



AVON
FIRE & RESCUE

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Productivity and Efficiency Plan

2025-2026

PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING



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Avon Fire & Rescue Service is committed to ensuring our documents are accessible to all members of the community. If you have difficulty reading this document because English is not your first language and you would like a translation, please contact:

Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality Team, Avon Fire & Rescue Service,
Police & Fire Headquarters, PO Box 37, Valley Road, Bristol, BS20 8JJ.

Telephone: 0117 926 2061

Email: DICE@avonfire.gov.uk

Introduction

This Productivity and Efficiency (P&E) Plan for 2025/26 reports on Avon Fire & Rescue Service's (AF&RS) recent performance and improvements in productivity, efficiency, and financial sustainability. Specifically, it provides an account of our progress and achievements during 2024/25, while setting a clear direction for how we will continue to build on this in 2025/26.

It forms a key part of the wider framework established by the AF&RS Productivity, Efficiency and Savings (PES) Strategy 2025–2028, which outlines our long-term vision for delivering a balanced budget, enhancing public outcomes, and fulfilling our statutory Best Value duty under the Local Government Act 1999.

This P&E Plan also responds to national expectations set out by the National Fire Chiefs' Council and the Local Government Association, which recommend that all Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in England deliver 2% of non-pay efficiencies and increase productivity by 3%. It details how AF&RS will achieve these targets during the 2025/26 financial period through a range of activities that enhance service delivery while maintaining safety, quality, and operational effectiveness.

This P&E Plan directly supports the Strategy by acting as the main reporting document for productivity and efficiency. Specifically, it focuses on reviewing performance in 2024/25, providing an account of our delivery against productivity and efficiency targets, and setting out our forward plan for productivity in 2025/26.

However, detailed plans for achieving future efficiency savings in 2025/26 are not set out within this document. These are instead captured in the Efficiencies and Savings (E&S) Annual Delivery Plan, which sits alongside this P&E Plan as a complementary document. Together, the PES Strategy, this P&E Plan, and the E&S Annual Delivery Plan provide the structured components of AF&RS's framework: the Strategy defines the overarching direction and strategic principles, the E&S Annual Delivery Plan sets out detailed efficiencies and savings delivery, and this P&E Plan bridges the two by reporting on current performance and planning for both productivity and efficiencies.

In addition to our strategic principles, our approach is underpinned by the ethical and inclusive foundations of the NFCC Core Code of Ethics and shaped by the values embedded across our Service. These values, along with our commitment to putting communities first, ensure that every action we take through this plan is carried out with fairness, integrity, and a clear focus on service improvement.

Key aims of this plan include:

- Reporting on efficiencies delivered to strengthen the long-term financial resilience of the Service, enabling us to adapt confidently in the face of rising demand and inflationary pressures
- Outlining improved productivity that has been delivered through targeted digital transformation, smarter working practices, and evidence-based deployment of people and resources

- Demonstrate alignment with the priorities and objectives set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, which emphasises the need for fire and rescue authorities to manage budgets responsibly, pursue all opportunities for efficiency, and ensure the effective use of resources. This also includes meeting expectations from the Home Office, HMICFRS, and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), while upholding the principles of integrity, fairness, and high service quality.

This plan supports the delivery of our Service Plan focus: Making our Communities Safer and Making our Service Stronger. It provides a structured basis for measuring progress, underpins transparent reporting, and reinforces our commitment to continuous improvement.

In doing so, it ensures that AF&RS remains responsive, innovative, and prepared to meet both current and future challenges with a clear focus on public value and professional excellence.



Our Vision Mission Values



Our Vision

To provide the highest standard and best value service to the community.

We will work closely with and help make our diverse communities safer and healthier; while ensuring our Service is a great place to work, where everyone feels valued and can achieve their full potential.



Our mission

To improve public safety through prevention, protection, response and resilience.

Making our communities safer, by being there when we are needed, identifying and reducing risks and improving the quality of life for local people; our staff working together as one to ensure a high-quality, value for money Service which meets the needs of the people we serve.



Our values

Respectful
Honest
Courageous
Ambitious
Inclusive
Transparent

Guided by the standards of behaviour captured in our values, we will support our staff to embrace challenges, recognise achievements and live out our values in Making our Communities Safer and exceeding expectations. The public expect their emergency services to be there when they need us, but also role model the very best standards of behaviour. When we make decisions and work together, our values are the things we keep in mind every time. They are important to us and non-negotiable.

Our Values and Behaviour Framework is aligned to the [Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services](#)

Primary Information

BUDGET (£000)			
Revenue Expenditure	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Direct Employee	41,779	46,434	48,832
Indirect Employee	2,475	2,868	3,136
Premises	2,820	2,935	3,506
Transport	1,481	1,550	1,582
Supplies and Services	6,998	7,726	8,309
Capital Financing	741	667	979
Other	(268)	(357)	(2,640)
Total	56,026	61,823	63,704
Income	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Actual Received from Precept	31,602	33,133	35,710
Local Government Finance Settlement	5,256	5,045	5,484
Other Grants	18,908	23,320	22,185
Income Raised Locally	260	325	325
Total	56,026	61,823	63,704

RESERVES (£000)					
Revenue Expenditure	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028
General Reserves	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	3,361	4,107	2,720	2,450	1,950
of which MRP reserve					
Earmarked Capital Reserves					
Other Reserves					
of which revenue	821	591	380	193	
of which capital	5,230	2,580			
Total	10,912	8,778	4,600	4,143	3,450

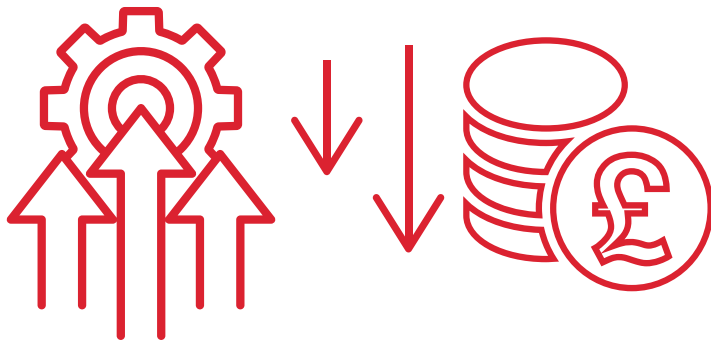
Efficiency Data

EFFICIENCY DATA (£000)						
	Actual 2023/2024		Actual 2024/2025		Forecast 2025/2026	
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	50,385		52,849		56,628	
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	41,933		45,736		48,832	
Non Pay Budget	8,452		7,113		7,796	
Efficiency Target (2% of non-pay budget)	169		142		156	
Efficiency Savings	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
Direct Employee						
Reduction in Prevention/Protection/Response Staff				783	495	
Reduction in Support Staff				(85)	20	
Indirect Employee (e.g. training, travel etc.)						
All Indirect Employee Costs				(146)		
Premises						
Utilities				45		
Rent/Rates				(191)		
Other Premises Costs				(101)		100
Shared Premises						
Transport						
Fleet				214		111
Fuel						
Other Transport Costs						
Supplies and Services						
National Procurement Savings						
Local Procurement Savings	100		100		100	54
Other Technology Improvements						245
Decreased Usage						

EFFICIENCY DATA (£000)						
Capital Financing						
Revenue Expenditure Charged to Capital						
Net Borrowing Costs						
Other						
Other Savings - reduction in Transformation Programme Investment		242			739	
Other Savings - £500k Airwave credit, PPE & uniform savings				889		
Other Savings - to be identified						739
Total Efficiency Savings	342		1,508		1,864	
Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets	4.05%		21.20%		23.91%	
Efficiency Savings Target	2.00%		2.00%		2.00%	
Over/(Under)	2.05%		19.20%		21.91%	

INCOME (£000)						
	Actual 2023/2024		Actual 2024/2025		Forecast 2025/2026	
	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
Income generated from charging policies						
Income generated from trading operations						
Income generated from shared premises	60		60		60	
Income generated from interest on investments		493		431		250
Income generated from other sources		357		126		15
Total	60	850	60	557	60	265

Efficiency



Direct Employee

There was a net saving of £698k on direct employee costs which is not expected to be recurrent. This was as a result of vacancies within Wholetime establishment as a result of increased retirements in year and recruitment challenges at certain levels within the Wholetime staff group. This is not

expected to reoccur in 2025/26 as there will be additional training schools run in year as well as a range of alternative recruitment options to ensure vacancies are reduced.

Indirect Employee

Overall indirect employee costs have increased in year as a result of additional ill health retirement costs. This is not expected to be a recurrent spend so there is no increase predicted in 2025/26. All other indirect employee costs are expected to remain consistent.

Premises

Utilities savings of £45k were realised in 2024/25 however this is not expected to be recurrent due to continuing volatility in utility costs. There were also overspends of £292k in total against rates costs and other premises costs as a result of higher than expected business rates and additional maintenance costs for certain premises. These are expected to be non-recurrent as a result of updated budgets, a business rates review, and current capital projects.

Transport

An overall reduction of £214k has been realised in our fleet costs as a result of improved processes and a refreshed fleet strategy. This is a non-recurrent saving as new processes will now be imbedded and require investment, however there will be recurrent fleet cost savings of £111k expected from 2025/26 onwards.

Supplies and Services

In addition to innovative practice within the procurement team, a number of procurement savings have been realised across supplies and services due to robust procurement policies and competitive tendering processes, totalling £100k.

Capital Financing

No savings have been realised against these costs.

Other

Other savings include reductions across a number of categories including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and uniform, however, these savings are not expected to be

recurrent as they have been a result of timing changes and underspends relating to staffing challenges and project delays. Future expenditure is expected to remain at budget level.

Future Efficiencies

Efficiencies totalling £1.864m are required to balance our revenue budget in 2025/26. Of these £515k of recurrent savings relating to staffing and crewing changes have already been approved by the Fire Authority and are expected to be realised. An additional £610k of non-recurrent non-pay savings have been identified by budget holders to bridge the savings gap and work continues to identify additional efficiencies of £739k through improved working practices and potential use of reserves.

Collaboration

In 2024/25, AF&RS continued to strengthen collaboration with a range of partners, delivering measurable operational benefits and contributing to service efficiency. Shared use of AF&RS premises by organisations such as NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT), St John Ambulance, and local policing teams has enabled critical public services to operate from fire stations at no additional cost, optimising public estate usage and reducing duplication of infrastructure.

Operationally, partnerships with South Western Ambulance Service, Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Avon & Somerset Police, and voluntary organisations like the British Red Cross and Rapid Relief Team have directly enhanced emergency response, resilience, and community engagement. These joint arrangements improve interoperability and streamline service delivery through coordinated training and shared equipment use.

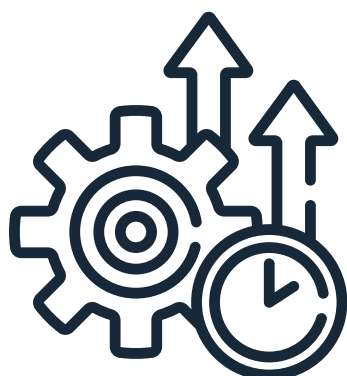
The collaborative approach taken in 2024/25 has reinforced AF&RS's ability to deliver joined-up public services, while supporting more efficient use of staff time, facilities, and operational resources. It has also fostered shared responsibility for improving safety outcomes for our communities across partner organisations.

Assessment of Efficiencies

AF&RS achieved a range of efficiencies in 2024/25, with a significant non-recurrent saving of £698k in direct employee costs due to higher-than-expected retirements and recruitment gaps. While this was not planned, it provided valuable in-year budgetary flexibility. Utility savings (£45k) and fleet efficiencies (£214k) were also realised, with £111k of the fleet savings expected to recur from 2025/26 due to strategic changes in fleet management.

Procurement activity delivered £100k in savings through robust tendering and innovation, highlighting the impact of strengthened commercial practices. While some additional savings in categories like PPE and uniforms resulted from project delays and underspend, these were non-recurrent and are expected to normalise. Collaborative arrangements across shared premises and joint response initiatives enhanced operational efficiency, optimised estate usage, and reduced duplication, contributing indirectly to overall service value.

Productivity



Collaboration

Shared Premises

The Service continues to collaborate through the provision of shared premises, enabling partner organisations to deliver vital services to our communities while promoting joint working and cost efficiencies.

At Kingswood, Temple, and Weston-super-Mare fire stations are used regularly by NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) to host blood donation sessions. This ongoing initiative enables the NHS to operate in accessible community locations at no cost, preserving the national blood supply without additional public sector expense. As a secondary benefit, these sessions provide AF&RS with an opportunity to engage members of the public and offer home fire safety advice, improving community fire safety awareness.

St John Ambulance continues to utilise space at Southmead Fire Station to deliver first aid training and hold meetings for its volunteers. This legacy arrangement, which provides the premises free of charge, supports the ongoing readiness and resilience of volunteer responders who serve the same communities as AF&RS. Although the benefit to the Service is indirect, the presence of trained community first responders enhances local emergency response capability.

Shared office space and facilities at Chew Magna Fire Station are provided as a drop-in facility for Bath and North East Somerset (BaNES) Council staff and the local Neighbourhood Policing Team. Through this arrangement, partners are better able to collaborate on local initiatives, enhancing visibility, accessibility, and engagement with the community. This enables joined up working on issues of mutual concern and fosters a shared commitment to improving outcomes for residents.

At Hicks Gate Fire Station, AF&RS hosts a British Red Cross support vehicle used by volunteers during incidents. This arrangement ensures rapid availability of post-incident support for vulnerable residents, including emotional and practical assistance. By enabling this support on-site, AF&RS enhances its post-incident care offer, while ensuring the continuity of core operational activities.

At our Lansdown premises, the Bristol 70cms Repeater Group house amateur radio equipment that supports the Radio Amateurs Emergency Network (RAYNET). This adds resilience to communications infrastructure during major outages and also supports training for young people in technical communication skills. This long-standing partnership supports both community engagement and emergency preparedness.

Having contributed to Service productivity and effectiveness during 2024/25, these shared premises initiatives will continue into 2025/26 and be reviewed on a rolling basis by collaboration leads who assess benefits and outcomes as part of our partnership governance process.

Partnerships

Through active partnerships, AF&RS supports local, regional, and national priorities across a wide range of community safety, emergency response, inclusion, and health and wellbeing agendas.

The Service is a key member of the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum, working with Category 1 and 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. These partnerships enhance the multi-agency coordination of response to large-scale incidents. By sharing knowledge and capabilities, the LRF enables faster resolution of incidents and ensures better protection for affected communities.

The Service has Service Level Agreements and works with Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI) and Bristol Women's Voice to deliver equality and cultural competency training to staff, and ensure we continually improve and promote best practice. This enhances the Service's ability to engage with its diverse communities and strengthens recruitment from underrepresented groups. It supports a more inclusive and responsive workforce and promotes trust between AF&RS and marginalised populations.

In collaboration with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), AF&RS shares live drone footage during water-based incidents, helping both agencies assess risks in real-time. This initiative improves situational awareness, enables more coordinated rescue planning, and contributes to saving lives along the coast and waterways. The Service also collaborates with the RNLI to deliver water safety education in schools and youth settings. Shared content and consistent messaging reduce the incidence and severity of water-related emergencies involving children and young people.

The Rapid Relief Team supports AF&RS during prolonged incidents by providing refreshments and practical assistance. This reduces the burden of fireground catering, supports operational resilience, and improves staff welfare, ensuring firefighters can remain focused and effective during long-duration incidents.

The multi-agency Bristol Water Safety Partnership works to reduce water-related harm in Bristol. By coordinating resources and campaigns, the group ensures improved community education, safer infrastructure, and more effective emergency response in and around the city's harbourside.

AF&RS receives regular data sharing updates from Air Liquide on properties with medical oxygen installations. This enables crews to plan safer responses and ensures vulnerable residents are proactively offered home fire safety visits. It enhances operational safety and reduces the risk of harm.

The Service collaborates with partners of the West of England Road Safety Partnership to reduce road fatalities and serious injuries. This includes education campaigns, data sharing, and operational enforcement. Targeted efforts align with AF&RS priorities, especially in reaching groups most at risk, such as young drivers and vulnerable road users.

The King's Trust Youth Development and Safety Engagement partnership helps young people gain confidence, employability skills, and resilience. AF&RS contributes safety training and mentorship, supporting vulnerable youth and fostering safer behaviours around fire, road, and water risks.

Productivity

In collaboration with multiple health and emergency service partners, AF&RS supports Mental Health Triage Service that ensures individuals in mental health crisis receive timely, appropriate care. This improves outcomes for vulnerable individuals while reducing unnecessary emergency interventions.

The Service supports Lifeskills in delivering interactive community safety education to children and vulnerable groups. This long-standing partnership strengthens community risk awareness and helps prevent fire and injury among the most at-risk members of society.

Advice and assurance are provided through the Primary Authority Scheme to the Curo housing group to ensure fire safety standards are met across its UK portfolio. This reduces fire risk for thousands of residents and prevents incidents through improved compliance and oversight.

All partnership initiatives are scheduled to continue yet be subject to regular reviews during the 2025/26 financial year, allowing outcomes to be measured and improvements identified through designated collaboration leads.

Shared Services and Resources

AF&RS is involved in several resource-sharing arrangements and joint training programmes that improve operational capability, reduce duplication, and enhance efficiency. We have a shared training centre with other fire and rescue services, and in March 2025 jointly hosted with our neighbouring services the South West region Women in the Fire Service training and development event there.

AF&RS works in close partnership with the South Western Ambulance Service (SWAST) and its Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) to support technical rope rescue incidents through a shared working at height collaboration. This initiative combines the specialist capabilities of both services and is underpinned by joint training and aligned operational procedures. The outcome is a more effective and efficient response to complex rescues, faster incident resolution, and improved care for casualties requiring technical extrication and medical intervention at height.

In strengthening its capabilities for Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and water rescue, AF&RS collaborates with Search and Rescue Assistance in Disasters (SARAID). This relationship is built around regular joint training exercises that promote interoperability between both teams, ensuring alignment in approach and communication. The collaboration enhances AF&RS's preparedness to respond to major and complex incidents with robust, well-coordinated specialist teams.

AF&RS also plays a vital role in the National Resilience (NR) Training Programme. As both a host and training partner for NR assets, the Service contributes to and benefits from a national framework that builds the capacity to respond to large-scale or critical incidents. Through this programme, operational staff are trained in specialist response techniques, ensuring that NR resources can be deployed rapidly and effectively within the region when required.

Close collaboration with Avon & Somerset Police supports the delivery of technical rescue at incidents involving heavy vehicles. This partnership has established a clear and consistent protocol for requesting and using specialist heavy lifting equipment, leading to improved coordination and significantly faster extrication of casualties. As a result, those

injured in major road traffic incidents can be reached and treated more quickly, improving their chances of recovery and survival.

AF&RS also leads on Severn Tunnel contingency planning through a multi-agency collaboration involving Network Rail, SWAST, British Transport Police, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, and other key stakeholders. This initiative involves joint training, shared strategic planning, and the storage of Network Rail's Road/Rail vehicles at Thornbury and Avonmouth Fire Stations. These preparations ensure a coordinated and effective response to any major incident within the Severn Tunnel, a high-risk location where cross border cooperation is essential to saving lives and minimising harm should an emergency incident occur.

The Service has integrated a suite of national and partner-led development programmes into its leadership offering. These include the NFCC's Supervisory, Middle Manager, and Executive Leadership Programmes, the ACAS eLearning platform, and the Hydra Facilitator course in partnership with Avon & Somerset Police. These initiatives are largely self-paced, virtual, and aligned with NFCC frameworks. The Middle Manager Programme began in 2024, with other components ongoing or newly implemented in 2025. These initiatives increase productivity by enabling targeted, timely access to high-quality development without reliance on external providers, significantly reducing cost, time, and resource demand. Training is self-initiated, standardised, and scalable, allowing staff to fit learning around operational demands. This model delivers certified leadership development, improves confidence and decision-making, and strengthens the leadership pipeline. It fosters alignment with NFCC practices, reduces duplication, and creates a consistent and inclusive learning environment that enhances both team and individual performance

Asset Management and IT Investment

Digitalisation

AF&RS is continuing to invest in digital transformation to improve how information is accessed, managed, and shared across the organisation. One of the key projects underway is the migration of file services to Microsoft 365, which began in the 2023/24 financial year. This move is helping staff collaborate more effectively, securely access documents from any location, and reduce reliance on paper-based processes, particularly for those working on station, in the community, or from home.

Complementing this investment, the Service launched a new intranet platform in February 2025, replacing the legacy system that had served the organisation for over a decade. The previous platform, accessible only through internal servers, had become increasingly fragmented and difficult to navigate. The new intranet, built in SharePoint and fully integrated with Microsoft 365, provides a central hub for Service news, operational information, toolkits, templates, and policy guidance, all in one place. It also includes a dedicated Continuous Improvement area featuring the Service Plan, Fire Standards, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) responses, an Improvement Register, project dashboards, governance documentation, business case templates, and a staff suggestion scheme.

The new platform has significantly increased productivity by reducing the time staff spend searching for information and enabling more consistent, clearer communication. Staff

Productivity

across all departments have been trained to manage their own pages, promoting more timely and locally relevant updates while reducing dependence on central communications teams. Early usage figures show strong adoption, with the new homepage receiving over 34,000 views in its first month, an increase of more than 6,000 compared to the same period on the old platform, demonstrating improved engagement and usability.

A series of dedicated Human Resources (HR) toolkits have also been introduced to support policy implementation and help managers and staff navigate common workforce issues. The Dignity & Respect toolkit (introduced in 2023/24), along with new toolkits for Supporting Attendance and Discipline (launched in 2024/25), have been built using SharePoint to offer consistent, easy-to-access guidance, resources, and templates. These toolkits allow staff to self-serve and resolve queries independently, reducing demand on the HR team and ensuring 24/7 access to information that was previously restricted or inconsistently delivered. Additional toolkits are under development to extend this capability to other HR policy areas, helping further embed best practice and ensure consistent application of procedures.

To further modernise core processes, all internal and external application forms are now hosted in a fully digital format, replacing legacy Word and PDF-based submissions. This change, introduced in the 2024/25 financial year, improves the appearance, usability, and accessibility of application processes while eliminating previous technical issues with formatting and file compatibility. By streamlining the user experience, the Service has created a more professional and reliable interface that benefits both applicants and recruiting managers.

Another recent enhancement has been the review and digitisation of the corporate staff induction and onboarding process. Beginning in the 2023/24 financial year and implemented during 2024/25, this work involved a collaboration between HR and Transformation teams to create a digital checklist for managers and new starters. The system also includes automated notifications to ensure key information and tasks are shared with the right teams at the right time. This has improved the consistency and efficiency of onboarding, ensuring new staff are better informed and supported from day one, while reducing administrative workload and potential delays in access to essential resources.

In addition to administrative process improvements, 2024 also saw the implementation of a new IT system to support Operational Assurance and post-incident learning. This software collates learning from incident debriefs and drives a structured Service-wide Organisational Learning and Feedback (OLAF) meeting. Within this forum, key stakeholders agree follow-up actions, allocate responsibility, and track progress through the system. This tool supports a culture of continuous improvement by recording lessons learned and ensuring they are acted upon, helping to refine response procedures and improve future outcomes. As an ongoing initiative, the system is enabling better monitoring and visibility of change linked to real-world operational performance.

Alongside these digital infrastructure changes, the Service is rolling out a business process transformation programme beginning in 2024/25 and running through to 2025/26. This project aims to digitise and automate paper-based workflows using modern tools and

systems, reducing administrative burden, improving process accuracy, and enhancing consistency across departments. By redesigning internal operations, this initiative will free up capacity for staff and help streamline day-to-day tasks.

To ensure the success and sustainability of these digital changes, a comprehensive digital skills training programme is being delivered across the workforce. Starting in 2024/25 and continuing thereafter, this initiative provides staff with accessible, role-relevant guidance on how to use core AF&RS systems effectively. By increasing digital literacy and confidence, the training supports wider adoption of new technologies and helps maintain high standards of data quality and productivity.

IT Systems

A key productivity initiative for 2025/26 is the rollout of advanced decision-support software. This system will harness real-time data to offer a live, comprehensive view of emergency response asset availability and usage. By enabling dynamic, data-driven decision-making, it will empower leaders to plan and deploy resources more effectively and efficiently. This smart deployment capability not only strengthens immediate operational coverage but also supports the long-term sustainability of our emergency response capacity.

We are also expanding the use of FireWatch software functionality to support a more decentralised approach to wholetime personnel management. This shift will see key elements of resource planning and management move from central teams to local station and watch-based leadership, promoting greater ownership and responsiveness at the point of need. In parallel, the rollout of a mobile app for On Call staff will significantly improve how availability is recorded and managed, providing a more accurate and user-friendly tool to support real-time operational planning.

Enhancing asset visibility and lifecycle management is a priority for AF&RS. As part of this, the Service began implementing an automated IT asset management system in 2024/25, which will complete in 2025/26. This platform enables more accurate tracking of IT assets, reducing the manual effort required to maintain records and ensuring equipment is available and functioning when needed. This supports improved planning and reduces the likelihood of disruptions due to equipment issues.

Another key development is the structured laptop refresh programme launching in 2025/26. This ongoing initiative forms part of a wider asset lifecycle strategy that ensures staff are using high performance, reliable devices. By addressing hardware obsolescence proactively, the Service reduces lost productivity due to technical failures and increases staff satisfaction and performance.

IT (Other)

Several complementary projects under the broader IT improvement umbrella are being progressed to further streamline operations and improve service quality. Starting and concluding in 2025/26, AF&RS will complete the migration of its core infrastructure to cloud-hosted services. This shift supports improved system availability, performance, and scalability, while also lowering the long-term cost and complexity of maintaining on-premises servers. With fewer interruptions and faster access to resources, operational efficiency is expected to improve significantly.

Productivity

The Service is also exploring the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools within support roles, beginning in 2025/26. A formal policy has been introduced to guide the ethical use of AI, with early experimentation such as Copilot use for Executive PAs already underway. These tools are improving the efficiency and consistency of administrative tasks, allowing support staff to focus on higher-value responsibilities.

To further enhance internal collaboration, advanced audio-visual equipment is being rolled out across key meeting rooms during 2025/26. These upgrades improve the quality and ease of virtual meetings, reducing time lost to technical issues and allowing teams to concentrate on their meeting objectives. This contributes directly to better decision-making, clearer communication, and more productive engagement across departments.

Finally, remote working remains a critical enabler of flexibility and resilience. Tied closely to the Microsoft 365 file migration, improvements in digital infrastructure and user training are helping staff work effectively from any location. This capability ensures continuity of service and supports broader organisational goals of accessibility and adaptability.

Asset Purchase, Maintenance and Contracts

AF&RS continues to prioritise sustainability, efficiency, and long-term value in the way it invests in, maintains, and upgrades its estate. As part of our commitment to reducing energy costs and environmental impact, the Service has been installing renewable energy infrastructure, primarily photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, across its estate since 2014. In some locations, this also includes battery storage, enabling more efficient use of generated power. These systems are incorporated into all major capital refurbishment or rebuild projects and are designed for maximum energy efficiency to ensure a strong return on investment. The impact of this initiative is already measurable: in 2023/24, AF&RS generated 28% of the total energy it used, significantly reducing our electricity expenditure. Plans are now underway to expand installations further, including an upcoming project at Bath Fire Station. This proactive investment in renewable energy directly improves the Service's financial resilience and environmental performance while supporting operational continuity through more reliable on-site energy supply.

Building on this, the Service began decarbonising its heating systems in 2022 with the installation of Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs), a more energy-efficient solution for heating and hot water provision. These systems are now included as standard in all major estate developments. In parallel, a heat decarbonisation plan is currently being developed to assess every site and identify the most cost-effective methods for reducing the Service's energy demand. The plan will produce a prioritised list of improvement actions, helping to ensure the right investments are made in the right places to deliver both environmental and financial efficiency gains. ASHPs are already helping reduce operating costs while supporting our long-term carbon reduction goals, and the forthcoming estate-wide plan will enable better measurement, monitoring and delivery of heating system improvements across the portfolio.

These initiatives sit within a long-standing and evolving Estates Capital Programme, which provides a structured and strategic approach to asset investment. The programme is reviewed annually and prioritises projects based on asset condition, operational demand,

energy performance, and community need. It is designed to deliver ongoing improvements to the condition, energy efficiency, and versatility of our buildings. By focusing on upgrading core infrastructure, such as insulation, mechanical and electrical systems, and space adaptability, the programme ensures that AF&RS sites are fit for purpose, cost-effective to operate, and better able to support evolving service delivery models. This continuous investment approach not only reduces maintenance and running costs but also enhances the ability of the estate to meet future operational and community expectations.

Resourcing

Employee

AF&RS has continued to review and refine its operational staffing approaches to maximise efficiency while supporting staff wellbeing and service delivery. One notable initiative is the introduction of a 12-month trial of a Flexible Day-Crewing Duty System at Yate Fire Station. Following extensive consultation with staff and representatives, a proposal was approved by the Service Leadership Board and implemented on 1 January 2025. The revised crewing model reduces the establishment from 14 to 12 Grey Book firefighters, enabling the redistribution of two posts elsewhere in the Service. This self-rostering approach enhances flexibility and work life balance for firefighters while maintaining operational effectiveness. Indications from the first review has suggested a smooth transition and positive reception among staff.

A further innovation in workforce flexibility has been the introduction of short-term Wholetime contracts for On-Call firefighters. This approach allows On-Call staff to support Wholetime stations during periods of short-term staffing needs, such as maternity or paternity leave, long-term sickness, or modified duties. The initiative improves vacancy management by maintaining continuity in cover and response levels, reducing the administrative burden of recruiting temporary staff.

In the 2024/25 financial year, AF&RS undertook a review of Wholetime staffing and identified opportunities to reduce the Grey Book establishment by four posts, effective from 2025/26.

These reductions are linked to increased productivity and improvements within the Service Delivery Support Directorate, ensuring that operational effectiveness is maintained while driving efficiencies.

Corporate staff across AF&RS have also adopted hybrid working practices since the pandemic, though this remains informally managed based on role requirements and manager discretion. The approach supports business continuity, provides staff flexibility, and optimises workspace usage.

To improve absence management, AF&RS launched the Supporting Attendance toolkit in 2023/24, with ongoing embedding throughout 2024/25. The supporting policy simplifies procedures, clarifies trigger points, and includes updated templates and enhanced data access for line managers. This empowers managers to independently track and address absence trends. A 2024 internal audit of this process provided reasonable assurance, with all recommendations either completed or on track.

Productivity

In terms of staff welfare, the Service introduced a new counselling provider in 2023/24, with further promotion and integration throughout 2024/25. Staff can now self-refer for support. Additionally, a private healthcare and cash plan has been approved and will be launched in early 2025/26, expanding access to a range of mental and physical wellbeing services for all employees.

AF&RS has operated an apprenticeship programme for several years, supporting both Firefighter and corporate roles. In 2025/26, the Service plans to expand its capacity for workplace apprenticeships, using them to build technical and professional skills across a wide range of functions. This enables apprentices to progressively take on more responsibility and contribute meaningfully to their teams. The programme is underpinned by strategic use of the Apprenticeship Levy, which AF&RS has accessed since 2017 to fund approved apprenticeship training. With a reduction in Firefighter apprenticeship numbers in 2024/25, a greater share of Levy funding has been made available to support development in leadership, specialist roles, and recruit-to-train pathways. These initiatives increase productivity by enabling apprentices to perform valuable tasks earlier in their development, reducing the workload on experienced staff and allowing them to focus on strategic, high-value activities. As skills and confidence grow, apprentices are able to work more autonomously, further boosting team efficiency and resilience.

Since 2024, AF&RS has focused on providing remote and self-paced development opportunities, including neurodiversity training, NFCC webinars, mentoring, and micro-learning. These initiatives allow staff to access learning in ways that suit their needs and schedules. This approach improves productivity by allowing staff to complete training without interrupting core duties, reducing time away from work, and increasing training reach and uptake. The result is faster skill acquisition, increased inclusivity, and improved digital capability. Training costs are reduced, and the reach of development opportunities expands significantly without added burden on infrastructure or resources.

In support of improved career guidance, launched in 2024, the new AF&RS intranet now hosts updated development pathways, a training calendar, and dedicated coaching and mentoring resources. A redesigned PDR process also supports better alignment between personal development and service needs. This improves productivity by reducing time spent finding suitable training, encouraging ownership of learning, and enabling more targeted development planning. Outcomes include improved access to learning, greater transparency of career progression opportunities, stronger leadership pipelines, and higher retention and engagement through more visible support for development.

Since 2024, AF&RS has significantly expanded its use of in-house training to address a broad spectrum of business-critical skills, including project management, risk assurance, wellbeing, finance, leadership, and mental health. These courses are delivered by internally trained facilitators, enabling the Service to provide timely and responsive learning opportunities tailored to organisational needs. Programmes such as Springboard, Hydra, and Mental Health First Aid are now regularly offered and supported through internal capacity, reducing the need for external trainers and minimising associated travel and accommodation costs.

To complement this enhanced delivery model, AF&RS has formalised a process for reviewing the effectiveness and impact of training. Since 2024, structured evaluation has been applied to key programmes including the Middle Manager Programme, the Leadership Academy, and ACAS mediation, ensuring that training content remains relevant, engaging, and aligned with strategic priorities.

Together, these initiatives increase productivity by ensuring training is both cost-effective and impactful. Resources are focused on high-value learning that addresses genuine skill gaps and supports workforce and succession planning. Internal delivery boosts organisational responsiveness and standardisation, while reviews support continuous improvement by helping the Service refine its learning offer based on feedback, performance outcomes, and return on investment. This dual approach enhances capability, performance, and retention, creating a culture of high-quality, targeted development that equips staff with the skills needed to deliver modern, efficient fire and rescue services.

Resourcing Systems

The Service has implemented a data-led review of appliance standby movements across Wholetime and On-Call crews. Each year, around 2,500 standby movements are carried out to maintain operational cover, yet analysis shows a proportion of these are not required to ensure effective response. The review, conducted through the 2024/25 financial year, seeks to identify and reduce unnecessary movements, increasing the time crews can devote to prevention and protection activity aligned with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). As well as generating financial savings through reduced vehicle use, the initiative directly improves crew productivity by refocusing time on risk-based community outcomes and reducing avoidable operational disruption.

Additionally, during 2024/25, AF&RS partnered with a third-party provider to implement advanced software tools designed to model and analyse emergency response trends. This system allows for detailed evaluation of incident patterns by time of day, day of the week, and season, enabling the Service to explore opportunities for adjusting shift or crewing patterns and reviewing the strategic placement of appliances and stations. The data-driven insights produced through this platform can also be used to model potential impacts of operational changes on response times before they are implemented. This work is ongoing and will continue into the 2025/26 financial year, supporting evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement in service delivery.

Fleet and Equipment

The Service is committed to reducing its environmental impact and maximising the operational efficiency of its fleet and equipment. A key initiative underway is the introduction of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) as a sustainable alternative to diesel across the Service's fleet. This initiative began with a trial phase using ancillary vehicles and appliances, which has proven successful. The wider rollout is planned to be completed by August 2025. Once fully implemented, the Service expects to reduce its annual carbon emissions by a minimum of 400 tonnes, with a further 140-tonne reduction anticipated as more of the fleet transitions to HVO. This initiative not only supports our sustainability goals but also contributes to more responsible and efficient fleet operations.

Productivity

In addition, AF&RS has reviewed the service life of its emergency appliances and identified opportunities to extend vehicle lifespans from 15 to 17 years, where compatible with Clean Air Zone (CAZ) compliance requirements. This extension helps to reduce capital expenditure and ensures maximum value is extracted from vehicle investment, without compromising on service performance or emissions standards. While this option will not apply universally due to CAZ restrictions, it provides a viable solution for select fleet segments.

To further enhance versatility and cost-efficiency, the Service is exploring the use of hook lift sled-based resources. This involves mounting specialist equipment, such as water bowzers, welfare units, and command units, on interchangeable sled platforms that can be transported by a shared pool of prime mover vehicles. This approach reduces the need for dedicated chassis, which are becoming increasingly expensive and time-consuming to procure. By maximising the use of multifunctional transport platforms, AF&RS can respond more flexibly to operational needs while reducing procurement and maintenance costs.

Income Generation

The majority of income for the Service is generated via Council Tax Precept, Business Rates and various grants. Whilst they are comparatively small income streams, the Service does generate some income.

The most significant source of 'generated income' is investment income which has totalled over £400k for both 2023/24 and 2024/25. This is maximised by pooling the AF&RS bank account with the bank account balances of Bristol City Council, and, as part of a Financial Services SLA that is in place, Bristol City Council invest these balances on behalf of the Service. Investment income is expected to drop in future years as the Services reserve balances are reducing and interest rates are forecast to decline.

The Service provides The Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset with access to part of the Fire Station in Nailsea, for a fee of up to £15k per annum. In addition to this the Service holds one residential property that was occupied by an ex-employee, with a small rental charge being collected each month. During 2024/25 this property became vacant, so AF&RS is planning for it to be sold and so this income stream will cease during 2025/26.

The Service generates some income through feed-in-tariffs and mobile phone masts, totalling around £40k for 2024/25.

AF&RS does have a cost recovery model in place for certain services provided to the public and other organisations, although minimal income is generated through this method each year.

Outcome-based Activities

AF&RS monitors several outcome-based activities delivered by wholetime firefighters, with the most prominent being Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs), Operational Fire Safety Checks (OFSC), Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI) and education interventions such as school visits. These activities are aligned to our CRMP and contribute directly to reducing risk in our communities.

Although targets are not set at the individual firefighter or watch level, the Service has adopted service-wide targets that guide delivery expectations. In 2024/25, AF&RS aimed to complete 7000 HFSVs. While the overall target applies to the Service as a whole, the allocation of HFSVs to wholetime firefighters is carefully managed to support a greater than 3% increase in their contribution compared to the previous year. A similar approach applies to educational visits, with an increase in the target from 700 to 900 visits. OFSC activity, introduced more recently, was delivered at a volume of 1287 visits in 2024/25, with a 2025/26 target of 1332 (a 3.5% increase).

Data for these activities is recorded within the Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS), and reports are produced regularly by the Prevention and Protection teams. The use of these reports supports oversight by leadership and enables activity monitoring by staff at operational and management levels. Data reporting is supplemented by internal performance dashboards and ongoing development of Power BI tools to enhance data analysis and visualisation.

While measuring the direct outcomes of prevention activity is inherently challenging, quality assurance processes are in place. These include routine reviews of the delivery of HFSVs by both wholetime firefighters and Community Safety Workers (CSWs) as well as quality assuring the training to ensure our teams are trained to deliver such visits. These reviews assess delivery standards and consistency with the person-centred framework. The Service acknowledges the importance of quality in prevention work and is committed to improving these assurance practices.

Looking forward to 2025/26, AF&RS plans to maintain the overall HFSV target of 7000, with a specific focus on increasing the number allocated to wholetime firefighters by a minimum of 3%, from 1431 visits in 2024/25 to at least 1474. Education visits and OFSCs will also continue to grow incrementally. This approach is designed to ensure that available firefighter capacity is directed towards high-impact, outcome-based community safety activity.

Workforce Capacity

AF&RS has identified a need to improve how it measures the workforce capacity of wholetime firefighters. At present, the Service does not have a fully developed methodology for quantifying capacity across its operational workforce. As a result, it has not been possible to report with confidence on available or latent capacity, or how it may have been reallocated to CRMP-aligned activities.

To address this, AF&RS will adopt the methodology outlined in the Home Office Fire Productivity Plan during 2025/26. This will involve defining core hours, categorising activities as operational, enabling, or non-framework, and recording daily activity across all wholetime watches. This step will provide the baseline data needed to understand workforce utilisation and identify latent capacity.

While formal capacity measurement has not yet been implemented, the Service continues to monitor and report on outputs through established reporting mechanisms. These include monthly performance dashboards, scorecards, and activity reports from Prevention and Protection teams. Such monitoring enables the Service to evaluate overall activity trends and inform resource planning decisions.

Productivity

Although we are not yet in a position to evidence capacity-driven productivity gains, the forthcoming adoption of national measurement principles reflects AF&RS's commitment to continuous improvement. Establishing a clear picture of wholetime firefighter capacity will enable more targeted allocation of time to prevention, protection, and preparedness work in future years, supporting both operational effectiveness and national productivity expectations.

Meeting the 3% Productivity Target

Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV)

Over the course of the spending review period, the delivery of Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) by wholetime firefighters has experienced year-on-year fluctuation, shaped by both operational and strategic demands. While 2022/23 marked a significant peak in completions (2735 visits for wholetime firefighters), this was due to reduced Community Safety Worker (CSW) availability, which led to increased delivery by station personnel. The subsequent reduction however in 2023/24 to 2068 visits and in 2024/25 to 1471 visits reflects a combination of factors: namely, the reallocation of wholetime capacity toward high-priority SSRI work. However, there has now been a return to a full complement of CSWs, who can complete more visits per day through the centralised booking system indicating a positive trajectory for completion.

Importantly, while absolute numbers declined, the Service remains committed to increasing the proportion of HFSVs delivered by wholetime firefighters by more than 3% annually, aligning with risk-based targeting and operational capacity. This focus remains on a person-centred, needs-led approach rather than blanket numerical targets, ensuring quality and effectiveness of visits remain paramount. It is also important to note that the overall service target for HFSV delivery remains at 7000 visits annually, providing vital context and balance to the lower completions by wholetime firefighters, as other delivery models such as CSWs continue to support the broader total.

Educational Visits

Educational engagement by wholetime firefighters has shown strong and consistent growth across the period, with visits increasing from 431 in 2021/22 to 1066 in 2024/25. This upward trend demonstrates a clear trajectory of improved productivity. While these visits are delivered jointly by Children and Young People (CYP) staff and operational crews, a deliberate strategy to allocate more interventions to wholetime teams has directly contributed to this increase. The service will continue to expand this area, supporting both fire prevention and positive community engagement outcomes, while sustaining above-target productivity gains.

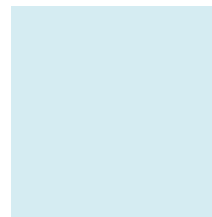
72d/SSRI (Site-Specific Risk Information)

Significant effort has been invested in strengthening the SSRI process in response to a HMICFRS cause of concern, resulting in enhanced operational understanding and more robust data capture. Although the numbers recorded for 2023/24 were not available, the figures for 2022/23 and 2024/25 (389 and 371 respectively) reflect meaningful activity, particularly given the high-intensity focus required to meet inspection expectations. This

prioritisation of SSRI work temporarily limited capacity for other activity, including HFSVs, but has laid a solid foundation for more sustainable and efficient delivery going forward. Continued process improvements and the introduction of digital tools will further support effective planning and completion of SSRIs in future years, helping to meet and sustain productivity expectations.

Operational Fire Safety Checks

This initiative represents a new area of activity introduced in 2024/25, with 1287 completions recorded in its first year. While historical comparisons are not possible, this strong initial performance provides a solid baseline against which future increases—targeted at 3.5% for 2025/26—can be measured. This addition to the productivity portfolio reflects a proactive and evolving role for operational firefighters in prevention and protection work, contributing meaningfully to the service's wider goals.



Produced by
the Corporate Communication Team

Avon Fire & Rescue Service,
Police & Fire Headquarters, PO Box 37, Valley Road, Bristol, BS20 8JJ

Tel: 0117 926 2061

www.avonfire.gov.uk



@AvonFireRescue