

PROJECT ASPECT: SERVICE DELIVERY UPDATE



REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

For Information

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on the progress of Project Aspect, the internal project team commissioned to examine and recommend proposals to address the financial deficit.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the progress of the project Aspect delivery, in particular the Public and Staff consultation.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In January 2026, Cleveland Fire Brigade established Project Aspect in response to the anticipated financial challenges faced by CFB, arising from the Government's proposed Fair Funding Formula for Fire and Rescue Services. The approved MTFS confirmed a recurring budget shortfall of £1.198 million. As detailed earlier in the report there is a risk this figure may increase as a result of higher than forecast inflation owing to international events. The £1.198m represents a significant financial pressure for the Service, particularly given its reliance on Government funding and the socio-economic characteristics of the communities it serves.
- 3.2 Project Aspect was commissioned by the ELT to identify and assess potential savings opportunities across the organisation in a structured, evidence-based and transparent manner. The project sought to ensure that any options developed would support the Brigade's long-term financial sustainability whilst maintaining operational effectiveness, meeting statutory obligations, protecting vulnerable communities and preserving public confidence. The project was specifically designed to avoid reactive short-term reductions and instead provide a robust evidence base to support informed decision-making by ELT and Cleveland Fire Authority.
- 3.3 The final options report was presented to ELT in June 2026 and subsequently to Cleveland Fire Authority on 24 July 2026.

The report was divided into two sections:

- Proposals resulting in efficiencies which when implemented result in smaller savings with minor disruption to the Service
- Operational configuration changes impacting on response arrangements (requiring the approval of the Fire Authority)

- 3.4 Following approval to proceed to the next stage from the Fire Authority, the Project team commenced a period of consultation and implementation activity.

4. PROJECT ASPECT – KEY UPDATES

4.1 Public/Staff Consultation

- 4.2 Consultation planning has progressed at pace, including benchmarking activity with other services such as Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to identify good practice and lessons learned. Consultation materials including FAQs, response forms, EQIAs and consultation plans have been developed and approved.
- 4.3 A list of community rooms has been obtained to ensure we cater for all requirements and in line with our EQIA obligations when engaging in community consultation events.
- 4.4 During the 12-week consultation staff engagement sessions will take place, the intention is to enable all staff to have the opportunity to have a face-to-face engagement session with members of ELT.
- 4.5 Staff and Public consultation information documents were produced in draft and circulated to stakeholders for review and comment, with final versions agreed by ELT on the 3 September 2026.
- 4.6 The consultation went live on the 3 September and will run until Thursday 26 November 2026. All staff received an email with publication details of the Service Delivery Consultation which is hosted on both internal and external website. This publication included detailed supporting documentation with actual staff frequently asked questions (FAQs) and anticipated public FAQs along with a consultation summary document.
- 4.7 In the initial 7 days of the consultation, we have received a combined total of 53 consultation responses
- 18 Public Responses
 - 35 Employee Responses
 - 91 views on the internal share point site
- 4.8 Supporting consultation work and documentation produced:
- Consultation survey question set developed
 - Internal communication sent to all staff
 - Public facing consultation webpage produced
 - SharePoint page produced for internal use
 - FAQ for both Staff and Public produced
 - Hard copies of the consultation documentation delivered to all stations by Friday 4 September 2026.
 - Copies of the consultation documentation delivered to a number of Libraries and Community Centres
 - Communications plan is developed and tracked
 - Consultation EQIA complete

4.9 Project Options work

- 4.10 Project Initiation Documents, EQIAs and implementation plans have been completed for the following areas, and each has been allocated a project lead:
- 4.11 No development activity is being undertaken on the Day Crewing model or the East Cleveland rotation as a result of the current Staff and Public consultation.
- 4.12 Staffing Officer Role - Profile is currently being developed, first meeting held with District managers on 4th of September. Emails have been sent to 10 other FRS for information gathering purposes on their staffing officer role and teams, awaiting responses for evaluation.
- 4.13 Catering Provision - Engagement meeting held with Training and Procurement discussing current contract (packed lunch) and future provision aspirations. Further meeting to be held between Cafe18 and procurement to be arranged to discuss contract amendment or termination.
- 4.14 Light and Flexi Vehicle – Research continuing on purchase options and validity of vehicle reductions.
- 4.15 Additional hours and Disturbance allowance efficiency savings have been combined into one and will be carried out within the Staffing Officer Role workstream.

5. NEXT STEPS

- Consultation documents to be circulated to the remaining Libraries and Community centres, engagement with partners and businesses to continue
- Meeting with Estates and Procurement to discuss Cleaning and Security arrangements.
- Work packages to be sent to Training for Meal Provision Data
- Consolidate findings from other services in relation to the Staffing Officer role profile and engage with HR
- PIDs and EQIAs signed off
- Finalise schedule for ELT watch engagement visits
- Community Forum engagement options and schedule to be finalised
- Station roadshows to commence with staff (16 September 2026)

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