

Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Public consultation on the Resource Review 2024

Report of findings



Hereford & Worcester
Fire Authority

Opinion Research Services

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1. Executive Summary

The commission

- 1.1 Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) has carried out a Resource Review as part of its duty to ensure that it is making best use of its available resources and funding and providing the most effective service possible. As a result of this Review, the Service is proposing changes to some operational fire engines.
- 1.2 In order to understand views on these proposed changes, a formal consultation was undertaken between 8th January and 4th March 2024. Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned to undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open consultation questionnaire and three focus groups with members of the public. In total, 1,122 questionnaire responses were received; and 28 residents attended the three focus groups, with each focus group lasting two hours.
- 1.3 In addition, HWFRS held 27 formal internal consultation sessions with 202 staff at the affected fire stations (as well as Strategic Leadership Board discussions with other stations and support staff departments, at which the Resource Review proposals were discussed); and eight written submissions were received from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA), Leominster Town Council, Malvern Town Council, Redditch Borough Council, two individual town/county councillors, and an individual firefighter.
- 1.4 In our experience, having run similar consultations, the level of engagement with staff, representative bodies, councillors, and members of the public was extensive.

The nature of public consultation

- 1.5 Public consultation promotes accountability and assists decision making; public bodies give an account of their plans or proposals and listen to feedback. Consultation has therefore been described as a dialogue, based on a genuine and purposeful exchange of views.
- 1.6 However, consultations are not referenda or 'votes' in which the loudest voices or the greatest numbers automatically determine the outcome. The feedback received often reflects widely varied and sometimes polarised views, and it is important to report these concerns and contrary views robustly, for decision-makers to conscientiously take into account the issues raised.
- 1.7 It should also be remembered that while open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, they are not 'surveys' of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically, and are more likely to be completed by motivated people while also being subject to influence by local campaigns. For example, we note a Fire Brigades Union (FBU) campaign opposing the Resource Review proposals. In this campaign - which can be found at [Hereford and Worcester: protect your fire service | Campaign \(fbu.org.uk\)](https://www.fbu.org.uk) - the FBU provided a

link to the online questionnaire with the instruction to: *‘Please respond to questions 1-7 with STRONGLY DISAGREE’*. While it is impossible to ascertain the level to which the questionnaire results have been influenced by this campaign, it should be borne in mind when considering them.

- 1.8 Moreover, questionnaire respondents will not have had the same opportunity as focus group participants (who were carefully recruited to ensure they represented ‘ordinary’ local residents) to discuss and debate the proposed changes.
- 1.9 This does not mean that the open questionnaire findings should be discounted: they must be taken into account as a demonstration of the views of residents who were motivated to put forward their views. However, the differing methodologies should be borne in mind when considering the findings reported below.

Main findings

- 1.10 The following sections summarise the main consultation findings¹. However, readers are referred to the chapters that follow for a full account of people’s views.

A need for change

HWFRS aimed to address a number of challenges through its Resource Review, namely to improve the resilience and crewing levels of its busiest Wholetime fire engines, and improve the availability of all remaining fire engines; ensure a more resilient, sustainable and affordable On-Call firefighter duty system; increase community engagement and capacity to deliver more Prevention work; explore new ways of working with On-Call staff and further improve support for On-Call fire stations; and reduce the need for excessive overtime shifts on Wholetime fire stations.

HWFRS believes that its resources could be rebalanced to employ more Wholetime firefighters; provide improved resilience and crewing levels on busier fire engines, releasing more resources to improve support for On-Call fire engines; develop new more sustainable ways of On-Call working; and enhance Prevention activities in the community.

Open questionnaire

- 1.11 Questionnaire respondents’ opinions were mixed with regard to whether HWFRS should change the way it uses its resources to address the challenges outlined above. Around a third (33%) of respondents agreeing that it should, with a fifth (20%) strongly agreeing. However, a larger proportion - more than three-in-five (63%) - disagreed, with over half (53%) strongly disagreeing.

¹ Please note that the staff discussion sessions were undertaken internally, and the notes from these sessions were provided to ORS by HWFRS.

Resident focus groups

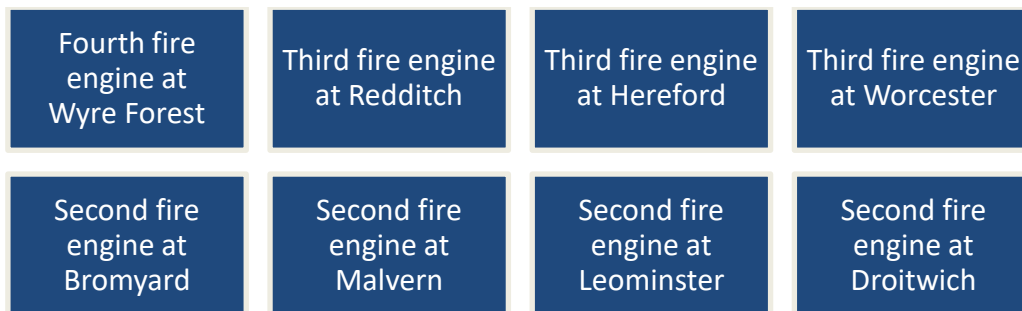
- 1.12 Focus group participants demonstrated little knowledge of the challenges outlined by HWFRS: they were unaware of the poor availability of some On-Call fire engines for example. However, when the challenges were outlined, the need for change was largely understood and supported.

Staff discussion sessions

- 1.13 Staff tended to acknowledge the societal changes and demographics that affect On-Call recruitment and retention. When the proposals were explained and data from the review discussed, the need for change was largely understood and supported.

Removal of On-Call fire engines

HWFRS is proposing to remove the following eight On-Call fire engines from fire stations with more than one fire engine, allowing savings to be reinvested in other, busier, fire engines to improve resilience and crewing levels, and support more prevention work within communities.



Open questionnaire

- 1.14 More than three quarters (77%) of questionnaire respondents disagreed with this proposal, seven-in-ten (70%) strongly. Just over a fifth (22%) agreed, 12% strongly.

Resident focus groups

- 1.15 The general consensus among participants across the three focus groups was that while in an ideal world the proposed fire engine removals would not be necessary, the proposal has been carefully considered and appears to be rational and proportionate.
- 1.16 This is not to say there were no concerns, though. A few participants worried about what they saw as a depletion of fire cover in rural areas; less overall resilience for, say, incidents like Grenfell Tower in high-rise buildings; the potential impact of the proposal on Prevention and Prevention activity in the affected areas; and that this could be the 'thin end of the wedge' for the On-Call service. However, this was all acknowledged to be academic if the appliances are unavailable.
- 1.17 Only one respondent across all three groups remained wholly opposed to the proposed removal of eight fire engines at the end of the discussions though. Their primary concern was around a lack of fire cover in their area in the event of larger or simultaneous incidents, as well as the potential impact of climate change on the number of incidents attended by HWFRS, and the possibility of further future reductions.

- 1.18 Reassurance was sought in all groups that HWFRS would monitor the implementation of the proposal if it is agreed and make further amendments in future if the situation requires it.

Staff discussion sessions

- 1.19 Staff members acknowledged that the retention of On-Call staff is an issue, and many felt that reducing On-Call staffing at stations where availability is poor, and utilising Wholetime staff to support these stations, would be useful. Some groups raised questions about the rationale for the proposal and the data captured in the Resource Review, and clarification was provided.
- 1.20 Key concerns were around the impact of removing eight On-Call appliances on fire cover and resilience, the potential for further reductions in future, and the need to ensure that appliances are crewed by five firefighters where possible.

Written submissions²

- 1.21 While a couple of Bromyard councillors supported the proposed removal of the second On-Call fire engine in their area, other respondents raised concerns. Leominster and Malvern Town Councils and Redditch Borough Council urged HWFRS to retain provision locally. Across the three submissions, the main concerns were that:
- The proposals do not take account of population growth; nor do they consider climate change and its consequences.
 - HWFRS's overall resilience would be compromised by the proposed removal of On-Call fire engines, and there would be a lack of cover in the affected areas in the event of larger or simultaneous incidents.
 - Any delay in response times due to a shortage of fire engines risks lives.
- 1.22 The FBU was concerned that the proposals would leave HWFRS further under-resourced; and was also worried that the proposed fire engine removals would negatively impact attendance times, the availability of resources for large-scale or protracted incidents, recruitment and retention issues, and firefighter/public safety. These concerns, among others specifically relating to their local area, were also raised by an individual firefighter.

Changes to the third (On-Call) engine at Wyre Forest

HWFRS is proposing to change the third (On-Call) fire engine at Wyre Forest to night cover only and allow firefighters up to eight minutes to attend the fire station, providing a much larger recruitment area, but potentially being able to provide 100% availability.

² Most of the comments made in the written submissions related to the proposed removal of On-Call fire engines, and have thus been included in this section of the executive summary.

Open questionnaire

- 1.23 Just over a quarter (27%) of questionnaire respondents agreed with the proposal to change the third (On-Call) fire engine to night-only cover, 14% strongly. However, more than three fifths (64%) opposed the proposal, more than half (54%) strongly.
- 1.24 There was a slightly higher level of agreement with the proposal to allow On-Call firefighters at Wyre Forest, on the third engine only, up to eight minutes (up from five minutes) to attend the fire station: more than a third (36%) of questionnaire respondents agreed, 18% strongly. However, more than half (55%) opposed the proposal, 46% strongly.

Resident focus groups

- 1.25 Although there were several questions about the practical impact of the proposed three-minute increase, most focus group participants understood the logic of increasing turn out times for the third (On-Call) fire engine at Wyre Forest, with some even suggesting it be considered in other areas to widen recruitment pools. A couple of Herefordshire residents cautioned against this, however. While they felt they could support the proposed change in the Wyre Forest, they objected to a wider roll-out across Herefordshire especially, mainly in the context of lengthening response times in more rural areas³.
- 1.26 There was also some scepticism that this change would work in isolation, given the role of societal factors in the recruitment difficulties faced by HWFRS and others. It was thus suggested that other initiatives would be required alongside the increased turn out time to ensure success.

Staff discussion sessions

- 1.27 Staff groups, especially at Wyre Forest, understood the logic for the change, with one staff member commenting they 'cannot continue as they are'.

Reinvesting savings to support the busiest fire engines

HWFRS is proposing to reinvest all the savings made into supporting its busiest fire engines by providing more Wholetime firefighters at some fire stations, who are immediately available and on duty during the day and night. More Wholetime firefighters would be available during the daytime when emergency calls are at their highest levels. Improving Wholetime resilience would release resources currently used to address shortfalls in the Wholetime service to support other On-Call fire engines across the Service area.

Open questionnaire

- 1.28 Just under a third of questionnaire respondents (31%) agreed - 19% strongly - with the proposal to reinvest savings into providing more Wholetime firefighters to support the busiest fire engines and provide improved ways of working for the remaining On-Call staff. However, more than three fifths (61%) disagreed, over half (51%) strongly.

³ It should be noted that this is not proposed for Herefordshire.

Resident focus groups

- 1.29 For many focus group participants, their support for the proposed changes to the On-Call system was contingent on the resulting savings being reinvested to support HWFRS's busiest fire engines. In this context, many acknowledged that the Resource Review was undertaken not to identify financial efficiencies, but to ensure a more efficient and effective use of resources. There was, though, some worry about the feasibility and sustainability of making the proposed investment in the Wholetime service in the event of future budget reductions.

Staff discussion sessions

- 1.30 In discussion, members of staff tended to appreciate that savings would be reinvested into an uplift in Wholetime staffing, and a redirection of resources. There were many questions and useful discussions about how this would work in practice.

Using alternative, more flexible modes of transport

There will be instances where the first On-Call fire engine at a fire station is sent to an incident with a crew of four, five or six, but additional firefighters have responded into the fire station and are available to also go to the incident. HWFRS is proposing to provide alternative, more flexible modes of transport at some locations where a fire engine has been removed, to transport additional staff to an incident if required. These would be transportation vehicles only, not 'response' vehicles with equipment.

Open questionnaire

- 1.31 Of all the proposals, the proposal to provide alternative, more flexible modes of transport (i.e. four-wheel drive vehicles) for available additional On-Call firefighters received the highest level of support with 37% agreeing, and 22% strongly agreeing. However, more than half (56%) disagree with this proposal, with around half (49%) of respondents strongly disagreeing.

Resident focus groups

- 1.32 The prospect of using alternative, more flexible modes of transport (instead of fire engines) was endorsed in all three focus groups as an innovative approach to enhancing resources at incidents.

Staff discussion sessions

- 1.33 Staff commented positively about the benefits of using of a 4x4-type vehicle, though some suggested they may prefer a van (as did the Fire and Rescue Services Association representative in their written submission). Some groups talked about using the opportunity to review where special appliances are located, or whether a Compact Fire Engine may be considered in some areas.

Implementing a more sustainable On-Call staffing model

HWFRS is proposing to use the savings generated to provide a more sustainable On-Call staffing model and explore new ways of working within the On-Call service.

Open questionnaire

- 1.34 Just under a third (31%) of respondents agree (18% strongly) with the proposal to provide a more sustainable staffing model and explore new ways of working within the On-Call service. However, three fifths (60%) disagree with this proposal, with around half (49%) of respondents strongly disagreeing.

Resident focus groups

- 1.35 Focus group participants were generally pleased that any savings made through the Resource Review would be reinvested into other areas of the Service, including the On-Call staffing model.
- 1.36 People were particularly keen to see HWFRS further engaging with local businesses to promote the benefits of employing On-Call firefighters; even incentivising them if necessary.

Staff discussion sessions

- 1.37 There was recognition of On-Call recruitment and retention challenges due to social changes and a general understanding that there is a need to make sustainable change.

Results by respondent type

- 1.38 Analysing the questionnaire responses by respondent demographic showed that the level of agreement varied between different groups. The differences by question are reported in Chapter 3 of this report, but in general:
- Those who work for HWFRS or another Fire and Rescue Service were significantly more likely to agree with all proposals; whereas members of the public were significantly more likely to disagree with all proposals.
 - Those living in Herefordshire or another area (i.e., outside Herefordshire and Worcestershire) and those aged 45-54 were also significantly more likely to agree with most of the proposals.
 - Those living in Worcester or Malvern Hills, those aged under 35 years, those who are female, and those who have a disability were also significantly more likely to disagree with most of the proposals.

Other comments

Open questionnaire

- 1.39 Three-in-ten (30%) respondents who provided further comments had concerns around increased risk, including longer response times and a potential loss of life. Particular worries were that there would be inadequate resilience in the event of large or simultaneous incidents, and that supporting fire appliances would be more frequently unavailable in their own areas if they are being called away to others more often.
- 1.40 A quarter (25%) said that they disagreed with the proposals in general, while 23% made comments disagreeing specifically with the removal of appliances, and 14% with the proposed

changes to staffing/reductions in staff numbers. In this context, it was said that the proposed reductions do not take account of population, housing, and building growth; or climate change-associated risks, the extensive local transport network, and the risks posed by the increased use of lithium-ion battery technology. Moreover, the proposals were thought to demonstrate a lack of recognition or regard for the dedication of On-Call firefighters, and there was concern that the prospect of attending fewer incidents could lead to an exodus, further exacerbating staffing issues.

- 1.41 11% of those who made a comment agreed with the proposed changes and/or felt they would improve the Service. In particular, they felt that the proposals are well-thought out and evidenced and would realign resources to risk; ensure more efficient, effective, agile, and sustainable service provision; allow HWFRS to modernise and “*move with the times*” and represent a better use of public funds.
- 1.42 Other perceived positive aspects of the proposals were that they recognise the challenges of and need to address on-call recruitment and retention issues; and look to provide a more guaranteed response through the provision of more Wholetime firefighters. A few respondents said that HWFRS’s fire stations appear over-resourced compared to those at other services, and that similar proposals have been implemented at other Services, with no detrimental effect.

Resident focus groups

- 1.43 Almost all focus group participants across the three groups ultimately supported HWFRS’s proposed approach, considering the overall ‘package’ of proposals to be considered, creative, and logical. In fact, several people said their views had changed during the discussion: that is, their initial reservations about the proposals had been addressed, and they left the session more reassured about the proposals and their potential implications.

Equalities issues

- 1.44 Around a third (32%) of respondents who answered the question on equality issues thought that there were no impacts on equalities. Most responded with general criticism of the consultation, however, 5% said that HWFRS should *treat everyone equally* while some others noted potential negative impacts on certain groups of the population including *increased risk for people with disabilities including mental health* (5%); *increased risk to rural populations* (3%); *increased risk to vulnerable/isolated people* (3%); and *increased risk to elderly people* (3%). In this context, we should note that 9% of those responding to the questionnaire (85 people) considered themselves to have a disability; and 13% (127 people) were over 65.
- 1.45 Positive comments saying that the proposed changes *will increase equality/diversity of staff including a broader recruitment pool were provided by* 4% of respondents, while 2% suggested that HWFRS should specifically increase the number of women in the service.

2. Consultation Process

The Resource Review

- 2.1 Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) has carried out a Resource Review as part of its duty to ensure that it is making best use of its available resources and funding and providing the most effective service possible.
- 2.2 HWFRS aimed to address several challenges through its Resource Review, and the Service believes that its resources could be rebalanced to improve resilience, improve crewing levels and availability on some of its busier fire engines, and enhance its prevention work in the community. Under the proposals, HWFRS would remove eight On-Call fire engines from fire stations with more than one fire engine; change the third (On-Call) fire engine at Wyre Forest to night-only cover; and allow On-call firefighters at Wyre Forest up to eight minutes to get to the station.
- 2.3 The savings made through these proposals would be fully reinvested into supporting some of HWFRS's busiest fire engines by employing more Wholetime firefighters (who are immediately available and on duty during the day and night) at some Wholetime stations and for the first time also on some On-Call stations.

The Commission

- 2.4 In order to understand views on these proposed changes, a formal consultation was undertaken between 8th January and 4th March 2024. Opinion Research Services (ORS) were commissioned to undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open consultation questionnaire and three focus groups with members of the public.
- 2.5 In addition, HWFRS held 27 formal internal discussion sessions with 202 staff at the affected fire stations (as well as Strategic Leadership Board discussions with other stations and support staff departments, at which the Resource Review proposals were discussed); and eight written submissions were received from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA), Leominster Town Council, Malvern Town Council, Redditch Borough Council, two individual town/county councillors, and an individual firefighter.
- 2.6 The eight-week formal consultation period gave residents, staff, and other stakeholders sufficient time to participate, and through its consultation document, HWFRS sought to provide people with sufficient information to understand the issues under consideration and to make informed judgements about them.

Consultation questionnaire

- 2.7 A consultation document outlining the issues under consideration was produced by HWFRS. Using this as a basis, ORS and HWFRS designed a questionnaire including a series of core questions, as well as sections inviting respondents to make further comments and answer demographic profiling questions. The questionnaire was available online (via a link from the HWFRS website) and in paper format between 8th January and 4th March 2024. In total, 1,122 questionnaires were completed, all of which were submitted online.
- 2.8 Fifty seven respondents chose not to provide profiling information, however of the remaining 1,065, most responses (1,050) were from individuals, and the tables that appear without commentary below and on the following page show the unweighted profiles of the responses to the survey provided by personal respondents (please note that the figures may not always sum to 100% due to rounding).

Table 1: Age – All respondents who gave a personal response

Age	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Under 25	89	9
25-34	194	20
35-44	190	19
45-54	213	22
55-64	165	17
65-74	99	10
75 or over	28	3
Not Known	72	-
Total	1,050	100

Table 2: Gender – All respondents who gave a personal response

Gender	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Male	557	57
Female	405	42
Other	10	1
Not Known	78	-
Total	1,050	100

Table 3: Disability – All respondents who gave a personal response

Disability	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Yes	85	9
No	865	91
Not Known	100	-
Total	1,050	100

Table 4: Ethnic Group – All respondents who gave a personal response

Ethnic group	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
White British	882	93
Any other ethnic group	65	7
Not Known	103	-
Total	1,050	100

Table 5: Respondent Type – All respondents who gave a personal response

Which of the following best describes you?	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Member of the public	821	82
Staff member at HWFRS	116	12
Staff member at another Fire and Rescue Service	29	3
Other	34	3
Not Known	107	-
Total	1,107	100

Table 6: Area – All respondents who gave a personal response

Area	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Herefordshire	171	20
Worcestershire	636	75
Other	44	5
Not Known	256	-
Total	1,107	100

In addition, 15 valid responses were received from the following organisations:

- Drakes Broughton and Wadborough with Pirton Parish Council.
- Droitwich Masons.
- Herefordshire County Council.
- Elected member representing one of the wards within Worcester City Council.
- Member of Parliament for West Worcestershire.
- National Fire Chiefs Council.
- Pyons Group Parish Council (Canon Pyon and Kings Pyon, Herefordshire).
- Roundhill Wood Solar Farm Opposition Group - www.rwsf.co.uk.
- Severn Stoke & Croome D'abitot Parish Council, Worcestershire.
- West Mercia Police.
- Worcester County Council.

- Worcestershire County Council Streetworks department.
- 3 unnamed organisations.

- 2.9 Responses submitted on behalf of organisations can differ in nature to those submitted by personal responses from members of the public if, for example, they represent the collective views of a number of different people or raise very specific issues. However, given the low number of responses provided by organisations (15), ORS has, on this occasion, reported the consultation responses from organisations together with those of individuals.
- 2.10 It should be noted that while open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, they are not ‘surveys’ of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically or adventitiously, and are more likely to be completed by motivated people while also being subject to influence by local campaigns. As such, because the respondent profile is an imperfect reflection of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire populations, its results must be interpreted carefully. This does not mean that the open questionnaire findings should be discounted: they are analysed in detail in this report and must be taken into account as a demonstration of the views of residents who were motivated to put forward their views.

Interpretation of the data

- 2.11 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of ‘don’t know’ categories, or multiple answers.
- 2.12 Where differences between demographic groups have been highlighted as significant, there is a 95% probability that the difference is significant and not due to chance. Differences that are not said to be ‘significant’ or ‘statistically significant’ are indicative only. When comparing results between demographic sub-groups, overall, only results which are significantly different are highlighted in the text.
- 2.13 Charts are used in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The charts show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with:
- Green shades to represent positive responses (e.g., agreement)
 - Beige shades to represent neutral responses (neither positive nor negative)
 - Red shades to represent negative responses (e.g., disagreement)
- 2.14 The numbers on charts are percentages indicating the proportions of respondents who gave a particular response on a given question. The number of valid responses recorded for each question (base size) are reported throughout in parentheses. ‘Don’t know’ responses have been treated as invalid when calculating percentages.

- 2.15 The example comments shown throughout the report have been selected as being typical of those received in relation to each proposal.

Duplicate and co-ordinated responses

- 2.16 It is important that engagement questionnaires are open and accessible to all, whilst being alert to the possibility of multiple completions (by the same people) distorting the analysis. Therefore, while making it easy to complete the questionnaire online, ORS monitors the IP addresses through which questionnaires are completed. A similar analysis of ‘cookies’ was also undertaken – where responses originated from users on the same computer using the same browser and the same credentials (e.g., user account).
- 2.17 In considering co-ordinated responses, we note a Fire Brigades Union (FBU) campaign opposing the Resource Review proposals. In this campaign - which can be found at [Hereford and Worcester: protect your fire service | Campaign \(fbu.org.uk\)](#) - the FBU provided a link to the online questionnaire with the instruction to:

‘Please respond to questions 1-7 with STRONGLY DISAGREE’.

- 2.18 While it is impossible to ascertain the level to which the questionnaire results have been influenced by this campaign, it should be borne in mind when considering them.

Resident focus groups

- 2.19 Three online focus groups were undertaken with a diverse and broadly representative cross-section of residents across Herefordshire, North Worcestershire, and South Worcestershire.
- 2.20 The meetings used a ‘deliberative’ approach that encourages participants to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service and its proposals, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing their ideas in detail. The focus groups began, for the sake of context, with a concise review of HWFRS’s resources and incident levels, before the consultation issues were considered. Discussion was stimulated via a presentation devised by ORS and HWFRS - and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they wished throughout the discussions.

Attendance and representation

- 2.21 The focus groups were designed to inform and ‘engage’ participants with the discussion issues. The meetings lasted for around two hours and were attended as overleaf in Table 7.

Table 7: Focus groups (area, time and date and number of attendees)

Area	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
North Worcestershire	Tuesday 20 th February 2024 6:30pm - 8:00pm	10
South Worcestershire	Wednesday 21 st February 2024 6:30pm - 8:00pm	10
Herefordshire	Wednesday 22 nd February 2024 6:30pm - 8:00pm	8
TOTAL		28

- 2.22 The attendance target for the focus groups was at least eight people, which was achieved in all cases. Overall, the 28 participants who took part represented a broad cross-section of residents from the affected areas. Once initially recruited, all participants were then written to, to confirm the invitation and the arrangements; and those who agreed to come then received telephone or written reminders shortly before each meeting. As standard good practice, people were recompensed for their time and efforts in taking part.
- 2.23 Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from the two counties the opportunity to participate. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meeting (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline based on similar discussions.

HWFRS-led engagement

- 2.24 HWFRS held 27 formal internal discussion sessions with 202 staff at the affected fire stations (as well as Strategic Leadership Board discussions with other stations and support staff departments, at which the Resource Review proposals were discussed). HWFRS has provided ORS with a report of key findings from these sessions, which is included as Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.25 The Service also undertook:
- A briefing session for all HWFA members and a further 10 individual discussions with HWFA Members (a further two individual discussions were offered but not accepted).
 - A discussion with HWFA Group Leaders.
 - A group discussion with regional Chief Fire Officers (Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services); and individual discussions with the Chief Fire Officers/Assistant Chief Fire Officers of Gloucestershire, Shropshire, South Wales, Staffordshire, South Yorkshire, Warwickshire, and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services.

- Discussions with local and regional representatives of the Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA); Fire Brigades Union (FBU); Fire Officers Association (FOA); His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS); and Unison.
- A meeting with HWFRS Group Commanders and department heads.
- Briefings with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and senior police officers.
- Meetings with Members of Parliament representing the affected areas (Bromyard & Leominster, Droitwich, Hereford, Malvern, Redditch, Worcester, Wyre Forest).
- Meetings with Wychavon District Council, and the Malvern Hills District Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- Three local radio interviews (on BBC Hereford & Worcester, Free Radio, and Midlands Today).
- A consultation webpage, which was visited by around 3,000 people. As a result, 1,122 online consultation questionnaire responses were submitted. 42% of those accessing the webpage were men, while 58% were women; and the most common age ranges for users were 25 to 34 and 35 to 44⁴.
- Social media engagement via four key posts⁵, with analytics showing that:
 - 31,154 people saw the most popular Facebook post.
 - The combined total views across all social media platforms for the four posts were:
 - Facebook - 43,541
 - X/Twitter - 4,440
 - Instagram - 235
 - LinkedIn - 1,136.

^{2.26} A full report of HWFRS’s social media and website activity and reach can be seen in Appendix 3.

^{2.27} In our experience, having run similar consultations, the level of engagement with staff, representative bodies, councillors and members of the public was very high.

⁴ A full report of HWFRS’s website activity and reach can be seen in Appendix 3.

⁵ A full report of HWFRS’s social media activity and reach can be seen in Appendix 3.

Written submissions

- 2.28 During the formal consultation period, eight written submissions were received from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA), Leominster Town Council, Malvern Town Council, Redditch Borough Council, two individual town/county councillors, and an individual firefighter. These have been summarised in Appendix 2 of this report and reproduced in full following the summaries.

The report

- 2.29 This report summarises the feedback received during the consultation period. ORS does not endorse any opinions but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly; our role is to analyse and explain the opinions and arguments of the different interests participating in the consultation, but not to ‘make a case’ for any particular point of view. In this report, we seek to profile the opinions, views, and arguments of those who have responded, but not to make any recommendations as to how the reported results should be used. Whilst this report brings together a range of data to be considered, decisions must be taken based on all the evidence available.

The nature of public consultation

- 2.30 Public consultation promotes accountability and assists decision making; public bodies give an account of their plans or proposals and listen to feedback. Consultation has therefore been described as a dialogue, based on a genuine and purposeful exchange of views.
- 2.31 It should be noted, however, that consultations are not referenda or ‘votes’ in which the loudest voices or the greatest numbers automatically determine the outcome. The feedback received often reflects widely varied and sometimes polarised views, and it is important to report these concerns and contrary views robustly, in order for decision-makers to be able to conscientiously take into account the issues raised.

3. Consultation findings

Introduction

- 3.1 The following chapter reports the findings from the open questionnaire and the three public focus groups. The chapter has been structured to address each of the areas of discussion in some detail, and in order to differentiate verbatim quotations from other information, they are in indented italics within text boxes.

Main Findings

A need for change

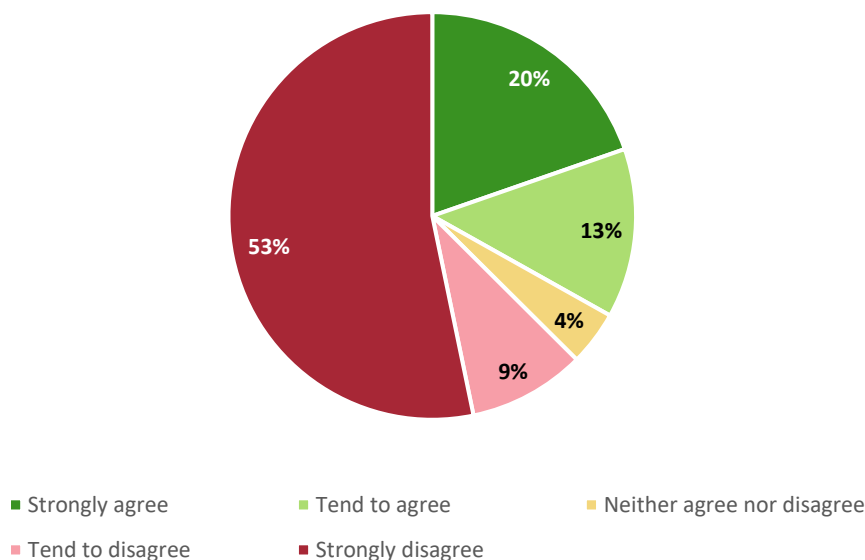
HWFRS aimed to address a number of challenges through its Resource Review, namely to improve the resilience and crewing levels of its busiest Wholetime fire engines, and improve the availability of all remaining fire engines; ensure a more resilient, sustainable and affordable On-Call firefighter duty system; increase community engagement and capacity to deliver more Prevention work; explore new ways of working with On-Call staff and further improve support for On-Call fire stations; and reduce the need for excessive overtime shifts on Wholetime fire stations.

HWFRS believes that its resources could be rebalanced to employ more Wholetime firefighters; provide improved resilience and crewing levels on busier fire engines, releasing more resources to improve support for On-Call fire engines; develop new more sustainable ways of On-Call working; and enhance Prevention activities in the community.

Open questionnaire

- 3.2 Figure 1 shows that opinions were mixed on whether HWFRS should change the way it uses its resources to address the challenges outlined above, with around a third (33%) of respondents agreeing with this, and a fifth (20%) strongly agreeing. However, a larger proportion - more than three-in-five (63%) - disagreed, with over half (53%) strongly disagreeing.

Figure 1: Level of agreement that HWFRS should change the way it uses its resources to address the challenges



Base: All respondents (1,108)

- 3.3 If the open questionnaire results for this question are analysed by sub-group, it can be seen that the level of agreement varies between different groups (Table 8). Respondents who live in Herefordshire or in an ‘other’ area (outside Herefordshire and Worcestershire), those aged 45-54 years, and those who work for Hereford & Worcester FRS or another Fire and Rescue Service were all significantly more likely to agree that HWFRS should change the way it uses its resources to address the challenges it is currently facing.
- 3.4 Conversely, those living in Worcester or Malvern Hills, those aged under 35 years, those who are female, those who have a disability and those who are a member of the public were significantly more likely to disagree with this proposal.

Table 8: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to change the way HWFRS uses its resources to address challenges

Significantly more likely to <u>agree</u>	Significantly more likely to <u>disagree</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living in Herefordshire or an ‘other’ area Aged 45-54 years Work for HWFRS Work for another Fire and Rescue Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living in Worcester or Malvern Hills Aged under 35 years Female Has a disability Member of the public

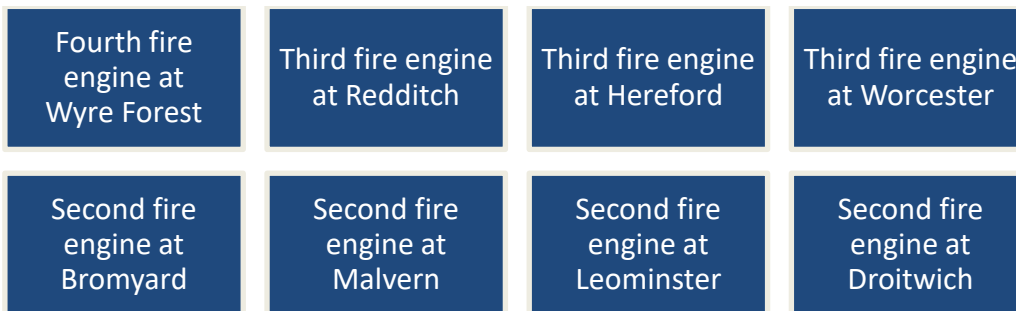
Resident focus groups

- 3.5 Focus group participants demonstrated little knowledge of the challenges outlined by HWFRS: they were unaware of the poor availability of some On-Call fire engines for example. However, when these challenges were outlined, the need for change was largely understood and supported.

“I was aware that there was some sort of resilience issues... but I wasn’t aware that it was specifically with staff and with the fire engines.” (Herefordshire)

Removal of On-Call fire engines

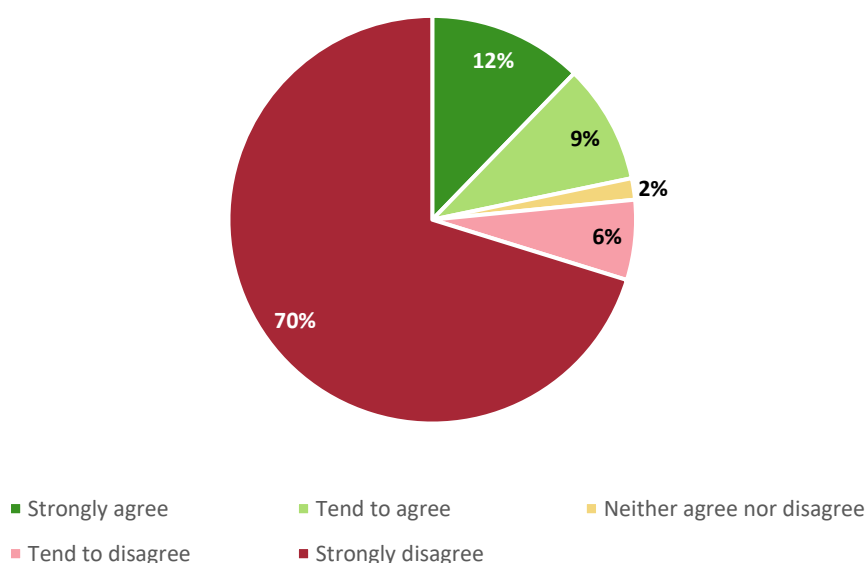
HWFRS is proposing to remove the following eight On-Call fire engines from fire stations with more than one fire engine, allowing savings to be reinvested in other, busier, fire engines to improve resilience and crewing levels, and support more prevention work within communities.



Open questionnaire

3.6 Figure 2 shows that the majority answering the online questionnaire disagreed with the proposal to remove eight On-Call fire engines from stations with two or more fire engines, to release resources for other, busier, fire engines, with more than three quarters (77%) of respondents disagreeing with this, and seven-in-ten (70%) strongly disagreeing. Just over a fifth (22%) agreed with this proposal, with 12% strongly agreeing.

Figure 2: Level of agreement with the proposal to remove eight On-Call fire engines from stations with two or more fire engines, to release resources for other, busier, fire engines



Base: All respondents (1,118)

- 3.7 If the open questionnaire results for this question are analysed by sub-group, it can be seen that the level of agreement varies between different groups (Table 9). Respondents who live in Herefordshire, Bromsgrove, or in an ‘other’ area (outside Herefordshire and Worcestershire), those aged 45-54 years, and those who work for Hereford & Worcester FRS or another Fire and Rescue Service were all significantly more likely to agree with the proposal to remove eight fire engines from stations with two or more fire engines.
- 3.8 Conversely, those living in Worcester or Malvern Hills, those aged under 35 years, those who are female, those who have a disability, and those who are a member of the public or an ‘other’ respondent type were significantly more likely to disagree with this proposal.

Table 9: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to remove eight fire engines from stations with two or more fire engines, to release resources for other, busier, fire engines

Significantly more likely to <u>agree</u>	Significantly more likely to <u>disagree</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Herefordshire, Bromsgrove, or an ‘other’ area • Aged 45-54 years • Work for HWFRS • Work for another Fire and Rescue Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Worcester or Malvern Hills • Aged under 35 years • Female • Has a disability • Member of the public or ‘other’ respondent

Resident focus groups

- 3.9 Prior to discussion on this proposal, participants were informed that the eight fire engines attend a low number of emergency response incidents each year; and that they have low levels of availability, mainly as a result of changing social attitudes leading to challenges around recruitment and retention.
- 3.10 After receiving this information, the general consensus among participants across the three groups was that while in an ideal world the proposed fire engine removals would not be necessary, the proposal has been carefully considered and appears to be rational and proportionate.

“I can see the logic if they’re not being used...” (North Worcestershire)

- 3.11 This is not to say there were no concerns, however. A few participants across the three groups worried about what they saw as a depletion of fire cover in rural areas; less overall resilience for, say, incidents like Grenfell Tower; the potential impact of the proposal on Prevention and Prevention activity in the affected areas; and that this could be the ‘thin end of the wedge’ for the On-Call service.

“My concern is that with less retained firefighters it will impact rural areas, as response time from the Wholtime fire station will be greater.” (South Worcestershire)

“I totally get the challenges, but... In Wyre Forest we’ve got quite a lot of high-rise; we’ve got a lot of high-risk businesses in the area. And yes, I know there are problems with recruiting On-Call firefighters, but if there’s a big incident... I’m worried about the response times to incidents like that...” (North Worcestershire)

“Will the changes impact in any way the fire safety and educative work of the Fire Service... There’s a lot more that could be done proactively...” (North Worcestershire)

“... You could put this in place and then in five or so years you have to do something else to make it workable...” (South Worcestershire)

- 3.12 Only one respondent across all three groups remained wholly opposed to the proposed removal of eight fire engines at the end of the discussions though. Their primary concern was around a lack of fire cover for their area in the event of larger or simultaneous incidents, as well as the potential impact of climate change on the number of incidents attended by HWFRS, and the possibility of further future reductions.

“What happens if there’s a major incident in Leominster... It’s a long time to get between Leominster and Bromyard ... And I think future cuts will come. I don’t feel reassured because the next thing will be that full-time staff in the fire services are very expensive and we’ll end up losing our full-time staff ... Will we end up with nothing in the smaller towns? (Herefordshire)

- 3.13 One South Worcestershire resident suggested that residents in the affected areas would not see a difference in fire cover however, given the current low availability of the fire engines proposed for removal.

“If you’re removing engines that you can’t currently crew anyway then your service delivered wouldn’t change...” (South Worcestershire)

- 3.14 It should also be noted that by the time the focus groups were held, amendments had been made to the proposal for Malvern Fire Station as a result of feedback from crews there (it is now proposed that this station will receive a ‘compact’ fire engine to replace its second On-Call fire engine for a trial period of two years). Participants were pleased with this, seeing it as evidence that HWFRS is listening and prepared to change its plans based on what it hears.

“It’s a creative solution, and the Service should be commended for that. And I’m reassured that if it’s not working, they won’t rest on their laurels and will make further changes if needed” (North Worcestershire)

- 3.15 Indeed, reassurance was sought in all groups that HWFRS would monitor the implementation of the proposal if it is agreed and make further amendments in future if the situation requires it.

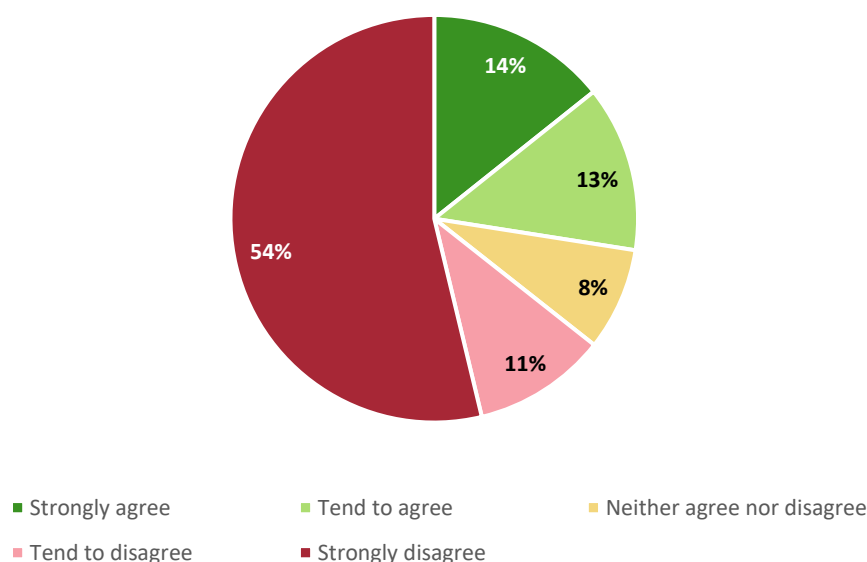
Changes to the third (On-Call) engine at Wyre Forest

HWFRS is proposing to change the third (On-Call) fire engine at Wyre Forest to night cover only and allow firefighters up to eight minutes to attend the fire station, providing a much larger recruitment area, but potentially being able to provide 100% availability.

Open questionnaire

- 3.16 Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to change the third (On-Call) fire engine to night-only cover, with 14% strongly agreeing (Figure 3). However, more than three fifths (64%) disagreed with the proposal, with more than half (54%) of respondents strongly disagreeing.

Figure 3: Level of agreement with the proposal to change the third (On-Call) fire engine at Wyre Forest to night-only cover



Base: All respondents (1,092)

- 3.17 If the open questionnaire results for this question are analysed by sub-group, it can be seen that the level of agreement varies between different groups (Table 10). Respondents who live in Herefordshire or in an ‘other’ area (outside of Herefordshire and Worcestershire), those aged 45-54 years, those who are male, and those who work for Hereford & Worcester FRS or another Fire and Rescue Service were all significantly more likely to agree with the proposal to change the third (On-Call) engine at Wyre Forest to night-only cover.
- 3.18 Conversely, those living in Worcester or Malvern Hills, those aged under 35 years, those who are female, those who have a disability, and those who are a member of the public were significantly more likely to disagree with this proposal.

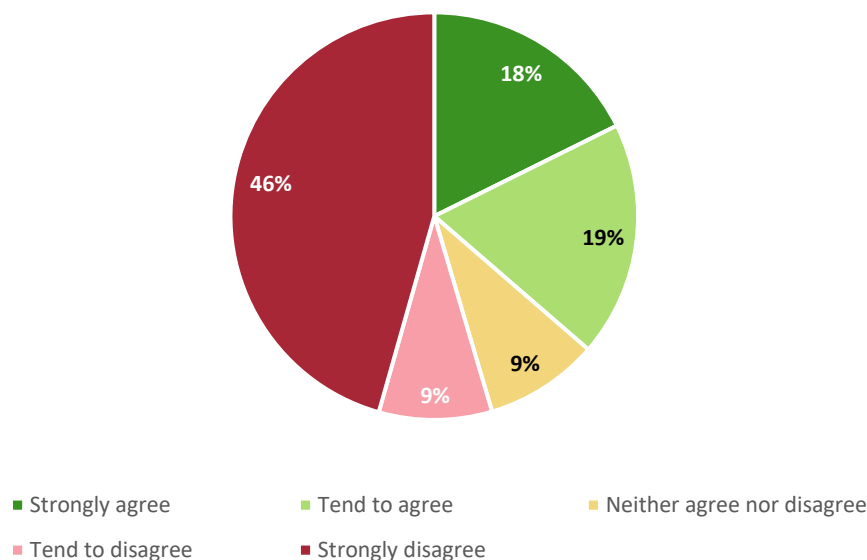
Table 10: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to change the third (On-Call) fire engine at Wyre Forest to night-only cover

Significantly more likely to <u>agree</u>	Significantly more likely to <u>disagree</u>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Herefordshire or an ‘other’ area • Aged 45-54 years • Male • Work for HWFRS • Work for another Fire and Rescue Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Worcester or Malvern Hills • Aged under 35 years • Female • Has a disability • Member of the public
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- 3.19 There was a slightly higher level of agreement with the proposal to allow On-Call firefighters at Wyre Forest, on the third engine only, up to eight minutes (up from five minutes) to attend the fire station, with more than a third (36%) of respondents agreeing and 18% strongly agreeing (
- 3.20 However, more than half (55%) disagreed with this proposal, with 46% of respondents strongly disagreeing.

Figure 4: Level of agreement with the proposal to allow On-Call firefighters at Wyre Forest, on the third fire engine only, up to eight minutes (up from five minutes) to attend the fire station



Base: All respondents (1,092)

- 3.21 If the open questionnaire results for this question are analysed by sub-group, it can be seen that the level of agreement varies between different groups (Table 11). Respondents who live in Herefordshire, Bromsgrove, or in an ‘other’ area (outside of Herefordshire and Worcestershire), and those who work for Hereford & Worcester FRS or another Fire and Rescue Service are all significantly more likely to agree with the proposal to allow On-Call firefighters at Wyre Forest, on the third fire engine only, up to eight minutes to attend the fire station.
- 3.22 Conversely, those living in Worcester or Malvern Hills, those aged under 35 years, those who are female, those who have a disability, those who are White British, and those who are a member of the public or an ‘other’ respondent type were significantly more likely to disagree with this proposal.

Table 11: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to allow On-Call firefighters at Wyre Forest, on the third fire engine only, up to eight minutes (up from five minutes) to attend the fire station

Significantly more likely to <u>agree</u>	Significantly more likely to <u>disagree</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Herefordshire, Bromsgrove, or an ‘other’ area • Work for HWFRS • Work for another Fire and Rescue Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Worcester or Malvern Hills • Aged under 35 years • Female • Has a disability • White British • Member of the public or ‘other’ respondent

Resident focus groups

- 3.23 Although there were several questions about the practical impact of the proposed three-minute increase, most focus group participants understood the logic of increasing turn out times for the third (On-Call) fire engine at Wyre Forest, with some even suggesting it be considered in other areas to widen recruitment pools.

“I think it’s quite innovative going from five minutes to eight minutes. I know at the moment that’s only Wyre Forest but have you got any plans to roll that out across the rest of the area...?” (South Worcestershire)

- 3.24 A couple of Herefordshire residents cautioned against this, however. While they felt they could support the proposed change in the Wyre Forest, they objected to a wider roll-out across Herefordshire especially, mainly in the context of lengthening response times in more rural areas⁶.

“... My concerns are that it will extend the response time... Maybe it’s better to have a fire engine that responds slower than not at all, but it worries me that it might be the thin end of the wedge. It might not be intended as that... but potentially once that’s accepted, does that have a knock-on effect in a few years if someone points to that and says: ‘Well, if that’s okay for Wyre Forest then why not there?’” (Herefordshire)

- 3.25 There was also some scepticism that this change would work in isolation, given the role of societal factors in the recruitment difficulties faced by HWFRS and others. It was thus suggested that other initiatives would be required alongside the increased turn out time to ensure success.

⁶ It should be noted that this is not proposed for Herefordshire.

*“... Is it just the time increase to get to the station that will positively impact recruitment, or will other factors still impact recruitment? I think what I'm asking is, ‘Will the time increase be enough to increase the pool of people that could be attracted to apply?’”
(South Worcestershire)*

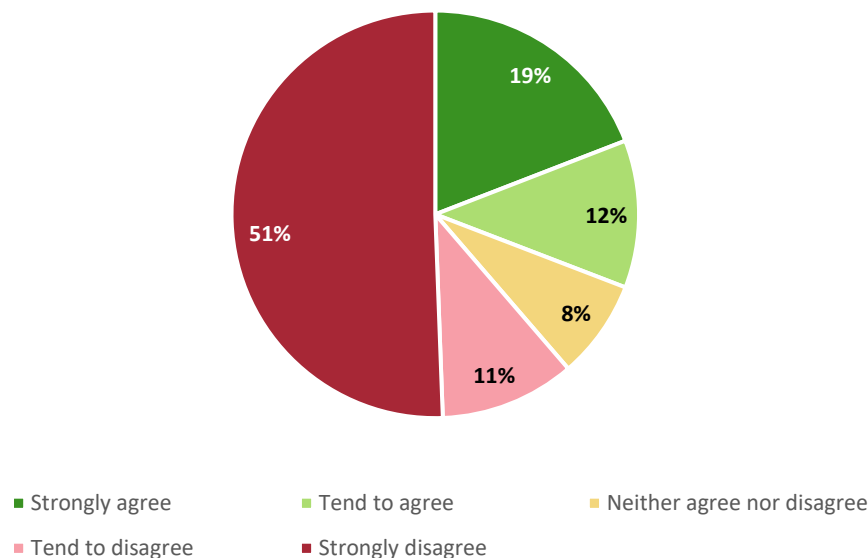
Reinvesting savings to support the busiest fire engines

HWFRS is proposing to reinvest all the savings made into supporting its busiest fire engines by providing more Wholetime firefighters at some fire stations, who are immediately available and on duty during the day and night. More Wholetime firefighters would be available during the daytime when emergency calls are at their highest levels. Improving Wholetime resilience would release resources currently used to address shortfalls in the Wholetime service to support other On-Call fire engines across the Service area.

Open questionnaire

- 3.26 Just under a third (31%) agree (19% strongly) with the proposal to reinvest savings into providing more Wholetime firefighters to support the busiest fire engines and provide improved ways of working for the remaining On-Call staff (Figure 5). However, more than three fifths (61%) disagree with this proposal, with over half (51%) of respondents strongly disagreeing.

Figure 5: Level of agreement with the proposal to reinvest savings into providing more Wholetime firefighters to support the busiest fire engines and provide improved ways of working for the remaining On-Call staff



Base: All respondents (1,109)

- 3.27 If the open questionnaire results for this question are analysed by sub-group, it can be seen that the level of agreement varies between different groups (Table 12). Respondents who live in Herefordshire, Bromsgrove, or in an ‘other’ area (outside of Herefordshire and Worcestershire), those aged 45-54 years, and those who work for Hereford & Worcester FRS or another Fire and Rescue Service were all significantly more likely to agree with the proposal to reinvest savings

into providing more Wholetime firefighters to support the busiest fire engines and provide improved ways of working for the remaining On-Call staff.

- 3.28 Conversely, those living in Worcester or Malvern Hills, those aged under 35 years, those who are female, those who have a disability, and those who were a member of the public are significantly more likely to disagree with this proposal.

Table 12: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to reinvest savings into providing more Wholetime firefighters to support the busiest fire engines and provide improved ways of working for the remaining On-Call staff

Significantly more likely to <u>agree</u>	Significantly more likely to <u>disagree</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Herefordshire, Bromsgrove, or an ‘other’ area • Aged 45-54 years • Work for HWFRS • Work for another Fire and Rescue Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Worcester or Malvern Hills • Aged under 35 years • Female • Has a disability • Member of the public

Resident focus groups

- 3.29 For many focus group participants, their support for the proposed changes to the On-Call system was contingent on the resulting savings being reinvested to support HWFRS’s busiest fire engines. In this context, it was acknowledged that the Resource Review was undertaken not to identify financial efficiencies, but rather to ensure a more efficient and effective use of resources across the Service.

“I think it’s brilliant that the resources are being rebalanced... I’m reassured... I especially like the potential savings and how it’s going to be reinvested for the resilience.” (Herefordshire)

“... I think it’s been very well thought out and it’s good to see that you’re not losing anything and that it’s all going back in... It’s a very sensible set of proposals” (North Worcestershire)

“... Rather than being cuts, it’s a sensible reallocation. For me it sounds as though the service will be better than it was before. It makes sense to take machines that not being used and reallocate those funds elsewhere. It all seems very positive to me.” (South Worcestershire)

- 3.30 There was, though, some worry about the feasibility and sustainability of making the proposed investment in the Wholetime service in the event of future budget reductions.

“Are you going to be able to keep putting what you say you’re investing into Leominster and Bromyard?” (Herefordshire)

- 3.31 Furthermore, a South Worcestershire participant suggested that reducing the availability of overtime shifts on Wholetime stations could have a detrimental effect on staff retention.

*“... is that part of the reason sometimes that firefighters are staying with you, because they know there will be an option for taking overtime? That might be taken away from some, which might have an impact on whether you retain firefighters going forward?”
(South Worcestershire)*

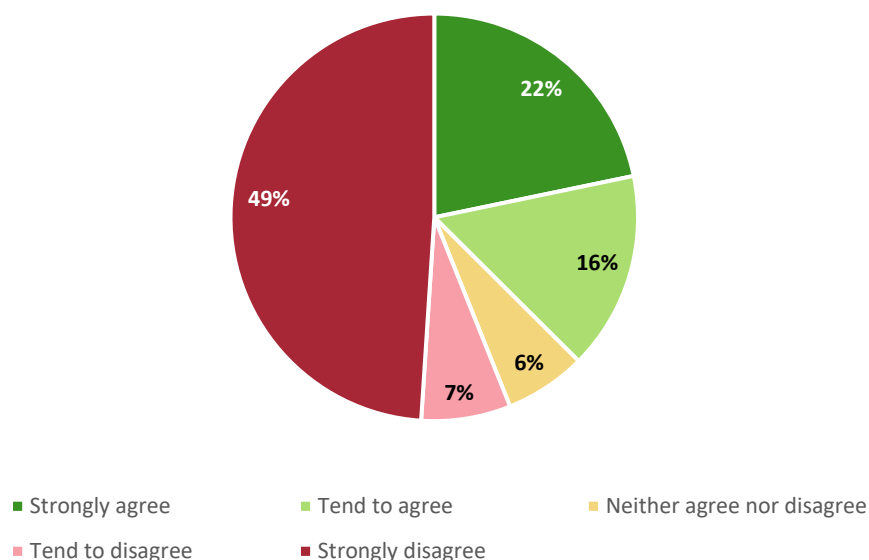
Using alternative, more flexible modes of transport

There will be instances where the first On-Call fire engine at a fire station is sent to an incident with a crew of four, five or six, but additional firefighters have responded into the fire station and are available to also go to the incident. HWFRS is proposing to provide alternative, more flexible modes of transport at some locations where a fire engine has been removed, to transport additional staff to an incident if required. These would be transportation vehicles only, not ‘response’ vehicles with equipment.

Open questionnaire

- 3.32 Of all the proposals, that to provide alternative, more flexible modes of transport (i.e. four-wheel drive vehicles) for available additional On-Call firefighters received the highest level of support, with 37% agreeing, and 22% strongly agreeing (Figure 6). However, more than half (56%) disagreed with this proposal, with around half (49%) of respondents strongly disagreeing.

Figure 6: Level of agreement with the proposal to provide alternative, more flexible modes of transport (i.e. four-wheel drive vehicles) for available additional On-Call firefighters



Base: All respondents (1,113)

- 3.33 If the open questionnaire results for this question are analysed by sub-group, it can be seen that the level of agreement varies between different groups (Table 13). Respondents who live in Herefordshire, or in an ‘other’ area (outside of Herefordshire and Worcestershire), those aged 55-64 years, and those who work for Hereford & Worcester FRS or another Fire and Rescue

Service were all significantly more likely to agree with the proposal to provide alternative, more flexible modes of transport for available additional On-Call firefighters.

- 3.34 Conversely, those living in Worcester or Wychavon, those aged under 35 years, those who have a disability, and those who are a member of the public were significantly more likely to disagree with this proposal.

Table 13: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to provide alternative, more flexible modes of transport (i.e. four-wheel drive vehicles) for available additional On-Call firefighters

Significantly more likely to <u>agree</u>	Significantly more likely to <u>disagree</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Herefordshire or an ‘other’ area • Aged 55-64 years • Work for HWFRS • Work for another Fire and Rescue Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Worcester or Wychavon • Aged under 35 years • Has a disability • Member of the public

Resident focus groups

- 3.35 The prospect of using alternative, more flexible modes of transport (instead of fire engines) was endorsed in all three focus groups as an innovative approach to enhancing resources at incidents.

“...The vehicles that pick up the firefighters that haven’t managed to get there in time is, in a rural area, probably a good idea.” (Herefordshire)

- 3.36 At the South Worcestershire group, a couple of people questioned whether HWFRS had considered building a degree of flexibility into the turn out time at the stations where it is proposed to introduce alternative modes of transport. That is, given those travelling in a ‘support’ vehicle would not be first on scene, these participants considered it “... *strange that you’re not considering recruiting on the premise of there being more flexibility in that time... You’re still recruiting on the premise that they have to be there in six minutes even though you’re saying practically they might not have to be.*” (South Worcestershire)
- 3.37 In North Worcestershire, one participant reflected on the societal changes evident since the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly people’s reluctance to relinquish quality time with family and friends. This, they felt, would contribute to ongoing issues with On-Call recruitment and retention. As such, they suggested “*building on that idea of moving staff around in four-wheel drive vehicles to eventually phase out On-Call staff as much as possible, giving yourself ways of mobilising fulltime staff in different ways...*” (North Worcestershire)

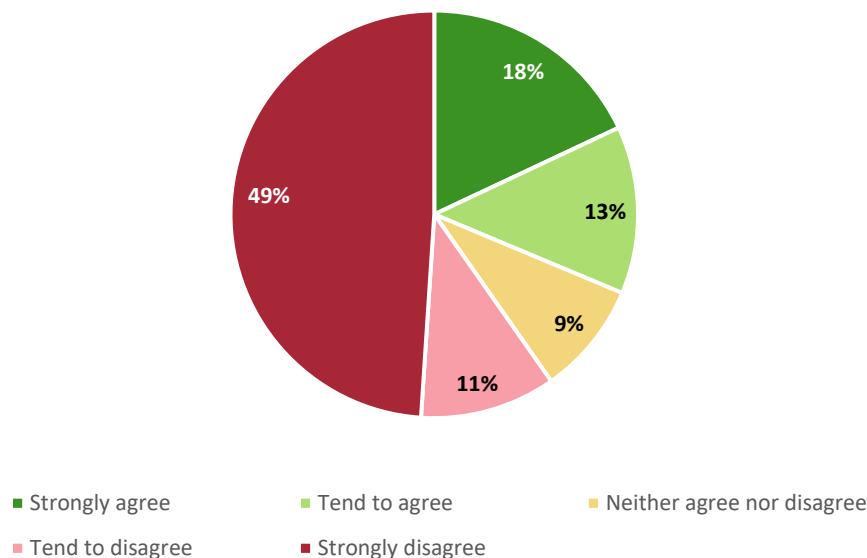
Implementing a more sustainable On-Call staffing model

HWFRS is proposing to use the savings generated to provide a more sustainable On-Call staffing model and explore new ways of working within the On-Call service.

Open questionnaire

3.38 Just under a third (31%) of respondents agreed (18% strongly) with the proposal to provide a more sustainable staffing model and explore new ways of working within the On-Call service (Figure 7). However, three fifths (60%) disagreed with this proposal, with around half (49%) of respondents strongly disagreeing.

Figure 7: Level of agreement with the proposal to use the savings generated to provide a more sustainable staffing model and explore new ways of working within the On-Call service



Base: All respondents (1,105)

3.39 If the open questionnaire results for this question are analysed by sub-group, it can be seen that the level of agreement varies between different groups (Table 14). Respondents who live in Herefordshire, or in an ‘other’ area (outside of Herefordshire and Worcestershire), those aged 45-54 years, and those who work for Hereford & Worcester FRS were all significantly more likely to agree with the proposal to provide a more sustainable staffing model and explore new ways of working within the On-Call service.

3.40 Conversely, those living in Worcester, those aged under 35 years, those who are female, those who have a disability, and those who are a member of the public were significantly more likely to disagree with this proposal.

Table 14: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to use the savings generated to provide a more sustainable staffing model and explore new ways of working within the On-Call service

Significantly more likely to <u>agree</u>	Significantly more likely to <u>disagree</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living in Herefordshire or an ‘other’ area Aged 45-54 years Work for HWFRS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living in Worcester Aged under 35 years Female Has a disability Member of the public

Resident focus groups

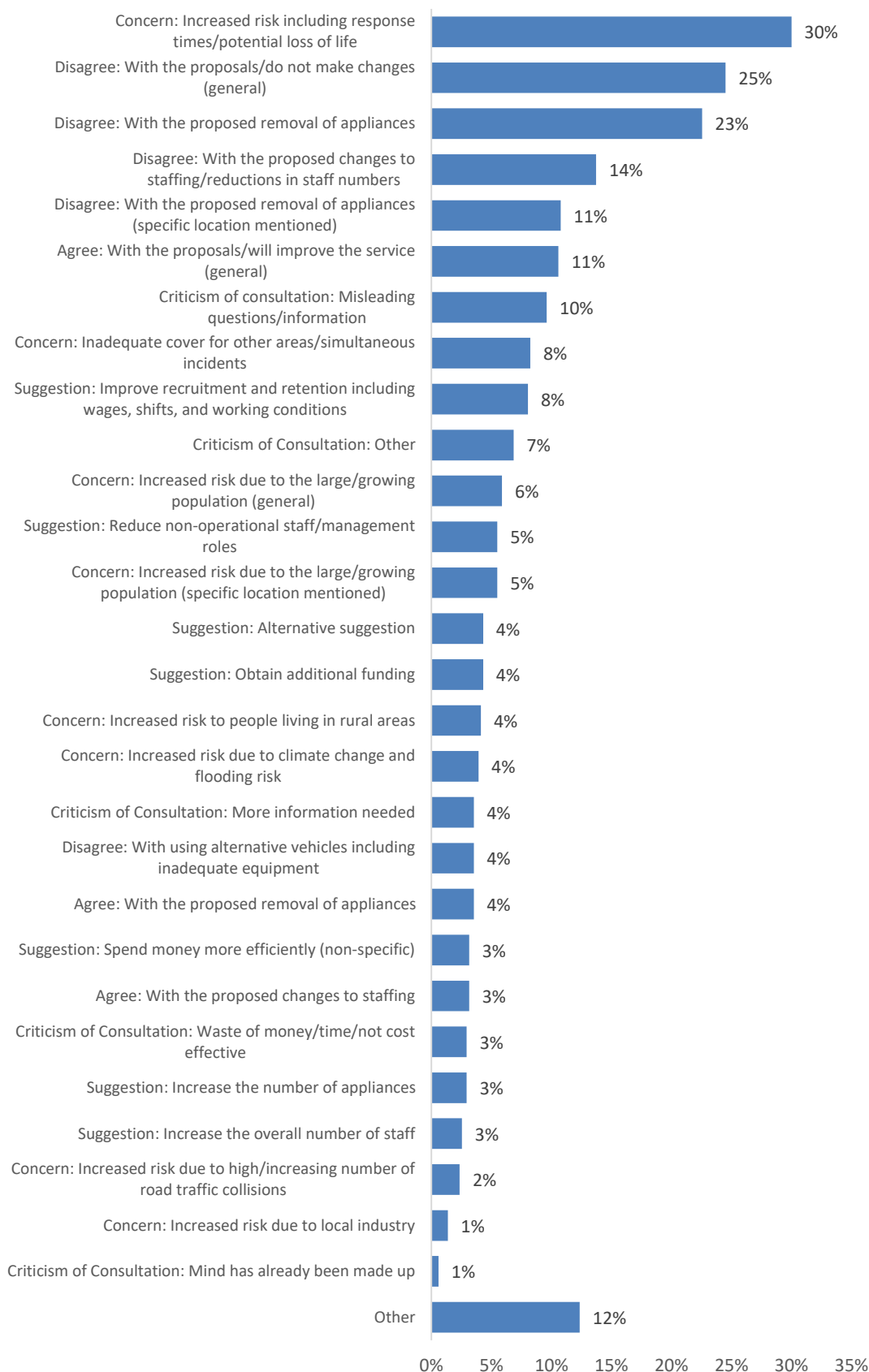
- 3.41 As reported earlier, focus group participants were generally pleased that any savings made through the Resource Review would be reinvested into other areas of the Service, including the On-Call staffing model.
- 3.42 People were particularly keen to see HWFRS further engaging with local businesses to promote the benefits of employing On-Call firefighters; even incentivising them if necessary.

“Will there be any incentives offered to businesses to improve recruitment of on-call fire fighters?” (South Worcestershire)

Other comments on proposed changes

- 3.43 Respondents to the open questionnaire were asked if they had any further comments about HWFRS’s proposed changes to resourcing. Figure 8 overleaf shows the main themes arising from the comments received.

Figure 8: Do you have any OTHER COMMENTS about HWFRS's proposed changes to resourcing?



Base: All respondents who provided further comments (510)

- 3.44 It can be seen that three-in-ten (30%) respondents who provided further comments had concerns around increased risk, including longer response times and a potential loss of life.

“... Proposed appliance removal in some towns/cities shouldn’t be allowed to go ahead, as the proposed growth in these areas would leave existing appliances under resourced as well as greater increase danger to firefighters already working in a dangerous job...”

“This proposal is front line cuts and a downgrading of fire cover... I do not believe for one minute that the loss of the fire appliances and firefighters will make the service better and provide an improved level of cover for the communities... Less fire engines, less firefighters equals greater risk...”

“A service already cut to the bone can’t be cut any further. HWFRS have a duty to ensure that when the people of Hereford & Worcestershire need their assistance, that they are able to ensure the correct number of fire engines, crewed by sufficient numbers of firefighters, are mobilised and arrive in an acceptable time. These cuts will further erode attendance times, impact on the safety of firefighters and lead to the loss of lives and property within the two counties.”

- 3.45 Particular worries were that there would be inadequate resilience in the event of large or simultaneous incidents, and that supporting fire appliances would be more frequently unavailable in their own areas if they are being called away to others more often.

“... If for example the only remaining Droitwich fire engine which has specialist equipment is deployed somewhere else within Hereford and Worcester, which is the area it covers, then any emergency in Droitwich will have to be attended by an engine from Worcester, Wye Forest or Redditch, assuming one is available as these numbers are also being reduced.”

“The use of on-call fire fighters is the very core of resilience for the fire service and the work it does. The fact that 75% of fire engines are crewed by on call firefighters shows the value and importance of these crews and engines to the area as a whole providing a quicker response time than having to rely on engines arriving from a more distant whole time crewed station. The removal of eight fire engines is a near 25% reduction could be very detrimental to the service fulfilling their role at complex incidents or when the service is under great pressure due to events like flooding which are only going to increase. There seems to be a real danger in this plan of reducing the fire services ability to perform its duties without having to rely on requesting assistance from neighbouring fire services.”

“... There are already many incidents where major fires have meant engines needed to be sent from the stations you are cutting an engine from. This would mean that station would have no engine to respond to an incident in that town. Add in the increase in electrical technology which means an increase fire risk I homes and this proposal is a recipe for disaster and potential tragedy...”

3.46 In addition, a quarter (25%) said that they disagreed with the proposals in general, while 23% made comments disagreeing specifically with the removal of appliances, and 14% with the proposed changes to staffing/reductions in staff numbers.

3.47 In this context, it was said that the proposed reductions do not take account of population, housing, and building growth; or climate change-associated risks, the extensive local transport network, and the risks posed by the increased use of lithium-ion battery technology. Moreover, the proposals were thought to demonstrate a lack of recognition or regard for the dedication of On-Call firefighters, and there was concern that the prospect of attending fewer incidents could lead to an exodus, further exacerbating staffing issues.

“I believe that any loss of a fire engine within the local community that is crewed by on call fire fighters, isn't the best way forward as on call firefighters are very hard to find and the potential loss off 45 firefighters will only make that worse. Potentially you will lose more as call numbers will decline and the spaces for each firefighter on a fire engine will halve, so firefighters may lose interest and leave...”

3.48 Concerns around particular areas mainly centred on population growth, the proximity of risks like motorways, waterways, industrial and agricultural areas, hospitals, and heritage buildings (Worcester Cathedral for example). An issue particular to respondents from Malvern was that the area is often “cut off” by flooding, and it is difficult for appliances from neighbouring stations to reach the town.

3.49 11% of those who made a comment agreed with the proposed changes and/or felt they would improve the Service. In particular, they felt that the proposals are well-thought out and evidenced and would realign resources to risk; ensure more efficient, effective, agile, and sustainable service provision; allow HWFRS to modernise and “move with the times” and represent a better use of public funds.

“I personally do not think the current model is sustainable, and the changes proposed would help to create a better, more agile and available service to the community.”

“... To enable a more effective response to incidents, the way that the Service delivers firefighters to incidents with the correct resources, with the appropriate skills needs to be reviewed, renewed and continually shaped to fit with the community needs. The model that is proposed is putting our communities first, the Service needs to be able to flex the resource to continually meet the demands of incidents within the two counties of Hereford and Worcester. I fully support the recommendations.”

“There is always a tendency to carry on doing things "because that's how we've always done it", but services need to change with the times and find new ways to work more effectively and efficiently. I support these changes as they are not cuts, but a reinvestment into, and a re-deployment of, resources.”

“Removing some of the unnecessary legacy crewing arrangements is essential to provide a modern, financially efficient Fire and Rescue Service. More efficient use of operational staff, especially Wholetime, will also help to achieve this.”

- 3.50 Other perceived positive aspects of the proposals were that they recognise the challenges of and need to address on-call recruitment and retention issues; and look to provide a more guaranteed response through the provision of more Wholetime firefighters.

“On-Call firefighter recruitment and retention is a growing issue across the whole country, I believe that the proposals made will increase the sustainability of the on-call staffing model, particularly increasing the response times to station and the station recruitment area. The other proposals regarding the re-distribution of resources appear to be very well researched and evidenced and show clear and tangible benefits if implemented.”

“Whilst nobody can ever be completely happy with any proposal that seems like a reduction in service, it doesn't make sense to keep financing (at a cost of nearly £900,000) these 9 engines that are not even crewed for more than two thirds of their potential availability. To re-invest this saving in improving numbers of Firefighters that are immediately available not only improves Firefighter safety but also improves the service to the public by having a larger workforce on the initial response to emergency incidents. Increased numbers of Whole-time firefighters will also cause less interruption to the vital work that specialist officers do to improve public and Firefighter safety as there will be few instances where these officers have to cover stations that cannot provide a complete crew. When public service funding is so poor (like it or not we are in another recession) I feel that there is little choice but to support the Chief Fire Officer's proposal and allow him to reallocate limited resources to best effect.”

- 3.51 A few respondents said that HWFRS's fire stations appear over-resourced compared to those at other services, and that similar proposals have been implemented at other Services, with no detrimental effect.

“These proposals are entirely sensible. I live in Worcester but work for another Fire and Rescue Service in another County... You are lucky to have so many appliances but they're utilisation levels show that with their removal, you are not putting people at risk.”

“The plan appears to be a pragmatic approach in dealing with some of the longer term issues related to crewing and availability. Many other FRS have already made changes such as these and haven't compromised community safety. I was surprised to hear of multi pump stations still being in place. With the current economic climate and the reduction in public sector funding over the last 12 years FRS' across the country need to move away from the very static traditional approaches to resource management.”

- 3.52 Other comments were made in relation to the proposals to providing alternative, more flexible modes of transport (while there was some positivity around this, others considered it a “pointless” risk to firefighter and public safety and there was some misconception that they would function as response vehicles); and allowing firefighters on the third Wyre Forest On-Call appliance up to eight minutes to get to the station (a few respondents considered this to be “reckless”, while others suggested it could be implemented more widely).

“I would also highlight that a flexible approach to getting firefighters to an incident is positive. A number of other Services have already moved to using personnel numbers in addition to number of pumps. This allows for Fire Control to manage assets intelligently and provides greater ability to keep more pumps available for other incidents.”

“...In your proposal to replace on-call fire trucks with 4 by 4 vehicle, this doesn't negate the loss of the additional fire truck. All this enables, is more fire fighters to be available at an incident, with less equipment to put out the fire, or other related incidents. What is the point in having 4 extra fire fighters, without the fire equipment? ...”

“... to propose to add to the time requirement for on call firefighters to reach the station, appears to be not only foolish, but reckless. Precious minutes wasted by rig/rigs being immobile waiting for crew for 8 minutes... On-Call have always lived within 5 minutes of the station and it has worked well...”

- 3.53 Finally, those who made comments criticising the consultation process primarily complained about what they considered the “biased” questionnaire, the “skewed”, “manipulated”, and “misleading” data used, and the “dressing up” of cuts as efficiencies.

Alternative suggestions/mitigations

- 3.54 Figure 8 also shows that many respondents to the open questionnaire suggested alternatives to the planned proposals and these are summarised below.

- 3.55 Around half of the suggestions given related to staffing, primarily reducing the number of senior and middle management positions within HWFRS, thus mitigating the need to remove appliances, or cut the number of firefighters. This, it was said, would enable On-Call staffing levels to be protected or even increased, with savings reinvested into enhancing front-line roles e.g., by increasing pay or flexibility.

“It would be more prudent to remove senior and middle management positions and reinvest that money in to on call firefighters, either paying them more or increasing flexibility to make it more attractive and increase recruitment.”

- 3.56 A few respondents specifically said that there are too many senior managers within HWFRS and that the Service is ‘top heavy’: one claimed that the *“officers model is substantially higher than other services nationally.”* It was suggested that if incident numbers and resources have reduced, the number of officers should also be reduced to reflect this.

“There are far too many Senior Officers and managers in the service in all areas and this has increased over the years. This could also be enhanced by removing the subsidised cars the service supply to officers to use for private use. As your review says, the amount of calls has got less so the need for more or the same amount of officers should be reduced to reflect this.”

“Why has the Officer Quota not been downgraded as the Brigade has less Fire Firefighters and appliances, where are the cuts to management? Why are officers riding round in Volvo's when less expensive means of transport are available.”

- 3.57 Some also suggested that the number and type of vehicles provided to officers should be reviewed, with identified savings directed towards emergency vehicles.

“Perhaps a reduction in management vehicles should be considered NOT emergency fire equipment and vehicles.”

- 3.58 A couple of respondents noted that HWFRS should concentrate on investing in and retaining the ‘good quality’ staff they already have rather than investing in new recruits, who would require training.

“... What benefit does it have to get rid of a bunch of trained and skilled firefighters. To pay for a bunch of new recruits to get to the same result. If instead you invested into the current firefighters to make sure that there was 100% availability. Would be a more sensible move.”

- 3.59 Several respondents specifically suggested improving employment conditions for On-Call staff. Paying On-Call firefighters a salary as opposed to a retainer fee and pay for turnout was considered a sensible approach – and one that has been successfully implemented at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. It was also felt that contracts should be more flexible, and that guaranteed part-time work could be considered for On-Call staff.

“As retained employees hold other jobs, you struggle to get crews, maybe consider the hourly contracts. 40, 60, and 100-hour contracts are shameful.”

“...Retention of On-Call would be better if we had more flexible patterns rather than having to shoehorn people into preset cover patterns and allowing stations more say as to how they manage those patterns.”

“Hereford and Worcester FRS should possibly explore the idea of South Wales FRS where the On-Call are paid a salary instead of retaining fee and attendances and turnouts. A decent liveable second income.”

- 3.60 One respondent also said that *“The current flexibility to book on/off but still do the contracted hours is ridiculous... I cannot believe the number of crews off the road... I think some critical reflection on why they don't/won't work unsociable hours or can book on/off as they please needs to be considered.”*
- 3.61 Other suggestions around staffing included re-hiring retired firefighters, using the previously create resilience pool to recruit extra firefighters, more dynamic On-Call recruitment and retention, and more joined-up working with local business owners.

“Try bringing back retired [firefighters] on a 20-hour contract to maybe sit at a station - maybe just be a driver? Or just as the [Watch Manager].”

“The extra fire fighters to enhance the Wholetime should come from the resilience pool that was created... and was never officially disbanded.”

“I believe more time and money needs to be invested into meeting with local business owners to promote the release of on call fire fighters during the day so that they can better understand how it actually works and boast the benefits this can bring to their businesses as a lot of employers aren't interested due to ignorance.”

- 3.62 Several respondents queried whether a similar approach to that being proposed at Wyre Forest, allowing On-Call firefighters eight minutes to respond to the station, could be adopted at other stations. They felt that if the response time was increased from five to eight minutes (particularly for night cover only, or ‘backup’ second appliances where a *“10-minute response time is better than none at all”*) this would increase the recruitment pool and overall availability of On-Call fire engines.

“If extending the time allowed for an On-Call firefighter improves staffing then this should also be considered if it improves the sustainability in the staffing model.”

“As some on call second engines are struggling to be manned, why not instead look to further relax those response times? ... Quite frankly a backup response of a 2nd engine with a 10 min response time is better than none at all. It could substantially increase the number of people who might volunteer. I for example would consider it, but I live 7 mins from my local station so haven’t bothered...”

“Could the On-Call all crews be given more time to respond when a special appliance is required e.g. 10 mins for the ALP?”

- 3.63 Many suggestions related to fire engines and the proposed alternative ‘transportation’ vehicles. Two respondents suggested that where a second appliance is proposed to be removed, HWFRS should consider replacing the remaining appliance with a larger vehicle that can mobilise with eight or more staff, minimising the impact of the loss of the other appliance.

“Should second appliances at solely retained stations be removed, I believe consideration should be given to providing appliances with more seating like in Shropshire. That way single appliance stations can still mobilise with 8 or more firefighters and... [it] minimises the impact of the loss of the second appliances.”

“In conjunction with the service’s proposals, have you considered where an appliance has been removed, having the remaining appliance fitted with 9 seats, so if there are staff available, they can attend incidents...”

- 3.64 In terms of the proposed four-wheeled drive vehicles, it was suggested that rather than being non-response vehicles, they should be equipped with suitable (firefighting) equipment to enable them to provide assistance in an emergency capacity.

“Having extra firefighters arrive in a 4x4 provides the manpower, but this vehicle will not have any firefighting equipment. Would it not be better to equip this vehicle as an immediate response, allowing the crew to have the flexibility and means to effect the rescue of anyone at risk, assess, stabilise or control the situation before the arrival of the main appliance. This includes providing additional capabilities to the crews of specialist vehicles.”

- 3.65 One respondent suggested that On-Call crews crew some of the special appliances 100% of the time to keep the Wholetime appliances available 100% of the time.

“At the affected locations, especially at Worcester and Hereford, the On-Call crews could crew some of the special appliances 100% of the time to keep the Wholetime appliances available 100% of the time without dividing the crews up.”

- 3.66 Two respondents provided feedback specifically on the proposed changes at Droitwich and Malvern. They felt that the second appliances at these locations should not be removed for the sake of wider resilience across the area, and given the proposed changes to day crewing that should improve their availability.

“In the review, Droitwich's first appliance ability to support fire cover in Redditch in the daytime is used as a reason to reduce Redditch's third appliance to night time cover only. It stands to reason that Droitwich's second appliance should be kept to provide additional resilience if the first appliance is expected to cover Redditch more, especially until the new day crewing arrangements are fully embedded.”

“I feel the review has failed to recognise the impact of the poorly conceived crewing changes at Droitwich and Malvern which saw the removal of the day crewing contract and how this hugely impacted the availability of the second on call appliances at night as on call staff were used to backfill the first appliance thus making the second vehicle unavailable. I feel strongly that the second appliances at Droitwich and Malvern should not be removed at this time and that a further review should be undertaken 24 months after day crewing is fully reinstated to see if availability figures improve significantly.”

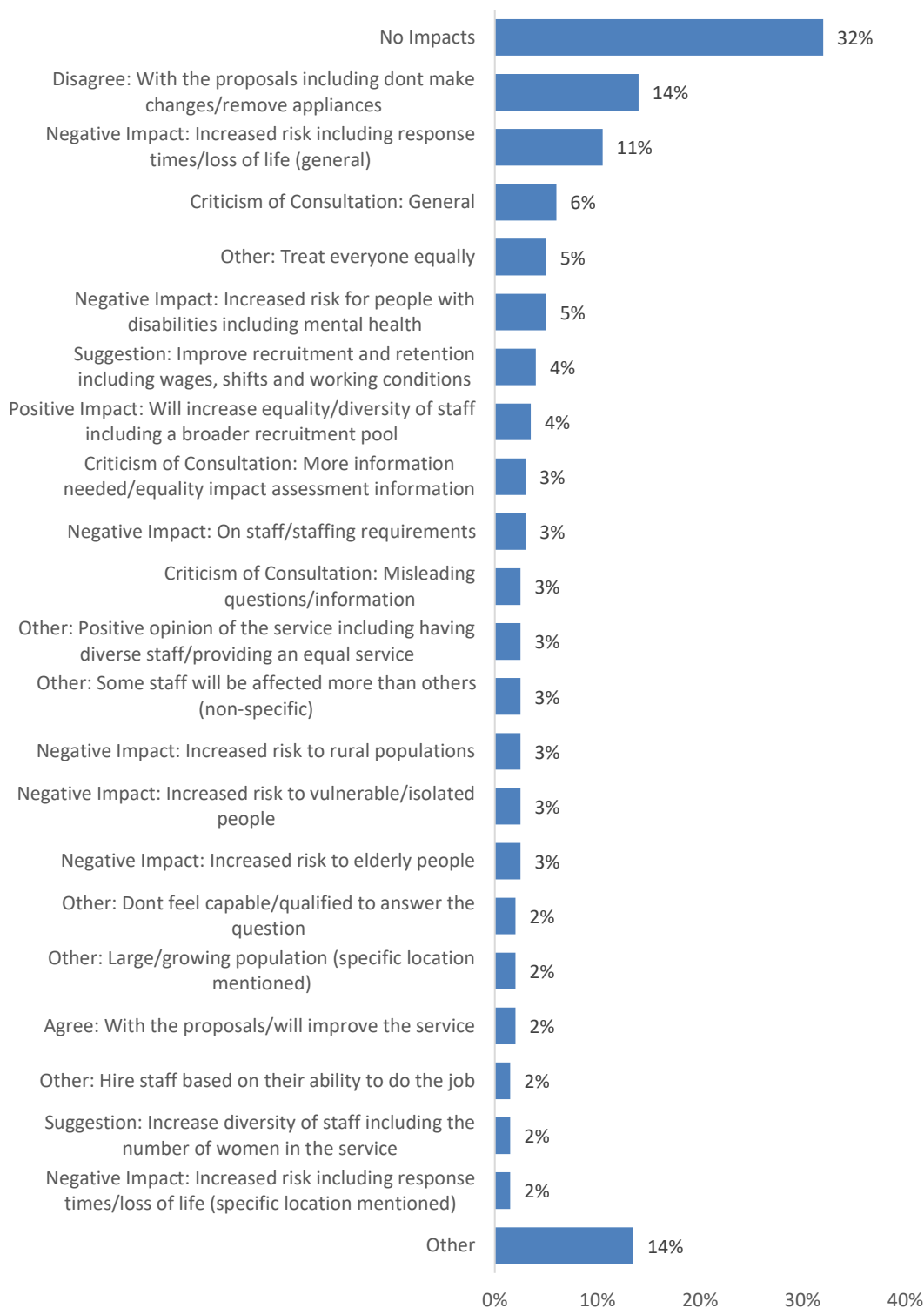
Equalities issues

Open questionnaire

- 3.67 Respondents to the open questionnaire were also asked if there were any positive or negative impacts relating to equalities that they believe should be considered. Many responded to this question with general feedback on the proposals (see

- 3.68 Figure 9), however around a third (32%) of those who answered the question thought that there were no impacts on equalities.
- 3.69 In terms of comments relating to impacts on equalities, 5% said that HWFRS should *treat everyone equally* while some others noted potential negative impacts on certain populations including *increased risk for people with disabilities including mental health (5%); increased risk to rural populations (3%); increased risk to vulnerable/isolated people (3%), and increased risk to elderly people (3%)*.
- 3.70 Positive comments saying that the proposed changes *will increase equality/diversity of staff including a broader recruitment pool were provided by 4%* of respondents, while 2% suggested that HWFRS should specifically increase the number of female employees.

Figure 9: Are there any positive or negative impacts relating to equalities that you believe should be considered?
Note: For presentational reasons the chart only shows themes raised by at least 2% of respondents. A full list of codes can be seen in the tables of results (provided separately).



Base: All respondents who provided comments (200)

4. Conclusions

Overall conclusions

- 4.1 Almost all focus group participants across the three groups ultimately supported HWFRS’s proposed approach, considering the overall ‘package’ of proposals to be considered, creative, and logical.

“In an ideal world we’d like them to have all the resources they could possibly want, but they’ve clearly not come up with this strategy in five minutes... It appears to be a pragmatic and innovative response to the reality of the situation. I probably feel more reassured now than at the beginning.” (South Worcestershire)

“Imagination and flexibility. Applying those to the situation and seeing what is needed where. That has come across really strongly ...” (North Worcestershire)

- 4.2 In fact, as alluded to above, several people said their views had changed during the discussion: that is, their initial reservations about the proposals had been addressed, and they left the session more reassured about the proposals and their potential implications.

“When I saw this consultation, my first thought was that Bromyard station would be closed and that we’d have to wait for fire engines from 21 miles away, so I’m reassured that... you’re maintaining those facilities. The fact that you’ve got the plans to do the best you can within the budget, I’ve found quite reassuring.” (Herefordshire)

“It’s provided reassurance and all the questions I had were answered. I joined expecting to have to fight about cuts and things, but I’ve felt a lot of reassurance that it’s all been thought out” (North Worcestershire)

- 4.3 The results from the open questionnaire suggest a lower level of overall support for HWFRS’s Resource Review, with substantial levels of disagreement with each proposal and just a third agreeing overall that HWFRS should change the way it uses its resources to address current challenges.
- 4.4 Table 15 summarises the level of support for or disagreement with each proposal. The proposals with the highest level of support were providing alternative, more flexible, modes of transport for available additional On-Call firefighters (37% agreed) and allowing an additional three minutes for On-Call firefighters to attend the fire station at Wyre Forest (36% agreed).
- 4.5 The proposals with the highest level of disagreement were removing eight On-Call fire engines from stations with two or more fire engines (77% disagreed) and changing the third fire engine at Wyre Forest to night-only cover (64% disagreed).

Table 15: Summary of level of support for or opposition to each proposal

Proposal	% agree	% disagree
HWFRS should change the way it uses its resources to address current challenges	33%	63%
Remove eight On-Call fire engines from stations with two or more fire engines, to release resources for other, busier, fire engines	22%	77%
Change the third (On-Call) fire engine at Wyre Forest to night-only cover	27%	64%
Allow On-Call firefighters at Wyre Forest, on the third fire engine only, up to eight minutes (up from five minutes) to attend the fire station	36%	55%
Reinvest savings into providing more Wholetime firefighters to support the busiest fire engines and provide improved ways of working for the remaining On-Call staff	31%	61%
Provide alternative, more flexible modes of transport (i.e. four-wheel drive vehicles) for available additional On-Call firefighters	37%	56%
Use the savings generated to provide a more sustainable staffing model and explore new ways of working within the On-Call service	31%	60%

^{4.6} It should be remembered, however, that open questionnaires are not surveys, and are therefore not a representative sample of a given population – they are more likely to be completed by motivated people or groups. They will also not have had the same opportunity as focus group participants to discuss the proposed changes, and this should be taken into account when considering the differing findings.

Appendix 1: key themes from internal staff engagement

Introduction

- 4.7 During the Resource Review consultation period (8th January to 4th March 2024), members of the HWFRS Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) conducted multiple engagement sessions including a cross section of staff, Elected Members, Senior Leaders from other Fire and Rescue Services, and MP's.
- 4.8 An extensive schedule of station visits ran from November 2023 throughout the consultation period to March 2024. In all, 27 formal visits were undertaken engaging with 202 staff at all the affected stations. A breakdown of the staff who attended can be found later in this section and discussions were noted and recorded for future reference.
- 4.9 The valued contributions from staff were broad in context but some key themes have been captured below for ease of reference. Generally, when discussed, members of staff appeared to understand the reasons behind the Resource Review with comments like *“the figures don't lie”* and *“I can see the need for change and the logic...we can't continue as we are”*. Positive comments were also made about the proposal to increase numbers on Wholetime watches and about On-Call staff crewing special appliances, for example Aerial Ladder Platforms.
- 4.10 There were, though, many questions asked around the rationale for the proposals (including the data used to underpin them), how they might work in practice, and the decision-making and implementation process. Key concerns were around the impact of removing eight On-Call appliances on fire cover and resilience, the potential for further reductions in future, and the need to ensure that appliances are crewed by five firefighters where possible.
- 4.11 In addition to the above, SLB members visited other stations and support staff departments and at every opportunity the Resource Review was discussed. Whilst not formally impacted these additional conversations covered an even broader range of staff, including those unaffected by the proposals. Furthermore, a video was produced and played on a loop on all the smart screens on stations and in departments as part of HWFA's digital communications strategy, conveying the key messages of the Resource Review. This was underpinned by internal bulletin articles.
- 4.12 The following summary of key themes and supporting information has been provided for inclusion by HWFRS.

Summary of key themes

Theme	Examples
Number of Wholetime firefighters	Discussions and questions around previous and proposed establishment numbers. Pleased to see the proposal for five on some fire engines. Request for guarantee to maintain five riders on these three fire engines.
On-Call firefighter skillsets and crewing Special Appliances	Positive reception for On-Call crewing Special Appliances. Discussions about which Special Appliances could be crewed by On-Call firefighters due to the impact of maintaining skillsets. Questions about whether Special Appliances would be relocated.
Implementation	Questions about the timescale for implementation, how the proposed changes would be implemented, and possible redundancies.
Fire cover and resilience	Questions, discussions, and concerns around the impact of the proposals on fire cover and support required at larger incidents if the eight pumps were removed. One location agreed having an eight-minute turn-in time would help. Other locations asked if this was going to be implemented elsewhere as it would support recruitment and retention at other stations. Some locations raised questions and discussed impacts relevant to their specific location only.
Wholetime posts at Leominster and Bromyard	Questions around what the crewing model would be, how many people would be at these stations, and what they would be expected to do.
Four-wheel drive vehicles	Questions around what these would be used for, whether they would carry equipment, whether they could be used for more than just carrying personnel, and who would decide when they are used/mobilised.
On-Call Availability	Discussions about the inflexibility in managing Pers3a's (the form used to log On-Call available hours), the difficult recruitment and retention of On-Call firefighters, and the amount of money and time spent currently trying to maintain availability and how this needs to change.

- 4.13 The Resource Review has not been taken lightly and staff consultation was at the forefront of the proposals. It is fair to say that this approach has gone a long way to informing the workforce and even when staff were initially uncertain, comments such as *“logically, staffing is too tight and...you can't argue against the Proposal”* provide assurance that, although difficult, a full review of resources was necessary.

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
Worcester	05/02/24	On-Call	14	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>General themes, some discussion regarding the data.</p> <p>Some members of staff accepted the need for the change and would be supportive of supporting the specials at Worcester.</p>
	12/02/24	Red	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>General views and conversations were around the data and the fact that locally they sometimes decide to deploy assets at the time of call and therefore questioned how the statistics reflected this.</p>
	25/01/24	White Wholetime and Day Duty	8	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Discussion around Resilience Register and what this costs.</p> <p>Supported the use of On-Call for Special Appliances.</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u> (replies are in italics)</p> <p>Can we sustain the number of Wholetime firefighters proposed? <i>We had six on the watch about 12 months ago: we went over establishment by 21 to cover anticipated future leavers. Recruitment requirements are predicted through the Workforce Planning Group.</i></p> <p>Why are we not using On-Call in the day at Worcester in the proposal? <i>Availability is currently poor, but those who are available will be used to crew specials or the 4x4 if needed.</i></p> <p>Is there scope to upskill the On-Call to the Specialist Rescue Tender (SRT) to support the Wholetime? <i>Yes, for WFR (Water First Responder). SRT and Rope Rescue is difficult for On-call to maintain skills on, so requires a lot of investment. Would look at using On-Call to crew Specials like the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP).</i></p> <p>How would the firefighters at Leominster and Bromyard be 'attached' to the stations? <i>This still needs finalising, but they would work with the Unit at their station to maintain competence and deliver Prevention and Protection work.</i> Proposed that these firefighters could be on rotation with a Wholetime watch to maintain competence and support numbers on the Watch to allow for leave or training courses, etc.</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				Why there is an increase in On-Call staff turn-over and what are we doing about it? <i>Yes, currently about 15%, was 10%, which his down to social changes and employers not wanting to release staff and people wanting more social time without the commitment.</i>
	01/02/24	Blue Wholetime and Green Day Duty	7	<p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>What are the timescales, if approved?</p> <p>Do you think there will be much opposition from the Fire Authority?</p> <p>Do you think this will mean that the budget will be safer because we are taking this course of action?</p> <p>What are the roles at Bromyard & Leominster (Wholetime), how do you see it working? Would you consider attaching them to a department so they can carry out Prevention work, for example?</p> <p>I think minimum for Wholetime should be five because otherwise they will be sent everywhere.</p> <p>Ref extra people (Wholetime) at Bromyard and Leominster. Will they be used to keep Wholetime at five and stop use of resilience register?</p>
Wyre Forest	18/01/24	On-Call	11	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>“The review takes some trawling through, but the figures don’t lie. Double whammy for us as we had Stourport and Bewdley, but we can’t crew three pumps. The eight mins turn in will help”.</p> <p>“Do you notice a difference in availability since the On-Call project started? It has started to pick up. It did come out though as a unit to only work the contracts and nothing else. This has hit morale slightly”.</p> <p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>With the council tax increase, do you see more cuts happening?</p> <p>What are the Timescales for resource review and implementation?</p> <p>Could you take the compact appliance away (please 😊!)?</p>
	13/02/24	Red	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>All staff understood the proposal laid out by the CFO (Chief Fire Officer) and understood the need to redirect resources. Although they didn’t want to lose fire engines, they welcomed the uplift in wholetime staffing.</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
	25/01/24	White	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Commented on how big the station area is compared with some other station areas which is a concern. They could have a second pump to cover it. <i>CFO explained how HWFRS is not a busy Service, and despite the size of the area it would be difficult to justify a second Wholetime pump.</i></p> <p>Discussion on shift system and amount of work to be done at Wyre Forest with all appliances.</p> <p>Discussion about the specials at Worcester and On-Call firefighters covering a shift. One said if the pump was removed, he would consider leaving the Service.</p> <p>Discussion about social changes and demographics which affect recruitment and retention.</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>Will this lead to a similar situation as what is happening in Warwickshire FRS? <i>No, that is exactly what we are trying to avoid by creating a system where On-Call is supported to improve availability, so they attend more incidents.</i></p> <p>How many pumps will go and who makes the decision? <i>The aim is to take eight out of the system, this is a package of eight. We need to take all eight to reap the benefits and have the money to reinvest. The decision will be down to the FRA.</i></p>
	15/02/24	Green	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Having six on a Watch does not account for training and development.</p> <p>Clarification given that the new Wholetime staff will not be used to keep other On-Call units on the run routinely, although cannot guarantee this will never happen; and that with the additional staff there will be approximately a 20% increase in Wholetime during the day and 15% at night.</p> <p>“I get the need for the change at Wyre Forest and the logic, and can see we cannot continue as we are, but I do feel sorry for Droitwich”.</p> <p>CFO provided clarification of an amendment to the proposal to allocate Malvern a Compact for a trial period of 2 years to allow the data to be reviewed after 18 months.</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				<p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>I would like to see the stats that tells you how appealing night time cover only is to a potential On-Call firefighter? <i>Data will be kept under review and if any of the proposals are not working it may be appropriate to review in the future, but for now this is the model being proposed.</i></p> <p>When will the extra staff land? <i>Following the close of consultation and after the fire authority have decided and any recruitment required has taken place.</i></p> <p>It is proposed that the third truck is used for night time cover only. If there are enough On-Call staff, can they cover during the day? <i>No. The model has been deliberately built in a way to compliment the cover already provided during the day by neighbouring fire stations. We cannot build the cover model around one big job every three years.</i></p> <p>How does the new 4x4 vehicle work with Fire Control? <i>Once we know if the proposals have been approved, we can then work in more detail with each watch commander locally to set out how the 4x4 will be used for that station. It will be allocated a call sign.</i></p> <p>What is happening with the spare £14k savings unallocated? <i>This and more will be taken up with the proposed alterations to the Malvern proposal.</i></p> <p>Will the 4x4 have blue lights? <i>Yes, however we need to be mindful about the training commitment required to drive on blue lights, guidance will be provided.</i></p>
	23/01/24	Urban Search & Rescue	14	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Useful discussions were had and no particular questions/issues were recorded.</p>
Droitwich	11/02/24	On-Call	11	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>“The drop-in availability last year was the enforcement of Pers3a to force people to only work their contract and no hours outside of this. This has now been rescinded due to a big drop in appliance availability years 23-24 already shows an improvement in cover”.</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				<p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>Why has the availability for 22-23 only been looked at for 261 (Droitwich 2nd fire engine) and not 262 (Droitwich 1st fire engine). Total night cover for 262 last year was 92.72% so during the night On-Call availability was 92.72%. 251 (Bromsgrove 2nd fire engine) availability was day 11.44%/night 32.81% total 22.12% and 261 was Day 38.93%/night 44.15%). The data suggests that 251 is the pump that should go.</p> <p>Why was the attendance as first appliance used in the report as 261 will generally be second appliance to attend due to 262 being shift during the day and first On-Call pump out at night?</p> <p>261 is well placed to support your 'busiest stations'. On 31 occasions last year (the highest of the 8 proposed cuts). Who will be covering these calls if 261 was to go?</p> <p>You refer to the Wholtime appliances that surround Droitwich as your busiest appliances in the service. With the removal of 261 and the possibility of 262 being off the run or detained at an incident e.g., UHRP (Ultra High-Rise Pump) calls, what will be the availability of these busy appliances to cover Droitwich?</p> <p>Increasing crew sizes at Worcester, Wyre Forest, and Hereford won't have an impact on cover at Droitwich. Although the review says, 'no cuts just reinvestment', are the people living in Droitwich benefitting from this? As residents of Droitwich we see the removal of the second appliance as a cut to our service we receive.</p> <p>Page 31 refers to response times of the alternative appliance if 261 was removed. Why is Droitwich time so low: 3 min 19 and Worcester 6 min 18? It's anticipated Worcester would be the closest pump to Droitwich if 261 was removed and 262 the Closest to Worcester if 213 (Worcester 3rd fire engine) removed. How does it take longer for Worcester to get into Droitwich then it does Droitwich to get into Worcester? The travel distance is the same just in reverse?</p> <p>Remaining On-Call units will be provided with a 4x4 to deploy to support all incident types. Why won't Droitwich have this option?</p> <p>What comprehensive supply of ICT equipment is supplied to on call? As Droitwich is the only unit being cut your saving of £135,000 works out to £10,384 per on call member. What is this equipment? <i>Action – the Review needs to show ICT, Equipment etc. The comma is missing.</i></p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				<p>You mention on page 47 the re-introduction of Day Crewing at Droitwich will see the availability of the first appliance 24/7. Why only mention Droitwich and not Evesham and Malvern in the report?</p> <p>As this appears to be a cost saving exercise as outlined on page 48, was there a review into the number of officers HWFRS employs. We currently have a higher officer model compared to Merseyside who attend more than double our annual call volume and have 27 Wholetime stations.</p> <p>Can you explain what happens at the FRA tomorrow and then next steps?</p> <p>What does phased implementation look like?</p> <p>What are we supposed to do now with our recruitment plans moving forward during this time of consultation and beyond?</p> <p>Will this be 6 to ride 5 or 6 to ride 4?</p>
	21/02/24	White	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Interrupted by a fire call half way through, however, generally supportive.</p>
	08/02/24	Green	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>“Drop in crewing due to changes in Day-Crewing model that is now being rectified, and the pump is now being taken away”.</p> <p>Discussed the future of the station with the training centre moving to Wyre Forest and whether there will still be a fire station in Droitwich.</p> <p>Discussion about future budgets following a concern raised about whether there would in future be a need to reduce back to 4’s on pumps. CFO stated that there may be a need but that current budgetary forecasts up to 26/27 aren’t expected to deliver significant shortfalls.</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>Will the 4x4s replace the Pre-determined Attendance (PDA)? <i>No, will supplement the PDA where firefighters are available.</i></p> <p>Will they be blue-light trained? <i>Not initially, happy to put through a ROC (Responding Officers Course) where those want to improve response using this vehicle but not necessary.</i></p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				<p>What do we do if this isn't agreed? <i>We will continue doing what we're doing.</i></p> <p>Is there any way to retain the staff at Droitwich, by using something like a BRV (Brigade Response Vehicle) or Compact type appliance? <i>We could do but something else will have to give as we can't afford to do that and crew 5s everywhere we want to. It will still be difficult ensure availability due to the challenges with On-Call.</i></p> <p>Would Droitwich be closed in future? <i>No, we are looking at alternative sites for the station rebuild.</i></p>
Redditch	15/01/24	On-Call	10	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Discussion about the cost of resilience and payments to both Wholetime and On-Call firefighters. Could see the benefit of having a 4x4 and the ISV (Incident Support Vehicle) and understand first-hand the difficulties of getting the third pump on the run at Redditch.</p> <p>Discussion about the provision of 4x4s, and the possible advantages. Concerns raised about the potential perception that this is Wholetime supportive and not On-Call supportive.</p> <p>Discussion about On-Call Recruitment Project and Team, its function and outputs and its future.</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>What happens if the FRA don't accept the proposals? <i>We go back to the drawing board'.</i></p> <p>Has the impact of changes to neighbouring services been considered? <i>Discussions have been started at strategic levels with some neighbouring FRS to understand their plans. HWFRS have no legal requirement to provide fire cover in neighbouring areas.</i></p> <p>Is there a precedence or another FRS in the country doing something similar? <i>No, there isn't. Some other Services looking at how they provide their functions and the costs associated with them.</i></p> <p>Question asked about crewing 6 to ride 5 and how that 5th person will be used. Will they be as a 5th rider or used to cover gaps? <i>They will be used as much as possible as a 5th rider. Confirmed that this additional person is not planned for Redditch or Bromsgrove.</i></p>
	05/02/24	Red	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Comments made about the positive impact on On-Call by having a vehicle to attend and support at incidents.</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				<p>Discussion about Wyre Forest area and the proposals for the On-Call Unit.</p> <p>General agreement that the third pump at Redditch doesn't get used and isn't available.</p> <p>Interest in the ISV or another Special being on station.</p> <p>Further discussions about locating the Specials and how this could be managed to maintain fire cover and provide resilience.</p> <p>Discussion about finances and some of the statements made on social media.</p> <p>Recognition that there are challenges with people wanting to do On-Call and changes socially.</p>
	19/02/24	White	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Useful discussions were had and no particular questions/issues were recorded.</p>
	31/01/24	Blue	3	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>"It is not a surprise the third pump is going; we only use it for water incidents".</p> <p>"Logically staffing is too tight now and logically you can't argue against the proposals".</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>When preparing the data, how was it recorded if a pump was turned around on-route to an incident? Did this count in the numbers?</p> <p>Why are we staying on 4s at Redditch Station? <i>Everyone will have 4 as a minimum, we will put another 8 Wholetimers on stations across the patch, but we can't afford to do this everywhere.</i></p> <p>If there is a fifth person will they just be sent to cover an On-Call station? <i>This may happen occasionally, but in reality, no. We want to get the establishment levels right and we are focused on getting the levels up. If we save more money from the overtime bill, we may be able to employ more wholtime staff.</i></p>
	22/01/24	Green	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>It seems that to lose 411 (Malvern 2nd fire engine) , 213 (Worcester 3rd fire engine), and 261 (Droitwich 2nd fire engine) from a small area will have a negative impact on the high-rise risks in the area.</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				<p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>Will the 6th person proposed at Hereford, Worcester, Wyre Forest be used for resilience or to ride 5?</p> <p>Will the extra Wholetime staff be used to put On-Call on the run?</p> <p>How many firefighters in total? And where will the extra firefighters come from?</p> <p>Malvern recently has increased their availability to 92% - will this now change the proposal for Malvern?</p> <p>With the 45 potential posts lost, is there going to be much savings there and where do you propose the 45 will come from?</p> <p>Do you think that the majority of job losses will be through natural wastage?</p>
Malvern	12/12/23	On-Call	15	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>“We are used a lot on 412 (Malvern 1st fire engine) to go on standby at Station 21. If 412 goes out on a job when its Day Crewed there's no one to standby at 21.”</p> <p>“The data looks at 411 when we’ve been covering 412 and therefore if we’d been available on 411 and not covering 412, we’d have been available more often and gone to more incidents.”</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>Why not remove some Wholetime units if they’re so expensive and put this towards On-Call?</p> <p>What about the other multi-pump stations, why aren’t they included?</p> <p>How would we maintain our competencies on the fire appliance if it's being used by the Wholetime?</p> <p>Why didn’t you come across and speak to us (the affected units) before tonight?</p> <p>What do think the public will think of the proposal? Would this open the door to mixed crewing? For example, if Upton was on three and we had two available, could we come together to put an appliance on the run for large incidents?</p> <p>Have you considered a different appliance for Malvern, perhaps a Compact Appliance, given the rural road infrastructure, etc.</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				Have you thought about closing other stations that aren't as busy as Malvern instead of removing our appliance?
	10/01/24	White	3	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>“We hear or are told that On-Call is a cheap option, it is not a cheap option but just a cheaper option than Wholetime”.</p> <p>Staff wanted assurance that fire engines would ride 5s at all times.</p> <p>Discussions extended to On-Call contracts and people needing to ‘book off’, removal of pumps from Wyre Forest and the commitment to not remove any fire engines from that station, and how the Service believes the Resource Review proposes a better use of funds.</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>Asked about the financial figures given on page 48. <i>CFO and DCFO explained how the figures have been accounted for. We need to ensure that it is clear these figures are an annual saving and cost.</i></p> <p>Asked about Nucleus Crewing at Leominster and Bromyard, when it would be implemented and how many people.</p> <p>Confirmed we aim to have three people at each location who are ERDT (Emergency Response Driver Trained) and Officer in Charge; use these people for cover in other areas where needed; increase Prevention work in these areas; and improve maintenance of equipment and appliances. Timeline will need detailing following any agreement.</p>
	30/01/24	Green	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>“The risk is getting bigger, and we will need these fire engines”.</p> <p>Consider the retention of On-Call staff an issue.</p> <p>Problem found by OCSO (On-Call Support Officer) was that when they arrived at a station, they would find availability would change and the pump would still be off, which is frustrating.</p> <p>Discussion about the number of pumps currently available within the service (7 of the 8 proposed were off, a total of 14 were off)</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				<p>Discussion about how to organise training nights to get more hands-on in one group whilst the other group complete organisational training programme. This will require a cultural change of training delivery.</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>Have we considered the way On-Call have had to support the first pump at the three Day-Crewing stations? <i>Yes, this is not just about availability but also about operational activity. The Operational activity of these 8 pumps is still too low to justify keeping them.</i></p> <p>Will any of the money go into training facilities? <i>No, the reinvestment is all into the 18 posts and 4x4 vehicles. This is dependent on what the FRA decides to do.</i></p> <p>When do we expect this to start having a positive impact? <i>By April, when the additional 7 Wholetime recruits arrive, we will be over at Hereford and Worcester. This is a balance of leavers, but we are currently over establishment. We can start to take some of the trucks out quite quickly to make savings on the pumps and then recruit further people to fill the gaps.</i></p> <p>Will there be a redundancy package? <i>This will depend on the how the Unit is affected and whether we need redundancies at that location. The aim is to lose people through natural wastage.</i></p> <p>How do you see the 4x4s being deployed? <i>They will not there to be a front-line first attack. They will be about getting additional people to the incident.</i></p>
Hereford	11/01/24	On-Call	18	<p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>We have recruited. Do you think the availability would be better on the 2nd pump in 6 months' time?</p> <p>Can we keep some day staff for ALPs / WFR?</p> <p>Are we looking at new bands for Pers3A contract?</p> <p>What is the establishment number?</p> <p>Could we be the first one on call for the Specials?</p> <p>Do we always have to have a pump on the run in the city?</p> <p>Are we looking at closure of stations in the future?</p> <p>What are we doing with spare appliances?</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				<p>Any kit on the 4x4?</p> <p>I do an 80-hour contract I can offer flexibly 100. Why is there no flexibility?</p> <p>Why do you think there is change in on-call firefighters?</p>
	12/01/24	Red	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Understood the need to change, still had some concerns regarding the specials, in particular the boat however, understood that the same issue is present today as it would be if the changes were approved - e.g. that WT staff would need to return to Hereford to collect the boat.</p>
	27/07/24	White & Alpha	7	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Discussion about Redditch's 3rd pump being a Special (CAFS [Compressed Air Foam System] Pump) and not a general pump. Not believed to be the case and that this has always been three pumps.</p> <p>Discussion about the stats reflecting the outcomes of previous decisions, for example, Wyre Forest's move and Droitwich's day-crewing changes.</p> <p>Comment that the 'tag line' should have been 'We are removing 8 pumps that are unused but replacing them with 8 4x4s that will be used a lot more'.</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>Where are we getting the money from for the 4x4s? <i>From the reduction in need to replace fire engines.</i></p> <p>Asked about costs of cross-border agreements, what West Midlands FRS charge, and what we charge them. Currently have 14 pumps unavailable, how many are the proposed 8 pumps? <i>7 of these are from stations where we are proposing removal.</i></p> <p>Is the £750k spent on overtime an average over three years? <i>No, it is this year's budget, which is based on the last few years of spend in this area.</i></p> <p>Asked about what will be on the 4x4s: will they have call-signs, equipment, how will they be mobilised and assigned to incidents, etc.? <i>A lot of these details need to be ironed out so that we can capture their use, look at their mobilisation/use, etc. and they are part of the fleet strategy.</i></p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				Has an alternative been considered to put Wholetime night cover back in for Hereford and Worcester? <i>We are busier in the daytime than at night, so additional firefighters are needed more in the day.</i>
	13/11/24	Blue & Bravo	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Useful discussions were had and no particular questions/issues were recorded.</p>
	29/01/24	Green	4	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Comment that the CFO is taking care to reassure that is about reinvestment and not about making savings. The money will be invested to make improvements and try something new to improve resilience and availability.</p> <p>Some understanding about the difficulties in using resilience and the cost of overtime, as well as the lack of skills to support the crew on their specials or undertake some basic tasks due to lack of experience. “We will always operate better when we are working within our own watch or team”.</p> <p>One audience member felt availability has got worse over the last three-years.</p> <p>Discussion about overtime spends, the benefits and down-sides to running this model.</p> <p>Further discussion about the location of Specials and if these would be moved.</p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>How are we going to get better availability on the On-Call pumps after making the savings? <i>CFO explained the use of Wholetime Day-duty staff and the recruitment team, potential to expand turn-in times to other stations in the future.</i></p> <p>Are we already doing a version of the Wholetime Day Duty proposal given the number of staff at places like Ross and Ledbury? <i>Yes. CFO explained the impact of currently using 3500hrs of Day Duty staff on Wholetime pumps, that can be released to support On-Call pumps and the other proposals to recruit Wholetime staff.</i></p> <p>Is there potential to make the 2nd pump at Hereford and Worcester into full Day Crewing? This would remove the need to have an On-call unit and hasn’t been considered as part of this review. <i>It would take some additional investment but could be an option for the future.</i></p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
Leominster	28/02/24	On-Call	17	<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>Crew want to keep 2nd pump. Some ideas given about how to keep the pump and recruit. <i>These have already been tried and the finances don't make keeping the pump an effective use of money.</i></p> <p>Discussions extended around availability, support from Kingsland, using spare crew at Kingsland to crew 2nd pump, and reiterating the proposals in the Resource Review and the benefits to Leominster.</p> <p>“We need a robust process in place to mobilise the additional available firefighters on the 4x4”.</p> <p>Discussion about CAFS pumps and how long it would take for a CAFS pump to get to Leominster. <i>CFO explained how and why we have the CAFS pumps we have in Service.</i></p> <p><u>Questions and replies</u></p> <p>Could we have the Compact from Redditch? <i>This would likely stay at Redditch or go to Bromsgrove to replace a full-size pump to make the savings required.</i></p> <p>Does the CFO believe in the On-Call model? <i>He couldn't be more pro-On-Call and explained what some of the other FRS' are doing to their On-Call compared with what we are proposing.</i></p> <p>How challenging were the 2022/23 pay rises and is this factored into the Review? <i>No. We are in a good position financially due to lobbying councillors and the uplift in Council Tax. This just about covered the pay increases.</i></p> <p>How do we currently fund the £700k in overtime? <i>This has to be found each year from existing budget and reserves.</i></p>
Bromyard	22/02/24	On-Call		<p><u>Questions and comments</u></p> <p>Agreement with the proposals - some suggested considerations already in the proposal, for example, reducing on-call staffing in areas where availability is poor and utilising whole-time staff to support those stations.</p> <p>Question about the type of calls the supplementary crew attend, for example how do they know when to proceed to an incident, i.e., road traffic collision or house fire?</p> <p>General comment about the contracts not being attractive or useful for a self-employed member of staff.</p>

Station	Date	Watch/Unit	Numbers attended	General comments, questions and replies
				<p>Participants asked about consulting staff about applying the process of removing the appliance and Bromyard's response was 'just get on with it.'</p> <p>Would like animal rescue to move to Bromyard as they Pershore are not bothered about it.</p> <p>Will the wholetime staff cover 7 days and weekends?</p>

Appendix 2: written submissions

Introduction

The key points made in the eight written submissions have been summarised here for reasons for accessibility. However, the full submissions and HWFRS's responses to them (where applicable) have also been included at the end of this appendix for those wishing to read the complete versions.

Summaries of written submissions

Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA) representative

The FRSA representative said concerns they had heard from their members and colleagues at Leominster had been allayed during a discussion with HWFRS's Chief Fire Officer, and that they would take the time to explain the reasons for the proposals to crews there. They also reiterated the following points:

- The data showing response times for a next nearest pump when the eight pumps are removed shows several occasions where the next pump is on the same station, utilising the same crew, but showing a faster response time, which *“artificially reduces the effect on response times as an average”*.
- Using a 4x4 van instead of a pickup would be more beneficial to Leominster and Bromyard, as it could be used to carry personnel to WFR (Water First Responder) incidents and in the case of Bromyard, animal rescues, whilst allowing the fire engine to remain available (crew permitting).
- Utilising additional Wholetime crews at Leominster would not increase availability of the first (and only) pump at the station, as Leominster has no obvious issue with crewing during the day. The benefit of having Wholetime crews available for fire safety and home safety checks could *“be better served by using non-blue light staff at a considerable cost saving”*.
- The Resource Review figures should have factored in the additional travel distance of support fire engines, as well as the extra cost of fuel, additional crew time payments, extra wear and tear on the fleet etc. to offset some of the obvious benefits highlighted.

Fire Brigades Union (FBU)

The FBU said the consultation proposals “*fail to provide the necessary fire cover needed, and also fail to provide adequate details on how the changes would be implemented*”. Specifically, the FBU said that:

- HWFRS is already under-resourced due to central government funding cuts.
- HWFRS’s intervention service delivery model is overestimated, where the reality identifies significant gaps in fire cover.
- Further cuts proposed by this consultation will leave HWFRS further under-resourced.
- The potential consequences resulting from the proposals are:
 - Longer first attendance times and delays to subsequent fire engines’ arrival
 - Loss of firefighter posts
 - Fewer resources available for large-scale or protracted incidents
 - Greater potential for firefighter injury and fatality
 - Greater losses/injuries/fatalities for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

The Union recommends that HWFRS should:

- Carry out a full IRMP (Integrated Risk Management Plan) to identify the current risks and trends in conjunction with changing forecasts of future risk.
- Address the shortfall in its emergency intervention response and make plans to invest in the service.
- Ensure all fire engines are staffed at five with a well-trained and competent crew for the safety of firefighters and for an effective response to all incidents.
- Finalise the Resource Review report and data pack and run another consultation process to ensure all responses are based on accurate data and facts.
- Address the issue of RDS availability. This will need a large increase in resources to ensure recruitment and retention are significantly improved, in order to bridge the deficiency in the intervention service delivery model.
- Look at ways to improve work/life balance and to engage with the FBU and our on-call members to investigate ways to create attractive and sustainable contracts for on-call staff.
- Engage with the discussions at the NJC and ensure that the pay for on-call members is both attractive and sustainable.

- Engage with FBU officials locally to ensure on-call firefighter terms and conditions are attractive and sustainable to help minimise the high turnover of staff.

It also recommends that the FRA should set HWFRS a “*much-improved response standard*” and embark on a strategy to achieve it (including lobbying the Home Office and central government to increase funding to HWFRS); and ensure that all proposals satisfy statutory duties and comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Leominster Town Council

Leominster Town Council raised concerns that:

- HWFRS staff had not been consulted on the Resource Review proposals.
- The proposals do not take account of climate change and its consequences, such as flooding and increased periods of dry weather with higher temperatures.
- There will be increasing need for the FRS when there is further growth in the town.

Malvern Town Council

Malvern Town Council urged HWFRS to retain its existing provision in Malvern.

Redditch Borough Council

Redditch Borough Councillors were concerned about the proposed changes to fire cover in Redditch Borough, and their implications for the future safety of local residents and businesses. They requested further risk-based information from HWFRS about the rationale for the proposals, in particular “*the number of calls that could have been served in Redditch if the third fire engine had been available 24/7 and fully crewed*”.

The following points were also made in the Council’s submission:

- It is important to retain capacity not only for the town but to enable cross-county and cross-border assistance to be offered. If only two engines were available then it would “*leave the town exposed if one was called away in such circumstances*”.
- A reduction in the number of engines also risks “*availability for large events where engines were called from other stations to assist*”.
- The Borough’s population increase means a third engine is necessary.
- Any delay in response times due to a shortage of fire engines risks lives.
- The proposals represent “*cuts disguised as efficiencies*”.
- The consultation document is long and “*difficult to navigate*” and “*could dissuade people from responding*”.

Ultimately, the Council *“opposes the proposed cuts to local Fire Services, which will leave Redditch with only 2 fire engines and calls on Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority to reconsider”*.

Town Councillor, Bromyard West

The Councillor fully supported the recommendations of the Consultation Document as they affect Bromyard.

Town Councillor, Bromyard West/Herefordshire County Councillor

The Councillor fully supported the proposals.

Individual firefighter

The firefighter objected to the removal of the third On-Call fire engine at Worcester Fire Station on the grounds that this would affect fire cover throughout the city and *“have an adverse and potentially fatal outcome in the future and impact the safety of the public...”*

In particular, the firefighter said that:

- When the two Wholetime fire appliances are called to an incident they will have no immediate back-up and *“if they are at an incident and another call comes in, the people in need will have to wait for another appliance to come from another town”*.
- Worcester has several high-risk sites, including three tower blocks with a pre-determined attendance of three fire engines. At present the On-call Crews can attend the incident as part of the PDA, but with these changes they will be unable to.
- The River Severn flows through Worcester, and Wholetime Crews can be tied up for lengthy periods when a boat search is required. During such times, *“that will mean there is no longer a fire engine to attend any other incidents... until the boat incident is resolved.”*
- The City is growing and *“we should be providing more cover not less.”*
- The proposed employment of more Wholetime firefighters is a *“smokescreen”* as they will be deployed to other stations where they are short of crew and *“not used at the station where they are based”*.
- Remaining On-Call personnel will leave if there is *“no work for them”*. Travelling to an incident in a vehicle without sirens or blue lights will mean them sitting in traffic, and in terms of On-Call staff crewing Special Appliances, at Worcester this would mean the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP). This only needs two crew members, so *“if (the third On-Call appliance) is removed, the Crew will all be leaving shortly afterwards as there is no point staying ‘on-call’ all day just in the hope that they get to sit in a car in traffic or if the ALP gets called out...”*

The firefighter also alleged that the figures underpinning the review are *“tainted and tapered towards making it look like the appliance proposed to be removed (213) are much lower at attending incidents than they actually did”*.

Full written submissions

Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA) representative

thanks for meeting just now. As discussed here is the response from the FRSA and some comments/suggestions that we may include in the final report.

regards

From:
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2023 6:38:05 PM
To:
Subject: Meeting 8.12.2023

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me, especially changing the venue at short notice due to the incident at Tenbury.

The discuss allayed some of the concerns from my FRSA members and colleagues at Leominster. Of course there is sadness that the station will be losing a fire engine, but I will take the time on the next drill night to explain the reasons to the crew and perhaps get an opportunity to visit Bromyard.

There were a few things raised that I would like to take the opportunity to remind you of:-

1. The data showing in the response times for a next nearest pump when the 8 pumps are removed. It show several occasions where the next pump is on the same station, utilising the same crew, but showing a faster response time. I am sure you must agree that this is a nonsense. However the use of these times artificially reduces the effect on response times as an average. I feel this data needs revisiting.
2. Using a 4x4 van instead of a pickup would be more beneficial to both Leominster and Bromyard, as it could be used to carry personnel to WFR incidents and in the case of Bromyard, animal rescues, whilst allowing the fire engine to remain available (crew permitting). This would benefit the service and the communities local to both stations.
3. Utilising additional WT crews at Leominster, would not increase availability of the first (and only) pump at the station. Leominster currently has no obvious issue with crewing during the day. The benefit of having WT crews available for doing fire safety and Home safety checks, perhaps would be better served by using non blue light staff at a considerable cost saving. Due to the nature of the geography of Leominster, I suggest that there would only be around 159 homes within the 5 minute turnout time for the station that may need a visit.
4. The figures should also have factored in the additional travel distance of support fire engines. The cost of

fuel, additional crew time payments, extra wear and tear on the fleet. Etc. The statistics provided did not appear to include any of this extra cost to offset some of the obvious benefits you highlighted.

Thanks you again for allowing us to meet, it was beneficial in terms of understanding some confusing use of statistical analysis, but also good to have time just to talk about life with you.

Best regards

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) (submission and HWFRS response)



**THE PROFESSIONAL VOICE
OF YOUR FIREFIGHTERS**

Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigades Union

**Response to the 2024 HWFRS Resource Review Public Consultation
proposals for Worcester, Wyre Forest, Droitwich, Redditch, Malvern,
Hereford, Leominster and Bromyard Fire Stations.**





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Introduction

In 2019 we responded to the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service's proposals for alternative options to Day Crewing Plus at Hereford, Worcester and Bromsgrove Fire Stations. Five years on, and having suffered the effects of the Covid pandemic, the impact of Brexit and the United Kingdom's leaving of the European Union's single market and customs union, the financial crash that came as a result of Prime Minister Liz Truss and Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng's mini budget, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Despite the Conservative Government claiming that the UK is bouncing back from a recession we see the reality that those claims are exaggerated and we continue to hear from Chief Fire Officers (CFOs), the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Home Office and Government that the incident at Grenfell Tower on 14th June 2017 will be a so-called turning point - "a game-changer", we are yet again responding in 2024 to another round of proposed cuts to the Fire and Rescue Service in Hereford and Worcester. Since 2010, there are almost 12,000 fewer Firefighters nationally. In Herefordshire and Worcestershire, there has been a reduction of 100 Firefighter jobs (14%) between 2010 and 2023.

The consultation launched by Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) is a mid-term Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) (known locally as a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)), action plan which proposes to cut fire cover not just in the two cities of Hereford & Worcester but also at Wyre Forest, Droitwich, Redditch, Malvern, Leominster and Bromyard, reducing the Service's fleet by 20% and the total number of firefighters by 5%. Although the focus for the CRMP should be the risk within the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, there is no consideration given to risk in the Service's proposals.

The consultation must also be viewed in the context of changes to crewing at the three Day Crewing fire stations in HWFRS (located at Malvern, Droitwich and Evesham), although we note that there are no planned changes to the resources currently based at Evesham. Although the consultation process began on 8 January 2024, the following week, the Service re-implemented the Day Crewing duty system at the three locations named above. This had an immediate positive impact to the availability of the On-call fire engines at those locations during night time hours and invalidated the historical data used to justify the removal of the second fire engines at Droitwich and Malvern. At the start of 2018 there were 10 guaranteed fire engines between the hours of 18:00 and 08:00, crewed with a total of 40 Firefighters available 24/7 with adequate Incident Command (IC), provision. The combined decisions to remove a duty system known as Day Crewing Plus and dis-establish the Day Crewing duty system reduced the total number of night time fire engines from 10 guaranteed fire engines to just 5. The re-establishment of Day Crewing has not only improved the availability of the on-call fire engines but has increased the number of guaranteed fire engines between the hours of 18:00 and 08:00 from 5 to 8. Our document will demonstrate the detrimental impact these dangerous cuts will have to fire cover if they are approved.

It is important with action plan consultations, when they occur between IRMP cycles, that the context of the action plan is fully explained. IRMPs must consider the entire service and its service delivery. Therefore, this consultation should include more detail on the impact that these proposals will have on the rest of the service (especially intervention service delivery), and the community. Our document will explain in more depth several aspects of service delivery not covered by the consultation. However, it is important to iterate the function and importance of IRMP and its philosophy. So, here in this document we need to begin by explaining IRMP in more detail before moving onto the contrast in fire cover proposed by the consultation.

The FBU's position has always been to campaign for a fully funded and modern fire and rescue service. A fire service that is fully prepared to respond to all risks within its community and for foreseeable future developing risks. There is no evidence that the risk in Herefordshire and Worcestershire has declined, in fact it can be argued that the risk is increasing. An ageing and growing population with incident statistics rising in recent years would indicate that more resources are required not less. Also, incidents such as Grenfell, Saddleworth Moor, major incidents declared in 2022 on the hottest day every recorded in Britain and regular flooding incidents that impact all parts of the UK but specifically the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire must also indicate that HWFRS's IRMP is out of date. Added to this, HWFRS have incorporated further new aspects of work for Firefighters to undertake under the auspices of collaboration. These should be dealt with at a national level, rather than introduced piecemeal and without agreement. However, it is clear that Firefighters are being asked to expand their work activities to include a broader response model and this therefore justifies increasing Firefighter numbers rather than reducing them.

The FBU nationally and locally is always keen to engage with employers and management to move our service forward and will do so in the midst of continued austerity. Central government funding cuts are at the root of the pressures placed on all Fire and Rescue Services and HWFRS is no different in that respect. We appreciate that there is intense political and financial pressure, but we urge both management and the Fire Authority to work more closely with the FBU.



Neil Bevan | Brigade Secretary



Trevor Connolly | Brigade Chair

Executive Summary

The effects of fire and other emergency incidents consistently have a multi-dimensional catastrophic effect on the communities we serve. HWFRS provides a fire and rescue service which strives to limit this effect on the community.

The population of Hereford and Worcester expect and deserve an efficient and effective Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) to be able to deal with a multitude of emergencies across a wide spectrum. In the past CRMP responses the FBU have acknowledged that HWFRS have provided an effective and efficient, well run fire service for many years which had been recognised by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). For the last 14 years HWFRS has been under huge financial pressure to continue to provide its service, but with ever decreasing budgets in real terms.

Evidence based standards for dealing with house fire persons reported and road traffic collision (RTC), persons trapped show that HWFRS's service delivery provision is already under resourced. The consequence of these proposals will only further reduce HWFRS's capacity. Thus, creating greater risks to Firefighter safety and to the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Numbers of trained and competent staff in Emergency Fire Control are also too low. The aim of HWFRS should be to recruit to fire control in order that they are able to deliver a coherent service for the public of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Investment in personnel numbers is required to provide a Fire Service for the future in response to increasing incident numbers received by HWFRS and in readiness for extra activities Firefighters will undertake as a result of national negotiations to broaden the work of Firefighters. It is imperative at this point to secure additional funding to prevent further erosion of the service and to safeguard the future. It is important to continue to influence the Home Office and central government to increase the central grant and secure additional funding locally.

There are three specific proposals within the consultation questionnaire:

1. Remove 8 on-call fire engines;
2. Reduce one fire engine to night-time cover only; and
3. Reduce the on-call establishment by 45 posts.

The three specific proposals fail to provide the necessary fire cover needed, and also fail to provide adequate details on how the changes would be implemented.

Notwithstanding the above, through the course of this document we identify a number of conclusions and recommendations, which for ease are listed here:

Recommendation

HWFRS need to carry out a full IRMP to identify the current risks and trends in conjunction with changing forecasts of future risk. It needs to address the shortfall in its emergency intervention response and make plans to invest in the service.

Recommendation

HWFRS must finalise the Resource Review report and Data Pack and run another consultation process to ensure all responses are based on accurate data and facts.

Conclusion 1

- **HWFRS is already under-resourced due to central government funding cuts;**
- **HWFRS intervention service delivery model is over estimated, where the reality identifies significant gaps in fire cover; and**
- **Further cuts proposed by this consultation will leave HWFRS further under resourced.**

Conclusion 2

The potential consequences resulting from the proposals are:

- **Longer first attendance times and delays to subsequent fire engines' arrival;**
- **Loss of Firefighter posts;**
- **Fewer resources available for large scale or protracted incidents;**
- **Greater potential for Firefighter injury/fatality; and**
- **Greater losses/injuries/fatalities for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.**

Recommendation

HWFRS need to address the issue of RDS availability. This will need a large increase in resources to ensure recruitment and retention are significantly improved, in order to bridge the deficiency in the intervention service delivery model.

Recommendation

HWFRS need to look at ways to improve work/life balance and to engage with the FBU and our on-call members to investigate ways to create attractive and sustainable contracts for on-call staff.

Recommendation

HWFRS should engage with the discussions at the NJC and ensure that the pay for on-call members is both attractive and sustainable.

Recommendation

HWFRS should engage with FBU officials locally to ensure on-call firefighter terms and conditions are attractive and sustainable to help minimise the high turnover of staff.

Recommendation

The FRA should set HWFRS a much improved response standard and embark on a strategy to achieve it. This should include, in conjunction with the national employers, lobbying of the Home Office and central government to increase funding to HWFRS.

Recommendation

The FRA should ensure that all proposals satisfy statutory duties and comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Recommendation

For the safety of Firefighters and for an effective response to all incidents, all fire engines should be staffed at 5 with a well-trained and competent crew.

Effect of Emergencies on Society

Previous IRMP and crewing consultation documents, have outlined the vital service that the FRS provides for the wider community. This is reiterated by the commendations often used by politicians, and reinforced in many market research surveys. However, it is still worth reinforcing and repeating it in this response.

In moving away from the National Standards of Fire Cover, the shift in focus for IRMP (through the guidance notes and National Framework), was to concentrate on life risk. Computer risk models together with the insurance industry are interested in life loss, injury and property damage. However, there are far wider implications on society, when a fire or other emergency occurs.

Other considerations include:

- Heritage loss (both natural and built);
- Business interruption;
- Indirect impact (e.g. effect of fire on nearby transport infrastructure);
- Environmental damage;
- Social impact;
- Economic impact; and the
- Effect on community cohesion and sustainability.

For example, a fire in a local Post Office or Community Centre would have substantial impact on the lives of local inhabitants. Similarly, where a fire affects a business it impacts on the livelihood and wellbeing of everyone in that community, not just the owners of the business and their employees.

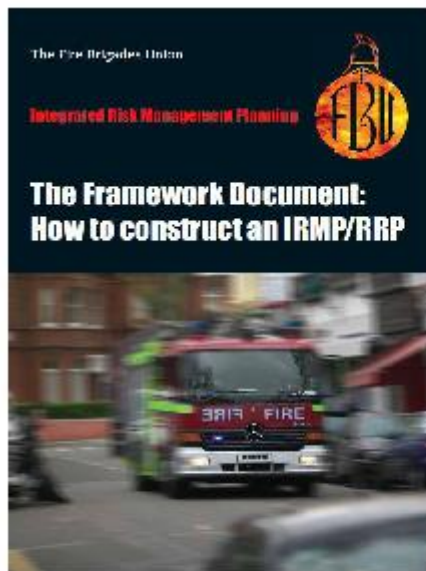
Fires or incidents that affect the transport infrastructure are estimated to have a huge economic impact. There are many economic models, but they all undoubtedly agree that any significant traffic delay, even to sub motorway routes, costs the local economy tens of thousands of pounds.

Therefore, when considering IRMP and the impact of emergency incidents:

- The effect of fire should not be restricted to injury and death
- The cost of emergencies cannot be fully converted into cash terms
- All aspects of the impact of incidents must be fed into the IRMP risk assessment.

The above points must be included when outlining the “Scope” of the IRMP. In other words, IRMP must start by considering every aspect of risk; otherwise the whole process will be flawed.

Once this is done, the rest of the IRMP cycle can be carried out as outlined in our document: “The Framework Document: How to Construct an IRMP”, available from the FBU website (<https://www.fbu.org.uk/publication/framework-document-how-construct-irmprrp>).



This document describes the process through a series of cyclical steps given below:

Step 1: Scope. Identify all of the issues that are the business of the FRS. Identify all of the internal and external controlling factors that impact upon the FRS.

Step 2: Risk assess each of the issues that are in scope. How likely are they to materialise? How harmful are they? Prioritise them according to overall risk and determine a performance outcome target (the degree to which you would like the risk to be reduced).

Step 3: Develop strategies to reduce the risks. Identify the resources needed to deliver each strategy. Allocate resources according to the degree of risk. Identify the inputs and outputs of delivery strategies – if short term inputs and outputs are achieved, long term outcomes should be satisfactory.

Step 4: Delivery. Remember that people are the most important part of any delivery strategy, so to make sure that the strategies work, consult staff about the practicalities of delivery mechanisms.

Step 5: Monitor the whole process from step 1 to step 4. Constantly look for new risks and changes to existing risks. Monitor performance against inputs, outputs and outcomes.

Step 6: Review the process in the light of performance. Did the strategies deliver the performance outcomes? If so, continue with them, if not; develop new strategies for the next planning cycle.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, the function of the IRMP process is simply to be honest and to be transparent about the service being proposed. The consultation stage of the IRMP process has to highlight the difference between:



1. True efficiency savings, and
2. Cuts in services that are forced on the FRS, as a result of budgetary constraints.

If providing value for money means providing a lower level of service because fewer finances are available, the IRMP consultation has to say so. It is the only way that the public can be sufficiently informed to make choices about the services they receive, and what they are prepared to pay for them.

This is often what local IRMPs understate or omit and in applying our evidence-based principles to HWFRS, we will later identify the level of intervention service delivery HWFRS should be providing in the areas under question.

Emergency Cover “Intervention”

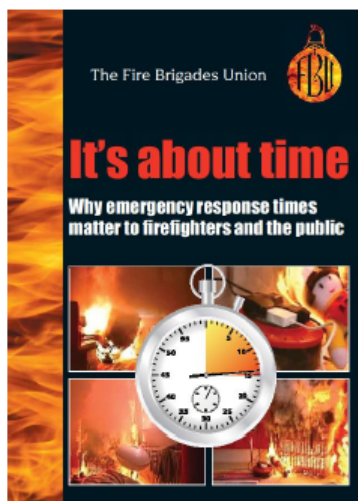
The National Framework for IRMP states:

Fire and rescue authorities are required to assess the risk of emergencies occurring, and use this to inform contingency planning. To do this effectively, fire and rescue authorities are expected to assess their existing capability, and identify any gaps as part of the integrated risk management planning process. This gap analysis needs to be conducted by fire and rescue authorities individually, and collectively to obtain an overall picture of their ability to meet the full range of risks in their areas.

Therefore, the IRMP must take account of Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) Risk Register as Category 1 responders, and also plan and provide for conceivable emergencies, across the whole

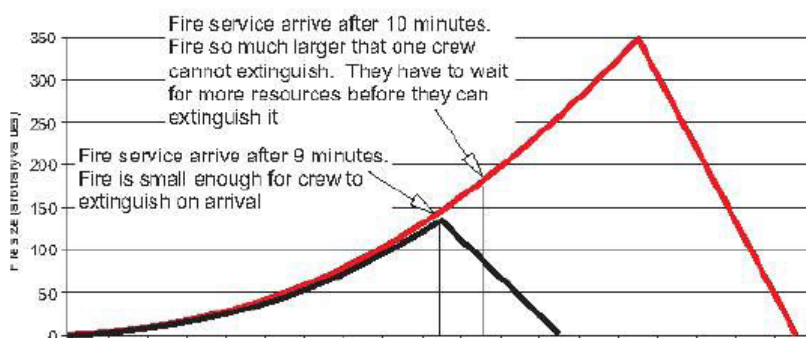
range of possibilities. To be properly effective, this needs greater central coordination of standards of fire cover on a national scale. However, FRSs should be able to make a reasonable attempt at providing a comprehensive IRMP, to include and plan for all realistic scenarios.

It is not for the FBU to carry out this function on behalf of FRSs, but we are able to demonstrate how this must be applied by using CAST scenario planning. A FRS must plan for the two most important services we provide; persons reported in dwelling fire and persons trapped at a Road Traffic Collision (RTC). In both instances, attendance times and weight of attack are critical for a successful outcome. The development of a fire is exponential (a fire doubles in size every minute). Therefore in order to rescue casualties and also to save property (including businesses and livelihoods), the response of the FRS needs to be ideally within 10 minutes. (Our neighbours in West Midlands Fire Service have an attendance time of 5 minutes). This also applies to the RTC scenario; where the prospect of survival of trapped casualties also deteriorates exponentially.



Not only does the attendance need to be within 10 minutes, the weight of attack also needs to be appropriate. An under resourced attendance will not only have difficulty in achieving its objectives; it will also put personnel in danger by being unable to provide safe systems of work.

The FBU has made this clear by robust evidence supplied in its document, "It's About Time," (shown here). Some of the evidence from this document is illustrated in the following diagram:



As can be seen, the importance of a prompt arrival with the necessary resources is essential to limit the effect of fire. The same is true of many other emergency incidents, where the deterioration of the incident is exponential.

With this in mind, when planning a fire service response, the FBU has long advocated the use of planning tools such as Critical Attendance Standards (CAST). This is explained below:

Critical Attendance Standards (CAST)

The CAST scenario planning tools demonstrate the fire service attendance required for a huge variety of conceivable incidents. This is done by identifying the resources required to successfully deal with an emergency incident, and then realistically plotting those resources on a task timeline.

Using these evidence-based principle, this document demonstrates the minimum fire service intervention cover required in order to deal with the two most basic incident types. This can then be compared to the intervention service delivery model for Herefordshire and Worcestershire to illustrate how under resourced HWFRS actually is.

The CAST planning for both of these scenarios are illustrated thus:

CAST 29 Table of Resources

The first part of the process is to identify the resources required, which is done in a table to show the personnel and equipment.

CAST 29 scenario is a Road Traffic Collision (RTC), involving two vehicles and a casualty in each. The resources required for this incident are shown in the following table:

Road Traffic Collision (RTC)*Generic incident-2 vehicles-1 casualty trapped in each vehicle**Two casualties in separate vehicles*

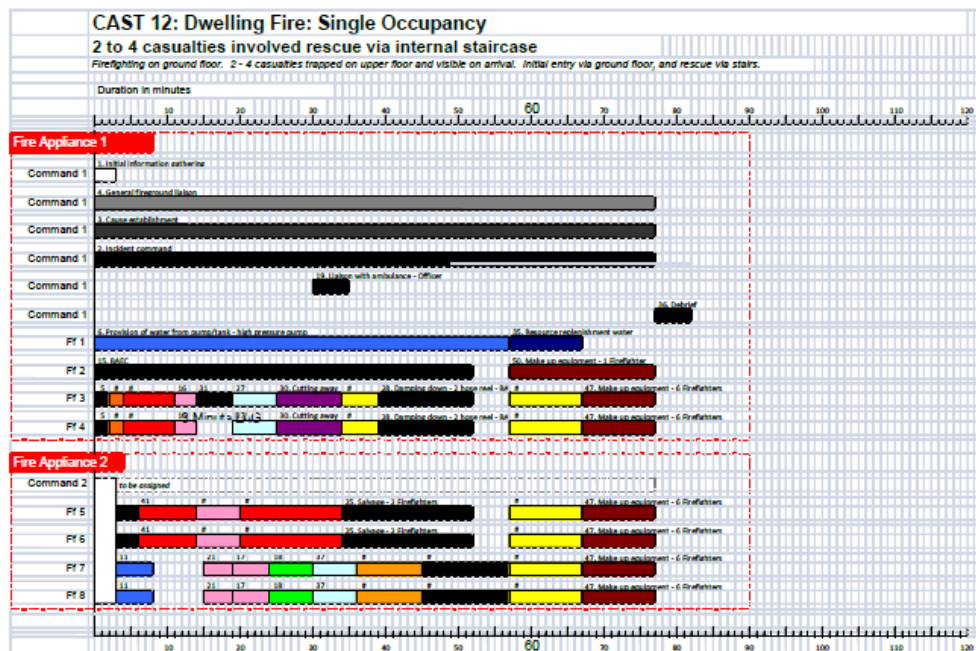
Task Sequence and Personnel Requirements		
1	Initial information gathering	1xIC
2	Supplementary portable fire extinguisher	1xIC
3	Liaison with Police	1xIC
4	General fireground liaison	1xIC
5	Incident Command	1xIC
6	Provision of hose reel branch	1xFF
7	Establish safe working area	1xFF
8	Provision of rescue and stabilisation equipment	4xFF
9	Stabilisation of casualty(ies)	1xFF
10	Stabilisation of casualty(ies)	1xFF
11	Provision of water from pump/tank-high pressure pump	1xFF
12	Stabilisation of structure/vehicle	2xFF
13	Liaison with ambulance	1xFF
14	Extrication of persons	4xFF
15	Firefighting/Rescue 1 Firefighter non BA- hose reel branch	1xFF
16	Maintain safe working area	1xFF
17	Casualty treatment	2xFF
18	Casualty treatment	2xFF
19	Debris/water removal	2xFF
20	Make up equipment	7xFF
21	Resource replenishment	1xFF
22	Debrief	1xIC
1 Incident Commander Role Firefighter & 9 Firefighters		10 Total
EQUIPMENT		
<i>Barriers/Cones/Tape x1, Casualty Shield x1, Ear Defenders x10, Eye Protection x10, First Aid Kit x2, Hose Reel and Branch x1, Hydraulic Cutting and Spreading Gear x1, Hydraulic Cutting Gear x1, Hydraulic Lifting Gear x3, Hydraulic Spreading Gear x1, Lighting Equipment x1, Lines x3,</i>		

Mechanical Lifting/Spreading/Pulling Equipment x2, Pneumatic Lifting Gear x2, Portable Fire Extinguisher x1, Pump with High Pressure Capability x1, Radio Communications x6, Resuscitator x2, Salvage Sheet x1, Signs x1, Small Gear x1, Specialist First Aid Equipment x2, Stabilising Equipment (Blocks and Chocks) x2, Stretcher x2, Water Tank - 1800 litres x1.

Once the resources have been identified, this information is then used to plot the tasks of the incident on a task timeline. This takes into account simultaneous activities and verifies the minimum number of personnel to successfully deal with the incident.

CAST 12 Task Timeline

CAST 12 scenario is a dwelling fire, persons reported. Having completed the Table of Resources similar to the one for RTC, the Task Timeline is then constructed thus:



The above illustrations depict the minimum requirement of personnel and equipment required, to enable a successful outcome for the two most basic incident types that FRS's are expected to deal with.

It is worthwhile to reiterate that HWFRS is instructed (in the National Framework), to consider, when planning its intervention resources, the full range of emergencies that will be encountered.

Indeed, it is incumbent on all FRSs to plan for a whole catalogue of other incidents as well as those directed by the Home Office. Consideration must also be given to:

- CBRN incidents;
- Terrorism;
- Major incidents;
- Climate change;
- Civil Contingencies;
- Civil disturbance; and
- Cross border liaison.

However, returning to the Resource Review consultation, which is the main intention of this document, HWFRS must still consider the following when taking into account minimum levels of emergency cover:

- Geographical population centres;
- Historical data of incidents;
- Risks within a station ground;
- Travel distances from support stations;
- Likelihood of simultaneous incidents;
- Staffing levels;
- Standard Operating Procedures; and
- Specific Incident Procedures.

These are only some of the basic considerations and these should be revisited for mid-cycle IRMP action plans

Alternative modes of transport

The HWFRS Resource Review public consultation questionnaire discusses exploring alternative, “more flexible” modes of transport for on-call firefighters. There is no detail behind this proposal, other than that the provision of these alternative modes of transport are reliant on the reduction of the Service’s fleet and on-call establishment. There is no consideration given to how this system would work, how Fire Control would manage the mobilisation of resources, the minimum competencies required or the impact on the availability of relief crews (which will be reduced under these proposals). At large scale incidents it is vital that crews are rotated for their health, safety and welfare. If all available on-call staff self-mobilise to an incident this will reduce the options for relief crews.

There are also training implications, HWFRS have adopted NFCC guidance which states that for Class B vehicles (up to 3500kg) a 10-day (80 hour) driving course is required if the individual has already completed an Emergency Response Driver Training (ERDT) course, or a three-week (120 hour) course if not. For many on-call staff this will be unachievable.

Previous Cuts

Of course, the FBU stood in opposition to the cuts proposed in 2014 and again in 2021 through HWFRS's IRMP. However, these current proposals advocate a level of intervention fire cover inferior to that identified as necessary to address the risk in 2014. As stated in the opening statements to this response, the assessment of risk has not been reviewed. Therefore, there can be no justification for further cuts below that level, especially overnight when people are most at risk from fire.

These latest proposals further reduce the number of operational crews. There are currently 153 wholetime firefighters and 361 on-call firefighters, these latest cuts equate to a 5% cut in the number of frontline firefighters. This is on top of the 100 firefighter jobs cut (14%) from 2010 to 2023.

HWFRS suggest on page 20 of the Resource Review report that the Service can effectively operate with fewer fire engines than it currently has. This does not align with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), and nor does it justify the removal of 20% of the Service's fleet as HWFRS could continue to "cope" (although at times heavily reliant on support from neighbouring services) until something catastrophic happens.

The public want the right number of firefighters on the right amount of fire engines to keep them, (and the firefighters helping them), safe in their hour of need. Therefore, it should be incumbent on the FRA to provide a fully funded fire and rescue service.

HWFRS do not staff fire engines with 5 firefighters and the availability of fire engines is further depleted (see below). Although the proposal to re-invest the savings from the reduction of 45 on-call firefighter posts and 8 fire engines into the wholetime establishment by increasing the total number of wholetime firefighters by 18, the Service are not proposing to increase the number of wholetime firefighters on fire engines from 4 to 5. The purpose of IRMP is to provide a risk-based service, not one that is driven by budget constraints.

Recommendation

HWFRS need to carry out a full IRMP to identify the current risks and trends in conjunction with changing forecasts of future risk. It needs to address the shortfall in its emergency intervention response and make plans to invest in the service.

HWFRS IRMP (CRMP)

With all that is explained above it is clear that IRMP must be kept under reasonable review periods. Much has changed since 2021 and to continue to rely upon an aged assessment is flawed.

The consultation document does not explain that the Service’s operational response demand continues to increase each year. In fact the Service is now 9.75% busier attending incidents than the previous 5 year average for operational incidents. The graph below shows how incidents attended by HWFRS have continued to increase each year since 2017/18.

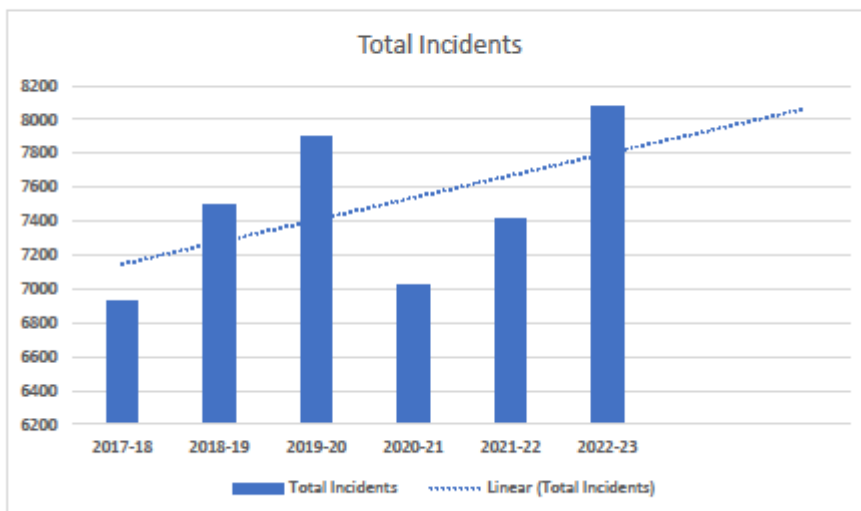


Figure 1: Total Incidents 2017/18 to 2022/23

The graph below shows the figures quoted in the quarterly Performance Report for the number of fires, special service incidents, road traffic collisions (RTCs), and total number of incidents presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority's Policy and Resources Committee:

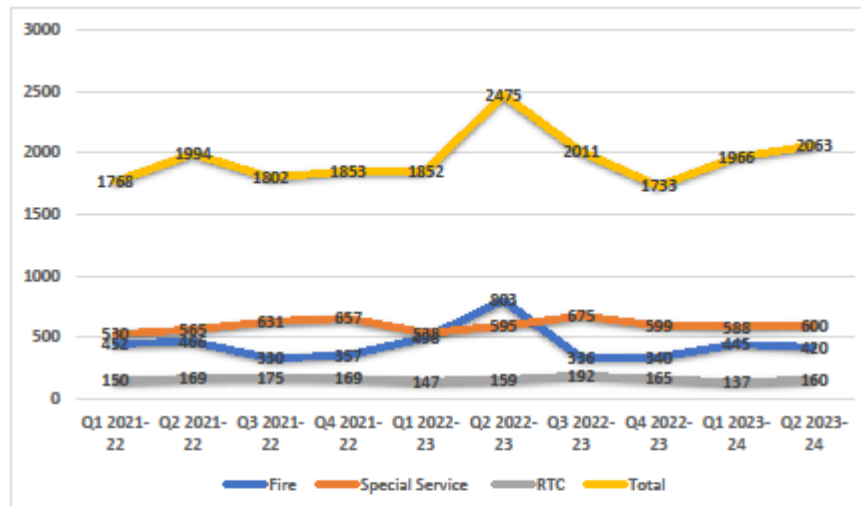


Figure 2: Quarterly numbers of fires, special service incidents, RTCs and total number of incidents

HWFRS Consultation

HWFRS's consultation document proposes cuts to fire cover without sufficient background evidence presented to the public in regard to what effect these cuts will have on them, their friends, families and the communities in which they live. The proposal to reduce the on-call establishment by 45, including by compulsory redundancies is only mentioned once whereas other statements are repeated ad nauseum. This vital detail is hidden away towards the end of the report and the real-life impact of this is then not considered. There is no mention of how this would be implemented or achieved, or where these 45 firefighters would come from. HWFRS on-call firefighters are contracted to provide a certain number of hours cover, during which time they will be expected to book themselves available and respond to emergency calls should they be required. The contracts for on-call firefighters range from 40 hours to 120 hours per week. Simply stating that the on-call establishment will be reduced by 45 on-call firefighters is not only unacceptable and dangerous, it is also misleading. For example 45 on-call firefighters who provide 120 hours cover each week equates to 135 on-call firefighters who provide 40 hours cover each week. The Resource Review report states that the current on-call establishment is 361. Reducing the on-call establishment by 45 firefighters who provide 120 hours cover per week would be equal to reducing the total number of on-call staff by 37%. This will likely result in slower response times; an increased likelihood of more severe injuries and fatalities of the public and firefighters;

that loss of property is more likely to occur; and that the environmental impact of fires will be greater and longer lasting.

It is abundantly clear that all on-call firefighters who are currently employed by Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority are required to crew the first fire engines at each of the 2-pump on-call stations and the on-call fire engines at each of the wholetime/on-call stations. The contracts signed by on-call firefighters overlap with others at each fire station so that at any time each on-call fire engine is available with a crew of 4. Removing any on-call firefighters will impact the availability of the fire engines at that location and will have a detrimental impact on availability and response times. This will also reduce resilience options to cover wholetime crewing deficiencies.

HWFRS propose to remove 8 fire engines from the fleet, equating to a 20% reduction. If implemented, this decision along with the reduction of 45 on-call firefighter posts and the downgrading of a 9th fire engine to provide night cover (19:00 – 07:00) only will have a detrimental impact on the safety of people living, working, holidaying and travelling through the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

It is disappointing that at 7 weeks into the public consultation all staff, including staff at the potentially effected stations, have not officially been spoken to by a Service representative about the proposals. On-call members risk losing their job in the fire service and a fire engine which they and their family and friends rely on to keep their homes and workplaces safe in the event of a fire. Informing those most affected should have been a priority for HWFRS.

All of the concerns raised above should have been fully explained in the consultation document produced for the public and HWFRS staff. Whilst the FBU support a move to re-establish wholetime firefighter posts, the adverse impact of the proposals far outweigh any advantages. Each of the documents (Resource Review report and the Data Pack) provided by HWFRS for this public consultation have been amended several times since the consultation began on 8 January 2024. The FBU cannot see how the results of this consultation can be viewed as accurate and valid given that the response provided will be entirely dependent on when the submission was made and which version of each document the individual was viewing in order to form their opinion at that time. The consultation should therefore be restarted when the report and data pack have been finalised.

Recommendation

HWFRS must finalise the Resource Review report and Data Pack and run another consultation process to ensure all responses are based on accurate data and facts.

HWFRS Service Delivery Model; Intervention

Emergency fire cover represents the larger consideration of any IRMP due to the proportion of resources needed in this area. The FBU have concerns at the levels of resources left to cope in other departments, but the proposals in this consultation concentrate on Intervention.

HWFRS’s model has in recent years relied upon four different shift systems. Any changes to one of them will have knock-on consequences to the others, and this is the case for the Retained Duty System (RDS).

Our members working on RDS stations provide HWFRS with incredible commitment to maintain emergency response, but RDS availability continues to be an issue at many retained stations. Recruitment and more significantly retention to the RDS is a burgeoning national issue for a variety of reasons, but for HWFRS the table below shows the percentage of retained availability for the last three and a half years as reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority’s Policy and Resources committee; figures are inputted on a quarterly basis as denoted by the ‘x’ axis:

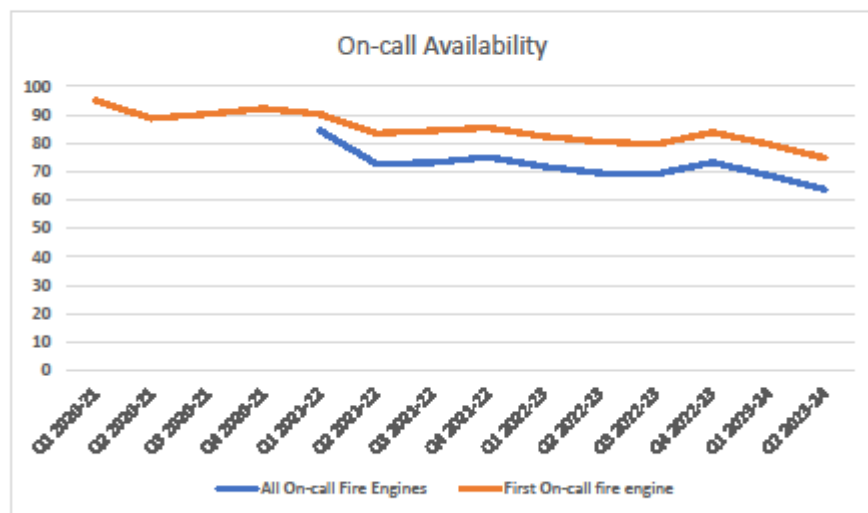


Figure 3: On-call Availability Q1 2020/21 to Q2 2023/24

In November 2022 a revised version of the On-call duty system was issued and at that time On-call contracts were reviewed. Despite issues being raised by the FBU this often meant that flexibility was removed and staff faced punitive management interventions which on multiple occasions resulted in the dismissal or resignation of on-call staff. It is no coincidence that the timing of this change in approach coincided with the downward trend in the availability of on-call fire engines. It is disappointing that there is no admittance of this from HWFRS or a view that remedies will be explored before any fire engines are proposed to be removed.

The re-establishment of the Day Crewing duty system at Droitwich, Evesham and Malvern was referenced in the Introduction. This change to the crewing arrangements of the first fire engines at the three locations has had an immediate impact on the availability of the second fire engines based there. The FBU therefore expect to see improved figures for the three on-call fire engines which will be recorded in the availability statistics reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority's Policy and Resources committee in Q3 and Q4 2023-24. Unfortunately, due to the timing and duration of the consultation this data will not be available until the process has closed.

Conclusion 1

The only conclusions that can be drawn from the above in conjunction with the consultation proposals is that:

- HWFRS is already under-resourced due to central government funding cuts;
- HWFRS's intervention service delivery model is over estimated, where the reality identifies significant gaps in fire cover; and that
- Further cuts proposed by this consultation will leave HWFRS further under resourced.

HWFRS response times are already at an all-time high. Response times to primary fires (potentially more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property) have slowed from 9 minutes and 30 seconds in 2010-11 to 12 minutes and 28 seconds in 2022-23. Despite the foreseeable delays for attendance times estimated at up to 6 minutes and 18 seconds as a result of these proposals stated in the Resource Review report the FBU are convinced that many members of the public will not realise that these proposals will result in a delay of the attendance of the first appliance, on top of extended durations, and then further delays of the second and subsequent fire engines due to these proposals and genuine gaps in RDS cover.

The growth in population will certainly cause an increase in incident numbers, just at the time when intervention fire cover will reduce. This growth in population over the coming years will place a huge strain on an already under-resourced Fire Service, let alone the Fire Service this consultation document proposes.

Conclusion 2

The potential consequences resulting from the proposals are:

- Longer first attendance times and delays to subsequent fire engines' arrival;
- Loss of Firefighter posts;
- Fewer resources available for large scale or protracted incidents;
- Greater potential for Firefighter injury/fatality; and
- Greater losses/injuries/fatalities for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Despite the magnificent commitment our members give to the RDS, relying on RDS fire engines carries a degree of risk as these fire engines are not sufficiently crewed all of the time. An increased reliance on RDS personnel who are already straining to maintain their cover has the potential to place a greater amount of stress on the RDS Firefighter's primary employers and families who face their staff/loved ones being away from their primary workplace/home for ever increasing periods. This may result in employers/families giving RDS Firefighters an ultimatum - their primary employment/family life or the Fire Service. It is highly unlikely that RDS staff will choose the Fire Service over their primary employment (which will pay the majority of their wages), nor over any conflict in their home life balance.

HWFRS need to be explicit to RDS staff in regard to how their call volume will increase at night, and the knock-on effect this will have on their primary employment and family lives.

Recommendation

HWFRS need to address the issue of RDS availability. This will need a large increase in resources to ensure recruitment and retention are significantly improved, in order to bridge the deficiency in the intervention service delivery model.

Recommendation

HWFRS need to look at ways to improve work/life balance and to engage with the FBU and our on-call members to investigate ways to create attractive and sustainable terms and conditions for on-call staff.

Future Projection

For the past 100 years the FBU have championed change and led in the evolution of the Fire and Rescue Service. There are discussions taking place at a national level regarding the expansion of the role of Firefighters, and it is the FBU that is leading on this work. Many of the areas that are being considered will result in fire crews attending more operational incidents. With this in mind, now is not the time to cut fire cover - now is the time to invest in front line services by increasing the number of firefighters. Staffing on fire engines need to increase to 5 rather than maintain the current level of 4 but not at the expense of the on-call. This will keep firefighters safer, ensuring they can carry out Fire and Rescue operations more efficiently and effectively both now and in the future. The FBU will support proposals that seeks to improve the conditions of our members and the service to the communities that they serve. However, the FBU cannot advocate a consultation process that gives no sound reasoning or reasonable justification for the degradation of fire cover and reduction of Firefighter posts.

Funding

Council tax levels that HWFRS receives through its precept rose by 2.99% in 2024/25 and has risen by 28.2% since 2010/11. The public of Herefordshire and Worcestershire may question this increase whilst the fire cover afforded to them continues to shrink. It is clear that the policies of central government since 2010, namely austerity, is the underlying cause of severe cuts to HWFRS.

In 2018 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) conducted the first independent inspection into fire and rescue services for 12 years. These inspections have continued to take place since, and the most recent report was published in November 2023. Although the focus of the inspections and the 'graded judgements' have been altered over this time, following the recent inspection His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) found that HWFRS performed 'Adequate' in the majority of areas, specifically those that focused on the Service's core duties. It was not a surprise to our members, but none the less disappointing that HMICFRS reported that, *"The service should make sure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information"*. This is an issue FBU members and their representatives have repeatedly raised with the Service. Last year was the 30th anniversary of the fire at Hereford's Sun Valley poultry plant where two of our members, John Davies and David Morris lost their lives in the line of duty. As a result of this tragedy HWFRS were issued an improvement notice which led to a computerised system being installed on every frontline fire engine in the Service's fleet (and later adopted by all FRs nationwide) to ensure crews had access to relevant and up-to-date risk information. Thirty years on, it is unthinkable that crews still do not have access to relevant and up-to-date risk information via a robust and reliable system. If the operational response is reduced as proposed within the consultation document this will not address the issues raised by HMICFRS and nor will firefighter or public

safety be improved. The FBU believe HWFRS should be striving to achieve an ever-improving service. Our Service should and can achieve 'Outstanding' in each category.



Figure 4: Sun Valley Fire, 6 September 1993

On-call Duty System

HWFRS offer a number of options for members of the On-call duty system. The contracted hours range from 40 to 120 hours per week. The FBU has raised issues with Service management regarding the bandings, the lack of flexibility and the unfair payment mechanism used to pay on-call firefighters for the time they are on call (the retaining fee).

The table below shows the amount paid to a competent on-call firefighter. Figures are shown for each banding (number of contracted hours) and are based on pay rates as of 1 July 2023.

Banding	Weekly Hours	Total Annual Hours	Retainer %	Total Annual Retainer	Current Hourly Rate (Retainer/Hours)
A	120	6240	120%	£4,347.60	70p
B	100	5200	115%	£4,166.45	80p
C	80	4160	110%	£3985	96p
D	60	3120	95%	£3441.85	£1.10
E	50	2600	80%	£2,898.40	£1.11
F	40	2080	80%	£2,898.40	£1.39

This shows that individuals who provide 1/3 of the contracted hours earn twice as much for the hours they are available for emergencies. In March 2023 the FBU proposed that in order to remove the unfair application, the following is applied:

Banding	Hours	Total Annual Hours	Proposed Retainer	Revised Annual Retainer	Revised Hourly Rate
A	120	6240	240%	£8,695.20	£1.39
B	100	5200	200%	£7,246	£1.39
C	80	4160	160%	£5,796.80	£1.39
D	60	3120	120%	£4,347.60	£1.39
E	50	2600	100%	£3,623	£1.39
F	40	2080	80%	£2,898.40	£1.39

As part of the 2022 and 2023 pay settlements it was agreed that working groups made up of employee and employer representatives at the National Joint Council (NJC) would look at a number of issues, including pay concerns for On-call firefighters.

Recommendation

HWFRS should engage with the discussions at the NJC and ensure that the pay for on-call members is both attractive and sustainable.

Recommendation

HWFRS should engage with FBU officials locally to ensure on-call firefighter terms and conditions are attractive and sustainable to help minimise the high turnover of staff.

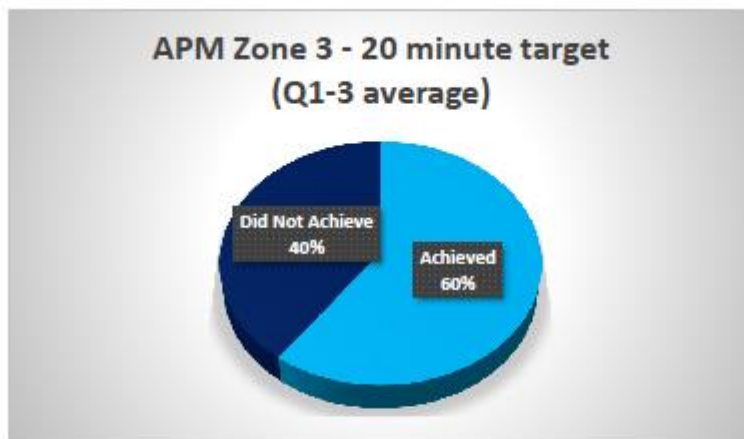
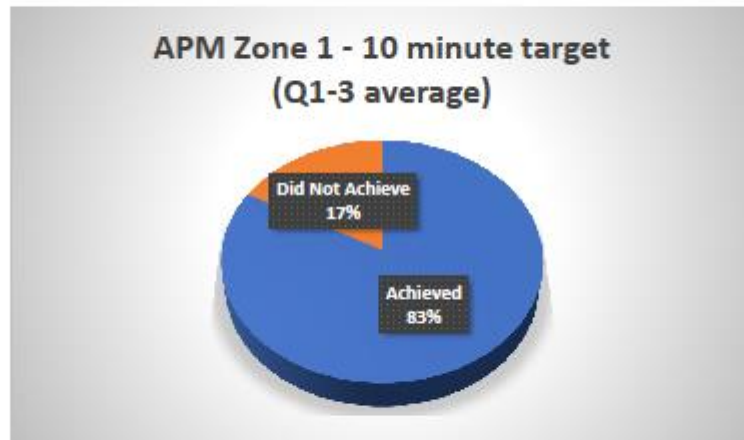
HWFRS are proposing to reduce the current number of on-call firefighter posts by 45 using a range of methods, including compulsory redundancies. Where members are eligible for severance pay HWFRS have budgeted just £39, 000. If split equally, this equates to less than £870 each. Our on-call members provide cover every week of every year, and in some cases for decades, often missing out on family celebrations, anniversaries and quality time with close friends. It is indefensible for HWFRS to budget such a small amount of money for years of dedication and sacrifice.

Proposals Overview

On 8th January 2024, the Fire & Rescue Authority (FRA) for Hereford and Worcester Fire & Rescue Service released a public consultation document proposing to cut fire engines from eight fire stations: Worcester, Wyre Forest, Droitwich, Redditch, Malvern, Hereford, Leominster and Bromyard. The proposals also included the reduction of 45 on-call firefighter posts and to downgrade a fire engine that is currently staffed 24/7 to night time only. This will result in a reduction to the intervention service delivery model of over 20%.

With the demise of the National Standards of Fire Cover, one of the most worrying trends we have seen is that Fire Services can set their own attendance standards. These attendance standards are then only required to be met a percentage of the time. On 1 April 2023 HWFRS launched the new Attendance Performance Measure (APM) which is based on a 10, 15 and 20 minute time zone, dependant on the road network from a fire station to the incident location.

Due to the short time scale that the new attendance standard has been in place there is limited data available. The following three pie charts show the average percentage of occasions for Quarters 1 to 3 that the Attendance Performance Measure (APM) was achieved for each of the time zones since the APM was introduced:



The FBU understand that meeting attendance response times in remote rural can be logistically difficult, but cannot accept a response standard that is not based on risk. The figures for the three quarters range from 100% to 13% which will not bring confidence to those who rely on the services of HWFRS. Importantly, the APM does not include call-handling time, whereas the previous standard (1 fire engine within 10 minutes on 75% of occasions) did. If call handling time was applied to these figures the percentage of occasions where the APM was met over the past three quarters would be greatly impacted.

Recommendation

The FRA should set HWFRS a much-improved response standard and embark on a strategy to achieve it. This should include, in conjunction with the national employers, lobbying of the Home Office and central government to increase funding to HWFRS.

The FBU also have grave concerns on the affect to response times. Home Office statistics confirm that response times continue to rise, and this proposal will undoubtedly increase them further. The consequence of this could be catastrophic, and not just to the local communities who will have to wait longer for a fire response, but would also put firefighters at increased risk waiting for further appliances to attend emergency incidents.

According to annual reports published by the Home Office response times to fires attended by fire and rescue services have been considerably increasing over the last 20 years. This is largely due to cuts to the frontline of the fire service.

Figures on the .Gov website (FIRE1001:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65324c3ce839fd000d86727c/fire-statistics-data-tables-fire1001-261023.xlsx>) for HWFRS show how response times have increased:

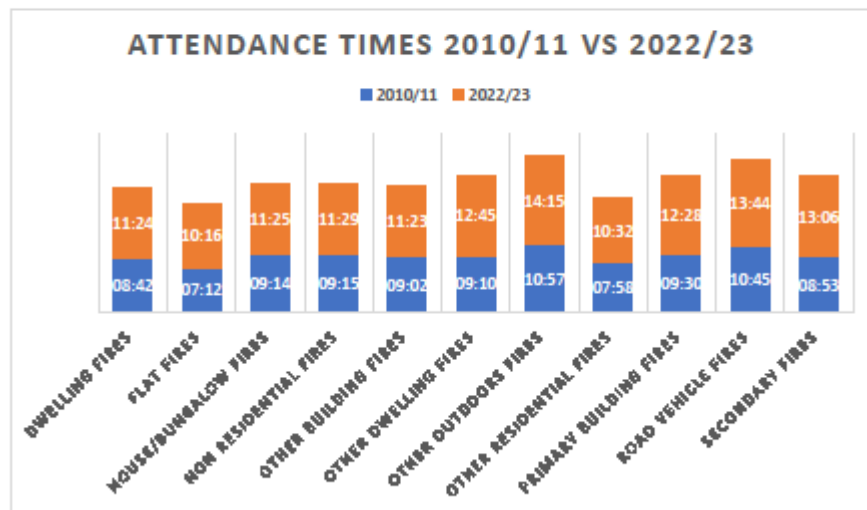


Figure 5: Attendance Times for a range of incident types 2010/11 compared to 2022/23

This information should be provided within the consultation documents in order so that members of the public can make an informed choice concerning the impact an additional 6 minutes and 18 seconds will have, and so they can determine if the consequential damage, injuries and loss of life incurred is worth the risk.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The FBU believe the proposals for a night-time only on-call duty system at certain locations disfavour single parents who could give cover whilst their children are at school. These proposals would adversely impact single mothers. Not only do these proposals not comply with the PSED, they also reduce the number of people who could fulfil the role of an On-call firefighter. Many existing members of the on-call do not live and work in the same area and would not therefore be able to continue with their current contracts.

Recommendation

The FRA should ensure that all proposals satisfy statutory duties and comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Removal of eight fire engines

Worcester and Hereford Fire Stations



The removal of eight fire engines would mean that for both Hereford and Worcester fire stations, each would have one fire appliance staffed on the Wholetime Duty System day and night, one fire engine staffed on a Day Duty System in the day and then staffed on the On-call Duty System at night. This is a reduction from three fire engines at each station during day and night-time hours to just two.

On-call staff at Hereford and Worcester fire stations are competent operators of the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP); one ALP is stationed at each location. Due to the requirement to provide on-call cover during night-time hours only, a situation could arise that due to a lack of on-call staff during the day, the ALP would need to travel a considerable distance, often via roads that are closed due to flooding, to assist with a rescue. This would lead to significant delays and mean that more damage is caused by fires and survivability rates are reduced. Firefighter's and members of the public's lives will be put at risk.



The figures for the third fire engines at Worcester and Hereford show that they attended a total of 154 incidents on average (Hereford attended 70 and Worcester attended 84) each year. This is a significant number of incidents that other stations will be required to cover, and by doing so cover will be reduced or removed entirely from those areas.

Wyre Forest Fire Station



Wyre Forest Fire Station would have one fire engine staffed on the Wholetime Duty System day and night, one fire engine staffed on the On-call Duty System day and night, and one fire engine on the On-call Duty System during night-time hours only, and with an extended turn-in time of 8 minutes compared to the current 5-minute standard. This is a reduction from four fire engines at day and night to two during the day and three at night.

Throughout the consultation process for the Wyre Forest Hub fire station HWFRS assured the public that they would see no change to the speed and weight of attack and that no fire engines would be lost. Less than 4 years on HWFRS are renegeing on that guarantee.

The report highlights the attendance of the first fire engine, however on-call fire engines are on a 5-minute delay due to the time staff have to respond to the station. Therefore these appliances will generally be the second, (or third, fourth, etc) fire engine in attendance. Additionally, where a wholetime crew are available they will be mobilised first so the on-call fire engines are not normally the first fire appliance to attend incidents by design.

Droitwich Spa Fire Station



HWFRS propose that Droitwich on-call cease to operate in its entirety. This would result in the loss of one fire engine and the crew, however the on-call members have been told they would be offered an on-call position on the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) unit also based at Droitwich. In order for firefighters to take up a USAR position it is a requirement that they are competent in the role of a Firefighter. This raises questions about competence but also about the HWFRS proposal and where it believes the 45 on-call posts will be from.

As previously stated, the Data Pack gives invalid and misleading data which is designed to elicit a certain response and justify the proposals within the consultation survey. For 5 years from 2019 until 12 January 2024 (the week after the public consultation opened), on-call staff at Droitwich, Evesham and Malvern were used to maintain the availability of the first fire engines at each of those locations. This was necessary due to a decision made by HWFRS to cease the Day Crewed Duty System that was in place which had provided 100% fire cover day and night for decades. Following this decision wholtime staff were assigned to a non-agreed Day Duty system which meant night-time fire cover was reliant on the support of on-call staff. This had an immediate impact on the availability of the second fire appliances which is the data presented, only without this explanation as to why the figures were so low, and it is this data which is being used to justify the removal of those fire engines. The total night-time cover for the 1st appliance at Droitwich last year was 92.72%, therefore the night-time on-call availability should be recorded as 92.72%.

Looking again at the figures for the second fire engine at Droitwich, the average number of incidents attended each year was 77; 31 of which were outside the Droitwich station ground. This is a significant number that another station will be required to cover. The busiest fire appliances are those that surround Droitwich, so if they are already deployed to an incident and the first (only under these proposals) fire engine at Droitwich is detained at an incident (e.g. an Ultra Heavy Rescue Pump call), the FBU are concerned that there will be significant delays before the attendance of the nearest available fire engine. A delay that could be avoided by maintaining the on-call crew and fire engine at Droitwich Spa.

A Day Crewing duty system was implemented at Droitwich, Evesham and Malvern mid-January 2024 and we will not see how the on-call availability has improved until after the close of the public consultation. HWFRS should not make any cuts to the Service's fleet until new figures, covering at least one year, are available.

Redditch Fire Station



The new combined Fire and Police station being built at Redditch is designed to house all three fire engines currently based at Redditch, however under the proposals tabled by HWFRS one of the bays will be left empty if the third fire engine is removed.

Over the three year period HWFRS have focussed on for this public consultation the third fire engine at Redditch has been mobilised to a range of incidents which involved persons trapped in burning buildings, road traffic collisions, floodings and industrial machinery. On top of this it has been used to assist other blue light services, rescue trapped animals and at incidents involving hazardous materials. This is an essential part of the Service's fleet and critical to managing the foreseeable risks identified in the HWFRS Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

Malvern Fire Station



HWFRS staff received the following email from CFO Pryce on 7 February 2024, just over half way through the 8-week public consultation:

Dear Colleague,

I wanted to make you fully aware of a minor amendment to the proposals in the Resource Review I will be making at the end of the consultation period with regard to Malvern fire station. I would like to emphasise in the strongest terms that this is a change being made solely on operational considerations and feedback from operational members of staff as part of the consultation process we are currently undertaking. I promised the consultation would be meaningful and we would listen carefully to feedback, and that is exactly what we have done.

The case for Malvern Fire Station and Malvern town only requiring one fire engine still stands, strongly supported by the evidence and data. Malvern fire station has low operational activity and have had, and I suspect will always have, challenges with On-Call recruitment, however I am proposing the following amendment based on some wider operational considerations, beyond the Malvern area:

Malvern Fire Station will remain with two operational fire engines, the first fire engine will continue to operate on the new Day Crewed system that has seen Malvern Fire Station recently receive a £200k investment and uplift in operational staffing already this year. However the second fire engine will also remain as it currently is, with an On-Call 24/7 fire engine, but will be subject to a review in a further two years time by the Fire Authority (in 2026) to examine its usage, cost and availability.

The second fire engine will be changed to a compact fire engine rather than a large 18 tonne fire engine (this was suggested by the On-Call staff at Malvern) which has lower overall running costs. The compact fire engine still has a full crew of Firefighters and attends all incident types, with the same capabilities as a normal fire engine, therefore there will be no reduction in service from Malvern fire station. Three compact fire engines are already successfully operational elsewhere in the Service and have been for some time.

The strategic operational reasons for this decision are as follows:

- Malvern On-Call staff suggested that they could be used more frequently as the covering fire engine into other fire stations (such as Worcester City or other neighbouring areas), if those fire engines are committed to protracted incidents. This is what are termed 'stand-by' or 'cover' moves, which already happen routinely. The use of Malvern On-Call would negate the need to move another fire engine from another location and was worthy of consideration.
- As outlined in the Resource Review report recruiting and retaining On-Call cover is a challenge across the Service at every location, and to tackle this issue we now have a full time On-Call recruitment team in place to primarily target first fire engines for improved availability. Some of the nearby On-Call stations to Malvern may take some time to build the workforce at these locations and employ suitable staff to fully improve their availability. Therefore despite Malvern On-Call also having some availability issues which the existing staff have said they can improve on, an additional fire engine in the wider Malvern area may be beneficial in terms of resilience based on Malvern's geographic location.

The Resource Review proposal for Malvern fire station meant the majority of On-Call staff would remain employed but without a dedicated fire engine. Malvern On-Call do not require any more staff, however some of those staff will require up-skilling which during the consultation they have now agreed to undertake in order to improve their availability.

The additional cost of this is circa £50K which makes the Resource Review costs slightly more than it saves which is unhelpful, however I believe the Service can fund this additional cost in the interim. I am also confident that there will be no need for any other changes to the Resource Review proposals as the cases for the other 7 fire stations and the removal of those fire engines remains unaffected, and in several locations the case is strengthened by this amendment.

Fire Authority Members are aware of this amendment alongside yourselves at Malvern fire station, and I whilst I will be happy to discuss the matter, I will communicate this more formally at the completion of the consultation process.

I know that many of you have stated to me personally that you understand and support the principles of the Resource Review, and can see the need for change, I would therefore hope that in response to

this genuine and meaningful consultation process, that this amended proposal would gain your support.

Jonathon Pryce
Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive

Whilst the FBU appreciate the flexible approach taken on this occasion, it does raise a number of questions, least of all about the validity of replies to the survey completed by members of the public and/or organisations who are not aware of this fundamental change in direction.

Furthermore, it appears that there has been no consideration given to the number of times on-call crews are mobilised to another location to provide cover in that area. **The figures presented in the Data Pack do not account for all mobilisations.**

Finally, if as the CFO states, this strategic change results in the Resource Review costing more than it saves, the FBU ask 'why continue with this process'? The proposal by on-call staff at Malvern was to save the second fire engine. The 'compact' was suggested as a last resort, but ultimately the preferred option would be to keep what already exists. As this is the cheaper option it does not make sense to replace it with a smaller, less reliable vehicle which carries a reduced amount of equipment, water and personnel.

During staff consultation meetings the message from the CFO has been very clear; that it is all or nothing... Whilst it is positive that HWFRS have moved from this position and are willing to consider alternative ideas, it brings into question the options that were considered prior to the formulation of the public consultation and the documents HWFRS have prepared.

Leominster and Bromyard



HWFRS are proposing to cut one fire engine from each of Leominster and Bromyard Fire Stations. HWFRS also propose to reinvest the money in 3 wholtime Firefighter posts at each location. There is no detail on what role these posts will be, how they will maintain their competencies or what duty system they will work. Although the FBU dispute the figures within the Data Pack, the availability of each fire engine at these stations are shown as:

Fire Engine	2022-23		2021-22		2020-21	
	Day	Night	Day	Night	Day	Night
Leominster's 1 st Fire Engine	98.39%	99.42%	97.48%	99.06%	99.51%	99.94%
Leominster's 2 nd Fire Engine	11.87%	35.86%	9.66%	20.58%	33.47%	38.92%
Bromyard's 1 st Fire Engine	94.58%	98.51%	90.15%	98.21%	98.55%	99.65%
Bromyard's 2 nd Fire Engine	15.46%	49.38%	5.73%	43.78%	25.16%	65.17%

Figure 6: Day/Night Availability Figures for Leominster and Bromyard Fire Engines 2020/21 to 2022/23

It is clear that the availability of the first fire engines at each location is high, so it is questionable as to why HWFRS are proposing that three wholtime members of staff will be based at these locations to support the availability of the first (and only) fire engine. HWFRS should reconsider this proposal and look to post wholtime staff to support the availability of the second appliances at Leominster and Bromyard.



The FBU consider that the proposed loss of 8 fire engines, the downgrade of a ninth fire engine to night-time hours and the reduction of 45 on-call firefighter posts fails to provide the level of fire cover that is necessary at the eight station areas and reduces the level of fire cover to the communities and surrounding areas.

Reduction of 45 On-call firefighter Posts

The proposal to reduce the on-call establishment by 45 is unclear and needs clarifying before anyone can make an informed decision, however to be clear the FBU are opposed to the compulsory redundancy of any firefighter, whatever duty system they work.

45 is an arbitrary figure and comes with no reasoning, other than it appears to give the savings required to fund the changes HWFRS wish to make. However on-call firefighters work a range of contracts which depends on the number of hours they provide, during which they will be available to respond to emergency calls. The number of hours range from 40 hours to 120 hours per week. HWFRS need to have this range of hours to ensure the duty system is able to be worked by the maximum number of people. On-call staff either work or live within a 5-minute travel distance from a fire station but not necessarily both, so a range of options are required and they all fit together to ensure the fire engine is available for the maximum amount of time with the minimum number of staff and roles required. Account needs to be taken for leave and other absences so there needs to be an overlap in the cover on-call members provide. The On-call policy states that there needs to be 7 firefighters (of relevant roles), each contracted to provide 120 hours cover per week, but 120 hours cover is provided by the minority of on-call staff. Therefore, simply stating that the on-call establishment will be reduced by 45 on-call firefighters is not only unacceptable and dangerous, it is also misleading. For example, 45 on-call firefighters who provide 120 hours cover each week equates to 135 on-call firefighters who provide 40 hours cover each week. The Resource Review report states that the current on-call establishment is 361.

Reducing the on-call establishment by 45 firefighters who provide 120 hours cover per week would be equal to reducing the total number of on-call staff by 37% if the equivalent number of 40 hour contracts (135) were removed. This will likely result in slower response times; an increased likelihood of more severe injuries and fatalities of the public and firefighters; that loss of property is more likely to occur; and that the environmental impact of fires will be greater and longer lasting.

Specials

Removing the night-time crew from the two cities of Hereford and Worcester will mean that the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) and boats that are currently crewed by staff based at these locations will no longer be guaranteed. A nationally increasing trend in the number and severity of flooding renders it unacceptable for these resources to be unavailable.

If on-call cover is reduced to night-time hours only, the amount of experience and exposure of on-call members will be impacted. This will have consequences for the maintenance of competence which is logged at operational incidents as well as training.

Other special appliances / skills that could be less available as a result of these proposals:

- Land Rover off-road firefighting vehicles
- Water First Responders
- Incident Command Unit
- Drone
- Incident Support Vehicle
- Argocat All Terrain Vehicle
- Water Carrier
- Animal Rescue Team

Ridership levels

Currently Fire Appliances are crewed with 4 personnel, this was imposed without any agreement with the FBU in 2014. The evidence based FBU policy is that the previous minimum crewing level of 5 on each fire engine should be reinstated. Staffing with 5 riders makes Firefighters safer and more effective, thus making the public safer as there will be the correct amount of Firefighters to carry out their tasks. At present, staffing with 4 firefighters means that safety critical tasks are either scrimped or ignored.

The FBU believes it is unacceptable for fire crews to ride fire appliances with 4, especially when our neighbours in West Midlands Fire Service and in Shropshire with whom HWFRS have a strategic alliance, crew with 5. Firefighters in HWFRS should have the same amount of crew on fire appliances as our Firefighting neighbours in West Midlands and Shropshire FRSSs.

Although HWFRS are proposing to replace the 8 on-call fire engines and 45 on-call firefighter posts with 18 wholetime firefighters the Service is not proposing to change the minimum or standard crewing levels, so fire engines will still mobilise with a crew of 4. The additional wholetime staff at Worcester, Wyre Forest and Hereford will have no impact on the fire cover at Droitwich, Redditch or Malvern and the FBU cannot see how the residents of those communities would benefit from these proposals.

Recommendation

For the safety of Firefighters and for an effective response to all incidents, all fire engines should be staffed at 5 with a well-trained and competent crew.

Assistance from Neighbouring Services

The Resource Review relies heavily on support from neighbouring Services. It does not look at how HWFRS could learn from recent incidents where this reliance was too heavy, or how it could be reduced in the future. Figures 8 and 9 on page 155 of the Data Pack quote data relating to the number of incidents that HWFRS fire engines are used by over-border Services and when neighbouring Services have attended and supported incidents within the borders of HWFRS. These figures are misleading in that multiple appliances will assist at incidents within our borders, whereas when HWFRS appliances assist with incidents over border the numbers are far fewer. The image on page 27 of the Resource Review is provided to illustrate how it is often the case that

Fire Engines are not used at incidents, and that they have been solely used to transport firefighters to the scene. Zooming into a digital copy of this image you will see that 4 of the 10 fire engines are from neighbouring Services – this is not only an example of how heavily HWFRS rely on assistance from neighbouring Services, but a poor illustration of how resources are not required. Simply, if they weren't required then they wouldn't have been there. Additional resources, including fire engines would have been required to move water around the fire ground via a water relay, to protect neighbouring properties or for internal firefighting.

Neighbouring Services are also facing cuts, such as changes to On-call cover in Warwickshire and West Midlands FRS currently provides its lowest number of available appliances. Our neighbouring Services will not be able to provide fire engines, equipment and personnel to HWFRS and they should not be relied on or factored in to planning for the management of risk within the borders of HWFRS. The Authority's 2021-2025 Community Risk Management Plan states that there will be 41 fire appliances across 25 fire stations – this number of fire engines is required to satisfy the risk and to deal with foreseeable events. There is no risk-based evidence to justify the reduction of 41 fire engines to 33.

Fire Control

The proposals do not acknowledge or deal with the issues faced by our members in Fire Control. Fire control is understaffed on a daily basis. The minimum crewing level in Fire Control is 3 but this has been as low as 1 on more than one occasion. Although fall-back arrangements are in place and emergency calls can be passed on to Shropshire Fire Control, they too are often staffed with a skeleton crew.

As the first point of contact for any member of the public in need of assistance from the Fire and Rescue Service and the mechanism for gathering information and mobilising the appropriate resources, HWFRS are not putting the safety of the communities we serve first or the safety of firefighters who rely on support and assistance from Fire Control. As we have discussed, attendance times are slower than ever but if Fire Control is not adequately crewed with competent Fire Control Firefighters then there will continue to be further delays and increased risk to the public and responding crews.

Conclusion and Recommendations

HWFRS are consulting on a mid-cycle IRMP action plan. The FBU have previously highlighted that any such mid-cycle consultation should revisit the tenets of the IRMP so that the action plan consultation can be put into context. This has not happened on this occasion and therefore the proposals within this consultation are likely to seem abstract to the general public; the very people that fund the Fire and Rescue Service through their council tax payments.

HWFRS's previous CRMP cuts have already left HWFRS vastly under resourced. The removal of eight fire engines, the downgrade of a ninth fire engine to provide night-time cover only and loss of 45 on-call firefighters from our communities means our counties would be less safe should these further cuts be implemented.

Increasing emergency calls in Hereford and Worcester has been substantial and with potential growth to Firefighter's work activities is juxtaposed to, these proposals, intend to reduce the Service's fleet by 20% and the total number of firefighters by 5%. Increases in attendance times to homes on fire, road traffic collisions and, more often, incidents involving flood water, no matter how 'slight', mean an increase in a threat to life – to both the person(s) involved and the firefighters sent to intervene.

The FBU do not accept:

1. A reduction of fire cover
2. Compromise to public safety
3. Compromise to firefighter safety

These proposals represent an increase in the threat to lives. The FBU therefore reject these proposals in their entirety.

Funding cuts through austerity has decimated all public services. Funding is essential to revitalise HWFRS. However, the FBU will always engage with management and FRA councillors to explore models of all service delivery.

The residents of our two counties deserve a Fire and Rescue Service which is fit for purpose, not one that is continually slashed by round after round of CRMP/Crewing change consultations. Fewer firefighters on fewer fire appliances, put Firefighters and the public they serve at greater risk from Fire and Rescue incidents.

Recommendation

HWFRS need to carry out a full IRMP to identify the current risks and trends in conjunction with changing forecasts of future risk. It needs to address the shortfall in its emergency intervention response and make plans to invest in the service.

Recommendation

HWFRS must finalise the Resource Review report and Data Pack and run another consultation process to ensure all responses are based on accurate data and facts.

Conclusion 1

- **HWFRS is already under-resourced due to central government funding cuts;**
- **HWFRS intervention service delivery model is over estimated, where the reality identifies significant gaps in fire cover; and**
- **Further cuts proposed by this consultation will leave HWFRS further under resourced.**

Conclusion 2

The potential consequences resulting from the proposals are:

- **Longer first attendance times and delays to subsequent fire engines' arrival;**
- **Loss of Firefighter posts;**
- **Fewer resources available for large scale or protracted incidents;**
- **Greater potential for Firefighter injury/fatality; and**
- **Greater losses/injuries/fatalities for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.**

Recommendation

HWFRS need to address the issue of RDS availability. This will need a large increase in resources to ensure recruitment and retention are significantly improved, in order to bridge the deficiency in the intervention service delivery model.

Recommendation

HWFRS need to look at ways to improve work/life balance and to engage with the FBU and our on-call members to investigate ways to create attractive and sustainable contracts for on-call staff.

Recommendation

HWFRS should engage with the discussions at the NJC and ensure that the pay for on-call members is both attractive and sustainable.

Recommendation

HWFRS should engage with FBU officials locally to ensure on-call firefighter terms and conditions are attractive and sustainable to help minimise the high turnover of staff.

Recommendation

The FRA should set HWFRS a much improved response standard and embark on a strategy to achieve it. This should include, in conjunction with the national employers, lobbying of the Home Office and central government to increase funding to HWFRS.

Recommendation

The FRA should ensure that all proposals satisfy statutory duties and comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Recommendation

For the safety of Firefighters and for an effective response to all incidents, all fire engines should be staffed at 5 with a well-trained and competent crew.



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18 April 2024

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Jonathon Pryce MBA, Dip, GFireE

Neil Bevan
Brigade Secretary
Fire Brigades Union
Region 7 Hereford & Worcester

Email: neil.bevan@fbu.org.uk

Dear Neil

Thank you for providing a response from the Hereford & Worcester branch of the Fire Brigades Union to the 2024 Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) Resource Review Public Consultation.

May I begin by outlining the intention of this response to your submission, which is to clarify any misunderstandings and reiterate the importance of the Service operating in an efficient and productive manner. Whilst I accept that change, especially with front line resources will always be controversial I hope that the recent Resource Review has openly and transparently laid out the case for much needed change in how we use our front-line resources in HWFRS.

However, it is our view that the narrative, tone and insinuation throughout the FBU's response to the consultation is unhelpful in maintaining a positive public perception and only serves to be divisive in nature. The continual reference to cuts and greater potential for Firefighter injury/fatality and greater losses/injuries/fatalities for the communities, are the types of scaremongering that risk the erosion of public trust in HWFRS and are unfounded and lacking any tangible evidence.

Cuts imply a permanent budgetary reduction where the money or resource is not replaced and the investment in the front-line resources is reduced. The Resource Review clearly states throughout, that HWFRS intends to reinvest all savings back into the frontline on the busier fire engines with improved staffing on the Wholetime duty system and additional investment in On-call crewing support. It is worth noting that we have also recently invested an additional circa £600k in front line staffing. It is therefore simply disingenuous and manipulative to try to portray this review as 'cuts' and that there is a reduction in the resources allocated to staffing fire engines in HWFRS.

Equally, as unhelpful, is the continual reference to the Resource Review Public Consultation document as a mid-cycle Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). On page one of the Resource Review it clearly states what the review is, how it fits into the CRMP, and why it is being undertaken. At no point in the consultation process has the proposal been referred to as a risk-based document. The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is the Service's public facing, stand-alone document which is an assessment of risks within the community, resulting in a long-term plan to make HWFRS more responsive to locally identified needs.

Responding in the time of need
Protecting from fire and other risks
Preventing harm and promoting well being

The Resource Review is not a risk management plan, but a review of how and where we need to allocate our resources to be able to best respond to our communities. This is based upon the ongoing availability issues within the On-call system along with the reduced and lower levels of calls in many areas.

In addition, the FBU's response states that the Resource Review contains 'misleading data which is designed to elicit a certain response'. I would like to respond that HWFRS wholly rejects this statement. The Service has transparently published and qualified all of the data and criteria used extensively in all documents. Where concerns were raised during consultation minor amendments may have been made and we have provided detailed explanations and additional specific data to a number of respondents throughout the consultation, all of which will be published in the final consultation document. This will clearly identify where material changes have been made as a result of the consultation.

What is particularly disappointing about the FBU's response to the Resource Review, is not so much the derision of the Resource Review but the fact that not a single feasible alternative solution is offered by the HWFRS FBU.

The challenges around On-call staffing and the current issues with Wholetime staffing levels are well understood and accepted. During the consultation, of the many hundreds of those who engaged with us, it was never suggested that the current status quo was something we should continue with. The lack of support from the FBU and the lack of any viable alternative ways of using our front-line resources from the FBU might suggest that, despite the overwhelming data and evidence provided for change, HWFRS branch of the FBU are happy to continue as we currently are.

The majority of recommendations made in the FBU response document, demanding additional funding from Central Government, appear somewhat simplistic and unrealistic. However, even if funding were forthcoming, it would not be reasonable to continue with the current response model which clearly shows that we have more fire engines than we need to safely and effectively respond to incidents in our communities and that around 20-25% are often unavailable.

Paragraph two on pg.5 of the FBU response helpfully recognises that, 'For the last 14 years HWFRS has been under huge financial pressure to continue to provide its service, but with ever decreasing budgets in real terms'. This is precisely why Fire and Rescue Services are exploring new and more efficient ways of working, hence the Resource Review. It also acknowledges that, 'HWFRS have provided an effective and efficient, well run fire Service for many years which had been recognised by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)'. However, an efficient Fire Service does not mean it is 'under resourced' as stated in the FBU's response. If this assumption is based upon the Critical Attendance Standard Tool (CAST) scenarios referred to later on in the FBU response, then the Service does not recognise this either, the reasons for which will be explained.

Pg.6 and pg.7 list the FBU's recommendations which are addressed throughout this document. However, it is encouraging to note that the FRA is already undertaking much of the work suggested.

Pg.'s 8-10 provide the FBU's Guidance on 'How to Construct an IRMP' which, whilst interesting, is largely irrelevant to the HWFRS Resource Review Public Consultation proposal. It may, however, interest the FBU to note that the NFCC have implemented new guidance and a CRMP Fire Standard which, like the majority of Fire and Rescue Services nationally, HWFRS are choosing to follow as the 2025-2030 CRMP is being drafted currently. It is also important to clarify that the 'National Framework for IRMP' quoted at the bottom of pg.10, refers to the FBU IRMP document, not the actual Fire and Rescue National Framework for England issued by the Home Office in 2018 and adhered to by all Fire and Rescue Services nationally.

Paragraph two on pg.12 states that 'the FBU has long advocated the use of planning tools such as Critical Attendance Standards (CAST)'. Unfortunately, when consulting the FBU's own website on CAST dated 2018, it states:

Policy text

'Conference previously supported the use of the Fire Brigades Unions' Critical Attendance Standard (CAST) and intervention window methodologies (as recommended in the 2004 Fire Brigades Union National IRMP document) when formulating Brigades IRMP plans. However, in light of significant changes in Fire Service knowledge and procedures, namely Operational Guidance Breathing Apparatus (OGBA), National Operational Guidance (NOG), Incident Command and the significant lessons learnt in tragic events since its inception, **there is a need to comprehensively scrutinise and rewrite the FBU CAST document in order to ensure that the content is current and consistent with the needs of the Fire Service today.**'

Furthermore, the Record of Decisions 2022 Fire Brigades Union 93rd Conference states:

'At Conference 2019 Resolution 40 'Critical Attendance Standards (CAST) Scenarios' was carried, it called for a review of the CAST scenarios along with the intervention windows and task analysis, to be shared by 2020. **This doesn't appear to have been done**'.

Therefore, I would suggest that all the data that you have supplied in pages 11-14 is unreliable and, in the FBU's own words, not current nor consistent with the needs of the Fire Service today. In fact, the FBU Response document uses the phrase 'to continue to rely upon an aged assessment is flawed' on pg.17, which in this case is entirely appropriate.

Pg.15 expresses concerns over the alternative, more flexible modes of transport for On-call firefighters for which the Service can assure the FBU that guidance will be provided prior to any actions being implemented. This will of course be undertaken in-line with the current policy and full assessments and protocols for the use of such vehicles, if approved, will be implemented.

On pg.18 under the HWFRS Consultation heading, it is appropriate to use a phrase directly from the FBU's response that again there appears to be 'misleading data which is designed to elicit a certain response'. If the On-call establishment of 361 posts were to be reduced by 45, this would be equivalent to 12.4%, not 37%. We have been very clear that we estimate around 45 posts against the current establishment (not 45 equivalent 120-hour posts) which would mostly be reduced through natural retirements and resignations. However, we have been open and transparent that there may be redundancies in some areas, although we believe that this would be a very low number of posts.

Perhaps one of the most misleading statements in the FBU response, however, is in the fourth paragraph on pg.19 which states that 'at 7 weeks into the public consultation all staff, including staff at the potentially effected stations, have not officially been spoken to by a Service representative about the proposal'. The public consultation went live on 8 January 2024 and the first of an extensive schedule of 27 station visits began on 13 November 2023 that ran through the entire consultation period to March 2024 engaging with 198 staff on affected stations. The main points of which were noted and have been fed back to Opinion Research Services (ORS) for them to use in the final report of the consultation. All impacted stations and watches were offered an opportunity to meet and, in some cases, dates to meet earlier in the schedule were offered and declined by that group of staff.

Furthermore, in the next paragraph it states that 'Each of the documents (Resource Review report and the Data Pack) provided by HWFRS for this public consultation have been amended several times since the consultation began on 8 January 2024'. There have been no material or significant changes to the document and the figures in both the Resource Review and the data pack were amended before the start of formal consultation, but only to change some figures to two decimal points in order to align with data production and mitigate confusion. This minor amendment was prior to the consultation going live. A key objective of the consultation is to have the data and proposals challenged and, where necessary, make any changes as required and appropriate. However, any changes were minor in nature and do not materially affect the proposals.

The second paragraph on pg.22 of the FBU's response recognises the commitment of our On-call staff to which HWFRS fully agrees. Unfortunately, it then goes on to make the statement that 'An increased reliance on RDS personnel who are already straining to maintain their cover has the potential to place a greater amount of stress on the RDS Firefighter's primary employers and families who face their staff/loved ones being away from their primary workplace/home for ever increasing periods'.

HWFRS fails to see how reducing the number of the lowest available appliances to create a more sustainable On-call system places more stress on staff. Equally, it is hard to see how the reduction of fire engines that are not used very often and have low availability will increase the time that staff will be away from their workplace or families.

In addition, many On-call staff undertake additional shifts on Wholetime stations due to the current staffing deficiencies and lack of resilience in Wholetime crewing identified in the Resource Review. Our proposals would reduce the need for many staff (Wholetime and On-call) to undertake these additional overtime shifts which, again, supports the point made by the FBU above and would reduce the time spent at work by many staff. As stated within the Resource Review, the Service have already introduced a team focusing on improving On-call recruitment and availability for the remaining On-call units. This will also help those On-call staff offering higher levels of cover to establish a better work/life balance.

The Funding section on pg.23 is of particular interest as it recognises the financial situation the Service finds itself in, hence the continual exploration of new ways of working. The first paragraph states 'The public of Herefordshire and Worcestershire may question this increase (in council tax) whilst the fire cover afforded to them continues to shrink.' One may suggest that with this rise in council tax, the public are far more likely to question how the FRA can justify spending circa £881,000 a year on eight fire engines which are unavailable 68% of the time and only attend 5.57% of the total HWFRS incidents. Also, the public may ask; why we have so many fire stations with multiple fire engines housed there (some of which are often not available), yet 84% of all calls received only need one fire engine, and further 13% only require sending two fire engines, leaving only 3% of calls per year needing more than three fire engines. As you will be aware, the Fire Authority has an obligation to adhere to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England:

- 5.1 Fire and Rescue Authorities must manage their budgets and spend money properly and appropriately and ensure the efficient and effective use of their resources, pursuing all feasible opportunities to keep costs down while discharging their core duties effectively.
- 5.2 Fire and Rescue Authorities must ensure that financial decisions are taken with the advice and guidance of the chief finance officer and that decisions are taken with an emphasis on delivering value for money to the public purse.

The second paragraph of the Funding section discusses His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). In the most recent report in November 2023 HWFRS achieved four 'Goods' and reduced the number of 'Areas for Improvement' (AFI) from 22 in the previous inspection to just 11.

The next section entitled 'Proposal Overview' uses further 'misleading data used to elicit a certain response' in the graphic used on pg.29. By not including increments on the 'y' axis of the graph a reader could easily assume that attendance times have more than doubled since 2010/11. The reality being that the increase is a matter of a few percent.

It should be noted that the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) referred to on pg.29 is a piece of government legislation which the FRA pays due regard to as a public authority. It has three general duties and three further specific duties.

The three aims of the general duty are to make sure that public authorities have **due regard** to the need to:

1. Put an end to [unlawful behaviour that is banned by the Equality Act 2010](#), including discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
2. Advance equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The specific duties state that public authorities must publish:

1. Equality information.
2. One or more equality objectives.
3. Gender pay gap information.

The duty is complied with. It does not mean that decisions cannot be taken which may impact on some people, but the decision maker should be aware of the implications of these decisions. Having due regard for the PSED, a People Impact Assessment was completed prior to the consultation.

The term 'Unavailable' covering over the Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs) image is also very misleading. The Resource Review details that On-call staff that remain at Hereford and Worcester Fire Stations will continue to be trained to crew the specials, like the ALP, and provide resilience to Wholetime staff. This is something that has been well discussed and explored with staff during the consultation and will form part of the outcomes.

The final paragraph on pg.30 states that the figures for the third fire engines at Hereford and Worcester fire stations show that they attended 84 calls and 70 calls each year respectively. What it fails to detail is that this equates to 1.14% and 0.95% of total attendances. To suggest that other stations will be required to provide cover is no different than the current situation, particularly when the third fire engine at Hereford has only been available on average 47.83% in the day and 16.42% at night and Worcester 79.89% in the day and only 32.33% at night. In addition, of the occasions when the fire engine was available to attend, the Worcester fire engine was only used at 52.18% of incidents and Hereford only 42.59%.

On pg.33 it states that 'The new combined Fire and Police station being built at Redditch is designed to house all three fire engines currently based at Redditch, however under the proposals tabled by HWFRS one of the bays will be left empty if the third fire engine is removed'. The plans for Redditch were agreed and drawn up some years ago as is the case with large scale capital investments, and it was not foreseeable to plan for the removal of a fire engine. It is also a presumption to assume the bay will be left 'empty', the Resource Review clearly states that Redditch will likely receive a 4x4 vehicle which will be housed in the third bay, and a special appliance may also be moved there as a result of other changes at other locations (such as the ISU from Droitwich). In addition, the second paragraph talks about the range of incidents the third fire engine has attended over the review period. What it fails to detail, however, is that last year it was available, on average, 2.74% during the day and 21.25% at night. This is one of the lowest availabilities of the entire fleet. Furthermore, of the incidents it was available for, it was not used at the incident on 58.81% of occasions.

Pg.34 shows a picture of Malvern Fire Station with the banner 'one fire engine only' across it but then goes on to attach a letter from the CFO which clearly states 'Malvern Fire Station will remain with two operational fire engines' under review for the next two years. This letter should very clearly demonstrate the very spirit of a consultation, in that the staff's suggestions when considered carefully, were not only listened to but acted upon promptly.

The section on 'Special' appliances such as the Incident Support Vehicle and ALP on pg.39 is addressed on pg.47 of the Resource Review.

It is impractical to compare us with West Midlands FRS or Shropshire FRS as they were not subject to the same budgetary cuts in 2014 and have greatly differing legacy infrastructure and levels of funding. Around 2014 the FRA had to manage a circa £7.5 million reduction from a circa £36 million budget which resulted in the loss of 80 Wholetime posts and two On-call (second) fire engines. It is worth noting there has been no loss of life, lives put at risk or any evidence to suggest a detriment to staff or the community from the reduction of Ledbury or Tenbury around a decade ago from two fire engines to one fire engine (again the second fire engines with low availability and usage). In 2014 for HWFRS to keep the same number of Wholetime fire engines it was necessary to reduce from five to four riders, and for some fire engines to become day staffed only. This was not the case in Shropshire nor the West Midlands FRS's.

The section on Assistance from Neighbouring Services makes more generalised statements such as 'when HWFRS appliances assist with incidents over border the numbers are far fewer'. There is no evidence referenced to support this and even any anecdotal evidence would only tell part of the factual reality.

It is worth reiterating that over the past three years there has never been an occasion when all fire engines across HWFRS have all been used at the same time, and there have not been instances where we have been unable to reasonably support our neighbours, and vice versa.

When considering over the last three years how many fire engines are actually in use at an incident at the same time across the whole Service, the figure is 1.03 fire engines (on average). HWFRS works closely with its seven neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services and has a mutual aid arrangement in place with all seven. There are around 127 fire engines within a twenty-mile radius of our borders thereby providing a high degree of support and resilience on those rare occasions of peak activity. In fact, cross border activity accounts for a very low number of incidents annually, many of which require only one fire engine and are for a short duration. Equally, HWFRS benefits from support during the rarer large incidents, as much as we support other FRSs on those rare occasions. Keeping our current establishment of fire engines for such eventualities is neither affordable, realistic or necessary.

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

The following section on Fire Control, bears no relevance to the proposal and would sit more comfortably in a separate document.

It is encouraging to note in the penultimate paragraph on pg.42 that 'the FBU will always engage with management and FRA councillors to explore models of all service delivery'. Unfortunately, this FBU Response document seems to be the opposite of a collaborative and open-minded exploration of new ways of working, in spite of meetings and documents openly expressing a genuine desire to evaluate and listen as to how we can become better, more efficient and work differently. The HWFRS FBU response only provides more evidence of the HWFRS FBU approach to management and the complete absence of any genuine intention of considering real change, or working constructively with managers in the Service.

However, HWFRS would like to end in the spirit that this document was intended, by providing assurance that we will consider all the valid points raised and that in fact many of the HWFRS FBU response points are already included in the Resource Review and future plans if it is approved.

Also, as previously stated, the 2025-2030 CRMP is being drafted in accordance with the new NFCC guidance which will identify, assess and mitigate the risk factors identified in the FBU response. An On-call Recruitment and Availability team has been established as part of the day-to-day work of the Project Team and will be addressing the points around availability, contracts and sustainability (pg.36 of the Resource Review) and we are firmly committed to improving the Wholetime crewing and the On-call crewing, availability and support, as we have and will continue to demonstrate through our strategies, investments and leadership. It is shame that the HWFRS FBU cannot find a way to support the Resource Review and help the Service implement real change for the long-term betterment of our communities.

Regarding the recommendations which require additional funding from Central Government, as detailed earlier, it is highly unlikely that the Fire and Rescue Service will feature in any Government spending plans in the foreseeable future. As such, the FRA will always have an obligation to continually look at new ways of working to be as efficient and effective as possible.

Yours sincerely



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13 March 2024

Dear Ms Debbage

Re: Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Resource Review

Thank you for your letter dated 8th March 2024 in relation to the Resource Review Public Consultation which has been carried out by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS). The consultation period for the review ran between 8th January 2024 and 4th March 2024.

I understand from your letter that Councillors have expressed concern about the Resource Review in relation to the proposal to reduce the number of fire engines at Leominster Fire Station from two to one. You stated that Councillors are particularly concerned that Fire Service staff have not been consulted on the proposals, that the proposals do not take climate change into account and finally, the implications of further growth in the town of Leominster.

I appreciate your interest in the Resource Review, however the consultation period closed on 4th March 2024. That being said, I am very happy to provide more information and will address all three of your concerns in turn, and if you could please ensure this response is shared with all the appropriate Councillors it would be most appreciated.

Firstly, may I begin by expressing my surprise that Councillors may have somehow got the impression that the staff within HWFRS have not been consulted and especially those at the affected stations including Leominster. We pride ourselves on working closely and communicating with our staff. I can therefore provide you with assurance that staff and other key stakeholders have been fully engaged and were consulted on the proposals, both formally and informally.

Prior to the Resource Review in the preceding six months, senior officers discussed informally with several hundred staff the outline of the proposals. When the Resource Review consultation document was published on the Service Website (in late December 2023) and communications with staff to launch the consultation commenced it also comprised of a video shared (looped) on fire station TV screens, internal bulletin items and briefings with managers encouraging them to share this information with their teams.

An extensive programme of station visits was conducted by Senior Leaders led by myself as the Chief Officer and the Deputy Chief Officer, consisting of 27 sessions and engaging with around 200 front-line staff including On-Call and Wholtime shift patterns. These consultation

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visits were specifically targeted at Stations directly affected and referred to in the Resource Review and were an open forum to provide information about the review and to encourage discussion and dialogue, this included Leominster Fire Station

Discussions and questions raised during these consultation sessions were recorded to feed into the consultation process. During the two-hour session at Leominster Fire Station on 28th February 2024 topics such as recruitment, funding and availability were discussed at length and any concerns from staff were addressed by myself and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer. I also ensured I had a lengthy personal phone conversation with the Watch Commander in charge of Leominster Fire Station just before I met with the station to provide details around the visit to enable the staff time to prepare.

Prior to the period of formal consultation commencing, I met with the Fire and Rescue Service Association (FRSA) trade union representative on 8th December 2023, who is also a manager at Leominster Fire Station, for nearly two hours and had an in-depth discussion.

In addition, I had two conversations with the national FRSA representative who has large membership based at Leominster Fire Station. Furthermore, on 16th February 2024, I met with the Conservative MP for North Herefordshire, Sir Bill Wiggin in Leominster. The key messages of the Resource Review were further communicated via a series of BBC television and radio interviews, including a television crew filming around Leominster Town Centre.

I hope this demonstrates that there have been opportunities to exchange information and opinions about the Resource Review in order for staff to understand the background and proposals to support them to make a decision about their own personal views and feed these into consultation, and Leominster has been well served throughout this process.

The Councillors' second concern states that the proposals do not take climate change into account and consequences such as flooding and increased periods of dry weather with higher temperatures. I would like to clarify to the Council that this Resource Review is a proposal for the reallocation of resources across the Service, not a Risk Management Plan.

Matters such as climate change are addressed and mitigating measures detailed in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which can be found here <https://www.hwfire.org.uk/assets/files/crmp-2021-2025-1.pdf>. The current CRMP runs until 2025, and preparations are underway to prepare the next CRMP which will in turn be publicly consulted on once the Fire Authority have approved a draft for consultation.

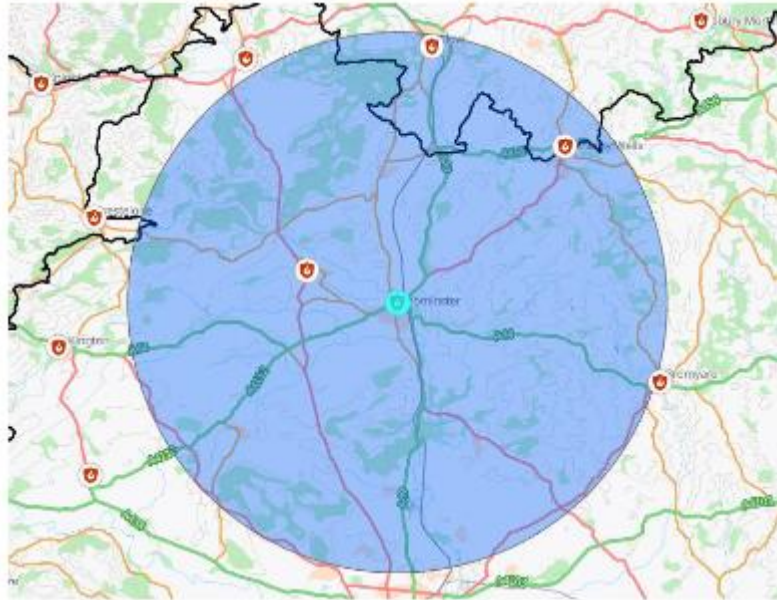
However, I would like to provide the Councillors with further assurance that Leominster has recently been upgraded and made into a Water First Responder station which means the crew are provided with training and Personal Protective Equipment (Dry suits to enter water in) to conduct rescues from flood water.

The vast majority of calls to incidents involving flooding where life is at risk are cars in water which require only one Water First Responder crew usually on one fire engine. For any more serious rescues from water usually around our rivers, the Fire and Rescue boat stationed at Hereford would be mobilised as is currently normal practice, as in most cases Firefighters cannot enter fast flowing river water without a boat. This response is unaffected by the proposals and we will be able to continue to respond effectively to flooding around the Leominster area with one fire engine if the proposals in the Resource Review are accepted.

In light of this it is important to note that between April 2022 and March 2023, over 73% of all incidents Leominster's fire station responded to required only one fire engine. On average, the second fire engine is only available 11.87% of the time in the day and 35.86% at night, meaning that most of the time the second fire engine is not available to attend these incidents.

This is one of the lowest day-time availability figures of any fire engine across the Service and is largely due to staff not being available to crew the second fire engine.

In contrary to the staffing issues on the second fire engine at Leominster, this is juxtaposed to Kingsland's availability which is nearly 100% and only four miles from Leominster. To add further context, within a 10-mile radius from Leominster Fire Station there are three other fire stations: Kingsland, Tenbury Wells and Ludlow Fire Stations (Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service).



Map depicting Leominster's neighbouring fire stations

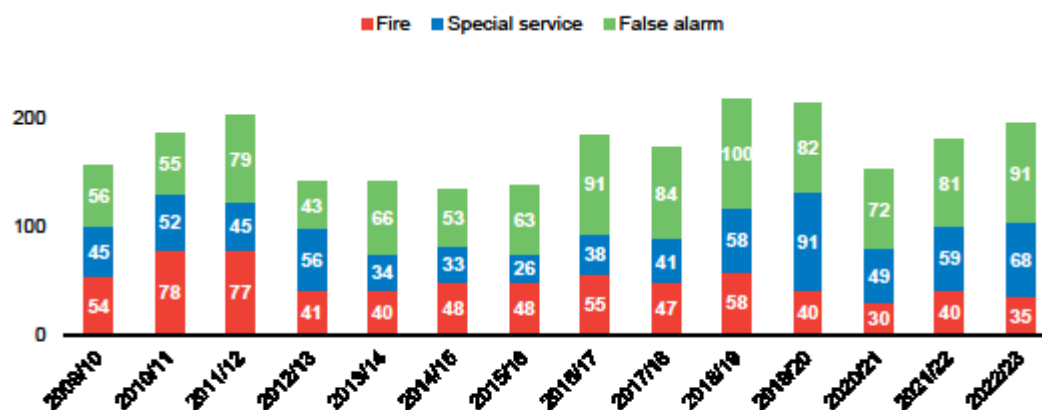
This means that without the second fire engine, outdoor fires and flooding will still continue to receive an excellent response and service in Leominster.

In order to address the Town Council's final concern which states there will be an increasing need for the Fire and Rescue Service when there is further growth in the town. It is important to note that expanding towns do not necessarily mean more fires or emergency calls.

In fact, modern construction methods, building regulations and fire-resistant furnishings mean new-build houses and developments are often safer and the data shows the number of fires is decreasing. As you can see from the table and graph below, although the total number of calls remains relatively similar over the 14-year period, the number of incidents involving fire is decreasing. Leominster only attended 194 calls last year, that is only around one call every 48 hours and 47% (almost half) of those are false alarms. This level of activity does not require two fire engines, especially when another fire station (Kingsland) is nearby.

Fires, special services, false alarms and total of incidents in the Leominster area

	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023	Total	%
Fire	54	78	77	41	40	48	48	55	47	58	40	30	40	35	691	28.77%
Special Service	45	52	45	56	34	33	26	38	41	58	91	49	59	68	695	28.93%
False Alarm	56	55	79	43	66	53	63	91	84	100	82	72	81	91	1,016	42.30%
Total	155	185	201	140	140	134	137	184	172	216	213	151	180	194	2,402	100.00%



You will note the number of Special Service calls have increased and this is of no surprise. In that period, we have seen increases in flooding related incidents, the response for which have been detailed in the previous section whereby we have increased Water First Responder capacity. Special Service incidents have also increased as we are seeing increased requests to assist other agencies and gaining entry on behalf of the Ambulance Service who need to access a patient in a locked house, again these calls only require one fire engine.

The number of false alarms has also increased, however, please note that all these types of incidents usually only require one fire engine which would be the first fire engine at Leominster and not the second in most cases. It is also worth noting that 84% of all incidents in Herefordshire and Worcestershire (circa 7500 per annum) were attended by one fire engine only, as this was all that was needed to safely respond.

The important statistic is what percentage of annual calls were for fires, which usually require more than one fire engine, and you can see that in 2009/10, 54 of the 155 calls were to fires (35%) compared to just 35 of the 194 in 2022/23 (18%).

To add further context, the table below taken from the Resource Review data pack shows the number of incidents attended by Leominster's second fire engine has almost halved from 50 to 28 calls per year last year (around one call every two weeks!), and it actually only attended less than a quarter (24%) of the total number of calls over the three-year period. It should be noted that for the vast majority of calls in Leominster, the second fire engine would have been a supporting fire engine and not the first in attendance, something which can easily and safely be undertaken by another nearby fire engine such as Kingsland, as has been happening when this situation occurs and the current second fire engine at Leominster is unavailable.

Incidents attended in Leominster station area by Leominster based fire engines.				
Year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	3-year total
Total number of incidents (unique incidents attended by either or both pumps)	127	150	157	434
Number of incidents attend by the second fire engine	50	26	28	104
Number of incidents attend by the first fire engine	86	128	135	349
Incident types attended by Leominster's Second Fire Engine, in the Leominster area				
Fires (all)	6	7	6	19
Primary Fires	1	5	2	8
SSCs	18	9	8	35
False Alarms	26	10	14	50

The reason for Leominster's second fire engine's low activity is not only due to the low volume of calls requiring two fire engines, but also because of low availability due to crewing shortages. Due to societal changes discussed in detail in the Resource Review document, the Service is facing challenges in recruiting and retaining enough On-Call staff with sufficient available hours to operate both On-Call fire engines in Leominster. This is not a Leominster

or HWFRS issue, but an acute national issue across the Fire Service and is not likely to be an improving situation.

The challenges around recruitment and retention of On-Call firefighters centres around two key issues and is due to employers becoming less willing to release their staff to be On-Call firefighters, mainly during the daytime, and changing attitudes of people in relation to giving up their free time. As you will appreciate, all On-Call staff have to remain within five minutes of the fire station to be 'On-Call' for many hours each week.

During the review it has been universally accepted by all those involved in the consultation that recruiting On-Call Firefighters during the day and during the weekends is particularly challenging, and has got harder in recent years and is unlikely to improve in the future. In fact, Leominster's response time to mobilise is on average over seven minutes, thus failing our six-minute standard. This is often because some key staff work or live some distance from the fire station and we cannot recruit staff that live or work closer.

The proposals in the Resource Review, whilst removing the second fire engine aim to invest significantly in Leominster Fire Station staffing with a compliment of full time Firefighters on the station during the daytimes. This will not only improve the response times during the day and provide the communities of Leominster with a faster responding first fire engine and aim to make it 100% available, but will also provide staff who can undertake more Fire Safety and Community Prevention work around Leominster town and the surrounding area. The Review will also provide a second vehicle that can be used to transport any available additional On-Call Fire fighters to the incident if they are needed.

To conclude, this letter addresses the three concerns the Councillors raised regarding the HWFRS Resource Review. Namely, the consultation of our staff, the consideration of climate change and the impact of the proposal in relation to further growth of Leominster.

Whilst I fully appreciate that this Review poses changes which may feel uncomfortable and that are not easily understood due to the complexity of how the Fire Service operates, I can assure you that these proposed changes are safe, necessary and realistic based not only on On-Call availability and low operational usage, but also the need to rebalance, improve resilience and invest in the busiest full-time fire engines and some of the On-Call fire stations such as Leominster.

I trust that this provides you with the level of detail required.

Yours sincerely



Jonathon Pryce
Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive

LEOMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL



11 Corn Square
Leominster
Herefordshire
HR6 8YP

Tel: 01568 611734

Email: townclerk@leominstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Jonathon Pryce,
Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive,
HWFR,
Service Headquarters,
Hindlip Park,
Worcester,
WR3 8SP.

8th March 2024

Re: HWFR Resource Review

Dear Mr Pryce,

The Leominster Town Council Planning & Highways Committee met on 26th February 2024 and discussed a response to the HWFR Resource Review. As a result, they have requested that I write to you to raise the following concerns about the proposals to lose the second fire engine at Leominster Fire Station.

- Fire service staff have not been consulted on the proposals;
- The proposals do not take climate change into account and the consequences such as flooding and increased periods of dry weather with higher temperatures;
- There will be an increasing need for the Fire and Rescue Service when there is further growth in the town.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Debbage".

Julie Debbage
Town Clerk

Malvern Town Council

Malvern Town Council

28-30 Belle Vue Terrace
Malvern
Worcestershire
WR14 4PZ



Linda Blake
Town Clerk

Telephone: 01684 566667

townclerk@malvern-tc.org.uk
www.malverntowncouncil.org.uk

26 February 2024

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Hindlip Park
Worcester
WR3 8SP

Dear Sirs

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service - Resource Review Public Consultation

I write on behalf of Malvern Town Council to submit the following comment in response to the Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Resource Review:

"Malvern Town Council urges the fire service to retain its existing provision in Malvern."

This response was agreed at a meeting of Full Council on 14 February 2024.

Malvern Town Council has twenty councillors representing the wards of Chase, Great Malvern, Link, Lygon, Pickersleigh, Pound Bank, St Joseph's, Upper Howsell and West.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Blake'.

Linda Blake
Town Clerk

Redditch Borough Council (submission and HWFRS response)

Redditch Borough Council

Town Hall,
Walter Stranz Square,
Redditch,
Worcs B98 8AH

Email: democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk



Email: info@hwfire.org.uk

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
Mr. Jonathon Pryce
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive

February 2024

Dear Mr. Pryce,

Resources Review Public Consultation – Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service

At a meeting of Redditch Borough Council's full Council, held on 29th January 2024, a Motion on Notice concerning the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service's current Resources Review Public Consultation was discussed. We have attached an extract from the minutes of the Council meeting for your consideration.

As you will see, the Councillors expressed concerns about the proposed cuts to the number of fire engines that will be operating in Redditch Borough under the proposals that are subject to consultation. The Councillors are particularly concerned about the implications of these proposals for the future safety of residents and businesses based in the Borough and surrounding area.

The Council is keen to receive further information, in writing, from Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service about your rationale for cutting the number of fire engines. We would appreciate the inclusion of risk-based evidence in this response. Furthermore, we understand that the current third fire engine operating in the Borough has not always been available to operate in the town 24/7 due to limited crew numbers. We would appreciate clarification from Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service about the number of calls that could have been served in Redditch if the third fire engine had been available 24/7 and fully crewed.

We can confirm that elected Members will complete the survey individually. However, we also wanted to write to you formally, detailing our views on these proposals. We can confirm that the points raised in our letter and in the extract from the minutes of the last Council meeting have cross party support.

We look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Gemma Monaco
Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Joe Baker
Leader of the Labour Group



Council

Monday, 29th January, 2024

MINUTES

Present:

Councillors Salman Akbar (Mayor), Karen Ashley (Deputy Mayor), Imran Altaf, Joe Baker, Juliet Barker Smith, Joanne Beecham, Brandon Clayton, Luke Court, Matthew Dormer, James Fardoe, Peter Fleming, Lucy Harrison, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Chris Holz, Joanna Kane, Sid Khan, Emma Marshall, Kerrie Miles, Timothy Pearman, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow, Craig Warhurst and Ian Woodall

Officers:

Peter Carpenter, Nicola Cummings, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley and Guy Revans

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill

63. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

Proposed Cuts to Local Fire Services

Councillors Brandon Clayton, Matt Dormer and Emma Marshall declared an interest in this item and left the room prior to its discussion and determination.

Councillor Sharon Harvey submitted the following motion for consideration:

"As community leaders, this council opposes the proposed cuts to local Fire Services, which will leave Redditch with only 2 fire engines and calls on Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority to reconsider their proposal."

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Harvey referred to a recent consultation on proposals to reduce the number of engines across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. In the proposals the three

Chair

Council

Monday, 29th January, 2024

engines currently based in Redditch would be reduced to two. She believed the proposals put the community at risk and that the reduced capacity represented cuts disguised as efficiencies. There were huge financial costs to the community from fire, in terms of housing, lost business and emotional impact. Councillor Harvey gave examples of the deployment of the third engine at Redditch for incidents including an explosion and flooding. A reduction in the number of engines also risked the availability for large events where engines were called from other stations to assist. The consultation document itself was large and could dissuade people from responding as it was difficult to navigate.

Councillor Joe Baker seconded the Motion.

Councillor Craig Warhurst proposed an amendment, to add the following to the Motion:

“The Council should submit a formal, cross-party response to the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire Authority’s Resource Review Public Consultation.

A paper is requested from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority setting out the rationale behind cutting the service, with risk-based data to be included.

Clarification is requested from Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority about how many calls could have been made had the third fire engine been available 24/7, fully crewed.”

Councillor Harvey accepted the additions and the amended Motion became the substantive motion. The following points were made during debate on the motion:

- It was important to retain capacity not only for the town but to enable cross county and cross border assistance to be offered; if only two engines were available then it would leave the town exposed if one was called away in such circumstances.
- Councillors had an important role in widening understanding about the proposals since the consultation document was large and complex.
- The increase in the population of the Borough as a result of development meant that a third engine was necessary.

Council

Monday, 29th January, 2024

- Any delay in response times due to shortage of engines risked lives.
- Redditch currently had 13 firefighters compared to 17 in 2021 and 950 hours per week were available compared to 1,350.

RESOLVED that

- 1) As community leaders, this Council opposes the proposed cuts to local Fire Services, which will leave Redditch with only 2 fire engines and calls on Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority to reconsider their proposal**
- 2) The Council should submit a formal, cross-party response to the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire Authority's Resource Review Public Consultation**
- 3) A paper is requested from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority setting out the rationale behind cutting the service, with risk-based data to be included, and**
- 4) Clarification is requested from Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority about how many calls could have been made had the third fire engine been available 24/7, fully crewed.**

**The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.53 pm**

Headquarters
Hindlip Park
Worcester
WR3 8SP

Tel 0345 122 4454
Web www.hwfire.org.uk
Email info@hwfire.org.uk



27 February 2024

Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive
Jonathon Pryce MBA, Dip, GFireE

Redditch Borough Council
Town Hall
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch
Worcestershire B98 8AH

Email: democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Dear Councillor Monaco and Councillor Baker

Thank you for your letter dated February 2024 in relation to the Resource Review Public Consultation being carried out by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS).

I understand from your letter that Councillors have expressed concerns about the Resource Review and in particular in relation to the proposal to reduce the number of fire engines at Redditch Fire Station from three to two. You stated that Councillors are particularly concerned about the implications of these proposals for the future safety of residents and businesses based in the Borough and surrounding areas.

I appreciate your interest in the Resource Review and I am very happy to provide more information.

Consequently, I would start by clarifying that the Resource Review is not proposing a 'cut' to front line services. This is a reallocation of resource across the Service and all savings will be reinvested into the front line. As you will appreciate I have a duty to ensure that the Fire Service is provided in an efficient, effective and sustainable way and in its current arrangement I cannot say that this is the case.

Rationale for Removing the Third Fire Engine at Redditch:

- **Availability of Staff / Third Appliance**

Due to societal changes discussed in detail in the Resource Review document, the Service is facing challenges in recruiting and retaining enough On-Call staff with sufficient available hours to operate two On-Call fire engines in Redditch and in particular the third fire engine at Redditch. This is not a Redditch or HWFRS issue, but an acute national issue across the Fire Service and is not likely to be an improving issue.

The challenges around recruitment and retention of On-Call firefighters centres around two key issues and is due to employers becoming less willing to release their staff to be On-Call firefighters, mainly during the daytime, and changing attitudes of people in relation to giving up their free-time. As you will appreciate, all On-Call staff have to remain within five minutes of the fire station to be 'On-Call' for many hours each week.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, the third fire engine at Redditch has only been available 2.74% of the time during the day and 21.25% of the time during the night. This is the lowest day

Responding in the time of need
Protecting from fire and other risks
Preventing harm and promoting well being

time availability figure of any fire engine across the Service and is largely due to staff not being available to crew the third fire engine. Having looked at the availability data again in preparation for this response, I can see that on Friday 23 February the third fire engine was only available for two hours between 10pm and midnight. This means that the third fire engine is not available to respond to emergencies for the majority of the time at the moment and has not been for some considerable time, despite repeated attempts at recruitment in the area.

It is our view that this situation is likely to decline further and will not improve in the longer term in a meaningful way, therefore Redditch's third fire engine is unlikely to see a sustained improvement in its availability in the future. The provision of all the resources to provide a third fire engine that costs over £300k to procure, has around £100k of equipment and all the other associated annual revenue costs to be available for use for only a very small percentage of time each week is simply not a viable situation.

- **Number of Incidents Over the Past Three Years**

In addition to the availability issues outlined above, the third fire engine at Redditch is not needed as it has very low operational usage, and even if it was available 100% of the time (which is not realistic, see above), it would still not be used very often. Having analysed data over a three-year period, the third fire engine at Redditch attends an average of only 31 incidents per year. Of these, 28 are inside its own station ground and only three are outside of its station ground. This equates to 0.42% of total incidents across the Service per annum. In comparison, the busiest fire engine in the Service attends on average 1,025 incidents per year or 13.91%.

Of the 31 incidents per year the third fire engine attends, on average only 12.66 are fires and the remainder are false alarms (7.33) or 'special service' incidents (11) which may relate to road traffic collisions, flooding or supporting a partner agency to gain entry to a property. It is interesting to note that at 30.08% of these incidents the fire engine was in our view, not actually used as it was in attendance for less than 20 minutes. The data also shows that the third fire engine at Redditch attended on average only one incident per year when there was no other fire engine available to attend from the station. It should also be noted that there is an immediately available fire engine in nearby Bromsgrove that can easily support Redditch if third fire engine is needed.

- **Breakdown of Numbers of Calls Historically**

In the tables below, we have shown the number of fires, false alarms and special service calls that we have attended in Redditch over the last 14 years. As you can see there has been no significant increase in incident numbers in any area, in fact overall incident numbers have reduced.

Since 2010 total calls in Redditch have reduced from 1,112 per year to 971, a reduction of around 13%, although the average total calls in the last three years is around 900 calls per annum

In regards to fires in Redditch, you can again see the total in 2010 was 347 (this includes all types of fires including small fire, waste fire, outdoor fire, car fires etc, as well as property fires) and in 2023 it was 256, again a reduction of 26%. It is fair to say in regards to fires and serious

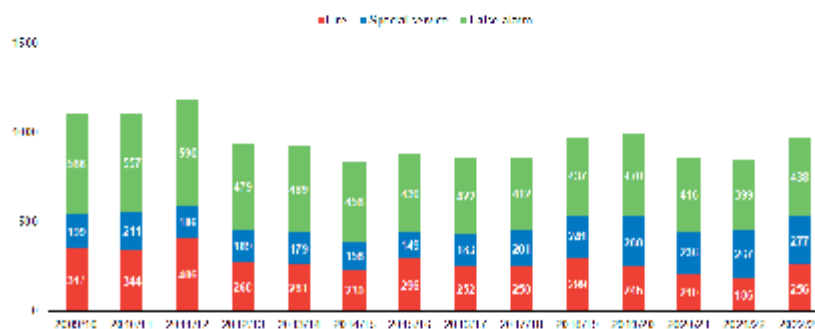
incidents, Redditch has become a safer place in the last decade and most firefighters will tell you that the fires they do attend now are often much smaller incidents in size and severity.

You will see special service calls have increased and this is of no surprise. In that period, we have seen increases in flooding related incidents, but we also now undertake gaining entry support into people’s houses for the Ambulance Service and searches for missing persons with the Police.

However, please note that these incidents usually only require one fire engine which would be the first fire engine at Redditch and not the third in most cases. It is also worth noting that 84% of all incidents in Herefordshire and Worcestershire (circa 7500 per annum) were attended by one fire engine only, as this was all that was needed to safely respond. A further 13% of all incidents required two fire engines and on 3% of all incidents required three fire engines across the whole of HWFRS annually.

Fires, special services, false alarms and total at Redditch

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total	%
Fires	377	393	408	391	361	336	326	352	350	339	376	310	385	376	4,061	26.83%
Special service	110	201	168	180	173	190	140	103	273	243	180	238	267	277	2,099	13.83%
False alarm	246	297	293	475	489	495	460	622	424	467	470	410	522	438	5,294	35.34%
Total	733	891	1,069	1,046	1,029	1,021	926	1,077	1,047	1,046	1,126	1,010	1,174	1,091	11,454	77.03%



• **Number of Incidents Requiring Three Fire Engines in Redditch**

When considering Redditch as a whole, on average over the last three years, 76.12% of incidents in its station ground required only one fire engine. Only 14.26% required two fire engines and 8.78% required three or more fire engines. With the low levels of availability for the third fire engine at Redditch, the third fire engine may come from Bromsgrove in some cases or nearby West Midlands Fire Service depending where the incident is located.

It is worth noting that Bromsgrove is close to Redditch and the crew is immediately available at Bromsgrove to respond in around 60-90 seconds. Considering the time for On-Call staff to respond (up to six minutes), on the few occasions a third fire engine is needed in Redditch, it will often not take much longer for Bromsgrove to arrive, as they can cover a reasonable distance in 4-5 minutes travelling on blue lights.

It is also worth noting the first immediately available fire engine in Bromsgrove is usually available 100% of the time and will have been used most of the time for many years as the third fire engine into Redditch when it is unavailable.

This shows that for the vast majority of incidents in Redditch only one fire engine is required. This would normally be the Wholetime crewed immediately available fire engine based at the station. The current availability at Redditch for the third fire engine means that for more than two thirds of the time, the third fire engine isn't available to attend and so the next nearest fire engine is sent from neighbouring fire stations.

However, the Resource Review aims to operate slightly differently and this will impact Redditch in a positive way. For example, when the third fire engine is unavailable, what currently happens is if the second fire engine is mobilised to an incident and it leaves the fire station with four or five firefighters on it. However, there may be some additional firefighters available who then arrive at the station or are available but not able to crew the third fire engine due to lack of skills (for example not being a qualified LGV fire engine driver or not being incident command trained) or if there are less than four firefighters (minimum required to crew a fire engine), then these additional firefighters are unable to attend the incident to support their colleagues and usually go home or back to work.

Under the proposals in the Resource Review, Redditch will receive a 4x4 vehicle which these additional available firefighters will be able to use to travel to the incident in their fire kit (PPE) and support their colleagues meaning there will be more firefighters at the incident in the future than there is now. The 4x4 vehicle will be able to mobilise with a minimum of one firefighter (up to a maximum of five) and they will need no specialist skills (like an LGV licence or incident command qualification). As we have explained in the Resource Review, it is additional firefighters that are most often needed at larger incidents and often not additional fire engines or the equipment they carry, as the first responding fire engines carry a vast amount of equipment.

- **Support for Large Incidents**

Over the past three years there has never been an occasion when all fire engines across HWFRS have all been used at the same time. When considering over the last three years how many fire engines are actually in use at an incident at the same time across the whole Service, the figure is 1.03 fire engines (on average). HWFRS works closely with its seven neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services and has a mutual aid arrangement in place with all seven and 127 fire stations within a twenty-mile radius of our borders (many of those are not far from Redditch), thereby providing a high degree of support and resilience on those rare occasions of peak activity.

Based on the geography and risk, it has never occurred where all seven neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services are also at a peak level of activity at the same time as HWFRS. Specifically, there are ten fire stations within ten miles of Redditch – including fire stations within both West Midlands and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services.

- **Additional Resources Proposed for Redditch**

The Resource Review proposes that Redditch would retain two fire engines. The first fire engine is immediately available and crewed by four watches providing cover 24/7, 365 days per year. The second fire engine will continue to be crewed by On-Call firefighters who live or work within five minutes of the fire station. They carry an alerter and attend the fire station when they respond to an emergency call. It is our intention to focus recruitment resources to try to ensure that the second fire engine is 100% available.

As mentioned above, the Review proposes that the station would receive an additional 4x4 vehicle, which would enable additional fire fighters to follow the appliance and attend an incident. This is new and would ensure that more fire fighters are deployed to an incident. Not only is this of benefit for the Incident Commander at the incident who can deploy these extra resource as they see fit, but it also acts as a retention tool for On-Call firefighters who would be able to attend more incidents. The On-Call crew would also have the ability to crew any additional special appliances which as a result of this review may well be located at Redditch Fire Station in the future.

To conclude, this letter sets out the rationale for redistributing the resources proposed as part of the Review. Your letter asked for details about how many calls could have been made had the third fire engine been available 24/7, fully crewed. The area of Redditch over the period analysed only required a third fire engine at 8.78% of incidents, based on the average number of incidents attended this may be approximately 87 incidents – which indicatively based on an analysis of previous incidents may be made up of 38 false alarms, 25 fires as well as 24 special services incidents.

It should be noted that for the vast majority of calls in Redditch, the third fire engine at Redditch would have been a supporting fire engine and not the first in attendance, something which can easily and safely be undertaken by another nearby fire engine as has been happening when this situation occurs and the current third fire engine at Redditch is unavailable.

Whilst I fully appreciate that this Review poses changes which may feel uncomfortable and that are not easily understood due to the complexity of how the Fire Service operates, I can assure you that these proposed changes are safe, necessary and realistic based not only on On-Call availability and low operational usage, but also the need to rebalance, improve resilience and invest in the busiest full-time fire engines. Any suggestion that these proposals will endanger or worsen the safety of the people of Redditch is untrue and rejected by the Service.

The need for investment in the busiest full-time staffed fire engines is well made in the Resource Review document. Following severe budgetary reductions post 2014 the full-time firefighters now have an annual overtime cost of £700k and require annually nearly 3500 hours of support from non-fire station based operational staff just to keep the ten full-time fire engines available, this includes Redditch's first fire engine. This situation is neither efficient or sustainable or a good use of public funds and I am sure that you would agree that the changes to our operating model as proposed to address these issues, are reasonable and proportionate when taken as a whole. Resolving the full-time firefighter issues will also enable the Service to focus on the remaining On-Call fire engines and staff and support those first On-Call fire engines that will still be the largest number of fire engines and staff group in the Service.

I trust that this provides you with the level of detail required. Should you wish to read more, the Resource Review document and accompanying Data Pack contain the full detail. I hope we have provided the details and assurances you requested and that you are now able to support the review. Consultation on the proposals concludes on 4 March 2024.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Pryce', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathon Pryce
Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive

Town Councillor, Bromyard West

Dear Jon Butlin,

Having had the opportunity to meet with the Bromyard Watch Commander on behalf of the Town Council with others I fully support the recommendations of the Consultation Document as they effect Bromyard.

I must stress that this is my personal opinion as a Town Councillor and I write in a personal capacity only.

Kind regards,

Councillor ,

Bromyard West Town Councillor.

Town Councillor, Bromyard West/Herefordshire County Councillor

To confirm I personally fully support the proposal.

Regards

Cllr Bromyard West

Individual firefighter (submission and HWFRS response)

From:
Sent: Friday, February 2, 2024 11:15 AM
To: Subject: [WCC EXTERNAL]Fire service proposal to remove fire engines

CAUTION: This email originates outside of Worcestershire County Council's network. Do NOT click on links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe. If you believe this email to be spam please delete it. Further information on cyber security is available on [OurSpace](#)

Dear Councilor,

I write to you in concern over the new proposals RECENTLY put forward by the Chief Fire Officer at HWFRS.

The plan is to remove 8 Fire Engines and 45 On-call Firefighters from the Service. Part of these very controversial and risky plans will directly affect Worcester City where I live with my family.

At Worcester Fire Station, the plan is to remove the On-call duty system during the day, seven days/week between the hours of 07.00 - 19.00. The On-call Crew (also known as Retained - RDS) which currently consists of 19 crew members will be completely removed during daytime hours, therefore directly affecting fire cover throughout the city. Last year alone they attended around 360 incidents. That is an average of more than 1 per day. The removal of a frontline fire appliance and reducing numbers of Firefighters will without a doubt have an adverse and potentially fatal outcome in the future and impact the safety of the public should these plans go ahead.

The figures they have put forward are tainted and tapered towards making it look like the appliance proposed to be removed (213) are much lower at attending incidents than they actually did. For example,

1. RDS take out 211 or 212 (Wholetime (WT) trucks) for example if WT are away training or on a Boat shout? 211 & 212 are more modern and also better equipped so RDS will take these first over 213. Control will alert RDS and tell them they have to take 211 or 212 depending on the incident. This is not included in the figures and this happens regularly. Without the RDS Crew, there would be no-one to take an appliance and attend an incident.
2. When RDS are deployed on 213 (RDS Pump proposed to be cut) to cover

other Fire Stations due to that station having no cover, that is not added to the total figure of incidents attended by 213.

3. When 213 attends an incident outside of their patch i.e. Kidderminster (Wyre Forest) this counts towards a Wyre Forest incident and not Worcester. The system that they use marks it down for a 'shout' for Wyre Forest and not Worcester.
4. When they bring RDS Crews in on 'Stand-by' (it means there are a lot of incidents going at the same time and the two WT trucks are away and will be delayed for a long time, so Control bring in RDS to sit at Worcester Fire Station in case another incident comes in), this does not count towards their 'turnout' figures. It is only if shout comes in and they attend does it count towards a turnout.
5. When RDS are turned out and they drive towards an incident they have been called too as a back-up truck, if they do not reach the incident in time (In attendance) i.e. the WT put in a 'Stop' message, then this does not count towards their turnout figure. It may come in as a 'house fire persons reported' so the pre-determined attendance is 3 appliances 211, 212 and 213 but when the WT get there, it turns out to be a small kitchen fire that they can easily put out with an extinguisher, they put in a 'Stop' message so as to tell Control the situation has been resolved. Now as I say, 213 will already be on its way as it was mobilised, but this does not go into 213's figures at being mobilised. If there was a full blown fire in the house with people inside, then 213's attendance (usually with a crew of 6 I might add – WT ride 4), it would make a massive difference to the outcome of the incident as an extra Fire Engine with 6 Firefighters is an enormous resource at an incident like this.

So as you can see from above, the figures have been manipulated to make 213 look like it is not used very much. I daresay this goes for the other 7 appliances as well. We are talking about peoples lives and livelihoods, I think it is so serious that the figures produced should be a correct reflection and not a distorted one.

Now, getting back to the point of why I know that these cuts are dangerous: When the two Wholetime Fire Appliances are called to an incident they will have no immediate back-up to support them and if they are at an incident and another call comes in, the people in need will have to wait for another appliance to come from another town, leaving those people in desperate need, vulnerable and without any help for a prolonged period of time.

We also have several high-risk sites such as high-rise buildings, Worcester Royal Hospital, the M5 Motorway, Worcester Cathedral etc. The three Tower Blocks in St Johns have a pre-determined attendance (PDA) of 3 fire engines. If it is a confirmed fire, the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) as part of the PDA and additional resources would also be mobilised. At present the On-call Crews can attend the incident as part of the PDA, but with these changes they will be unable to. The third

engine will likely come from Malvern, Droitwich (both also losing an Appliance) or Pershore and the ALP would have to come all the way from Hereford (also facing cuts) if available. The only other option is to reduce the PDA which is ill-considered; there have been fires in the flats over the years and the rapid response of 3 appliances and ALP has prevented the situation escalating, resulting in lives being saved. As the Grenfell fire in London proved, when situations like this happen, it must be dealt with in the most effective and efficient way, using all resources available in a timely manner. These proposed cuts will put people's lives at risk.

We also have the large River Severn and although beautiful, it is a dangerous river flowing through Worcester and only the Wholetime Crews are trained to enter water and to use the boat. They receive several shouts each month and as we know people have unfortunately died in the river on many occasions over the years. 'Person in river' usually entails a large-scale search, requiring large numbers of personnel and can take several hours; so, with the proposed cuts, when the boat is required, that will mean there is no longer a fire engine to attend any other incidents like a 'persons reported' house fire, or people trapped in a road traffic collision (RTC) until the boat incident is resolved. Once again, they will have to wait for other fire engines from other stations much further away and potentially from a neighbouring Service which may already even be involved in the river rescue.

On-call staff get called out several times during the week and over the years they have played a key part in helping save people's lives, homes, businesses etc. The City is getting bigger with new housing estates popping up everywhere. New high-rise buildings are being built such as the development on Sheriff Street adding many more people and places fire crews need to support if there is an incident. We should be providing more cover not less. The population of Worcester is increasing massively each year and we all deserve appropriate cover, day and night. We all pay our Council Tax which pays for the Fire Service and we should be entitled to the best cover that can be provided. People's lives are not something we should be putting at risk. This proposal will put people's lives at risk!

The Service are stating that in order to cover the loss of the On-Call Daytime Crew they will be employing more Wholetime Firefighters, but this is a smokescreen as the 'extra' Wholetime Firefighters will be deployed to other stations where they are short of Crew and not actually used at the Station where they are based. Also, even if they manage to put 5 Crew on the WT appliance, replacing a Crew of 6 and a fully equipped Fire Engine is not comparable and literally nonsensical. The proposals do not equate and will seriously effect cover across the two counties.

Now the Fire Service will try to state that they are not cutting the RDS Crew itself during the day, however, if you get rid of their appliance, there will be no work for them so they will all just leave. The proposal states that RDS will be able to turnout to the station and then take a station car and at 'road speed' with no sirens or blue lights attend the incident. How is that even plausible? If there is an incident, it will create traffic, if it is rush hour, there will be traffic, if it is the school-run, it will create traffic. As we all know, Worcester is not great for traffic as the road system is that of a small town and not a big city like it is now. It has got better over the years, but it can still take you an 1/2hr – 45mins to get from one side of the river to the other. The proposal also states that RDS will Crew the 'Specials'. At Worcester that is the Boat and the ALP. RDS Crew are not trained on the Boat so cannot man that and the ALP only needs 2 crew, so as I say once again, if 213 is removed, the Crew will all be leaving shortly afterwards as there is no point staying 'on-call' all day just in the hope that they get to sit in a car in traffic or if the ALP gets called out. The removal of 213 is also a removal of the RDS daytime Crew.

One last point I would like to make is that Worcester is not alone in the proposed cuts. The towns of Kidderminster/Stourport/Bewdley (now covered by the Wyre Forest Fire Station), Malvern, Hereford, Droitwich, Redditch, Leominster and Bromyard are also facing the loss of a fire engine and their On-call Crews. All these areas will have less fire cover, therefore increasing the risk to the Public and to Firefighters.

As a representative of the people and responsible for our health and safety and protection, I implore you to not allow this to happen. We need to stop this from happening and protect our families, friends and businesses.

Thank you for your taking the time to read my email and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Kind regards,

Headquarters
Hindlip Park
Worcester
WR3 8SP

Tel 0345 1224454
Web www.hwfire.org.uk
Email info@hwfire.org.uk



26 February 2024

Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive
Jonathon Pryce MBA, Dip, QFireE

Thank you for providing additional context to your consultation response as part of the Resource Review. I very much appreciate you providing the Service, through your Station Commander with your methodology for the data you provided Councillor Hardiman in an email on the 02 February 2024. Your main focus of the letter to Councillor Hardiman (and on social media) was the following:

- That the Resource Review was tainted and manipulated to make the third fire engine at Worcester fire station look less busy
- That because the Resource Review was tainted and manipulated to make the third fire engine at Worcester fire station less busy, you implied that other fire engine data was also tainted and manipulated

I would like to respond that the Service wholly rejects your statements above. We have transparently published and qualified all of the data and criteria used extensively in all documentation. I would robustly challenge your comments and state that it appears to be you who is using unqualified data (on social media and to Councillors) to alter the perception of incidents attended by a third fire engine at Worcester. There has been no attempt by the Service to mislead or manipulate the data as I will explain in detail below.

Number of Incidents Attended by the Third Fire Engine at Worcester

You made the point that last year alone in your view, the On-Call crew attended around 360 incidents. This is not the case. The third fire engine or third available crew from Worcester Fire Station attended a total of **252 incidents between 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2023 over a three-year period**. This equates to an average of **84 incidents attended** per year as detailed within the Resource Review. This is important to note, as the second available crew/second fire engine are not affected by the Resource Review, so we must not include their calls attended in this data.

The Resource Review is very clear that it has focussed on the number of incidents attended, not activity or incidents that the third fire engine at Worcester were mobilised to, but the times a third crew and fire engine actually attended an incident and served the community. For obvious reasons, we are examining the value to the community in this review and what the third crew does for the community and not the number of internal mobilisations or cover moves etc. We have been explicitly clear about this in the review. However, it appears from your email to Station Commander Gareth Taylor on 12 February 2024, that your data is based on the On-Call pay sheets to determine the 360 incidents mobilised to in 2023. This would clearly include a lot more movements and activity

Responding in the time of need
Protecting from fire and other risks
Preventing harm and promoting well being

than just the incidents attended by a third available operational crew only and would most likely include activity undertaken by the second fire engine crew too.

As stated above, the Resource Review concentrated and was explicitly clear to the reader that it was based on those incidents attended on average over the period of three years, as it is only those incidents that were attended by a fire engine which may have had an impact on the outcome of any given incident. Where a fire engine is mobilised but does not attend an incident, such as standby moves or being turned back prior to attending at the incident, then these figures were not counted for reasons as stated i.e. would not impact on the outcome of the incident.

We have also been explicitly clear that we have focussed on incidents within Worcester's station ground area, as incidents outside the area can and are often covered by other fire engines. If the third fire engine in Worcester was removed, it would be no different to when it is currently unavailable and where another fire engine can often easily and promptly respond to any incident outside the Worcester area.

Please find below a picture from the Incident Recording System (IRS) which confirms 252 incidents attended over a three-year period by Worcester's third fire engine as stated within the Resource Review.

INCIDENT SELECTOR

Reference:

Make: <input type="text"/>	Type: <input type="text"/>	Fire: <input type="text"/>	Date Range: <input type="text"/> to <input type="text"/>
Status: <input type="text"/>	Fire Area: <input type="text"/>	Call Sign: <input type="text"/>	Call Sign List: <input type="text"/>
Fire Classification: <input type="text"/>	Address Co-ords: <input type="text"/>	Station Attending: <input type="text"/>	

Results 1 - 25 of 252

An additional in-depth analysis was completed by the Service to further scrutinise the exact detail of the 252 incidents over the three-year period attended by Worcester's third fire engine. This additional analysis identified that over the three-year period 01 April 2020 – 31 March 2023, Worcester's third fire engine attended a total of only 30 incidents where it was the only fire engine available at Worcester Fire Station to attend, an average of 10 incidents per year. On all other occasions there was another fire engine available that could have been taken to the incident.

For analysis, the Resource Review has used financial years. It would again appear that you have used calendar years in the unqualified data you supplied to Councillor Hardiman and other Councillors. For transparency however, I have provided below the data from calendar years for comparison using the same methodology (attended only) as per the Resource Review

methodology. You will see that the numbers remain similar when comparing the last three financial years as per the Resource Review (252 incidents attended) with the last three calendar years as per your own methodology (273 incidents attended) using the Incident Recording System. *Please note that the data analyses were completed in mid-December 2023, before the calendar year has ended.*

Number of incidents per year that Worcester's third fire engine has attended. Source: Incident Recording System (Section 6)			
Calendar Year	07.00-19.00	19.00-07.00	Total per 24hrs
2021	53	24	77
2022	59	28	87
2023	89	20	109
Totals	201	72	273

Please also note that all mobilisations of fire engines were analysed from the Command and Control System, against all attendances recorded in the Incident Recording System, regardless of the incident closure code and fire engine status.

As a comparison to the table above, the next table below shows the total number of mobilisations undertaken by Worcester's third fire engine according to the Service Command & Control System in calendar years. However, as detailed above please remember that the number of mobilisations is not the same as the number of incidents attended.

Number of occasions per year that Worcester 213 has been mobilised. Source: Command & Control System			
Calendar Year	07.00-19.00	19.00-07.00	Total
2021	111	42	153
2022	134	52	186
2023	178	44	222

You will notice from the table above, that the data provided to Councillor Hardiman that Worcester's third fire engine was mobilised in 2023 is far less than the 360 stated by you, being mobilised on only 222 occasions in that year. Without you providing the 360 incident numbers to be analysed further, it is impossible to confirm how you have reached 360 incidents actually attended by Worcester's third fire engine in 2023.

I have included the tables above for comparison purposes only. To confirm, the Resource Review analysed data using three financial years data 01 April 2020 – 31 March 2023 for all fire engines proposed for removal using the same methodology. It was based on the attendances of fire engines and not mobilisations to incidents. The data was provided by the Service's Command and Control System and the Incident Recording System.

The Service also clearly stated that of all the incidents reviewed for all the affected fire engines, around 50% of those incidents that were actually attended by those fire engines, the fire engine attended for less than 20 minutes, as a supporting fire engine and not as a first in attendance. We therefore assert that this would normally mean the fire engine took very little action and was most likely not needed. You may feel that is somehow portraying your third fire engine in an unfairly negative way, however we are merely stating facts so the readers can understand what the fire engines do for the community, and draw conclusions about the impact if it were to be removed. This is neither unfair or unreasonable, as it is unlikely to be of any concern to the public if a fire engine is mobilised and not used when considering the impact of its removal.

An attendance recorded is determined in the Resource Review as a fire engine actually attending the incident and therefore impacting on the outcome of that incident, noting that even then around 50% of the time they were only in attendance for less than 20 minutes.

I would like to conclude therefore that regarding incident data for the third fire engine at Worcester as detailed within the Resource Review, the data has not been tainted or manipulated as you state, but has been carefully qualified and transparently published. I would also like to confirm that all fire engines proposed for removal have been carefully considered using the same methodology and service data sets as Worcester's third fire engine and have therefore also not been manipulated as you state in your letters to Councillors.

Availability

As you will appreciate the Resource Review was presented to the Fire Authority in December 2023. A deliberate decision was taken to use a non-COVID year as a normal base for availability data. Therefore, it was appropriate to use the financial year 2022-2023, as detailed on pages 20 and 21 of the Resource Review. Page 39 of the accompanying Data Pack contains availability information for the full three financial years from 01 April 2020 – 31 March 2023.

Availability data comes from the Service's Gartan and Gartan Availability systems which produce these reports on a monthly (amongst other reporting options) basis. The Service does not make manual calculations.

Although we have used Availability data aligned to financial years, the figures you have provided for Worcester's third fire engine are similar to those provided within the Resource Review. Within your email to Station Commander Gareth Taylor, you stated that you struggled with the reporting side of the Gartan system in obtaining the information but you again utilised calendar years whereas the Resource Review has used financial years. This is where the slight discrepancies in the figures below can be explained.

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Average availability for Worcester's third fire engine (Resource Review data)	65.17%	54.22%	60.85%
██████████	59.07%	55.13%	61.25%

I can conclude therefore that the Resource Review's availability data for the third fire engine at Worcester is accurate and has not been tainted or manipulated, and whilst the Services figures are accurate, your own figures are not dissimilar and portray an overall low level of annual availability which supports the proposals and challenges faced by the Service in the review.

The only explained reason why your data is different to the Service's Resource Review is that you have used calendar years. The Service has been quite clear within both the Resource Review and supporting Data Pack the methodology's, data sets and timelines used. You have explained to Station Commander Gareth Taylor that the reason for the reduced availability for Worcester's third fire engine is because "the lack of skills sets has made 213 not be available". The Resource Review (pages 33-37) clearly set out the challenges faced by the Service regarding the recruitment and retention of the On-Call which you yourself have confirmed within your email. In this case therefore, you appear to be supporting this element of the review.

Supplementary Concerns Raised

Within your email to Councillor Hardiman, you have detailed some supplementary concerns particularly around Worcester fire stations risk profile. Although you have provided some information, it appears that this is based upon the opinion of the "dangers" in removing the third fire engine at Worcester and not part of any detailed analysis. Without repeating the data both from the Resource Review or indeed in response to the data provided by you, I would like to provide some further analysis of incident data to provide clarity.

During the year 2023, across the whole of Herefordshire and Worcestershire combined, the 41 fire engines attended 7,774 incidents, of which:

- 6,554 incidents (84%) were attended by one fire engine only.
- 973 incidents (13%) were attended by two fire engines.
- 247 incidents (3%) were attended by three or more fire engines.

This additional data above alone makes a very compelling case for reallocating resources from fire stations with three or four fire engines into the first and most busy fire engines, as proposed in the Resource Review.

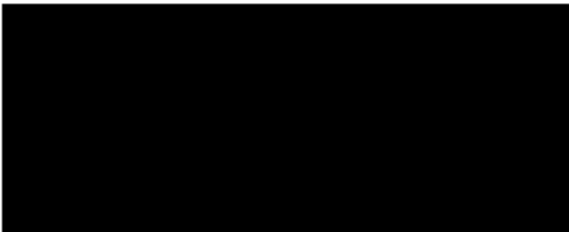
When the third fire engine at Worcester is unavailable, a third fire engine, if needed, would be mobilised from the nearest available asset as has happened safely for many years. Based on our assessment and feedback from many On-Call staff during this consultation, virtually all agree that recruitment and availability is unlikely to improve or become easier. In Worcester's case it is the Services view that the community of Worcester and the firefighters would benefit from increased resilience and crewing on their first fire engine and would not be unduly affected by the loss of the third fire engine. This does not and should not be seen to devalue or demean the valued On-Call staff at Worcester fire station, all of which was extensively explained during the consultation visits to staff.

During the review and consultation, we have also proposed to put an additional vehicle (if required) to mobilise additional available On-Call staff to incidents, and provide existing and new On-Call staff to support special appliances such as the Aerial Lifting Platform (ALP). We have also confirmed the On-Call unit at Worcester will be receiving Water First Responder capabilities in the near future. All of which should assure you of the future of Worcester's On-Call unit and the continued valuable role it will have at Worcester fire Station, if the Resource Review is approved.

This data, along with the incident and availability data of Worcester's third fire engine, presented in both the Resource Review and in this response, provides some context as to why the data provides a reassurance that these underused, unavailable fire engines will not adversely affect the ability to respond effectively to incidents across the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

I trust this has addressed your concerns.

Yours sincerely



Appendix 3: consultation webpage and social media posts

- 4.14 A consultation webpage, which was visited by around 3,000 people. As a result, 1,122 online consultation questionnaire responses were submitted. 42% of those accessing the webpage were men, while 58% were women; and the most common age ranges for users were 25 to 34 and 35 to 44⁷.
- 4.15 Social media engagement via four key posts, with analytics showing that:
- 31,154 people saw the most popular Facebook post.
 - The combined total views across all social media platforms for the four posts were:
 - Facebook - 43,541
 - X/Twitter - 4,440
 - Instagram - 235
 - LinkedIn - 1,136.
- 4.16 A full report of HWFRS’s social media and website activity and reach can be seen overleaf.

⁷ A full report of HWFRS’s website activity and reach can be seen in Appendix 3.



Resource Review

Social Media Analytics

24/04/24

Created by
Ellie Lindop
Internal Communications
Officer

Prepared for
Thom Morgan





Contents

1. Part One: Resource Review Posts	2-3
2. Part Two: Demographics	4-10

Part One

Resource Review Posts



Resource Review (Facebook)



Date Posted: 05/01/24
Impressions: 2,766 **Comments:** 2
Reach: 2,437 **Likes:** 17
Engagement: 127
Reactions: 23
Link Clicks: N/A
Shares: 18



Date Posted: 08/01/24
Impressions: 7,823 **Comments:** 12
Reach: 7,241 **Likes:** 35
Engagement: 397
Reactions: 37
Link Clicks: 155
Shares: 35



Date Posted: 12/01/24
Impressions: 1,798 **Comments:** 10
Reach: 1,468 **Likes:** 2
Engagement: 226
Reactions: 12
Link Clicks: 28
Shares: 1



Date Posted: 16/01/24
Impressions: 31,154 **Comments:** 214
Reach: 27,441 **Likes:** 90
Engagement: 2,710
Reactions: 177
Link Clicks: 231
Shares: 96

Part Two

Demographics



Resource Review (Facebook page fan locations)

f Page fans

Worcester, Uk	1,160
Hereford, Uk	981
Kidderminster, Uk	925
Redditch, Uk	404
Malvern, Uk	314
Droitwich, Uk	291
Other	2,949

Post 1: 05/01/24

f Page fans

Worcester, Uk	1,154
Hereford, Uk	984
Kidderminster, Uk	923
Redditch, Uk	406
Malvern, Uk	315
Droitwich, Uk	290
Other	2,954

Post 2: 08/01/24

f Page fans

Worcester, Uk	1,107
Hereford, Uk	990
Kidderminster, Uk	927
Redditch, Uk	409
Malvern, Uk	317
Droitwich, Uk	297
Other	2,974

Post 3: 12/01/24

f Page fans

Worcester, Uk	1,122
Hereford, Uk	988
Kidderminster, Uk	925
Redditch, Uk	409
Malvern, Uk	314
Droitwich, Uk	295
Other	2,978

Post 4:16/01/24

The data above illustrates audience demographics based on location, providing a general an overview on that day.

Website (devices used to access consultation page)

Page path and screen class		Device model	↓ Views	Users	Views per user	eng
			4,585 100% of total	3,205 100% of total	1.43 Avg 0%	
1	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	Chrome	965	846	1.14	
2	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone	732	509	1.44	
3	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	Edge	719	311	2.31	
4	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	Safari	267	152	1.76	
5	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPad	109	62	1.76	
6	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone 11	89	63	1.41	
7	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone 13	75	72	1.04	
8	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone 14	57	48	1.19	
9	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone 12	49	48	1.02	
10	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	SM-G991B	44	23	1.91	
11	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone SE (2nd generation)	43	40	1.08	
12	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	SM-A536B	42	28	1.50	
13	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone 14 Pro	41	38	1.08	
14	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	(not set)	37	25	1.48	
15	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone 14 Pro Max	37	31	1.19	
16	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	SM-S911B	34	20	1.70	
17	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone 13 Pro Max	34	34	1.00	
18	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	SM-S901B	32	23	1.39	
19	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	SM-S918B	32	22	1.45	
20	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	SM-A137F	31	8	3.88	
21	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	SM-A528B	30	20	1.50	
22	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	SM-G780F	29	18	1.61	
23	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone 13 Pro	27	26	1.04	
24	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	iPhone XR	27	26	1.04	

Page path and screen class		Device category	↓ Views	Users	Views per user	eng
			4,599 10.76% of total	3,213 21.76% of total	1.43 Avg -50.56%	
1	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	mobile	2,358	1,702	1.39	
2	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	desktop	1,994	1,340	1.49	
3	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	tablet	233	165	1.41	

Website (devices used to access consultation page continued)

In total **31,154** people have seen the most popular Facebook post, **3000** have visited the consultation web page. Of those 3000 people, **1,122** have submitted the consultation form.

Below are the combined total views across all our social media platforms for the four posts

Facebook- 43,541

X/Twitter- 4,440

Instagram- 235

LinkedIn- 1,136

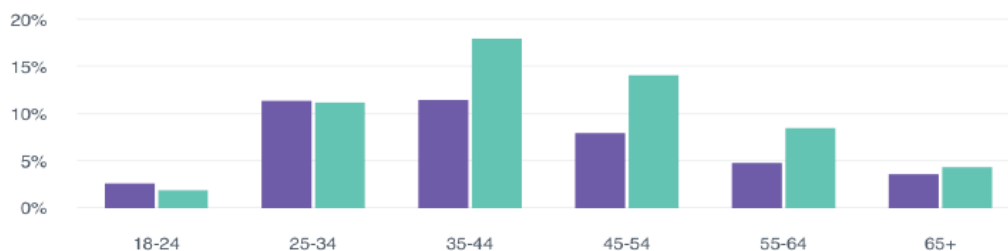
This data offers insights into the devices utilised by visitors accessing the consultation page within the time frame spanning from **January 5th 2024, to March 4th, 2024**. The "User" column, highlighted in yellow for clarity, corresponds to a unique visitor. This represents a single instance of interaction with the consultation page, regardless of the number of times that individual accessed it.

Website (gender of users who accessed the consultation page)

Search...		Page path and screen class	Gender	Views	Users	Views per user
				4,585 100% of total	3,205 100% of total	1.43 Avg 0%
1	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	unknown		3,641	2,646	1.38
2	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	male		485	291	1.67
3	/your-right-to-know/consultation/	female		459	280	1.64

Age and Gender

Men 42.00%
Women 58.00%



This data offers valuable insights into the **gender** distribution among our audience. As shown in the graph above, our Facebook group's current demographics reveal a split, with **42% of users identified as male, and 58% as female**. Notably, this distribution mirrors the gender breakdown observed in users accessing the consultation page on our website.

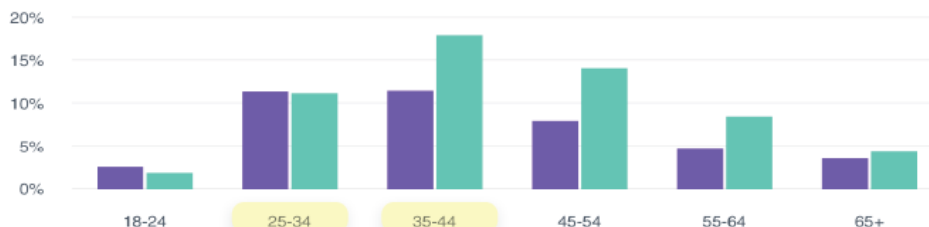
It is worth noting that the overall user base on Facebook leans slightly towards females, there is a slight skew towards male users when it comes to accessing the consultation page on the website.

Website (age of users who accessed the consultation page)

Page path and screen class	Age	Views	Users	Views per user
		4,585 100% of total	3,205 100% of total	1.43 Avg 0%
1 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	unknown	3,694	2,670	1.38
2 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	25-34	212	127	1.67
3 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	35-44	195	122	1.60
4 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	45-54	157	109	1.44
5 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	55-64	154	95	1.62
6 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	65+	97	63	1.54
7 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	18-24	76	36	2.11

Age and Gender

Men 42.00%
Women 58.00%



This data provides a breakdown of the **age** groups of users who accessed the consultation page. When comparing this data with our Facebook demographics, we observe a correlation in age distribution across both platforms. The analysis reveals that the most common age range for accessing the consultation page falls between **25 to 34 years old**, closely followed by the **35 to 44 age group**.

This alignment in age demographics suggests a consistency in user preferences and interests across both platforms.

Website (location of users who accessed the consultation page)

Page path and screen class	Town/City	↓ Views	Users	Views per user	Average engagement time	Event count All events
		4,585 100% of total	3,205 100% of total	1.43 Avg 0%	0s	10,998 100% of total
1 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	London	1,100	853	1.29	0s	2,776
2 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Worcester	862	473	1.82	0s	1,910
3 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	(not set)	386	286	1.35	0s	921
4 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Cardiff	358	354	1.01	0s	1,062
5 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Birmingham	295	200	1.48	0s	656
6 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Hereford	153	107	1.43	0s	370
7 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Ludlow	109	73	1.49	0s	259
8 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Evesham	90	64	1.41	0s	206
9 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Droitwich Spa	77	54	1.43	0s	168
10 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Redditch	62	47	1.32	0s	154
11 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Plymouth	59	44	1.34	0s	132
12 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Bromsgrove	51	40	1.28	0s	123
13 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Kidderminster	46	38	1.21	0s	114
14 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Wolverhampton	41	32	1.28	0s	96
15 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Cheltenham	31	23	1.35	0s	82
16 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Gloucester	30	20	1.50	0s	72
17 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Norwich	29	21	1.38	0s	63
18 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Croydon	26	21	1.24	0s	65
19 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Luton	26	19	1.37	0s	52
20 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Edinburgh	25	19	1.32	0s	41
21 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Shrewsbury	24	20	1.20	0s	60
22 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Milton Keynes	22	16	1.38	0s	54
23 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Newcastle upon Tyne	21	17	1.24	0s	51
24 /your-right-to-know/consultation/	Ross-on-Wye	18	16	1.13	0s	47

This data provides insights into the geographical distribution of users who accessed the consultation page. Worcester leads with a total of **473 users**, followed by Hereford with **107 users**.

Further down the list, we can observe several other locations within our service area.



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