



Nottinghamshire

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

Reserves Strategy 2021-22

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Background

1. The requirement for financial reserves is acknowledged in statute. Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Act require Precepting authorities (and billing authorities) in England and Wales to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.
2. In England and Wales, earmarked reserves remain legally part of the General Reserve, although they are accounted for separately.
3. There are other safeguards in place that help to prevent Police & Crime Commissioners over-committing themselves financially. These include:
 - The balanced budget requirement (Local Government Act 1992 s32 and s43).
 - Chief Finance Officers duty to report on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves (Local Government Act 2003 s25) when the Police & Crime Commissioner is considering the budget requirement.
 - Legislative requirement for each Police & Crime Commissioner to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and that the Chief Finance Officer has responsibility for the administration of those affairs (section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972).
 - The requirements of the Prudential Code.
 - Auditors will consider whether audited bodies have established adequate arrangements to ensure that their financial position is soundly based.
4. These requirements are reinforced by section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which requires the Chief Finance Officer to report to the Police & Crime Commissioner if there is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget. This would include situations where reserves have become seriously depleted and it is forecast that the Commissioner will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year. The issue of a section 114 notice cannot be taken lightly and has serious operational implications. Indeed, the Police and Crime Commissioner must consider the s114 notice within 21 days and during that period the Force is prohibited from entering into new agreements involving the incurring of expenditure.
5. Whilst it is primarily the responsibility of the Police and Crime Commissioner and its Chief Finance Officer to maintain a sound financial position, external auditors will, as part of their wider responsibilities, consider whether audited

bodies have established adequate arrangements to ensure that their financial position is soundly based. However, it is not the responsibility of auditors to prescribe the optimum or minimum level of reserves for individual Police and Crime Commissioners or authorities in general.

6. CIPFA's Prudential Code requires the Chief Finance Officers to have full regard to affordability when making recommendations about the Commissioners future capital programme. Such consideration includes the level of long-term revenue commitments. Indeed, in considering the affordability of its capital plans, the Commissioner is required to consider all of the resources available to it and estimated for the future, together with the totality of its capital plans and revenue forecasts for the forthcoming year and the following two years. There is a requirement for three-year revenue forecasts across the public sector and this is achieved through the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) has provided the Commissioner with details of proposed revenue grant for one year and capital grant settlement has yet to be announced. This provides limited ability to focus on the levels of reserves and application of balances and reserves.
7. CIPFA and the Local Authority Accounting Panel do not accept that there is a case for introducing a generally acceptable minimum level of reserves. Commissioners on the advice of their Chief Finance Officers should make their own judgements on such matters taking into account all relevant local circumstances. Such circumstances will vary between local policing areas. A well-managed organisation, for example, with a prudent approach to budgeting should be able to operate with a level of general reserves appropriate for the risks (both internal and external) to which it is exposed. In assessing the appropriate level of reserves, a well-managed organisation will ensure that the reserves are not only adequate, but also are necessary.
8. The Home Office has now indicated that it expects general reserves to be no more than 5% of the net revenue budget.
9. Section 26 of the Local Government Act 2003 gives Ministers in England and Wales a general power to set a minimum level of reserves for authorities. However, the government has undertaken to apply this only to individual authorities in the circumstances where the authority does not act prudently, disregards the advice of its Chief Finance Officer and is heading for serious financial difficulty.

The Commissioners Plans

10. The Commissioner holds reserves for specific reasons that are included within the Police & Crime Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy these include:
- To meet forthcoming events where the precise event, date and amount required for such events cannot accurately be predicted. For example major events that would require the use of the General Reserve. These are detailed within the General Reserve risk assessment provided at **Appendix A**.
 - To meet forthcoming events where the precise date and amount required cannot be accurately predicted. For example: Night Time Levy where partners are making proposals together on how best to utilise this funding or the Grants and Commissioning Reserve, where proposals on how to utilise this fund from previous years underspends are being considered for Crime Prevention or Victims.
 - To meet forthcoming capital expenditure needs where major capital schemes are being planned and the reserve will be utilised to reduce the cost of borrowing and capital charges to the revenue account.
 - To meet smaller projects such as the Animal Welfare Reserve where expenditure is only met from this reserve and which meets specific policy requirements.
 - A reasonable amount to meet peaks and troughs in revenue expenditure requirements (e.g. redundancy or restructuring costs). This is met through the MTFP Reserve.

Current Financial Climate

11. The pressures on public finances are continuing with the cost of the pandemic and Brexit being the key drivers affecting the totality of funding for the public sector. At the local level the good news of being able to recruit additional officers remains a challenge and the Force remain ahead of the curve for achieving its recruitment targets. The national target for achieving savings continues and whilst welcomed, it becomes particularly difficult when officer numbers have to be maintained and back office support is now in the lowest quartile making it difficult to find where additional savings to fund the gap can actually be made. Therefore, the ability to retain reserves for unforeseen events and circumstances becomes not only difficult, but something that requires careful consideration.
12. We are still facing an uncertain future with the impact of Brexit and how this will impact on public expenditure plans, which are currently unknown.

13. Nottinghamshire currently has one of the lowest levels of forecast reserves for policing in England and Wales. Nottinghamshire has never been cash rich and has been underfunded through the current funding mechanism.
14. The Medium Term Financial Strategy identifies risks in achieving the required efficiencies to ensure balanced budgets over future years.

Types of Reserve

15. When reviewing the medium term financial strategy and preparing the annual budgets the Commissioner should consider the establishment and maintenance of reserves. These can be held for four main purposes:
 - A working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing. The MTFP Reserve has been the source for this, but this has been fully utilised and therefore the General Reserve is the back-up solution for this risk.
 - A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies – this also forms part of general reserves.
 - A means of building up funds often referred to as earmarked reserves, to meet known or predicted requirements; earmarked reserves are accounted for separately, but remain legally part of the general reserve.
 - The economic climate and the safety of the Commissioner's financial assets. This would link closely with the Treasury Management and Prudential Code Strategy - this also forms part of general reserves.
16. The Commissioner also holds other reserves that arise out of the interaction of legislation and proper accounting practice. These reserves are not resource-backed and cannot be used for any other purpose, are described below:
 - The Pensions Reserve – this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile the payments made for the year to various statutory pension schemes.
 - The Revaluation Reserve – this is a reserve that records unrealised gains in the value of fixed assets. The reserve increases when assets are revalued upwards, and decreases as assets are depreciated or revalued downwards or disposed of.
 - The Capital Adjustment Account – this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile the different rates at which assets are depreciated under proper accounting practice and are financed through the capital controls system.

- The Available-for-Sale Financial Instruments Reserve – this is a reserve that records unrealised revaluation gains arising from holding available-for-sale investments, plus any unrealised losses that have not arisen from impairment of the assets. Currently none.
 - The Financial Instruments Adjustment Reserve – this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile the different rates at which gains and losses (such as premiums on the early repayment of debt) are recognised under proper accounting practice and are required by statute to be met from the General Fund. Currently none.
 - The Unequal Pay Back Pay Account – this is a specific accounting mechanism used to reconcile the different rates at which payments in relation to compensation for previous unequal pay are recognised under proper accounting practice and are required by statute to be met from the general fund. Currently none.
 - Collection Fund Adjustment account – this is specific to the changes in accounting entries relating to the Collection Fund Accounts held by the Billing Authorities.
 - Accumulated Absences Account – this account represents the value of outstanding annual leave and time off in lieu as at 31st March each year.
17. Other such reserves may be created in future where developments in local authority accounting result in timing differences between the recognition of income and expenditure under proper accounting practice and under statute or regulation, such as the Capital Grants Unapplied.
18. In addition the Commissioner will hold a Capital Receipts Reserve. This reserve holds the proceeds from the sale of assets, and can only be used for capital purposes in accordance with the regulations.
19. For each earmarked reserve held by the Commissioner there should be a clear protocol setting out:
- The reason for/purpose of the reserve
 - How and when the reserve can be used
 - Procedures for the reserves management and control
 - A process and timescale for review of the reserve to ensure continuing relevance and adequacy

20. When establishing reserves, The Commissioner needs to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and in particular the need to distinguish between reserves and provisions.

Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Reserves

21. This document aims to provide an over-arching strategy that defines the boundaries within which the approved budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) operate.

The General Reserve

22. It has previously been established that General Reserves will be maintained at a level above the **minimum of 2.0% of the total net budget**.
23. The purpose of this reserve is to provide for any unexpected expenditure that cannot be managed within existing budgets. Such expenditure would be one-off and resulting from an extraordinary event.
24. Similarly the General Reserve should be set at a prudent and not excessive level, as holding high level of reserves can impact on resources and performance. As such the **maximum** level of General Reserves is set at **5.0% of the total net budget**.
25. Authorisation to finance such expenditure must be obtained in advance from the Commissioners Chief Finance Officer, in accordance with the scheme of delegation and the protocol between the Chief Constable and the Chief Finance Officer. Where time permits the request should be supported by a business case.
26. As the net budget position changes the level of General Reserve must be monitored to ensure the minimum level is maintained.
27. **Appendix A** details the elements that make up the current General Reserves balance and the levels of risk attached to each of these elements. These are indicative and may not be exhaustive as new risks emerge. This does not include the Jointly Controlled Operations general reserve of £0.075m.

Earmarked Reserves

28. Unlike General Reserves earmarked reserves have been identified for specific areas of expenditure where there are anticipated costs that can only be estimated. It is therefore prudent for the Commissioner to identify such areas of expenditure and set aside amounts that limit future risk exposure (e.g. balancing budget shortfalls in the MTFS).
29. Such expenditure usually arises out of changes in policy or where the organisation is working in collaboration with other forces to provide a specific service (for example Private Finance Initiative (PFI)).
30. Expenditure relating to earmarked reserves has to specifically relate to the purpose of the reserve.
31. **Appendix B** details for each of the earmarked reserves that existed at the start of the 2020-21 financial year and their estimated balance by 1st April 2021.

Details of the **earmarked reserves** available for use in 2021-22 are given below:

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Reserve

32. The medium term financial strategy of the Commissioner is under constant review and changes as new and reliable information becomes available.
33. The original purpose of this reserve was to alleviate financial pressure on the budgets in current and future years.
34. The support from this reserve is only one-off support and as such cannot be used to finance on-going commitments.
35. This reserve has been completely utilised.

Asset Replacement Reserve

36. This reserve is reflecting the need to consider the major programme of asset replacement in the capital programme.
37. The repayment of reserves previously utilised has provided this reserve with the necessary balances to fund the joint HQ new build and not require a significant level of borrowing which could have resulted in a breach of borrowing limits.

38. The Commissioner has also requested a full Asset Strategy to include a detailed stock condition. This will enable the updating of all remaining buildings to a reasonable and comparable standard. And produce the Asset Management Strategy to CIPFA standards.

IT Investment Reserve

39. This reserve is set aside to support investment and replacement of IT hardware and software. IT revenue underspends will be transferred to this reserve to meet future changes in IT investment and in support of a medium term IT Strategy.

PCC Reserve

40. This reserve has now been earmarked for any cost associated with the PCC elections. This is funded from underspends in the OPCC budget.

Grants & Commissioning Reserve

41. It is intended that underspends on the Grants and Commissioning budget are transferred to here to provide for future needs in this growing area of work. Current plans are to utilise part of this reserve for the refurbishment of a new SARC building in partnership with the NHS and to support further work relating to Sexual and Domestic Violence.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Reserve

42. This is a reserve for the equalisation of expenditure over the life of the contract. This is a statutory reserve to maintain.
43. This reserve has been reviewed in light of the vehicle PFI contract being terminated. All of this reserve relates to commitments within the Riverside PFI. The transfers and balance will remain until the Building PFI has been terminated.

Property Act Fund Reserve

44. This reserve relates to the value of property sold where the Commissioner can retain the income for use in accordance with the Property Act.

Drugs Fund

45. This minor reserve is received from court awards in drugs cases and is only used for initiatives that reduce drug related crime.

Revenue Grants

46. This reserve combines the small amounts of grant income on completed projects where the grant conditions do not require repayment of any balances. Cumulatively they create a reasonable reserve, because they also include the Road Safety Partnership Reserve. The use of this reserve will be subject to evaluation of any risk of repayment.

Animal Welfare Reserve

47. This reserve was established to support the policy for the welfare of animals specifically police dogs on retirement as working animals. There is a panel which meet with representatives from the Vets and the Force and to approve any claims against this fund. Any approved expenditure relating to on-going welfare as a result of work related injuries can then be paid from this fund. This reserve is for the Animal Welfare Retired Dogs Scheme and is for costs associated with the running of that scheme

Tax Base Reserve

48. Due to the timing differences between the Commissioner's budget being approved and the deadline for the Billing Authorities to notify us of the final tax base and any Collection Fund surplus or deficit this fund has been created.
49. This reserve will be utilised where the tax base reduces from the estimated figures provided by Billing Authorities to the declaration of the actual tax base, as this would create a shortfall in overall total funding.
50. This reserve will also be used to cover the Commissioner's portion of costs associated with the Single Occupier Discount Reviews undertaken periodically across the City and the County.
51. Currently, this reserve has a balance equivalent to a 0.5% change on the net revenue budget.

Night Time Levy

52. The Commissioner utilises this funding to contribute towards projects that ensure the City Night Time economy runs smoothly and safely (e.g. the work of the Street Pastors/additional policing when required). Decisions on what projects should be funded are made in partnership with the City Council.
53. The amount of funding through the levy has reduced significantly over the few years it has operated. There is a full programme of projects to utilise the revenue received, but their delivery has been delayed due to the pandemic.

Allard Reserve

54. It has been agreed that any further risks associated with this case will be managed within existing revenue budgets. This then “frees up” this balance to fund the bringing back in-house of the vehicle maintenance contract.

Jointly Controlled Operations (Regional Collaboration) Revenue Reserve

55. There are a growing number of areas where collaborative working is undertaken with other Regional Policing areas. EMSOU is providing collaboration for specialised policing services, such as Major Crime and Forensics. Collaboration has also extended beyond Police Operation Services to include areas such as Legal Services, Procurement and Learning and Development.
56. The Police & Crime Commissioners meet to make decisions and agree further areas of collaboration. They would also approve the use of this reserve for regional activity.
57. The reserve exists to finance activities of regional collaboration above those identified within the annual budget.

Procedure for Use of Reserves

58. The use of reserves requires approval of the Chief Finance Officer to the Commissioner and the Commissioner.
59. All requests should be supported by a business case unless there is an approved process for use, such as the Animal Welfare Reserve, or the request relates to a specific project relating to retained grant.
60. On occasion where an urgent request is being made this should comply with the protocol between the Chief Constable and the Chief Finance Officer to the Commissioner.

Monitoring

61. The level of reserves is kept under continuous review. The Commissioner receives reports on the levels of reserves as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy updates together with the Annual Reserves Strategy in January and the out-turn position in June each year.
62. The current level of forecast reserves remains low and if called upon will impact negatively on the financial viability of the force. Reserves and their usage is carefully planned for and monitored throughout the year.

Risk Analysis

63. Any recommendations that change the planned use of reserves reported within the Annual Budget and Precept Reports will take account of the need for operational policing balanced against the need to retain prudent levels of reserves.
64. However, there are significant risks, which affect the level of reserves to be maintained, and it is for this reason that a minimum level of 2% (with a maximum level of 5%) of total net budget has been set for the General Reserve.
65. The significant risks that have been considered, but which will also be kept under review are:
 - Significant unforeseen legal costs.
 - The budget monitoring report highlights potential risks in being able to achieve the required efficiencies and savings during the year.
 - The ability to seek financial assistance from the Home Office for major incidents has been diminished and can no longer be relied upon.
 - The need to finance organisational change and redundancies may have an impact on the use of reserves, although this is also reducing in value and risk.
 - The ability to recover significant overspends by divisions and departments would be very difficult in the current financial climate.
 - The instability of the Financial Markets means that the investments we make with balances are currently exposed to greater risk. This is negated by the Treasury Management Strategy, but returns on investment have reduced significantly.
 - Should the Commissioner and Force be faced with two or more of the above issues at the same time then the reserves may be needed in full.

- Once utilised reserves have limited scope for replenishment. This is usually achieved through a budget underspend.
- There may be exceptional levels of insurance claims that cannot be met from the usual provisions.
- Home Office interest in the levels of reserves held by Police Forces. Nottinghamshire is in the lower quartile in regard to this so any requirement by Central Government affecting reserves would impact on us greater.

CFO Opinion

It is my opinion that the current level of forecast reserves is low and this requires significant budget management by the force. It is right and prudent to use the reserves to finance significant capital expenditure, thereby reducing the impact on revenue budgets.

STRATEGY REVIEW

This strategy will be reviewed annually and the Police & Crime Commissioners approval sought.

During the year changes may occur in the MTFS, which affect this strategy. Such changes will be monitored by the Chief Finance Officer and reported to the Commissioner for approval.

Charlotte Radford (CPFA)
Chief Finance Officer

Reserves Risk Assessment 2021-22

GENERAL RESERVE

RISK	IMPACT	PROBABILITY	Min £m	Max £m	Proposed for 2021-22 £m
Major Incident(s) Unbudgeted expenditure	Any amount under 1% of net budget is to be funded by the authority. Amounts over 1% of net budget are subject to Home Office application approval.	Single Incident amounting to less than 1% of net budget. MEDIUM Multiple incidents amounting to over 1% of net budget. MEDIUM Single incident amounting to over 1% of net budget. LOW	2.1	4.2	4.2
Major Disaster (e.g. natural)	Operation policing affected and resources diverted. (e.g. through building being inaccessible and disaster recovery plan being auctioned).	LOW	0.5	1.0	0.5
Partnership Support	Funding supported by partners continues to reduce. This has also been risk assessed as part of the budget assumptions.	Medium to HIGH	0.5	4.6	1.2
Counterparty failure	If invested balances were tied up in a process to recovery there would be an immediate impact on the revenue budget (possibly short term).	LOW	0.5	5.0	0.5
Employment Tribunals and other litigation	Direct impact on revenue budgets.	LOW	0.1	0.5	0.1
Insurance	Emerging Risks and late reported claims.	To date no claims of this type have affected the accounts. Low to MEDIUM	0.3	0.7	0.5
TOTAL					7.0

Earmarked Reserves Assessment

RISK/RESERVE	PURPOSE	HOW AND WHEN IT WILL BE USED	Management and control	Review	Estimated Balance 31.03.21 £m
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	To provide against financial shortfalls identified within the MTFS.	Smoothing peaks and troughs in financing the MTFS.	Chief Finance Officer & Commissioner	Minimum twice annually	0.000
Asset Replacement	To provide funding towards major items of capital expenditure.	In conjunction with the Treasury Management Strategy.	Chief Finance Officer	On-going	6.781
IT Investment	To provide for investment in new IT software and hardware	In line with the IT strategy	Chief Finance Officer	On-going	0.976
PCC Reserve	Underspends on PCC budgets are transferred here, to meet future needs.	To be utilised to meet unforeseen expenditure.	Chief Finance Officer	On-going	1.617
Grants & Commissioning	To collate small balances within revenue accounts to provide funding for this growing area of work.	To meet specific requirements relating to Grants and Commissioning.	Chief Finance Officer	On-going	5.770
PFI reserve	To fund irregular PFI related expenditure on a smoothed basis. And to provide for end of life PFI expenditure.	Life cycle equalisation for Riverside PFI.	Chief Finance Officer	Annually	0.128
Property Act Fund	Income from the sale of property act confiscations.	To be determined by the Police & Crime Commissioner.	Chief Finance Officer & Commissioner	Annually	0.049

Drug Fund	For use in reducing drug related crime.	To be determined by the Police & Crime Commissioner and CC.	Chief Finance Officer & Commissioner	Annually	0.027
Revenue Grants	Balances on grants not required to be repaid. Use needs to be risk assessed.	To be determined by the Police & Crime Commissioner.	Drawn upon when repayment has been requested	Annually	1.698
Animal Welfare	To set up a scheme for animal welfare on retirement as working animals.	Scheme established.	Chief Finance Officer	During the year	0.019
Tax Base	To iron out fluctuations caused between estimated and actual tax base data.	Every 3-4 years to finance Single Person Discount Review.	Chief Finance Officer	Annually	2.107
Night Time Levy	To be utilised to address Night Time economy issues of crime and safety.	To be determined by the Police & Crime Commissioner.	Chief Finance Officer & Commissioner	Annually	0.265
Target Hardening	To be utilised when activity has been identified and agreed with partners.	Once schemes have been approved.	Chief Finance Officer	Annually	0.073
Allard	Once legitimate claims are made and approved for payment	On receipt of claims.	Chief Finance Officer	During the year	0.200
TPAC Collisions	To provide for fluctuations in claims made against the Force.	On receipt of claims above the budgeted.	Chief Finance Officer	Annually	0.100
JCO – Jointly Controlled Operations	To provide for unexpected expenditure relating to regional collaboration.	Decisions relating to the use of this fund follow the regional governance arrangements.	EM meeting of the Commissioner's	Annually	1.054
TOTAL					20.864

Tables to show the use of General Reserves

	2020-21	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
	01.04.20 Balance £m	01.04.21 balance £m	Use in year £m	01.04.22 balance £m	Use in year £m	01.04.23 balance £m	Use in year £m	01.04.24 balance £m	Use in year £m	01.04.25 balance £m	Use in year £m
General Reserve	7.000	7.000	0	7.000	0	7.000	0	7.000	0	7.000	0
EMSOU general reserve	0.075	0.075		0.075		0.075		0.075		0.075	
<i>% of net budget</i>	3.2%	3.0%		3.0%		3.0%		2.9%		2.9%	

The policy in relation to General Reserves is that they will be no less than 2% of the Net Budget and no more than 5% of the net budget.

Tables to show the estimated use of Earmarked Reserves

	2020-21	2021-22			2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
<u>Earmarked Reserves</u>	01.04.20 Actual £m	01.04.21 balance £m	Use in year £m	31.03.22 balance £m	Use in year £m	31.03.23 balance £m	Use in year £m	31.03.24 balance £m	Use in year £m	31.03.25 balance £m	Use in year £m	31.03.26 balance £m
MTFP	0.000	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000
Asset Replacement	7.099	7.659	(5.106)	2.553	(0.203)	2.350		2.350		2.350		2.350
IT Investment	0.884	0.884		0.884		0.884		0.884		0.884		0.884
PCC Reserve	0.817	1.617		1.617		1.617		1.617		1.617		1.617
Grants & Commissioning	5.136	5.765	(0.829)	4.936	(0.300)	4.636		4.636		4.636		4.636
PFI	0.087	0.458	(0.330)	0.128		0.128		0.128		0.128		0.128
Property Act Fund	0.196	0.049		0.049		0.049		0.049		0.049		0.049
Drug Fund	0.027	0.027		0.027		0.027		0.027		0.027		0.027
Revenue Grants	1.698	1.698		1.698		1.698		1.698		1.698		1.698
Animal welfare	0.019	0.019		0.019		0.019		0.019		0.019		0.019
Tax Base	1.679	2.107		2.107		2.107		2.107		2.107		2.107
Night Time Levy	0.247	0.265	0.032	0.297	0.032	0.329	0.067	0.396	0.067	0.463	0.067	0.530
Target Hardening	0.073	0.073		0.073		0.073		0.073		0.073		0.073
Allard	1.200	0.200		0.200		0.200		0.200		0.200		0.200
TPAC Collisions	0.100	0.100		0.100		0.100		0.100		0.100		0.100
Joint Ops	1.054	1.054		1.054		1.054		1.054		1.054		1.054
TOTAL	20.316	21.975	(6.233)	15.742	(0.471)	15.271	0.067	15.338	0.067	15.405	0.067	15.472