Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service

Working together for a safer Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service

Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2026-2027

Gloucestershire County Council

Contents

1: Introduction

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) is committed to delivering efficient, effective and sustainable services for the communities it serves. In line with the National Framework and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) requirements, this Productivity and Efficiency Plan sets out the Service's approach to improving efficiency and productivity, building on performance achieved in previous years and outlining planned activity from 2026/27 onwards.

The Plan provides a comprehensive overview of the Service's financial position, efficiencies achieved to date, and forecast savings over the medium term, alongside a structured narrative describing key productivity initiatives. These initiatives demonstrate how GFRS is improving outputs and outcomes while making best use of available resources, in line with the national definition of productivity.

The Plan is structured in accordance with the prescribed national template and supporting annexes, ensuring consistency and comparability across Fire and Rescue Services. It integrates both financial data and narrative evidence to provide assurance regarding the Service's approach to financial sustainability, performance improvement and value for money.

Delivery of this Plan supports the Service's wider strategic objectives, including those set out in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), by ensuring that resources are aligned to risk, prevention, protection and response priorities. It also demonstrates GFRS's ongoing commitment to collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement in service delivery.

2: Financial Information

Revenue Budget

The 2026/27 Revenue Budget was approved by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) in February 2026. As a County Council Fire and Rescue Service, Gloucestershire does not directly receive income from precepting or from the Local Government Finance Settlement albeit the sum provided by the Council includes these sources of funding.

Budget (£000)					
Revenue Expenditure	**2024/25**	**2025/26**	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**
Direct Employee	20,055	21,461	22,616	23,238	23,760
Indirect Employee	1,012	561	945	1,000	319
Premises	4,748	4,845	4,866	4,984	5,046
Transport	68	78	78	78	78
Supplies & Services	2,366	2,608	2,393	2,417	2,503
Capital Financing	0	0	0	0	0
Other	-854	-694	-557	-676	-738
Total	**27,395**	**28,859**	**30,341**	**31,041**	**30,968**
Income	**2024/25**	**2025/26**	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**
Actual Received from Precept	0	0	0	0	0
Glos County Council Funding	-23,056	-24,725	-26,203	-26,902	-26,827
Other Grants	-4,233	-4,025	-4,025	-4,025	-4,025
Income Raised Locally	-106	-109	-113	-114	-116
Total	**-27,395**	**-28,859**	**-30,341**	**-31,041**	**-30,968**

Reserves

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) does not hold reserves. Under the Local Government Act 2003, GCC has a responsibility to ensure that reserves are adequate. As at 31 March 2026, the following were held on behalf of the Service:

Reserves (£000)					
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
General Reserves					
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	353	206	45	0	0
of which MRP reserve					
Earmarked Capital Reserves					
Other Reserves					
of which revenue (PFI)	3,828	3,480	3,061	2,431	1,682
of which capital					
Total	**4,181**	**3,686**	**3,106**	**2,431**	**1,682**

3: Efficiencies

Efficiency Data (£000)										
Gloucestershire	Actual 2024/25		Actual 2025/26		Forecast 2026/27		Forecast 2027/28		Forecast 2028/29	
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	23,056		24,725		26,203		26,902		26,827	
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	20,055		21,461		22,615		23,238		23,760	
Non-Pay Budget	3,001		3,264		3,588		3,664		3,067	
Efficiency Savings	Recurrent	Non -recurrent	Recurrent	Non -recurrent	Recurrent	Non -recurrent	Recurrent	Non -recurrent	Recurrent	Non -recurrent
Direct Employee (not included in totals)										
Reduction in Prevention/Protection /Response Staff	56	-			281		43		248	
Reduction in Support Staff	-	-								
Indirect Employee (e.g. training, travel etc.)										
All Indirect Employee Costs			14	84						
Supplies and Services										
National Procurement Savings			16		24					
Local Procurement Savings			2	2	3					
Other Technology Improvements										
Decreased Usage			1							
Other										
Rationalisation of mobilisation equipment						31		31		31
Other Savings 2 (Please Specify)	29									
Other Savings 3 (Please Specify)										
Total Efficiency Savings (excluding direct employee savings)	29		119		58		31		31	
Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets	0.97%		3.65%		1.62%		0.85%		1.01%	

Premises, transport, and capital financing costs are largely managed corporately by GCC and therefore do not form part of the Service's controllable net budget, with the exception of PFI-related costs.

Efficiencies Achieved 2025/26

Indirect Employee – total saving £98,000

A significant efficiency was realised through the use of the Apprenticeship Levy, where six apprentices successfully completed their programmes at the Fire Service College. By maximising levy funding rather than incurring external training costs, the Service generated £84,000 of savings. Within the Training function, GFRS reduced expenditure by retaining its current cohort of trainers, avoiding the need to recruit and develop new staff ahead of the planned 2028 training facility closure. This decision produced a further £7,000 of savings for the year. These savings are already factored into the procedure for setting a balanced budget.

Operational training was further enhanced through the mobile XVR incident command simulator, which removed the need for firefighters to travel to central locations for revalidation. This increased training throughput, reduced abstraction time, and generated £7,000 in savings, while modernising the way incident command competence is maintained.

Supplies and Services – total £21,000

The Service made multiple gains through smarter, more collaborative procurement. Working with West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service on specific product lines delivered cashable savings, while further efficiencies were achieved through use of national frameworks for safe and well equipment, bedding, mobile voice and data contracts, laboratory licences, and waste collection. Individually modest in some cases, these improvements collectively and contributed £21,000 in efficiencies, reduced contract costs, and improved future negotiating positions.

Future Efficiencies

Supplies and Services

The Service will focus on shifting procurement culture from a transactional activity to a proactive, collaborative process embedded early in planning and decision-making. By strengthening engagement, building capability, and encouraging shared ownership of procurement outcomes, the Service will drive continuous improvement, reduce avoidable inefficiencies, and create more consistent, sustainable ways of working that support long-term operational effectiveness.

ICT

Mobilisation equipment on all stations has been replaced, and two devices have been rationalised into one, halving costs across 3 years 2026-2028. This saving has already been factored into the procedure for setting a balanced base budget.

Stronger Futures Programme

The Stronger Futures Programme is a Gloucestershire County Council–wide initiative in which Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) is actively engaged. The programme is designed to modernise ways of working, strengthen the Council's financial resilience, and ensure organisational readiness for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The programme is structured around three core workstreams:

- Technology – improving digital capability, reducing administrative burden, and enabling more effective use of data and automation to release capacity for frontline services.
- Third-party spend – driving greater value and efficiency through the management and optimisation of procurement and external expenditure.
- Organisational design – ensuring structures, roles, and capacity are aligned to future demands, including LGR requirements.

Collectively, these workstreams provide a balanced and deliverable approach to transformation, supporting the Council to become:

- financially sustainable,
- digitally enabled, and
- organisationally resilient against future challenges.

This programme underpins efforts to deliver Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings while maintaining service effectiveness and improving the capacity available for frontline delivery.

Assessment of Efficiencies

The efficiencies achieved and planned are proportionate to the Service's relatively limited non-pay budget and reflect a pragmatic approach focused on sustainable, deliverable savings. Activity to date demonstrates that GFRS is securing value through smarter procurement, improved use of technology, and more efficient approaches to training and workforce deployment, while avoiding adverse impacts on frontline service delivery. Taken together, these measures strengthen financial resilience, support balanced budgets over the medium term, and evidence a continued commitment to productivity improvement in line with national expectations.

4: Productivity

Collaboration

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) has a number of well-established series of collaborative relationships which support prevention, protection, and response activities.

Deliberate Fire Prevention – NFU & Forestry England Collaboration

GFRS is working with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and Forestry England to reduce deliberate and accidental wildfires during hot, dry periods, especially in rural and forestry areas. The initiative uses joint prevention messaging and targeted communications during high-risk periods.

Preventing these incidents reduces pressure on emergency services and allows crews to focus on higher-risk and statutory work. The impact on deliberate fires is being tracked over a rolling three-year period.

The initiative helps protect environmental assets such as the Forest of Dean, reduces disruption to farming, and strengthens community safety and resilience.

Deliberate Fire & Anti-Social Behaviour – Gloucestershire Constabulary Patrols

GFRS is working with Gloucestershire Constabulary to increase patrols in deliberate fire hotspots. Shared data and intelligence support earlier intervention and evidence gathering, helping reduce fire setting, reassure communities and support safer neighbourhoods.

The pilot starts in Q1 2026/27 and will be reviewed to inform any wider rollout.

The work reduces duplication, improves response and investigation times, and lowers repeat incidents. Success will be measured through fire incident data and shared intelligence outcomes.

Protection Collaboration – Housing Partner Memorandum of Understanding

With a view to improving fire-compliance and productivity, the GFRS Protection team has entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with local housing partners to formalise joint working, coordinated inspections and intelligence-sharing. The MoU reduces duplication by avoiding repeat inspections, minimising travel and administration, and improving case progression. Productivity will be monitored through joint inspection planning, reduced repeat visits and enforcement timelines.

Asset Management and IT Investment

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) has implemented a coordinated Asset Management and IT improvement programme focused on modernising systems, enhancing data quality, and streamlining operational workflows to support frontline delivery. This work combines system development, procurement improvements, and enhanced maintenance support to ensure assets and digital tools are reliable, accessible, and aligned with service needs.

Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS) Development

A central element of the initiative is the in-house development and ongoing enhancement of CFRMIS, supported by mobile access and automation. This removes duplicated processes, enables crews to record information at the point of activity, and makes risk data available immediately. It reduces administration for watch managers and allows system administrators to focus on system development and data quality. Productivity is measured through faster record completion and improved data quality.

The initiative also improves planning and deployment. Linking CFRMIS to a live gazetteer improves location accuracy and allows a full year's Business Safety Check programme to be allocated in one cycle. Crews can then group visits geographically, reducing travel and making better use of time, fuel and personnel. Dynamic mobilisation tools further support efficient standby cover. Performance is monitored through allocation lead times, completion rates and fewer unsuitable premises visits.

In addition, GFRS has robust maintenance arrangements in place, including first-line IT support and out-of-hours cover, helping to maintain continuity and minimise downtime.

Dynamic Mobilising Tool

The Service is introducing a digital decision-support system used in Fire Control to dynamically deploy and reposition resources (appliances and crews) based on live risk, demand, and availability, rather than relying on static cover arrangements. It is expected that this system will deliver efficiencies in standby hours, fuel use and personnel deployment.

Enhanced procurement support – SAP Ariba

Procurement activity complements asset management and
IT investment by establishing appropriate contract models and exploring enhanced data visibility through SAP Ariba, improving oversight of suppliers, contracts, and spend.

Overall, the initiative improves outcomes by delivering more timely, accurate, and accessible risk information, enabling better-informed decision-making and more effective targeting of prevention activities. It also enhances operational efficiency by reducing manual processes, improving data flows, and ensuring that frontline crews can focus more time on service delivery rather than administration.

Resourcing

Protection Team

In 2026/27, the team will introduce new ways of working after audits to help complete jobs more quickly. A new letter system will use information already recorded during the audit to produce standard letters and notices, reducing manual work and improving consistency. This will help officers prepare and issue correspondence more quickly, making the service more efficient. Performance measures have also been updated to track:

- jobs completed within target timescales
- time taken to complete each job
- time taken to prepare letters and issue notices

These changes will help improve speed, consistency and service for the public.

Frontline Staffing

We are making better use of available staff to maintain fire cover more efficiently and reduce additional staffing costs. This includes using day-duty staff to support operational cover when needed and deploying firefighters to on-call stations when capacity allows, particularly in areas where availability is lower. This approach helps maintain service resilience, supports communities where cover is most needed, and reduces reliance on overtime.

Income Generation

While the primary focus of the Fire Service is working for a safer Gloucestershire, we also look to maximise opportunities to generate income.

The Service Delivery function of GFRS will continue to charge on a cost recovery for attending incidents that GFRS are not statutory obliged to attend. Any such incidents/activities that GFRS attend will continue to be charged on an hourly fee basis to the person/company requesting the service

Hiring of GFRS Community Spaces

In 2025/26, an initiative was introduced to maximise income generation opportunities while also strengthening engagement with local community groups. The scheme will be fully rolled out across the Service in 2026/27.

A simple and consistent model is proposed for use across the GFRS estate, with the potential to generate additional income in support of the Service. The initiative includes a centralised booking platform, which will streamline the process and reduce the administrative burden on Station Managers, enabling them to focus more fully on their operational responsibilities.

Primary Authority partnership – Protection Team

Extending the cost recovery model through a Primary Authority partnership would create an opportunity to generate income for the Service. Where there is a strong alignment with service capacity and risk priorities, such a partnership could also support the delivery of local, risk-based protection activity.

The partnership could also be used to assess the feasibility of introducing charges for avoidable false alarms at non-sleeping risk premises, and at sleeping risk premises during staffed daytime periods, subject to legal powers, policy alignment, and equality and impact considerations. If implemented, this approach could help to improve compliance and enable the Service to recover costs associated with preventable demand.

Outcome-based Activities

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service uses an outcome-based approach to manage firefighter activity, ensuring time and resources are directed to work that supports operational readiness, community safety, and service performance. This applies to both wholetime and on-call firefighters across prevention, protection, response, competence, and workforce development.

Performance is monitored through targets, dashboards, and local and strategic review arrangements, enabling the service to assess delivery, strengthen productivity, and redirect capacity to higher-priority activity where needed.

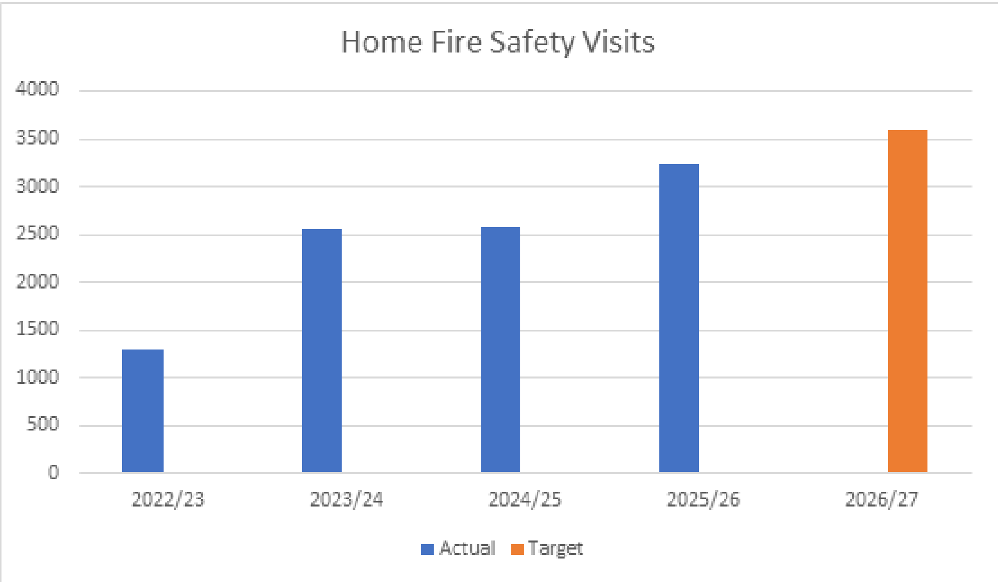
For wholetime firefighters, the service measures core activity including Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) visits, Home Fire Safety Visits, Business Fire Safety Checks, response times, availability and community engagement. This provides a broad view of operational performance and contribution to prevention and protection activity.

For on-call firefighters, measurement focuses on the same core operational areas, reflecting the need to maintain safe and effective capability within a different availability model.

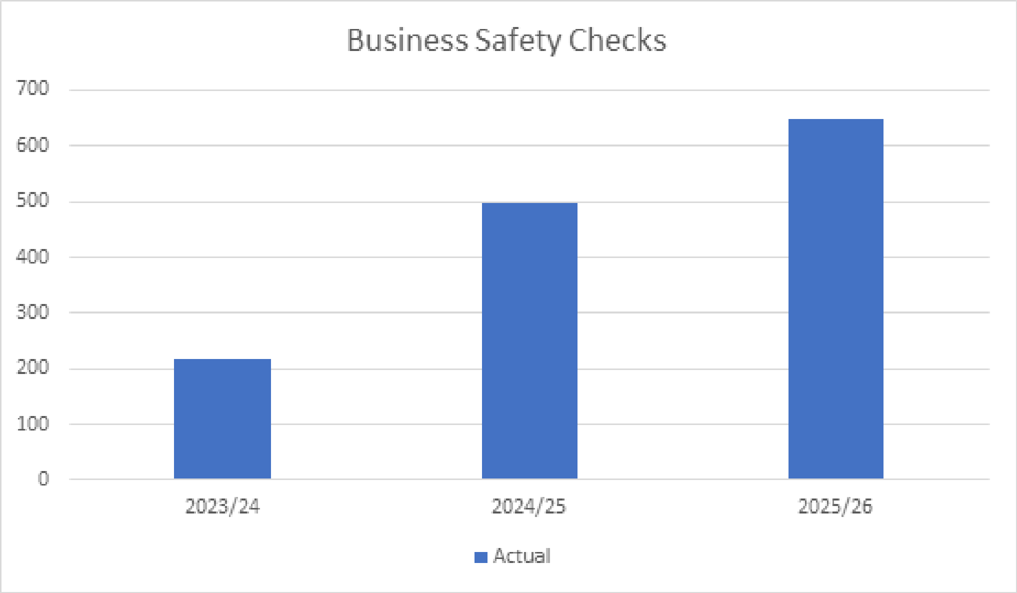
Home Fire Safety Visits and Business Safety Checks

Central to GFRS's community engagement strategy is Home Fire Safety visits. Between 2022/23 and 2025/26 there was a 151% increase in the number of Home Fire Safety Visits undertaken. These visits highlight best practice to vulnerable people and offer fire safety advice as well as guidance on general wellbeing.

For 2026/27 the target will be 3,600 visits. The visits are now planned and agreed in a panel meeting of Station Managers, resources are being provided to the Watches in advance, and a reference code is issued so that we can track support for key campaigns and evaluate the outcomes.



From 2026/27 improvements to the Community Fire Risk Management Information System, and its integration with a live detailed directory of local businesses, building and locations (Gazetteer), mean that Business Safety Checks will be more robust. Through these improvements, the Protection team will be able to strengthen data reporting and thus support more efficient allocation and targeting of checks.



Activity	Current Target/Expectation	Actual Achievement 2025/26
SSRI activity	80	71
Availability – wholetime staff	100%	100%
Availability – On-call staff	75%	81%

Together, these measures provide a clear performance framework and help the service assess how operational time supports prevention, protection, and response outcomes.

Recording and Analysis of Data

Performance is tracked through strategic performance meetings, local station dashboards, incident data, and community engagement reporting, providing both local oversight and strategic visibility.

Monthly and quarterly performance meetings review activity, quality, and outcomes, supporting a focus on impact rather than volume alone.

Outcome and Quality Assessment

The service reviews both outputs and outcomes to test whether activity is delivering the expected benefit, whether targets remain appropriate, and whether performance is improving public value and operational readiness.

This is particularly important in areas such as Home Fire Safety Visits, community engagement, and SSRI, where the number of activities completed is only one measure of success. Monitoring arrangements support a broader assessment of risk reduction, preparedness, and community benefit.

Planned Increases in Activity

Planned changes include increasing full Home Fire Safety Visits from 15 to 20 per month, expanding community engagement, and completing a six-month response review to align firefighter time more closely with service priorities and national guidance.

Overall, this approach is intended to improve productivity by focusing capacity on activity that delivers the greatest operational and community value.

Workforce Capacity

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service monitors workforce capacity to ensure it has sufficient wholetime and on-call staff to meet statutory duties, maintain operational cover, and deliver prevention, protection, and response services. This includes maintaining minimum staffing levels, monitoring on-call availability, aligning training and skills to operational need, and reviewing how staff time is used to support service priorities.

Capacity is assessed through staffing thresholds, availability monitoring, workforce planning, and review of shift structures. These arrangements support operational resilience, help direct resources to areas where cover is reduced, and inform changes to working patterns to improve productivity and ensure training can continue when staffing is under pressure.

The service draws on availability data, operational dashboards, workforce planning information, and risk data to inform decisions on staffing, deployment, and service delivery. This supports a more effective use of workforce time and underpins changes to shift patterns, training arrangements, and processes intended to release capacity for priority activity, including training, firefighter safety, emergency response, and community prevention.

Increasing Productivity

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has taken steps to improve productivity for both wholetime and on-call firefighters by redesigning the working day, strengthening outcome-based activity, and improving how staff time is monitored and directed. The aim is to ensure that available capacity is used more effectively to support operational readiness, prevention, protection, and community safety.

For wholetime staff, this has included clearer expectations for shift activity, greater use of performance dashboards, and changes to working patterns informed by the response review. For on-call staff, productivity has been supported by reducing unnecessary administration, reviewing training requirements, and using wholetime staff to strengthen on-call cover where appropriate. These measures are intended to improve the use of firefighter time and align activity more closely to service priorities.

The changes introduced have released additional capacity for priority activity, including training, community engagement, Home Fire Safety Visits, and support for operational cover. Evidence from dashboard reporting, community activity data, and incident systems indicates that firefighter time is being used more purposefully and transparently, supporting operational competence, public safety, and service resilience.

The Protection Team is improving efficiency by moving from reactive, inspection-led activity to a targeted approach that delivers multiple outcomes in a single intervention. A key example is joint community engagement through a "one stop shop" model. Led by the Protection Team, these events bring together partners such as Trading Standards and the Prevention Team to engage with businesses and the public providing advice and carrying out proportionate audits.

This model increases productivity by reaching more people through one coordinated activity rather than multiple separate visits. It reduces duplication, supports shared intelligence, and ensures consistent messaging. When Prevention colleagues are unavailable, Protection officers continue to promote home fire safety, maintaining coverage without additional resource.

Activity is underpinned by a risk-based, data-led approach. Fire data, incident trends, premises types and causes are used to focus work in higher-risk areas and sectors, ensuring officer time is directed where it will deliver the greatest impact.

5: Service Changes and Achievements

Integrated Prevention Approach

A key achievement this year was the development of a more integrated prevention approach, bringing together SkillZONE volunteers, Serious Violence Duty activity, business-as-usual delivery and outreach. This has improved coordination across prevention work, strengthened partnership working and enabled a more targeted service offer.

The changes introduced during the year have increased engagement with higher-risk groups and expanded delivery capacity through effective use of volunteers. Overall, they have improved resource efficiency and strengthened alignment between service delivery and identified risk.

Overall, prevention activity has increased without additional cost, supported by better risk-based targeting and stronger partnership outcomes.

Procurement

The service is improving the way it buys goods and services so that processes are simpler, quicker, and better value for money. A clear procurement pipeline is being used to plan activity around organisational priorities, helping to reduce delays, avoid repeated work, and improve delivery. Progress will be measured through performance information, savings, and feedback from those involved.

The updated procurement approach focuses on earlier planning, clearer assessment of risk, and buying processes that are proportionate to the size and complexity of each contract. This will help reduce last-minute purchasing, improve quality, and support more efficient delivery. Finance will be involved earlier, with checks designed to be clear and proportionate so that good control is maintained without creating unnecessary delay. Stronger working arrangements with Legal, Finance, and ICT, together with tools such as SAP Ariba and Power BI, training, and standard documents, will improve consistency, provide better information, and support better decision-making across the organisation.

Quick Screens Implementation

Within the Fire Safety Team, the implementation of Quick Screens on service iPads will support the allocation of a full year of Business Safety Checks to stations through a single programme. Watches will then be able to self-allocate checks and plan them geographically, enabling multiple premises in the same area to be completed in one trip. This will reduce travel time, improve completion against target, and maintain an auditable record on CFRMIS.

Professional Standards Unit (PSU)

During 2025/26, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service established a Professional Standards Unit (PSU) to strengthen governance, consistency and confidence in the management of professional standards and employee relations matters. The PSU replaced fragmented arrangements with a central, transparent model for the oversight of grievance and misconduct cases, providing clearer accountability, structured case management and stronger assurance at senior leadership level.

The PSU has a clear Terms of Reference setting out its purpose, scope and governance. All cases are triaged on receipt and actively monitored through structured allocation, oversight meetings and improved case tracking, with reporting to Fire Senior Leadership Team providing clearer visibility of case volumes, outcomes, timescales and organisational learning. This model was informed by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) findings, an Independent Review and internal case analysis, all of which highlighted the need for greater consistency, fairness, pace and control.

The PSU is now fully operational and has delivered measurable improvements in case progression, throughput and management oversight. Average case timescales have reduced significantly, with attendance cases falling from 94.5 days in 2024 to 32 days in 2026 and conduct cases reducing from 77.5 days to 38 days. By Q1 2026, the Service was closing cases at the same rate as new demand while reducing legacy backlog, demonstrating stronger system grip and more effective use of management capacity.

The PSU has also improved the quality and proportionality of case handling. Most matters continue to be resolved through informal advice, guidance or no further action, reducing unnecessary use of formal process, while formal sanctions and suspension are applied selectively where appropriate. Performance data is now being used to identify trends, support earlier intervention and strengthen management capability, with a detailed Terms of Reference for every investigation improving consistency and efficiency. The PSU therefore provides a strong foundation for sustained improvement in 2026/27 and beyond, supporting a more consistent, transparent and efficient approach to governance across the Service.

6: Conclusion

This Plan demonstrates Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service's commitment to improving productivity, delivering value for money and maintaining effective service delivery within available resources. Through a combination of financial discipline, targeted efficiencies, service improvement and better use of data, technology and workforce capacity, GFRS will continue to strengthen resilience and support its strategic priorities. The Service will keep progress under review to ensure planned activity delivers sustainable benefits for the organisation and the communities it serves.