on advice from PCC CFO	If no reserve is held, PFCC could find it difficult to invest in transformational activities or savings would have to be made from operational budgets before any initiatives could be undertaken.	Annual
EARMARKED - CAPITAL RECEIPTS	From sales of equipment above the capital de-minimis level and used to support the capital programme funding requirements.	Used to support funding the capital programme to minimise the cost of external borrowing on NCFRA and the taxpayer.	Will vary according to activities.	PFCC, on advice from PCC CFO	The reserve is held when equipment over a certain value is sold. If no reserve is held, external borrowing costs may be higher.	Annual
EARMARKED – CAPITAL AND ESN	To meet capital and ESN capital costs	Used to support funding the capital programme to minimise the cost of external borrowing on NCFRA and the taxpayer.	Will vary according to activities.	PFCC, on advice from PCC CFO	If no reserve is held, external borrowing costs may be higher.	Annual
EARMARKED – S106 RESERVE	To meet the additional infrastructure and other requirements of new developments.	To implement new infrastructure required as a result of developments without needing to use the annual operational budget.	Will vary according to activities.	PFCC, on advice from PCC CFO	If no reserve is held, PFCC could find it difficult to invest in new infrastructure requirements resulting from the developments.	Annual

	Rationale	How and when used	Level	Management and control	Risk	Review
EARMARKED - CAPITAL GRANTS UNAPPLIED	Unapplied grants brought forward from the Governance Transfer with Northamptonshire County Council.	Used to support funding in accordance with the grant requirements to minimise the cost of external borrowing on NCFRA and the taxpayer if purchased from capital.	Will vary according to activities.	PFCC, on advice from PCC CFO	If no reserve is held, external borrowing costs may be higher.	Annual

Summary of Reserves 2021/22 to 2026/2027

	Balance at 31 March 2021 £m	Balance at 31 March 2022 £m	Balance at 31 March 2023 £m	Balance at 31 March 2024 £m	Balance at 31 March 2025 £m	Balance at 31 March 2026 £m	Balance at 31 March 2027 £m
<u>Held to meet budgetary risks</u>							
Insurance	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250
Operational Equipment	0.030	0.030	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	0.280	0.280	0.310	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250
<u>Held to support the medium term budget</u>							
Earmarked Funding	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Funding Reserve	0.500	0.441	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	0.599	0.441	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
<u>Held to facilitate change programmes</u>							
Transformation Reserve	0.400	0.558	0.226	0.052	0.052	0.152	0.252
	0.400	0.558	0.226	0.052	0.052	0.152	0.252
<u>Committed to future capital programmes</u>							
Capital Receipts	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Capital and ESN Reserve	0.387	0.387	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061
S106 Developer Contributions	0.255	0.362	0.157	0.107	0.057	0.007	0.007
Capital Grants Unapplied	0.551	0.405	0.774	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	1.193	1.154	0.992	0.168	0.118	0.068	0.068
Total Earmarked Reserves	2.472	2.433	1.528	0.470	0.420	0.470	0.570
General Fund	3.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
Total Reserves	5.472	4.433	3.528	2.470	2.420	2.470	2.570

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

3 FEBRUARY 2022

Report Title	Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Work Programme 2021/22
Report Author	James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers		
West MO (for West and joint papers)	Catherine Whitehead	26/01/2022
West S151 (for West and joint papers)	Martin Henry	26/01/2022

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Outline Work Programme 2021/22

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to enable the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel to review progress with the development and delivery of its 2021/22 work programme.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The report invites the Panel to review the latest version of its outline work programme for 2021/22 and to endorse this subject to any changes that the Panel considers to be necessary.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel endorses its outline work programme for 2021/22, subject to any changes that the Panel considers to be necessary.
- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendations are intended to support the effective operation of the Panel during 2021/22 and the delivery of its statutory responsibilities.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 The Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Policing & Crime Act 2017 and supporting legislation give various specific responsibilities to the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel (“the Panel”). These are principally as follows:
- Scrutinising and reporting on the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC)’s proposed Police and Fire & Rescue precepts
 - Scrutinising and reporting on the PFCC’s Police & Crime Plan and Fire & Rescue Plan
 - Scrutinising and reporting on the PFCC’s Annual Report on the delivery of Police & Crime Plan objectives and on the annual Fire & Rescue Statement reporting compliance with the Fire & Rescue National Framework
 - Scrutinising and reporting on proposed appointments by the PFCC to certain positions (: Deputy PFCC; Chief Executive; Chief Finance Officer; Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police; and Chief Fire Officer of Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service)
 - Dealing with complaints from members of the public about the conduct of the PFCC.
- 4.2 In addition, the legislation referred to in paragraph 4.1 above gives the Panel the general responsibility to review and scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the PFCC in connection with the discharge of his functions and to make reports or recommendations to the PFCC with respect to these matters. The Panel is required to carry out its role with a view to supporting the PFCC in effectively exercising his functions.
- 4.3 It is standard practice for the Panel to agree a work programme that provides a framework within which it carries out its functions and the practical tasks these involve. The work programme is made up of a combination of statutory and discretionary scrutiny work; matters relating to the operation of the Panel; and any supporting activities such as briefings or training. The work programme covers a rolling 12-month period. The work programme is considered at the first Panel meeting in the municipal year. It is then kept under regular review by the Panel and modified or updated as necessary, with a view to ensuring that it is focussed on the aim of using available capacity to best effect.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 The Panel considered its outline work programme at its meeting on 17th June 2021 and identified items of business that it wished to consider during the year ahead alongside its mandatory tasks. The resulting outline work programme is included with this report (at Appendix A).
- 5.2 The work programme should not be seen as fixed and it is open to the Panel to review and modify it at any time as the municipal year progresses. The work programme can be informed by input from a range of sources, including suggestions from individual Panel members and from the PFCC. The Panel should consider suggested business from all sources on its merits, with a view to maintaining a work programme that reflects the Panel’s remit, has the support of Panel members, is realistically deliverable within available resources and has the potential to produce the most worthwhile outcomes.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 There are no specific resources or financial implications associated with this report. The normal operation of the Panel is supported by grant funding that the Panel's host authority can claim from the Home Office for the purpose of maintaining a panel for the Northamptonshire Police area.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposal.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 The Panel should ensure that its work programme and operating arrangements enable it to carry out its statutory role and functions effectively. Factors that might represent a risk to this could include setting a work programme that was unfocussed, that included too much business to be realistically deliverable, or that was not sufficiently flexible. These risks should be mitigated by the Panel reviewing its work programme and any associated matters at each of its normal meetings during the municipal year. This will enable the Panel to consider any changes to existing arrangements that may seem necessary, with a view to ensuring that the work programme and the specific activities contained within it remain deliverable within the Panel's overall capacity and the resources available to support it.

7. Background Papers

Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011

Policing & Crime Act 2017

Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Rules of Procedure

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Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel – Outline Work Programme 2021/22

MEETING DATE	STATUTORY BUSINESS	DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS	BUSINESS RELATING TO PANEL OPERATION	OTHER BUSINESS
3 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PFCC’s proposed Police precept and budget for 2022/23 - PFCC’s proposed Fire & Rescue precept and budget for 2022/23 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work programme - 2022/23 meeting dates 	
17 February 2022 (Reserve meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PFCC’s revised Police precept and budget for 2022/23 [if required] and/or - PFCC’s revised Fire & Rescue precept and budget for 2022/23 [if required] 			
14 April 2022		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PFCC’s Delivery updates - PFCC’s Budget updates - Priorities in the county with regard to managing fire safety risks in residential properties, including risks associated with houses in multiple occupation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work programme - Complaints and conduct matters update 	

MEETING DATE	STATUTORY BUSINESS	DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS	BUSINESS RELATING TO PANEL OPERATION	OTHER BUSINESS
Meeting #1 2022/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PFCC's Annual Report on Policing for 2021/22 - PFCC's Fire & Rescue Statement for 2021/22 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appointment of Panel Chair and Deputy Chair - Work programme - Appointment of Complaints Sub Committee members 	
Meeting #2 2022/23		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PFCC's Delivery updates - PFCC's Budget updates - Joint Independent Audit Committee Annual Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work programme - Complaints and conduct matters update 	
Meeting #3 2022/23		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PFCC's Delivery updates - PFCC's Budget updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work programme 	

Additional work programme topics to be scheduled

1. The Panel has requested to receive a report on action being taken in Northamptonshire to respond to the outcomes of the Kerslake Report and the Public Inquiry into the Manchester Arena terror attack.
2. The Panel has identified the involvement of children and young people in crime and anti-social behaviour in Northamptonshire as a potential topic for scrutiny as part of its future work programme, subject to further consideration of the practicalities involved.

Task-and-finish work

1. A workshop session open to all Panel members on the 2021/22 Police and Fire & Rescue budget positions.

This session was held on 30th November 2021.

2. A workshop session open to all Panel members in January 2022 on the development of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC)'s proposed precepts, to include separate sections on Police and Fire & Rescue.

This session was held on 19th January 2022.

Briefings / Training

1. Two briefing sessions open to all Panel members with the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer on their respective service's priorities and challenges, to take place in venues appropriate to the subject matter.
2. A visit to Darby House for all Panel members.

These sessions were due to be held on 22nd November 2021 but had to be postponed due to unforeseen circumstances affecting availability. A new date for the sessions needs to be identified.

Background Information

(A) Statutory Business

PFCC's Annual Report and Fire & Rescue Statement – The PFCC is required to produce an Annual Report on the exercise of the PFCC's police and crime functions during the previous financial year and the progress made in meeting objectives set out in the PFCC's Police & Crime Plan. The PFCC is also required to publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the priorities set out in the Fire & Rescue National Framework for England. The Panel must review and report on both the Annual Report and Fire & Rescue Statement as soon as practicable after they are received.

PFCC's proposed Police and Fire & Rescue precepts – The PFCC's proposed precepts must be reviewed and reported on by the Panel before they can be issued. The Panel has the power to veto a proposed precept, in which case the PFCC is required to produce a revised proposal that must also be reviewed by the Panel at the reserve meeting included in the outline work programme (if the Panel does not veto either of the proposed precepts the reserve meeting will not be held). The steps involved in this process must take place by specific deadlines set in legislation.

PFCC's Police & Crime Plan and Fire & Rescue Plan – The PFCC is required to issue a Police & Crime Plan setting out his police and crime objectives and associated matters during the financial year following an election. The PFCC is also required to issue a Fire & Rescue Plan setting out strategic priorities and objectives 'shortly after the PFCC takes office'. In both cases, proposed plans must be reviewed and reported on by the Panel. These matters are currently listed provisionally in the work programme to reflect that the timing may vary.

(B) Discretionary Business

PFCC's Delivery Updates – These are two regular reports setting out actions by the PFCC supporting progress towards the delivery of the strategic outcomes set out in his Police & Crime Plan and in his Fire & Rescue Plan. The Delivery Updates also include contextual information about Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service performance.

PFCC's Budget Updates – These are two regular reports setting out the latest in-year position for the budgets for policing and the Office of the PFCC and for the budget for the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

3 FEBRUARY 2022

Report Title	Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel meeting dates for 2022/23
Report Author	James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers		
West MO (for West and joint papers)	Catherine Whitehead	26/01/2022
West S151 (for West and joint papers)	Martin Henry	26/01/2022

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to enable the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel to agree its meeting dates for the 2022/23 civic year.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The report invites the Panel to consider a proposed schedule of meeting dates for 2022/23 and to agree this subject to any changes that the Panel considers to be necessary.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel agrees the following meeting dates for 2022/23:
- 23rd June 2022
 - 8th September 2022
 - 1st December 2022
 - 2nd February 2023

- 16th February 2023 (Reserve)
- 20th April 2023

All meetings to start at 1.00pm. All meetings to take place at local authority venues in Northampton.

- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendations are intended to support the effective operation of the Panel during 2022/23 and the delivery of its statutory responsibilities.

4. Report Background

4.1 The Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Policing & Crime Act 2017 and supporting legislation give various specific responsibilities to the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel (“the Panel”). These are principally as follows:

- Scrutinising and reporting on the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC)’s proposed Police and Fire & Rescue precepts
- Scrutinising and reporting on the PFCC’s Police & Crime Plan and Fire & Rescue Plan
- Scrutinising and reporting on the PFCC’s Annual Report on the delivery of Police & Crime Plan objectives and on the annual Fire & Rescue Statement reporting compliance with the Fire & Rescue National Framework
- Scrutinising and reporting on proposed appointments by the PFCC to certain positions (: Deputy PFCC; Chief Executive; Chief Finance Officer; Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police; and Chief Fire Officer of Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service)
- Dealing with complaints from members of the public about the conduct of the PFCC.

4.2 In addition, the legislation referred to in paragraph 4.1 above gives the Panel the general responsibility to review and scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the PFCC in connection with the discharge of his functions and to make reports or recommendations to the PFCC with respect to these matters. The Panel is required to carry out its role with a view to supporting the PFCC in effectively exercising his functions.

4.3 It is good practice for the Panel to agree an annual schedule of meetings before the start of the relevant civic year. This assists with the planning and delivery of the tasks that the Panel is required or chooses to undertake and therefore supports the Panel in carrying out its formal responsibilities as effectively as possible.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1 The Panel Secretariat has taken account of various factors in drawing up the proposed meeting dates and associated arrangements set out in paragraph 3.1 above, as follows:

- The proposed scheduling of Panel meetings through the civic year, the day of the week used and the start time for meetings reflects previous practice both before and after local government reorganisation in Northamptonshire.
- The proposed meeting dates seek to take account of local authority meetings in Northamptonshire and other relevant events and avoid clashes as far as possible.

- The dates for the meetings in February 2023 reflect the statutory requirements on the Panel concerning scrutiny of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner’s proposed policing and Fire & Rescue precepts: the Panel must scrutinise and make a report on the proposed precepts by 8th February and, if necessary following a veto of the proposed precepts, scrutinise and make a report on revised precepts by 22nd February.
- The Panel agreed at its meeting on 9th September 2021 that local authority venues in Northampton should be the normal location for future meetings. The Panel considered that this was most conducive to supporting its stated priorities relating to meetings, which were a location that offered the ability to webcast and that was central in Northamptonshire and accessible to participants.

5.2 It is open to the Panel to consider amending the proposed schedule should it identify the need to do so at this point. The Panel will also be able to maintain an overview of its meeting schedule as it moves through 2022/23 and to respond to any issues that arise that may require it to consider amending planned meeting dates.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 There are no specific resources or financial implications associated with this report. The normal operation of the Panel is supported by grant funding that the Panel’s host authority can claim from the Home Office for the purpose of maintaining a panel for the Northamptonshire Police area.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposal.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 The Panel should ensure that it agrees meeting dates for 2022/23 that can be delivered within available resources and that will enable it to carry out its role. It is proposed that the prospective meeting dates set out in this report do not involve any specific risks in this regard, as they represent a realistic schedule of meetings for 2022/23 that builds on previous practice and that reflects priorities that the Panel has identified.

7. Background Papers

Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011

Policing & Crime Act 2017

Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Rules of Procedure

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