

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Resources Committee

Wednesday, 24 September 2025, at 10.00 am in the Main Conference Room, Service Headquarters, Fulwood.

Minutes

Present:	
Councillors	
N Alderson (Vice-Chair)	
A Ali OBE (Chair)	
J Fox	
Z Khan MBE	
A Riggott (Substitute)	
M Ritson	
S Sidat MBE	
D Smith	
J Tetlow	

Officers
S Pink, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (LFRS) S Brown, Director of Corporate Services (LFRS) E Sandiford, Director of People and Development (LFRS) B Warren, HR Lead - Pensions & NWFC (LFRS) J Meadows, Head of Finance (LFRS) J Hutchinson, HR Manager (LFRS) M Nolan, Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority S Hunter, Member Services Manager (LFRS) L Barr, Member Services Officer (LFRS)
In attendance
K Wilkie, Fire Brigades Union

11-25/26	Apologies for Absence
	Apologies were received from County Councillor A Blake and Councillor G Baker with County Councillor A Riggott attending as substitute.
12-25/26	Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests
	None received.
13-25/26	Minutes of the Previous Meeting

	Resolved: That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 8 July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.														
14-25/26	Financial Monitoring														
	The Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) advised that this report set out the current budget position in respect of the 2025/26 revenue and capital budgets. Revenue Budget Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's 2025/26 revenue budget was set at £77.511m. The budget profiled to the end of July 2025 was £25.452m and expenditure for the same period was £25.497m which was essentially breaking even. Both pay and non-pay budgets were showing a small year to date overspend of £0.048m on pay, and a small year to date underspend of (£0.003m) on non-pay activities. The budget included £0.5m of savings to be delivered through effective deployment of resources and effective management of overtime, whilst the profile of overtime was higher over the summer period, management information showed that overtime had been avoided and therefore the service forecasted that these savings would be met. Overall, a small overspend was forecast of £0.147m, which was just 0.2% of the services net budget, this reflected the higher than budgeted pay awards of 3.2% for all staff compared to the 3% budgeted. There were inflationary pressures that were highlighted in the Future Pressures section, although at this stage these were not reflected in the forecast position as more information would be needed to provide a more accurate position. The year-to-date and forecast positions within all departmental budgets were set out in Appendix 1, with the major variances of note shown separately in the table below. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Area</th><th>Year to Date</th><th>Forecast</th><th>Reason</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Service Delivery - Pay</td><td>£0.098m</td><td>£0.155m</td><td>The pay award of 3.2% was agreed effective from July 2025, this was 0.2% above the services budgeted assumptions which largely accounts for the forecast variance.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Prevention and Protection - Pay</td><td>(£0.110m)</td><td>(£0.155m)</td><td>Several vacant posts existed in the current staffing establishment for which recruitment was planned long term. Challenges persisted in recruitment and retention due to competition from the private sector.</td></tr> </tbody> </table>			Area	Year to Date	Forecast	Reason	Service Delivery - Pay	£0.098m	£0.155m	The pay award of 3.2% was agreed effective from July 2025, this was 0.2% above the services budgeted assumptions which largely accounts for the forecast variance.	Prevention and Protection - Pay	(£0.110m)	(£0.155m)	Several vacant posts existed in the current staffing establishment for which recruitment was planned long term. Challenges persisted in recruitment and retention due to competition from the private sector.
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Fleet – Non-Pay	£0.105m	£0.054m	Vehicle repair and maintenance costs remained high due to inflationary pressures and demand for parts across the industry however this was projected to reduce during the year.
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Future Developments

A pay award of 3.2% was agreed for both Grey Book and Green Book employees, that was above the 3% increase originally included in the budget. For Grey Book staff, the uplift applied from 1 July 2025 and covered all basic pay rates and CPD payments, with the trainee rate of pay removed from National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales. For Green Book employees, the same percentage increase was effective from 1 April 2025, applied as a consolidated, permanent uplift to all NJC pay points and relevant allowances. The unbudgeted element of this increase would place an additional pressure on the 2026/27 budget.

As of August 2025, the UK Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation rate stood at 3.83%, continuing an upward trend from earlier in the year. Forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility and other independent analysts suggest that CPI inflation would average around 3.2% for the 2025/26 financial year, with a gradual decline expected towards 2.1% by March 2026. This level of inflation was notably higher than the 2% general inflation assumption included in the budget and was placing pressure on both revenue and capital non-pay budgets.

Utility costs were also higher than the 2% inflation assumption at over 6% which was largely due to geopolitical instability. Longer-term projections suggested energy bills would remain at this high level into 2026 placing pressure this year and into the period of the next Budget.

Since January 2025, the Bank of England base rate had gradually declined from 4.75% to 4.00%, with forecasts suggesting a further drop to 2.75% by the end of 2026. Investment returns had followed suit which was higher than budgeted levels, it was therefore likely future projections would include additional income from investment returns.

After years of lobbying for a longer-term settlement and a fairer funding mechanism Government committed to a Spending Review and three-year settlement from 2026/27, and also to review the local government funding formula and business rates retention scheme. Whilst the June 2025 Spending Review announcement did not provide any detail regarding funding for the Fire Service, the subsequent 'Fair Funding 2.0 Consultation' that followed enabled the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to commission some financial modelling on potential medium term funding implications for the sector and services. In summary the financial modelling showed that:

- There were real term cuts to government grants for the sector.
- There was a reduced share of funding for those fire authorities with lower population growth and higher levels of deprivation.

- Business rates funding from growth was removed.
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service unfortunately may experience one of the largest cuts based on this modelling, of the 43 services Lancashire would be the sixth most affected and represented a total cut over the Spending Review period of over £7m (a reduction in the budget of £3.6m from 2028).
- There were other risks that may compound this such as an assumption that all fire authorities increased the council tax precept by the maximum allowed. This was extremely disappointing, and strong representations had been made to Government from across the sector and us.

Savings Targets

Over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) £5m of savings was required to be delivered; £0.5m in 2025/26, £1.0m in 2026/27, £1.5m in 2027/28 and 2028/29 and £0.5m in 2029/30. The £0.5m required in 2025/26 to balance the budget would be delivered by using Dynamic Resource Management (DRM), for the effective deployment of resources and effective management of overtime.

The Dynamic Resource Management policy came into effect on 1 July which provides steps which could be taken prior to using overtime to fill shortfalls, including using the fifth crew member from the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) stations and redistributing the crew from second pumps at two pump wholetime stations where there was adequate fire cover in the area. The one-month initial review showed that the policy so far had been effective in reducing overtime costs whilst maintaining response standards. This monitoring report assumed the success of this policy would be maintained for the year and the savings would be delivered, although it was still early in the financial year.

The Productivity and Efficiency Plan for 2025/26 included £0.572m of savings to be delivered in 2025/26; the delivery of £0.5m is explained above. The balance of £0.072m was a balance of some smaller initiatives such as procurement savings, this would be reported through our update of progress against the plan later in the year.

Capital Budget

The revised Capital Programme for 2025/26 approved by the Resources Committee was £13.884m and to date £1.602m had been spent. A summary of the programme was set out below and in more detail in Appendix 2.

Area	Budgeted Items	Budget	Year to Date
Operational Vehicles Budget	The budget included initial costs of six large Type B pumping appliances, two smaller Type A pumping appliances. All were on target for delivery this financial year.	£2.911m	£0.0m

Other vehicles Budget	This budget allowed for the replacement of various operational support vehicles including several cars, vans and a welfare unit. All were on target for delivery this financial year.	£1.284m	£0.289m
Operational Equipment Budget	This budget allowed for operational equipment purchases including Breathing Apparatus, CCTV cameras for appliances, stab vests and helmets, flow meters and hose reel, cutting and extrication equipment.	£1.897m	£0.077m
Building Modifications Budget	This budget included the continued programme of Drill Tower Replacements, upgrades to Preston and Blackpool stations.	£4.538m	£0.793m
IT systems Budget	This budget included various projects including upgraded Firewalls, network upgrades, Retained Duty System Alerts, North West Fire Control (NWFC) Dispatch System and replacement of each protection, pooled PPE and stock management systems, and a Firefighting Robot.	£3.254m	£0.443m

A detailed review of the Capital Programme had identified a number of areas where expenditure would slip into 2026/27, the table below sets out the main items of slippage:

Area	Slippage to 2026/27	Reason
Operational Equipment	(£0.042)	The project to replace disposable gastight suits would slip to 2026/27 due to vehicle interdependencies.
Building Modifications	(£1.190)	The Development and Land Acquisition budget of £0.840m was requested to be slipped to next year with the acquisition of land in the Preston area on hold due to the lack of availability of appropriate sites. £0.350m was also requested to be slipped to next year following revision of the programme.
	(£1.232)	

The Chair explained that some potential savings may be realised from the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) tri-annual review of the pension fund and suggested that the Director of Corporate Services write to Lancashire County

	Council's Chief Executive to ascertain if this was the case. Additionally, the Chair explained that Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service was lobbying MP's regarding the fair funding agreement and asked that scenario planning be undertaken by the service in anticipation of the settlement. In response to a question from County Councillor J Tetlow in relation to the potential for pay freezes, the Director of People and Development (DoPD) explained that the service was part of a national pay negotiation agreement and whilst a freeze on pay could be agreed it was not something that the service could agree independently. She outlined that it was important that any pay decisions were balanced with employee relations within a competitive employment market. Resolved: That the Committee noted and endorsed the financial position and approved slippage in the capital programme of £1.232m to 2026/27.
15-25/26	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report The Director of People and Development (DoPD) presented the report. The Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Culture Annual Report 2024 – 2025 and Delivery Plan 2025 – 2026 offered a comprehensive overview of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's (LFRS) ongoing commitment to fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion across its operations. As a public sector body, the Service had a legal obligation to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. LFRS's approach was further informed by feedback from inspections in other Services and feedback and recommendations from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue (HMICFRS). The work undertaken by the Service in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), was focused on the identification of risk and undertaking action which would minimise risks and keep people safe. Key areas covered within the report included; Accessibility LFRS Corporate Communications Department ensured that information was made available in a variety of formats and using multiple channels to effectively engage Lancashire's diverse communities. In 2024-25, the website experienced increased visitor numbers, likely attributable to enhancements in design and accessibility following its relaunch in 2023-24. During the year, an accessibility tool was trialled and subsequently implemented permanently on the website; over a three-month period, features such as screen reader and keyboard assistance were utilised by 2,389 users. In 2024-25, messaging regarding e-bike and e-scooter safe purchasing behaviours was added to the website in various languages, complementing existing fire safety advice available in 26 additional languages to enhance accessibility for non-native English speakers. Fire safety videos were also provided in British Sign Language. Fire safety advice was distributed in accessible formats on social media platforms. Staff continued to receive training to produce accessible social media content. All video content, including public safety footage from emergency incidents, was published with subtitles. Approximately 60 staff members received accessibility training during the year through in-person, online sessions, and a webinar, now

available to all employees, to ensure that website and intranet content remained accessible.

The Corporate Communications Department actively supported LFRS prevention initiatives by partnering with prevention, community fire safety, and operational teams. Campaigns were developed through a structured planning process, focusing on objectives and target audiences determined by data and risk analysis in areas such as cooking safety, rechargeable battery fires, and water safety. Each campaign aimed to encourage safer practices among targeted groups and was evaluated through structured debriefs. In January 2024, the department supported a positive action campaign encouraging women and under-represented groups to explore career opportunities at LFRS. In 2024-25, the department delivered 21 campaigns—including three recruitment efforts—reaching a combined audience of 80,420,611 people, generating 1,265,779 engagements with an overall engagement rate of 9%, compared to an industry average of 5%.

Engagement and Consultation

Social media engagement varied across platforms during 2024-25, with notable increases observed on Facebook (+24%), LinkedIn (+24%), and NextDoor (+17%), contrasted by decreases on Instagram (-28%, attributed to platform algorithm changes), TikTok (-10%, also due to algorithm fluctuations), and X (-75%, resulting from reduced usage). The Service evaluated the demographics of followers across each platform to determine optimal channels for reaching diverse groups. Email newsletter subscribers increased by 5.8% to a total of 101,061.

In 2024-25, the Service launched several e-newsletters focused on prevention, protection, and partnership, offering pertinent risk information and service updates for dissemination by agencies and businesses engaging with residents. The quarterly stakeholder e-newsletter, 'Hot Topics', was distributed to key stakeholders, including partner organisations, MPs, town and parish councils, and community groups.

The Service also produced episodes of its podcast series, "Out of the Ashes: Stories from Lancashire," featuring topics such as youth empowerment through The King's Trust Programme, the responsibilities of on-call firefighters, and preparations for unexpected business disruptions. These episodes included interviews with young people, on-call firefighters, and business representatives.

During 2024-25, principal officers, directors, and area managers completed 95 station visits; 12 in-person staff events were held with service delivery managers, accompanied by 10 online crew sessions. There were 176 wellbeing interactions—including workshops, support dog visits, and station drop-ins—as well as 12 "On the Menu" events covering various topics.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and progression data was analysed and reported to the equality, diversity, inclusion and culture (EDIC) Board and the demographic profile of the Service was reported quarterly to the Performance Committee. LFRS continued its journey to improve the diversity of the workforce to ensure that it represented the community it serves. Positive action was delivered to attract a diversity of candidates to fill the Wholetime firefighter apprenticeship course that began in

February 2025. The service had taken an integrated approach in relation to delivering positive action and promoting LFRS as an employer of choice; colleagues from human resources and operational staff worked together to deliver attraction events supported by other colleagues from the service's employee voice groups. Four "Have a Go" events were delivered by project members, at various stations including a flagship event held at our Leadership and Development Centre to coincide with International Women's Day, with a total of 74 attendees. Further "Have a Go" events were planned for 2025/26.

Whilst no Wholetime Firefighter recruitment took place in 2024/25, 99 other recruitment campaigns associated with Grey and Green Book staff occurred between 01/04/2024 and 31/03/2025, full details were included within Appendix B of the report.

Workforce Profile

Employment monitoring data was collected and reported annually in relation to all protected groups apart from gender reassignment due to the sensitive confidential nature of this data. Since 2023/24, the proportion of women employed increased from 20.8%. The percentage of employees identifying as BME decreased from 3.7% to 3.5%. The proportion of staff declaring a disability rose from 2.9% to 3.4%. The percentage of employees who identified as LGBT+ increased from 3.7% to 4.4%.

Disciplinary cases

There were 18 disciplinary investigations during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 which was 10 fewer than the previous year.

The outcomes of these cases where:

- Three dismissals
- No final written warnings
- Two formal written warnings
- Three management letters
- Four people resigned or retired before the hearing. Of these, two investigations were considered Gross Misconduct and would have resulted in dismissal, one was not deemed Gross Misconduct and therefore the outcome would not have been dismissal, whilst the fourth remained ongoing into 2025/26.
- Six ongoing into 2025/26

The disciplinary investigations addressed alleged breaches of Service policy—such as vehicle or property damage, inappropriate social media use, failure to follow instructions, non-responsiveness, and alleged criminal activity outside work.

No disproportionate impact was found on any minority group.

In response to a question from Councillor D Smith in relation to the report being brought to Resources Committee rather than other committees, the Clerk explained that the report was about people resources. The DoPD added that matters traditionally reported to Resources Committee had been about the people resource, and financial resources, but she acknowledged that a lot of the detail within the report was linked to performance, she confirmed that it was a member decision where the report would be reported. The Chair added that the report

	could also be shared with Performance Committee. In response to a question from Councillor S Sidat in relation to the average age within the workforce being 40 years old, the DoPD explained that this had reduced in recent years. The average age used to be much older due to historical recruitment freezes, where there was also a reduction in new people joining the Service, she referenced that there has historically been lower staff turnover in comparison to the private sector and firefighters generally stayed within the Service until they could access their pension on retirement. She added that talent mapping was carried out to plan for the eventuality of people retiring from the Service. The Clerk added that other factors for the reduction in average age could include the changes to the default retirement age and pension scheme changes. In response to a question from County Councillor J Tetlow in relation to utilising Instagram and Tiktok as part of recruitment campaigns, the DoPD explained that the service used a full range of social media with an evaluation carried out after each campaign. County Councillors M Ritson and J Tetlow asked about the reduction in engagement on Tiktok and it was agreed that the Assistant Director of Communication and Engagement would contact County Councillor J Tetlow outside of the meeting to discuss further. The Chair requested that any vacancies be shared with members via email to allow them to share recruitment opportunities. Resolved: That the report be noted.
16-25/26	Date and Time of Next Meeting
	The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 26 November 2025 at 1000 hours in the Main Conference Room at Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Fulwood. Further meeting dates were noted for 25 March 2026 and 29 June 2026.
17-25/26	Exclusion of Press and Public
	Resolved: That the press and members of the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, indicated under the heading to the item.
18-25/26	Update from Capital Building Projects Working Group
	(Paragraph 3) Members were provided with an update from the Capital Building Projects Working Group. Resolved: That the report be noted.

19-25/26	High Value Procurement Projects
	(Paragraph 3) Members considered a report that provided an update on all contracts for one-off purchases valued in excess of £100,000 and high value procurement projects in excess of £100,000 including: new contract awards, progress of ongoing projects and details of new projects. Resolved: That the Committee noted and endorsed the report.
20-25/26	Pensions Update (Standing Item)
	(Paragraphs 4 and 5) Members considered a report that provided an update on the various issues which had arisen in respect of the changes to the pension schemes applying to the uniformed members of the Fire Sector. Resolved: That the committee noted the current situation.

M Nolan
Clerk to CFA

LFRS HQ
Fulwood