



**MEETING: FIRE AUTHORITY 22 JANUARY 2024**

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**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/2024 - THIRD QUARTERLY REVIEW**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER / CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CLERK TO  
THE AUTHORITY) AND THE FINANCE DIRECTOR**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The original Capital Programme for 2023/2024 was approved at the Authority meeting on 13th February 2023.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to review the current year's Programme and reflect any changes necessary to those that were presented to the Authority in the Second Capital Programme Review held on 20th November 2023.
- 1.3 Progress on some projects within the Programme, as reported previously, has been impacted by external factors including the continuing impacts of the pandemic, the EU exit, the continuing war in the Ukraine and the ongoing issues with the supply of labour, plant and materials being experienced by some areas of the Authority's activities within the Capital Programme. These problems will inevitably cause delays to the planned projects to be delivered in 2023/2024 and updates will be provided to Members as required.

**2. Capital Programme 2023/2024 – Third Review**

- 2.1 The Capital Programme is showing a decrease of £2,467,937 in the total estimated costs, from £16,625,988 reported at the Second Review stage to £14,158,051.
- 2.2 Regular monitoring of the Capital Programme continues to take place and at the Third Quarterly Review stage there are a number of issues to bring to Members' attention for information. These are set out from section 2.4 of this report:
- 2.3 The position for 2023/2024 is summarised overleaf, with more detail of all schemes being provided in Appendix A to this report.



**Summary of the Capital Programme 2023/2024**

	<b>Second Review</b>	<b>Third Review</b>
	<b>Revised Estimate (November)</b>	<b>Revised Estimate (January)</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Expenditure - Projects c/fwd from 2022/2023	850,000	0
- Continuing Projects 2022/2023	13,265,858	12,385,387
- Projects Commencing 2023/2024	347,500	632,589
- Vehicle Replacement Programme	2,162,630	1,140,075
	<b>16,625,988</b>	<b>14,158,051</b>
Resources - Home Office Section 31 Grant (ESN)	1,725,471	0
- Capital Reserve	13,644,748	13,703,854
- Revenue Contribution to Capital	250,000	250,000
- One-off RCCO specific projects	850,000	0
- External Funding – SCC Contribution	15,646	15,646
- External Funding – NFRS Contribution	140,123	140,123
- New Dimensions Grant	0	5,445
- Fire Safety Protection Fund Grant	0	42,983
	<b>16,625,988</b>	<b>14,158,051</b>

**Continuing Projects**

**Estates**

2.4 Projects that were delayed due to COVID access restrictions are now progressing well and most are now expected to be completed by the end of this financial year.

An update in summary is as follows:

- The Stock Condition Works £110k budget allocated for 2023/2024 is now fully expended. The works have primarily focused on aesthetic but nevertheless essential enhancements to the property portfolio comprising of essential maintenance and necessary internal and external painting incorporating the new corporate colour schemes.
- The Barmston Mere Training Centre Condition Works are well underway for this year with replacement steel doors and gas mains removal now complete and structural work commenced in December.



- The Fire Behaviour Units are now complete and are currently undergoing testing.
- As reported at second review, the works at Hebburn Tri Station are progressing well and occupation is still scheduled for March 2024.

## ICT

- 2.5 The new and replacement hardware budget may be slightly overspent due to additional equipment requirements mainly for new roles.. This will be monitored and reported to Members at Outturn.

## Operations (£-6,911)

- 2.6 The body worn video cameras have all been delivered into the service and are currently being rolled out to departments. A number of the cameras, costing £9,368, are for Fire Safety staff and will be funded from Fire Safety Protection Fund Grant. In addition there is an underspend of £6,911 on the project. The Programme has been amended accordingly and is a significant contribution to supporting firefighter and staff safety.

## Community Safety

- 2.7 When the Programme was set in February, the smoke detector budget was reduced by £15,000 to £120,000 for 2023/2024 and future years. There is a risk that there will be no stock left in March and additional spend may be needed.

## Control/Mobilising (£-1,725,471)

- 2.8 The national Government led Emergency Services Mobile Communications Project (ESMCP) has experienced a number of delays during the years whereby the timing of progress and expenditure has continued to be uncertain. An independent review has shown that it is correct to move to the ESN Network but is now anticipated that this will not go live until beyond 2027. As the project is fully funded from specific grant, the project and funding will be slipped into 2025/26 but may be reviewed again as required.

## Additional Projects (+£297,445)

- 2.9 A number of additional projects are required to be added to the Capital Programme as follows:
- **Inflatable Boat**  
A third inflatable boat is required for the service to be classed as DEFRA and NFCC compliant for operational and training purposes. These are recent requirements due to changes resulting from tragic accidents in other areas of the country and amendments to the Boat Code. Three



inflatable boats in the Service Delivery fleet will allow for a response for both the River Tyne and the River Wear whilst also having the capacity to carry out routine training at remote locations. This will cost £10,445 including required storage equipment and will be funded from £5,445 New Dimensions Grant and £5,000 transferred from the Operational Equipment Replacement Programme Budget which is already included in the Capital Programme so this means a net increase to the Programme of £5,445.

- **Roller Brake Tester**

It has become apparent that the roller brake tester located in the Transport Workshop requires replacement. The current unit is fifteen years old and replacement parts are obsolete. Contractors have shown a reluctance to take on a maintenance contract for this old unit because of the difficulty in sourcing replacement parts. It is a fundamental piece of equipment to measure and record vehicle brake efficiency and is a pre-requisite for vehicle testing. It is estimated that a new unit will cost £45,000 which will be funded from Capital Reserve.

- **Fire Safety Accommodation Provision**

Bespoke accommodation and a meeting room are required for an additional team in the Fire Safety Department. This team will ensure recommendations from the Grenfell Inquiry are fully adhered too. The estimated cost is £47,000, £35,000 of which will be funded from Fire Protection Grant and the remaining £12,000 from Capital Reserve.

- **Enhance Female Firefighter Facilities**

Works are required at Sunderland Central, South Shields, Birtley and Chopwell Community Fire Stations to enhance the shower and locker room provision for Female Fire Fighters to ensure compliance with the Equalities Act. This is estimated to cost £200,000 and will be met from Capital Reserve.

## **Additional Schemes**

- 2.10 The Capital Programme was set in February recognising an additional £0.850m for a number of important schemes that were carried forward from previous years. Both schemes, the development of the Barmston Mere Training Centre (BTC) and the relocation and future development of 'Safetyworks!' have had detailed feasibility studies completed and reviewed.

The BTC plans are progressing well and the cost of future developments are being managed by the Training Facilities Group so that planned developments are being prioritised in line with the available resources. These are now forming part of the wider Capital Programme and have been absorbed as individual projects in their own right within the main Capital Programme. These developments will utilise all of the earmarked funds allocated.



Whilst the Service continues to operate Safetyworks!, the service is continuing to look at other available options and possible alternative ways of delivering the fire education messages and experiences in order to future proof this important area which may mean a dedicated replacement Safety Education Centre is now possibly not the preferred solution. Members will be kept updated of developments in this area.

### **3. Vehicle Replacement Programme (-£1,033,000)**

- 3.1 Work has been ongoing to review the current small fleet and consider options for replacement. A number of essential vehicles have been purchased this financial year and are currently awaiting delivery. Due to vehicle lead in times the remaining small fleet budget will need to be slipped in to 2024/2025. Future requirements will be considered at budget setting and the small fleet budget realigned to reflect current and future needs.
- 3.2 The Specialist Vehicles due to be purchased in 2023/2024 have been subject to a full Specials Review. The service are looking to procure a welfare vehicle estimated to cost around £40,000 by the end of the financial year. The remaining budget of £80,000 for a trailer will slip in to 2024/2025.
- 3.3 Due to long lead in times for such specialist vehicles it is considered that none of the other vehicles will be delivered in this financial year and the budgets will need to be slipped in to 2024/2025.

### **4. Capital Programme Funding**

- 4.1 The funding for the Capital Programme has been adjusted to reflect the change required to the Programme in sections 2.6 of the report with the results shown in the table at paragraph 2.1 and detailed in Appendix A for members information.
- 4.2 The bulk of the Authority's Capital Programme (89%) is funded from its own reserves which it has built up over time and these are set out in Appendix B for information. The detail shows that all reserves held by the Authority are fully committed and as such there is no flexibility to use reserves to help fund the Revenue Budget (not that this is considered a prudent use of the Authority's reserves by the Section 151 Officer of the Authority).

### **5. Prudential Indicators**

- 5.1 The Prudential Indicators for the financial year 2023/2024 were approved by the Authority on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023. These indicators are regularly reviewed to ensure that:
  - The Authority remains within its Authorised Limit for External Debt and any warning signals are highlighted where there is a danger that capital investment plans are not affordable, prudent, and sustainable;



- Treasury Management decisions are taken in accordance with professional good practice; and
- The capital expenditure control framework operated locally is consistent with, and supportive of, local strategic planning, local asset management planning, and proper option appraisal.

5.2 Internal monitoring procedures have been established to track performance against the various Prudential Indicators agreed by the Authority. These are managed on a day to day basis by the Finance Director. At this stage the Authority is operating within its Authorised Borrowing Limit, which is a statutory limit determined under Section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

There are no areas for concern or any issues which require any review of the indicators as originally approved. A further review of the indicators will be reported at the Capital Programme Outturn stage.

## **6. Risk Management**

6.1 A risk assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the risk to the Authority has been minimised as far as practicable. The assessment has considered an appropriate balance between risk and control, the realisation of efficiencies, the most appropriate use of limited resources and a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits. The risk to the authority has been assessed as low utilising the standard risk matrix based on control measures being in place.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 The financial implications are set out in the report.

## **8. Equality and Fairness Implications**

8.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

## **9. Health and Safety Implications**

9.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **10. Recommendation**

10.1 Members are requested to note the progress to date and the reported variations since the Third Quarterly Review and to approve the revised Capital Programme for 2023/2024, as set out at Appendix A.

**Tyne and Wear Fire  
and Rescue Authority**



