



HEREFORD & WORCESTER  
**HWFR**  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



# Resource Review

January 2024



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**HWFR**  
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# Executive Summary

## What is a Resource Review?

A Resource Review examines the arrangement of a Fire and Rescue Service's operational response resources and considers how this can be improved. This Resource Review aims to ensure that Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) is making best use of its available resources, funding, and to assure the Fire Authority, stakeholders and the community that it is providing the most effective service possible across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

This review aligns with the core principles of the current [Community Risk Management Plan \(CRMP\) 2021-25](#) and the [Response Strategy 2021-25](#) where the Service said:

### CRMP Aim

- Provide a prompt, safe and effective response to fires and other emergencies.

### Our Objectives

- Review fire and emergency cover to ensure appropriate provision of resources and crewing arrangements.
- Continually monitor firefighter availability to ensure capacity and resilience across the Service area.

### Response Strategy

- The Service will review systems that monitor and maintain availability of staff and resources.
- The Service will ensure fire and emergency cover arrangements are appropriate to meet current and emerging risks.

The key challenges that this review aims to address are:

- To improve resilience in the busiest Wholetime fire engines and increase crewing levels.
- To improve the availability of all the remaining fire engines.
- To ensure that the On-Call firefighter duty system is more sustainable and affordable.
- To increase community engagement and capacity to deliver more Prevention activities.
- To explore new ways of working with On-Call staff.
- To improve the operational support for On-Call fire stations.
- To reduce the need for excessive overtime shifts to be worked on Wholetime fire stations.



# Executive Summary continued

## What is a Resource Review?

Analysis of data carried out in this review shows that maintaining all 41 current fire engines, with the resources to crew them fully, alongside the need to improve crewing and resilience on the first responding 25 fire engines is not affordable, necessary, or realistic.

The call volume or operational usage of some of the fire engines highlighted in this report is extremely low and could (as is often the case) readily be undertaken by another nearby fire engine. Whilst additional resources from across the Service are routinely used and have been redirected towards the Response (fire engine) functions to improve resilience in the long term this is not sustainable, and the reallocation of underutilised resources within the Response function is now considered necessary.

When considered alongside the challenges and sustainability of providing such a widescale On-Call crewing model 24/7 across all 31 of the dedicated On-Call fire engines, and five additional On-Call fire engines at night (when some of those fire engines have extremely low usage), it may be prudent to consider alternative ways of using some of those resources.

To address these issues, this review aims to:

- Increase Wholetime workforce numbers to improve resilience and provide more on duty firefighters 24/7.
- Release valuable resources currently being used to underpin the Wholetime duty system, to support more On-Call stations.
- Develop a new blended crewing model at two locations.
- Change the cover model of one other fire engine to widen the response area of potential On-Call staff.

- Provide alternative, more flexible ways of transporting additional firefighters to incidents at some locations.
- Focus on additional prevention activities in some areas.

**Please note the review does not propose closing any fire stations or removing any 'first' fire engines.**

Through examination of the data gathered from several sources, including the national Incident Recording System (IRS) and the On-Call and Wholetime availability system firefighters use to manage their working hours (Gartan), it is proposed that eight On-Call fire engines on stations with more than one fire engine could be removed from the Service with a change made to a ninth fire engine's cover model.

This would release the funding allocated to these eight fire engines to be utilised elsewhere in supporting and increasing the crewing levels of some of the remaining fire engines - in particular, some of the first 25 responding fire engines.

**£981,000**

Total Cost Savings

**£967,000**

Total Reinvestment

In determining the fire engines that could be removed or have a change to their cover model, the following key factors were considered, which are detailed in the main report:

- How often are these fire engines available?
- How many incidents a year in their own station area does each fire engine mobilise to, and how many times did the fire engine attend as the only fire engine?
- How long do they attend at each incident, and what do they do when they attend an incident as a second, third or fourth supporting fire engine?
- What would be the impact of removing the eight fire engines and changing the cover model on a ninth fire engine?
- Would it be reasonable and affordable to put the required resources into getting these fire engines crewed 100% of the time with the On-Call duty system, considering the challenges in recruiting On-Call staff to crew the first fire engines 100% of the time at most other locations?
- What is the Service's professional judgment regarding the balance of moving resources from the under-utilised second, third or fourth fire engines into the much busier 'first' fire engines?
- What impact will this have on members of the public calling 999?
- What are the savings associated with the options, and what will these savings be used for?

**It is therefore envisaged that this review will:**

- **Improve resilience in the Wholetime duty system, to release capacity to support the On-Call staff.**
- **Create a more sustainable On-Call duty workforce.**
- **Develop new ways of working.**
- **Optimise the use of the available On-Call staff.**
- **Increase the levels of Prevention activity in some areas.**



**Jonathon Pryce**

*Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive*

## Key Findings



Fire and Rescue Services routinely carry out reviews to make sure their resources are being effectively utilised and are in the right place, at the right time and at the right level, to tackle the most likely fire and rescue risks.

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) has conducted a review examining the balance of resources against their frequency of use across Herefordshire and Worcestershire on the fire stations with more than one fire engine, and the detailed findings are set out in this report.

Given the strategic locations of the Service's 25 fire stations and the importance of the first responding fire engine, there is no intention of closing any fire station or removing any of the first 25 fire engines at each station. Instead, the focus of the review has been on examining the response resources at the fire stations with more than one fire engine.

The review has found that there could be improvements in the use of the resources deployed to incidents by making some changes to how the current resources are allocated and used. The evidence and conclusions in this review are based on an analysis of incident data, and fire engine availability over the last three years combined with professional experience and judgement of the current challenges within the Fire sector.

The review found that:

- Eight fire engines could be removed from the Service and the reduction to night only fire cover for one On-Call fire engine without adversely affecting the ability to respond effectively to incidents across the two counties, and in those locations affected.
- The eight fire engines are currently crewed by On-Call firefighters, and subsequently there would need to be reductions in the size of On-Call units at the affected fire stations, with only one fire station removing its On-Call unit in its entirety.
- No fire station closures are proposed – all eight fire engines that could be removed are On-Call fire engines at fire stations with two or more fire engines, no fire station with a single fire engine is affected.
- The nine fire engines identified currently have very low usage operationally and are the least available at their fire stations.
- Resources released as a result of removing the eight fire engines and changes to one other fire engine would be made available to be reinvested/reallocated to improve response capabilities in the affected locations.



The reinvestment of savings generated would result in:

- The provision of additional Wholetime firefighter posts on certain Wholetime stations improving resilience and crewing levels for some first fire engines, resulting in six of the first eight Wholetime fire engines having a larger Watch size (alongside proposed day crewing changes in 2024).
- The provision of a contingent of Wholetime firefighters on two On-Call fire stations.
- The release of some existing (non-fire station-based staff) capacity currently used on Wholetime fire stations for approximately 3,357 hours each year (373 shifts), for use on On-Call fire stations or in their primary prevention, protection or response roles.
- Increased capacity to undertake more prevention engagement with members of the community, and potentially more local engagement focusing on signposting to Fire Safety.
- The provision of alternative vehicles to assist in transporting available On-Call firefighters to incidents at those affected locations.
- Alleviation of ongoing difficulties in recruiting On-Call staff in those areas.
- Greater resilience on a daily basis for On-Call fire stations ensuring that the resources we have are used in the most effective and efficient way.
- New ways of working for the On-Call duty system at eight locations and provision of a more sustainable and efficient On-Call duty system.



# Key Findings continued

## Headline Figures

The first 25 fire engines are the most important fire engines to have available. All 25 fire stations will continue to have a first responding fire engine.

### Analysis in this review shows:

The **nine fire engines affected** are **not used sufficiently well** and are **unavailable for 68% of the time** on average.

The **eight fire engines to be removed** attended an average **annual total of 410 incidents** of the total 7,366 attended by the whole Service (**5.57% of incidents**).

Of the 410 incidents attended, **only 29 were attended as the first or only fire engine** when no other fire engine was available on the station. This equates to **less than 4 incidents per fire engine per year** on average.

The **eight fire engines** were **not required to support** the operational response at **almost half of the average 410 incidents** attended per year (**47.59%**).

If the **fire engines were removed**, by **sending an alternative** fire engine from another fire station there would have been a **slight increase in attendance times** of an average **6 minutes 18 seconds** at just **29 of 7,366 incidents** attended on average each year (**0.38%**).

The **cost per year** associated with **retaining the eight fire engines** is **£881,000**.

### Reinvesting the resources could:

Add up to an **additional 18 Wholetime firefighters** at both **Wholetime and On-Call locations**. This would **improve the crewing levels** to many **thousands of incidents** a year and deliver **more community engagement** in prevention in some areas.

Provide **additional four-wheel drive vehicles** at some of the affected locations. This would allow any additional available **On-Call firefighters to support** the first attending fire engines.

**Maintain the fire engine at one location** to provide night only cover with a **wider area of On-Call cover** allowing a **slightly longer time for firefighters to attend** the station.



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**Note: Some Figures use three-year average values. This can lead to small discrepancies between the sum of these averages and the total due to rounding up/down.**

Please see the accompanying Data Pack for more information on the Figures.

# Introduction



Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) has conducted a review of operational resources across Herefordshire and Worcestershire focusing on fire stations with more than one fire engine, and considered how these resources might be used differently to make better use of available funding. The detailed findings are set out in this report.

It is important that the Service utilises all the available resources efficiently and ensures that best use is being made of all assets and employed staff. This review has been conducted to evaluate whether the reallocation of some of its existing resources within the Response Directorate would provide a more effective and efficient service to local communities across all three main Service functions – Response, Protection and Prevention.

Fire and Rescue Services routinely carry out reviews to make sure their resources are being fully utilised. It is a key element of strategic planning and is highlighted as a key objective in the Fire Authority's [Community Risk Management Plan \(CRMP\) 2021-25](#). The CRMP shows how the interrelated functions of Response, Protection and Prevention are organised and how work in these areas will be supported to ensure the Service:

- **Maintains resilience,**
- **Delivers value for money, and**
- **Supports our workforce.**

The CRMP includes the following objective in relation to the emergency response function.

- We will provide a prompt, safe and effective response to fires and other emergencies and to do this:
  - We will continually review fire and emergency cover to ensure appropriate provision of resources and crewing arrangements; and
  - We will continually monitor firefighter availability to ensure capacity and resilience across the Service area.

This is further expanded upon in the Service's [Response Strategy 2021-25](#), which states:

- The core foundations in delivering this (Response) strategy are; Availability, Competence and Intelligence.

This review focusses on delivering better overall availability of resources and within the Response Strategy it states:

- We will review systems that monitor and maintain availability of staff and resources; and
- We will ensure our fire and emergency cover arrangements are appropriate to meet current and emerging risks.

This review considers whether these objectives can be fulfilled in a more efficient and effective manner whilst maintaining our commitment to local communities. It does not examine all the operational resources available and does not seek to overhaul or reform the entire Response function, which in many parts works extremely well. The main purpose of this review is to examine how the following objectives can be addressed:

- **To improve resilience in the busiest Wholetime fire engines and increase overall crewing levels.**
- **To improve the availability of all the remaining fire engines.**
- **To ensure that the On-Call firefighter duty system is more sustainable and affordable.**
- **To explore new ways of working with On-Call staff.**
- **To improve the operational support for On-Call fire stations.**
- **To reduce the need for excessive overtime shifts to be worked on Wholetime fire stations.**
- **To increase the levels of Prevention activity in some areas.**



# Introduction continued

## Current arrangement of operational resources

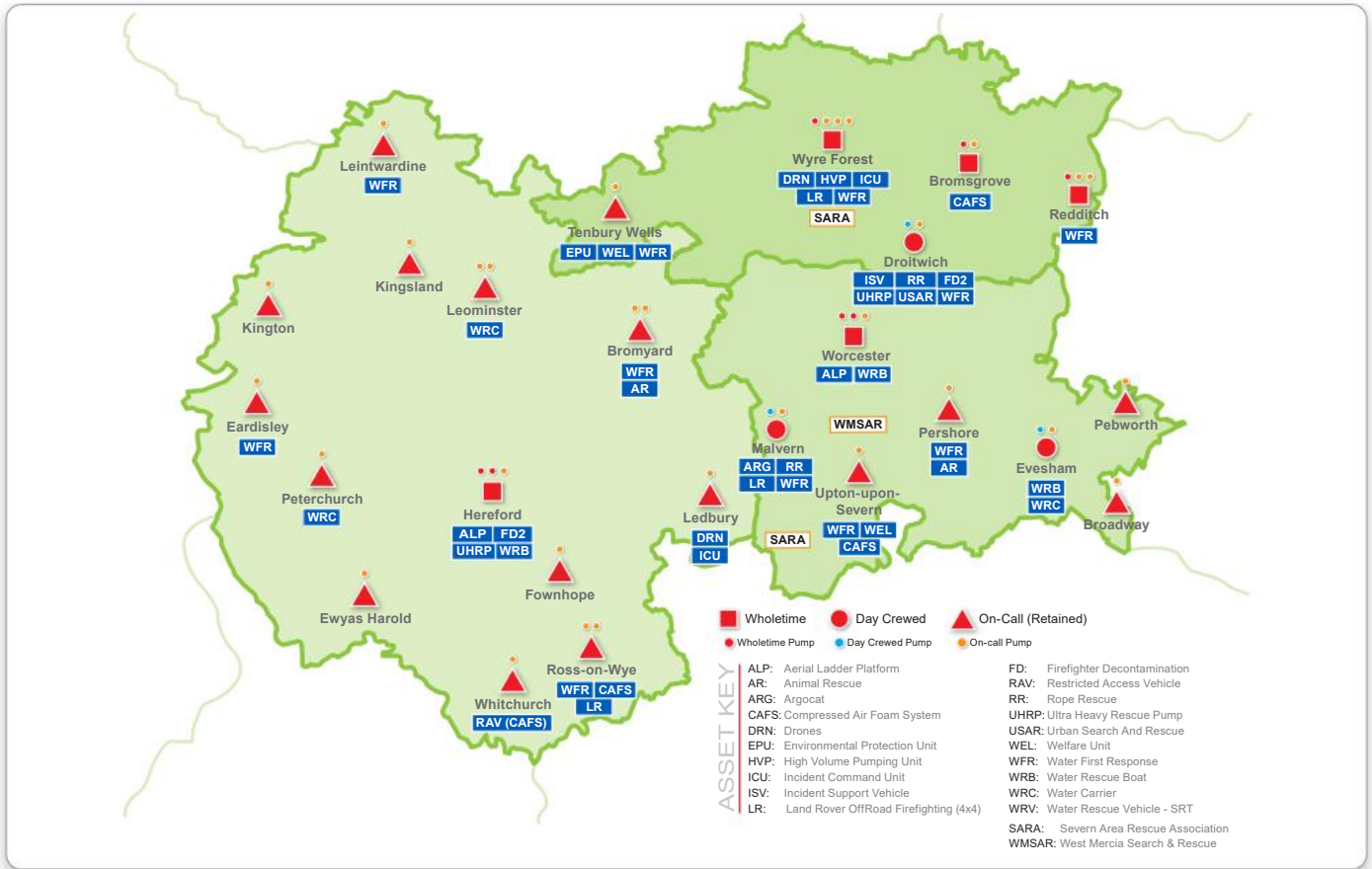


Figure 1: Location of HWFRS fire stations and the resources currently based there.

HWFRS provides fire and rescue services across a very large, mostly rural area. Most of the 790,700 residents live in the built-up areas of the two cities of Hereford and Worcester and several large towns, while around 42% of the total population live in smaller rural settlements across the two counties. Operational activity levels are relatively low compared to other Fire and Rescue Services nationally, and the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire tend to have a balanced and even spread of risk, rather than large or specific areas of high risk and operational demand.

The Service has 25 fire stations strategically located across the two counties (shown in Figure 1) providing emergency response services for our communities. There are currently 41 fire engines based at these locations, crewed by a mixture of 153 Wholetime firefighters and 361 On-Call firefighters.

Wholetime firefighters are those whose main employment is with the Service, and they work various shift types, averaging a 42-hour working week. They are deemed to be immediately available to respond to an emergency when mobilised by Fire Control (allowing up to around 90 seconds deployment time to put on their fire kit and mobilise the fire engine).

There are three types of Wholetime firefighting shift patterns used in HWFRS. These are known as:



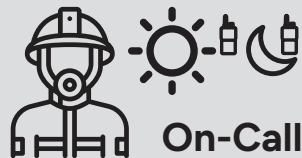
The 2,2,4 Shift pattern (on duty on a fire station for two-day shifts, two-night shifts and four days off duty) requires four Watches to provide an on duty immediately available crew 24/7 365 days per year.



The Day-Crewing shift pattern uses two shifts, known as Watches, who work on the fire station during the day and are On-Call at night.



The 12-hour Shift uses Wholetime firefighters who work a 12-hour day shift, with no night shifts (at night the fire engine is covered by a different group of staff who are working the On-Call system on that station).












































On-Call firefighters are those who live or work within five minutes of their fire station and usually have alternative employment away from the Service (although some are also employed elsewhere in HWFRS). They carry an 'alerter' (like a pager) which activates when they are required to respond to an emergency call for HWFRS. On-Call firefighters are allowed a small period of time for them to travel to the fire station and put on their fire kit, enabling the fire engine to deploy in up to six minutes from the time they are alerted by Fire Control.

The Service currently deploys its 41 fire engines across the 25 fire stations in different ways. All 25 of the Service's fire stations have at least one fire engine that is crewed by On-Call firefighters. Of these, the 17 fire stations in the more rural areas of the two counties are solely crewed by On-Call firefighters. The eight fire stations in the two cities and larger towns are the busiest and currently have a mix of fire engines crewed by both Wholetime and On-Call firefighters; where the Wholetime fire engine would normally be the first to be deployed in the event of an emergency call.

## Introduction continued

A total of 31 fire engines are crewed solely by On-Call firefighters across the 25 locations, with five other fire engines crewed by Wholetime firefighters during the day and crewed at night by On-Call staff.

Station	2, 2, 4	Day	12-hour	On-Call	
Station	Total	Shift	Crewed	Shift	On-Call
Worcester	3				
Wyre Forest	4				  
Bromsgrove	2				
Droitwich	2				
Redditch	3				 
Evesham	2				
Pebworth	1				
Broadway	1				
Pershore	1				
Upton	1				
Malvern	2				
Ledbury	1				
Fownhope	1				
Ross-on-Wye	2				 
Whitchurch	1				
Hereford	3				
Ewyas Harold	1				
Eardisley	1				
Kington	1				
Leintwardine	1				
Kingsland	1				
Leominster	2				 
Tenbury	1				
Bromyard	2				 
Peterchurch	1				
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>31</b>

As the table shows, eleven fire stations have two or more fire engines. The reason for this is largely historic (going back over many decades) and based on a legacy outdated methodology.

Not all fire engines are used equally, for a variety of reasons which were explored in this review. What is clear from the latest data analysis and the Service's professional experience is that the first responding fire engines are the most important, and the most utilised assets at each location.

The second, third or fourth fire engines on a fire station are least utilised and can often have challenges with staffing levels, essential skills, and availability. Fire engines in the cities and larger towns are generally busier than those in the smaller, less populated areas as can be seen from the tables in the Data Pack that accompanies this Review.

The challenge in HWFRS is to ensure the right resources are available in the busier urban areas to respond where the majority of calls occur and where the resources are utilised most, against the need to provide effective operational cover over a wide geographic area where calls are much less frequent but still require a prompt Fire and Rescue Service response, which is unaffected by this review.

While some of the 14 fire stations with one fire engine have relatively lower usage, some extremely low, they help to ensure that response services are normally available across a wide geographic area and therefore would require a much wider and more complex risk based cover review. A table of the average number of incidents attended by all 41 fire engines is included in the Data Pack.



**Across our 25 locations, the 25 first crewed fire engines can normally ensure that virtually all parts of the two counties can receive a fire engine within around twenty minutes, even in the most rural areas, with most built up areas receiving a fire engine much more quickly.**

The more densely populated cities and towns are usually able to receive a fire engine much more quickly than twenty minutes, with most calls occurring within 10 minutes of our fire stations. Since the Attendance Performance Measure (APM) was introduced on 1st April 2023, figures show that 71% of all incidents attended are within the 10-minute Time Response Area. The APM compares how quickly the first fire engine attends the most urgent incidents with the time it is expected to take, depending on where the incident is located relevant to the nearest fire station. Figure 2 below shows the three response areas used to measure response times.

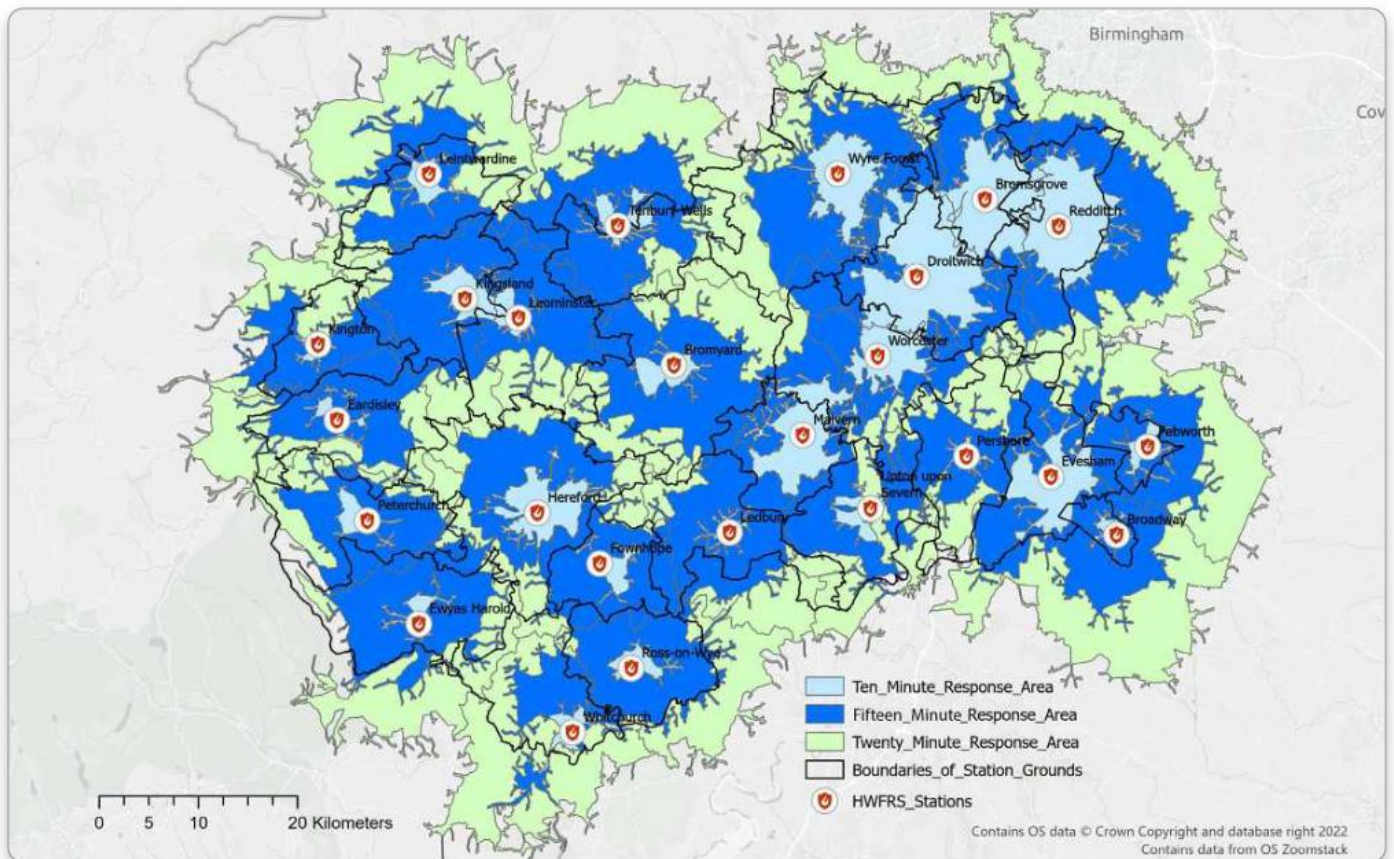


Figure 2: Existing time zones from each fire station used in the Attendance Performance Measure (APM).

## Introduction continued

**At no point in this review has it been proposed to close any of the 25 fire stations or reduce the crewing or emergency cover of the first fire engine, at any of the 25 locations.**

Given their strategic locations and the importance of the first responding fire engine, this review has not considered closing any fire station or removing any of the first 25 fire engines at each station. In fact, **the proposals in this review will make improvements to crewing levels, availability and resilience on the first responding 25 fire engines.**



### Focus of the review

The review has solely focused on the allocation of resources within the Response arena and **supports the Service's [Response Strategy 2021-25](#), which highlights seeking high levels of fire engine 'availability' as a core principle.**

It has focused on the resources located at the 11 fire stations that have more than one fire engine. This is because an examination of available data, usage and performance strongly indicates that there is scope for changing how these resources are allocated and used. The review has considered where the current On-Call second, third or fourth fire engine is used less frequently, and where it has been identified that this resource could be better used by supplementing or improving crewing on other fire engines that respond much more often to emergencies.

The analysis set out in the review has identified that eight On-Call fire engines could be removed and one other fire engine on the On-Call cover model could be changed. This could realise potential reinvestment to improve resilience and crewing levels in front line services, and lead to an increase in the amount of prevention work undertaken in some of the affected areas, which are among the most effective ways of indirectly saving lives and protecting property.

The analysis also considered what the impact would be on the other fire stations if eight fire engines were removed, and one cover model was changed.

To support the decision-making process, the review also includes a summary of the estimated overall costs of maintaining the nine affected fire engines in the current format, and then examines the benefits and costs of any proposed reinvestment options.



As the proposal does not close any fire stations and as the reinvestment options are designed to improve availability, especially in the daytime at several On-Call fire stations, a reduction in how quickly the first fire engine will reach an address in the eight affected areas is not expected. In some cases, the response of the first available fire engine may be faster.

The eight fire stations where the On-Call second, third or fourth fire engines are proposed for removal are at: Wyre Forest, Worcester, Hereford, Redditch, Droitwich, Malvern, Leominster and Bromyard. There would also be a cover change to the third fire engine at Wyre Forest. The fire engines in the other three locations (Evesham, Bromsgrove and Ross-on Wye) have been excluded at this time due to their usage, location and availability; however, they could be part of a future review should the proposals in this review be accepted.

Future reviews and the next CRMP will consider other aspects of operational fire and emergency cover and risk.

**It is therefore envisaged that the outcomes of this review will:**

- **Improve resilience in the Wholetime duty system, to release capacity to support the On-Call staff.**
- **Create a more sustainable On-Call duty workforce.**
- **Develop new ways of working.**
- **Optimise the use of the available On-Call staff.**
- **Increase the levels of Prevention activity in some areas.**





## Challenges to be addressed

The review aims to address a number of challenges facing the Service. The main issues are listed below, and they are developed further in the review:

- To improve the resilience in the busiest first fire engines and where possible increase crewing levels.
- To improve the overall availability of the remaining fire engines.
- To ensure that the On-Call firefighter duty system is more sustainable and affordable.
- To increase community engagement and capacity to deliver more Prevention activities.
- To explore new ways of working with On-Call staff.
- To improve the operational support for On-Call fire stations.
- To reduce the need for excessive overtime shifts to be worked on Wholetime fire stations.

### Financial Considerations

Due to a number of changes within the On-Call duty system (as detailed), the Service estimates it would require over 20% more employed On-Call staff if it were to try to keep all the current On-Call fire engines available 100% of the time. This is due mainly to On-Call firefighters generally now only being able to provide smaller amounts of operational On-Call cover, thus requiring more employed people working less hours, to provide a crew over a 24/7 period than it used to. This makes the current model unsustainable.

The Service does not have the budget to achieve this. It would cost an estimated additional £1.2 million in On-Call salaries per annum alone, which would be an unsustainable increase on the current budget and medium-term financial plan (MTFP).

In 2014 the Service underwent some significant, severe and challenging budgetary reductions, the effect of which is still very much felt today with a reduction of two On-Call fire engines and much lower numbers of full time operational and support staff employed.

These legacy front line budgetary reductions reduced the crew sizes on all the Wholetime fire engines and removed virtually all resilience to routine Wholetime crewing and Wholetime support for On-Call fire stations.

This has had a long-term organisational impact and has resulted in a significant increase in the use of overtime shifts for Wholetime and On-Call staff to a point now that it has become inefficient and difficult to manage effectively.

**The Service now also relies too heavily on the use of the non-fire station based operational day-duty staff who provided 373 shifts (approx. 3,357 hours) last year (April 2022 – March 2023) away from their primary prevention, protection, training and departmental roles, and the use of overtime payments to crew wholetime fire engines.** These staff are now crucial to maintaining Wholetime first responding fire engines, because of the lack of immediately available resilience in the current system.

In plain terms, this means that the Service now has an inefficient staffing model and cannot afford its current operational resourcing model if it aims to have all the current fire engines fully available.

The proposal will reduce the need for these day-duty specialist staff to crew Wholetime fire engines and increase capacity in their day job, enabling them to carry out more of their specialist roles in prevention, protection, and training activity (for example). These staff could then offer additional cover on the On-Call fire stations, rather than Wholetime fire stations, where they can complete their departmental work. The overtime budget would also be reduced, and the savings made could be used for employing more staff to crew fire engines more resiliently.

This review strongly indicates that the reallocation of the identified resources into increasing Wholetime firefighter numbers to improve both the number of firefighters on the busier Wholetime fire engines, and the availability of first fire engines at several On-Call fire stations is a viable proposal for consideration.

Although not without a slight negative impact on the attendance times of some supporting fire engines at a very small number of incidents per year, where these fire engines



are currently the first fire engine to attend (less than four incidents on average per fire engine per year), this proposal will increase overall resilience and, importantly, improve the Response and Prevention capability of the Service, and appears to be a more sustainable model and better use of available resources.

**Unless there is an unforeseen acute budgetary shortfall in the near future, this review will not result in 'cuts' to front line services, all the resources realised will be reinvested in front line fire engine staff.**

The rest of the review considers the challenges facing availability, resilience and On-Call recruitment. It then considers a proposed solution, which outlines estimated savings and how they can be reinvested to address the challenges posed.

# The Review

## Review Methodology

Following an initial review of all multi fire engine locations, eight fire stations with two or more fire engines have been identified for change in this analysis, based upon incident volume and availability data from the last three financial years (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2023). The data has been analysed to provide an accurate picture of how the Service's resources have been used historically.

The tables in this Review summarise an analysis of the data. For completeness an additional Data Pack has been produced to provide the detail behind these summary tables.

### Review methodology

The first step was to look at how many incidents each On-Call fire engine attended, whether they were inside their own station ground or not and how many times that fire engine was used at an incident in its own area, and how often it was the first fire engine to an emergency incident. The review also looked over the three-year period at what those incidents actually were, and what role these fire engines may have had in those incidents.

Next, each incident was analysed to assess which fire engine could have attended instead based on the resources available for that incident. Mapping software was used to calculate the new journey time to give an indication of the difference in travel time.

Analysis was also undertaken of On-Call staff availability and how often a fire engine was not able to attend an incident due to a lack of available staff. Where there are not enough firefighters available at the fire station within five minutes of being alerted (or if there are insufficient skills available), the fire engine becomes unavailable to mobilise to any incident.

The Service currently requires a minimum number of four firefighters on each fire engine to perform specific tasks when they arrive at an incident. As a minimum this is a driver, an officer-in-charge and two breathing apparatus wearers/suitably skilled firefighters.

Some Fire and Rescue Services do mobilise some fire engines to certain incident types with less than four suitably qualified

firefighters. This is not a system that HWFRS officers currently recommend exploring for HWFRS at this time, and this system usually still requires the next nearest, fully crewed fire engine to also be deployed anyway. However, should the proposed review not be accepted, then a reduced crewing model based on less than four firefighters would need to be explored to improve the availability of the current response model of 41 fire engines.

On-Call fire engine availability changes throughout the day and night as firefighters become available, or not, to provide a minimum crew, which is why an On-Call fire station with one fire engine may contract around 10 to 14 members of staff to be able to provide a minimum crewing level of four at any given time.

The second fire engines at Evesham, Bromsgrove and Ross-on-Wye fire stations have not been identified for removal as the initial analysis recognised that these stations had relatively higher levels of operational calls, or offer geographical resilience, and following the assessment of the criteria outlined above have been excluded. The Data Pack includes tables of all 41 fire engines showing details of availability, incidents attended and usage at the incident for these fire engines.

**It is important to reiterate that this review does not propose the closure of any of the 25 fire stations or reductions to any of the 25 first crewed fire engines. In fact, some of the 25 first fire engines would receive increased crewing levels and resilience.**



# The Review

## Availability and Usage

As can be seen in the Data Pack, very few of the On-Call fire engines have 100% availability all of the time. However, the Service's ambition is for all fire engines to be available as close to 100% of the time as possible, which it does not believe is possible with the current number of On-Call fire engines as is explored elsewhere in this review. A key point to also note in regard to availability is that the Service attends 68% more incidents in the daytime than it does at night.

When a fire engine is not available for any reason the next nearest fire engine is sent and this is normal operating practice especially when a fire engine is deployed and another incident in that area occurs. Another reason that can cause a fire engine to be unavailable is when there are not enough appropriately qualified firefighters available to form a crew. This is especially a more acute issue when On-Call firefighters are not available, rather than Wholetime firefighters who are on duty shifts.

**Over the last 12 months on an average day, HWFRS routinely has at least four On-Call fire engines not available during the day (0700-1900) and nine On-Call fire engines not available over night (1900-0700), due to a lack of a qualified crew** (note: there are five more fire engines on the On-Call model at night than during the day, thus it is often likely to have more fire engines unavailable at night than during the day).

The lower daytime average figure of four fire engines not available is distorted as some day-duty operational full time employed staff will work out of On-Call locations to improve crewing if possible. If this were not the case, then the daytime number of unavailable fire engines would certainly be much higher.

During the daytime, due to the challenges of calling in On-Call staff who often need to be released from their primary employment during these periods, the number of On-Call fire engines unavailable can be as many as 17 at extreme periods.



# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage



The routinely unpredictable and varying nature of the current widespread On-Call system of over 31 fire engines during the day and 36 at night, makes it challenging to plan and maintain operational On-Call cover, and provides varying and inconsistent levels of service to the community. The Fire Authority is often not the primary employer of On-Call staff, and they are reliant on their employer to allow them to respond from their workplace.

With a regular number of fire engines being routinely unavailable during the day and night and with these calls being attended by other available nearby fire engines, it would suggest that as a baseline the Service can already effectively operate with fewer fire engines than it currently has.

The proposal to remove the eight fire engines would enable the reallocation of those resources with a weighting more to daytime cover improvements based upon likely usage (68% more calls), although improvements will also be made to night-time cover. Additionally, response times are usually faster at night-time due to the roads being less busy. This also addresses the acute challenges of recruiting On-Call firefighters during the day to some extent at some locations.

### How often are the affected fire engines available?

The eight fire engines proposed in this review for removal currently have very low average availability and so attend a lower number of incidents. Over the 12-months examined (01/04/2022 to 31/03/2023) this has meant these fire engines have provided cover for *an average* of only 31.99% of the time (see Figure 3). It must be made clear that these fire engines are not solely being identified for removal for low availability, although it is one of the considerations.

The most important factor in this part of the review is that even if these fire engines were all available 100% of the time, they still would only be used at operational incidents for a very small proportion of the Service's overall operational activity, and the same question about the effective use of resources would be valid.

The low availability for each fire engine (detailed in Figure 3) is split for the daytime (0700-1900hrs) and night-time (1900-0700hrs) periods to show the difference in availability and the difficulty in maintaining cover, especially during the day.

It should be noted that availability for these fire engines was much better during the COVID-19 period, when people were not allowed to go out or had to work from home; thus, the averaged data from this period should show a slightly higher level of availability than may be reflected post-COVID-19.

The average availability for each of the eight fire engines ranges from 12.77% to 91.55% across the last three years (see Data Pack for more information). The decline in availability can be seen using the figures for Hereford’s third fire engine as an example; in 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 the overall availability was 91.55%, 68.32% and 30.82% respectively. The restrictions that were enforced during COVID-19 meant that staff were more likely to be closer to the fire station and able to provide greater cover. Since the return to normality these levels of cover have dropped. For that reason, the data has only been provided data based on the 12-months between April 2022 – March 2023 in Figure 3.

Station	Fire Engine	Fire engine average availability during the day	Fire engine average availability during the night
Wyre Forest	4th Fire Engine	29.56%	37.63%
Redditch	3rd Fire Engine	2.74%	21.25%
Bromyard	2nd Fire Engine	15.46%	49.38%
Malvern	2nd Fire Engine	30.86%	17.76%
Leominster	2nd Fire Engine	11.87%	35.86%
Hereford	3rd Fire Engine	47.83%	16.42%
Droitwich	2nd Fire Engine	38.93%	44.15%
Worcester	3rd Fire Engine	79.89%	32.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>All eight Fire Engines</b>	<b>32.14%</b>	<b>31.85%</b>
Wyre Forest	3rd Fire Engine	7.08%	4.92%

Figure 3: Average availability of fire engines by day and night between 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

The data indicates that the impact of removing or adjusting the cover model of these fire engines will be low as, on average, they already only provide cover for less than a third of the time – 32.14% availability during the day and 31.85% availability at night.

The proposal to provide an additional four-wheel drive vehicle at most of the affected locations would mean that in instances where the fire engine(s) at that station is sent to an incident with a crew of four, five or six, but there are still additional available On-Call firefighters who arrive at the station, these additional available firefighters

could travel to that incident in the four-wheel drive vehicle to supplement and support the crew if required at certain incident types.

However, the overall staffing levels would also be reduced to meet the needs of the On-Call unit that would have less fire engines, rather than maintaining staffing at current levels where this would be above the requirements for the remaining fire engine(s). Despite this, due to the flexible nature of the On-Call model there can be times during a week when there may be more firefighters available than needed.



# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage

**How many incidents a year in their own station area does each of these affected fire engines mobilise to, and how many times did these fire engines attend as the only or first fire engine when there was no other fire engine available at their fire station?**

Over the last year the Service has attended, on average, 7,366 incidents (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023), a total of 22,099 over the past three years.

Figure 4, on the next page, shows that the annual average number of incidents attended, across the entire Service area by all eight of the fire engines proposed for removal was 410 incidents (5.57% of the total 7,366 annual average for the whole Service).

Of the overall 410 incidents per year, the eight fire engines proposed for removal attended 325 incidents in their own station areas, or an average of 41 per fire engine per year, see Figure 4.

This ranges across the eight fire engines individually from 0.31% to 1.14% of all incidents attended across the Service area, and these are the lowest number of incidents attended for any of the second, third or fourth fire engines in the Service.

As a comparator to the information shown in Figure 4, the busiest single fire engine (Wyre Forest fire station's first crewed fire engine) attended on average 1,025 incidents which equates to 13.91% of overall activity.

The data shows that over the same period, the eight fire engines attended 220 incidents (of the 410 overall incidents) on average each year, as the first or only fire engine (2.99% of all incidents), and on average, 190 incidents as a supporting fire engine (2.57% of all incidents).

**However further detailed analysis of the 220 incidents per year where the eight fire engines attended as the first or the only fire engine to arrive, shows that on average only 29 of these incidents were emergency response incidents where one of the eight fire engines were the only fire engine available at their fire station to attend (0.38% of incidents per year). It should also be noted that when these fire engines are not available (on average 68% of the time), these calls are covered by the next nearest fire engine.**



In other words, whilst the data shows 220 incidents where it may appear the fire engine was the first fire engine to attend, a further detailed analysis showed that for 192 of the 220 incidents, that the eight fire engines attended, there was another fire engine available at the fire station or in the area that could have attended instead, and/or where the incident did not require an emergency response or the incident was not in their area. An example is where the 'first crew' took the second fire engine as a vehicle of choice, rather than the second fire engine being

required. This can occur for many reasons, for example based on equipment difference on each fire engine.

Therefore, the overall figure of attending an emergency response incident in their station area is an average of 29 incidents per year, across eight fire engines, giving an average of less than four emergency response incidents per year, per fire engine where those fire engines attend as the first or only fire engine.

Station	Fire Engine	Average number of incidents attended per year	Average number inside own station ground	Average number outside own station ground	Average number of incidents attended as first or only fire engine	Average number of incidents attended as supporting fire engine	No. of attendances as % of all incidents
Wyre Forest	4th Fire Engine	23	22	1	10	13	0.31%
Redditch	3rd Fire Engine	31	28	3	17	14	0.42%
Bromyard	2nd Fire Engine	37	29	8	21	16	0.51%
Malvern	2nd Fire Engine	44	34	9	19	24	0.59%
Leominster	2nd Fire Engine	45	35	10	33	11	0.61%
Hereford	3rd Fire Engine	70	61	9	30	39	0.95%
Droitwich	2nd Fire Engine	77	46	31	50	26	1.04%
Worcester	3rd Fire Engine	84	70	14	40	44	1.14%
<b>Total</b>		<b>410</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>5.57%</b>
Wyre Forest	3rd Fire Engine	25	25	0	12	13	0.34%

Figure 4: Annual average number of incidents each On-Call fire engine attended between 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2023. (Wyre Forest 3rd Fire Engine figure included to provide comparison and information for a change in its cover model).

# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage

This means that on average each of the eight fire engines only attends less than four incidents per year where there was no other fire engine available at their station as shown in Figure 5, below:

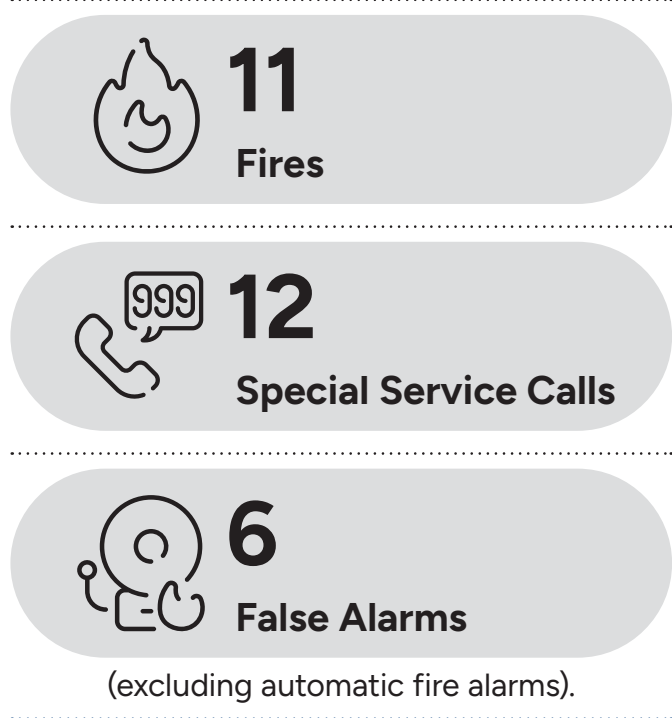
Station	Fire Engine	Average number of incidents attended when no other fire engine was available to attend
Wyre Forest	4th Fire Engine	1
Redditch	3rd Fire Engine	1
Bromyard	2nd Fire Engine	No instances, always another fire engine available
Malvern	2nd Fire Engine	7
Leominster	2nd Fire Engine	No instances, always another fire engine available
Hereford	3rd Fire Engine	6
Droitwich	2nd Fire Engine	4
Worcester	3rd Fire Engine	10
<b>Total Average</b>		<b>29</b>
Wyre Forest	3rd Fire Engine	3

Figure 5: The annual average number of incidents attended by each fire engine as the first or only fire engine following the further analysis.

If the above fire engines were available more of the time, then it is reasonable to assume they may be mobilised to more incidents, however the overall number of average emergency incidents would be proportionally a very small number of overall incidents, and would still not necessarily reflect an efficient use of the resources allocated to maintaining these fire engines. Additionally, when these fire engines are not available, these incidents are being routinely responded to by the next nearest fire engine, usually in a supporting role to the first available fire engine.

**This means the removal of these eight fire engines would have negatively affected the response times, on average, to 29 of the 220 incidents each year that the fire engines attended as the first or only fire engine. This equates to an average of less than four per affected fire engine per year.**

Further detailed analysis shows that of the average 29 incidents the eight fire engines attended annually, they were classified as follows;





*Note; A [Special Service](#) incident is a non-fire incident that can include road traffic collisions, rescues of persons, flooding, chemical spills and assisting other agencies. False Alarms include both Malicious and Good Intent False Alarms.*

Given the costs associated with maintaining these eight fire engines, which are not available for 68% of the time and only attend on average 29 emergency incidents as a first or only fire engine each year, it does not appear to offer value for money. The estimated costs of currently around £880,000 per year for such a relatively very small, and often unavailable response capability, that is so infrequently utilised.

### **How long do the affected fire engines attend at each incident, and what do they do when they attend an incident as a second, third or fourth supporting fire engine?**

It is important to consider how much time is spent at incidents by each of the fire engines to understand whether they were used, and how much impact their attendance has on the resolution of those incidents. The longer the average time spent at incidents indicates they would most likely have contributed more towards resolving the incidents attended.

For the purposes of this review, the parameter used was that for any incident where a fire engine was in attendance for less than 20 minutes, it was determined that it was not used in any meaningful way at that incident. If the incident data showed a fire engine was at the incident for longer than 20 minutes, this review has assumed that it would normally be utilised in some way at the incident.

Whilst the fire engine may have been mobilised to support as part of a set Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA) for the incident type as a precaution, once the first fire engine was in attendance, the supporting fire engine is often not needed to undertake any significant or meaningful activity.

This means that other fire engines arriving faster are dealing with, or have dealt with, the incident (or the incident did not require the level of resources mobilised through the PDA) before these fire engines arrive between 30% to 60% of the time, as shown in Figure 6 on the next page.

As these are average times, this does not mean that they spent a large amount of time at all, or even, most incidents. For example, in 2021 the Service attended and dealt with two separate large incidents both of which spanned several days. Both incidents required the repeat attendance of fire engines over the total length of the incident being resolved, so the attendance at these two incidents distorts the end figure. Therefore, when looking at the average amount of time the fire engines spend at an incident, the times have been separated into two columns to understand the average time spent at more regular routine incidents where the fire engine forms part of the initial response, and where it forms part of a larger response. Where it has been mobilised as part of a larger response for a 'make up' it should be noted that this role can readily be filled by another available fire engine, should that one no longer be in service.

# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage

Note: PDA stands for Pre-Determined Attendance. It is a pre-arranged number of resources the Service mobilises to an incident. For example, the PDA to a fire in the open is one fire engine, as the incident is classified as lower risk. For a house fire with people trapped, however, the Service will send three fire engines and an officer due to the higher risks involved and the tasks that may need to be undertaken by the first attending crews. Normally, the first fire engine will undertake the most risk critical activities and assess whether there is a need for additional fire engines and resources. A 'Make Up' is a type of message used by the Service when the crews already attending an incident require additional resources. These additional resources can come from any fire station and are normally sent in the nearest first order. All fire engines can be part of the additional resource requested as part of a 'make up', so on the occasions where these fire engines were not available an alternative fire engine would be selected.

Station	Fire Engine	Average number of annual incidents attended	Average time spent at the incident when forming part of the initial response	Average time spent at the incident when they were the first or only in attendance for the 29 incidents	Average time spent at the incident when forming part of a 'Make Up'	% of times not used at all incidents (attended an incident for less than 20 minutes)
Wyre Forest	4th Fire Engine	23	00:29:29	01:03:51	01:15:25	50.54%
Redditch	3rd Fire Engine	31	00:33:09	00:46:13	00:44:09	58.81%
Bromyard	2nd Fire Engine	37	00:41:30	No Data	02:50:39	30.08%
Malvern	2nd Fire Engine	44	00:38:16	00:30:26	02:28:38	46.61%
Leominster	2nd Fire Engine	45	00:43:52	No Data	01:42:05	55.97%
Hereford	3rd Fire Engine	70	00:31:55	00:42:31	01:57:43	42.59%
Droitwich	2nd Fire Engine	77	00:44:48	00:37:56	02:35:25	46.14%
Worcester	3rd Fire Engine	84	00:33:46	00:30:49	02:41:46	52.16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>All Fire Engines</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>00:37:54</b>	<b>00:35:49</b>	<b>02:07:00</b>	<b>47.59%</b>
Wyre Forest	3rd Fire Engine	25	00:29:42	00:38:45	02:09:17	53.18%

Figure 6: Amount of time on average that each fire engine spent at the incidents it attended as well as the percentage of how often that fire engine was not used at the incidents, based on the amount of time it spent at the incident. Information provided is annual averages based on data from the three-year period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2023.

Looking at the “Average time spent at the incident when forming part of the initial response” column, it shows that the eight fire engines were, on average, in attendance for less than 40 minutes at an incident where they formed part of the PDA, whereas the final column shows how many incidents the fire engine was not used, as a percentage. **This indicates that the eight fire engines were not required to support the operational response at almost half the incidents they attended as they are not used on average 47.59% of the time (Figure 6).**

The fifth column, ‘Average time spent at the incident when they were the first or only in attendance’ shows the average amount of time the eight fire engines spent at the average 29 incidents per year, where they were the first or only fire engine to attend. Where there are gaps in the times, this is because for these two fire engines there was always an alternative fire engine at their station that could have attended and did not attend one of the 29 incidents.

For larger incidents, it is the actual firefighters that are required to provide support or relief for crews dealing with the emergency and not the large numbers of fire engines carrying equipment. The image below (Figure 7) serves as an example. The image shows 10 fire engines at a large incident, seven of which are not in use at the incident except to bring firefighters from various locations to the scene, while the other three are pumping water for firefighting. If the proposed changes are accepted, the provision of four-wheel drive vehicles as part of the reinvestment of resources would provide a more cost-effective alternative method of transport to get any available additional On-Call firefighters to an incident. They could also be used for routine work, relief crews and equipment recovery post-incident. It should be noted that the fire stations affected would have fewer overall employed On-Call staff. However, as existing one appliance fire station crewing shows, there are often periods when additional extra employed On-Call staff are available and could be deployed if necessary.



*Figure 7: Image shows 10 fire engines at the MCD Carpets fire in Kidderminster, December 2021. Of these, seven are parked and not in use and have solely been used to transport firefighters to the scene. The three others are being used to pump water for firefighting.*



# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage

### Service Resilience

This review has considered the impact that the loss of eight of the 41 fire engines would have on overall levels of Service resilience, especially on those rare occasions when there is intense widespread activity across both counties – such as wide scale flooding events.

These high intensity events are not routine or predictable and it should be noted that as highlighted previously, it would be unlikely that all 41 fire engines would be available to start with.

**On average, over the last three years, only 1.03 fire engines are in use at an incident at any given hour across both counties, and the Service has not utilised all 41 fire engines in a single day over the past three years.**

More typically, on average, around seven fire engines are called on initially to attend a medium to large scale incident. Any incident that requires five or more fire engines is classed as large scale. Incidents such as the two large factory fires in Kidderminster in 2021 (one declared a major incident), utilised around twenty fire engines at the peak, alongside officers and specialist function resources supported by firefighters.

When considering the requirement for overall large-scale strategic resilience in the event of large or wide scale incidents, the assessment does not stop at the borders of

our two counties. Like every other Fire and Rescue Service in England, HWFRS can call in, and rely on, some form of mutual aid from neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services. This is legally well established through Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and is often used for smaller incidents on the borders.

HWFRS has mutual aid arrangements with all seven neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services. **Those seven Fire and Rescue Services currently have a total of circa 127 fire stations that are within a twenty-mile radius of HWFRS' borders** (see Figure 8 on the next page), thereby providing a high degree of support and resilience on those rare occasions of peak activity. In the last three years, HWFRS has attended an average of 54 incidents per year for our neighbouring Services. Conversely, our neighbouring Services have attended an average of 141 incidents per year within HWFRS with 61.67 of these being as the only attending Service.. (See Data Pack for more details).

The Service does not rely heavily on neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services for support on a regular basis and there have been no issues on those peak occasions in using the mutual aid arrangements slightly more extensively when needed.

**Based on the geography and risks it has never occurred where all seven neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services are also at a level of peak activity at the same time as HWFRS.**

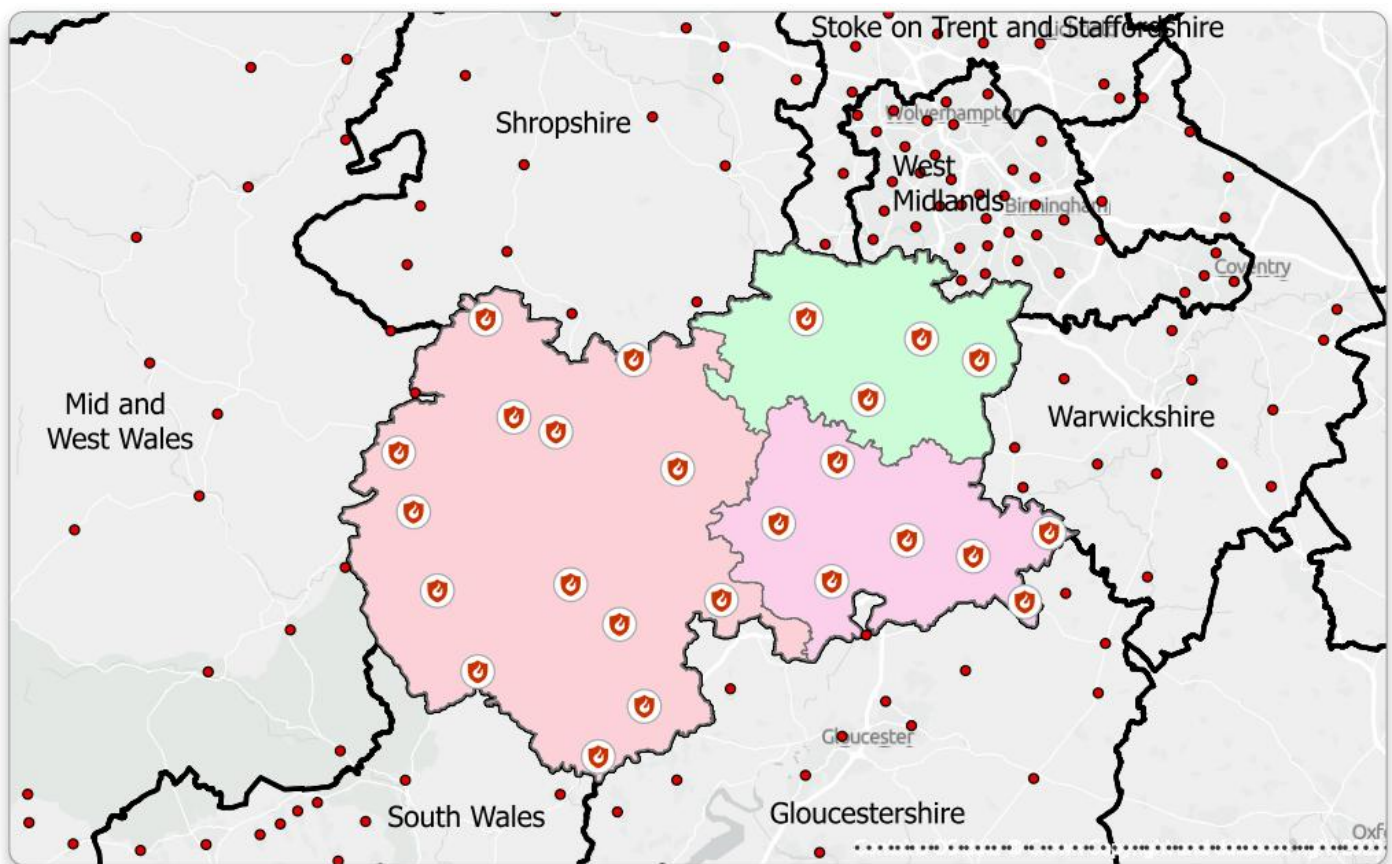


Figure 8: Location of HWFRS fire stations (shield icons) in relation to the fire stations of neighbouring fire and rescue services (red dots).

In terms of maintaining resilience, consideration should be given to whether it is reasonable to retain the eight fire engines just in case of a rare operational occurrence, or whether it is more prudent to reallocate the resources used for these fire engines. This would provide additional support to the other 33 fire engines that are responding to serious incidents that occur every day and hundreds or thousands of times per year.

With more robust and increased crewing levels on the remaining fire engines and the provision of four-wheel drive vehicles to deploy available additional On-Call staff, alongside readily available support from the surrounding seven Fire and Rescue Services, **it is not envisaged that overall resilience levels for larger incidents will be affected in any material way by the removal of the fire engines as proposed.**

The Service does recognise that by implementing the proposal there might be a slight increase in the attendance time of some supporting appliances at, on average, 189 incidents a year (shown in Figure 4). However, this should be balanced against the proposed improvements in the availability, the number of firefighters and some of the response times of first attending fire engines for an average of 2,962 incidents per year, that this review proposes an increase in Wholtime firefighters at.

# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage

### What would be the impact of removing the eight fire engines and changing the cover model on a ninth fire engine?

The review has explored what the impact would be on the remaining HWFRS fire engines if the eight fire engines were removed, and the cover model changed for the third fire engine at Wyre Forest. For 381 incidents each year (on average) it is important to note there was another fire engine available at their fire station or other fire engines were available to be sent to the incident. Therefore, Figure 9 focusses on the remaining 29 incidents. It is logical that the time taken for another alternative fire engine to arrive at those incidents is likely to be longer if the proposed eight are removed. Whilst this may seem significant, several key points must be considered:

- On many occasions (on average 68% of the time) these fire engines are currently not available, and the next nearest fire engine is already being mobilised in lieu.
- Often incidents do not require all the supporting appliances that are being mobilised, and when they are required, managing incidents with varying timescales for supporting fire engines to arrive is a normal skill and consideration for incident commanders at the scene.
- Data explained elsewhere in this report shows that around 50% of the time the supporting fire engine is not required, and often when required is not on the scene for a long period of time.
- Based on availability data and On-Call recruitment challenges, it is unlikely that these fire engines will ever be able to reach the desired high levels of availability

(90-100%), so will not be available for the majority of the time in the future. Recruitment challenges are discussed later in this review.

- On 14 fire stations, HWFRS currently operates with only one fire engine and at all these locations they already must wait for the next nearest fire engine to arrive in all circumstances, when they require two or more fire engines at an incident.
- Fire stations with one fire engine are normal and are the most common type of fire station found across UK Fire and Rescue Services.

To explore the direct impact of the removal of the eight fire engines this review has looked at the 29 incidents per year that they attended as the first or only fire engine, (a total of 86 incidents that occurred over a three-year period, 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2023) and used the incidents attended as the basis for what other fire engine would have replaced them as the first or only fire engine in attendance, had they not been available. *Two incidents were removed from the analysis due to system failures in recording the timings for those fire engines, so 86 incidents were looked at in more detail.*

**The headline figure is that on average when one of the fire engines being proposed for removal is replaced by another fire engine the time taken for that fire engine to arrive would extend by around six minutes for a small number of incidents, based on historical incidents that have occurred.**



When looking at the historical data, two of the eight fire engines had an alternative fire engine available, so there is no impact to travel times should they be removed. Therefore, there is no data available for these fire engines to be included in Figure 9, so only six of the eight are included in this table.

Several databases and mapping software were used to compare the actual response time to the potential alternative response time to the incident. Alternative fire engines were plotted from their home fire station as this would be the worst-case scenario for an alternative fire engine to have to travel from.

Station	Fire Engine	Current average response time	Potential average response time of alternative fire engine	Difference between original and alternative fire engine response times
Wyre Forest	4th Fire Engine	00:15:12	00:22:59	00:07:47
Redditch	3rd Fire Engine	00:09:11	00:10:45	00:01:34
Bromyard	2nd Fire Engine	Other fire engine available on station, no data available.		
Malvern	2nd Fire Engine	00:11:24	00:18:56	00:07:32
Leominster	2nd Fire Engine	Other fire engine available on station, no data available.		
Hereford	3rd Fire Engine	00:11:16	00:18:18	00:07:02
Droitwich	2nd Fire Engine	00:10:59	00:14:18	00:03:19
Worcester	3rd Fire Engine	00:10:55	00:17:45	00:06:50
<b>Total Average</b>		<b>00:11:02</b>	<b>00:17:20</b>	<b>00:06:18</b>
Wyre Forest	3rd Fire Engine	00:11:00	00:19:21	00:08:21

Figure 9: Comparison of original and potential average response times for the 86 incidents attended as the first or only fire engine, 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2023.

Figure 9 shows the average response times of the eight fire engines proposed to be removed and the average response times of alternative fire engines had the eight fire engines not been available at the time. It also gives the difference between the two response times so the Service can understand the impact on speed of attendance. In all cases the response time is the travel time plus the standard time allowed for the crew to leave the station. For an On-Call crew this is six minutes (excluding Wyre Forest's 4th Fire Engine which is ten minutes) and for a Wholetime crew this is one and a half minutes.

The data shows that if the eight fire engines were not available and the next nearest fire engine was sent instead, there would have been a slight increase in average response time of six minutes 18 seconds.

**It should be stressed that this potential increase in travel times would only be for an average of 29 incidents per year, of the 7,366 the Service attends each year.**

# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage

More detailed information on the average attendance time for each alternative fire engine and the number of additional incidents they may have to attend can be found in the Data Pack.

The Service's Attendance Performance Measure (APM) reviews how quickly a fire engine arrived at an incident from the point it is mobilised by Fire Control, against expected times as shown in Figure 2. Any increase in attendance time should the fire engines be removed is still well within the three time zones of 10, 15 or 20 minutes used in the APM. The Service therefore expects the impact on the first attending fire engine to incidents to be normally unchanged, and would still be within the APM on most occasions.

The proposal includes the provision of a four-wheel drive vehicle on some fire stations as an innovative solution to ensure that all available crewing is utilised from the remaining On-Call units after the removal of the fire engine. This will enable available firefighters not on the first fire engine to mobilise with their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and attend an incident in support of the first fire engine. This means that, whilst a supporting fire engine would still come from a neighbouring location as per the normal pre-determined attendance, if there are additional staff available, they can deploy to support the incident. Importantly, where the travel time is greater (e.g. around 7 minutes) this would mean that if they are needed any available On-Call Firefighters can be transported in this period to the incident to support the first fire engine before a supporting fire engine arrives.



## Recruitment and Retention of On-Call firefighters

HWFRS has historically maintained a high level of recruitment on most first fire engines and has comparatively high levels of fire engine availability on many first On-Call fire engines. As of October 2023, the Service employs 361 On-Call firefighters, who provide 24/7 cover for 32 of the 41 fire engines and 12/7 cover for a further five fire engines every night.

However, despite this level of On-Call firefighter success over many years and a system that is still very much workable, the Service has seen a decline in first fire engine availability (92% availability in Apr 2016 – Mar 2017 had fallen to 82% in Apr 2022 – Mar 2023 as published in the Service's [Quarterly Performance Reports](#)).

This has been due to many staff providing fewer hours cover and a high turnover of around 15% or 45-60 leavers and new joiners per year. Figure 10 shows an overall downward trend in first On-Call availability since 2016-17 (though availability improved somewhat during the COVID-19 period). This is largely linked to societal changes and primary employer requirements as discussed in the following pages. With the proposals in this review alongside investment to improve availability, it is anticipated that this downward trend can begin to stabilise.

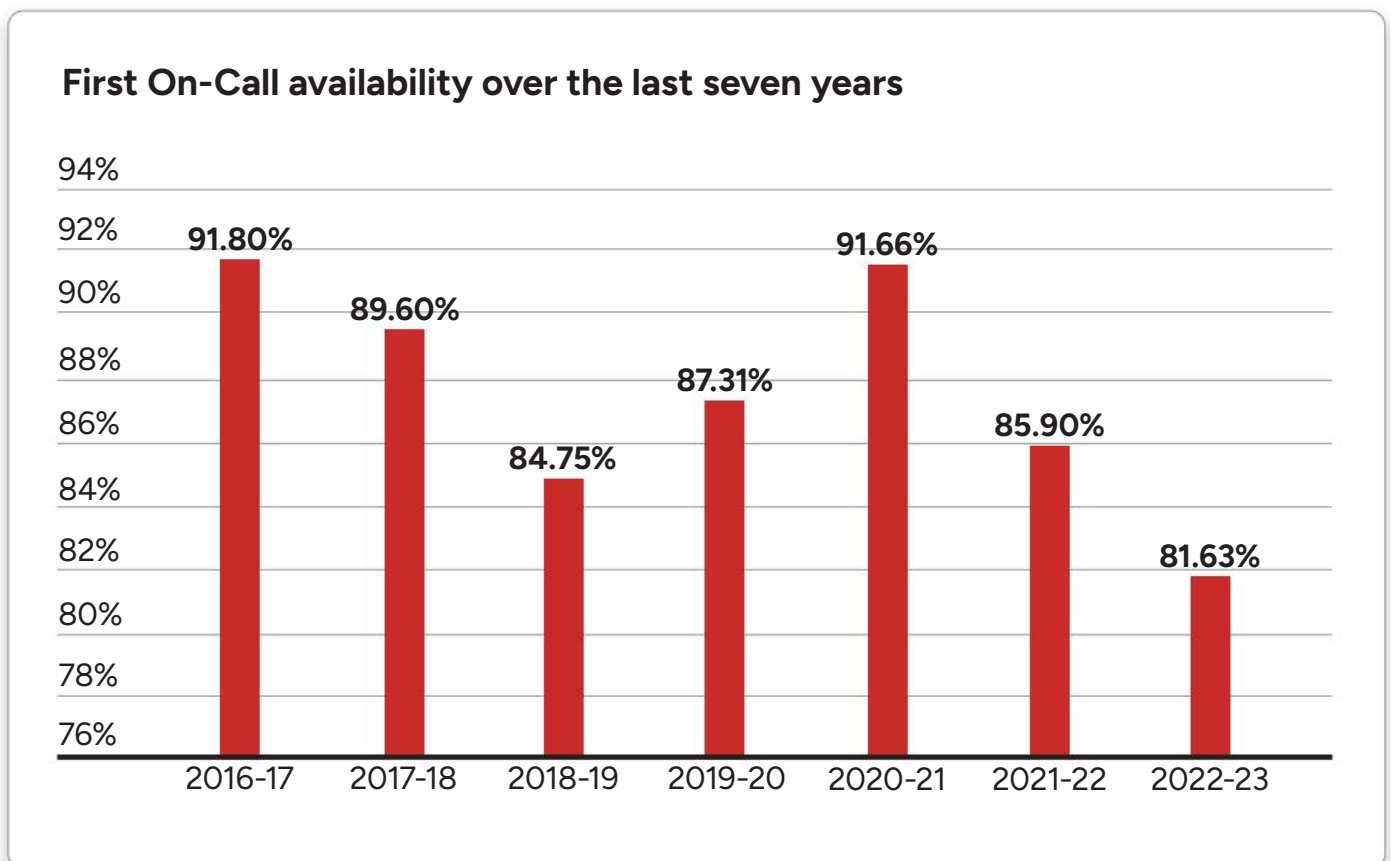


Figure 10: Average annual availability of the first On-Call fire engine over the last seven years.



# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage

Many issues facing the recruitment and retention of On-Call firefighters are due to changes in societal attitudes and behaviours, working practices in primary employers, and social mobility. Whilst changes in remuneration, working patterns and conditions can improve these issues slightly, it is perhaps time for the fire and rescue sector to fully acknowledge that these challenges are here to stay, and the Service must explore more sustainable models for On-Call staffing.

The On-Call duty system has its roots around the Second World War and since then a lot has changed in our communities (business and residential). The areas and communities around the 25 fire stations in HWFRS have all changed dramatically. The key issues the Service now faces are as follows (the list is not exhaustive):

- New On-Call firefighters often find it extremely hard to get enough time off from their primary employment to undertake the necessary training to be competent and safe to work for HWFRS. This is partly due to the increasing complexity of the role of a firefighter and the need for assessment and validation of the required skills.
- Many employers find it difficult to allow staff to leave the workplace reasonably regularly for Fire and Rescue Service incidents 'at a moment's notice' without a serious impact on their business. Many businesses, whilst they want to support HWFRS, simply cannot allow their staff to leave the workplace during business hours.
- Many employers are now working in different ways and moving their base work locations out of towns and employing staff from a wider area with remote working arrangements. Simply put, there are fewer and fewer employers willing to release staff to be On-Call firefighters within five minutes of the 25 fire station locations. Additionally, the progressive increased professional mobility, economic decline of key social areas such as town centre high streets, combined with out-of-town shopping and housing developments makes finding locally employed On-Call staff more challenging.
- People's free time or 'down time' is now at a premium and seems to be valued more than ever. This can be due to the high value placed on family commitments, greater freedom of movement and mobility and higher priority given to social activities, hobbies, etc. Being confined to a five-minute radius of a fire station, having to leave family or work at a moment's notice, weekly training sessions and being fit to drive for between 40-120 hours per week is not an attractive proposition for many. Simple tasks like visiting an out-of-town supermarket or sporting hobbies become a challenge for On-Call staff and their families when providing weekly HWFRS On-Call cover.
- Many people do not (regularly) work or socialise near where they live any more. People change jobs and homes more frequently. In simple terms, buying a house and working for one employer for many years has been replaced with higher levels of renting and changing homes more frequently, and regular changes in jobs and careers.
- Lower levels of operational activity and low call numbers mean giving up large periods of free time without being mobilised to an incident each week, which has led to some On-Call staff leaving the Service.

- The complexity, both technically and physically, as the Service drives up standards and requires professional assurance, along with the requirements of the On-Call role also impact on the retention and attraction rates.
- These issues not only affect smaller communities with low populations, but also acutely affect larger towns and cities, especially during the daytime when employers are not willing to release staff to be On-Call firefighters. Also, businesses are not located near an On-Call fire station as many businesses have migrated into more out-of-town locations or operate remotely.
- This review shows that the current number of fire engines requiring On-Call firefighters is not sustainable or realistic to recruit to, deliver and maintain. Despite this, HWFRS is confident it can maintain a healthy and effective On-Call system with the remaining fire engines, although the challenges will not get any easier.

HWFRS is not alone in facing these issues. The challenge of recruiting and retaining enough On-Call firefighters to ensure cover every hour of every day of the year, on every On-Call fire engine with sufficient crew is a long-standing issue that has a huge impact on every Fire and Rescue Service across the country that uses an On-Call model. It is an acute issue which is worsening across the UK and does not look likely to improve.

As a comparator of the acute challenges being faced in this regard, it should be noted that Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service recently published their On-Call availability for September 2023 at 34%.



# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage

**Would it be reasonable and affordable to put the required resources into getting these fire engines crewed 100% of the time with the On-Call duty system, considering the challenges in recruiting On-Call staff to crew the first fire engines 100% of the time at most other locations?**

The Service is already investing around £1 million (over three years) in a dedicated project to explore how the Service can improve the sustainability of On-Call attraction, recruitment and retention, which has had some success. What has become clear in the early stages of this project is that all the resources available for On-Call recruitment now in place will continue to be quickly and readily consumed in attracting, recruiting and maintaining the availability of the first available fire engines on an annual basis, thereby leaving very little resource to address the challenges faced in sustaining an On-Call model for other second, third and fourth On-Call fire engines. Further resource is not available to expand this project any further and we are currently seeking resources outside of this review to provide this resource as a substantive delivery team in the future.

Over the past three years, 139 On-Call firefighters have left the Service with only 117 recruited over the same period, despite a targeted effort to continually advertise and recruit for On-Call members of staff. The top reasons given for leaving during the Exit Interview process are cited as:

- Personal reasons,
- Retirement, or
- Due to primary work commitments.



Another challenge faced by the Service is the ability of On-Call staff to change the number of hours they are available. For example, seven On-Call firefighters at one fire station in one month changed their availability resulting in a reduction in the number of hours they provide.

Extrapolating this challenge over coming years means it is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible within the current resources, to maintain or improve the availability of all the existing HWFRS On-Call fire engines, especially where there is more than one On-Call fire engine at a station.

To recruit On-Call firefighters to crew 100% of the time on all the existing On-Call fire engines would need an estimated workforce of circa 500 or more On-Call firefighters. This is due to the system needing more people, who all now provide less operational cover per week (as current trends and data shows). If it were actually achievable to recruit and retain them given the challenges outlined above, these additional staff would cost circa £1.2 million in salaries, which current trends and analysis do not support. The funding for this is not currently available within the budget of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and would require an increase in overall funding of at least 3% per annum to pay the salaries costs alone.



## What does the Service need in an On-Call firefighter?

As outlined above, the On-Call duty system ('retained duty system' as it was formerly known and is still referred to in the conditions of service) generally relies on the Fire and Rescue Service employing members of the community, who live and/or work within five minutes travel time of their fire station. This is a paid role with average annual earnings for a firefighter of about £6,500 per annum in HWFRS, depending on activity and call levels. For accounting purposes this means an approximate total of £9,000 per person including on-costs.

A significant issue with attracting On-Call firefighters is that many members of Herefordshire and Worcestershire communities do not know or understand what an On-Call firefighter is. For instance, there is a common view that all firefighters work shifts on fire stations. Many people believe they are not fit enough to undertake the requirements of the job – while this may be true for some, it is not as big a barrier as is imagined. The Service is currently working hard at investing in marketing and recruitment resources to address these issues and attract more suitable applicants to maintain availability on the first 25 On-Call fire engines. However, this is a resource intensive and long-term piece of work.

On-Call firefighter applicants who pass the recruitment selection process and can offer the fire station a fixed number of On-Call hours cover (between 40-120 hours per week) will then receive extensive training in their first few years. After this, they then need to attend the fire station when there is an emergency when they are On-Call. In addition, they will need to attend the fire station for around three hours of training per week as well as up to eight additional days training and input per year.

## Addressing the challenge of On-Call firefighter recruitment and retention

**The review has shown that the current establishment of 31 dedicated On-Call fire engines and another five fire engines crewed solely by On-Call staff at night is not sustainable within the current budget and crewing model, and not required based on the data on usage and availability.**

Whilst the On-Call duty system is a viable and essential part of HWFRS's response model, the increasing challenges of recruitment and retention for maintaining such an extensive On-Call workforce appears to have become unaffordable and highly difficult to achieve.

Considering the evidence and the difficulties in operating the current On-Call system, this review shows that there are more sustainable and feasible options available to maintain a high level of fire cover. Examples include the use of alternative vehicles, crewing changes and more full and part-time on duty employed firefighters (within the current budget), and new On-Call operating models.

In recognising the challenges of On-Call recruitment and retention alongside the reduced resilience in the Wholetime establishment due to the budgetary reductions in 2014, the Service has already taken some measures to address this.

# The Review continued

## Availability and Usage

The first step has been to begin to introduce a new Day-Crewing duty system at the Malvern, Evesham, and Droitwich fire stations at an additional annual cost of £350,000, to guarantee a suitably skilled crew 24/7 by using Wholetime staff on an enhanced On-Call contract to provide night cover instead of having a separate dedicated On-Call staffing system at night. It is acknowledged that this duty system would see an improvement in the availability of the second fire engine at those locations. However, the issues highlighted in this review of low usage, challenging day-time availability and other factors, still support the removal of Malvern and Droitwich's second On-Call fire engine.

This review now offers a second major step to creating a more sustainable On-Call duty system in the future by reducing the number of solely On-Call crewed fire engines by eight (and 50% of the time on a ninth fire engine) and reallocating or redeploying those resources into employing more Wholetime firefighters, mainly during the daytime when call volume is 68% higher than at night.

Longer-term, reducing the On-Call workforce by an estimated 15% (circa 45 posts) will alleviate recruitment and retention demands and allow the available resources for this function to continue to be focused on the remaining Wholetime, and subsequent resources which can be released to support other On-Call first fire engines.

In some areas this may slightly increase in the number of incidents other On-Call fire engines attend, which may impact on some On-Call staff who are then called out more often. The Service will carefully monitor the impact of this and manage it locally. However, as noted above, some On-Call staff leave the Service due to a lack of call outs and,

therefore, an increased level of operational activity is likely to present an incentive both to gain more operational exposure and to earn more as they are paid hourly per call out.

Despite removing eight fire engines, the evidence indicates that the impact on the remaining 33 fire engines would be minimal in relation to annual call volume.

### **What is the Service's professional judgement regarding reinvesting resources saved into the much busier first fire engines?**

The review proposes to reinvest the resources currently allocated to the affected fire engines into rebalancing and adding resilience through an increase in crew sizes to some first fire engines and by basing Wholetime firefighters at some On-Call locations during daytimes. This not only increases the number of firefighters attending incidents on some of the most utilised first fire engines at many incidents, but also provides resilience for staff absences through sickness or training without making fire engines unavailable for incidents.

The provision of two On-Call fire stations with a mixed Wholetime and On-Call crew during the day may also result in faster turnout times, as two of the crew would normally be Wholetime firefighters, who would be immediately available on station or can be quickly alerted when completing prevention and protection activities with high-risk individuals in the local community.

The importance of having additional Wholetime firefighters at two of the affected fire stations cannot be overstated. Their presence will help to make a significant contribution to the amount of prevention work undertaken in these areas.

Having additional Wholetime staff at Leominster and Bromyard fire stations would assist in the workload of Prevention Technicians in completing additional Home Fire Safety Visits to potentially vulnerable households in each station area per year. Likewise, they could also support Prevention Engagement Officers in helping to identify and carry out prevention work with harder to reach groups in the more rural areas in and around the station areas and locality. In terms of Protection, there would be opportunities for more Business Fire Safety Inspections and support for local businesses in complying with their fire safety responsibilities, as well as increased familiarisation visits to business premises to help to identify fire safety concerns.

Although eight fire engines are proposed for removal, the availability analysis shows that average availability is currently only 37 fire engines during the day and 32 at night, so a reduction from 41 to 33 is not a realistic representation of the impact of this proposal; it is more like a reduction in real terms of four fire engines, at most. The Data Pack has additional detail about the balance of resources using the newly introduced Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT), which is used daily to understand the risk balanced against fire cover by available resources.

The Service's professional judgement is therefore that the resources currently allocated to providing fire engines that are unavailable and underutilised is not effective or efficient, and the reinvestment of these resources would be better placed in improving the resilience and availability of the first crewed fire engines.



### **What impact will this have on members of the public calling 999?**

Based on the analysis completed during this review, the change will have little impact on members of the public. No fire stations are being closed and the Service will still have all the first fire engines available to respond as they do today, and should in some cases see some improvements in first fire engine availability, crew sizes and response times.

The potential negative impact is outlined above, whereby on some occasions, when a supporting fire engine is required, it may take slightly longer to arrive. However, this is already the case currently with the low levels of availability of the nine fire engines highlighted, when they are unavailable anyway.

This is also mitigated by the larger first fire engine crew sizes and the provision of additional vehicles to deploy available staff to the incident, as well as the supporting fire engines being deployed from neighbouring locations in some fire stations affected by this review.

Currently, where the nearest fire engine is not available the next nearest is always selected to attend an incident. This is something that Fire Control does routinely to manage the attendance of fire engines at the incidents the Service gets called to.



# The Review continued

## Proposed Solution

This review identifies eight On-Call fire engines could be removed and one additional fire engine where the cover model could be changed, with all nine being located at fire stations with more than one fire engine. The proposals for each fire engine are as follows:

- Remove the 4th fire engine at Wyre Forest fire station – reduced On-Call unit to remain on the station.
- Remove the 3rd fire engine at Redditch fire station – reduced On-Call unit to remain on the station.
- Remove the 2nd fire engine at Bromyard fire station – reduced On-Call unit to remain on the station.
- Remove the 2nd fire engine at Malvern fire station – reduced On-Call unit to remain on the station mainly for special appliances.
- Remove the 2nd fire engine at Leominster fire station – reduced On-Call unit to remain on the station.
- Remove the 3rd fire engine at Hereford fire station – night cover On-Call unit only to remain.
- Remove the 2nd fire engine at Droitwich fire station – On-Call unit to be removed as the change in crewing system to Day-Crewing will provide a 24/7 availability.
- Remove the 3rd fire engine at Worcester fire station – night cover On-Call unit only to remain.
- In addition, the 3rd fire engine at Wyre Forest fire station to become a night cover fire engine only and increase the turn-in time by two minutes, allowing eight minutes for On-Call firefighters to get to the fire station, put on their fire kit and mobilise the fire engine. An eight-minute turn-in time will increase the number of people to be recruited from, as the number of households in the larger turn-in area increases to over 45,000 from the current 14,000.

## Proposed Reinvestment in Front Line Crewing

The proposal aims to reallocate the savings made to provide more Wholetime firefighters, who are immediately available and on duty during the day and night (often with additional skills). This will support and increase the crewing of several Wholetime and On-Call fire engines at most affected fire stations.

The proposal does not release enough revenue resource for improvements to front line crewing at all the affected fire stations. However, alongside improvements and investments (circa £350k) that are already being implemented, outside of this review, at the current Day-Crewing fire stations at Malvern, Evesham, and Droitwich, the reallocation of resources will provide extra firefighters to add some much-needed daytime resilience to crewing levels.

The Service has also identified a small number of non-fire station-based efficiencies and transfers of posts, which could be added into the resources realised from this proposal to supplement and further improve the additions to the front-line fire engines-based resilience.

Overall, the proposed reinvestment of resources will see more firefighters attending the thousands of incidents the Service attend every year on some of the first available fire engines. For example, the Service currently operates with 40 Wholetime firefighters on duty in the day, and 20 Wholetime firefighters immediately available at night. Including the current Day-Crewing changes, this review contains several options to improve this.

**If all the proposals in this review are adopted, alongside the current planned Day-Crewing changes, and the resources realised, this could increase the overall numbers of up to 50 Wholetime firefighters on duty in the day (an increase of 20%) and 23 firefighters on duty at night (an increase of 15%).**

**It should be emphasised that these proposals are not 'anti' On-Call and 'pro' Wholetime, even though it would see a reduction in On-Call staff and fire engines, and an increase in Wholetime staffing. HWFRS highly values and will always need its On-Call staff. Following this review there will still be 22 On-Call and 10 Wholetime fire engines during the daytime and 28 On-Call fire engines with five Wholetime fire engines at night, with an establishment of around 316 On-Call staff and 171 Wholetime staff on fire stations.**

The following reinvestment of resources is proposed;

- Worcester fire station's first available fire engine will increase Wholetime crewing from four to five firefighters on most occasions.
- Hereford fire station's first available fire engine will increase Wholetime crewing from four to five firefighters on most occasions.
- Wyre Forest fire station's first available fire engine will increase Wholetime crewing from four to five firefighters on most occasions.

# The Review continued

## Proposed Solution

- Leominster and Bromyard fire stations will receive an establishment of Wholetime staff to provide crewing support during the daytime periods, potentially up to seven days a week, as required. This will provide a virtually guaranteed level of fire and emergency cover for the first fire engine in both towns, reduce response times, and increase the available resources to significantly improve the prevention and protection work undertaken in these communities.
- Wyre Forest fire station's second fire engine (On-Call) will not change, and the third fire engine will be for night cover only on a dedicated Compact fire engine to deploy to all incident types with On-Call firefighters from a slightly larger geographic area. On-Call firefighters are currently required to live or work within five minutes of the fire station. For the third fire engine at Wyre Forest, if firefighters were allowed to live or work within eight minutes of the fire station, this would increase the number of households to potentially recruit firefighters from by almost 31,000 (an increase of 207%) making the future recruitment model more sustainable.
- Worcester, Hereford, Wyre Forest, Malvern, Bromyard, Leominster and Redditch fire stations' remaining On-Call units will be provided with the ability to crew special appliances (as required at those locations) and use a dedicated four-wheel drive vehicle at each location to deploy any available additional On-Call firefighters to support all incident types if they are required. Potentially, some of these additional firefighters who are currently required to live or work within five minutes of the fire station, could now be slightly further away if they are in a supporting role not on the first fire engine.

## Benefits to the Community of Additional Capacity to Deliver Prevention Activities

The proposal includes the provision of Wholetime firefighters at two of the affected fire stations, which will make a substantial difference primarily to the amount of prevention and potentially to some of the protection activities undertaken in some areas.

Preventing fires and other emergencies from happening is the most effective way to indirectly save lives. Prevention activities not only help to reduce the actual number of emergency incidents attended, but also how serious these incidents could be.

Likewise, Protection is a legal responsibility and an integral part of keeping the community safe in commercial and public buildings. Protection work has also come to the fore following the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy, with increasing public expectations in terms of building safety.

Taking the proposed addition of Wholetime firefighters at Leominster and Bromyard fire stations as an example, the amount of prevention activities in these areas could be significantly increased in these market towns and surrounding areas.

In terms of Prevention, this particular area of Herefordshire currently has community safety activity delivered by Prevention Technicians delivering Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) to members of the community. They are supported by a Prevention Engagement Officer who focuses on developing referrals from partner agencies. Having additional staff located at Leominster and Bromyard stations would be beneficial as this would assist in the workload of the Prevention Technicians by completing up to an additional 192 HFSVs per fire station per year, which equates to an uplift of around 5%.





In addition, this will also provide an opportunity to further identify the hardest to reach groups in the more rural locations by working alongside the Prevention Engagement Officers to carry out door-knocking initiatives in the communities they know, utilising the station risk profiles. Additionally, where crewing levels do not require the wholetime staff they may be able to carry out prevention work outside of the Bromyard and Leominster town areas.

To conclude, from a Prevention perspective, having operational personnel based at these stations would add value to the work of Prevention and to the communities.

In terms of Protection, the majority of premises in this area of Herefordshire are Medium/Low/Very Low risk on the Service Risk Based Inspection Programme, meaning a Crew Commander could inspect these premises if they were trained to a Level 3 in Fire Safety, however this will not be a requirement of these roles in this review.

The Service could see an uplift of additional Business Fire Safety Inspections (BFSIs) per annum. BFSIs help to keep people safe from fire, whilst also supporting local businesses to comply with their legislative Fire Safety responsibilities. If the staff are not fully

qualified at these locations they could, however, carry out increased familiarisation (Intel) visits to business premises and signpost any concerns around Protection (Fire Safety), to other specialist qualified officers.

In addition to the above improvement in the delivery of prevention and protection work in Herefordshire, the increase in Wholetime firefighters would alleviate the need for non-fire station-based firefighters to provide cover at Wholetime stations. This would increase the capacity to deliver prevention and protection activities across the two counties.

In the year 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, Watch Commanders whose primary role is within the Prevention or Protection roles provided 222 shifts (approximately 1,998 hours) of cover, and those in the Response Directorate provided 151 shifts (approximately 1,359 hours) on Wholetime fire engines. The increase in Wholetime firefighters would reduce the need for these Watch Commanders to provide cover and this total of 373 nine-hour shifts (approximately 3,357 hours per year) would be spent in their primary role, allowing them to deliver community safety activities, support operational training activities, or whilst supporting On-Call fire engines these staff can also carry out prevention and protection work in the On-Call area.

# The Review continued

## Proposed Solution

### What are the savings associated with the proposal and what will they be used for?

There are a variety of savings that can be considered for re-investment when considering the potential removal of up to eight fire engines. They include savings associated with:

- The need to replace, service, and maintain the fire engines.
- The cost of supplying, testing and maintaining eight fire engines with equipment.
- The costs of employing On-Call firefighters, which include:
  - The salary paid and on-costs.
  - The provision of uniform.
  - ICT.
  - Their training and development.

To understand what potential savings for reinvestment are, an analysis of the costs has been conducted.

This section uses a number of planning assumptions. It expects that the main changes would take place from April 2025. However, if approved by the Fire Authority in 2024 some changes could be implemented earlier subject to funding. It is also assumed that replacement four-wheel drive vehicles will need to be purchased in advance of the changes, and in some cases, staff may need to be recruited and trained.

Costs are based on the average fixed (i.e. excluding Disturbance/Attendance/Turnout) cost of each fire station in 2022/23. Potential

savings have been calculated based on 2022/23 prices. The proposals and associated costs have been summarised on the following pages.

### Staffing and Resources

#### Potential Savings

##### On Call Staffing Posts

For the purposes of this review, it is considered that up to 45 On-Call posts may no longer be required.

Considering the average annual cost of an On-Call firefighter, including retaining fee, payment for drill nights and training days, pension and National Insurance this equates to a **£392,000 annual saving once those posts are removed**, or when the changes have been phased in. If voluntary or imposed redundancies were in place, then this saving would be realised at an earlier stage, subject to consultation and due process.

This does not include payment for turnouts or attendances at incidents as the proposals in this report do not change the number of incidents the Service attends.

It is assumed that the reduction in the number of On-Call posts will be achieved sympathetically, as much as possible, through natural turnover as staff leave the Service. Therefore, it will take some time to achieve the full savings.

##### ICT, Operational and Associated Equipment

Each firefighter is provided with a comprehensive supply of equipment and access to ICT. An approximation of ICT, operational and associated equipment savings from no longer having to provide these supplies has also been added to the total amount of potential savings. **The total savings is estimated to be £135,000.**

### Reduction in reliance on the use of overtime.

The Service currently relies on other staff filling shifts that are unfilled due to lack of availability, using overtime. By resetting the On-Call model it is anticipated there will be a reduction in the need for other staff to fill these shifts and therefore reduce the overtime bill. **It is conservatively estimated that the total reductions in overtime payments would be in the region of £100,000.**

### Consequential Post Savings

There are other savings associated with reducing the overall number of fire engines held by the Service and the numbers of firefighters employed. For ease of reference these are referred to as 'consequential post savings' and include, for example, a potential reduction in the need for mechanical maintenance of fire engines and the number of staff required to train a reduced cohort of firefighters. **It is estimated that the total savings generated would be in the region of £106,000.**

### Vehicles

Fire engines are replaced routinely every 15 years, as detailed in the [Fleet Plan 2021-25](#). The cost of replacement varies depending on the market and the cost of steel and other materials used in the build process. There are two sizes of fire engines available on the market in the UK. HWFRS have procured both sizes, with the larger fire engines being able to carry more water than the medium fire engine size. The proposal is to remove up to eight fire engines, which reduces the need for future replacement. This reduces the revenue capital financing costs. **This would mean annual steady state savings of £248,000.**

**In summary the potential annual total achievable to reinvest is £981,000.**





# The Review continued

## Proposed Solution

### Staffing and Resources

#### Potential Input / Reinvestment

##### Staffing

The proposal increases the number of Wholetime firefighter posts by up to three at both Leominster and Bromyard fire stations. This would mean up to an additional six firefighters to improve availability of the fire engines at these fire stations. It would also ensure there is always at least one fire engine available at each of these stations, improving fire cover in Herefordshire during the day. This may be scaled up as resources are realised from initially three firefighters across both locations to six firefighters over time, if they are required.

Additionally, where On-Call cover is good for the day period, the firefighters based at these two stations may be used to increase availability at neighbouring one-fire engine stations and allow them to complete community engagement and Prevention work in those areas.

To achieve the additional Wholetime firefighter posts will require some investment before the full saving can be realised and it will be necessary to introduce the full number of Wholetime firefighters before 'steady state' savings are achieved. This funding can be realised through some internal saving, reallocation of reserve funding or reallocation of existing budgets or temporary posts.

The Service may also increase the number of Wholetime firefighter posts by one person on each shift (2,2,4 pattern) per Watch to increase the ridership to five people from four as it currently stands, at one or more of the following locations; Worcester, Wyre Forest and Hereford fire stations, requiring up to a total of twelve new posts.

This would mean that there are more firefighters on these fire engines able to deal with the incidents they attend more effectively, reducing the need to make requests for additional fire engines when additional firefighters are needed both day and night.

It is anticipated that the Service could increase its Wholetime establishment by up to 18 posts, **at a total cost of £949,000.**

##### Vehicles

The proposal aims to provide a four-wheel drive crew-carrying vehicle (4x4 type pick-up) at one or more of the following locations; Worcester, Malvern, Redditch, Hereford, Leominster and Bromyard fire stations. Wyre Forest fire station will maintain its Compact fire engine that is currently within the fleet. Also, some of the four-wheel drive pick-up vehicles may be reallocated from elsewhere in the fleet.

The provision of these vehicles will enable personnel to attend incidents to supplement those personnel on the initial attending fire engines. They may also be used at the fire station for relief crews instead of a fire engine and for retrieval of equipment and post incident workloads. These vehicles can also be used as an additional asset for deployment in such incidents as wide scale flooding for Water Responder teams (such as is already in place elsewhere in the Service) where crewing permits and are resilient for moving staff during extreme weather events.

Therefore, this reinvestment option allows for the transport of additional personnel when required to support firefighting operations. The benefit of having these vehicles would be that additional firefighters can attend an incident to support their colleagues where there are On-Call firefighters available at that location but do not have a fire engine to travel in.



**It is anticipated that the annual capital financing costs will be in the region of £18,000.**

All eight locations will maintain a reduced On-Call Unit, except for Droitwich fire station which, with the change in crewing system to Day-Crewing, will provide a 24/7 availability of the fire engine based there. The Incident Support Vehicle will be relocated to Redditch fire station as they will maintain an On-Call unit who can crew it. Some other 'special appliances' may be moved strategically or relocated to accommodate some changes to staffing at some of these locations.

Where the saving options above are implemented, On-Call Units will continue to crew both fire engines and specialist appliances at all other locations. This will support resilience in the Service by maintaining availability of the specialist capabilities when the fire engine is already attending an incident.

#### **Potential costs of redundancy**

It is anticipated that most of the staffing reductions will be achieved by natural turnover. However, there may also be a requirement to offer voluntary redundancy or consider compulsory redundancy.

A one-off sum of £39,000 has been allocated for this, as part of the phasing to steady state. Any additional redundancy costs can be accommodated through existing budgets within the year.

**Considering the reduction in the cost of the overtime bill which will be used towards funding the additional fire fighters, the total amount to be spent on reinvestment is £967,000.**

*To summarise, the estimated savings of £981,000 does not exceed the proposed £967,000 re-investment. Any additional saving realised in the longer term can be reinvested in front line staffing improvements.*

# The Review continued

## Proposed Solution

Below is a summary of the resources identified that could be realised annually through the proposal:

### Cost Savings

**£981,000**

Total Cost Savings

**£392,000**

Reduction in On-Call requirement

**£135,000**

ICT, Operational and associated equipment savings

**£248,000**

Appliance Capital Finance savings

**£100,000**

Resilience Register (Overtime) savings

**£106,000**

Consequential Post Savings

### Reinvestment

**£967,000**

Total Reinvestment

**£949,000**

Wholetime firefighters

**£18,000**

Vehicle Investment – capital finance costs

### Net

**£14,000**

£981k savings minus  
£967k to be invested

Figure 11: Summary of cost savings and reinvestment opportunities.



# Timescales and Potential Implementation

## Plan Commencing April 2025

Following consultation and subject to approval, changes will be phased in from April 2025. It is anticipated that the changes will be phased in over up to five years, with some up-front investment necessary to introduce a full number of Wholetime firefighters before steady state savings are achieved in 2030-31.

## Summary

In summary, it is the professional opinion of the Service that, following the in-depth analysis and the evidence provided in this document and in the Data Pack, the introduction of the proposals in this Review would provide a more effective and efficient use of the resources. This will also result in the provision of a better overall service to the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.





HEREFORD & WORCESTER  
**HWFR**  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



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