

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2024/25

Section 1: Primary information

Budget

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority (LCFA) agreed a net budget of 75.2m for 2024/25 and is broken down below:

	£m
Employee	57.1
Premises	6.2
Transport	2.6
Supplies & Services	8.7
Other (including Capital Financing Costs)	4.0
Income	(3.4)
Net Budget Requirement	75.2

The budget will be met from:	£m
Revenue Support Grant	13.5
Locally Retained Business Rates	4.6
Council Tax Precept	39.3
Grants *	17.6
Other Income **	0.2
Total	75.2

* Grants includes Business Rates Top Up Grant of £12m and one-off Funding Guarantee Grant of £0.9m.

** Other Income includes Council Tax and Business Rates Collection Fund surpluses.

Further details of our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Capital Strategy, Reserves Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy are contained in our Budget Booklet/Medium Term Financial Strategy.

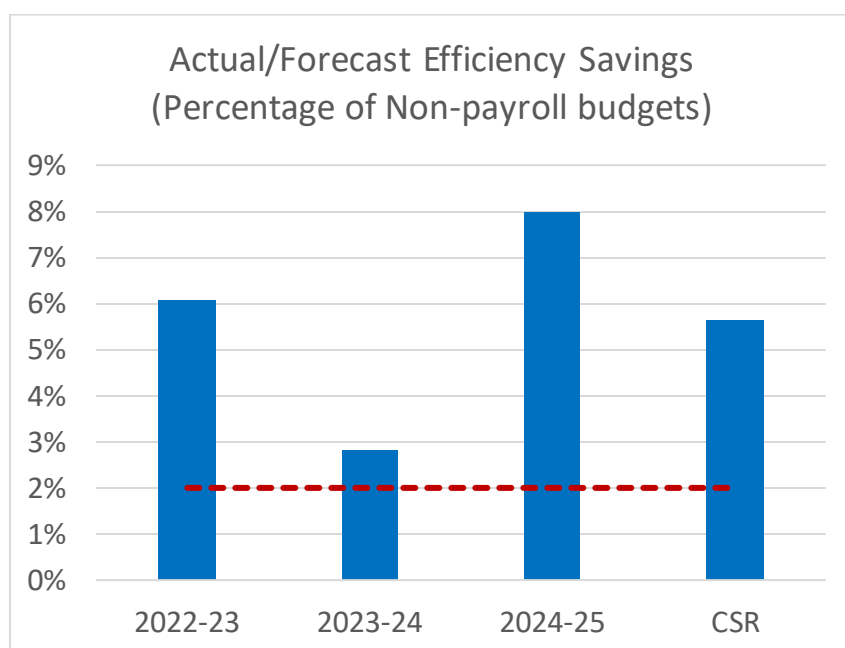
Reserves

A summary of the reserves that are available as at 31 March from 2024 to 2029, split between type of reserves, and planned use over the next five years in line with the current MTFS, is set out below:

£'m	2024	Use	2025	Use	2026	Use	2027	Use	2028	Use	2029
General Reserve	4.8	0.1	4.9	0.2	5.1	(0.3)	4.8	0.1	4.9	0.0	4.9
Capital Reserve	18.8	(7.7)	11.1	(11.1)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Earmarked Reserves	6.6	(0.5)	6.1	(0.3)	5.8	(0.4)	5.4	(0.4)	4.9	(0.5)	4.5
Total	30.2	(8.1)	22.1	(11.3)	10.9	(0.7)	10.2	(0.3)	9.9	(0.5)	9.4

Efficiency Section

The chart below shows the annual and average cashable efficiency savings over the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period (from 2022/23 to 2024/25), as a percentage of non-pay costs. It shows that compared to the Government CSR non-pay efficiency savings target for fire authorities of 2%, the LCFA achieved 5.6% on average over the period; more detail is set out in Annex A.



The table below sets out efficiency and other savings (in £ and % of non-pay budgets) planned to be achieved in 2024/25. The major risks or barriers to delivery are also included in the table:

Saving (including which area of spend)	Type of Saving	£'m	% of Non-pay budgets	Narrative including major risks or barriers to delivery
Reduction in the revenue contribution to the capital programme.	Cashable	1.5	8	The budgeted revenue contribution to the capital programme has been reduced from £4m to £2.5m in 2024/25.

Commentary on efficiencies planned beyond 2024/25 is included below; the estimates below represent a saving of 14% of the non-pay budget:

- Cashable efficiencies of £2.5m from 2026/27 are included in the MTF5;
- Both cashable and non-cash releasing savings are expected from a new combined Headquarters and Training Facility from 2027; realising cashable energy, travel and maintenance savings and enabling productivity and cultural improvements from the centralisation of many synergistic services and working in a more modern and efficient operating environment.
- Non cashable productivity efficiencies and potentially cashable efficiencies are expected from our investment in new Training Props from 2027; providing high quality facilities will help in the initial training and ongoing maintenance of competency requirements across a broad spectrum of operational activities.
- A review of operational resources across the wider Preston area has commenced that is expected to result in cashable energy and maintenance efficiencies and productivity improvements, due to working in a more modern and efficient environment, from the rebuild or relocation of our Preston station in 2028/29.

Efficiencies achieved since the Spending Review (from 2022/23) are set out below, they total £1.4m, representing a saving of 3% in 2023/24 and 6% in 2022/23 of the non-pay budget:

- The Emergency Cover Review endorsed by the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority (LCFA) in November 2022 ensured that during its implementation from 2023/24 we:
 - Maintained all 39 fire stations.
 - Maintain our outstanding response standards and all 58 fire appliances.
 - Provided cashable efficiency savings of £0.4m.
 - Increased the overall fire-fighter establishment by 8 and provide more flexible crewing arrangements.
- Adjust pooled Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) budgets during 2022/23 to reflect lifecycle replacement requirements, realising £0.2m of cashable efficiency savings.
- Reduced the majority of non-pay budgets by 2.5% during 2022/23 realising cashable efficiencies of £0.2m.
- Reduced in car users/mileage budgets across all budgets, reflecting alternative ways of future working during 2022/23 realising cashable efficiencies of £0.3m.
- Achieved cashable procurement savings of £0.3m during 2022/23.

Productivity

As detailed in our 2023/24 Plan, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) productivity improvements were to be largely framed around the volumes of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) and Business Fire Safety Checks (BFSC) delivered, alongside completion of training and increases in operational activity linked to new work areas in support of other agencies. It is anticipated that such productivity increases will lead to safer communities and improved business safety across the county.

We are pleased to report that the last 12 months has seen output gains in aspects of Prevention and Protection activity, commensurate with the broader ambition of a 3% increase. Tangible outputs increased from 22,375 combined HFSC & BFSC in 22/23, to 22,715 combined year-to-date (11 months) for 23/24. We anticipate that the year-end position will be c.24,700 interventions.

The Service has also achieved a reduction in Unwanted Fire Signal mobilisations (AFA's) with the move to 24-hour adoption of a policy change being approved by the CFA and implemented from Spring 2023. Reducing unwanted and unnecessary mobilisations to premises types covered by the policy change and disruption to operational crews has been calculated as an efficiency saving in the region of 1241 hours over the last 11-month period which has undoubtedly supported the increase in P&P delivery.

Section 2: Secondary information

Collaboration

LFRS has a long tradition of partnership working and was able to demonstrate that in exceptional ways throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, working tirelessly with partners to delivery life critical vaccinations across the county. As a key partner of the Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF), our Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) is the current Chair and the Service is linked in with strategic partners to deliver efficient and effective prevention, protection, and response services to Lancashire communities, whilst at the same time ensuring that these services are delivered in the most productive manner, using the available knowledge and skills of ourselves and partner agencies.

Lancashire Blue Light Collaboration Board includes representation from Fire, Police and Ambulance Service, who have all signed a strategic statement of intent which contains the following aims:

- Improve Outcomes
- Reduce Demand
- Better Value for Money
- Reduce inequalities within communities.

Collaboration Projects to date have delivered improved community outcomes and commensurate increases in operational response activity, ensuring the right blue light agency can respond effectively to deliver the best outcomes:

- Joint PFI scheme with Merseyside and Cumbria Fire Services to deliver 16 stations across the 3 Authorities (4 of which are in Lancashire), the largest Fire specific PFI scheme agreed at that point in time (estimated capital value of £48m).
- Combined Fire and Ambulance stations at Darwen and at Lancaster; this provides rental income to the Authority (c.£50,000 pa) but also negates the need for North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) to invest in new facilities, saving the public purse £4m-£5m.

- Joint procurement with the Clinical Commissioning Group for the Wide Area Network (WAN), saving £40,000 p.a.
- Gaining Entry for Ambulance Service [c.2000 p.a. based on 2023-24 data].
- Drone development (aerial and sub-surface capabilities) for which LFRS has the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) lead role. Our aerial drone capability has supported with many Missing Person Searches [c.250 p.a. based on 2023/24 data]. With increasing experience of missing person searches, LFRS staff can provide local or specialist advice for consideration by the Police Search Advisor (PoISA), and searches become streamlined allowing a more structured and effective approach to locating high risk missing persons.
- Further investment was approved which has led to us strengthening sub-surface rescue / recovery capability of persons by virtue of an underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV). This asset has been deployed locally, regionally and nationally and delivered improved outcomes by way of quickening incident resolution across a number of incidents. Ultimately, this results in less public spending, due to reduced time commitment of 999 responding agencies. In the 6 months since launch, the 'inspection class' ROV has been deployed operationally several times. The incidents involved the casualty being found by the ROV, or led to areas being searched (and effectively cleared), which in turn had positive effects on the incident conclusion. The underwater deployments have enabled incidents to be de-escalated, significantly reducing the number of resources required from several agencies for what would normally be protracted incidents.
- Specialist canine capabilities - Search and Rescue (USAR & ISAR), Fire Investigation, Cadaver deployed locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally (ISAR). LFRS currently have a Memorandum of Understanding with Greater Manchester and Cumbria FRS to provide fire investigation dog response on a recharge basis.
- North West Fire Control (NWFC) – collaboration between Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire, and Gtr. Manchester Fire Authorities, realising annual savings in excess of £1m p.a. The coming year will see further system-based improvements being introduced collaboratively into NWFC to improve efficiency within the context of Dynamic Cover Software (designed to optimise fire cover across the FRS) and a more efficient software-based solution for the handling of Fire Survival Guidance at complex incidents. A collaborative project to source the replacement CAD and ICCS systems within the Control Room also build upon the previous economies of scale delivered through the initial project.
- Our Community First Responder pilot has gone live with a group of community safety staff, and more recently a cohort of Flexible Duty System managers being trained by NWS and able to deploy to life critical medical emergencies during working hours, alongside our ambulance colleagues. Already this has delivered lifesaving interventions whilst awaiting the arrival of ambulance colleagues with c.80 incidents attended during 2023. The UK FRS have been providing emergency medical response (EMR) services to the public in recent years. According to a cost-benefit analysis conducted by the New Economy, the benefits of EMR far outweigh the initial

investment required. The analysis estimates an overall financial return on investment of £4.41 per £1 invested.

- Regional Fleet collaboration through Technical Officers Group (TOG) on equipment and vehicle related issues, including procurements and common specifications.

National leadership – All of our Principal Officers have significant national leadership roles, contributing to sector-wide efficiency and productivity. Our Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is the Vice Chair of the NFCC, leading work across the sector including national work around National Organisational Learning, National Support and Academic Research (ACER).

Our DCFO is the national lead for On-Call, supporting national work-streams including a comprehensive data research analysis; academic evaluation to identify future sustainable solutions to this incredibly efficient duty system; and the sharing of national best practice, including analysis of different operating systems that can demonstrate more efficient and effective ways of operating.

Our Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) is the deputy NFCC lead for Wildfire and during the past 12 months has been instrumental in shaping sector direction of travel and improvement: developing international knowledge exchange; working with lead government departments to develop a national wildfire framework; scope out a cohesive national wildfire strategy for England; and successfully secured H.O. funding to create a dedicated National Resilience Wildfire capability lead.

Transformation Plans

Our transformation high level planning is available across our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and supporting core strategies. Some of our high-level plans include:

Fire Protection Transformation programme:

We have restructured our Fire Protection function to meet challenges posed by risks within the built environment and the introduction of the Building Safety Regulator.

We have delivered further refinements to our previously externally validated Risk Based Inspection Programme to align building and occupancy risk to competence of inspectors, and thereby increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of resources deployed to undertake risk reduction activities.

We have increased productivity outputs in terms of timeliness of the handling of Building Regulation Consultations, from 76.3% in 2022/23, to 94.6% in the year to date.

Business Fire Safety Check training to increase knowledge of the built environment delivered across wholetime and on-call operational crews along with flexi duty officers has produced efficiency and productivity savings of c.225 hours of wholetime operational crew time (reduced travel), alleviated 111 hours of On Call travel time and provided an overall direct financial saving of c.£12k through the use of new digital technology and bespoke delivery.

We intend to explore the potential to undertake system replacement over 2024/25 which will synergise and streamline current P&P and Contact Centre systems, to increase efficiency

in the handling, scheduling and booking of P&P visits, reduce wastage in appliance journey times, alongside delivering reduced system costs.

We are actively streamlining policy and procedure in relation to the gathering of operational risk information (SSRI) to ensure that the collation of information is appropriate to risk, based on a data-led approach and that subjectivity in risk assessment is removed to make the process as reliable and efficient as it can be. We expect to see a reduction in the number of SSRI files held over the coming year and the resultant reduction in unnecessary time spent maintaining these records by operational crews over 2024/25 and beyond.

A **Training review** is planned for 2024-25 to streamline service wide training delivery to optimise our arrangements and build back capacity into both Training and Operational Response functions. The review aims to:

- Assure effective and proportionate training delivery.
- Reduce training costs.
- Produce further productivity gains for operational crews in future years.
- Reduce rota abstractions due to training attendance.
- Reduce overtime costs.
- Deliver a more flexible training model for On Call staff, reducing the need for time away from primary employment and therefore a reduction in the associated loss of earnings claims.

Our 'Climate Change Operational Response Plan 2022-27' was developed with investment into new capabilities. Evaluation of several key deliverables to date has provided operational efficiencies across:

- Fleet vehicles
- Specialist training
- PPE
- Technology & Equipment

Increased partnership working via Lancashire Fire Operations Group (LFOG) has seen the launch of PSPO's (Public Space Protection Orders) over the last year, for sites deemed high risk for wildfire activity. The introduction of PSPO's should deter unwanted and unnecessary fire-setting in high-risk areas, reducing mobilisations and incidents. The success of the PSPO's introduced, will be measured after the 2024/25 wildfire season.

Our **On Call Improvement Programme** provides a fundamental review of our On Call system to ensure that it remains an efficient and effective use of resources. The programme focuses upon recruitment, selection, development, and retention of On Call staff and takes in reviews of induction, initial training, role capabilities, remuneration, employment contracts, mobilising and resilience of special appliances. Several projects were delivered during 2023/24, which included a 'Hybrid Working' trial which enables people to work from an On Call station during essential daytime hours and simultaneously provide availability for the On Call fire engine. This has resulted in more effective recruitment and improved availability

of a fire engine where the trial has taken place. The learning from this project is being shared nationally as positive practice.

We recognise the need to continue to review and invest in the On Call system to ensure its sustainability longer term. During 2023-24 we implemented a Flexi Duty Officer (FDO) restructure to redistribute workloads to create a specific station manager post to drive the improvement and progression across our On Call programme. This redistribution of resources avoids the need to invest in new posts, saving 0.1m.

We have recently commissioned work on a bespoke software solution to provide rich data for each of our on-call units to ensure they are sustainable and able to increase availability of our on-call fire appliances. It is anticipated that this innovative software will lead to improved availability of resources and allow us to target specific individuals based on intelligent data, for upskilling around incident command and driving, in particular.

Charging policies

Our focus in recent years has been to deliver collaborative projects with a priority of delivering the best community outcomes. We have an innovative approach to service delivery and are a trusted partner that can, and does, support regional and national partners during emergency incidents. We have arrangements in place across our neighbouring FRS to deliver the quickest and most suitable response, generally on a 'knock for knock' basis. Over last 12 months we introduced:

- **Charging for out of county asset deployment** in line with NFCC Guidelines on FRS Charging for Mutual Assistance.
- **Charging model for other agencies** for application when FRS assets are used for non-statutory duties in support of other agencies, for example use of our Drones with Lancashire Constabulary.

Asset Management and Investment in Technology

We have developed a **Digital Strategy** that outlines our 5-year trajectory to deliver improved productivity and efficiency both internally and externally. Our high-level projects and plans are progressing well:

Digitising fire engines – We have recently replaced all of our front Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) and will have a full roll-out of rear, demountable MDTs completed by late Spring 2024. At the same time, we have delivered a programme of upgrades of iPad devices on our frontline fire engines, all of which increases the ability for simultaneous activity and thereby productivity. We are currently undertaking a pilot at two of our wholtime fire stations of full digitalisation of a fire engine; this includes additional work terminals and 5G wi-fi bubbles so that firefighters and officers can undertake office administration tasks and access various applications whilst out in communities and away from the station. Access is being provided to the full suite of applications as is presently accessed on fire stations (e.g. HFSC system, BFSC App, Training Management, Incident Recording System, Rota Management System, Service Intranet).

CCTV installations on Service vehicles - to reduce accident and injury costs, also a deterrent for anti-social behaviour and spurious claims. The Service has seen a 30% reduction in accident numbers since 2021/22.

Business Intelligence – the function is being strengthened with use of a data warehouse, new Service level Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reporting, performance dashboards for use by managers to improve understanding of performance outcomes and inform efficient and effective targeting of resources.

Training delivery – the current implementation of a new Learning Management System will vastly reduce the administration demands for operational staff, managers, and training department. Capturing evidence of competency in a digital format will also enable development programmes to be delivered more efficiently and free up capacity. Incident Command workshop events for On Call staff are being delivered using a hybrid approach, i.e. in person at the On Call station, or digitally via Microsoft Teams, reducing travel and time costs.

Equipment and appliance checks, inventories and defects - in line with the appliance digitisation programme, we are currently exploring new fleet management software to remove the manual entries and improve on-station equipment and maintenance checks. This will enable visibility of equipment and vehicle inspections. The new system will be App based, so inspections can be verified remotely and live updates posted on the system. In addition, we now operate an in-house vehicle compliance/safety checking procedure at station level. This ensures appliance safety inspections are completed on-time, keeping defect rectification to a minimum, which provides enhanced appliance availability and efficiencies.

Resourcing

We aim to undertake a strategic review of Emergency Cover resources on a cyclical 3 yearly basis, aligned to refreshed 'Strategic Assessments of Risk' across Lancashire. Our latest Emergency Cover Review (ECR) was conducted in 2022 and will be delivered over the next 3 planning years:

Emergency Cover Review (2023-26): Our latest operational review of emergency cover and duty systems will result in a budget saving of c.£400,000, whilst at the same time increasing overall wholetime firefighter numbers by 8 and increasing the number of available 'positive' hours on stations that change from Day Crewing Plus (DCP) to Wholetime. In summary, the ECR will deliver:

- Reductions in crewing levels across DCP stations from 14 to 13 per station.
- Reductions in crewing levels at Flexi Day Crewed stations from 14 to 13 per station.
- Change several DCP stations to Wholetime, whilst at the same time reducing overall crewing numbers on single pump Wholetime stations across the county from 28 to 24.
- Mainstreaming alternative vehicles into the appliance fleet such as Climate Change vehicles for use in flooding and wildfire response.

- Consider how we utilise On Call firefighters in a more productive manner to create efficiencies, for example using them to drive our Aerial Ladder Platforms at 2 fire stations instead of providing dedicated wholetime staffing.
- We are continuing to explore opportunities for more flexible ways of operating our duty systems with relevant Trade Unions, for the benefit of our staff and to create more efficient and effective working practices.

Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT) – has now been introduced into the Service and operates 24/7 within our Command Support Room to optimise fire cover ensuring efficient and effective disposition of resources. During spate conditions, use of the DCT has reduced appliance movements (based upon comparison against previous notional cover arrangements), supported reduced usage of overtime, reduced unnecessary disruption to business activities and thereby supported the broader productivity increases. Over the coming year, our aim is to move to full DCT implementation within North West Fire Control, on a collaborative footing, and subsequently the removal of traditional notional fire cover policies and procedures.

Rota Management – alongside the implementation of the DCT, we have created a dedicated central Rota Management Team to streamline and optimise crewing arrangements, reduce inefficient practices in the management of detached duties and overtime, and to optimise emergency cover aligned to prevailing risk.

Over the last year we have undertaken a review of operational protected assets (which resources we keep available 24/7), to ensure we are delivering effective and efficient response arrangements.

Investment in additional Water Tower dual purpose Fire Appliances - to ensure LFRS can deliver high volumes of water for firefighting and reduce the number of appliances required to safely deal with protracted commercial (and to a lesser degree domestic) fires. We have procured two additional water towers which will replace two conventional 'B' type appliances within our fleet. With a higher pumping capability, aerial water throw and piercing capacity, these versatile appliances reduce the size of attendances to structural fires.

Procurement

We are involved in both national and regional procurement projects as well as undertaking our own local procurement activities. In all instances we seek to maximise the benefits offered by existing frameworks to deliver savings, both cashable and non-cashable, and to maximise the commercial advantages offered by collaboration. Some examples being:

- Active member of the Facilities Management and Construction National Strategic Task and Finish Group, currently working on procurement of a national cleaning contract.
- Utilised various Fire Specific National Frameworks such as provision of specialist vehicles, including an Aerial Ladder Platform which delivered a saving of £150,000.

- We have utilised blue light specific frameworks, such as the Police framework for the supply of footwear.
- We have utilised non-fire frameworks, such as Crown Commercial Services for support vehicles, G-Cloud for software support, YPO for PPE/station uniform and Health Trust Europe for IT related services.
- Part of the North West Group, responsible for aligning requirements and undertaking regional procurement activities across various headings, such as laundry of PPE, provision of flood suits.
- As part of the Regional Group we also invite other organisations to join in appropriate exercises, one example being for maintenance and repair of Appliance Bay Doors where NWAS joined the project.

We record savings generated by procurement on an annual basis, identifying savings of £0.5m in 2022/23.

Productivity

LFRS is well placed to deliver the 3% productivity increase under the sector wide Spending Review (2021/22-2024/25) with productivity gains already amassed and evident from our increased outputs. As we move into year 2, we aim to consolidate the gains made, whilst delivering further improvements via the ambitions of various Service priorities.

These gains will be balanced against the need to facilitate capacity to manage through sizeable Service change programmes arising from our Emergency Cover Review. Most notable in this regard, are the significant training burdens arising from duty system changes and staff relocations around the county, and our requirement to train at pace new fire appliance drivers, and a spectrum of specialist skill sets (swift water rescue, large animal rescue, water towers, aerial ladder platforms etc) to maintain service provision.

Annex A

£'000	Actual	Forecast	Forecast	
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Average
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	32,277	33,480	33,982	
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	24,208	25,110	25,487	
Non Pay Budget	8,069	8,370	8,495	
Efficiency Target (2% of non-pay budget)	161	167	170	
Efficiency Savings				
<u>Direct Employee</u>				
Reduction in Prevention/Protection/Response Staff				
Reduction in Support Staff				
<u>Indirect Employee (e.g. training, travel etc.)</u>				
All Indirect Employee Costs	-114			
<u>Premises</u>				
Utilities				
Rent/Rates				
Other Premises Costs				
Shared Premises				
<u>Transport</u>				
Fleet				
Fuel				
Other Transport Costs				
<u>Supplies and Services</u>				
Procurement Savings				
Other Technology Improvements				
Decreased Usage	-84			
<u>Capital Financing</u>				
Revenue Expenditure Charged to Capital	-168	-436		
Net Borrowing Costs		-28	-45	
<u>Other</u>				
Other Savings 1 (Please Specify)		-40		
Other Savings 2 (Please Specify)				
Other Savings 3 (Please Specify)				
Total Efficiency Savings	-366	-504	-45	
LFRS Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets	4.54%	6.02%	0.53%	3.70%
CSR Efficiency Savings Target	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%

