



# A summary of our Statement of Accounts for 2007/2008

accounts*lite*



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority  
**MAKING YOU SAFER**  
PREVENTING. PROTECTING. RESPONDING  
[WWW.BUCKSFIRE.GOV.UK](http://WWW.BUCKSFIRE.GOV.UK)

# Welcome to Accounts Lite!

WE'VE called this booklet Accounts Lite because, even if you're not familiar with the financial workings of local authorities, it should be relatively easy to digest.

It's a simpler and shorter form of our Statement of Accounts. We're hoping that people who have previously shied away from the full document will find this slimline version more appetising.

If, after reading it, you would like to go on to the main course, the full Statement of Accounts is available on our website at **[www.bucksfire.gov.uk](http://www.bucksfire.gov.uk)**

The longer version contains all the information and details Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority – the organisation that runs Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service – has to publish every year in order to comply with accounting practice and legislation.

**Cover picture:** Firefighters at the scene of a road traffic collision near Milton Keynes in September 2007. Nearly a fifth of the 9,000 incidents we attended in 2007/2008 were emergencies other than fires.

# Our aims in 2007/2008

## Vision

Making you safer, by working together to reduce death, injury and damage to property, the environment and our heritage from fire and other emergencies. This will be achieved by balancing the provision of prevention, protection and response services.

## Strategic aims

- Intervene effectively: Respond effectively, efficiently and safely to emergency and safety incidents.
- Improve community safety: Reduce the incidence and severity of fire and related risks facing the community.
- Build resilience: Develop a sustainable, efficient and effective service for the community.

# Major achievements

You can see a full list of our performance against the aims set out on the left by looking at our Annual Report, which is on our website at [www.bucksfire.gov.uk](http://www.bucksfire.gov.uk)

Here are of some of our major achievements:

- We completed 3,776 Home Fire Risk Checks – basic assessments of the fire risks in people’s homes – and installed 5,392 smoke alarms.
- We achieved a 20.2 per cent reduction in the number of false alarms caused by automatic fire alarms.
- An initiative to help reduce the number of deliberate fires and other criminal activities at empty and insecure buildings was rolled out. It allows police and fire personnel who attend an incident at an unoccupied building to seek the help of their local council to deal with the problem by using an electronic form.
- We introduced the single referral scheme in Chiltern District – a simple process which gives vulnerable people access to a wide range of public services, including safety checks and free smoke alarms – and it produced 3,493 referrals.
- Around 4,000 sixth-formers attended one of six performances of a potentially lifesaving road safety presentation, Safe Drive Stay Alive, in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.



■ Our rolling programme of replacing and standardising our fleet of fire and rescue vehicles continued with the purchase of three more Scania 94D Rescue Pumps (pictured above), which are stationed at Beaconsfield, Great Holm and Newport Pagnell Fire Stations.

■ Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service staged 11 events to support Road Safety Week in November 2007.

■ The Impact Roadshow – an initiative to help guide young people under court orders for vehicle-related offences away from a path that could potentially harm them or others – was cited as best practice at the Youth Justice Convention in Bournemouth in November 2007. It's a joint venture between us and Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Team.

■ Our water rescue crews carried out more than 100 rescues during the July 2007 floods and were mobilised as far afield as Hereford and Worcester, Gloucestershire and Norfolk.

■ We assisted the National Flood Support Centre at Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters by sending senior officers to provide resilience and back-up cover.

■ We deployed our Urban Search and Rescue team to help search for the three missing firefighters following the warehouse fire tragedy in Atherstone on Stour, Warwickshire, in November 2007.

■ We improved two of our scores in an independent assessment by the Audit Commission – Use of Resources Score and Value for Money.

■ Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service's Finance department was formally accredited as a Best Practice Employer by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

■ During the year we successfully put 16 newly-recruited firefighters through the first phase of their training.

■ A campaign to encourage more people to become part-time firefighters at their local fire stations led to the recruitment of 31 Retained Duty System staff.

■ The number of pages viewed on our website at [www.bucksfire.gov.uk](http://www.bucksfire.gov.uk) more than doubled during 2007 to a monthly average equivalent to 1.2 million a year.

## Calls attended 2007/2008

Type of call	Percentage of total calls
False alarms	47
Special service calls, including road traffic collisions and rescues from lifts etc	19
Accidental primary fires (where there is risk to life and/or property of value)	12
Secondary fires (where there is no risk to life and/or property of value)	12
Deliberate primary fires	9
Other	1

## What did we spend the money on?

In setting the budget for 2007/08, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority raised the amount required from the council tax payers of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes by 4.95 per cent.

The levy on council tax band D properties for 2007/08 was set at £52.33 for the year based on the number of band D properties totalling 285,181. This was still one of the lowest Fire Authority precepts in the country.

The increase was agreed by members in order to provide additional staffing and resources to develop and enhance our work in the community, addressing prevention and protection issues as well as still allowing us to provide a response service when needed.

The table on the next page shows the costs of running our services against the budget for 2007-08 as a whole.

2006/07 Actual £000s	Expenditure	2007/08 Actual £000s	2007/08 Budget £000s
21,605	Employees	22,928	23,022
932	Premises	1,037	995
2,239	Transport	2,057	2,329
2,841	Running costs	2,426	2,792
638	Capital charges	452	398
<b>28,255</b>	<b>Expenditure total</b>	<b>28,900</b>	<b>29,537</b>

Breakdown of expenditure 2007/08	
Employees	79%
Running costs	8%
Transport	7%
Premises	4%
Capital charges	2%

We generated a small surplus and this is explained in the section on page 9 headed "Did we have anything left over?"

Service expenditure is analysed between the main operational divisions of service and central services. These are:

<b>Community fire safety activities</b>
<b>Firefighting and rescue operations</b>
<b>Central services</b>

The biggest area of spend classified as central services is on corporate and democratic core. These are the costs of running Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority associated with being democratically accountable to the local population and having to fulfil certain statutory obligations, a proportion of senior management time, audit inspection, legal costs and a contribution towards the running costs of the South East Regional Management Board.

The percentage of spend by service area is:

<b>Firefighting and rescue operations</b>	<b>86%</b>
<b>Community fire safety</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Central services</b>	<b>4%</b>

Within the service areas, the split of net expenditure can be seen as follows:

<b>2006/07 net expenditure £000s</b>	<b>Community fire safety</b>	<b>% of net expenditure within service area</b>	<b>2007/08 net expenditure £000s</b>
1,318	Statutory inspection and certification	51	1,445
1,259	Prevention and education	49	1,406
<b>2006/07 net expenditure £000s</b>	<b>Firefighting and rescue operations</b>	<b>% of net expenditure within service area</b>	<b>2007/08 net expenditure £000s</b>
22,551	Operational responses	93	23,746
945	Communications and mobilising	7	1,670
200	Securing water supplies	1	175
<b>2006/07 net expenditure £000s</b>	<b>Central services</b>	<b>% of net expenditure within service area</b>	<b>2007/08 net expenditure £000s</b>
833	Corporate and democratic core	77	898
-101	Non distributed costs	23	273

# How did we pay?

We financed our expenditure by the use of income generation and grant funding, local and national taxation and redistributed Business Rates as follows.

2006/07		2007/08	
Actual £000s	Budget £000s	Actual £000s	Budget £000s
-3,276	Income	-2,835	-3,174
-14,084	Precepts	-14,973	-14,973
-1,769	General Government Grants	-1,613	-1,613
-9,178	Non-domestic rates redistribution	-9,612	-9,613
-164	Transitional Funding	-164	-164
-28,471	Income Total	-29,197	-29,537

Breakdown of income 2007/08	
Precepts	50%
Non-domestic rates redistribution	33%
Income	10%
General government grants	6%
Transitional funding	1%



**Above:** Our fire investigation dog handler Kerry Burns with fire investigation dogs Ember (left) and Barney, and Nick Molloy from Tesco, who are sponsoring the van.

The income received includes specific grant income received from central government, charges for training courses provided to external bodies, recovery of costs from other partners for employees seconded elsewhere, charges to other authorities for services provided to them, rents for space provided on our premises and charges to staff for the provision of vehicles with associated running costs.

The shortfall in income relates to specific grant that has been carried forward to 2008/09 to help deliver specific projects such as FiReControl and Fire Link and to embed the Urban Search and Rescue function within the service.

## Did we have anything left over?

We spent slightly less than we received last year, leading to a small surplus on our revenue account. The surplus for the year was added on to those accumulated from previous years to give a new working balance on the general reserve of £3.919m.

### Revenue account surplus

2006/07 £000s		2007/08 £000s
-28,471	Income	-29,197
28,255	Cost of services	28,900
-216	Surplus for the year	-297

**Below:** The scene of a major warehouse fire which took place in Aylesbury in 2007.



**Above:** A controlled public demonstration of a chip pan fire at one of our fire station open days.

We handled significant amounts of cash during the year as set out in the following table:

2007/08 £000s	Cash flow	2007/08 £000s
-210	Cash as at 1/4/07	-484
30,261	Plus cash in	31,494
30,535	Less cash out	30,682
-484	Cash as at 31/3/08 (in the bank)	328

# Capital projects

## What did we spend?

The aim of the capital programme is to continue to provide an efficient, effective and sustainable service to the public by:

- Relocating and renewing key installations such as fire stations to ensure that they are in the right places bearing in mind future community risks, and that our fire stations remain fit for purpose and compliant with all modern standards and building regulations.
- Replacing our fire appliance fleet and equipment. As they age and become unfit for use.
- Investing in modern information and communication technology so that it is compatible with developments such as regional control centres and FireLink, the new national radio system for fire and rescue services which puts all emergency services on the same frequency and system.
- Continued investment in the latest operational equipment.

We have to account for this money separately from the running of the day to day service.

A total of £1,816,384 was spent on capital schemes and equipment as follows:

2006/07 £000s		2007/08 £000s
114	Maintaining our existing buildings	332
538	New building (purchasing, design and build)	387
328	New vehicles	568
	New equipment	
47	ICT (hardware and software)	296
199	Operational equipment	233
<b>1,226</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,816</b>

## How was it financed?

This is how we paid for the money spent on capital projects:

£000s	Source of funding	£000s
466	Capital borrowing	1,798
760	Capital receipts (sale of vehicle)	18
0	Capital grants	0
<b>1,226</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,816</b>

# What are we worth?

## Reserves and balances

The Treasurer has confirmed to members that reserves are adequate. The interest earned on the bank balances provides essential income to support the income and expenditure account and amounted to £545,531 in 2007/08. There is a mixture of earmarked and general reserves.

The revenue reserves are as follows at 31 March 2008:

Balance as at 31-03-2007 £000s	Reserve	Balance as at 31-03-2008 £000s
2,010	General fund balance	3,919
1,928	Time served retirements	0
335	Debt repayment	335
50	Control room (unforeseen events)	50
0	Invest to Save reserve	100
4,323	Total	4,323

## Net assets

At the end of each year we are required to draw up a balance sheet setting out how much Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority's land, buildings, plant and equipment is worth, how much others owe us, how much cash we have and how much we owe to others.

2006/07 £000s	Net assets	2007/08 £000s
32,649	Land, buildings, plant and equipment	33,405
7,397	Investments	7,608
1,975	How much others owe us	622
-484	How much cash we have	328
	Net liabilities	
-2,226	How much we owe to others (excluding Central Government for things such as tax etc)	-2,880
-594	Central Government	-245
-8,654	Leases and long term borrowing	-8,679
30,063	Total assets less total liabilities	30,159

How much we owe to others excludes our pension liabilities. We are required by law to contribute to pension provision for all our staff (wholtime, retained and non-operational staff). The long term liability for the accrued benefits is £133,650,000 as at 31 March 2008.

# How have we performed?

Please take a look at our Corporate Performance Report on our website at [www.bucksfire.gov.uk](http://www.bucksfire.gov.uk) to see how we have performed against our targets. These are the challenges we set ourselves to ensure that you are safer within our community and are set out in the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

These challenges focus on:

<b>Prevention</b>
<b>Protection</b>
<b>Response</b>



# The next three years

## Vision and challenges

Our vision for the future sets out the following:

- We respond more effectively to a falling number of emergencies and reduce the negative impact that these incidents have on our communities and staff.
- We are seen as an employer of choice, with our staff enhancing all aspects of service provision through innovation and initiatives and achieving personal goals.
- We are financially sound, and we can meet the continuing demands of our Integrated Risk Management Plans, the effects of an expanding and diverse population and known pressures without recourse to big increases in the council tax we charge you or unexplained borrowing.
- Our organisational performance improves year on year.
- We are recognised, trusted and respected by our peers, inspectors, partners and communities for exceeding expectations.

**Left:** Fire and Urban Search and Rescue crews taking part in a multi-agency exercise in Taplow.

At the same time as trying to achieve the vision set out on the previous page, a significant challenge arises as a result of the Government's decision to provide sub-inflationary increases in the grant funding (general, business rates and specific transitional funding) that we receive from them over the next three years. These currently form around 40 per cent of our total funding. This equates to a one per cent increase for 2008/09, falling to 0.5 per cent for the two subsequent years.

In order to meet this challenge we are constantly striving to achieve efficiency savings by reviewing practices and processes, collaborating with partners where possible and accessing national contracts where they offer real savings.



## Treasurer's statement

As the statutory financial officer for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority, I can confirm that this year's Statement of Accounts has been prepared in accordance with proper practices as set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy/Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

### Certificate of the Treasurer

I hereby certify that this Summary Statement of Accounts presents fairly the financial position of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority as at 31 March 2008 and its income and expenditure for the financial year 2007-08. Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority's accounts have been audited by the Audit Commission – the Government's independent public spending watchdog. We expect to receive an unqualified audit opinion as in the previous year. A full copy of the Statement of Accounts will be available on request in October once the audit has been completed and confirmed.

### Cynthia Changer BA (Hons) CPFA, Treasurer

**Left:** The Green Street Youth Crew - a Positive Activities for Young People initiative in High Wycombe run in conjunction with the local community.



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