



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Policy and Strategy Committee

# **CHIEF FIRE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION: FIGHTING FIRES OR FIREFIGHTING**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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**Agenda Item No:**

**Date:** 02 November 2012

**Purpose of Report:**

To update Policy and Strategy Committee on the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) publication and its contents.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

**Name :** Frank Swann  
Chief Fire Officer

**Tel :** 0115 967 0880

**Email :** frank.swann@notts-fire.gov.uk

**Media Enquiries  
Contact :** Elisabeth Reeson  
(0115) 967 5889 elisabeth.reeson@notts-fire.gov.uk

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Fire Authority on 21 September 2012 a copy of the CFOA publication 'Fighting Fires or Firefighting' was circulated to all Members. The document had been formally published as a response to cuts in funding and sought to offer up deliverable policy options that Government could take.
- 1.2 At that meeting Members asked for a formal paper related to the publication to be presented to the next meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 On Thursday 20 September 2012, CFOA, at its annual general meeting, released the publication 'Fighting Fires or Firefighting, The Impact of Austerity on English Fire and Rescue Services.' The document was in response to the impact that grant reductions are having on the ability of Fire and Rescue Services to continue to deliver service.
- 2.2 CFOA is a professional association consisting of senior officers from across the Fire Service. It does work closely with the Local Government Association and Government, but reserves its right to comment independently on matters which affect the Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.3 As professionals tasked with delivery of the Service across England, concern is growing that the Government's deficit reduction strategy will have a disproportionate affect on the Fire and Rescue Service, due to it already being efficient, and that the elements that will be lost are the 'added values' the Service brings.
- 2.4 On average each adult in the UK pays just £46.12 per year for the Fire and Rescue Service. For this the public receives not only an emergency response based upon statutory provisions, but flooding response, initiatives to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour, road safety programmes, and general initiatives to improve health and well-being.
- 2.5 CFOA identifies that on current trajectories, the financial reductions could place a requirement of a collective saving of £207 million on top of those already made. This can be quantified as being equivalent to 4050 fire fighters, 60 fire stations and 150 fire appliances.
- 2.6 A key statistic to note is that if Fire and Rescue Authorities were to use the option of a referendum to increase Council Tax by 5% across the whole country, the referenda costs of £41 million would exceed the return of £38 million of extra revenue.

- 2.7 CFOA seeks to offer potential solutions for Government rather than just identify the pitfalls of the current situation, as to continue in the current manner will affect the long term safety of the public.
- 2.8 Whilst Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority cannot endorse CFOA's publication, it can note the content and accept the advice being given by professional officers. The Chief Fire Officer believes that this document should be widely distributed to Elected Members of the City and County Councils, District Councils and local MPs. It is not inappropriate for Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority to support that approach.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The only financial implications arising from this report are the costs of disseminating the document. These will be reduced considerably by the use of electronic means such as e-mail.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report.

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There is a slight risk that the Fire Authority may be criticised for being seen to indirectly support the CFOA stance, and the lobby this document represents. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has been affected by the need to reduce costs due to grant reductions and would be affected by further reductions in future years. This direct impact reduces the risk of such criticism.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 9.1 Note the content of the Chief Fire Officers Association publication; and
- 9.2 Note the Chief Fire Officer's strategy for circulating the document amongst Councillors and MPs throughout Nottinghamshire..

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

Frank Swann  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**





**CFOA**  
Chief Fire Officers  
Association



**Fighting Fires or Firefighting:**  
The Impact of Austerity on English  
Fire and Rescue Services

## **“Firefighters are the bravest of the brave”**

- David Cameron (2011)

*Following the riots in major UK cities*

## **“The Fire Services are highly valued by the public and were praised for their dedication and contribution.”**

- Sir Michael Pitt (2007)

*Following the review of major widespread flooding across the UK*

## **“No finer set of public services and public servants in the world.”**

- Tony Blair (2005)

*Following the terrorist bombings in London*

**Worthy praise for a vital and respected public service but fire and rescue services across the UK are facing the toughest challenge in their history. Chief Fire Officers across the country are concerned about the impact that cuts in funding will have on their ability to keep communities safe, protect businesses, reduce the economic impact of fires and other emergency incidents and maintain national resilience. In this report the Chief Fire Officers Association, as the professional voice of the service, sets out the value that fire and rescue services contribute to a safe, healthy and prosperous society. We outline the scale of financial pressures that Chief Fire Officers are facing and set out a range of deliverable policy options that Government could take to ensure our wider social impact is sustained.**

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## Executive Summary

The UK's Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) are the most respected fire and rescue services in the world and undertake vitally important work 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Combining prevention, protection and response, we have been successful in driving down fires, deaths and injuries by over 50% in the last 10 years. Efficient and effective, FRSs have a strong track record of managing with tight budgets in the face of an increasingly complex range of incidents. The FRS is already an efficient and effective service and provides excellent value for money; on average each adult in the UK pays just **£46.12 per year** for their fire and rescue service.

Whilst we recognise the need for all public services to contribute towards reducing the national deficit, the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) is warning that English FRSs are facing a 'perfect storm' of financial pressures which, if not addressed, may lead to a drastic reduction in firefighting capacity, increases in community risk, loss of vital prevention work and a threat to maintaining national resilience. This comes at a time when there is a high likelihood of an increase in demand for our prevention and response services as a consequence of an ageing population and as deprivation increases due to the economic recession.

The fire and rescue service is facing:

- backloaded cuts in central grant funding as a result of austerity measures
- further cuts caused by the localisation of council tax benefit
- reduced council tax bases and ability to raise income locally
- the impact of the economic downturn on risks to commercial premises particularly increased risk of arson
- potential increases in pension costs

These all converge during 2013-2015 to create a 'perfect storm' - one which CFOA believes will leave many FRSs with no option but to cut frontline services with a consequent increase in local and national risk.

During the summer of 2012 CFOA conducted a survey of England's FRSs to determine how Services plan to meet the challenges of '**doing more or the same with less**'. The early results are stark and CFOA is presenting this report to inform Government, locally elected politicians and the public of the impact that FRSs have at both local and national level; the efficiencies we have achieved to date; and the challenges of protecting communities and keeping people safe as FRSs are subjected to further cuts to funding.

Key findings from the CFOA survey:

- Almost all FRSs have already reduced the number of frontline firefighters; to date this has been achieved by natural wastage
- 90% of Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) believe that further cuts in front line posts are inevitable
- 97% of FRSs have cut back office staff and three quarters have implemented redundancy programmes amongst corporate or back office staff
- 90% of CFOs don't believe that sufficient savings can be made through changing their back office support functions, better procurement or sharing senior teams. The savings required to set balanced budgets are just too big
- Almost half of FRSs expect to reduce the number of fire engines and a quarter are planning to close fire stations
- 95% of CFOs expect to see an impact on national resilience (civil protection)

English Fire and Rescue Services are expected to find savings of £207 million and together may lose as many as 4,050 firefighters, 60 fire stations and 150 fire appliances as a result, despite moves to further improve efficiency.

CFOA is calling on government to recognise the efficiencies already being delivered through staff reductions, more efficient staffing and shared services but further cuts risk permanently damaging one of the UK's most important public services. We are making a number of key recommendations as a result.

- Recognise the contribution that FRSs make, in addition to firefighting, to address other key Government priorities including:
  - Providing national resilience for dealing with terrorism, flooding and other climate change issues
  - Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
  - Reducing deaths and serious injuries on the roads
  - Protecting business premises and minimising commercial loss
  - Improving opportunities for young people through our work on youth inclusion, reducing youth offending, improving school attendance rates and increasing employment prospects
  - Safeguarding children through the delivery of safety education programmes in schools
  - Working with partners to improve health and wellbeing in our local communities, particularly through our work with vulnerable people



- Protect FRSs from the impacts of the Council Tax Benefit localisation scheme given we have no direct levers to move people off benefits
- Vary the council tax referendum limits for fire to reflect the fact that Services cover several administrative boundaries - for example one FRS serves 14 district areas and would potentially have to hold 14 different costly referenda if it wished to increase local council tax. To increase council tax amongst all precepting authorities by just 5% would cost an estimated **£41 million in referenda costs and yet would raise just £38 million in extra income**
- Clearly identify funding for county fire and rescue services to assist county councils in making informed decisions about resource allocation
- Recognise the new burdens under the new Fire and Rescue National Framework and fund us accordingly – FRSs cannot keep doing a lot more with significantly less
- Work with CFOA to review Government risk assessments of the impacts of the cuts on national and local resilience
- Provide clear data to the public on the combined effect of all the cuts and funding changes on their local FRS
- Remove the barriers to FRSs merging or combining especially the requirement to equalise council tax and provide funding to bridge the equalisation costs which are prohibitive for many FRSs
- A fundamental review, within this parliament, of the funding mechanisms for Fire and Rescue Services in the future, with particular emphasis on the years of the next parliament 2015-2020

This report forms the first in a series of strategic documents that CFOA will develop over the coming 12 months as a basis for a new dialogue with Government on the future role of fire and rescue services. Fire Futures, initiated by the Coalition Government's first Fire Minister, Bob Neill MP, started a useful debate but stopped short of a clear articulation of Government's expectations of FRSs for the next decade and beyond. CFOA will lead a mature and evidenced debate with Government on the contribution FRSs make to wider community wellbeing and the expanded prevention and response role it can deliver if funded accordingly. CFOA will also begin to craft an evidenced proposition for a radical reshaping of emergency service provision for England.



## 1. Introduction

UK fire and rescue services (FRSs) are recognised as the most professional, effective and respected services in the world and amongst the most highly performing public services in the country. Organised and deployed on the basis of risk rather than demand the FRS responds 24 hours a day to fires, road traffic collisions, floods and all manner of emergencies. The Service enforces fire safety legislation, protects the environment and works extensively with partners to reduce anti-social behaviour and promote community safety. FRSs are also part of the critical national infrastructure, providing national resilience in the event of major emergencies resulting from terrorist activity, extreme weather, industrial accident or any other unexpected catastrophe. The public expects an immediate and professional response, equipped with the necessary resources and staff to deal with the incident in an effective way and ensure a swift return to normality.

Prior to the cuts in public spending the FRS was able to deploy 8,000 operationally trained staff in minutes and had the ability to call upon up to 50,000 staff in a matter of hours. The Service provides public reassurance and is a visible, trusted presence in localities. There is a minimum resource threshold, and therefore minimum fixed cost, below which both public and firefighter safety is compromised.

The combination of prevention, protection and response has driven down the number of fires year on year, reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries and saving the UK hundreds of millions of pounds of physical and economic damage. The money saved is not limited to the buildings that would otherwise have been lost – the NHS benefits from reduced treatment costs, councils see less adverse impact on transport and housing infrastructure and the economy benefits as jobs are not lost or businesses ruined. The Government's own research (The Economic Cost of Fire) highlights clearly how substantial these costs can be.

As the number of fire related incidents declines FRSs have used the capacity this creates to increase their prevention work becoming a deliverer of choice for other public agencies struggling to achieve improved outcomes with vulnerable or hard to reach groups. FRSs have a unique brand and positive reputation – dependable, trusted and respected – which they use to leverage tangible outcomes across many national and local priorities. For example, through high impact youth engagement programmes FRSs reduce the cost of school exclusion – estimated at £90,000 per pupil; a success rate of 70% working to reduce



reoffending saving the public purse £250,000 per offender; working with Job Centre Plus on core employability skills for the long term unemployed resulting in 65% of people finding work – a saving in welfare benefits of at least £15,000 per person.

FRSs are making a direct contribution to reducing public spending by reducing the demand on other public agencies through their wider work in communities. We can, and do, help to reduce the annual costs of:

- Youth unemployment (£14.8bn)
- Road traffic collisions (£15bn)
- Anti social behaviour (£3.8bn)



- School exclusion (£650m)
- Slips trips and falls in the home (£4.6m daily)
- Reoffending (£11bn)
- Commercial losses caused by fire (£865m)
- Economic loss caused by commercial fires (£9.1bn)
- Troubled families (£9bn)

CFOA is calling on Government to recognise the impact FRSs have on the policy agendas across Government departments and to debate how this contribution can be leveraged over the coming years.

England's fire and rescue services are facing the most significant financial challenge in their history. All Services recognise the need to contribute to reducing the national deficit and in 2010 the fire and rescue service sponsor Government department, Communities and Local Government, announced that the FRS as a whole would be expected to lose 25% of its grant funding over four years, backloaded into the last two years. So far the FRS has received cuts totalling £69 million in 2011-2013, an average cut to formula grant of 6.5%. Current figures indicate that there will be a further £138 million cut over the next two years (2013-2015), an average of 14.4% of formula grant. These cuts may be even more significant for those FRSs that are part of county councils, where the council will need to prioritise an ever increasing adult and children's social care budget but with less overall funds. The Local Government Association (LGA) has

estimated that councils will need to cut non-social care budgets (including the fire and rescue service) by as much as 80% in order to continue funding support for the most vulnerable in society.

The FRS has risen to meet this challenge, introducing more innovation and reform to bring down costs - streamlining back office functions, increasing collaboration and partnership in areas such as procurement, introducing new shift patterns and reducing already very low sickness levels. This has produced some excellent results but falls well short of the reductions needed - 90% of Chief Fire Officers do not believe that these sorts of efficiencies will be sufficient to balance their budgets.

As a result, the impact of these cuts is already being felt on the frontline. All Services will have cut firefighter posts and support staff by 2015 with three quarters expecting to lose more than 10% of their frontline strength and a similar proportion expecting this to lead to a reduction in the number of fire engines (appliances) available for emergency response. Two thirds of Services believe there will be a negative impact on National Resilience capability.

In this document CFOA sets out the potential impacts of the cuts on public safety and puts forward a number of suggestions to Government which will sustain the FRS wider social impact and mitigate the risk to local and national resilience.



## 2. What Fire and Rescue Services Do and Our Added Value

There are 46 Fire and Rescue Authorities in England split into four distinct governance types:

- **County** - the fire and rescue service is one of a number of service areas within a county council such as Suffolk
- **Metropolitan** - covering a number of different councils around metropolitan areas, such as Greater Manchester
- **Combined** - covering areas which can have both unitary and county councils, such as Hampshire
- **London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority** - part of the Greater London Authority (GLA)

The Fire and Rescue Service's primary aim is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the community it serves. It does this in a number of ways, not least the ability to provide a nationwide response, within minutes, to any emergency through its highly trained and competent workforce. This is a unique and significant capability and is the essential backbone of how we ensure the protection and safety of the nation, demonstrated most recently during the riots of 2011.

The range and scale of emergencies the FRS is capable of dealing with has extended massively in recent years. Firefighters are now highly skilled in water rescue, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear emergencies, hazardous materials release, urban search and rescue in collapsed structures, and fire scene investigation to name just a few. Following the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, FRSs and the Government have put in place a national resilience programme which has improved emergency preparedness and reduced risk from regional and national-scale emergencies such as terrorist attacks and flooding. In some areas firefighters are also taking on the role of co-responders, providing the earliest possible first response to life-threatening medical emergencies.

The mantra of 'prevention is better than cure' is now at the heart of everything the fire and rescue service does. Detailed research and analysis of incidents over many years has identified those most at risk - including the elderly, those with physical or mental disability and those with substance abuse problems - and fire and rescue services now actively target high-impact prevention work at those groups. Many of those most at risk from fire are also in contact with other agencies such as the NHS or the

local council, so FRSs work closely with partners to deliver joined up services.

We have recognised particularly the importance of engaging with children and young people, not only through traditional fire safety education but also the role that FRSs can play in improving health and wellbeing and combating anti-social behaviour. Charities within the sector such as The Prince's Trust and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme now work closely with local fire and rescue services to deliver positive outcomes for young people.

While prevention can stop a fire happening in the first place, protection measures can limit its impact or even extinguish it altogether before the fire and rescue service arrives. The FRS takes a leading role in promoting the use of fire safety features, including sprinklers, in all buildings. We play an active role in the planning process for new buildings, provide guidance and advice to existing building owners and where necessary enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order. As with everything we do, this is done through a risk-based process, where the most at risk buildings are targeted for the most scrutiny.

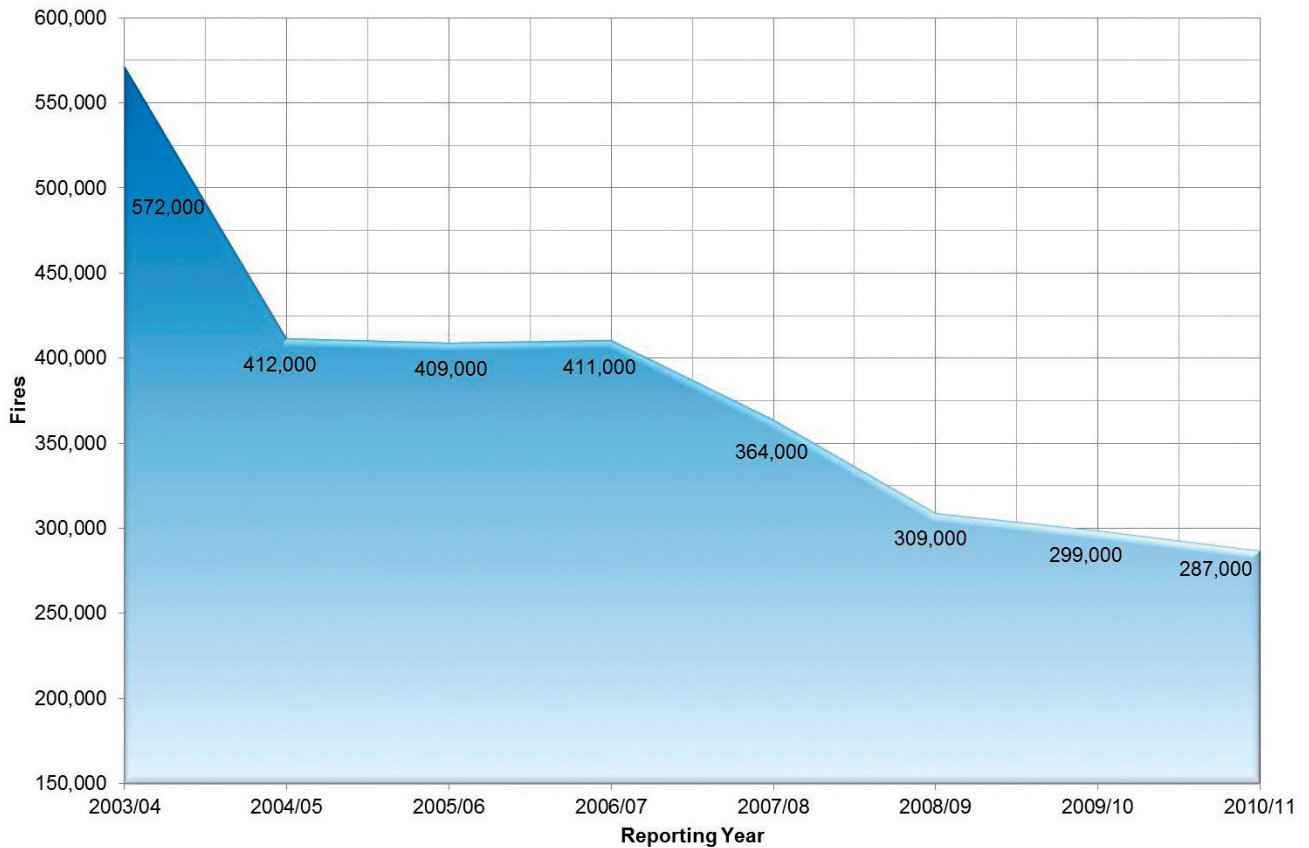
Climate change is having a profound impact on the way the FRS operates, as changing weather patterns lead to increased flooding, heavier snowfalls and hotter, drier weather that can lead to wildfires. We are developing new procedures and introducing new training and equipment to counter these new threats. We also recognise that we have an effect on the environment as much as it has an effect upon us. The fire and rescue service has played a leading role in research into the carbon output of fires and the way that this can be reduced. We also recognise the dangers of contamination from some of the incidents that we attend and do all that we can to limit it.

## 3. Continuous High Performance

The FRS has a track record to be proud of, having made continuous year-on-year improvements in performance rarely seen in other public services. Combining improved response, targeted prevention activity and expert protection advice we have seen the number of fires in England and Wales halved since 2003/04. Injuries and deaths are down and we have made excellent progress in reducing the number of false alarms attended, which are otherwise a waste of time and resources.



**Fig 1 - Total Fires** (Data Source – DCLG 2010/11 Fire Statistics Great Britain)

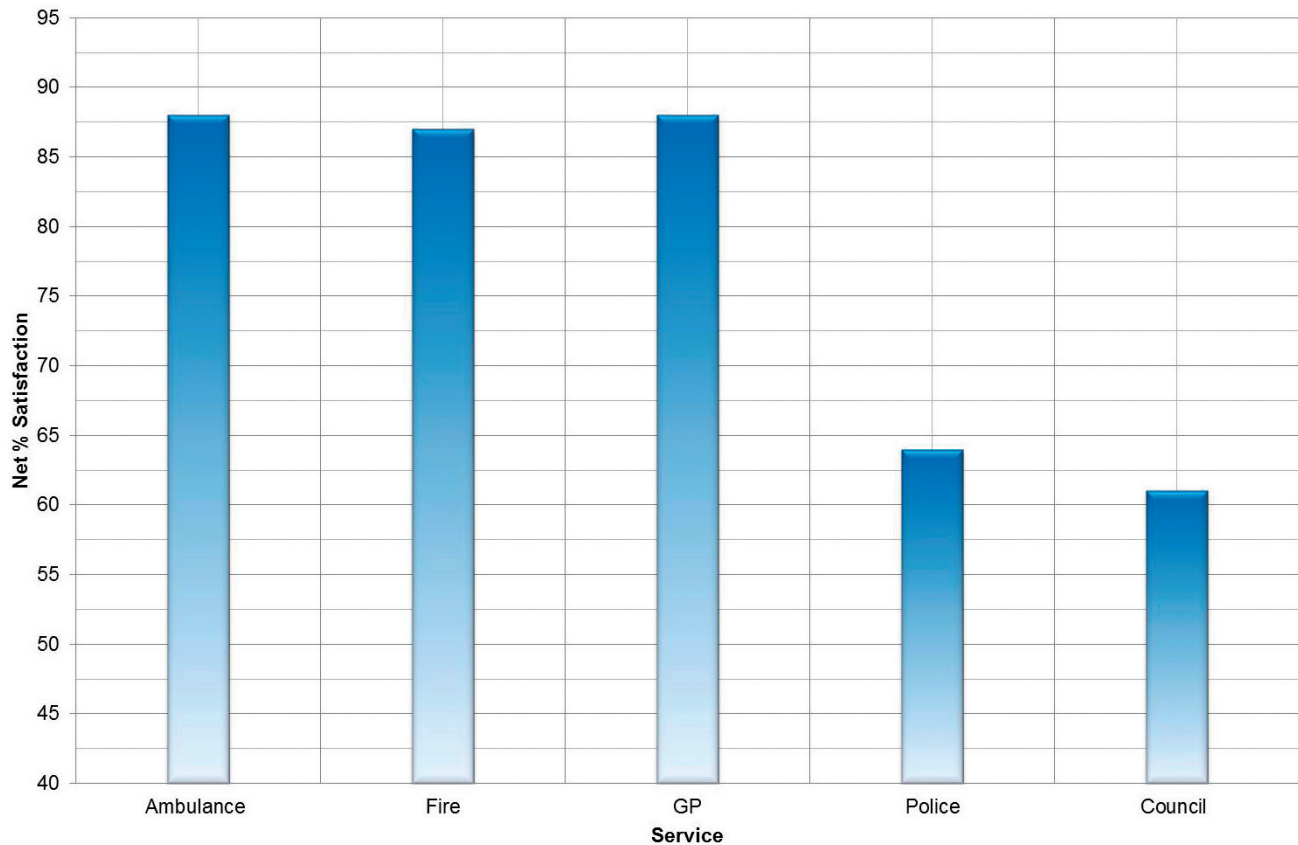


The efforts of the fire and rescue service have a significant positive impact on the economy by reducing the costs of fires, deaths and injuries. The cost to the economy of a single fire death according to latest estimates (2008) is **£1.65 million** and the estimated average consequential cost of a domestic fire is **£ 44,523**

This significant reduction in emergency response has meant that more resources can be diverted to preventative work thereby creating a virtuous circle, improving education and awareness of the risks of fire and delivering year on year improvements in performance. The unique public respect afforded to our firefighters means that we are able to access client groups that other public agencies find difficult to reach. The strength of the fire and rescue service brand means that our prevention activities have achieved more success relative to any other public service. Chief Fire Officers are concerned that these prevention programmes are at greatest risk from the funding cuts.



**Fig 2 - Public Satisfaction with Local Public Services** (Source – Institute of Customer Service 2012)



Public satisfaction is amongst the highest of any public service and we take great pride in our positive public image, which is so vital for the effective prevention work we undertake and in particular for our work with children and young people.

All of this success comes from the smallest budget of any critical public service – both Police and Health have much larger budgets. It is arguable that fire and rescue services provide more “bang for the buck” than nearly any other service because we are able to make such efficient use of our firefighting staff in all three areas of prevention, protection and response.

## 4. Efficient and Effective

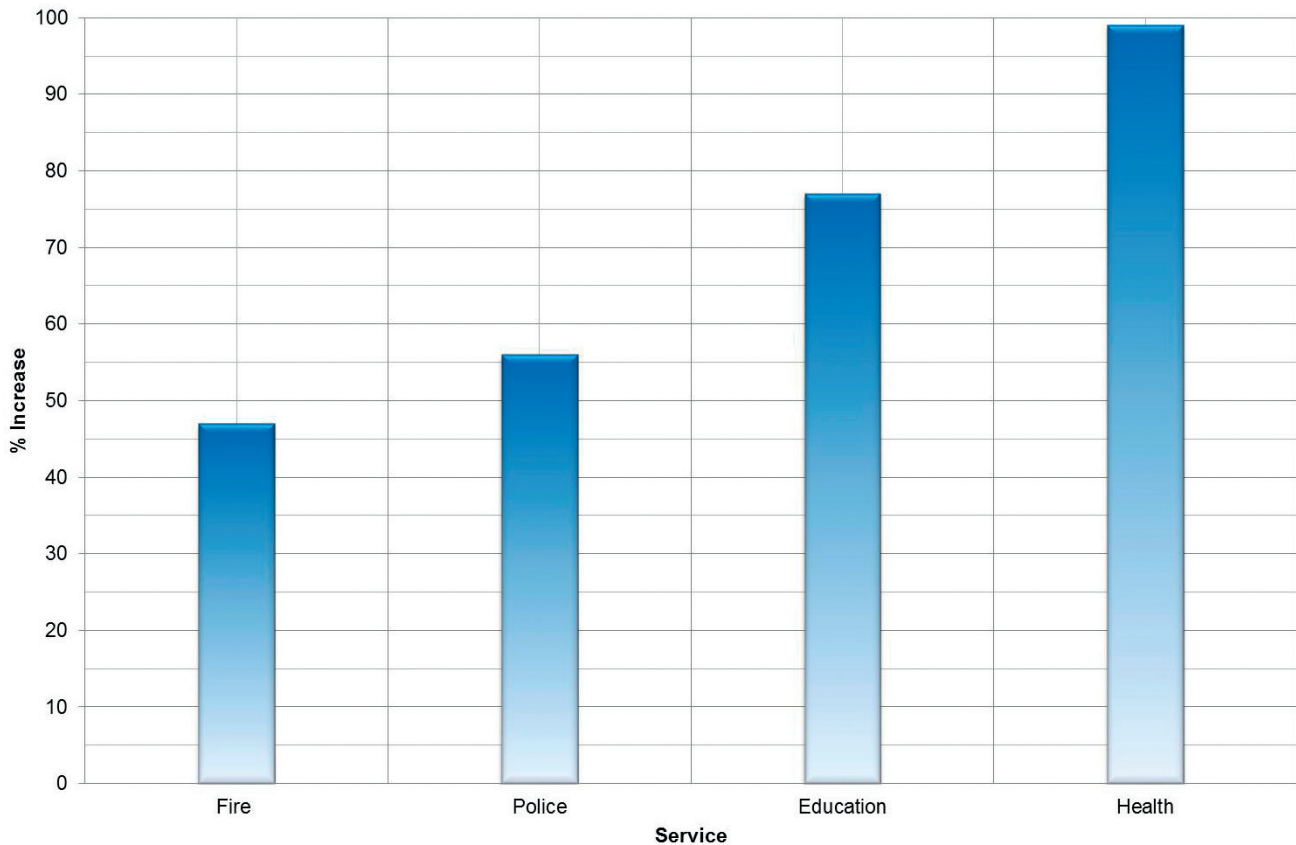
The FRS is also an efficient and effective service and provides excellent value for money; on average each adult in the UK pays just **£46.12 per year** for their fire and rescue service. Over the past decade, the FRS has moved forward with a significant, sector-wide modernisation and improvement agenda, introducing £185 million worth

(Audit Commission report 2009) of efficiencies whilst focusing on reducing risk to businesses and homes and continuing to provide the standard of service the public has come to expect.

Whilst health, education and police have seen significant increases in funding, FRS funding has remained relatively static and yet FRSs are still being expected to find large scale savings. Only councils have received higher percentage grant cuts than FRSs. Police cuts over the Spending Review period are below 20%, the health sector can expect inflationary increases and the education sector remains relatively static in real terms.

Fire and Rescue budgets are already oriented heavily towards frontline service provision – three quarters of our costs are staff wages, of which 80% are firefighters. Most premises costs are fire stations; most vehicle costs are fire engines or specialist response vehicles. Back office staff levels in the FRS are substantially lower than in other parts of the public sector with many administrative functions shared with host or lead local authorities.

**Fig 3 - Increase in Total Identifiable Expenditure on Services (England) between 2001/02 and 2009/10**



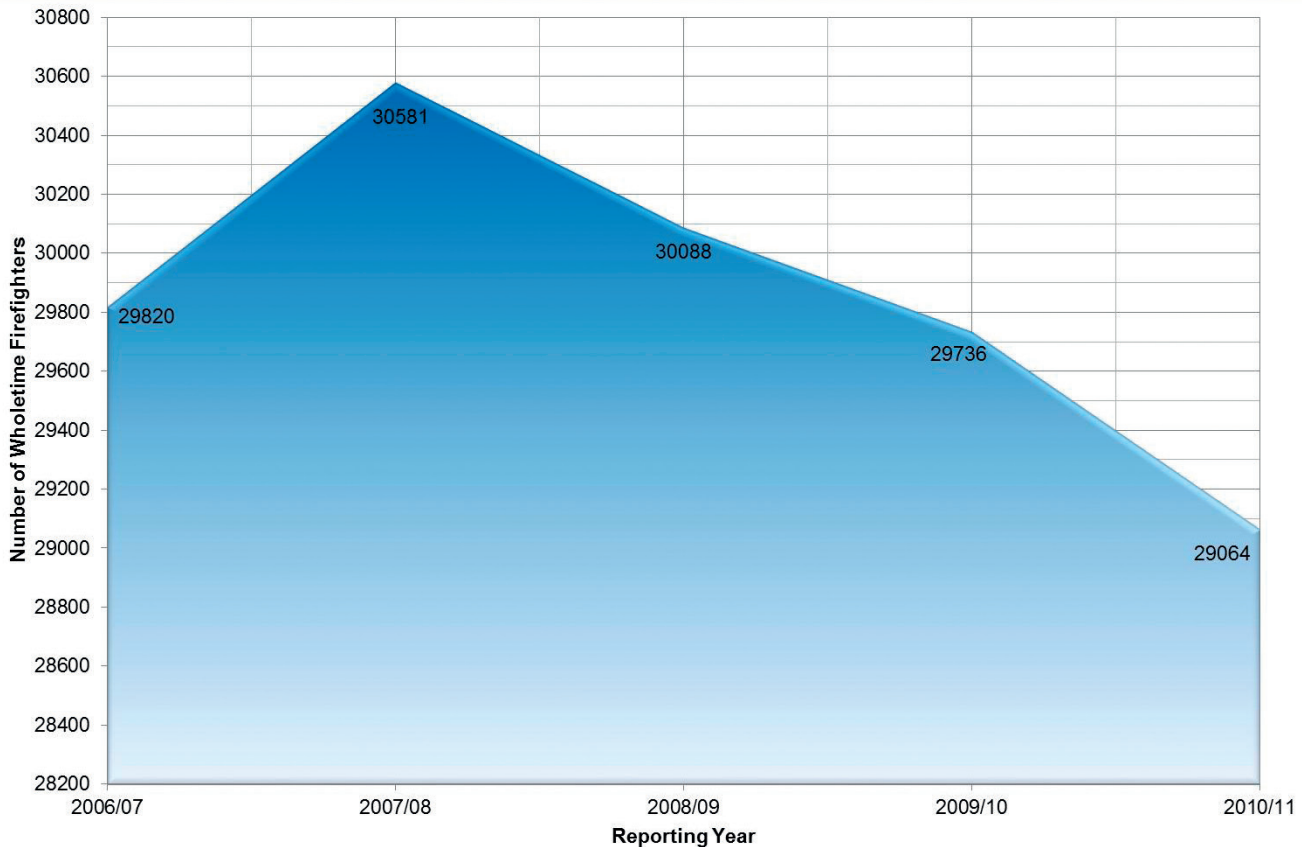
Whilst some uniformed staff work in offices they are still also available to provide the essential operational resilience required in the event of a major emergency and are fundamental to ensuring that the appropriate numbers of operational personnel, with specialist skills, are available to deal with a major emergency safely.

It is often argued that our success in reducing incidents should inevitably lead to a reduction in firefighter numbers. This holds true to a degree and most Services have reduced their firefighter numbers over the recent years as more appropriate staffing models are introduced. This has seen a reduction in full time firefighters and an increase in retained, or on call, staff.

However, the relationship between firefighter numbers and the number of fires is not straightforward – fewer fires does not directly equal fewer firefighters. We provide a service dependent upon risk, not demand. While demand has fallen, risk remains and could increase given the impact that the recession is having on households and lifestyles and our service must provide resilience against this.



**Fig 4 - Number of Wholetime Firefighters Nationally** (Data Source – Audit Commission Value for Money Profiles 2012)



As already illustrated the range of incidents firefighters are expected to respond to has increased dramatically in recent years. National resilience, against both criminal and natural threats, requires that we maintain a minimum level of resource at all times.

There is a clear public expectation that in the event of a local or national civil emergency, whether it is fire, transport, industrial or weather related, the FRS is there as an immediate, well equipped and trained body able to intervene to carry out rescues, mitigate damage and assist the most vulnerable members of society. For most other (non responsive) services, reduction in resources can be accommodated by scaling back the range or the level of service; for the FRS, as a largely responsive service, the range or level of service can only be adjusted if the risks reduce or change in nature.

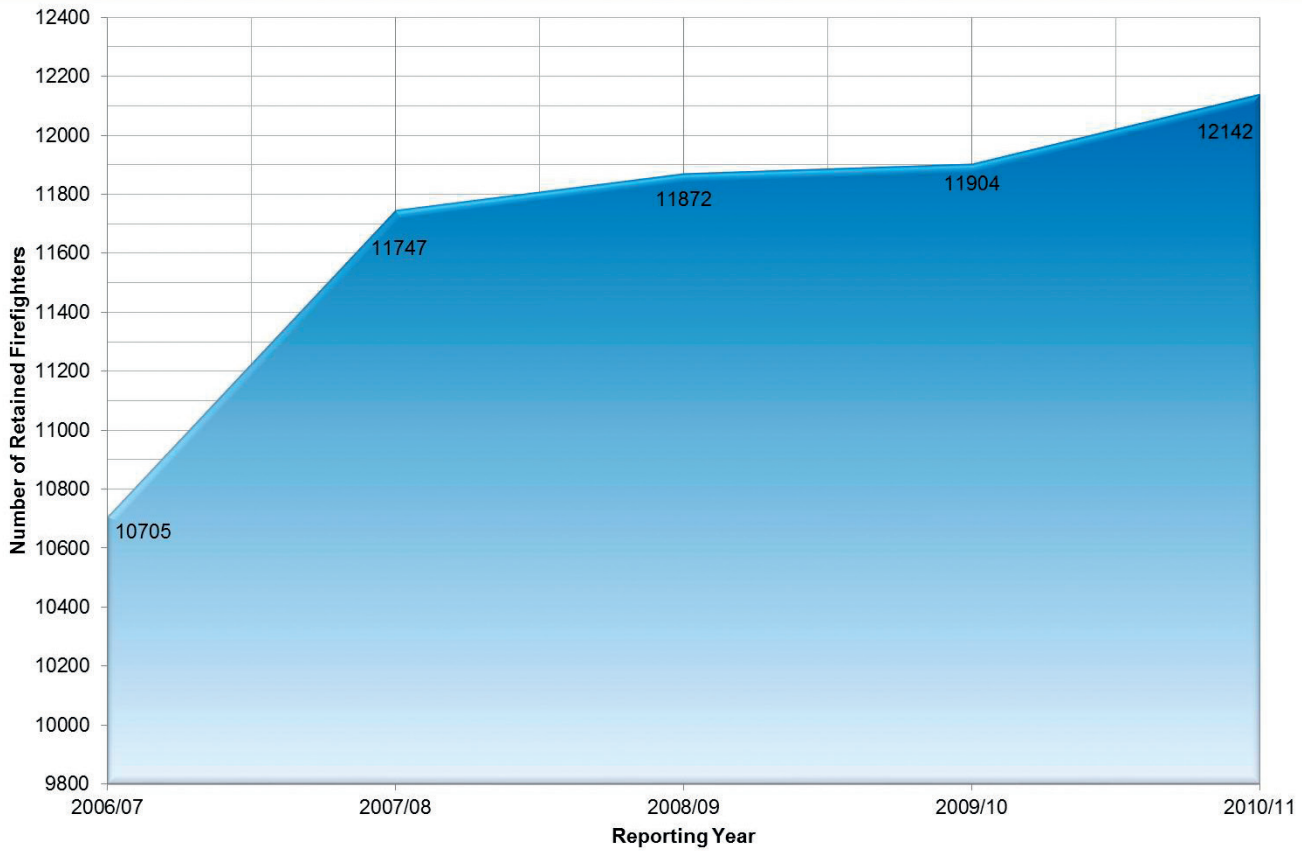
Many public services will argue that there is a base level of provision or infrastructure below which the essential fabric of the service is not sustainable. Such arguments are always open to challenge as they assume there is a limit to productivity improvement, and also that the existing

level of service is sacrosanct. However, in the case of the FRS, the argument is more robust and defensible because its core functions are dealing with immediate emergencies and potential life threatening situations where the difference between success and failure is measured in minutes rather than months or years.

Substantial progress can already be evidenced, ranging from the new and extended functions which have been absorbed over the last decade, to the rationalisations of the last five years which have saved costs in some areas but more importantly created new capacity to support community fire safety and community wellbeing.



**Fig 5 - Number of Retained Firefighters Nationally** (Data Source – Audit Commission Value for Money Profiles 2012)



## 5. A Perfect Storm

Although nearly all public services face a difficult financial future, the FRS in particular faces a near 'perfect storm' of issues which will make managing budget reductions very difficult. In addition we feel that the cumulative impact of all the cuts and changes impacting on fire and rescue services at the same time may not have been fully explored in the Government's risk assessments for local and national resilience. Critically these cuts are happening at a time when demand for our response services are expected to increase as the recession bites deepest into those most vulnerable or most at risk from death or injury in a fire.

As we approach the grant settlement for years three and four of the Spending Review we know that the cuts from years one and two are only just beginning to be felt. We also face much greater cuts to come as reductions have been backloaded for fire. Current estimates suggest a national average cut in grant of 14.4% for 2013-15.

As a part of local government, we will be affected by the 10% reduction in council tax benefit and the localisation of the schemes, despite having no direct levers to move people off benefits. Some local authorities are choosing to

absorb this 10% rather than pass it on to households that cannot pay and this would be equivalent to a further £60 million of lost income to fire and rescue services.

Furthermore, Fire Authorities are being unfairly restricted by the new council tax referendum measures introduced by the Localism Act 2011. FRSs often cover very large areas made up of several councils, but represent a very small proportion of the overall council tax bill; the average cost per adult for providing a fire and rescue service is just **£46.12 per year**. As a result, the cost of holding several referenda across many districts outweighs any potential increase in council tax that could be gained. To increase council tax amongst all precepting authorities by just 5% would cost an estimated £41 million in referenda costs and yet would raise just £38 million in extra income.

Our efforts to save money to meet the cuts expected are also restricted by other significant financial risks. A recent court decision relating to retained firefighter pensions could increase the pension liability for the service as a whole by nearly £500 million. Most Fire Authorities in the past have used natural wastage to avoid compulsory redundancy amongst firefighters when savings have to be made. The retirement profile for firefighters is low for the next few years so Authorities may struggle to meet reductions in firefighter numbers without resorting to compulsory redundancies because too few of our firefighters will have reached retirement age.

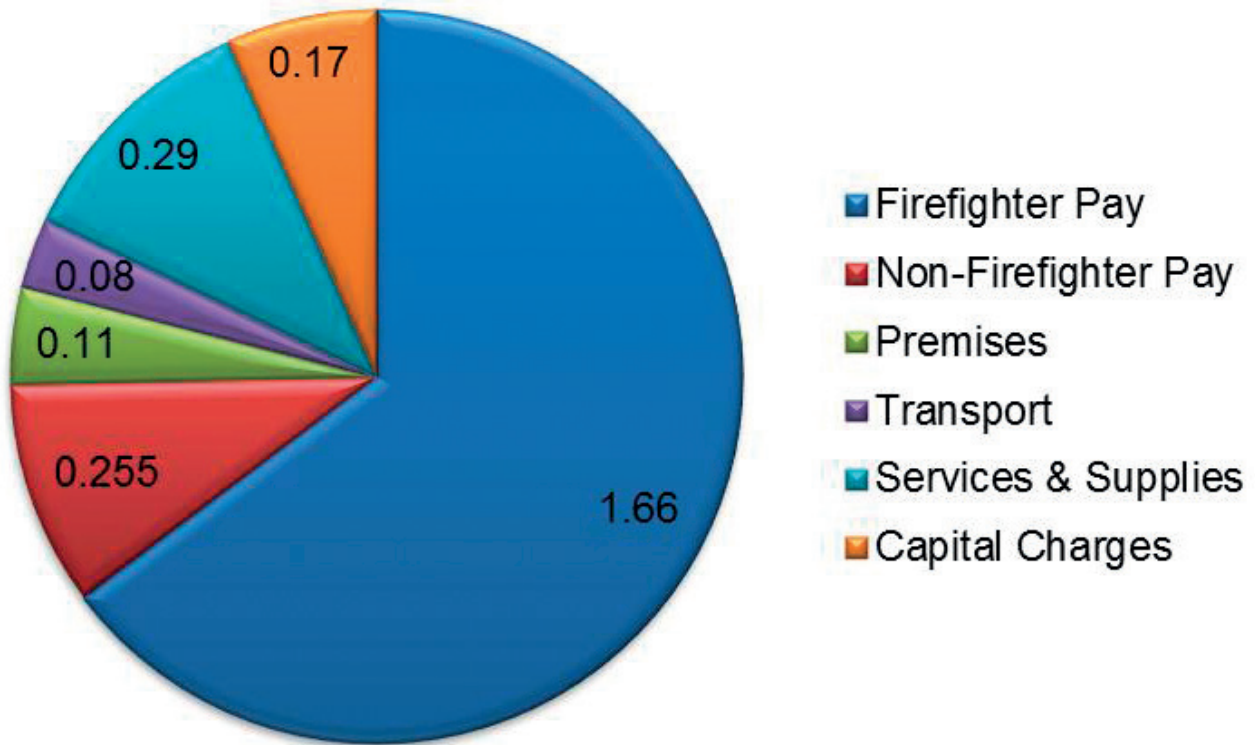
Cuts could be particularly profoundly felt in the long term by county fire and rescue services, where the FRS forms just part of the council's overall spending. Analysis by the LGA has shown that the pressure on local government budgets is extremely high. Dramatically falling income and pressure from the increasing cost of providing adult and social care, children's services and waste management is reducing the budget available for other areas (including fire and rescue) by as much as 80% in real terms by 2019/20.

The impact of a weakened economy is to increase deprivation and pressures on the business community - two key risk areas for the FRS workload.

Our staff have matched the Chancellor's aspirations with most having had pay frozen for two years (or three years for corporate staff) as well as facing up to pay restraint going forward. Inflation remains high and our staff have seen their real wages falling. In his initial bulletin concerning FRS budget cuts the Fire Minister suggested a number of ways to make savings without the need to impact upon frontline services.



Fig 6 - UK Fire and Rescue Service Spending (£Billion)



- Flexible staffing arrangements
- Improved sickness management
- Pay restraint and recruitment freezes
- Shared services/back office functions
- Improved procurement
- Sharing Chief Officers and other senior staff
- Voluntary amalgamations between Fire and Rescue Authorities

All fire and rescue services have explored these recommendations and introduced some excellent reforms and efficiencies as a result. However, based upon prudent and ambitious calculations of savings from these areas it will be impossible to meet the savings needed using these methods alone.

As can be seen from the pie chart above, areas such as procurement do not constitute a significant proportion of fire and rescue services budgets and the projected savings from all these areas fall well short of the necessary amount.

Current figures indicate that the service will be required to make £207 million worth of savings over the four years of the Spending Review. Our most ambitious estimates indicate that only £117 million of that can be met through the measures mentioned above. This assumes that we halve the number of senior fire officers and improve already very low sickness levels by a further 25%, which will be very difficult given the physical demands of the firefighters role. This leaves over £90 million to be found elsewhere, and that can only come from the frontline. £90 million is equivalent to some 2,500 firefighters. This is on top of the estimated 1,200 firefighters lost through the recruitment freezes and flexible staffing arrangements mentioned above.

It is evident that fire and rescue services face a uniquely difficult funding situation, have limited means to change it, and will be forced to manage the reductions through cuts to the frontline.



## 6. Impact of Cuts

The present range of services offered by the fire and rescue service and the ways in which they are delivered and resourced, are the result of years of modernisation and improvement. There is a high level of expectation from Ministers, other public services, the media and, most important of all, the public when it comes to the provision of fire and rescue services. Double figure reductions in resources, in tandem with the other financial pressures mentioned above will inevitably push some, if not all, FRSs to the limit, beyond which sustainability of services would be at risk.

Austerity measures will inevitably impact differently in different Services due to the range of governance and funding structures in England. Grant funding from central government is distributed according to a complex and opaque formula and ranges from 30% to 70% of total FRS revenue. This means resource cuts applied directly through this central grant system or indirectly through council tax will impact differently across FRSs. 80% of costs are committed to frontline or direct support costs and these operational resources are aligned to local risks which are detailed and evidenced in local Integrated Risk Management Plans.

Given the cumulative impact of all these funding pressures we surveyed Chief Fire Officers to find out how they would continue to deliver a balanced budget:

- **A further 4,050 frontline firefighter posts will be cut during 2013-15**
- **Almost 1,150 additional jobs will be cut from back office support functions**
- **150 fire appliances will be cut**
- **60 fire stations will close**
- **Almost 40 other fire stations will provide a reduced level of operational cover**

This will mean that over the Spending Review period FRSs will have 22% less frontline staff to deliver the high impact outcomes already illustrated in this report – it will be our ability to prevent emergency incidents, to reduce demand on other public services and to make a positive contribution to economic recovery which will be severely compromised.





## 7. Policy Options that Sustain the FRS Wider Social Impact

CFOA is clear that the current situation cannot continue without risking the long term safety of the public. We recognise the need for all public services to contribute towards reducing the national deficit, but we believe that Fire needs some protection to reflect its vital contribution to civil protection and the safety and wellbeing of local communities.

### CFOA therefore requests that the Government:

- Recognises the contribution that FRSs make, in addition to firefighting, to address other key Government priorities including:
  - Providing national resilience for dealing with terrorism, flooding and other climate change issues
  - Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
  - Reducing deaths and serious injuries on the roads
  - Protecting business premises and minimising commercial loss
  - Improving opportunities for young people through our work on youth inclusion, reducing youth offending, improving school attendance rates and increasing employment prospects
  - Safeguarding children through the delivery of safety education programmes in schools
  - Working with partners to improve health and wellbeing in our local communities, particularly through our work with vulnerable people
- Protect fire from the impacts of the Council Tax Benefit localisation scheme given we have no direct levers to move people off benefits. The impact of localising council tax benefit on FRSs could equate to a **further grant cut of £60 million** on top of the £207 million already required from the Spending Review, leading to further frontline reductions of **1650 firefighters or 35 stations**
- Vary the council tax referendum limits for fire to reflect the fact that Services cover several administrative boundaries - for example one FRS serves 14 district areas and would potentially have to hold 14 different costly referenda if it wished to increase local council tax



- Clearly identify funding for county fire and rescue services to assist county councils in making informed decisions about resource allocation
- Recognise the new burdens under the new Fire and Rescue National Framework and fund us accordingly – FRSs cannot keep doing a lot more with significantly less
- Work with CFOA to review Government risk assessments of the impacts of the cuts on national and local resilience
- Provide clear data to the public on the combined effect of all the cuts and funding changes on their local FRS
- Remove the barriers to FRSs merging or combining especially the requirement to equalise council tax and provide funding to bridge the equalisation costs which are prohibitive for many FRSs
- A fundamental review, within this parliament, of the funding mechanisms for Fire and Rescue Services in the future, with particular emphasis on the years of the next parliament 2015-2020

These changes would not only offer protection, but provide greater flexibility to allow Services to continue to make efficiencies in future.

As we have already shown, fire and rescue services are already amongst the most efficient and effective public services in the UK and continue to be held in high esteem by the public. We have an excellent performance record and punch well above our weight in terms of benefits to society as a whole. As a key part of the UK's critical national infrastructure, it is vital that we are given support if we are to continue to provide the resilience and security that Government and the public at large expect.







### **The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA)**

The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) is a professional membership association and a registered charity. CFOA members are drawn from all UK Fire & Rescue Services (FRSs) representing the senior executives and managers of the Service. Through the work of its members the Association supports the Fire and Rescue Services of the UK in its aspiration to protect the communities they serve and to continue to improve the overall performance of the fire sector. CFOA provides professional and technical advice to inform national fire policy.



**CFOA**  
Chief Fire Officers  
Association