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REPORT OF THE TREASURER

REVENUE BUDGETS 2007/08 AND PROJECTIONS FOR LATER YEARS

1 Purpose of Report

This report brings together the expenditure proposals considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee, updated for recent changes.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the expenditure proposals set out in the report, prior to considering the total resources likely to be available – set out in the next report.

3 Background

Strategy and Resources Committee recommended a package of expenditure proposals totalling £19,198,000 as follows.

	£ 000	Note
Base plus committed growth	18,432	Subject to ongoing review and monitoring
Pay and Prices	598	
Capital (Revenue Consequences)	73	Subject to project appraisal and Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) consultation
	19,103	
Efficiencies and other Savings	195-	Subject to review of the Retained Service Implementation Plan
Developments	290	Subject to comprehensive reports on each investment and IRMP consultation
	£19,198	

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Full details are attached at Appendix D (on green paper), which brings together reports 6 and 6a to 6i considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 16 November 2006.

A number of changes have emerged as a result of continuing review of the budget. The Fire Authority is also considering the Independent Remuneration Panel's Report on Members' Allowances.

4   Base plus Committed Growth

As reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee, the provision for Firefighters' pensions payments has been reviewed and, in the light of current monitoring, a reduction of £68,000 can be made in 2007/08 and subsequent years. In addition a further £69,000 can be taken from the budgeted full year cost of the 2006/07 capital budget, giving a total reduction of £137,000. There is also the potential for an additional commitment of £28,000 a year, depending on consideration of allowances.

The costs of the Regional Management Board (RMB) Programme Office are being reviewed, which may result in a lower re-imbursement from the RMB budget for staff of this Authority. It is assumed that this will be offset by a reduced contribution to the RMB's budget.

5   Pay and Prices

The latest indications are that current assumptions are prudent.

6   Capital Programme

Project appraisals are underway and it is recommended that the capital programme be reviewed during January for a final decision in February.

7   Efficiencies and Other Savings

Efficiencies are deliverable. The rephasing of the Retained Review is subject to consideration earlier on the agenda. Any additional one-off costs arising because of rephasing implementation could be dealt with by setting aside a provision from net underspendings, as set out in the earlier report.

8   Growth in Services

The Road Safety Strategy has been considered in some detail at the Fire Authority's last meeting. The IRMP proposals are set out in the earlier report. The remaining items are the subject of appendices A, B and C. There has been a reduction of estimated costs of £10,000 as detailed proposals have been worked up.

9   Reserves and Provisions

The previous report sets out the latest budget monitoring position. As a result, a total of £252,000 is available for investment in the reserves. It is recommended that the level of the Capital Reserve is reviewed together with the Capital Programme during January. It is also recommended, in the earlier report on the Retained Review Implementation Update, that consideration is given to providing a provision to level out any uneven expenditure as the Review is implemented.

10   Summary

Expenditure can, therefore, currently be summarised as:

		£ 000		£ 000
i	Base plus committed growth			18,432
	Add – Pay and Prices	598		
	Capital Programme (subject to review)	73		
	Less – Pension and Capital Programme expenditure adjustments	137	-	534
				18,966
	Items for consideration at this meeting:			
ii	Potential commitments	28		
iii	Efficiencies and savings	195	-	
iv	New service developments	280		113
	Total assuming all expenditure and reductions proposals are included in full			19,079

11   Financial Implications

The financial implications are as set out in this report.

12   Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

13   Appendices

Appendix A   Securing Improvements in Data Quality
Business Case: Establishment of Information Officer Post

Appendix B   Equality, Diversity and Disability Costs

Appendix C   Older People's Officer Post

Appendix D   Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee, 16 November 2006
Reports 6 and 6a to 6i

14   Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

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Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balance Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	*
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Equality and Diversity		Retained	*
Efficiency Savings	*	Risk and Insurance	
Environmental		Staff	*
Financial	*	Strategic Planning	
Fire Control/Fire Link		West Midlands Regional Management Board	

For further information about this report please contact Keith Dixon, Treasurer, 01743 260202.

Putting Shropshire's Safety First

Appendix A to report on
Revenue Budgets 2007/08 and Projections for Later Years
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
20 December 2006

Securing Improvements in Data Quality

Business Case:
Establishment of Information Officer Post

1 Introduction

The unparalleled growth of information, technology and communications (ITC) in all sections of society has undoubtedly brought many benefits. But the Fire Authority's ability to capitalise on these benefits within the Service is becoming impaired due to an increasing lack of capacity within the organisation to match and manage effectively escalating levels of data generated. This situation is compounded further by the legitimate want of interested stakeholder groups, be these local communities or Government departments, to have greater access to public sector information.

The Service has risen to the challenge of providing all key staff with the appropriate level of ITC provision to undertake and perform their respective roles within the organisation. Such roles include, to name a few, the accurate and timely capture of data to address integrated risk management planning (IRMP), the regulatory reform order (RRO), integrated personnel development systems (IPDS), financial, performance and personnel information. But, whilst highly commendable work has been achieved in providing, and moreover maintaining, a modern suite of ITC assets, the endless proliferation of information and data produced has outstripped the organisation's capacity to manage effectively the outputs that, if properly co-ordinated, will add real value to the aims of the Fire Authority.

With the Audit Commission and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) placing greater and more frequent demands on the Fire Authority to furnish accurate and timely information the need has arisen to adopt a more strategic approach to the management of data streams and information flows, both within and external to the organisation. This need has been reinforced through the recent Audit Commission Data Quality audit, an audit of the Authority that has identified data management as an area for improvement.

To co-ordinate and manage data across the organisation, thus enabling the effective and timely provision of information to the Fire Authority to support and monitor key strategic decision making, it is imperative that careful consideration is given to how the Fire Authority wishes to administer effectively the collation, retention and sharing of data and information in the future.

2 Background

The effective capture, collation and management of data and information can do more than just assist the Fire Authority in meeting a host of existing legislation and new data quality requirements. Today's legislation places strict requirements on fire and rescue authorities to manage data and information effectively. This is especially true in performance data and financial information, where oversight from the Audit Commission is imposing much stronger operational controls on databases and their

use. However, the ability to determine when databases have been accessed (and by whom) and when compromises have been made to data integrity has moved from a secondary ITC function to an essential one. This shift has occurred because of several factors, including:

- Heightened expectations for the respect for individual privacy and control over personal information (as reinforced through the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts)

- Increased access by employees and other individuals to corporate Fire Authority data, previously accessible only in highly restricted back-office configurations

- Much higher volumes of sensitive Fire Authority corporate data (e.g. IRMP, RRO, IPDS data and information held on Mobile Data Terminals) being captured and maintained electronically

- Proliferation, in some instances uncontrolled, of databases used by individuals and departments

- Increasing demands placed upon the Fire Authority by the Audit Commission and DCLG for more frequent and timely performance data

These factors have led to increased scrutiny, with 2006 being an especially important year for compliance with the new audit criteria prescribed through the Audit Commission's Performance Framework.

Data quality is a paramount concern for the Fire Authority to satisfy increasing audit requirements. The task of safeguarding data assets is multi-faceted, but a central aspect is ensuring that data is changed only in intended ways and only the proper parties view the data. Implementing suitable privacy and security policies and mechanisms is an important step, and this has been partially addressed through the recent revisions to the Service's ITC Corporate Strategy, but it does not address two important realities. First, even authorised users will sometimes access data inappropriately, whether deliberately or accidentally. Second, flaws in policy and implementation can introduce vulnerability, enabling unintended data access or database changes. Such realities compound the Fire Authority's ability to produce accurate and timely information, information that is crucial to effective decision making and strategic planning.

3   Contribution to Fire Authority Objectives

The effective management of data and information is critical to the delivery of the Fire Authority's strategic objectives, specifically:

- **Corporate Objective 13**
  Ensure the effective management of performance and corporate risk[1]

- **Shared Priority: Management Information System**
  To establish a fully integrated management information system that supports performance monitoring and reporting[2]

- **Best Value Performance Indicator 157**
  E-delivery - the number of types of interactions that are enabled for e-delivery as a percentage of the types of interactions that are legally permissible for e-delivery[3]

4   Satisfying Statutory Requirements

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a legal responsibility upon fire and rescue authorities to have regard to the National Framework when carrying out their functions. The Fire Authority's Performance Plan sets out the aims and objectives of the Authority to deliver against the National Framework.

The capture, retention, management and sharing of data/information is, to a large extent, prescribed within the following Acts:

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Environmental Information Regulations 1992 and Environmental Information (Amendment) Regulations 1998
- Audit Commission Act 1998
- Local Government Act 1999

Of particular note is the Freedom of Information Act, which is seen as a major opportunity for local government to become more open and accessible to its communities.

The Fire Authority's success in delivering its responsibilities under the National Framework are, to some extent, dependent upon the effective capture and sharing of business critical data/information. The Framework's requirements are exhaustive, but the following areas represent some examples where improved data quality management approaches are essential:

- Para 4.9 – Civil Contingencies Act[4]
- Para 4.16 – Regional Resilience Forums[5]
- Para 4.30 – Firelink[6]
- Para 5.18 – Equality and Diversity[7]
- Para 6.7 – IPDS[8]
- Para 6.11 – Learning and Development Strategy[9]
- Para 7.3 – Annual Efficiency Statements[10]
- Para 8.9 – Performance Management[11]
- Para 8.14 -16 – Best Value and Data Collection[12]
- Para 8.23 – e-Government[13]
- Para 8.24 -27 – E-Fire[14]
- Para 8.28 -30 – ICT Roadmap[15]
- Para 9.9 – National Fire and Rescue Research Strategy[16]
- Para 9.13 – Statistics[17]

5   Developing a More Strategic Approach to Data Quality

A more strategic approach to the management of data quality is currently underway and essentially dependent upon having effective systems and processes in place.

The approach developed will:

- Support the Fire Authority further in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of data and information
- Comply with internal corporate policies and processes
- Understand and improve internal business processes
- Detect and analyse breaches in user and application behaviour, intentional or accidental
- Perform analysis for detecting fraud, outsider intrusion, and employee misbehaviour
- Respond rapidly to violations and vulnerabilities
- Improve data resilience
- Verify strategic partner activities
- Verify third-party application behaviour
- Answer ad hoc business questions
- Satisfy external due diligence requirements set by the DCLG and the Audit Commission
- Comply with Government regulations regarding the security and privacy of data

Certain essential elements form the foundation for an integrated strategic approach to the effective management of data and information. To satisfy the Audit Commission's data quality audit regime the Service has revised its ITC Corporate Strategy to address:

- Audit of all databases
- Identification of data/information custodians/users
- Training needs analysis
- Business critical databases/data flows
- Identification of dependencies between disparate databases
- When someone changes database schema or permissions
- All changes to schemas and permissions
- What data was changed, when, and by whom
- Who has viewed certain data and when
- Who accessed certain tables
- Login activity, both successful and unsuccessful
- Suspicious behaviour on certain tables
- Who modified a set of tables over a period of time

To support delivery of the ITC Corporate Strategy a procurement exercise is currently in progress to acquire a performance/management information system. This exercise forms one of the Fire Authority's shared priorities (MIS).[18] It will be a prerequisite of any solution acquired that it has the following capabilities:

- **Capture Data Access**
  Automatically track whenever data is modified or viewed by any means on target databases, preferably with control over the granularity of data tracked

- **Capture Structural Changes**
  Automatically track changes both to the permissions that control data access and to database schema (to ensure ongoing integrity of the structures storing data)

4

- **Manage Captured Information**
  Automatically consolidate the tracked information from multiple databases into an easily managed, long-term common repository

- **Centralise Configuration and Management of all Brigade Servers**
  Provide a straightforward way to configure auditing of all of the target servers, specify the activities of interest, the repository for managing the information, and the schedule for transferring data

- **Flexible Information Access**
  Provide flexible and efficient means for processing the stored information to identify activities of interest

- **Produce Reports**
  Ad hoc and periodic exporting of analysis results in a variety of formats, for display, printing, and transmission suitable for the Fire Authority, DCLG and Audit Commission

- **Detect Conditions of Interest for Notification**
  Automatically monitoring for conditions of interest and generating selected alerts

- **Capture Login Activity**
  Automatically capture information on who has logged into certain database information, or who was unsuccessful in logging in

- **Record Requests for Information**
  Document and respond to all requests received through the Freedom of Information Act etc

6   Critical Success Factors

As outlined above, a revised ITC Corporate Strategy has been developed and a procurement exercise is underway to acquire a performance/management information system. Critical to the successful deployment and implementation of both the processes and systems to secure improvements is the appointment of a suitably qualified person to undertake overall control of data quality, as a distinctly separate discipline to the management of ITC assets.

The expansion of, and reliance upon, accurate and timely data from co-ordinated datasets cannot be effectively achieved within the Service's current staff resources. To take full advantage of the business benefits to be derived from the proposed processes and systems set out within this business case it is essential that full consideration is given to establishment of an Information Officer post.

Some responsibilities of the proposed post are currently being undertaken in an ad hoc manner by several individuals within the Service to ensure the Fire Authority's compliance with relevant legislation and audit requirements. But the resources assigned are disparate across the organisation and, as such, do not provide a joined-up strategic approach to data quality management. This has led to inefficiencies in the ever-increasing use of ITC. These inefficiencies are arising out of multiple and inconsistent data capture methodologies leading, on occasion, to discrepancies in statistical information produced.

But perhaps more importantly, the integrity of information produced could, on occasion, be of questionable value to the Authority, when setting future strategy.

The existing staffing arrangements do not provide the capacity to release or appoint an individual, on either a part or full-time basis, to take overall responsibility for data quality and information management across the Service.

7 Options Appraisal

In exploring the alternatives to address the increasing demands for accurate and timely data, three potential options exist:

Option 1 – Do Nothing

This is obviously a viable option, but to do nothing would seriously impede the Fire Authority's ability to secure improvements in service delivery as strategic planning assumptions may be made on erroneous data. Perhaps of greater immediate concern, however, is the Service's limited ability within current resource constraints to address the requirements of the Audit Commission's Data Quality audit regime. There are no additional costs in pursuing this option, but inefficiencies will continue due to multiple and inconsistent data capture methods in use, leading, on occasion, to discrepancies in statistical information produced.

Option 2 – Establish Information Officer Post

This is the preferred option, as it is viewed as a critical success factor to the effective deployment and implementation of the ITC Corporate Strategy and any new performance/management information system. The projected total costs to appoint an Information Officer are not expected to exceed £30,000 per annum.

Option 3 – Outsource Data Quality Management

As with most ITC services today, an option exists to outsource data quality to a third party. This may be a viable approach and one that undoubtedly has the potential to draw upon best practice from leading data quality industry specialists. It is, however, expected that such an approach may attract budget implications of in excess of at least £50,000 per annum. No further work has been conducted in respect of this approach, but detailed costs could be sought, if this was considered to be the preferred option.

8 Affordability

Within the Treasurer's previous projected budget report of 6 November 2006, an indicative revenue estimate of £35,000 was identified to support the establishment of an Information Officer.

It is anticipated that the post, taking effect from 1 April 2007, would be graded at around scale point 7 (£21,000 - £24,000). With on-costs of 20 percent, together with one-off ITC and furniture provision, it is expected that the total year one costs would not exceed £30,000.

Office accommodation would be achieved at no extra cost within existing offices of the Service's Performance Improvement Department.

9   Achievability of improvements in Data Quality

The Service has a clear awareness of its need to address deficiencies in management of data and information. The Audit Commission's Data Quality audit conducted in the summer of 2006 will be repeated during 2007 and the Fire Authority will fail to demonstrate improvements, unless action is taken to address the resourcing needs to support the effective delivery of the ITC Corporate Strategy and any new performance/management information system. The establishment of a dedicated Information Officer post, and more importantly the early appointment of a skilled individual, is seen as essential to achieve improvements in data quality.

The post holder would be a key member of the Service's Performance Improvement Department.

10   References

[1] Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority (2006) PERFORMANCE PLAN, 2006-08 June 2006. p11
[2] *ibid* p16
[3] *ibid* p26
[4] DCLG (2006) FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK, 2006-08. p31
[5] *ibid* p32
[6] *ibid* p34
[7] *ibid* pp39-40
[8] *ibid* p45
[9] *ibid* p46
[10] *ibid* pp50-51
[11] *ibid* p59
[12] *ibid* pp60-61
[13] *ibid* p62
[14] *ibid*
[15] *ibid* pp62-63
[16] *ibid* p67
[17] *ibid* p68
[18] Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority (2006) PERFORMANCE PLAN, 2006-08 June 2006. p16

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Human Resources, Training and Development Department Additional Budget Proposals

Reasonable Adjustment Budget

Funding of **£10,000** is requested for a dedicated 'Reasonable Adjustment' budget. To date we have had cases of reasonable adjustment, where the adjustment required has been at a cost to the Fire Authority and there is no clear budget area, from which to draw the money required. As we are legally required to make reasonable adjustments where possible, there should be a dedicated budget to be used, if required.

Equality and Diversity Budget

Set out on page 3 of this Appendix are the elements that would form the Equality and Diversity budget for future years, for which **£15,000** is requested. Members will note that the total requirement is more than the amount that has been requested. This is because it has been recognised that some expenses fall every 2 or 3 years rather than annually and, therefore, with careful planning it should be possible to keep the budget static. The annual estimated cost (allowing for annual variations) is £19,000 but we feel that a conservative estimate is prudent, given that this is a new budget area

We are legally required to have a **Race Equality Scheme**, a **Disability Equality Scheme** and a **Gender Equality Scheme**, all of which must be published and widely circulated. The same is so for the **Cultural Awareness Booklet** and **Harassment and Bullying** booklet, which are provided to all new employees. We can use the internet as a vehicle but to ensure accessibility we cannot rely on just one means of circulation and, therefore, must publish the documents in paper format.

The **translation of documents** is not easy to estimate, because we are obliged to make all of our documents available in alternative languages/formats on request and the total cost will depend on the size of the document concerned.

Attendance at the annual **Mega Mela** (a celebration of Asian Culture) is a regional undertaking and all five Services contribute to the cost of the stand and support it with staff.

Taster days will be ad hoc but initial indications show that they have been helpful in leading to appointments in the most recent recruitment round and we intend to repeat them in future.

The Fire Authority has committed £5,000 for one year (2006/07) to the **Equalities Forum** (Shropshire County Council). It is expected that this body will come forward with similar requests for funding in the future and it would, therefore, be prudent to make provision.

The **conversor** and the **information posters** are examples of equipment and resources that it is reasonable to presume may need to be provided to support either an individual or team or to help to demonstrate the organisational commitment to equality and diversity issues, such as disability.

Although we have not to date provided specific **dyslexia testing** at all, we should make provision to do so. We are currently meeting the costs of other **disability testing**, such as colour vision testing and lung function tests, from the occupational health budget, which as a result has been overspent in 2006/07.

Communication with people, for whom English is not their first language, and with those, who may have hearing difficulties, was raised at the Operational Assurance audit. **Language Line** is the most cost-effective and operationally effective means we can find of meeting the potential need to converse in other languages. The figures provided below include an estimate of the level of usage, as this has not yet been implemented due to lack of finance available.

It is recommended that places on the **Networking Women in the Fire Service** (NWFS) conference are provided for from within the equality and diversity budget to demonstrate organisational commitment in this area.

When developing new Equality Schemes the organisation is required to undertake **public consultation**. To date, due to lack of funds, facilitation of such sessions has been done by officers. It is recognised that a professional body would be able to support this work and bring their experience to it to improve qualitative and quantitative feedback in future.

Equality and Diversity Budget

Item	Required	Cost
Race Equality Scheme - 200 copies	Every 3 years	£2,500
Cultural Awareness Booklet	Every 2/3 years	£3,000
Harassment and Bullying Booklet	Every 2/3 years	£2,000
Translation of documents into alternative formats, e.g. audio, Braille	Annual estimate	£1,800
Mega Mela	Annual	£1,000
Taster Days - promotional materials, advert etc.		£1,800
Equalities Forum (Shropshire County Council)	One off	£5,000
Conversor/equipment for public use		£500
Promotional information disability posters		£150
Dyslexia/disability testing	Annual estimate	£1,000
Language Line: Administration charge Training Calls per annum (1 hour per month off peak) Total estimate		£295 £500 £1,782 £2,577
Send 2 people on the NWFS Conference (£425 for one place)		£850
External facilitation of public consultation	Estimate	£2,000
Total		**£24,177**
Total adjusted for annual variance in printing costs		**£19,177**
Budget Requested		**£15,000**

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COMMUNITY SAFETY 'PREVENTION' PEOPLE AT RISK TEAM (PaRT)

This paper presents the case for permanently increasing the staff within the 'People at Risk Team' to focus on older people, who are at greater risk from fire in our County.

This proposal supports the following Fire Authorities Strategic Aims[1]:

Aim 1   Reduce the risk to life and material loss from fire, road traffic collision and other emergencies in the community including Corporate Objectives 1 to 4)

Aim 4   Provide a service that demonstrates quality and best value in service provision' (Corporate Objectives 1 and 2)

Aim 5   Provide a service committed to the highest levels of equality and fairness' (Corporate Objective 1)

It also supports the attainment of the Government's PSA 3:

'To reduce the number of accidental fire related deaths
in the home by 20% by 31st March 2010[2]'

The Fire Authority is asked to consider the contents of this paper and agree the budget required.

The Case for an Older Persons' Officer

Analysis of fire statistics indicates that certain groups within society are at a greater risk from fire. T he National Fire and Rescue Framework Document[3] requires fire and rescue services to focus on such groups to improve their safety from fire.

These commonly include:

- The socially disadvantaged
- Those living in the more remote locations
- The elderly (in particular those living alone)
- Black and ethnic minorities
- Those with learning difficulties
- People dependant upon drugs and alcohol
- People suffering mental illness
- The disabled and those with long-term debilitating illness
- Gypsies and travellers

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[1] Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority - Performance Plan 2006-08
[2] The Fire and Rescue National Framework 06-08 (Section 1.10)
[3] The Fire and Rescue National Framework 06-08 (Annex B, Page 77)

Within the area of Shropshire County Council there is a population of some 283,000 people spread over 3,000 square kilometres in market towns, scattered villages and hamlets. 54,000 of these people are aged over 65 with 8.5% of the population being over 75.

The area of Telford & Wrekin Borough covers some 200 square kilometres and has a population of over 160,000 with around 30,000 of these being people over 65. Due to the fact that the Borough saw significant growth of younger people in the 1970s they are expecting a significant percentage growth in the elderly population in the next five to ten years

We have long recognised that those citizens over 65 can fall into many of the 'at risk' categories listed on the previous page and are, therefore, more likely to suffer from the effects of fire than the population as a whole. It is, therefore, our goal to improve the safety of older people within our community, both by protecting them from fire and also in supporting our partners in making older people safer in their homes.

By doing this we will ensure that older people can maintain an active role in our local communities and continue to provide a valuable resource to the whole of society. To do this we have to think carefully about the kinds of service we wish to provide now and in the future to ensure that we tackle the fire related issues that older people feel are important.

The above facts were recognised by the Service and key partners and, as a result, in 2005 we benefited from sponsorship by Shropshire County Council of an Elderly Persons Officer. This resource proved so valuable that on conclusion of the County Council's sponsorship in 2006 the Fire Authority took over funding of the post from short-term efficiencies in the community safety budget.

Officers now seek to make this post permanent. It is a non-operational professional post and it is anticipated that the costs will be approximately £24,000 per annum.

Accommodation

The post holder will work from the Service's Shrewsbury office.