



Cumbria Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Reserves Strategy 2021/22

Public Accountability Conference 19 February 2021

Report of the Joint Chief Finance Officer

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 This reserves strategy is produced and published as part of the overall budget setting process. The reserves strategy meets the statutory requirement to consider annually the level of reserves that should be held to meet future expenditure requirements when setting the budget. The strategy seeks to achieve a balance between pro-actively utilising reserves to support services for our communities and providing financial resilience to meet unexpected events. It sets out the purpose for which reserves are held and the planned movement in reserves over a period of 4 years (the medium term financial forecast period). Our reserves are held for three main purposes. These are:

- ◆ a working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing,
- ◆ a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies,
- ◆ a means of building up funds, often referred to as earmarked reserves, to meet known or predicted pressures or liabilities.

1.2 Over the past year, the level of reserves nationally have become a focus of attention for the Home Office and it is now considered best practice to publish a **reserves strategy**, which covers the MTF 4 year timeframe plus a further 2 years, 6 years in total.

- 1.3 As part of the budget process a capital strategy is produced which includes capital plans over a longer 10 year timeframe, reflecting the cyclical nature of capital expenditure programmes. In order to facilitate the production of the capital strategy and associated capital financing, reserve balances are projected over this longer 10 year timeframe. For this reason, it has been determined that a reserves strategy should be produced covering a 10 year timeframe (exceeding the best practice requirements).
- 1.4 The level of reserves should take into account the medium term financial plan and not be based solely on short term considerations. Set out in section 2 below is a description of the reserves held by the Commissioner and the purpose for which they are held. At **Appendix A** a table is provided which sets out the planned movement in reserves over this longer 10 year timeframe to 31 March 2031. **Appendix B** summarises this information graphically.
- 1.5 The medium term financial forecast shows a budget deficit of £2.1m in 2023/24 and £5.1m in 2024/25. Savings plans are being progressed to address the deficit. In the event that this is not achieved, reserves will be required to bridge the gap and will result in the level of reserves depleting more quickly than indicated in this strategy.

2. Details of Specific Groups of Reserves

- 2.1 **General Reserves:** The general reserve (police fund) is the main contingency for unexpected events, and the management of cash flow. The level of general reserve is £3m in 2021/22. The amount represents approximately 3% of the net recurrent budget (after specific grants & fees and charges). The level of the general reserve takes account of the risks within the budget, as set out in the Joint Chief Finance Officer's report on the robustness of the budget and the level of provision for those risks within specific earmarked reserves and contingencies.
- 2.2 **Earmarked Capital Reserves:** Capital reserves are a combination of general and earmarked revenue contributions that have been set aside to meet the costs of approved capital schemes to be delivered over multiple financial years. Capital schemes are only included within the capital programme on the basis of setting aside funding to

meet the expenditure. The policy is that general capital reserves will be maintained at a level to ensure a balanced capital budget for the duration of the medium term financial forecast. The capital reserves currently include a reserve to allow consideration of options for the West Cumbria TPA HQ and a balance of general capital reserve. The current capital programme forecasts that these reserves will be almost fully utilised by the end of March 2023.

- 2.3 **Earmarked Revenue Reserves:** Earmarked reserves are held for a number of specific purposes, see paragraphs 2.4 to 2.6 below.
- 2.4 **Budget Stabilisation and Insurance Reserves** are established to smooth the impact of intermittent costs across financial years. This group of reserves includes operational reserves for the Commissioner and Chief Constable, these reserves are to cover any unexpected expenditure that arises during a financial year that cannot be accommodated for existing budgets. The strategy is for these reserves to be replenished if used through the next budget cycle. This group also includes the Chief Constable's contingency, this reserve was established when a more risk based approach to budgeting was adopted thereby removing contingency sums from individual budgets. An Insurance reserve is also maintained to cover the cost of insurance claims below the policy excess.
- 2.5 **Budget Support Reserves** the budget support reserve was established to meet emerging demands and unforeseen items. This section includes the addition of a reserve to provide support for reduced council tax precept income as a result of a reduction in the tax base, due principally to increased local council tax support for low income households and increases in collection fund deficits. The reserve is due to be established from Government grants expected in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and is likely to be utilised in succeeding years to meet council tax deficits arising from the financial effect of the pandemic.
- 2.6 **Short-term Project Reserves** primarily fund the one off revenue implications of approved projects and also provide for areas within the budget where there is a liability

but the amount or timing is uncertain. This group includes a reserve to cover the future lifecycle costs in relation to the PFI. This group also includes funding in relation to Cumbria road safety initiatives which is ring-fenced to be spent on road safety measures, a reserve to fund the cyclical replacement of body armour and reserves in relation to PCC commissioned services where the approved spend will be drawn down over a number of years.

Roger Marshall

Joint Chief Finance Officer

19 February 2021

Planned Movement in Reserves 2021/22 to 2030/31

Reserves Plan 2021 - 2025	Note	Actual	Estimated	Forecast	Net	Forecast	Net	Forecast	Net	Forecast	Net	Forecast	Net	Forecast	Net	Forecast	Net	Forecast	Net	Forecast	Net	Forecast
		Balance 31/03/20 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2020/21 £000s	Balance 31/03/21 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2021/22 £000s	Balance 31/03/22 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2022/23 £000s	Balance 31/03/23 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2023/24 £000s	Balance 31/03/24 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2024/25 £000s	Balance 31/03/25 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2025/26 £000s	Balance 31/03/26 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2026/27 £000s	Balance 31/03/27 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2027/28 £000s	Balance 31/03/28 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2028/29 £000s	Balance 31/03/29 £000s	Gain/(Use) 2029/30 £000s	Balance 31/03/30 £000s
General Reserve/Police Fund	1	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000
Total General Reserve/Police Fund		3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000	0	3,000
Capital Reserves	2																					
HQ Refurbishments		294	(60)	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234
West Cumbria Estate		4,000	0	4,000	(250)	3,750	(3,750)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Capital Reserves		4,294	(60)	4,234	(250)	3,984	(3,750)	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234	0	234
Budget Stabilisation/Insurance	3																					
PCC Operational Reserve		250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250
Constabulary Operational Reserves		250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250	0	250
Chief Constable's Contingency		500	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	500
Insurance Reserve		1,186	46	1,232	46	1,278	46	1,324	46	1,370	46	1,416	0	1,416	0	1,416	0	1,416	0	1,416	0	1,416
Total Budget Stabilisation/Insurance Reserves		2,186	46	2,232	46	2,278	46	2,324	46	2,370	46	2,416	0	2,416	0	2,416	0	2,416	0	2,416	0	2,416
Budget Support Reserves	4																					
Budget Support Reserve		7,674	(967)	6,707	0	6,707	0	6,707	0	6,707	0	6,707	0	6,707	0	6,707	0	6,707	0	6,707	0	6,707
Council Tax Support Reserve		0	781	781	(298)	483	(235)	248	(170)	78	0	78	0	78	0	78	0	78	0	78	0	78
Total Budget Support Reserves		7,674	(186)	7,488	(298)	7,190	(235)	6,955	(170)	6,785	0	6,785	0	6,785	0	6,785	0	6,785	0	6,785	0	6,785
Short Term Project Reserves	5																					
Body Armour (Future Roll Out)		237	50	287	50	337	50	387	0	387	0	387	0	387	0	387	0	387	0	387	0	387
Business Intelligence		58	(30)	28	0	28	0	28	0	28	0	28	0	28	0	28	0	28	0	28	0	28
Business Transformation		1,175	(1,175)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cohort Software		25	(25)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commissioned Services		1,883	(18)	1,865	(46)	1,819	0	1,819	0	1,819	0	1,819	0	1,819	0	1,819	0	1,819	0	1,819	0	1,819
Covid-19 Response		236	0	236	0	236	0	236	0	236	0	236	0	236	0	236	0	236	0	236	0	236
Cumbria Road Safety Initiatives		25	0	25	0	25	0	25	0	25	0	25	0	25	0	25	0	25	0	25	0	25
HQ Security		130	0	130	0	130	0	130	0	130	0	130	0	130	0	130	0	130	0	130	0	130
Learning & Development (Business Transformation)		195	(195)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PFI Lifecycle Replacements		256	0	256	0	256	0	256	0	256	0	256	0	256	0	256	0	256	0	256	0	256
Red Sigma		252	(147)	105	(105)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Short Term Project Reserves		4,472	(1,540)	2,932	(101)	2,831	50	2,881	0	2,881	0	2,881	0	2,881	0	2,881	0	2,881	0	2,881	0	2,881
Total Earmarked Revenue Reserves		14,332	(1,680)	12,652	(353)	12,299	(139)	12,160	(124)	12,036	46	12,082	0	12,082	0	12,082	0	12,082	0	12,082	0	12,082
Total All Reserves	6	21,626	(1,740)	19,886	(603)	19,283	(3,889)	15,394	(124)	15,270	46	15,316	0	15,316	0	15,316	0	15,316	0	15,316	0	15,316

Overall reserves are forecast to fall to just £15.3m over the life of the MTF, this represents a fall of 29% compared to their current level of £21.6m

Planned Movement in Reserves 2021/22 to 2030/31

