

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2022
QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF
NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY

WRITTEN RESPONSES PROVIDED AFTER THE MEETING AS THE TIME LIMIT OF 15 MINUTES FOR QUESTIONS WAS REACHED

Question from Councillor Kate Foale

Does the Chairman share my concern that further Government cuts to Fire and Emergency services will significantly increase risk of keeping people safe in Nottinghamshire?

Response by Councillor Michael Payne, Chairman of the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is the 7th worst affected fire & rescue service in the country in term of cuts from this Conservative government.

In 2019/20 Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service had seen a 13.21% cut in their budget compared to 2010/11 as a result of Conservative cuts. In the same year Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service received a 3.92% increase, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service received a 3.34% increase and Shropshire received a 1.32% increase.

And if you wondered what the position is for Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is, as at today - since 2010/11 Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service has seen a 5.26% cut by the Conservative government in its overall funding (official government figures).

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is STILL 7th worst affected fire & Rescue service in the country in terms of cuts from the Conservative government.

Futures 2025 resource modelling has been delivered in partnership with ORH, a sector leading expert with extensive experience of emergency services around the world, to optimise resource use and respond in the most efficient and effective way. It is at the core of what the Service does to manage risk as best we can in our communities. Keeping people safe is the focus.

ORH have over 30-years' experience and have worked with over 150 organisations including NHS Trusts, EMAS, London Fire Brigade and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service.

Building on the operational response cover that they undertook for the Service in 2021, ORH undertook optimisation modelling to identify different configurations of fire appliances to meet saving levels of £1m, £1.5m, £2m, £2.5m and £3m. This approach reflected the uncertainty of savings required and projected budget shortfalls.

It is not possible to save sufficient money from existing budgets without reducing the ridership.

Inevitably such a reduction in resources will have an impact on Service performance. The average time for a first appliance to arrive at an incident from mobilisation would increase by seven seconds. Whilst this increase would have minimal impact on the outcome of an incident, it would mean that the Community Risk Management Plan commitment to attend within an average of eight minutes is breached by four seconds.

Official figures show fire and rescue services across England are facing inflationary pressures of c£145m in 2023/24 as a result of significant increases in utility costs, diesel, and green book salary costs as a result of increases in the national living wage. The Conservative government has given no funding yet to cover these additional funding pressures – which will result in further cuts across the country.

Conservative MPs and councillors should be asking their Conservative government why they've singled Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service out for a 5.26% funding cut since 2010/11 but over the same period they've given Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service a 14.95% increase, Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service a 13.64% increase and Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service an 11.92% increase in funding.

Question from Councillor Penny Gowland

How have Fire and Emergency Service budgets been impacted by recent Covid-19 and inflationary pressures and what actions have been taken by Members of the Fire Authority or the Government to alleviate these pressures?

Response by Councillor Michael Payne, Chairman of the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority

The Service received £1.2m additional Covid grant from Central Government. This was fully utilised in delivering additional services to the public such as administering over 59,000 vaccinations, delivering over 12,500 food parcels, and supporting EMAS, and the mass testing centres.

Inflationary pressures, specifically around pay, have had a significant impact on the service during 2022/23 and the situation is expected to worsen in 2023/24, with an anticipated deficit position of £3.3m. In order that the service can remain within its 2022/23 budget, temporary in year savings have been identified in both pay and non-pay budgets to provide time to complete the Futures 2025 efficiency programme.

This programme has already identified £250k savings from the green book pay budget. A second phase will deliver a wider change and improvement programme which is expected to identify a range of saving options for the 2023/24 budget.

A separate Fire Cover Review has been undertaken and Members will be aware that consultation is currently underway regarding potential changes to the delivery model which could deliver savings in the region of £2m.

Alongside these efficiency savings it is expected that support will be required from the Authority's reserves in the region of £1m in 2023/24.

The Chief Fire Officer and I along with Members of the Fire Authority have met with Nottinghamshire MPs to discuss the current financial pressures and lobbied Central Government to request increases in revenue grant and a review of the permitted maximum council tax precept increase without invoking a referendum.