

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COMMISSIONER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2022/23 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS



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NARRATIVE REPORT

BY THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

Introduction

The Authority's financial performance for the full year ended on 31st March 2023 is as set out in the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement (CIES) and its financial position is as set out in the Balance Sheet and Cash Flow Statement. These financial statements have been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting United Kingdom 2022/23. It is the purpose of this report to explain, in an easily understandable way, the financial facts in relation to the Authority.

Northamptonshire

The county of Northamptonshire covers an area of 913 square miles and has an estimated population of over 768,000 people (source: HMICFRS Value for Money Population estimates 2022/23). It is the southern-most county in the East Midlands region and its most populated towns are Northampton, Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough. There has been a notable increase in population in recent years with some major new housing development projects and more to come.

Prior to 2021/22, the county was serviced by seven borough/district councils. On 1 April 2021, these were consolidated into two unitary authorities (North and West Northamptonshire) through the reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire as directed by Central Government. Fire and Rescue Services provided by Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (NCFRA) continue to service the whole of Northamptonshire.



Northamptonshire is a very fast growing county and the 2021 national census highlighted that the county's population has grown by 13.5% since 2011 compared to a national increase of 6.5%.

In fact, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Demography Insight Pack 2020 described that the county has had above (national) average population growth in recent decades. In the past 10 years the population of Northamptonshire has grown by an estimated 10.2% versus a 7.84% England average. Looking back over the past 30 years the growth gap is even greater, with an estimated increase of 30.9% between 1989 and 2019 in Northamptonshire compared with 18.4% across England. This is estimated to increase further by 2041.

Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

The Police and Crime Act 2017 enabled Police and Crime Commissioners to have a say in the oversight of fire and rescue services within their area, subject to the approval of a business case by the Home Secretary. The aim of this legislation was to “enable fire and rescue services to work more closely together and develop the role of elected and accountable Police and Crime Commissioners.”

On 1st January 2019, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire (PCC) became the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire (PFCC). On that date Northamptonshire became the first and until 1st April 2023 was the only county Fire and Rescue Service to transfer Governance arrangements in this way.

Whilst the governance of Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority is undertaken by the PFCC and his statutory officers, it is a separate corporation sole, therefore separate budgets are allocated, separate precepts are set and the funding and accounts for NCFRA are produced separately to the PFCC accounts for policing.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 stipulates that a Fire and Rescue Plan must be prepared and published by a relevant Fire and Rescue Authority in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework and that it should set out the Authority’s priorities and objectives, for the period covered by the document, in connection with the discharge of the Authority’s functions.

Group Boundary

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire (Fire and Rescue Authority) Order 2018 utilised existing legislation (Specifically Section 4A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004) to create a new corporation sole NCFRA, a role which is held by the Police, Fire and Commissioner, but acting as NCFRA. This legislation outlines the key responsibilities for oversight and ensuring good governance within the NCFRA.

This reflects that the government provides funding to NCFRA and is ultimately responsible for the NCFRA. As such, the NCFRA Accounts are included within the Whole of Government Accounts, which is the consolidation of over 9,000 public sector bodies, including central and local government and public corporations such as the Bank of England, to provide the most complete and accurate picture of the UK's public finances.

Therefore, whilst there is some commonality within the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire (OPFCC), Chief Constable and NCFRA, they are three separate corporations sole, with Fire and Police created under separate legislation and with the responsibility to set up and maintain separate “Funds” for each organisation; with separate legal responsibilities and no ability to vire funds between them. As set out by CIPFA, there is not a requirement for the NCFRA Accounts to be included within the OPFCC group accounts.

The Business Case for the Governance transfer included maintaining separate management arrangements and operational functions for each service but working towards sharing of some support services and buildings where it makes sense to provide better value for money for the public of Northamptonshire. This direction of travel towards shared support teams continues. The accounts of Fire and Policing are operated separately in line with the legislation.

In line with the Home Office Financial Management Code of Practice, a collaboration agreement is in place between the three separate organisations of: NCFRA, the Northamptonshire Chief Constable and the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner which sets out the arrangements for working together where it would be advantageous to the parties to do so, mirroring such collaboration arrangements that Northamptonshire Police have with other Police forces.

The arrangements outlined in the legislation result in the PFCC having some influence over some policing relationships with NCFRA, and therefore there is a requirement to disclose the nature of the transactions between OPFCC and the NCFRA and this is provided within the related parties note within the statement of accounts. Most of this note relates to governance services provided by the Office of the PFCC to Fire, and charges for services and shared staff providing services to Fire and Policing.

Police, Fire and Crime Plan 2021-2026

The current Police, Fire and Crime Plan covering the period 2021-2026 was published in early 2022, and the Fire Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which aligns to the Police, Fire and Crime Plan also during the year.

Vision and Values

The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner's Vision as set out in the Police, Fire and Crime Plan is:

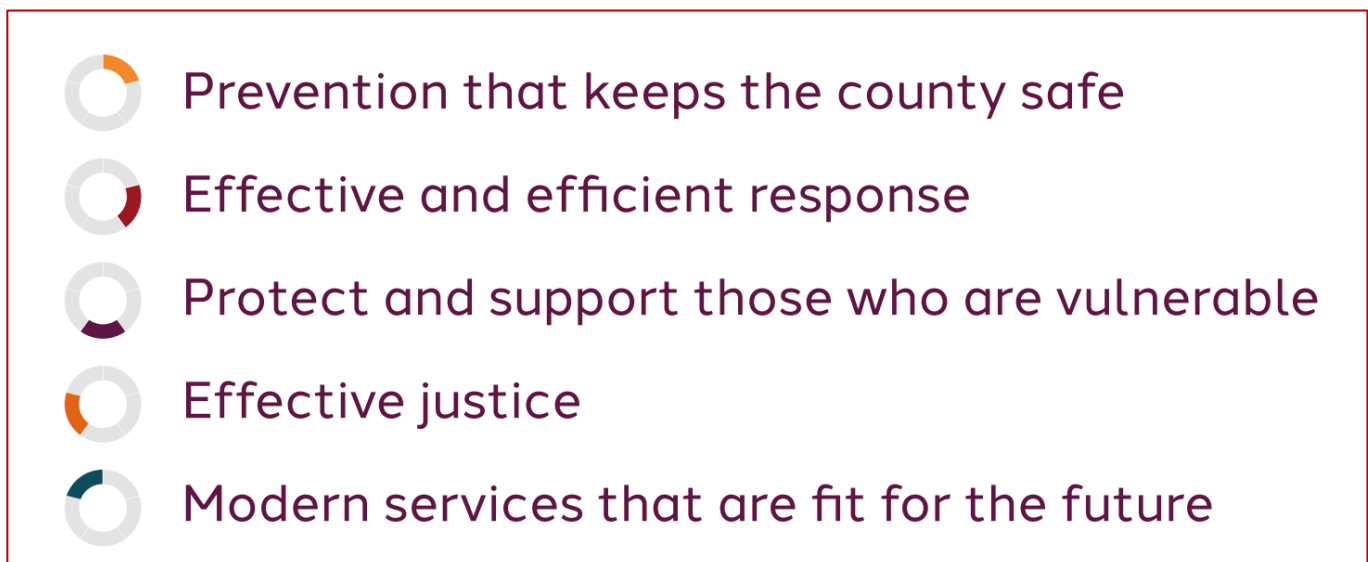
"Working with Communities to make Northamptonshire safer."

The PFCC also set out the values:

"It is more important than ever that our emergency services are seen to embody the highest ethical standards as we work to make a difference for our communities."



The Police, Fire and Crime Plan sets out the following priorities for Fire and Policing in Northamptonshire:

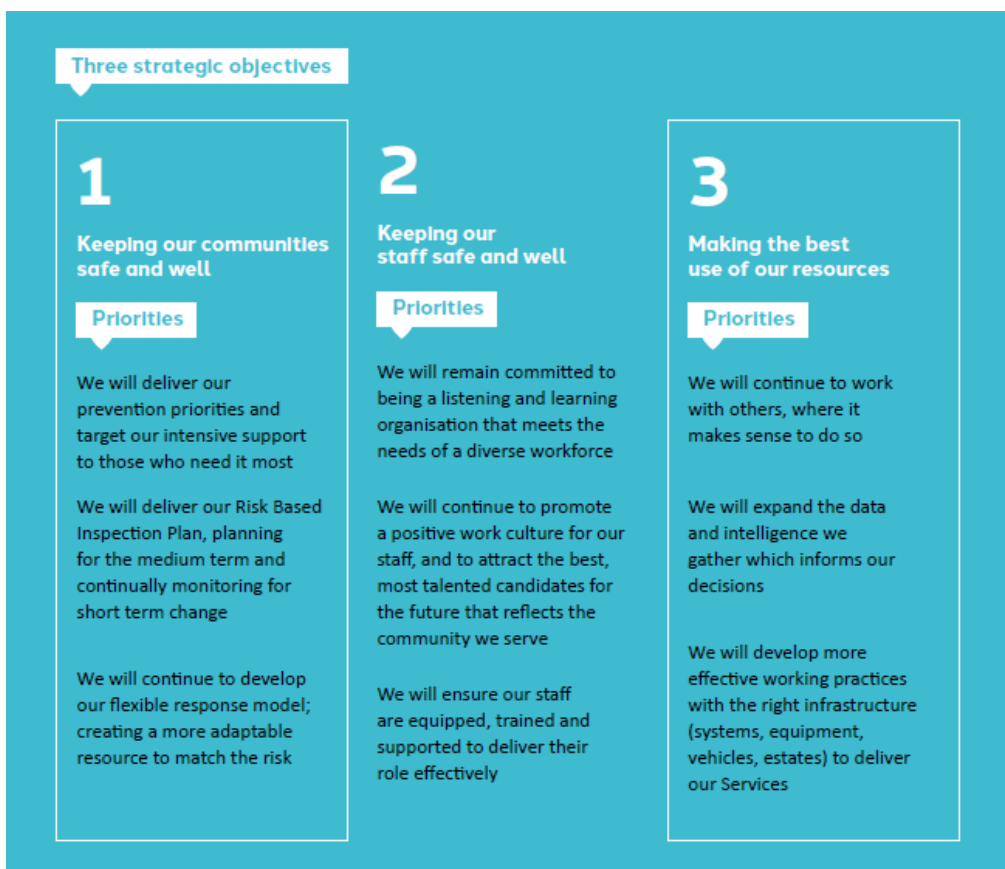


Community Risk Management Plan

The Community Risk Management Plan forms part of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's (NFRS) three key strategic documents, sitting alongside the Police, Fire and Crime Plan and the Chief Fire Officer's Vision 25. These strategic documents are designed to deliver the NFRS vision of:

"Making Northamptonshire Safer."

The NFRS strategic objectives and priorities set out in the CRMP are as follows:



Economic climate

Whilst NCFRA was established on 1 January 2019 without any reserves being transferred, the Authority put in place priorities to build a stable financial platform and a three year financial stability plan taken forward to ensure an appropriate level of reserves were established; with a financial base that was understood and supported by internal controls.

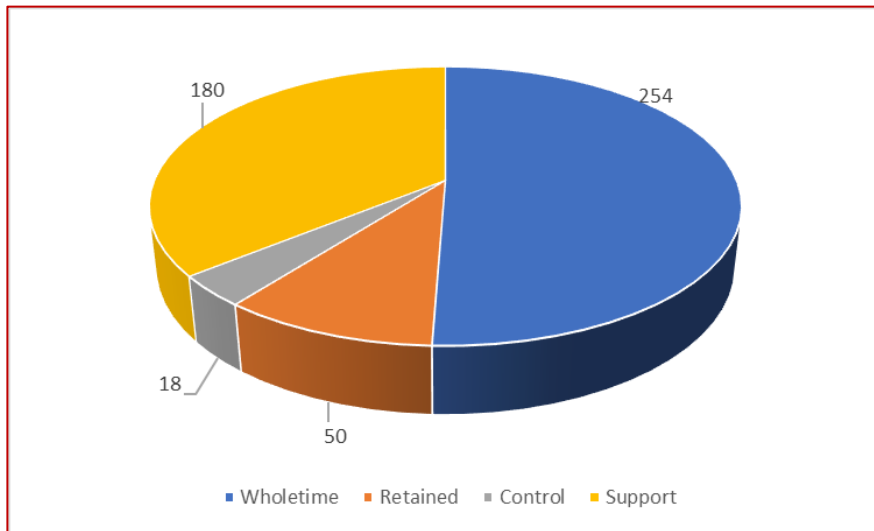
Whilst the financial stability plan was achieved during 2021/22, the cost of living remains a challenge and the revenue budget is feeling the pressure of increased pay, fuel and utility costs. Therefore, efficiencies are still required and a plan is in place to ensure a balanced budget can be achieved each year. The impact of these on the MTFP will continue to be kept under review and measures put in place to address them.

A capital programme is in place which enables investment in key operational requirements including investment in new fire tenders, replacement of essential operational equipment and delivery of the joint estates strategy with Police. Fire are continuing to work with Police to integrate essential support services and arrangements where appropriate, building capacity and resilience and releasing efficiencies over the medium term.

Whilst the PFCC has been successful in obtaining further funding for NCFRA since the governance transfer, he will continue to ensure all opportunities are taken to identify and realise savings and efficiencies.

Our People

At 31st March 2023 NCFRA budgeted establishment was 502 and comprised as follows:



Gender Pay Gap

The NCFRA Gender pay Gap Report as at 31st March 2022 was published in November 2022 and key elements are set out below:

The Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service is required by law to carry out Gender Pay Reporting under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017. This involves carrying out calculations that show the difference between the average earnings of men and women in the organisation; it does not involve publishing individual employees' data. The data used for the calculations is the Fire & Rescue Service's pay data as of 31st March 2022.

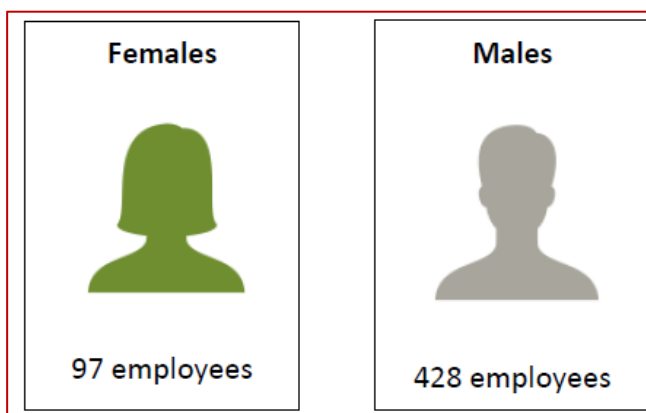
NCFRA are required to publish the results on a government gender pay gap website, and in addition it is advisable to publish the high level results on the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Services website alongside pay and transparency data.

Gender pay reporting is used to assess:

- the levels of gender equality in the workplace
- the balance of male and female employees at different levels

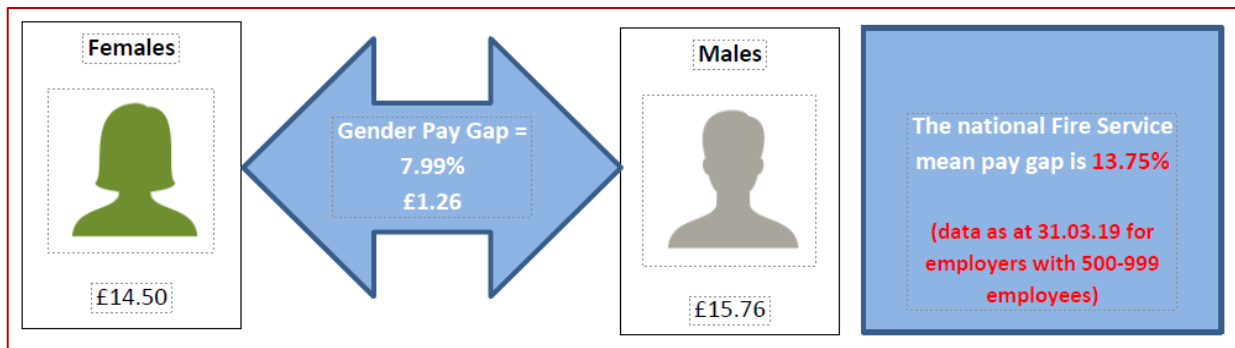
Workforce Profile

Total headcount as of the 31st March 2022 was 525 with 18.44% of these employees being female.

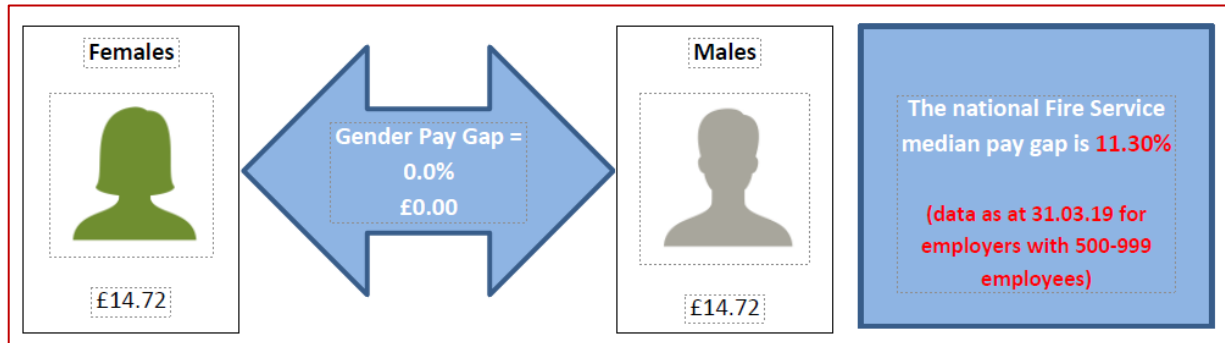


The pay gap is a snapshot in time, reflecting organisational structure and individuals in post as of 31st March 2022.

Mean Gender Pay Gap in Hourly Pay



Median Gender Pay Gap in Hourly Pay



The national data is taken as an average of Fire & Rescue Services with 500-999 employees covering 15 authorities, it shows that the mean and median gender pay gap is currently lower than the national average.

Appointments

The following statutory officers were in role during 2022/23:

- Darren Dovey, Chief Fire Officer and Head of Paid Staff – retired 11th October 2022
- Mark Jones, Chief Fire Officer and Head of Paid Staff – commenced 3rd October 2022 (handover 3-11/10/22)
- Helen King, Chief Finance and Section 151 (S151) Officer for the PFCC and NCFRA.
- Nicci Marzec, Director of Early Intervention and Monitoring Officer for the PFCC and NCFRA.

NCFRA 2022/23 Performance

The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner produces an Annual Report for consideration by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at their meeting in Summer 2023. This report, when published sets out the final performance for the year and sets out delivery against priorities and a full copy will be available on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel website.

Accountability for Fire and Rescue performance and service delivery is undertaken through the Accountability Board. Members of the Board are the Commissioner (the Chair), the Chief Fire Officer and both the PFCC and statutory and non-statutory Chief Officers from the OPFCC and Fire. There is a formal agenda which has a schedule of assurance in the form of standard tems.

The final performance information for the year will be considered at the Accountability Board in Summer 2022 and the minutes of the Accountability Board are published on the OPFCC website.

Draft outturn Performance and trend data for the year 2022/23 is as set out in the PFCC Annual Report:

		2022/23				21/22	22/23
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	EOY	EOY
NI 33 (A)	No. of Deliberate Primary Fires per 10,000 population	0.98	1.02	0.65	0.51	2.80	3.15
NI 33 (B)	No. of Deliberate Secondary Fires per 10,000 population	2.26	3.76	0.98	0.90	6.30	7.90
NI 49 (i)	No. of Primary Fires per 100,000 population	31.39	36.60	26.43	25.03	118.08	119.46
NI 49 (ii)	No. Fatalities in Primary Fires per 100,000 population	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.27	0.00
NI 49 (iii)	No. of Non-Fatal Casualties in Primary Fires per 100,000 population	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.21	0.79
BVPI 143 (i)	No. of deaths arising from accidental fires in dwellings per 100,000 population	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.13
BVPI 143 (ii)	No. of injuries (exc precautionary checks) arising from accidental fires in dwellings per 100,000 population	0.64	0.25	0.38	0.51	1.72	1.78
BVPI 142 (iii) D1	No. of accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 population	2.57	2.47	2.67	2.87	10.69	10.59
BVPI 207	Non-Domestic Fires per 1000 Non-Domestic premises	1.43	1.35	1.51	1.19	6.05	5.49
LPI 8ai	Sickness – Wholetime (days/shifts lost per head)	3.37	2.98	2.99	1.96	10.10	11.30
BV 12ii	Sickness – All staff (days/shifts lost per head, excluding on-call)	2.95	2.67	2.67	1.85	9.83	10.15
Prevention							
	Delivery of Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV)	1349	1285	1572	1480	4255	5685
	% of HFSV completed by dedicated prevention staff / station-based staff	26/74	29/71	23/77	30/70	31/69	27/73
Protection							
	Full audits – RBIP RI	188	185	261	226	-	860
	Reactive follow up fire safety complaints	28	21	22	27	-	98
	Targeted Risk Management (TRM) activity	68	33	29	44	-	174
	Total protective risk inspections (LP178)	320	245	330	324	-	1228
Response							
	Average of Full Response Time	09:55	10:32	10:08	10:12	-	-
	Average Call Handling Time (call to mobilise)	01:43	01:38	01:40	01:44	-	-
	Average appliance availability (No. of appliances)	17.96	17.70	18.10	17.74	-	-
Training							
	% of Wholetime operational staff in date with Core Competences	-	-	85%	95%	-	95%
	% of on-call operational staff in date with Core Competences	-	-	72%	83%	-	83%

Whilst there has been a reducing trend in primary and secondary fires since 2016/17, during the summer of 2022, there was an increase in both primary and secondary fires due to spate conditions over the at time.

NCFRA have continued to prioritise prevention and protection activities and the number of Home Safety Visits showing a significant increase over the previous year.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection

The second full inspection of the service was carried out by His Majesty's Inspection of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) during 2021/22 and the report was published on Wednesday 27th July 2022 and is available on the OPFCC website.

In HM Inspector's summary, Roy Wilsher, HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue services set out:







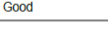




"It was a pleasure to visit Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way that the service engaged with our inspection.







We were pleased to see that the service has made significant progress since our 2018 inspection in how effectively and efficiently it keeps people safe and secure from fires and other risks. It has made clear use of our recommendations from the last inspection to improve the service it gives the public. But there are areas where the service still needs to improve, particularly how well it looks after its people. My principal findings from our assessments of the service over the past year are as follows:

- *The service has positively responded to our cause of concern that it didn't have adequate resources available to respond effectively to emergencies. It now consistently makes sure enough fire engines are available and senior managers oversee this. It has also improved the way it uses its prevention and protection functions to keep the public safe and target resources at those most at risk.*
- *The service has used the change in governance arrangements to stabilise its financial position, both now and in the future. It has removed significant financial instability and has clear plans in place to provide an affordable fire and rescue service, while establishing a reserves strategy and capital funding to make essential investments.*
- *The service and its leadership team have a clear strategic intent to embed values and promote equality, diversity and inclusion. However, I am concerned to find that in many areas this is not translating into effective actions that people throughout the organisation understand and support. We have identified several areas where the service needs to improve the way it looks after its people. It has, however, fully resolved our cause of concern from 2018 where we identified it was not monitoring or recording risk-critical training.*

Overall, I commend the service on the changes it has made and expect it to continue working to resolve the further areas for improvement we have identified. We will continue to assess progress through our usual monitoring arrangements."

The outcomes of the inspection and comparison to the 2018 Inspection were as follows:

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 Effectiveness	 Good	Requires improvement
Understanding fires and other risks	 Good	Good
Preventing fires and other risks	 Good	Requires improvement
Protecting the public through fire regulation	 Good	Requires improvement
Responding to fires and other emergencies	 Good	Inadequate
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	 Good	Requires improvement
Question	This inspection	2018/19
 Efficiency	 Good	Requires improvement
Making best use of resources	 Good	Requires improvement
Future affordability	 Good	Requires improvement

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 People	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Promoting the right values and culture	 Requires improvement	Good
Getting the right people with the right skills	 Good	Inadequate
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Managing performance and developing leaders	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Stephen Mold responded to the report:

"I am very pleased that the independent assessment from HMICFRS confirms what I believed was the case – that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service is providing a much-improved service in the way they keep the county safe." "I expect to see plans in place to improve the culture as soon as possible. I will also be looking for opportunities for further collaboration with Northamptonshire Police as both organisations work to build trust and confidence across the board."

Financial Performance

As at year end, NCFRA underspent the budget by £129k on the budget of £27.092m after agreed drawdown from reserves.

Budget Heading	Variance £000
Response Control	(110)
Retained Firefighters	(23)
Wholetime Firefighters	1,340
Commercial	(36)
Prevention and Protection	63
Engineering, Fleet and Stores	190
Occupational Health and Wellbeing	(43)
Property	(195)
Service Information Team	(149)
Securing Water Supplies	(138)
Enabling Services	(131)
Design and Technology	(103)
Other Fire Budgets	36
Additional funding	(830)
Year End Underspend	(129)

The overspend in wholetime firefighters due to the cost of the pay award above budget, spate conditions over the summer of 2022 and operational changes to the delivery model. This and the inflationary overspends in engineering, fleet and stores. These additional costs were offset by staff vacancies in Fire and Enabling Services and additional funding income from business rates and government grants above budgeted levels.

Capital

NCFRA have a significant capital programme following many years of under investment prior to the governance transfer. The programme is continually reviewed to ensure that it is affordable. In 2022/23, capital expenditure totalled £2.9m and included four fire tenders and an aerial appliance. Internal borrowing of £1.5m with the balance from capital receipts, grants and revenue contributions.

Schemes	Outturn £000
Expenditure:	
Fleet	1,209
Estates	500
ICT	877
Operational equipment	284
Total capital programme	2,870
Funded by:	
Capital receipts	(60)
Capital grants	(323)
S106 developer contributions	(243)
Capital reserves	(300)
Revenue contributions	(478)
Borrowing	(1,466)
Total capital funding	(2,870)

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2023 is the closing balance for the 2022/23 accounts and the opening balance for the 2023/24 accounts.

Fixed Assets

NCFRA owns twenty four properties across Northamptonshire, of which all but one are freehold.

Borrowing

Only internal borrowing took place in 2022/23. NCFRA undertook borrowing of 40 years in 2020/21 and there is a balance of £3.1m remaining as at 31st March 2023. NCFRA does not hold any short term loans.

Reserves

As at 31st March 2023, NCFRA hold £4.5m in usable reserves as follows:

Reserve	31 March 2023 £000
General Fund	2,000
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	1,688
Capital Grants and Reserves	766
Balance as at Year End	4,454

Events after the Balance Sheet Date

There were no events highlighted after the Balance Sheet date.

The 2022/23 Statement of Accounts

Each year NCFRA publishes a Statement of Accounts that incorporates all the financial statements and disclosure notes required by statute. These accounts relate to the year ended 31st March 2023.

The Statements of Accounts for 2022/23 has been prepared in accordance with the 'Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom'. This sets out the accounting principles and practices required to present a true and fair view of the financial position of a local Council and is based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Accounts drawn up under the Code assume, for example, that a Fire Authority will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. This assumption is made because Fire Authorities carry out functions essential to the local community and receive council tax, business rates and grants.

The Core Financial Statements are set out on **pages 23 to 26** and consist of the following, which are explained in more detail in the notes to the accounts:

- **Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement** – this statement provides a summary of the resources which have been applied and generated in providing services and managing the Authority during the year;

The headline figures and messages from this statement for NCFRA are that the Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure was a surplus of £95.0m. Due to the nature of the CIES most of this surplus arose from beneficial changes in pension actuarial assumptions. Such surpluses do not immediately impact on the budget required for NCFRA each year but are required to ensure that NCFRA accounts for its assets and liabilities correctly.

- **Balance Sheet** - setting out the assets and liabilities recognised by NCFRA at the balance sheet date, the bottom line is effectively the net worth of the organisation. The NCFRA holds sufficient current assets to discharge its current liabilities, however, the long term liability which is the pension commitment is not able to be funded by the assets held and will be funded by revenue funding when the liability becomes payable.
- **Movement in Reserves Statement** – shows the movement from the start of the year to the end on the different reserves held by the authority, analysed into ‘usable reserves’ (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other ‘unusable reserves’. This statement shows how the movements in year of the authority’s reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax or rents for the year. The Net Increase/Decrease line shows the statutory General Fund Balance in the year following those adjustments.

The headline figures and messages from this statement for NCFRA are that usable reserves have decreased by £1.2m in line with the planned use on revenue purposes and funding the capital programme as set out in the reserves strategy.

- **Cash Flow Statement** – outlines the changes in the cash and cash equivalents, for example, changes in debtor balances (those owing NCFRA money) and creditor balances (those which NCFRA owes money to) during the year. The statement shows how NCFRA generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities.

The headline figures and messages from this statement for NCFRA are that at the balance sheet date NCFRA held a cash balance of £4.2m which is sufficient for the authority to fulfil their ongoing obligations.

Risk Management

The manner in which NCFRA manages its response to various risks is part of a continuum of risk management that takes into account the National Security Strategy, the National Risk Register and the NCFRA risk registers. Risks are regularly considered at the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) and the last update was considered in March 2023.

Managing risk and business continuity arrangements are a key aspect of NCFRA’s governance arrangements. As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Authority is required to have in place business continuity arrangements to ensure that continuity of service can be provided for foreseeable events that may impact upon the delivery of services.

The most significant risks to NCFRA have related to the operational risks required following the HMICFRS inspection and ensuring sufficient level of reserves and funding levels over the medium term.

The 2023/24 Budget and Medium Term Outlook

NCFRA has adopted a prudent approach to budgeting that is both affordable and sustainable over the medium term.

The PFCC has set a balanced budget for Fire for 2023/24. The budget was approved by the PFCC in January 2023 and the proposed precept considered at the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in February 2023. Following intensive lobbying, Fire Authorities were given the opportunity to increase the precept by £5 and as the second lowest preceptor in the country, the PFCC took this into account and the views of the public of Northamptonshire before levying this increase.

Whilst a gap remains, the increase was successful in establishing a permanent increase of £1m in the base budget and a levy of £73.20 was set for a Band D property for 2023/24, the maximum increase available. Even after this increase, NCFRA is still one of the lowest funded and lowest precepting FRA’s in the country.

However, with the increase in pay, fuel and utilities inflation, further pressures are anticipated in the medium term. The Medium Term Financial Plan will be regularly updated and where appropriate further savings identified.

The Fire budget and precept continues in taking forward the statutory duty to collaborate for the three emergency services. This means that the services should be actively seeking opportunities to work together to deliver more efficient and effective public services.

A number enabling services joint teams have already been established and these, together with interoperability proposals, will provide opportunities for efficiencies and greater integration between police and fire and rescue to realise savings to meet financial challenges, increase capacity and resilience and reinvest where possible in frontline services.

As set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan considered at the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in February 2023, with identified savings, NCFRA have a balanced budget for 2023/24.

The medium term outlook is more challenging and whilst some efficiencies have been agreed, it is currently envisioned that more will still be required for future years. In the short term, reserves are available to smooth the timing or impact of efficiencies and are sufficient if required.

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Expenditure	29.558	31.261	32.383	33.425	34.524
Agreed Efficiencies	0.000	(0.293)	(0.603)	(0.603)	(0.603)
	29.558	30.968	31.780	32.822	33.921
Anticipated Funding	29.558	30.241	31.069	31.927	32.816
(shortfall)	0.000	(0.727)	(0.711)	(0.895)	(1.105)

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's responsibilities

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is required to:

- Make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this Authority, that officer is the Chief Finance Officer.
- Manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets.
- Approve the Statement of Accounts.

I certify that these accounts were considered and approved.

Danielle Stone, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire

Date: 6 December 2024

The Chief Finance Officer's responsibilities

- The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

In preparing this Statement of Accounts, the Chief Finance Officer has:

- Selected suitable accounting policies and applied them consistently
- Made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- Complied with the local authority Code.

The Chief Finance Officer has also:

- Kept proper accounting records which were up to date.
- Taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Chief Finance Officer's certificate

I certify that the Statement of Accounts has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code and present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority at 31st March 2023 and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31st March 2023.

Vaughan Ashcroft

Chief Finance Officer and s151 Officer, Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Date: 6 December 2024

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1. Accounting Policies

The Financial Statements must meet the accounting requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting which has been agreed with HM Treasury. Consequently, the following financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2022/23. The accounting policies contained in the CIPFA Code of Practice follow International Financial Reporting Standards to the extent that they are meaningful and appropriate to Local Authority Accounts, as determined by His Majesty's Treasury, who are advised by the Financial Reporting Advisory Board. Where the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be the most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Authority for the purpose of presenting fairly the position of the Authority is selected. The particular policies adopted by the Authority are described below and they have been applied consistently in dealing with items considered material in relation to the Accounts.

Accounting Convention

These Accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment, intangible assets and inventories. Where appropriate, financial assets and liabilities have been impaired or discounted to bring them to fair value.

Acquisitions and Discontinued Operations

Activities are considered to be 'acquired' only if they are taken on from outside the public sector. Activities are considered to be 'discontinued' only if they cease entirely. They are not considered to be 'discontinued' if they transfer from one public sector body to another. The Authority has not acquired or discontinued any operations during the reporting period.

Going Concern

These accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis.

The concept of a going concern assumes that the functions of the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The provisions in the Code (Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23) in respect of going concern reporting requirements reflect the economic and statutory environment in which fire and rescue services operate.

These provisions confirm that, as fire and rescue services cannot be created or dissolved without statutory prescription, they must prepare their financial statements on a going concern basis of accounting.

Fire and Rescue services carry out functions essential to the local community and are themselves revenue-raising bodies (with limits on their revenue-raising powers arising only at the discretion of central government). If a fire and rescue authority were in financial difficulty, the prospects are thus that alternative arrangements might be made by central government either for the continuation of the functions it provides or for assistance with the recovery of a deficit over more than one financial year. As a result of this, it would not therefore be appropriate for the financial statements to be provided on anything other than a going concern basis. Accounts drawn up under the Code therefore assume that a fire and rescue authority and service will continue to operate for the foreseeable future.

NCFRA have undertaken cashflow modelling which demonstrates the Authority's ability to work within its Capital Financing Requirement and has a realistic headroom on a £27m annual budget, together with sufficient scope for borrowing if required.

At the time of the approval of the accounts, the Authority has only one long term loan which is well below the Authority's operational boundary and authorised limit. The costs of this borrowing is included within the MTFP.

NCFRA therefore concludes that it is appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis and that NCFRA will continue to be a going concern, 12 months from the date of the approval of these accounts.

Accruals of Income and Expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed. Where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
- Fees, charges and rents due are accounted for as income at the date the Authority provides the relevant goods or services.
- Interest payable on borrowings and receivable on investments is accounted for as expenditure or income respectively on the basis of the effective interest rate for the relevant financial instrument rather than the cash flows fixed or determined by the contract.
- Where income and expenditure has been recognised but cash has not yet been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where it is doubtful that debts will be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

Employee Benefits

Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as salaries, paid annual leave and flexitime, bonuses and non-monetary benefits (for example cars) for current employees and are recognised as an expense in the year in which employees render service to the Authority. The CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting requires the Authority to recognise the amount of untaken annual leave at the 31st March as a liability which is reflected on the Balance Sheet. To ensure consistency annual leave costs have been reflected in the year in which the annual leave should have been taken.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Authority to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or of an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits. These are charged on an Accruals basis to the CIES at the earlier of when the Authority can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Authority recognises costs for a restructuring.

When termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund Balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the Pension Fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

Retirement Benefits

Employees of the Authority are members of the following pensions schemes:

- The 1992, 2006, 2015 and Modified Firefighters' Pension Schemes (FPS) - these are unfunded schemes, which means that there are no investment assets built up to meet the pensions liabilities, and cash has to be generated to meet the actual payments as they fall due. The Authority is required by legislation to operate a Pension Fund, with the amounts that must be paid into or out of the Pension Fund being specified by regulation. The Authority set up a Pension Fund on 1 April 2006 from which pension payments are made and into which contributions, from the Authority and employees, are received. The Pension Fund receives a top-up grant from the Government equal to the deficit each year, with any surplus on the Pension Fund being repaid to the Government. The Pension Fund is shown separately in the Accounts

- The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for support staff, administered by the Northamptonshire Pension Fund, is a funded scheme, which means that the Authority and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pensions liabilities with investment Assets.

The above schemes provide defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees work for the Authority. They are accounted for in accordance with the requirements for Defined Benefits Schemes, based on the principle that an organisation should account for retirement benefits when it is committed to give them, even though this may be many years into the future.

A pensions Asset or Liability is recognised in the Balance Sheet, made up of the net position of retirement Liabilities and pension scheme Assets. Retirement Liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, by assessing the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates and projections of earnings for current employees. Pension scheme assets (LGPS only) attributable to the Authority are included at their Fair Value. The Authority currently has a net pensions liability and this is matched in the Balance Sheet by a Pensions Reserve.

The change in net pensions Liability during the year is analysed into the following components:

Service cost comprising:

- Current service cost – the increase in Liabilities as a result of service earned by employees in the current year. This is charged to services within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Past service cost – the increase in Liabilities as a result of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to service earned in earlier years. This is part of the services line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- Net interest on the net defined benefit Liability – the change during the period in the net defined benefit Liability that arises from the passage of time. This is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit Liability at the end of the period, taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit Liability during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments. This is charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line within the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Remeasurements comprising:

- The return on plan assets (LGPS only) – this excludes amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit Liability and is charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure
- Actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions Liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions. This is charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- Contributions paid / benefits paid – cash paid as employer's contribution by the Authority either to LGPS or directly to pensioners to reduce the scheme Liabilities.

Statutory provisions require that the amount charged to the General Fund Balance is that payable by the Authority to Pensions Funds or directly to pensioners during the year rather than that calculated under accounting standards. This means that an appropriation to or from the Pensions Reserve is done within the Movement in Reserves Statement to replace the notional sums for retirement benefits with the actual pensions costs. The negative balance on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

On 31st March 2022, following the Sergeant and McCloud ruling for Pensions Age Discrimination, both the 1992 & 2006 schemes were closed and all members of these schemes will be transferred to the 2015 pension scheme.

Other Expenses

Other operating expenses are recognised when, and to the extent that, the goods or services have been received. They are measured at the Fair Value of the consideration payable.

Property, Plant and Equipment

Recognition

Property, plant and equipment is capitalised if:

- it is expected to be used for more than one financial year;
- the cost of the item can be measured reliably; and
- the item has a cost of at least £6,000 or is part of a project or replacement programme costing above £6,000.

Where a large Asset, for example a building, includes a number of components with significantly different Asset lives (a minimum of 5 years), the components are treated as separate Assets if they have a cost that is a significant proportion of the whole Asset (a minimum of 25%). The components are treated as separate Assets and depreciated over their useful economic life.

Donated Assets are recognised at their value and are defined in the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Government Accounting as those Assets that are transferred at nil value or acquired at less than Current Value. Donated Assets that are from other public bodies are accounted for as a government grant (as required by IAS 20).

Valuation

All property, plant and equipment are measured initially at cost, representing the cost attributable to acquiring or constructing the Asset and bringing it to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management. All Assets are measured subsequently at Current Value.

Land and buildings used by the Authority are stated in the Balance Sheet at their re-valued amounts, being the Current Value at the date of valuation. Revaluations are performed with sufficient regularity to ensure that carrying amounts are not materially different from those that would be determined at the end of the Reporting Period. Current Values are determined as follows:

- Operational Buildings – Depreciated Replacement cost.
- Land and non-specialised buildings – Current value for existing use.
- Vehicles, plant and equipment – historic cost less accumulated depreciation (as a proxy for current replacement cost).

Properties in the course of construction are carried at cost, less any impairment loss. Costs include professional fees but not borrowing costs, which are recognised as expenses immediately, as allowed by IAS 23 for assets held at Current Value. Assets are re-valued and depreciation commences when they are brought into use. An increase arising on revaluation is taken to the Revaluation Reserve except when it reverses an impairment previously recognised in expenditure, in which case it is credited to expenditure to the extent of the decrease previously charged there. A revaluation decrease is recognised as an Impairment charged to the Revaluation Reserve to the extent that there is a balance on the Reserve for the Asset, and, thereafter, to expenditure. Gains and losses recognised in the Revaluation Reserve are reported as other comprehensive income in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Disposals

Capital receipts from the sale of non-current assets are held in the Capital Receipts Unapplied Account until such time as they are used to finance other Capital Expenditure or to repay debt. Gains and losses on the disposal of non-current assets are recognised in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Depreciation and Impairments

Depreciation is charged to write off the costs or valuation of property, plant and equipment and intangible non-current assets, less any residual value, over their Useful Economic Lives, on a straight line basis. The Useful Economic Life of an Asset is the period over which the Authority expects to obtain economic benefits or service potential from the Asset. This is specific to the Authority and may be shorter than the physical life of the Asset itself. The Useful Economic Life and Residual Values are reviewed each year end, with the effect of any changes recognised on a prospective basis. The approximate average useful lives (depreciation periods) are categorised below:

- Buildings 30 – 60 years
- Vehicles – Fire Appliances 15 years
- Vehicles – Lorries and Vans 7 years
- Vehicles – Non FDS Cars and Light Vans 7 years
- Vehicles – FDS Cars 5 years
- Equipment 5 years
- Specialised Equipment (e.g. Breathing Apparatus) 10 Years

Assets acquired under Finance Leases are Depreciated over the term of the lease (or the life of the asset if this is lower than the term of the lease) on a straight line basis.

At each reporting period end, the Authority checks whether there is any indication that any of its non-current Assets have suffered an impairment loss. If there is indication of an Impairment loss, the recoverable amount of the Asset is estimated to determine whether there has been a loss and, if so, its amount.

If there has been an Impairment loss, the Asset is written down to its recoverable amount, with the loss charged to the Revaluation Reserve to the extent that there is a balance on the Reserve for the Asset and, thereafter, to expenditure. Where an impairment loss subsequently reverses, the carrying amount of the Asset is increased to the revised estimate of the recoverable amount but capped at the amount that would have been determined had there been no initial impairment loss. The reversal of the impairment loss is credited to expenditure to the extent of the decrease previously charged there and thereafter to the Revaluation Reserve.

The Authority undertakes regular reviews of all its assets to verify that they still are in use and will provide an economic benefit to the Authority. A non-property asset that is due to last 5 years will incur depreciation for each of those five years and have a £0 balance at the end of the 5 years, but will still be recorded in the asset register after these five years if it still exists and provides an economic benefit to the authority.

The Authority is not required to raise council tax to cover Depreciation and Impairment, however it is required to make an annual provision from its revenue budget to contribute towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement, the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The Authority borrowed for the first time in 2021/22 for capital purposes. The policy is to charge MRP over the life of the asset from the year after the asset acquired comes into use, so the first charge was made in 2021/22.

Government Grants

Government grants are grants from Government bodies. Revenue grants are matched against the expenditure to which they relate. Capital grants are credited to income once any conditions of the grant have been satisfied. Assets purchased from government grants are valued, Depreciated and Impaired as described for purchased Assets.

Leases

Leases are classified as Finance Leases when substantially all of the risks and rewards of ownership are transferred to the lessee. All other leases are classified as Operating Leases.

The Authority As A Lessee

The Authority has a single asset held under a Finance Lease (a vehicle). The outstanding Liability relating to Finance Leases is reflected in the Authority's Balance Sheet, with the Assets acquired under Finance Leases added to the Authority's Asset register and the value reflected in the Property, Plant and Equipment total on the Balance Sheet. Interest costs relating to Finance Leases are reflected in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Payments for Finance Leases are made in equal amounts over the term of the lease. Operating Lease payments are recognised as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term. Lease incentives are recognised initially as a Liability and subsequently as a reduction of rentals on a straight-line basis over the lease term. Where a lease is for land and buildings, the land and building components are separated. Leased land is treated as an Operating Lease. Leased buildings are assessed as to whether they are Operating Leases or Finance Leases.

Inventories

Inventories are valued at the lower of cost and Net Realisable Value using the average cost method. This is considered to be a reasonable approximation to Fair Value.

Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is cash in hand and deposits with any financial institution repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. The balances on the current account and the business reserve account are cash. The balance in the liquidity manager account is a cash equivalent (as this is held for investment purposes until a sufficient balance is achieved and a short-term investment entered into). In the Cash Flow Statement, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and that form an integral part of the Authority's cash management.

Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the Authority has a present legal or constructive obligation as a result of a past event, it is probable that the Authority will be required to settle the obligation, and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period, taking into account the risks and uncertainties.

Reserves

The Authority sets aside specific reserves for future policy purposes. Details of these reserves are provided in the relevant note to the Accounts. The Authority has the following reserves:

- General Fund Reserve
- Insurance
- Funding Reserve
- Transformation Reserve
- Carry Forwards Reserve
- Equipment Reserve
- S106 Developer Contributions
- Capital Receipts Reserve
- Capital Grants Unapplied Reserve
- Capital Reserve

Other reserves held by the Authority, are held to meet accounting requirements:

- Revaluation Reserve
- Pension Reserve
- Capital Adjustment Account
- Accumulated Absence Reserve

Financial Assets

Financial assets are recognised when the Authority becomes party to the Financial Instrument contract or in the case of trade receivables, when goods or services have been delivered. Financial assets are derecognised when the contractual rights have expired or the Asset has been transferred. Financial Assets are initially recognised at Fair Value.

Financial Assets are classified into the following categories: Financial Assets at Fair Value through profit and loss; held to maturity investments; available for sale Financial Assets, and loans and receivables. The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the financial assets and is determined at the time of initial recognition.

Loans and Receivables

Loans and receivables are non-derivative Financial Assets with fixed or determinable payments which are not quoted in an active market. After initial recognition, they are measured at Amortised cost using the Effective Interest Method, less any Impairment. Interest is recognised using the Effective Interest Rate Method.

Fair Value is determined by reference to quoted market prices where possible, or failing that by reference to similar arms-length transactions between knowledgeable and willing parties.

The Effective Interest Rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash receipts through the expected life of the financial asset.

At the end of the reporting period the Authority assesses whether any Financial Assets, other than those held at 'Fair Value through profit and loss' are impaired. Financial assets are impaired and Impairment losses recognised if there is objective evidence of impairment, as a result of one or more events which occurred after the initial recognition of the Asset and which has an impact on the estimated future cash flows of the Asset.

For Financial Assets carried at amortised cost, the amount of the Impairment loss is measured as the difference between the Assets carrying amount and the present value of the revised future cash flows discounted at the Asset's original effective interest rate. The loss is recognised in expenditure and the carrying amount of the Asset reduced directly.

If, in a subsequent period, the amount of the Impairment loss decreases and the decrease can be related objectively to an event occurring after the Impairment was recognised, the previously recognised impairment loss is reversed through expenditure to the extent that the carrying amount of the receivable at the date of the Impairment is reversed does not exceed what the amortised cost would have been had the Impairment not been recognised.

Financial Instruments

Financial instruments are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Authority becomes party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument. They are initially measured at fair value.

Financial Assets

Financial assets held at amortised cost. These represent loans and similar arrangements where repayments of interest and principal take place on set dates and at specified amounts in advance. The amount presented in the Balance Sheet represents the outstanding principal received plus accrued interest. Interest credited to the CIES is the amount receivable as per the loan agreement.

Changes in the value of assets carried at fair value are debited/credited to the CIES as they arise.

Financial Liabilities

Financial Liabilities are recognised in the Balance Sheet when the Authority becomes party to the contractual provisions of the Financial Instrument or, in the case of trade payables, when the goods or services have been received. Financial liabilities are derecognised when the liability has been discharged, that is, the Liability has been paid or expired.

Financial Liabilities are recognised at Fair Value.

Exceptional Items

Exceptional items shall be included in the costs of the service to which they relate and noted accordingly.

Events After The Reporting Period

Material events after the Balance Sheet date shall be disclosed as a note to the Accounts and amended in the Accounts as required. Other events after the Balance Sheet date will be disclosed in a note with an estimate of the likely effect.

VAT

Where output tax is charged or input VAT is recoverable, the amounts are stated net of VAT. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant expenditure category or included in the capitalised purchase cost of Non-Current Assets.

ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st March 2023

2021/22			2022/23			
Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure/Income (-)	Note Ref	Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure/Income (-)
£000	£000	£000		£000	£000	£000
34,483	(7,823)	26,660		33,918	(6,354)	27,564
34,483	(7,823)	26,660		33,918	(6,354)	27,564
129	(19)	110		342	(19)	323
6,655	(3)	6,652		8,926	(46)	8,880
-	(24,237)	(24,237)	3	-	(26,276)	(26,276)
		9,185				10,491
		(3,662)	9			(2,032)
		(2,762)	26.2			(103,429)
		(6,424)				(105,461)
		2,761				(94,970)

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st March 2023

	General Fund	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Grants Unapplied	Capital Receipts Reserve	Usable Reserves Total	Unusable Reserves Total	Reserves Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 31st March 2021	(3,000)	(1,921)	(552)	0	(5,473)	291,190	285,717
Movement in Reserves for 2021-22							
Total comprehensive income and expenditure	9,185	-	-	-	9,185	(6,423)	2,762
Adjustments between accounting and funding basis under regulations (note 7)	(9,429)	-	6	-	(9,423)	9,423	-
Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	1,244	(744)	(500)	-	-	-	-
(Increase)/decrease in the 12 months to 31 March 2021	1,000	(744)	(494)	-	(238)	3,000	2,762
Balance carried forward at 31 March 2022	(2,000)	(2,665)	(1,046)	-	(5,711)	294,190	288,479
Movement in Reserves during 2022-23							
Total comprehensive income and expenditure	10,492	-	-	-	10,492	(105,461)	(94,969)
Adjustments between accounting and funding basis under regulations (note 7)	(10,101)	239	628	-	(9,234)	9,234	-
Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	(391)	391	-	-	0	-	-
(Increase)/decrease in 2022-23	0	630	628	-	1,258	(96,227)	(94,969)
Balance carried forward at 31 March 2023	(2,000)	(2,035)	(418)	-	(4,453)	197,963	193,510

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31st March 2023

31 March 2022			31 March 2023	
£000			Notes	£000
46,126	Property, Plant and Equipment		9	48,681
46,126	Long Term Assets			48,681
244	Inventories		10	264
2,596	Short Term Debtors		11	2,240
3,000	Short Term Investments		12	0
2,105	Cash and Cash Equivalents		12	4,203
7,945	Current Assets			6,707
(4,449)	Short Term Creditors		14	(5,852)
(448)	Provisions		14a	(388)
(4,897)	Current Liabilities			(6,240)
(3,218)	Long Term Borrowing		16.1	(3,135)
(334,435)	Other Long Term Liabilities		16.2	(239,523)
(337,653)	Long Term Liabilities			(242,658)
(288,479)	Net Liabilities			(193,510)
(5,711)	Usable Reserves		17	(4,453)
294,190	Unusable Reserves		18	197,963
288,479	Total Reserves			193,510

Signed: Danielle Stone, Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

Date: 6 December 2024

Vaughan Ashcroft,
Chief Finance Officer & s151 Officer, Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Date: 6 December 2024

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

FOR THE TWELVE MONTHS ENDED 31st March 2023

2021/22 £000		2022/23 £000
(9,185)	Net Surplus on the provision of services	(10,492)
1,230	Depreciation and impairment	1,516
-	- Movement in Impairment for Bad Debts	-
(938)	Increase(-)/Decrease in Creditors	1,343
2,642	Increase/Decrease (-) in Debtors	356
(7)	Increase/Decrease (-) in Inventories	(20)
(2,843)	Additions of PPE Assets	(2,869)
8,342	Movement in Pension Liability (difference between employer's contributions paid and IAS19 adjustments)	8,517
-	- Increase(-)/Decrease in Long Term Liabilities	-
-	- Increase/Decrease(-) in Investments	3,000
(82)	Proceeds from Borrowing	(83)
129	Derecognition of PPE Assets	347
(10)	Other Non Cash Movements	464
(722)	Net cashflows from operating activities	2,079
	Net cashflows from investing activities	
19	Proceeds from Sale of Assets	19
(703)	Net Increase /Decrease (-) in cash and cash equivalents	2,098
2,808	Cash and Cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	2,105
2,105	Cash and Cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	4,203

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

The notes provided in the following pages are intended to aid interpretation of the financial statements set out on pages 23 to 26 and provide further information upon the financial performance of the Authority during 2022/23.

1 Expenditure and Funding Analysis

This statement shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, rents, council tax and business rates) by local authorities in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by authorities in accordance with proper accounting practices. Income and expenditure accounted for under proper accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Net Surplus Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis	2021/22 Net Surplus in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		Net Surplus Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis	2022/23 Net Surplus in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
£000	£000	£000		£000	£000	£000
17,237	9,423	26,660	Fire and Rescue Services	18,330	9,234	27,564
17,237	9,423	26,660	Net Cost of Services	18,330	9,234	27,564
(17,475)	-	(17,475)	Other Income and Expenditure	(17,072)	-	(17,072)
(238)	9,423	9,185	(Surplus) or Deficit	1,258	9,234	10,492
(4,921)			Opening Revenue Reserves	(5,159)		
			Add: CGUA Reserve	(552)		
(5,159)			Closing Usable Reserves at 31 March	(4,453)		

Note 7 outlines the breakdown of the Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis

2 Accounting standards that have been issued but not adopted

Under The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting disclosure of the impact of accounting standards issued but not yet adopted is required. Following a review of the relevant standards it has been determined that there would be no material changes to the accounts if these were to have been adopted. The relevant standards being introduced for 2022/23 are:

- Definition of Accounting Estimates (Amendments to IAS 8) issued in February 2021.
- Disclosure of Accounting Policies (Amendments to IAS 1 and IFRS Practice Statement 2) issued in February 2021.
- Deferred Tax related to Assets and Liabilities arising from a Single Transaction (Amendments to IAS 12) issued in May 2021.

3 Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income

12 Months to 31 March 2022	Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates Income	12 Months to 31 March 2023
£000		£000
(15,609)	Council Tax Funding	(17,063)
(2,279)	Revenue Support Grant	(2,348)
(6,349)	Non Domestic Rates Funding	(6,864)
(24,237)		(26,275)

4 Events after the Balance Sheet date

Where events taking place before this date provided information about conditions existing as at 31 March 2023, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect the impact of this information.

5 Assumptions made about the future and other major sources of estimation uncertainty

The statement of accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Authority about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

The items in the Balance Sheet at 31st March 2023 for which there is a risk of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year are as follows:

Item	Uncertainties	Effect if actual results differ from assumptions
Property, Plant and Equipment	Assets are depreciated over useful lives that are dependent on assumptions about the level of repairs and maintenance that will be incurred for each asset. The current economic climate makes it uncertain that the Authority will be able to sustain its current spending on repairs and maintenance, bringing into doubt the useful lives assigned to assets.	If the useful economic life (UEL) of assets is reduced, depreciation will increase and the carrying value of assets will decrease. It is estimated that the annual depreciation charge for buildings would increase by £14k for every year that useful lives had to be reduced.
Pensions Liability	Estimation of the net pension liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex actuarial assumptions/judgements relating to the discount rate used, salary increases, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected return on assets. A firm of consulting actuaries is engaged to provide the Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied.	The carrying value of the Fire Staff pension liability as at 31 March 2023 is £239.5m. The effect on the net pensions' liability as a result of changes in individual assumptions is detailed within the Pensions Note 26.
Council Tax (CT) and Business Rates (BR)	One local billing authority was unable to complete their Council Tax returns and therefore the result of the Council Tax Collection Fund for that authority has been estimated.	The estimation technique is to assume the equivalent debtor, creditor or cash balance for the size of the Council compared to historical trends and published forecast information where available. Material differences in Council Tax collection fund would have a material impact on Council Tax funding NCFRA will receive in the 2024/25 financial year and future years. However due to the recommended accounting treatment for these items there would be no impact on the NCFRA reserves position as at the 31st March 2023 of any material differences between the estimate used and the actual values when they become available.

6 Material items of income and expenditure

There are no material items of income or expenditure arising in the year that require separate disclosure.

7 Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total comprehensive income and expenditure recognised by the Authority in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Authority to meet future capital and revenue expenditure.

	Usable Reserves				Movement in Unusable Reserves £000
	General Fund Balance	Earmarked Reserves	Capital Grants Unapplied	Capital Receipts Reserve	
2021/22					
Adjustments to the Revenue Resources	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the CIES are different from Revenue for the year calculated in accordance with Statutory Requirements:					
Pension costs (transferred to (or from) the Pensions Reserve	(8,341)				8,341
Depreciation and Impairment Losses moved to Capital Adj Account	(1,240)				1,240
Change in Accumulated Absence Charge	21				(21)
Capital Expenditure Funded by Revenue Funding (RCCO)	150	-	-	-	(150)
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	29				(29)
Capital Receipts Received in year	19	-		(19)	-
Loss on Disposal	-				-
Application of S106 Funding	188				(188)
Application of Capital Receipts				19	(19)
Application of Capital Grants			6		(6)
Application of Collection Fund Income	(255)				255
Total Adjustment to Revenue Resources	(9,429)	0	6	0	9,423
2022/23					
Adjustments to the Revenue Resources	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the CIES are different from Revenue for the year calculated in accordance with Statutory Requirements:					
Pension costs (transferred to (or from) the Pensions Reserve	(8,518)				8,518
Depreciation and Impairment Losses moved to Capital Adj Account	(2,016)				2,016
Change in Accumulated Absence Charge	(16)				16
Capital Expenditure Funded by Revenue Funding (RCCO)	479	-	-	-	(479)
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	-				-
Capital Receipts Received in year	60	-		(60)	-
Loss on Disposal	(331)				331
Application of S106 Funding		239			(239)
Application of Capital Receipts				60	(60)
Application of Capital Grants			628		(628)
Application of Collection Fund Income	241				(241)
Total Adjustment to Revenue Resources	(10,101)	239	628	-	9,234

8 Transfers to/from earmarked reserves

This note sets out the amounts set aside funding in earmarked reserves to provide financing for future expenditure plans.

	Opening Balance April 2022	Transfers to Reserve	Transfers from Reserve	Closing Balance March 2023
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Earmarked Reserves:				
Section 106 Contributions	273	-	(239)	34
Insurance reserve	250	-	-	250
Funding Reserve	924	50	(682)	292
Transformation Reserve	681	319	-	1,000
Capital Reserve	356	-	(42)	314
Equipment Reserve	30	70	-	100
Carry Forwards Reserve	151	-	(106)	45
Total Earmarked Reserves	2,665	439	(1,069)	2,035

9 Property, plant and equipment

The movement in fixed assets during the year is shown in the table below

Operational Assets				
	Land and Buildings £000	Assets Under Construction £000	Vehicles, Plant and Equipment £000	Total Assets £000
Cost or Valuation				
At 31 March 2022	34,624	3,610	9,985	48,219
Additions/Enhancement	225	136	2,508	2,869
Revaluation Increases/(Decreases) to Revaluation Reserve	2,032	-	-	2,032
Depreciation eliminated on Revaluation	(564)	-	-	(564)
Revaluation Loss Reversal to Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(483)	-	-	(483)
Derecognitions	-	-	(400)	(400)
Reclassifications	-	-	981	981
At 31 March 2023	35,834	3,746	13,074	52,654
Depreciation/Impairment				
At 31 March 2022	-	-	(2,093)	(2,093)
Charge for the twelve months to 31st March 2022	(564)	-	(952)	(1,516)
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	-	-	-	-
Depreciation written out to the CIES Impairments	564	-	-	564
Derecognitions	-	-	53	53
Reclassifications	-	-	(981)	(981)
At 31 March 2023	-	-	(3,973)	(3,973)
Balance as at 31 March 2023	35,834	3,746	9,101	48,681
Balance as at 31 March 2022	34,624	3,610	7,892	46,126

The freehold and leasehold properties within the Authority's property portfolio are valued by the Authority's property advisors (Wilkes, Head and Eve) with impairment reviews made annually.

A full valuation was undertaken as at 31st March 2023. All valuations were undertaken in accordance with the Statements of Asset Valuation Practice and Guidance Notes of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Fire stations are valued at depreciated replacement cost and other properties are valued at existing use value

10 Inventories

The values of stock items held are summarised in the table below:

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
237	Opening Balance	244
7	Year End Stock Take Adjustment	20
244	Total Inventories	264

11 Debtors

The analysis of Debtors is shown below:

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
571	Trade Debtors	606
2,025	Other Debtors	1,634
2,596	Total Debtors	2,240

Trade Debtors consist primarily of payments in advance made to suppliers for goods and services. Other debtors include the Authority's share of Council Tax and Business Rates debtors due to be paid to the Northamptonshire Unitary Authority's by taxpayers, grants and from other local government organisations for a variety of arrangements.

12 Cash, cash equivalents and short term investments

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
2,105	Cash at Bank	4,203
2,105	Total Cash	4,203

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
3,000	Cash at Bank (95 Day Notice Account)	-
3,000	Total Short Term Investments	0

13 Assets held for sale

The Authority has no assets held for sale at the 31st March 2023.

14 Creditors

The analysis of Creditors is shown below:

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
(1,520)	Trade Creditors	(1,744)
(2,929)	Other Creditors	(4,108)
(4,449)	Total Creditors	(5,852)

Other creditors include the Authority's share of Council Tax and Business Rates prepayments made to the Northamptonshire Unitary Authority's by taxpayers, grants received in advance from central government (details in note 15), payments due to central government for income tax and national insurance and pension contributions due to be paid to the pension fund.

14.1 Provisions

Each Unitary Council, based on their local data, calculates a provision for potential losses arising from ratepayers successfully appealing the level of their property's rateable value. A proportion of each provision (currently 1%) is allocated to the Authority and recognised in the accounts.

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
(282)	Provision for Business Rates Appeals	(388)
(166)	Other Provisions	(0)
(448)	Total Provisions	(388)

15 Grant receipts in advance

The Authority has grant receipts in advance, all of which is for revenue purposes.

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
(651)	Emergency Services Network Grant	(651)
-	COVID-19 Grant	-
(59)	Fire Protection Grant Building Risk	(50)
(159)	Fire Protection	(243)
(869)		(944)

16.1 Long Term Borrowing

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
(3,218)	PWLB Loan	(3,135)
(3,218)	Total Long Term Borrowing	(3,135)

16.2 Other Long Term Liabilities

The Authority has other long term liabilities of £239.5m, which relate to its pension liabilities which are estimated to fall due over the longer term

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
(334,435)	Pension Liabilities	(239,523)
(334,435)	Total Long Term Liabilities	(239,523)

17 Usable reserves

Movements in the Authority's usable reserves are detailed in the Movement in Reserves statement. The nature and purpose of these reserves is set out below:

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
(2,000)	General Fund	(2,000)
(273)	Section 106 Receipts	(34)
(250)	Insurance Fund External	(250)
(924)	Funding Reserves	(292)
(151)	Carry Forwards	(45)
(681)	Transformation Reserve	(1,000)
(356)	Capital	(314)
(30)	Equipment Reserve	(100)
(4,665)	General Fund + Earmarked Reserves	(4,035)
(1,046)	Capital Grants Unapplied Account	(418)
(1,046)	Capital Grants Unapplied Account	(418)
-	Capital Receipts Reserve	-
-	Capital Receipts Reserves	-
(5,711)	Total Usable Reserves	(4,453)

17.1 General Fund

This is the accumulated surplus of income over expenditure after allowing for any General Fund Reserves. Its strategic use is to safeguard against budget risk and adverse impact on future funding levels.

17.2 Capital grants unapplied

These are grants received for a specific purpose but remaining unspent at the end of the year.

18 Unusable reserves

An analysis of the unusable reserves is shown below:

31 March 2022		31 March 2023	
£000		£000	
(5,320)	Revaluation Reserve	(7,351)	
(35,276)	Capital Adjustment Account	(34,336)	
334,435	Pensions Reserve	239,524	
70	Accumulated Absences Account	86	
281	Council Tax and NDR Collection Fund Account	40	
294,190	Total Unusable Reserves	197,963	

18.1 Revaluation reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains/losses made by the Authority arising in the value of its Property, Plant and Equipment.

31 March 2022		31 March 2023	
£000		£000	
(1,656)	Opening Balance	(5,320)	
(3,676)	Revaluation gains in the period	(2,726)	
12	Revaluation loss in the period	695	
(5,320)	Revaluation Reserve	(7,351)	

The Reserve contains only revaluation gains/losses accumulated since 1 January 2019, the date that the Reserve was created.

18.2 Capital adjustment account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or enhancement of those assets under statutory provisions. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or enhancement as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Authority as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and enhancement. The Account contains accumulated gains and losses on Investment Properties and gains recognised on donated assets that have yet to be consumed by the Authority. The Account also contains revaluation gains accumulated on Property, Plant and Equipment before 1 April 2007, the date that the Revaluation Reserve was created to hold such gains. Note 7 provides details of the source of all the transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve. A breakdown of the CAA balance is set out below:-

31 March 2022		31 March 2023	
£000		£000	
(36,255)	Opening Balance	(35,276)	
(179)	Additions -Revenue funding	(479)	
(187)	Additions -S106 Funding	(239)	
(6)	Additions -Capital Grants Unapplied	(628)	
(19)	Additions -Capital Receipts	(60)	
1,230	Depreciation	1,516	
140	Revaluation Losses + Disposals	830	
(35,276)	Capital Adjustment Reserves	(34,336)	

18.3 Pension reserve

The Pension Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Authority accounts for post-employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Authority makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pay any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Authority has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
328,856	Opening Balance	334,435
5,579	Actuarial (Gains)/Losses	(94,911)
334,435	Pension Reserve	239,524

18.4 Accumulated Absences Account

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
90	Opening Balance	70
(20)	Provision for the period	16
70	Accumulated Absences Account	86

18.5 Collection Fund Adjustment Account

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
90	Council Tax Collection Fund Adjustment Account	(159)
191	NNDR Collection Fund Adjustment Account	199
281	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	40

19. Officers' remuneration

The number of officers whose remuneration, excluding pension contributions, was **£50,000** or more during 2022/23 is listed below:

Number of Officers	Remuneration Band	Number of Officers
2021/22		2022/23
21	£50,000 - £54,999	28
22	£55,000 - £59,999	26
7	£60,000 - £64,999	10
1	£65,000 - £69,999	7
1	£70,000 - £74,999	5
2	£75,000 - £79,999	2
1	£80,000 - £84,999	-
-	£85,000 - £89,999	2
-	£90,000 - £94,999	1
2	£95,000 - £99,999	-
-	£100,000 - £104,999	2
1	£120,000 - £124,999	-

19.1 Senior Officer Remuneration

Full year remuneration amounts for all senior officers are included in the table of remuneration by pay band in Note 19 (above).

The tables below detail the individual remuneration of senior employee's for 2022/23 and 2021/22 respectively.

2022/23	Start Date (with NCFRA)	Leaving Date	Salary	Other	Total Excl Pension	Employer's Pension
Post Holder Information			£	£	£	£
Chief Fire Officer - M Jones	03/10/2023		69,247	-	69,247	-
Chief Fire Officer - D Dovey	01/01/2019	11/10/2023	71,901	-	71,901	-
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (1)	01/01/2019		101,773	-	101,773	29,310
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (2)	01/01/2019		101,773	-	101,773	29,310
Area Manager (1)	01/01/2019		62,408	17,267	79,675	22,946
Area Manager (2)	01/01/2020		62,232	17,267	79,499	22,896
Area Manager (3)	01/01/2019		57,826	15,571	73,397	20,501
Head of Protection	01/01/2019		61,687	-	61,687	10,672
Prevention, Safeguarding and Partnership Manager	01/01/2019		61,687	-	61,687	10,672

2021/22 Post Holder Information	Start Date (with NCFRA)	Leaving Date	Salary £	Other £	Total Excl Pension £	Employer's Pension £
Chief Fire Officer - D Dovey	01/01/2019		123,259	-	123,259	-
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (1)	01/01/2019		99,308	-	99,308	28,601
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (2)	01/01/2019		99,308	-	99,308	28,601
Area Manager (1)	01/01/2019		62,766	17,267	80,033	23,049
Area Manager (2)	01/01/2020		58,695	16,384	75,079	21,616
Area Manager (3)	01/01/2019		56,522	13,717	70,239	19,183
Head of Protection Prevention, Safeguarding and Partnership Manager	01/01/2019		56,628	-	56,628	9,797
	01/01/2019		56,628	-	56,628	9,797

A number of the senior officers for the NCFRA are employed and remunerated by either the OPFCC or the Office for the Chief Constable. These posts are detailed below and details of their remuneration are included within the OPFCC accounts.

Post Holder Information	Start Date (with NCFRA)
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner	01/01/2019
Monitoring Officer	01/01/2019
Chief Finance Officer	01/01/2019
Assistant Chief Officer (Enabling Services)	01/04/2020

All of the above roles remain as at 31 March 2023.

For the 2022/23 financial year, the Authority made a contribution to OPFCC and this is referenced further within the related parties note.

20 External Audit costs

The Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) have set a scale fee of £31k for external audit services carried out by the appointed auditor (EY) in 2022/23 (the scale fee of £25k was payable for 2021/22 and any further costs requested will be subject to discussion with PSAA).

21 Related parties

IPSAS 20 Related Party Disclosures, based on IAS 24, requires NCFRA to disclose material transactions and outstanding balances with related parties – bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence NCFRA or to be controlled or influenced by NCFRA.

Central Government has effective control over the general operations of both NCFRA and the OPFCC. It is responsible for providing the statutory framework within which NCFRA and the OPFCC operates, together with funding in the form of general or specific grants.

The Director of Delivery (and Monitoring Officer) and Chief Finance Officer of the OPFCC also undertake these roles in NCFRA and all OPFCC Directors and OPFCC staff support the governance of NCFRA. There is also a joint Communications Team for OPFCC and Fire. The costs are reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process and in 2022/23, the sum of £379k was charged to NCFRA for this support. Furthermore, the OPFCC agreed to fund a post in Fire of up to three years to support Youth engagement, the LGA subscription and a contribution to the acorn demography tool. These costs equated to £53k.

NCFRA and Northamptonshire Police work together on a number of collaboration and other activities or where one organisation provides services for another. A separate collaboration agreement is in place which sets out the governance arrangements for existing and future collaborative activities between OPFCC, the Chief Constable (CC) and NCFRA. This agreement was reviewed in December 2021.

NCFRA and Police collaborate on operational and non-operational activities. Shared support services teams are in place for a number of services and shared accommodation in Darby House. During 2022/23, net charges of £2.739m were charged by Police to NCFRA.

NCFRA collaborate and deliver mutual aid arrangements to and from other Fire Authorities. They collaborate with Warwickshire for the control room and system.

The OPFCC maintains a register of business interests and key members of staff in the OPFCC and NCFRA Chief Officers and the JIAC members are required, at the end of each year, to declare whether they, or any member of their immediate family, have had any related party transactions (i.e. significant financial dealings) with the OPFCC and NCFRA. All returns were received and reviewed by the S151 Officer and no disclosures are required.

During the year, whilst NCFRA do not contribute financially, they continued as active participants in the Cadets arrangements with other Bluelight services in Northamptonshire.

NCFRA continued to receive some support services from West Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes which had been previously provided by Local Government Shared Services (LGSS) and Northamptonshire County Council (NCC). These charges equated to £163k from West Northamptonshire and £36k from Milton Keynes during 2022/23.

22 Capital expenditure and capital financing

The movement on the Capital Financing Requirement in the year was as follows:

31 March 2022 £000		31 March 2023 £000
3,300	Opening Capital Financing Requirement	5,753
	Capital Investment:	
2,843	Property, Plant and Equipment	2,871
2,843	Total Capital Spending	2,871
	Sources of Finance:	
(19)	Capital Receipts	(60)
(4)	Earmarked Reserves	(628)
(188)	Section 106 Receipts	(239)
	Sums set aside from revenue:	
(179)	Direct revenue contributions	(479)
(390)	Total Sources of Finance	(1,406)
5,753	Closing Capital Financing Requirement	7,218

The year end position on the Capital Financing Requirement consists of the following:

31 March 2022 £000		31 March 2023 £000
	Capital Investment:	
46,125	Property, Plant and Equipment	48,681
46,125	Total Capital Spending	48,681
	Unusable Capital Reserves:	
(5,320)	Revaluation Reserve	(7,351)
(35,276)	Capital Adjustment Account	(34,336)
(40,596)	Total Unusable Capital Reserves	(41,687)
	1st January 2019 Stock on Governance Transfer	
224	Inventories	224
224		224
5,753	Closing Capital Financing Requirement	7,218

23 Operating Leases

The Authority has some property and vehicle leases which have been accounted for as operating leases.

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
63	Less than one year (payments)	59
197	One to five years	138
260	Total	197

The future minimum payments due under operating lease in future years are:

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
63	Minimum lease payments	59

The expenditure charged to service lines in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure during the period in relation to these leases were:

24 Commitments

NCFRA discloses all material Capital Commitments and after a review of all approved contracts, there were one significant capital commitments that was in existence prior to 31st March 2023. NCFRA had entered into a contract for the construction or enhancement of Property, Plant and Equipment with the outstanding contract commitment of £1.16m. This contract, for the delivery of a updated command and control room for NCFRA is due to last until March 2029.

25 Redundancy and early retirement costs – Exit packages

Redundancy and early retirement costs are payable when employment is terminated before the normal retirement date or when an employee accepts voluntary redundancy in exchange for these payments.

These costs are recognised only when the Authority is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment on the affected employees.

In the 12 months between April 2022 and March 2023 there was one redundancy payment committed to during this period with an expected value of between £25-£30k. There were no redundancy payments decided in the 12 months between April 2021 and March 2022.

26 Pensions

26.1 Participation in pension schemes

On 1 April 2015 a new Firefighters' Pension Scheme was introduced, and the following notes include the data for the three schemes combined, 2015, 2006 and 1992. Employees' and employers' contributions into the Firefighters' Pension Fund are determined by the Secretary of State on the advice of the Government Actuary. Payments of pensions and other retirement benefits are made from the Pension Fund. Government grant is payable to cover any shortfall on the Pension Fund account.

Other employees, subject to certain qualifying criteria, are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme, which is a funded defined benefits scheme administered by Northamptonshire County Council. The Authority and employees pay contributions to the LGPS Pension Fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liability with investment assets. In 2022/23, the rate of contributions payable by employees range from 5.5% to 12.5% depending on the salary band of the employee. The Authority contributes at the rate prescribed by the Fund's actuary.

26.2 Transactions relating to retirement benefits

The Authority recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the Net Cost of Services when employees earn them, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the funding needs of the Authority are based upon the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of retirement benefits is reversed out after Net Operating Expenditure. The following transactions have been made during the year:

	Local Government Pension Scheme	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme	Total	Local Government Pension Scheme	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme	Total
	March 2022	March 2022	March 2022	March 2023	March 2023	March 2023
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Income and Expenditure Account						
Cost of Services						
Current Service Cost	1,133	6,980	8,113	913	5,420	6,333
Past Service Cost (including Settlements and Curtailments)			-			-
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure						
Net Interest Expense	120	6,470	6,590	126	8,730	8,856
Total defined benefit cost recognised in Income and Expenditure Account	1,253	13,450	14,703	1,039	14,150	15,189
Return on plan assets (excluding the amount included in the net interest expense)	(415)	-	(415)	(676)	-	(676)
Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in demographic assumptions	(69)	-	(69)	(68)	-	(68)
Actuarial gains and losses arising on changes in financial assumptions	(1,182)	(1,120)	(2,302)	(6,023)	98,400	92,377
Other	24	-	24	(676)	-	(676)
Total remeasurements recognised in Other Comprehensive Income (OCI)	(1,642)	(1,120)	(2,762)	(7,443)	98,400	90,957
Movement in Reserves Statement						
Reversal of net charges made for retirement benefits in accordance with IAS19	791	(6,370)	(5,579)	4,331	90,580	94,911
Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for pensions in the year:						
Employers' contribution payable to scheme (LGPS)/Retirement Benefits payable to pensioners (FPS)	(402)	(5,960)	(6,362)	(341)	(6,330)	(6,671)

26.3 Assets and liabilities in relation to retirement benefits

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers and other employees, the Authority offers retirement benefits. Although these will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Authority has a commitment to make payments that need to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement. The Authority participates in two defined benefit pension schemes:

- the Local Government Pension Scheme for civilian employees, administered by West Northamptonshire Council – this is a funded scheme, meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level estimated to balance the pensions liabilities with investment assets.
- the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme – this is an unfunded scheme, meaning that there are no investment assets built up to meet the pensions liabilities, and cash has to be generated to meet actual pensions payments as they eventually fall due.

The Local Government Pension Scheme contributions payable by employers are determined by the actuary to the Pension Fund based on triennial valuations, the most recent of which was at 31 March 2022 which has changed the level of contributions from 2023/24. The level of contributions payable during the year was consistent with 2021/22.

Reconciliation of asset and benefit obligation:

	Pension Scheme 31 March 2022 £000	Pension Scheme 31 March 2022 £000	Total 31 March 2022 £000	Pension Scheme 31 March 2023 £000	Pension Scheme 31 March 2023 £000	Total 31 March 2023 £000
Opening Defined Benefit Obligation	13,547	323,370	336,917	13,811	329,740	343,551
Current Service Cost	1,133	6,980	8,113	913	-	913
Past Service Cost						
Interest Cost	290	6,470	6,760	381	-	381
Contribution by Scheme Participants	150	1,270	1,420	126	1,290	1,416
Actuarial Gains and Losses:						
Arising from changes in demographic assumptions	(69)	-	(69)	(68)	-	(68)
Arising from changes in financial assumptions	(1,182)	(1,120)	(2,302)	(6,023)	-	(6,023)
Return on assets	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	24	-	24	378	-	378
Curtailments, Settlements and past Service Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Benefits paid	(82)	(7,230)	(7,312)	(134)	(7,620)	(7,754)
Closing Defined Benefit Obligation	13,811	329,740	343,551	9,384	323,410	332,794

Reconciliation of opening and closing balances of the fair value of scheme assets:

	LGPS Pension Scheme 31 March 2022 £000	LGPS Pension Scheme 31 March 2023 £000
Opening Fair Value of Employer Assets	8,062	9,116
Return on Plan Assets, excluding the amount included in the net interest costs	414	(683)
Interest income on Plan assets	170	255
Benefits Paid	(82)	(134)
Contributions from Employer	402	341
Contributions by scheme participants	150	126
Closing Fair Value of Employer Assets	9,116	9,021

The expected return on scheme assets is determined by considering the expected returns available on the assets underlying the current investment policy. Expected yields on fixed interest investments are based on gross redemption yields as at the Balance Sheet date. Expected returns on equity investments reflect long-term real rates of return experienced in the respective markets.

26.4 Scheme history

	Local Government Pension Scheme March 2022 £000	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme March 2022 £000	Total March 2022 £000	Local Government Pension Scheme March 2023 £000	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme March 2023 £000	Total March 2023 £000
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(13,547)	(323,370)	(336,917)	(9,384)	(323,410)	(332,794)
Fair value of plan assets	8,062	-	8,062	9,021	-	9,021
Net Liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(5,485)	(323,370)	(328,855)	(363)	(323,410)	(323,773)

The liabilities show the underlying commitments that the Authority has in the long run to pay retirement benefits. The total liability of £323.8m has a substantial impact on the net worth of the Authority as recorded in the Balance Sheet

However, statutory arrangements for funding the deficit mean that the financial position of the Authority remains healthy:

- the deficit on the local government scheme will be made good by increased contributions over the remaining working life of employees, as assessed by the scheme actuary; and
- finance is only required to be raised to cover fire pensions when the pensions are actually paid.

26.5 Basis for estimating assets and liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The annual Fire Authority budget will make allowance for the firefighter's pension scheme payments based on an estimate of when such payments fall due. The Authority's budget is set taking the employer's pension contribution into account and government grant is received to cover any shortfall in the account.

The Government Actuaries Department (GAD), has assessed both the Firefighters' scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LPGS) liabilities. The main assumptions used in their calculations are as follows:

Local Government Pension Scheme March 2022 %	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme March 2022 %		Local Government Pension Scheme March 2023 %	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme March 2023 %
3.15	3.00	Rate of inflation	2.95	3.00
3.65	4.75	Rate of increase in salaries	3.45	4.75
3.15	3.00	Rate of increase in pensions	2.95	3.00
2.75	2.65	Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	4.75	2.65
50	N/A	Take up of option to convert annual pre April 2008 service Pension into retirement grant	50	N/A
75	N/A	Take up of option to convert annual post April 2008 service pension into retirement grant	75	N/A

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the other assumptions remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur, and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the scheme, i.e. on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis below did not change from those used in the previous period.

Local Government Pension Scheme March 2022	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme March 2022		Local Government Pension Scheme March 2023	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme March 2023
21.7	21.5	65 year old current pensioner	20.6	21.5
24	21.5	Male	24.9	21.5
		Female		
		45 year old future pensioner at age 65		
22.7	23.2	Male	21.8	23.2
25.8	23.2	Female	25.7	23.2

Local Government Pension scheme	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme	Impact on Defined Benefit Obligation	Local Government Pension scheme	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme
		Increase/Decrease in assumption		
March 2022	March 2022		March 2023	March 2023
3%-5%	3.5%	Longevity (increase in 1 year)	4%	3.5%
0.0%	1.5%	Rate of increase in salaries (increase by 0.1%)	0.0%	1.5%
2.0%	8.0%	Rate of increase in pensions (increase 0.1%)	2.0%	8.0%
2.0%	-9.5%	Rate for discounting Scheme liabilities (decrease by 0.1%)	2.0%	-9.5%

The Fire Pension Scheme has no assets to cover its liabilities. The Local Government Pension Scheme's assets consist of the following categories, by proportion of the total assets held:

31 March 2022		31 March 2023
£000		£000
113	Cash and Cash Equivalents	136
	Equity Securities	
	Debt Securities Bonds	
908	Government	741
	Property	
531	UK	521
73	Overseas	71
	Private Equity	
408	All	677
	Investment Funds and Trust Units	
5,721	Equities	5,351
822	Bonds	890
0	Commodities	0
540	Infrastructure	634
9,116	Total Assets	9,021

26.6 Pensions Reserve

	Local Government Pension Scheme 31 March 2022 £000	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme 31 March 2022 £000	Total 31 March 2022 £000	Local Government Pension Scheme 31 March 2023 £000	Fire Fighters Pension Scheme 31 March 2023 £000	Total 31 March 2023 £000
Opening Balance	5,485	323,370	328,855	4,694	329,740	334,434
Current service cost	1,133	6,980	8,113	913	5,420	6,333
Interest cost	120	6,470	6,590	126	8,730	8,856
Changes in assumptions	(1,642)	(1,120)	(2,762)	(5,029)	(98,400)	(103,429)
Past service cost, including curtailments	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contributions by employer/employee	(402)	1,270	868	(341)	1,290	949
Benefits Paid	-	(7,230)	(7,230)	-	(7,620)	(7,620)
Return on assets less interest	-	-	-	-	-	-
Closing Balance	4,694	329,740	334,434	363	239,160	239,523

27 Financial Instruments

Financial instruments are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the Fire Authority becomes party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument.

They are initially measured at fair value.

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are subsequently measured at amortised cost. For the Fire Authority's borrowing this means that the amount presented in the Balance Sheet is the outstanding principal repayable (plus accrued interest).

Annual charges to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement are based on the carrying amount of the liability, multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument.

Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified as below:

1) Financial assets held at amortised cost. These represent loans and loan-type arrangements where repayments of interest and principal take place on set dates and at specified amounts. The amount presented in the Balance Sheet represents the outstanding principal received plus accrued interest. Interest credited to the CIES is the amount receivable as per the loan agreement.

2) Fair Value Through Profit and Loss (FVTPL). These assets are measured and carried at fair value. All gains and losses due to changes in fair value (both realised and unrealised) are recognised in the CIES as they occur.

Allowances for impairment losses have been calculated for amortised cost assets, applying the expected credit losses model. Changes in loss allowances (including balances outstanding at the date of derecognition of an asset) are debited/credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the CIES.

As at the 31st March 2023 (or 31st March 2022), the fire authority has no type 2) assets or liabilities in its balance sheet

Changes in the value of assets carried at fair value are debited/credited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the CIES as they arise.

Note 27a Financial Instruments

The value of debtors and creditors reported in the table below are solely those amounts meeting the definition of a financial instrument. The balances of debtors and creditors reported in the balance sheet and Notes 11 and 14 also include balances which do not meet the definition of a financial instrument, such as tax-based debtors and creditors.

31 March 2022			31 March 2023	
Long term £'000	Short term £'000		Long term £'000	Short term £'000
		Financial assets at amortised cost		
0	3,000	Investments	0	0
0	2,089	Debtors	0	1,699
0	5,089	Total Financial Assets	0	1,699
		Financial liabilities at amortised cost		
(3,218)	0	Borrowing	(3,135)	0
0	(3,559)	Creditors	0	(4,877)
(3,218)	(3,559)	Total Financial Liabilities	(3,135)	(4,877)

Note 27b Financial Instruments

Income, Expense, Gains and Losses

2021/22			2022/23	
Financial Liabilities Measured at Amortised Cost £'000	Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost £'000		Financial Liabilities Measured at Amortised Cost £'000	Financial Assets Measured at Amortised Cost £'000
65		Interest Expense	70	
65	-	Total Expense in Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Service	70	
0	(3)	Interest Income		(46)
-	(3)	Total income in Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services		(46)
65	(3)	Net Gain/(Loss) for the Year	70	(46)

Note 27c Financial Instruments

Fair value of assets and liabilities

Financial liabilities and financial assets classed as financial assets and financial liabilities at amortised cost are carried in the balance sheet at amortised cost.

31 March 2022			31 March 2023	
Carrying Amount	Fair Value		Carrying Amount	Fair Value
£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
		Financial Assets Held at amortised cost		
3,000	3,000	Investments	0	0
2,089	2,089	Debtors	1,699	1,699
5,089	5,089	Total Financial Assets	1,699	1,699
		Financial liabilities at amortised cost		
(3,218)	(2,914)	Public Works Loan Board Borrowing	(3,135)	(2,445)
(3,559)	(3,559)	Creditors	(4,877)	(4,877)
(6,777)	(6,473)	Total Financial Liabilities	(8,012)	(7,322)

Their fair values can be estimated by calculating the present value of cash flows that will take place over the remaining term of the instruments.

The fair value of borrowing is less than the carrying value because this reflects the fact that the average rate of interest (1.98%) on the Fire Authorities's borrowing is less than current rates (2.66%) for new borrowing.

31 March 2022			31 March 2023	
Carrying Amount	Fair Value		Carrying Amount	Fair Value
£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
		Financial Assets Held at amortised cost		
3,000	3,000	Investments	0	0
2,089	2,089	Debtors	2,240	2,240
5,089	5,089	Total Financial Assets	2,240	2,240
		Financial liabilities at amortised cost		
(3,218)	(2,914)	Public Works Loan Board Borrowing	(3,135)	(2,445)
(3,559)	(3,559)	Creditors	(5,852)	(5,852)
(6,777)	(6,473)	Total Financial Liabilities	(8,987)	(8,297)

FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION FUND ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2023

2021/22 £000		Note	2022/23 £000
	Income To The Fund		
	<u>Income to the Fund</u>		
	Contributions Receivable		
	From Employer		
(2,872)	Normal Contributions	7	(3,163)
(1,272)	From Members	9	(1,456)
	Transfers in		
(76)	Individual transfers in from other schemes		(65)
	<u>Expenditure by the Fund</u>		
	Benefits Payable		
7,185	Pensions including ill health		7,844
2,028	Commutations and lump sum retirement benefits		534
	Payments to and on account of leavers		
-	Individual transfers out to other schemes		170
4,993	Net amount payable for the year		3,864
(541)	Refund to be received from HMRC		
(4,452)	Top up grant receivable from Central Government	10	(3,864)
-	Net Fund position for year		-

31 March 2022 £000	Net Current Assets and Liabilities	Note	31 March 2023 £000
421	Top Up grant receivable/(received) from Central Government	10	(952)
(421)	Amount Owing to/(owed by) Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue		952
-	Total		-

NOTES TO FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION FUND ACCOUNT

Notes to the Firefighters Pension Fund Statement

1. This statement has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in Great Britain.
2. Three pension schemes operate within the Fund, the 1992 scheme, the 2006 scheme, and the 2015 scheme
3. The Fund is administered and managed according to the statutory requirements set out in the 1992, 2006, and 2015 scheme legislation.
4. The Firefighters Pension Schemes are unfunded and as such have no investment assets. They are funded through employee and employer contributions and Government grant.
5. All firefighter pension related benefits are charged to the Firefighters Pension Fund Account with the exception of costs relating to non-member retirement on ill health grounds and all costs relating to injury pensions, which are charged to the Fire Service Operating Account (revenue).
6. The Fund Account captures income and liabilities relevant to the period shown and therefore does not take account of liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after the period end.
7. Normal Employer contributions are made as follows:
 - 1992 scheme 37.3% of pensionable pay.
 - 2006 scheme 27.4% of pensionable pay
 - 2015 scheme 28.8% of pensionable pay
8. For any retirement on ill health grounds the Fire Service is required to make a payment to the Pension Fund from its revenue account. This is payable over 3 years. There were 0 retirements of scheme members on ill health grounds
9. Members contributions, for both the 1992 scheme and also the 2006 scheme, changed to having banded contributions in 2013/14. The bandings are as follows:

FPS	Rates from 01/04/2014 (%)	
	1992 Scheme	2006 Scheme
Pensionable Pay Band		
Up to and including £15,609	11.0	8.5
More than £15,609 and up to and including £21,852	12.2	9.4
More than £21,852 and up to and including £31,218	14.2	10.4
More than £31,218 and up to and including £41,624	14.7	10.9
More than £41,624 and up to and including £52,030	15.2	11.2
More than £52,060 and up to and including £62,436	15.5	11.3
More than £62,436 and up to and including £104,060	16.0	11.7
More than £104,060 and up to and including £124,872	16.5	12.1
More than £124,872	17.0	12.5

2015 scheme members	
Pensionable Pay	FPS 2015
Up to £27,818	11.0
£27,819 to £51,515	12.9
£51,516 to £142,500	13.5
£142,501 or more	14.5

10. These accounts have been prepared on an accruals basis.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Police and Crime Act 2017 enabled Police and Crime Commissioners to become responsible for the governance of fire and rescue authorities, subject to the approval of a business case by the Home Secretary. The aim of this legislation was to ‘enable fire and police services to work more closely together and develop the role of our elected and accountable Police and Crime Commissioners.’ Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (NCFRA), was created on 1st January 2019. The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner also acts as NCFRA.

The CIPFA/SOLACE Framework of Good Governance

In 2007, CIPFA developed with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace) a framework – “*Delivering good governance in local government*”. This was subsequently reviewed in 2015 and an updated edition was published in April 2016.

Governance as defined in the 2016 framework is:

“Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and delivered.”

Good governance is not only about rules, policies and procedures but should also incorporate a spirit of good governance as an integral part of the culture of the organisation, its values and the expected behaviours. Senior leaders have a significant responsibility not only to ensure that good governance arrangements are properly codified and documented but also that the proper culture exists so that the concept of good governance, including transparency and openness, is effectively conveyed throughout their organisation.

This framework recognises that no two organisations are the same and as such allows an organisation to test its governance structures against a set of principles which are:

- **Principle A:** Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law:
- **Principle B:** Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- **Principle C:** Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental outcomes.
- **Principle D:** Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.
- **Principle E:** Developing Capacity and Capability.
- **Principle F:** Managing Risks and Performance
- **Principle G:** Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and accountability.

This statement explains how NCFRA has complied with the CIPFA/SOLACE framework and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

Northamptonshire PFCC is responsible for ensuring that his business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards of conduct, probity and professional competence, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. He also has a duty to arrange to secure continuous improvement in the way in which his functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In discharging this overall responsibility, the PFCC is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of his affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of his functions which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The PFCC has approved and adopted a Corporate Governance Framework (CGF) which is consistent with the framework; explains how the PFCC has complied with the code and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations in relation to the publication of an AGS. The CGF was reviewed in May 2023.

This governance statement provides a high level overview. It comments on the effectiveness of governance arrangements over the 12 month period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, and will be updated where required as at the date of signing of the statement of accounts for 2022/23.

The purpose of the Governance Framework

The Corporate Governance Framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which NCFRA is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community. It enables the Authority (the PFCC) to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, value for money services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the PFCC's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The Governance Framework

The Police, Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 brought in the responsibility for local authorities to create a Police and Crime panel. This panel is made up of local elected councillors and independent members with the responsibility to scrutinise and support the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 amended Section 28 (Powers of Police and Crime Panels) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to include the responsibilities of the new Fire and Rescue Authority. The functions of the panel are set out in legislation and the Panel must also review or scrutinise decisions made, or other actions taken by the PFCC in connection with the discharge of their functions in relation to Policing and Fire and Rescue. The Panel is referred to as the Police, Fire and Crime Panel (PFCCP).

The PFCC's Governance Arrangements

To ensure the effective administration of NCFRA, key meetings are as follows:

- The PFCC holds a monthly Accountability Board with the Chief Fire Officer, supported by statutory officers and senior fire and PFCC officers. Minutes are available on the OPFCC website.
- The PFCC meets regularly with the Chief Fire Officer and meetings are held between the Chief Fire Officer and key Officers from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC).
- The terms of reference of the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) includes NCFRA. Four meetings of the Committee took place in 2022/23 and notes of the meetings are published on the OPFCC website. Additional workshops with a specific focus were also held. The JIAC provides independent assurance to the PFCC as NCFRA.
- An Enabling Services Transformation Board provides a structured approach to managing and monitoring collaboration opportunities between Fire and Policing.
- A joint Assistant Chief Officer leads the Enabling Services Programme and provides strategic leadership of joint support services across Fire and Policing.
- A collaboration agreement is in place in line with the Home Office Financial Management Code of Practice. The agreement was reviewed in the year.
- Fire and Rescue Service have a number of meetings established at strategic and operational levels. Where appropriate, members of the OPFCC attend to provide scrutiny and challenge.
- During 2021/22, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services undertook their second inspection of Northamptonshire. The report was produced in July 2022.

In the full year to 31st March 2023, the PFCC has sought to ensure that appropriate management and reporting arrangements are in place to enable him to be satisfied that the approach to corporate governance was both adequate and effective in practice.

The system of internal control is based on a system of financial, contractual, management and administrative controls and is reviewed by both internal and external audit.

Compliance with the seven principles set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law:

The Corporate Governance Framework provides guidance on expected behaviours to ensure integrity and builds on the clear statements made by the PFCC and the Chief Fire Officer.

For the financial year 2022/23, related party disclosures have been received for all key staff in the OPFCC, JIAC members, and the Chief Fire Officer and Senior Officers .

The statutory roles of Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer to NCFRA are held by the post holders in the OPFCC which provides consistency and continuity.

The policies for Fire transferred across to NCFRA under the Governance arrangements. Some have been reviewed to date and regular reviews are undertaken.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

The Authority's purpose is set out in statute. The vision for Northamptonshire is set out in the Police, Fire and Crime Plan and supported by the Community Risk Management Plan.

The OPFCC website is used to publish a wide range of policy and information, making this easily accessible to the public. The website includes key NCFRA governance information and the role of the PFCC in Fire Governance is set out. Agendas of the are available on the PFCC website, together with the minutes of the Accountability Board.

Decisions made by the PFCC are published on the website, together with consultations and details of future public events. The PFCC undertook public consultation to inform setting the Fire precept for 2022/23 and 2023/24. This consultation included wider public engagement on Fire and the report is available on the OPFCC website.

Significant stakeholder engagement was undertaken for the Police, Fire and Crime Plan and the Community Risk Management Plan in 2021. The report for the Police, Fire and Crime Plan is available on the PFCC website.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental outcomes.

For the 2022/23 budget and precept, the Police, Fire and Crime Plan was used to direct the resources of NCFRA through the Revenue and Capital budgets.

Whilst still one of the lowest funded authorities nationally, although future efficiencies are required, it is now in a much more stable and resilient position. The NCFRA revenue budget has increased by around £7m (over 30%) since the governance transfer and reserves are currently deemed adequate.

As in previous years, the 2022/23 and 2023/24 budgets were prepared on zero-based budget principles, the Chief Fire Officer was fully involved in the preparation of the budgets and a number of targeted meetings took place with him to develop the detail of the budget and the capital programme, which were aligned to key priorities.

Volatility on Fire budgets has reduced in most areas during 2022/23. However, some volatility remains in estates and was also experienced in the wholetime budget where uncosted operational changes to the delivery model resulted in increased costs. The PFCC scrutinised and challenged this and held the previous Chief Fire Officer to account on the forecast expenditure position. As such, the Chief Fire Officer has implemented management and overtime controls to bring the wholetime budget back in line. Budget manager engagement continues to improve and the Joint Head of Finance continues to work with the Chief Fire Officer and budget managers to improve monitoring and forecasting.

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.

The NCFRA Capital Programme has continued to develop. The Chief Fire Officer's view is that this currently includes essential operational requirements, together with some transformative requirements for the service.

As part of the monthly budget monitoring the Chief Fire Officer provides regular updates to the PFCC on the costs and delivery of the capital programme, particularly in relation to large scale building projects which have been affected by delays and inflationary increases following Brexit and Covid to ensure they can regularly be reviewed.

As a result the previously approved joint workshop is one project which is now cost prohibitive and an alternative delivery model and joint working approach is being actively progressed which still meets the priorities set out in the initial joint workshop business case.

The Authority has the strategies and plans in place to continue to evolve and change over time, and the Government's White Paper "reforming our Fire and Rescue Service", currently being consulted on will potentially bring further changes.

The capital programme is supported by asset strategies and these reflect the PFCC's desired direction of travel for interoperability, building capacity or reducing costs to be reinvested in operational services.

Joint Heads of Department are in place for all Support Services. A joint finance system was implemented for Fire from 1st April 2023 and HR and payroll will be implemented in the following year. NCFRA are receiving the benefits of extra resilience and professional expertise.

The second HMICFRS Inspection took place in 2021/22 and was published in Summer 2022. The report by Roy Wilsher, HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue services set out:

"We were pleased to see that the service has made significant progress since our 2018 inspection in how effectively and efficiently it keeps people safe and secure from fires and other risks. It has made clear use of our recommendations from the last inspection to improve the service it gives the public. But there are areas where the service still needs to improve, particularly how well it looks after its people."

Since publication of the draft accounts, the subsequent inspection report was released in September 2024, which clarifies areas for improvement that are being addressed as part of the priorities identified by the new Chief Fire Officer.

The JIAC receive regular updates throughout the year on the progress of HMICFRS recommendations and the PFCC requires regular reports to the Accountability Board.

Principle E: Developing Capacity and Capability.

Following the governance transfer, after many years of holding vacancies, work has continued to recruit staff to build capacity and capability. Workforce planning is in place which regularly reviews current and future staffing plans and profiles.

The commitment to increasing wholtime firefighters supports wellbeing of the workforce whilst increasing capacity and resilience for the public of Northamptonshire. As such, appliance availability now averages around 18 appliances. In some previous years appliances available averaged 14.

Whilst significant strides have been made in managing staffing resources, the link between resources and appliance availability needs to be further aligned. The previous Chief Fire Officer commenced an Emergency Cover (ECR) review which produced initial information in October 2022. The new Chief Fire Officer has completed an initial assessment of this work and commenced further work which is anticipated to conclude in Summer/Autumn 2023.

NCFRA has training capacity, skills and knowledge based at Chelveston and there are options to review these to maximise the benefit from these resources of NCFRA. A joint Fire/Police business development/commercial manager is in place and a commercial strategy is in place which is intended to consider all opportunities available to both Fire and Police.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officers continued in role during the year, as did the Joint Assistant Chief Officer for Enabling Services, the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer, however, subsequent to the Balance Sheet date and following the retirement of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) in December 2023, Vaughan Ashcroft, who was the permanent s151 Officer for the Chief Constable, was made the interim CFO for the OPFCC. He was made permanent in October 2024. Jonny Bugg was appointed as the substantive Chief Executive (Monitoring Officer) in January 2024.

During the 2022-23 financial year, the previous Chief Fire Officer retired in October 2022 and Mark Jones was appointed as the new Chief Fire Officer. A one week handover was carried out to ensure continuity and handover of knowledge. Subsequent to the Balance Sheet date, Mark Jones was in post as Chief Fire Officer until 7th July 2023 and replaced by Nicci Marzec as Interim Chief Officer until Deputy Chief Finance Officer Simon Tuhill took over as Interim Chief Fire Officer from 18th July 2023 to 15th May 2024. Nikki Watson commenced as Chief Fire Officer on a permanent basis from 16th May 2024 and Simon Tuhill reverted to his substantive role as Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

To drive forward the work on the ECR and culture and to establish clear succession plans for senior managers, a new post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer was created as part of the 2023/24 budget and the post will be filled from July 2023.

One of the Assistant Chief Fire Officers has announced his intention to retire in June 2023 and it is anticipated that this role will be recruited to in the coming months.

Subsequent to the Balance Sheet date, a new Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner was elected in May 2024 but the change in office did not impact upon the Authority accounts during this transition.

Principle F: Managing Risks and Performance

NCFRA have a developed Risk Management system and the same system is being used following the governance transfer. The NCFRA risk register was considered at the March 2023 JIAC meeting. Furthermore, an OPFCC Director attends the Fire Risk Management meetings where risks are considered. During 2022/23 Internal Audit continued to deliver risk management support and expertise. As part of the move to joint working, in April 2023, NCFRA implemented the 4Risk risk management system, ensuring a consistent approach with the OPFCC and the Force.

An operational performance framework is in place that aligns to the outcomes in the previous Police, Fire and Rescue Plan and CRMP. This is a regular item at the Accountability Board, with monthly monitoring to the Chief Fire Officer's executive meeting.

During 2022/23, West Northamptonshire Council continued to deliver some finance, payroll and HR activities. All activities are scheduled to transfer in house in 2023/24 and the following year.

The JIAC Chair and two members continued in their roles during the year. One member was appointed and commenced their role in May 2022 and, subsequent to the Balance Sheet date, another member commenced in March 2024. JIAC members were offered and some attended CIPFA, EY (the external auditors), Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) or other events. Additionally, EY and other circulars are shared with JIAC members and senior officers where provided.

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and accountability.

External governance is managed through a system of assurance that includes attendance at meetings by OPFCC staff to fully understand activities and associated risks. There is a monthly robust, formal Accountability Board meeting regularly between the PFCC and Chief Fire Officer and this is supported by regular informal meetings.

The PFCC provides regular updates to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel as well as to elected Members, officials and members of the local community and has continued with the regular newsletter to Northamptonshire Members of Parliament.

The OPFCC website has been awarded the independent CoPaCC transparency award in the last three years. In line with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, the draft 2022/23 NCFRA statement of accounts were placed on the OPFCC website by the 31 May 2023.

As with every year since NCFRA was established in 2018/19, it is a major concern to the PFCC, the Panel, JIAC and statutory officers, that, due to factors outside of NCFRA's and the PFCC's control, the 2021/22 audit was not concluded by the time the draft accounts for 2022/23 were published. Throughout the year, locally and nationally concerns were raised on a number of occasions regarding the time taken by current audit contracts for the organisation and the public of Northamptonshire.

The Chief Finance Officer has continued to work closely with the auditor to ensure the audit is scheduled and concluded under prescribed backstop arrangements to ensure that public transparency and accountability is delivered for the public of Northamptonshire in a timely and effective manner. Any delays are reported on the PFCC website in line with the legislative requirements.

Internal Audit and Internal Audit Review of Effectiveness

The PFCC has the responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the JIAC, internal and external auditors, HMICFRS, statutory officers and senior managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment.

The agreed Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23, was informed by statutory officers, approved by the PFCC and considered by JIAC in March 2022. The plan covered- identified areas of risk and internal control. At the date of the draft Chief Internal Auditor report at the end of April 2023, a number of final audit reports remained outstanding. These have since been finalised and the results do not vary from the interim audit assessments used to inform the AGS.

Fire provide an annual update for the PFCC on the progress of audit recommendations and the PFCC asks for updates on specific audits as appropriate. For example, a report was considered on Safeguarding during the year. Furthermore, the JIAC received updates on Internal Audit Reports and Management’s implementation of recommendations during the year.

Internal Audits undertaken are given two assurance ratings:

- System: How the control environment is assessed and documented, and
- Compliance: How well the system and environment is working in practice.

There are five assurance ratings as follows: Substantial, Good, Satisfactory, Limited and No Assurance. Since the governance transfer, the PFCC and statutory officers have prioritised the need for Fire to embed an effective internal control framework and have targeted the internal audit programme to consider these key areas and to monitor them until controls have improved. The assurance received shows demonstrable progress since the governance transfer as follows:

AUDIT TITLE	19/20 Assurance Rating		20/21 Mid Year Assurance Rating		20/21 Year End Assurance Rating		21/22 Assurance Rating		22/23 Assurance Rating		Report Ref:
	System	Compliance	System	Compliance	System	Compliance	System	Compliance	System	Compliance	
Annual IA Report/Governance Statement	Satisfactory		Satisfactory			Satisfactory		Good			i.
Target operating Model Performance Monitoring	Good	Good	One Audit Assessment		Good	Good	Good	Good	Good*	Good*	ii.
Corporate Governance	Good	Satisfactory	One Audit Assessment		Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Satisfactory (Code of Ethics)	iii.
MTFP/Budgetary controls	Good	Good	One Audit Assessment		Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Satisfactory	iv.
Accounting systems (AP/AR)	Good*	Limited*	Good (AP)	Limited (AP)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	v.
			Satisfactory (AR)	Satisfactory (AR)	Good	Good					
Payroll	Good*	Limited*	Good	Limited	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory	vi.
ICT Systems	Limited	Limited	One Audit Assessment		Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Not separately undertaken in 21/22 or 22/23				
Grenfell Action Plan	NEW In 20/21 – Statutory Officers Requested Assurance In These Areas				Good	Good					
Asset Management					Satisfactory	Limited					
Covid 19 –Spend Analysis					Good	Satisfactory					
Covid 19 – Contracts Payments					Good	Satisfactory					
Procurement & Stock Control					Satisfactory	Limited					
Financial Controls Environment (Key Recommendations bank/treasury/journals)					Satisfactory	Limited (Contracted Out services)	Good (in house)	Good (in house)			vii.
ICT Security - Data Recovery	New In 2021/22 - Statutory Officers Requested Assurance in these areas				Limited	Limited	Not separately undertaken in 22/23				
Target Operating Model - Golden Thread Data Quality					Limited	Limited					
People Culture - HR Improvement Plan					Good	N/A					
Equipment Maintenance and Testing					Good	Satisfactory					
Policies and Procedures - Safeguarding					New in 2022/23 - Statutory Officers Requested Assurance in these areas						
Project Management	Good	Satisfactory	ix.								
ICT - Privileged Access Controls	NOT YET COMPLETED		x.								
People and Culture	Good	Satisfactory	xi.								
Contract Management - review of monitoring and adequacy of supplier H&S Arrangements	Good	Limited	xii.								
Network Infrastructure Security	NOT YET COMPLETED		xiii.								

Italics denote draft report received

* Denotes Draft Chief Internal Auditor Assessment Included in Annual Report - as at May 2023 - report not yet received

The audits reflect that whilst good policies and procedures are in place, work will need to continue to ensure compliance.

The PFCC, the S151 Officer and the Chief Fire Officer will continue to monitor these areas closely and will identify areas where further assurance is required and act accordingly.

The Chief Internal Auditor has produced her draft annual report for NCFRA for 2022/23, as follows:

Audit Opinion – 2022/23

I can confirm that sufficient assurance work has been completed to allow me to form a conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority's internal control environment. Based on audit work undertaken during the year, in my opinion, NCFRA's framework of governance, risk management and management control is **GOOD**.

Audit testing has demonstrated that controls were working in practice across key areas for the most part during the year.

Where weaknesses have been identified through internal audit review, we have worked with management to agree appropriate corrective actions and a timescale for improvement.

Jacinta Fru BA (Hons) FCCA
Chief Internal Auditor

Within the report, the Chief Internal Auditor has advised:

"The Good assurance opinion reflects the overarching sound controls environment during the year, despite the challenges of ongoing work to finalise the transfer of key support service delivery, to a unified Enabling service with the Police Force."

The Chief Internal Auditor will produce an updated annual report after all audits have been concluded. The JIAC will consider the final report at their meeting in July 2023.

MK Internal Audit Services (MKIA) have provided a comprehensive Internal Audit Service to NCFRA since the governance transfer in January 2019. As 2022/23 represents the final year of the MKIA contract for NCFRA as following the transfer of financial system in April 2023 services will be delivered by the Joint Fire and Police finance team. To align to the system changes, NCFRA have contracted with Mazars to provide Internal Audit Services to both Fire and Policing with effect from 2023/24. This will enable a comprehensive and holistic internal audit plan to be delivered across all services which it is envisaged will also provide efficiencies for both Fire and Police.

CIPFA Financial Management Code

The CIPFA Financial Management Code translates the principles of good financial management into a series of financial standards that comprise: leadership and accountability, governance and financial management, medium term financial planning to inform and ensure financial resilience, and monitoring financial performance to address emerging issues through to financial reporting. Taken together these financial management standards underpin the effective governance of the use and control of resources utilised by NCFRA in pursuance of its stated objectives.

The S151 Officer, together with the Joint Finance Team and Joint Assistant Chief Officer for Enabling Services have considered a self-assessment against this framework. This review highlighted that compliance has mainly been achieved in all significant areas of the framework and a small number of areas have been highlighted for further consideration in 2023/24, and this is captured in the AGS action plan as a recommendation.

Review of Effectiveness

The Internal Audit Plan was in place in 2022/23 and is almost concluded. The results of the audits show good progress in key financials since the time of the governance transfer. The PFCC is fully appraised of these and will continue to seek assurance through statutory officer updates and the Accountability Board.

A training and induction day was held for both new and existing members in July 2022 with the PFCC, the Chief Fire Officer and the S151 officer in attendance to provide context and understanding of the funding, governance, decision making and internal control environments for NCFRA.

There were four JIAC meetings during the year, a workshop in November 2022 on the draft 2021/22 Statement of Accounts and a workshop in February 2023 on Risk Management. The four meetings considered the following across Fire and Police:

JIAC Meeting	Areas Covered	Fire	Police
July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting of members with auditors without officers present Annual Report of the JIAC and Terms of Reference Review External Audit Update 2020/21 and 2021/22 Internal Audit Annual Report 2021/22 Internal Audit Progress Report 2022/23 Risk Register Update Internal Audit progress against recommendations update System Implementation updates HMICFRS Update Benefits Realisation 	Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y Y	Y Y Y Y Y - - Y - Y
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audit Progress Report 2022/23 Internal Audit progress against recommendations update External Audit Update 2020/21 and 2021/22 Anti-Fraud and Corruption Processes 2023/24 Budget and MTFP Processes, Plan and Timetable OPFCC Risk Register Enabling Services update 	Y - Y Y Y - Y	Y Y Y - Y Y Y
December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audit Progress Report 2022/23 Internal Audit progress against recommendations update External Audit Update 2020/21 and 2021/22 Anti-Fraud and Corruption Processes HMICFRS Update Feedback from the Accounts Workshops Risk Register 	Y Y Y - Y Y -	Y - Y Y - Y Y
March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audit Progress Report 2022/23 Internal Audit progress against recommendations update External Audit Update 2020/21 and 2021/22 Internal and External Audit Appointment and 2023/24 Plan Update HMICFRS Update Feedback from the Risk Management Workshop 2023/24 Treasury Management Strategy Risk Register Enabling Services Update 	Y - Y Y - Y Y Y Y	Y Y Y Y Y Y Y - Y

Significant Governance Issues

There were no formal reports issued by the S151 or Monitoring Officer during the year, outcomes of Monitoring Officer Investigations, objections from local electors or ombudsman referrals. The financial settlement and precept flexibility for 2023/24 have enabled NCFRA to set a balanced budget for three years with an agreed realistic efficiency plan which will be kept under close review.

NCFRA have Fixed Asset Strategies, Reserves, Treasury Management Strategies and a Capital Programme in place, and the Capital Programme is regularly reviewed to ensure deliverability and affordability.

Representation will continue to be made for funding to mitigate this impact. It remains essential that opportunities to build resilience and capacity and maximise efficiencies continue to be taken forward with Policing. The internal control framework continues to develop, and it is important that this momentum is maintained.

Progress on the 2022/23 Recommendations

Good progress has been made on the 2022/23 AGS recommendations as follows:

Progress on 2022/23 Internal Control Actions		
Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.	Recommendation 1: On receipt of the HMICFRS report, take forward recommendations and areas for improvement and monitor updates regularly through the Accountability Board.	Update: Ongoing. – On 2023/24 Regular updates are provided to the Accountability Board and JIAC. Many of the dates are not yet due. The next HMICFRS visit is scheduled for Q3 and Q4 2023/24 Put in place additional monitoring and assurance in relation to the cause of concern.
Principle E: Developing Capacity and Capability.	Recommendation 2: Further develop the work of the Establishment Board including the development of Recruitment plans and forecasts.	Update: Completed – incorporated in BAU Regular balanced scorecard reports are being produced and whilst some improvements will still need to be taken forward, workforce planning is now part of business as usual.
Principle F: Managing Risks and Performance.	Recommendation 3: Take forward the recommendation from the Target Operating Model Performance Data audit and progress	Update: Ongoing – On 2023/24 The team and functionality has now moved into enabling services and the improvements are being taken forward.
	Recommendation 4: – take forward the recommendation from the ICT Disaster Recover audit.	Update: Completed
Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and accountability.	Recommendation 5: To work closely with Budget managers and the service to understand that the impact of proposals and decisions made can be fully understood to ensure that reliance can be placed on information provided and that unexpected volatility on the budget headings is minimised.	Update: Ongoing – On 2023/24 Whilst the new Chief Fire Officer has implemented management controls and Bank, this is part of a wider resource and outcome requirements exercise as an Emergency Cover Review due for completion in 2023/24.
	Recommendation 6: To take forward the recommendations of the Asset Management and Stock control internal audits.	Update: Completed
	Recommendation 7 – To take forward the Actions Identified from the self-assessment of the CIPFA Financial Management Code.	Update: Ongoing – On 2023/24 Some improvements and actions have been completed – work on the remaining actions will continue.

Recommendations for 2023/24

Following the assessment of internal controls, the following areas have been recommended to embed and improve internal controls further in 2023/24:

2023/24 Internal Control Action Plan	
Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental outcomes.	Recommendation 1: Complete the Emergency Cover Review and Propose Options for the PFCC Consideration and next steps.
Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.	<p>Recommendation 2: Northamptonshire HMICFRS Report 2022 - Continue to take forward recommendations and areas for improvement with specific attention to the Cause of Concern.</p> <p>Take forward recommendations and actions from the national HMICFRS Report "Culture and Values in Fire and Rescue Services 2023 and monitor updates regularly through JIAC and the Accountability Board.</p>
Principle F: Managing Risks and Performance.	Recommendation 3: Take forward the recommendation from the Target Operating Model Performance Data audit and progress.
Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and accountability.	<p>Recommendation 4: To work closely with Budget managers and the service to understand that the impact of proposals and decisions made can be fully understood to ensure that reliance can be placed on information provided and that unexpected volatility on the budget headings is minimised.</p> <p>Recommendation 5: To continue to take forward the Actions Identified from the self- assessment of the CIPFA Financial Management Code.</p>

CONCLUSION

Actions have been identified within this statement to take steps to address the above matters and further enhance the NCFRA governance arrangements. These actions will be monitored during the year and updated as part of the next annual review.

Signed: Danielle Stone, Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

Date: 6 December 2024

**Vaughan Ashcroft,
Chief Finance Officer & s151 Officer, Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority**

Date: 6 December 2024

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1 Accounting period

The length of time covered by the accounts, normally a period of twelve months commencing on 1 April. The end of the accounting period is the Balance Sheet date.

2 Accruals

Sums included in the final accounts to recognise revenue and capital income and expenditure earned or incurred in the financial year, but for which actual payment had not been received or made as at 31 March.

3 Actuarial gains and losses

For defined benefit schemes, the changes in actuarial deficits or surpluses arise because: events have not coincided with the actuarial assumptions made for the last valuation (experience gains or losses) or the actuarial assumptions have changed.

4 Asset

An item having value to the authority in monetary terms. Assets are categorised as either current or fixed:

A current asset will be consumed or cease to have material value within the next financial year (e.g. cash and stock);

A fixed asset provides benefits to the Authority and to the services it provides for a period of more than one year and may be tangible e.g. a community building, or intangible, e.g. computer software licences.

5 Audit of accounts

An external audit is an independent examination of the financial records prepared by an organisation. The main objective of an external audit is to verify that the accounting records for a company provide a true and accurate picture of the organisation's finances and that statements are prepared in accordance to the set laws and accounting standards. External audits also add value by identifying areas where efficiency in the business can be improved and where controls and processes may be made more effective.

6 Balance sheet

A statement of the recorded assets, liabilities and other balances at the end of the accounting period.

7 Budget

The forecast of net revenue and capital expenditure over the accounting period.

8 Capital expenditure

Expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset, which will be used in providing services beyond the current accounting period, or expenditure which adds to and not merely maintains the value of an existing fixed asset.

9 Capital financing

Funds raised to pay for capital expenditure. There are various methods of financing capital expenditure including borrowing, leasing, direct revenue financing, usable capital receipts, capital grants, capital contributions, revenue reserves and earmarked reserves.

10 Capital programme

The capital schemes the Authority intends to carry out over a specific period of time.

11 Capital receipt

The proceeds from the disposal of land or other fixed assets. Proportions of capital receipts can be used to finance new capital expenditure, within rules set down by the government but they cannot be used to finance revenue expenditure.

12 CIPFA

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

13 Collection fund

A separate fund that records the income and expenditure relating to Council Tax and non-domestic rates.

14 Consistency

The concept that the accounting treatment of like items within an accounting period and from one period to the next is the same.

15 Contingent asset

A contingent asset is a possible asset arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the Authority's accounts.

16 Contingent liability

A contingent liability is either: a possible obligation arising from past events whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the Authority's control; or a present obligation arising from past events where it is not probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required, or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

17 Creditor

Amount owed by the Authority for work done, goods received or services rendered within the accounting period, but for which payment has not been made by the end of that accounting period.

18 Current service cost (pensions)

The increase in the present value of a defined benefits pension scheme's liabilities, expected to arise from employee service in the current period.

19 Debtor

Amount owed to the Authority for works done, goods received or services rendered within the accounting period, but for which payment has not been received by the end of that accounting period.

20 Deferred charges

Expenditure which can be properly deferred (i.e. treated as capital in nature), but which does not result in, or remain matched with, a tangible asset. Examples of deferred charges are grants of a capital nature to voluntary organisations.

21 Defined benefit pension scheme

Pension schemes in which the benefits received by the participants are independent of the contributions paid and are not directly related to the investments of the scheme.

22 Depreciation

The measure of the cost of wearing out, consumption, or other reduction, in the useful economic life of the Authority's fixed assets during the accounting period, whether from use, the passage of time or obsolescence through technical or other changes.

23 Discretionary benefits (pensions)

Retirement benefits which the employer has no legal, contractual or constructive obligation to award and are awarded under the Authority's discretionary powers such as the Local Government (Discretionary Payments) Regulations 1996.

24 Equity

The Authority's value of total assets less total liabilities.

25 Events after the balance sheet date

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, favourable or unfavourable, that occur between the Balance Sheet date and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue.

26 Exceptional items

Material items which derive from events or transactions that fall within the ordinary activities of the Authority and which need to be disclosed separately by virtue of their size or incidence to give fair presentation of the accounts.

27 Expected return on pension assets

For a funded defined benefit scheme, this is the average rate of return, including both income and changes in fair value but net of scheme expenses, which is expected over the remaining life of the related obligation on the actual assets held by the scheme.

28 Extraordinary items

Material items, possessing a high degree of abnormality, which derive from events or transactions that fall outside the ordinary activities of the Authority and which are not expected to recur. They do not include exceptional items, nor do they include prior period items merely because they relate to a prior period.

29 Fair value

The fair value of an asset is the price at which it could be exchanged in an arm's length transaction less, where applicable, any grants receivable towards the purchase or use of the asset.

30 Government grants

Grants made by the government towards either revenue or capital expenditure in return for past or future compliance with certain conditions relating to the activities of the Authority. These grants may be specific to a particular scheme or may support the revenue spend of the Authority in general.

31 Impairment

A reduction in the value of a fixed asset to below its carrying amount on the Balance Sheet.

32 Income and expenditure account

The revenue account of the Authority that reports the net cost for the year of the functions for which it is responsible and demonstrates how that cost has been financed from precepts, grants and other income.

33 Interest cost (pensions)

For a defined benefit scheme, the expected increase during the period of the present value of the scheme liabilities because the benefits are one period closer to settlement.

34 Investments (pension fund)

The investments of the Pension Fund will be accounted for in the statements of that fund. However, authorities are also required to disclose, as part of the disclosure requirements relating to retirement benefits, the attributable share of the pension scheme assets associated with their underlying obligations.

35 Liability

A liability is where the Authority owes payment to an individual or another organisation. A current liability is an amount which will become payable or could be called in within the next accounting period, e.g. creditors or cash overdrawn.

A deferred liability is an amount which by arrangement is payable beyond the next year at some point in the future or to be paid off by an annual sum over a period of time.

36 Liquid resources

Current asset investments that are readily disposable by the Authority without disrupting its business and are either: readily convertible to known amounts of cash at or close to the carrying amount; or traded in an active market.

37 Long term contract

A contract entered into for the design, manufacture or construction of a single substantial asset or the provision of a service (or a combination of assets or services which together constitute a single project), where the time taken to substantially complete the contract is such that the contract activity falls into more than one accounting period.

38 Materiality

The concept that the Statement of Accounts should include all amounts which, if omitted, or mis-stated, could be expected to lead to a distortion of the financial statements and ultimately mislead a user of the accounts.

39 Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

The minimum amount which must be charged to the revenue account each year in order to provide for the repayment of loans and other amounts borrowed by the Authority.

40 Net book value

The amount at which fixed assets are included in the Balance Sheet, i.e. their historical costs or fair value less the cumulative amounts provided for depreciation.

41 Net debt

The Authority's borrowings less cash and liquid resources.

42 Non-domestic rates (NDR)

The Non-Domestic Rate is a levy on businesses, based on a national rate in the pound set by the government and multiplied by the assessed rateable value of the premises they occupy.

43 Non-operational assets

Fixed assets held by the Authority but not directly occupied, used or consumed in the delivery of services. Examples are investment properties, assets under construction or assets surplus to requirements pending sale or redevelopment.

44 Operating lease

A lease where the ownership of the fixed asset remains with the lessor.

45 Operational assets

Fixed assets held and occupied, used or consumed by the Authority in the pursuit of its strategy and in the direct delivery of those services for which it has either a statutory or discretionary responsibility.

46 Past service cost (pensions)

For a defined benefit pension scheme, the increase in the present value of the scheme liabilities related to employee service in prior periods arising in the current period as a result of the introduction of, or improvement to retirement benefits.

47 Pension scheme liabilities

The liabilities of a defined benefit pension scheme for outgoings due after the valuation date. Scheme liabilities measured during the projected unit method reflect the benefits that the employer is committed to provide for service up to the valuation date.

48 Precept

The levy made by precepting authorities to billing authorities, requiring the latter to collect income from Council Tax on their behalf.

49 Prior year adjustment

Material adjustments applicable to previous years arising from changes in accounting policies or from the correction of fundamental errors. This does not include normal recurring corrections or adjustments of accounting estimates made in prior years.

50 Provision

An amount put aside in the accounts for future liabilities or losses which are certain or very likely to occur but the amounts or dates of when they will arise are uncertain.

51 Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)

A Central Government Agency, which provides loans for one year and above to authorities at interest rates only slightly higher than those at which the government can borrow itself.

52 Rateable value

The annual assumed rental of a hereditament, which is used for NDR purposes.

53 Related parties

There is a detailed definition of related parties in IAS 24. For the Authority's purposes related parties are deemed to include the Authority's members, the Chief Executive, its Directors and their close family and household members.

54 Related party transactions

The Code requires the disclosure of any material transactions between the Authority and related parties to ensure that stakeholders are aware when these transactions occur and the amount and implications of such.

55 Remuneration

All sums paid to or receivable by an employee and sums due by way of expenses allowances (as far as those sums are chargeable to UK income tax) and the money value of any other benefits. Received other than in cash. Pension contributions payable by the employer are excluded.

56 Reserves

The accumulation of surpluses, deficits and appropriations over past years. Reserves of a revenue nature are available and can be spent or earmarked at the discretion of the Authority. Some capital reserves such as the fixed asset restatement account cannot be used to meet current expenditure.

57 Residual value

The net realisable value of an asset at the end of its useful life.

58 Retirement benefits

All forms of consideration given by an employer in exchange for services rendered by employees that are payable after the completion of employment.

59 Revenue expenditure

The day-to-day expenses of providing services.

60 Revenue support grant

A grant paid by Central Government to authorities, contributing towards the general costs of their services.

61 Stocks

Items of raw materials and stores an authority has procured and holds in expectation of future use. Examples are consumable stores, raw materials and products and services in intermediate stages of completion.

62 Temporary borrowing

Money borrowed for a period of less than one year.

63 Useful economic life (UEL)

The period over which the Authority will derive benefits from the use of a fixed asset

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COMMISSIONER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Disclaimer of opinion

We were engaged to audit the financial statements and the firefighters' pension fund financial statements of Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority ('the Authority') for the year ended 31 March 2023. The financial statements comprise the:

- Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement,
- Movement in Reserves Statement,
- Authority Balance Sheet,
- Authority Cash Flow Statement,
- the related notes 1 to 27 including a summary of significant accounting policies,
- and include the Firefighters' Pension Fund Accounts comprising the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement, and the related notes 1 to 10.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASMC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022).

We do not express an opinion on the accompanying financial statements of the [Authority. Because of the significance of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

Basis for disclaimer of opinion

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907) which came into force on 30 September 2024 requires the accountability statements for this financial year to be approved not later than 13 December 2024.

We completed the audit of the 2021/22 financial statements and issued our audit opinion on 1 June 2023.

The backstop date and the wider requirements of the local audit system reset meant we did not have the required resources available to complete the detailed audit procedures that would be needed to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to issue an unmodified audit report on the 2022/23 financial statements.

Matters on which we report by exception

Notwithstanding our disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements, performed subject to the pervasive limitation described above, we have nothing to report in respect of whether the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Authority.

We report to you if:

- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
 - we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
 - we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
 - we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
 - we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended)
- we are not satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2023.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities for Statement of Accounts as set out on page 15, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements and the firefighters pension fund financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 as amended by the Update to the Code and Specifications for Future Codes for Infrastructure Assets (November 2022), and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the Chief Finance Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Authority either intends to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our responsibility is to conduct an audit of the Authority's financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and to issue an auditor's report.

However, because of the matter described in the basis for disclaimer of opinion section of our report, we were not able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion on these financial statements.

We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Code of Audit Practice 2024 and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice 2024, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2024, as to whether Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General

determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2023.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether, in all significant respects, Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until we have completed our procedures to certify the closure of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 audits.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (as amended) and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

E. Jackson
Ernst & Young LLP

Elizabeth Jackson (Key Audit Partner)

Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)

Luton

6 December 2024