



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFR
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Public Consultation on the Attendance Performance Measure

Final report of findings

Opinion Research Services

October 2022



Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service: Public Consultation on the Attendance Performance Measure

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Contents

1. Executive Summary	5
The commission	5
Main findings	5
Should call handling time be included in the Attendance Performance Measure?	5
Should response times be measured by travel zones?	6
Should a broader range of emergency incidents be measured?	7
2. The Consultation Process.....	9
Background to the project	9
The Commission	9
Consultation questionnaire	9
Interpretation of the data	11
Duplicate and Co-ordinated Responses.....	12
Resident focus groups	12
Attendance and representation	12
Written submissions	13
The report	13
3. Key findings	14
Introduction	14
Main Findings	14
Should call handling time be included in the Attendance Performance Measure?	14
Should response times be measured by travel zones?	18
Should a broader range of emergency incidents be measured?	22
Other issues	25
Open Questionnaire – Further Comments	26
4. Conclusions.....	27
List of Tables	28
List of Figures	29

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1. Executive Summary

The commission

- 1.1 Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) is proposing changes to its Attendance Performance Measure, which is one way in which its performance is monitored and measured. The Measure helps HWFRS analyse how long it takes to reach emergency incidents and to identify where improvements might be made.
- 1.2 In order to understand views on these proposed changes, a formal consultation was undertaken by the Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority (HWFA) between 8th July and 16th September 2022. HWFA and HWFRS commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open consultation questionnaire and two focus groups with members of the public. In total, 74 questionnaire responses were received; and 13 residents attended the two focus groups. In addition, a written submission was received from the Fire Brigades Union.

Main findings

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

Should call handling time be included in the Attendance Performance Measure?

Outline

- When a 999 call is made, it is answered by a Fire Control firefighter, who will ask about the nature of the emergency and the location of the incident, before alerting the appropriate fire engines and crews to respond. The time taken between a 999 call being answered by Fire Control and the fire engine and crews being alerted is the 'call-handling time'
- The current Attendance Performance Measure includes 'call-handling time', as well as 'crew turn out time' (the time taken between crews being alerted to the incident, and when they leave the station) and 'travel time' (the time taken between crews leaving the station, and when they arrive at the incident)

Proposal

- Attendance times would be measured from the time Fire Control alerts the fire station to respond to an incident to the arrival of a fire engine, in line with national guidance
- 'Call-handling time' would still be measured and reported separately
- The rationale is that it will provide more of a level playing field, as the 'call-handling time' can be affected by factors that are out of the Service's control. It will also allow a better comparison with many other Fire Services who also do not include call-handling time

- 14 There was strong support for removing ‘call-handling time’ from the Attendance Performance Measure from those giving a personal response to the open questionnaire; around three quarters (76%) agreed with the proposal, with more than half (55%) strongly agreeing. Those who said they work for Hereford and Worcester FRS were more likely than all respondents to agree with this proposal.
- 15 Most focus group participants recognised that the call handling time can be affected by issues outside the Service’s control and agreed that it should start on alerting the relevant station crew/s. This, it was felt, would allow the call handler sufficient time to gather and digest the information they are receiving from the caller, which can sometimes take time – and would enable HWFRS to focus on the element of the Measure that is within its remit to improve. It was considered crucial, though, that HWFRS continue to record, analyse, and report the call handling time separately in future to identify any potential issues and areas for improvement.
- 16 In its written submission, the FBU strongly disagreed with the proposal to remove the call handling time from the Attendance Performance Measure and start the clock from the point of mobilisation on the grounds that: the Home Office measures attendance at incidents that includes all three elements (call handling, reaction time to mobilise, and travel time), and it is a technique designed to “mitigate poor performance” and meet response time Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s).

Should response times be measured by travel zones?

Outline

- HWFRS wants to give residents a clearer picture of how long it might take a fire engine to arrive at an emergency incident depending on where they live
- The Service has estimated how far a fire engine is likely to be able to travel to an incident within 10 minutes, 15 minutes and 20 minutes of a fire station. The calculation also took account of the location of each fire station and their crewing
- Further calculations showed that about 74% of households live within the 10 minutes travel zone around each fire station; about 22% live within the 15 minutes travel zone; and most of the remaining 4% live within the 20 minutes travel zone

Proposal

- The proposed new Measure for the arrival of the first fire engine at an incident would be measured across three travel time zones to provide residents with a realistic measurement of real-life expected attendance times: Travel Zone 1 – within 10 minutes; Travel Zone 2 – within 15 minutes; Travel Zone 3 – within 20 minutes
- The proposed new measure is similar to that already in place in Shropshire FRS (SFRS) and was devised jointly by HWFRS and SFRS as part of their strategic alliance activities. Adopting this measure would, it was felt, help ensure a more consistent approach across both Services
- There are a very small number of areas outside the 20 minutes travel zone. Prevention and community safety activity would be carried out in these areas

- 1.7 Respondents to the open questionnaire were generally in support of the proposal to measure the Attendance Performance Measure across three travel time zones; almost four fifths (79%) of respondents giving a personal response agreed with the proposal, with almost half (48%) strongly agreeing.
- 1.8 In the focus groups, there was general recognition that HWFRS can get to some geographical areas quicker than others depending on distance from, and crewing arrangements at, the nearest fire station. As such, it was agreed that having a ‘blanket’ ten-minute Attendance Performance Measure is inappropriate. In light of this, there was widespread support for the proposal to separate the Attendance Performance Measure into 10-, 15- and 20- minute zones. This was considered more representative and transparent, and important in managing expectations and raising awareness of potential wait times in rural areas – as well as the corresponding need to implement protective measures.
- 1.9 One of the perceived benefits of the proposed change was that people would have a much clearer idea of how long they might expect to wait in the event of an emergency incident. It was thus strongly suggested (at the Worcestershire group in particular), that if the new Measure is approved, it should be well publicised to all those living and working in the two counties. However, it was said that care will need to be taken with the messaging so as not to exacerbate any concerns among those living within and especially just outside the 20-minute zone.
- 1.10 The FBU, however, disagreed with the creation of a “postcode lottery” for emergency response, stating that the integrated risk management planning process is designed to determine the necessary speed and weight of response according to the type of risk. Therefore, properties of a similar nature, be it residential or commercial, should expect the same attendance standard.
- 1.11 The FBU also questioned the method used to predict and map attendance times, which it says has neither taken account of historical attendance times over a period of time, nor considered the availability of the fire engines in different areas. Furthermore, the FBU says that the travel time analysis/mapping does not appear to consider: risk information; the effect of road closures; congestion due to the time of day or natural features, such as rivers and hills; or the resources required to adequately deal with a range of incidents.

Should a broader range of emergency incidents be measured?

Outline

- Since 2009-10, the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure has only been calculated for fires in buildings (‘primary building fires’). However, the Service now attends a much broader range of incidents.

Proposal

- HWFRS is proposing that the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure is extended to include a broader range of emergency incidents (such as fires, road traffic collisions and flooding incidents) instead of only ‘primary building fires’.

- 1.12 Of all the proposals, the one to extend the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure to include a broader range of incidents instead of only ‘primary building fires’ received the highest level of support from personal respondents to the questionnaire; the vast majority (95%) of all respondents agreed with

this proposal, with around four fifths (81%) strongly agreeing. However, a preference for only including more serious or life-threatening incidents in the Measure, was also flagged by one respondent.

- 1.13 Focus group participants also overwhelmingly supported the proposal to measure attendance to a broader range of incidents, particularly considering only 7.2% of incidents are currently being measured. This, it was felt, would allow the Service to undertake a much more nuanced analysis of its current attendance times, and determine what resources it might need to make improvements. Indeed, there was some feeling that this should have been done some time ago given the much broader remit of the fire and rescue service nowadays.
- 1.14 When asked what types of incidents they would like or expect to see measured, participants offered mixed views. Some supported measuring attendance times to *all* incidents, resources permitting, on the basis that ‘the more information, the better the understanding’. More, though, preferred a more targeted approach that measures only those incidents that threaten life, property and/or the environment. Ultimately, though, participants were happy to *“leave it to the Fire and Rescue Service to decide what is appropriate to measure and if they want a wider range of measurements... It should be left to the experts to know what to measure.”* (Herefordshire)
- 1.15 The FBU felt that the Attendance Performance Measure should apply to all incident types where there is a foreseeable risk to the lives of the public and firefighters.

2. The Consultation Process

Background to the project

- 2.1 Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) is proposing changes to its Attendance Performance Measure, which is one way in which its performance is monitored and measured. The Measure helps HWFRS analyse how long it takes to reach emergency incidents and to identify where improvements might be made.
- 2.2 The Service's current Attendance Performance Measure was introduced in 2009. Since then, there have been changes to road networks, the level of traffic congestion and traffic calming measures; and it is recognised that the current measure does not take into account the difference between incidents in city centres and more rural locations, or the range of incidents that the Service attends. As such, it is no longer considered a meaningful tool and HWFRS is proposing a new approach to measuring and reporting attendance performance. A revised Attendance Performance Measure will, it is felt, provide managers, elected members, and local communities with a much clearer picture of the emergency incident response for the area in which they live. The data collected will also allow analysts to analyse where performance falls short of expectations, enabling review and improvement.

The Commission

- 2.3 In order to understand views on these proposed changes, a formal consultation was undertaken by the Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority (HWFA) between 8th July and 16th September 2022. HWFA and HWFRS commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open consultation questionnaire and two focus groups with members of the public.
- 2.4 Participants were mainly asked about the proposals to:
 - Remove the 'call handling time' from the measure
 - Measure attendance performance across three travel time zones
 - Extend the measure to include a broader range of incidents.
- 2.5 In total, 74 questionnaire responses were received; and 13 residents attended the two focus groups. In addition, a written submission was received from the Fire Brigades Union.
- 2.6 The 10-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 demographic profiling questions.

- 2.8 The questionnaire was available online (via a link from the HWFRS website) and in paper format between 8th July and 16th September 2022. In total, 74 questionnaires were completed, all of which were submitted online.
- 2.9 Nine respondents chose not to provide profiling information, however of the remaining 65, most responses (62) 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 45	23	39
45-54	22	37
55 or over	14	24
Not Known	3	-
Total	62	100

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

Gender	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Male	31	54
Female	23	40
Other	3	5
Not Known	5	-
Total	62	100

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

Disability	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Yes	8	14
No	48	86
Not Known	6	-
Total	62	100

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

Ethnic group	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
White British	50	88
Any other ethnic group	7	12
Not Known	5	-
Total	62	100

Table 5: Working for HWFRS – All respondents who gave a personal response

Do you work for Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service?	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Yes	32	59
No	22	41
Not Known	8	-
Total	62	100

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

Area	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Herefordshire	26	50
Worcestershire	26	50
Not Known	10	-
Total	62	100

- 2.10 In addition, 3 valid responses were received from the following organisations:
- Finstall Parish Council
 - Eardisland Parish Council
 - 1 organisation – no name provided
- 2.11 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. For this reason, ORS typically reports the consultation responses from organisations separately to those of personals.
- 2.12 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 (as outlined in the full report) 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

- 2.13 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of ‘don’t know’ categories, or multiple answers.
- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 The example comments shown throughout the report have been selected as being typical of those received in relation to each proposal.

- 2.16 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)
- 2.17 The numbers on charts are percentages indicating the proportions of respondents who gave a particular response on a given question.
- 2.18 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.

Duplicate and Co-ordinated Responses

- 2.19 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).

Resident focus groups

- 2.20 Two online focus groups were undertaken with a diverse and broadly representative cross-section of residents across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
- 2.21 The meetings used a ‘deliberative’ approach that encourages participants to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service, 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

- 2.22 The focus groups were designed to inform and ‘engage’ participants with the discussion issues. The meetings lasted for 1.5 hours and were attended as below in Table 7.

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

Area	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
Worcestershire	Wednesday 14 th August 2022 6:30pm - 8:00pm	7
Herefordshire	Thursday 15 th August 2022 6:30pm - 8:00pm	6
TOTAL		13

- 2.23 The attendance target for the focus groups was at least six people, which was achieved in both cases. Overall, the 13 participants who took part represented a broad cross-section of residents from the local 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.
- 2.24 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.

Written submissions

- 2.25 During the formal consultation process, a written submission was received from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). ORS has read and summarised this in the report.

The report

- 2.26 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.

3. Key findings

Introduction

- 3.1 The following chapter reports the findings from the open questionnaire, the two public focus groups and the written submission from the FBU. 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

Should call handling time be included in the Attendance Performance Measure?

Outline

- When a 999 call is made, it is answered by a Fire Control firefighter, who will ask about the nature of the emergency and the location of the incident, before alerting the appropriate fire engines and crews to respond. The time taken between a 999 call being answered by Fire Control and the fire engine and crews being alerted is the 'call-handling time'
- The current Attendance Performance Measure includes 'call-handling time', as well as 'crew turn out time' (the time taken between crews being alerted to the incident, and when they leave the station) and 'travel time' (the time taken between crews leaving the station, and when they arrive at the incident)

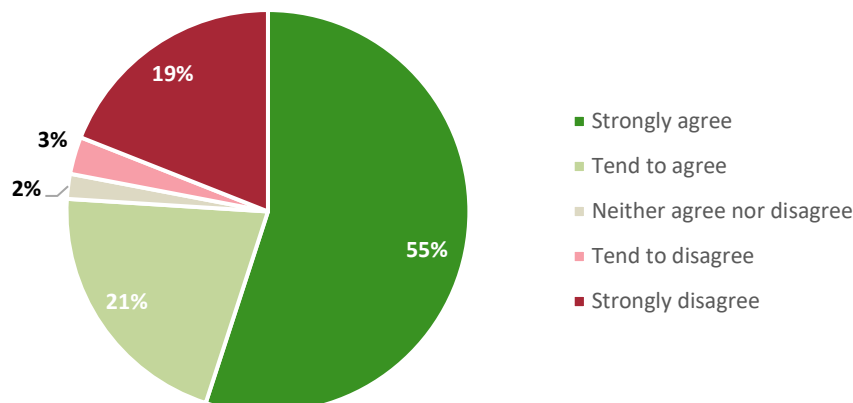
Proposal

- Attendance times would be measured from the time Fire Control alerts the fire station to respond to an incident to the arrival of a fire engine, in line with national guidance
- 'Call-handling time' would still be measured and reported separately
- The rationale is that it will provide more of a level playing field, as the 'call-handling time' can be affected by factors that are out of the Service's control. It will also allow a better comparison with many other Fire Services who also do not include call-handling time

Open questionnaire

- 3.2 Figure 1 shows that there is strong support for HWFRS' proposal to remove the 'call handling time' from the Attendance Performance Measure with around three quarters (76%) of respondents giving a personal response agreeing with this, and more than half (55%) strongly agreeing. However, almost a quarter (23%) disagreed, with around a fifth (19%) strongly disagreeing.

Figure 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that ‘call handling times’ should be removed from the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure so that attendance times are now measured from the point of mobilisation to the arrival of the first fire engine?



Base: All respondents giving a personal response (62)

- 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 below). Respondents who are female, those who have no disabilities, those who are White British and those who work for Hereford & Worcester FRS are all significantly more likely to agree with the proposal to remove ‘call handling time’ from the Attendance Performance Measure, while those who do not work for Hereford & Worcester FRS are significantly more likely to disagree with this proposal.

Table 8: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to remove ‘call handling time’ from the Attendance Performance Measure.

Significantly more likely to <u>agree</u>	Significantly more likely to <u>disagree</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female No disability White British Work for HWFRS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not work for HWFRS

- 3.4 Of the three organisations who answered this question, one strongly agreed with the proposal to remove ‘call handling time’ from the Measure, one tended to agree and one neither agreed nor disagreed.

Resident focus groups

- 3.5 When asked, almost all focus group participants said that prior to coming along to the session, they would have expected the Attendance Performance Measure to start as soon as a Fire Control firefighter picks up a call. As such, they were initially surprised to learn that HWFRS is proposing to remove it from the Measure.

“From the moment I recognise that the incident has [started], from my point of view, the clock is ticking. I would have thought that was an integral part of the response time and I hear what you are saying about measuring it separately, but I just feel as an end user that that is part of my expected response time” (Worcestershire)

- 3.6 After discussion, however, most participants recognised that the call handling time can be affected by issues outside the Service’s control and agreed that it should start on alerting the relevant station crew/s.

“I don’t think it should be included in that final time. I think it should be from when the information has been relayed correctly from them... I can see [the] point that in my head it would be from when I pick up the phone, but... it should be from the moment the information is clearly relayed and there are clear instructions” (Worcestershire)

- 3.7 This, it was felt, would allow the call handler sufficient time to gather and digest the information they are receiving from the caller, which can sometimes take time – and would enable HWFRS to focus on the element of the Measure that is within its remit to improve.

“I feel that it could take someone 60 seconds before they have actually said where and what the issue is and then you are getting penalised... for something [you] can’t control... Some people will be really quick to say, ‘This is the address, and this is the issue’, whereas other people might take longer and that’s not an accurate representation of the actual time it has taken, if you include it” (Worcestershire)

“I think it’s a very reasonable thing to do... The time it takes from the call to get to the FRS is one thing. You can’t really improve on that because it depends on the people you are actually talking to... trying to get answers out of some people is impossible... I am in full agreement with this change” (Herefordshire)

“I get the fire service taking out something they have no control over to measure something they do have control over...” (Worcestershire)

- 3.8 It was considered crucial, though, that HWFRS continue to pay close attention to the call handling time in future to identify any potential issues and areas for improvement.

“... How they get their information and how long it takes to get... to where they need to be ... It is important to gather the information as to what has been said and what processes have [been] gone through to get to the stage of when they were dispatched. So, I think time is crucial and I think emphasis [should be] put on that particular process to try, in time, hopefully to speed that up... ” (Worcestershire)

- 3.9 Only one participant across the two groups opposed the proposed removal of the call handling time after discussion on the grounds that it forms an “integral” part of the Measure, and that its exclusion could be seen as a means of trying to meet unachievable targets.

“Working in the NHS, I am well aware of targets, and we know that targets often get requested to be changed when they are unachievable, and we need to provide a better way of what we are reporting and trying to achieve. I am just worried that that actually leads to a deterioration in the way that we end up with our numbers and our reporting...” (Worcestershire)

- 3.10 Overall, then, as long as the call handling time continues to be recorded, analysed, and reported separately, the majority of participants were content with its removal from the Attendance Performance Measure.

“As long as both aspects are being recorded and analysed then for the general public... it makes no difference for them and it’s easier for the fire service” (Herefordshire)

Written submission from the FBU

- 3.11 The FBU strongly disagrees with the proposal to remove the call handling time from the Attendance Performance Measure and start the clock from the point of mobilisation on the grounds that:
- The Home Office measures attendance at incidents that includes all three elements: call handling; reaction time to mobilise; and travel time

“... Measuring only the reaction and travel time is misleading and in contradiction of the statistics the Home Office produce each year” (FBU)

- It is a technique designed to “mitigate poor performance” and meet response time Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s)
- 3.12 The FBU also says that crewing levels in Fire Control are frequently below the Service’s minimum level of three which, along with a large volume of calls, will have an impact on call handling time. This problem, it is felt, needs to be resolved by employing more Fire Control staff, not by removing the call handling time from the attendance standard.

Should response times be measured by travel zones?

Outline

- HWFRS wants to give residents a clearer picture of how long it might take a fire engine to arrive at an emergency incident depending on where they live
- To do this, the Service has estimated how far a fire engine is likely to be able to travel to an incident within 10 minutes, 15 minutes and 20 minutes of a fire station. The calculation also took account of the location of each HWFRS fire station and how they are crewed
- A further calculation showed that about 74% of households live within the 10 minutes travel zone around each fire station; about 22% live within the 15 minutes travel zone; and the vast majority of the remaining 4% live within the 20 minutes travel zone

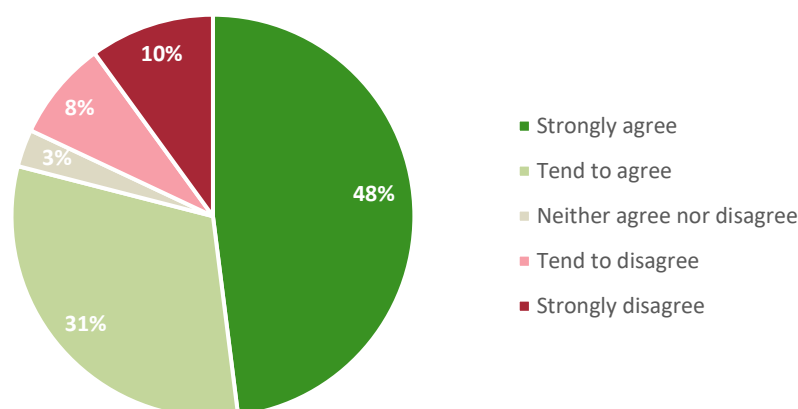
Proposal

- The proposed new Attendance Performance Measure for the arrival of the first fire engine at an incident would be measured across three travel time zones to provide residents with a realistic measurement of real-life expected attendance times
 - Travel Zone 1 – within 10 minutes
 - Travel Zone 2 – within 15 minutes
 - Travel Zone 3 – within 20 minutes
- The proposed new measure is similar to that already in place in Shropshire FRS (SFRS) and was devised jointly by HWFRS and SFRS as part of their strategic alliance activities. Adopting this measure would, it was felt, help ensure a more consistent approach across both Services
- There are a very small number of areas outside the 20 minutes travel zone. Prevention and community safety activity would be carried out in these areas

Open questionnaire

- 3.13 Figure 2 shows that there is also strong support for the proposal to measure the Attendance Performance Measure across three travel time zones; almost four fifths (79%) of respondents giving a personal response agreed with the proposal, with almost half (48%) strongly agreeing. However, almost 1 in 5 (18%) disagreed with this proposal, with 1 in 10 (10%) strongly disagreeing.

Figure 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Attendance Performance Measure should be measured across three travel time zones?



Base: All respondents giving a personal response (62)

- 3.14 If the 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 below). Respondents who are female, those who have no disabilities, those who are White British and those who work for Hereford & Worcester FRS are all significantly more likely to agree with the proposal to measure the Attendance Performance Measure across three travel time zones, while those who do not work for Hereford & Worcester FRS are significantly less likely to agree with this proposal.

Table 9: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to measure the Attendance Performance Measure across three travel time zones.

Significantly more likely to <u>agree</u>	Significantly less likely to <u>agree</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female No disability White British Work for HWFRS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not work for HWFRS

- 3.15 All three organisations who answered this question agreed with the proposal to measure the Attendance Performance Measure across three travel time zones; two strongly agreed and one tended to agree.
- 3.16 Respondents to the open questionnaire were asked if they had any further comments on the proposals and a few made comments specifically in relation to the proposal to measure the Attendance Performance Measure over three travel time zones. Those who commented were generally concerned that this change would have a negative impact, particularly on rural areas; one respondent suggested that fastest attendance times should be based on the severity of the incident rather than the geographical location and another felt that 10 minutes is too long for a vehicle to arrive at an emergency. There was also a concern that slower response targets for non-urban areas would result in poor performance in these areas not being highlighted.

“I disagree with the 10, 15 and 20 minutes attendance time concept. Surely the fastest attendance time of 10 minutes should not be aimed at geographical location, but the severity of the incident. It is my view that a fire in a bin within the proposed 10 minute zone can be attended to within 20 minutes because it is not a life risk. Whereas as house fire needs the fastest response regardless of where it is.”

“The proposed changes will mean slower attendance targets for the areas outside of urban areas. The consequence is that this poor performance will not be highlighted, and be used to justify service reduction/closure of stations etc. On the basis that the area can be covered by another station with a longer response time.”

Resident focus groups

- 3.17 In the focus groups, there was general recognition that HWFRS can get to some geographical areas quicker than others depending on distance from, and crewing arrangements at, the nearest fire station. As such, it was agreed that having a ‘blanket’ ten-minute Attendance Measure is inappropriate. Indeed, there was a strong sense at both groups that the current Measure is setting the Service up to fail given the rurality of much of its area (in Herefordshire especially). In light of this, there was widespread support for the proposal to separate the Attendance Performance Measure into 10-, 15- and 20- minute zones.

“... I think it’s realistic and would probably ensure that the Fire and Rescue Service was working more efficiently because they haven’t got such an unrealistic target” (Herefordshire)

“... It makes sense [as] there’s no point having a target that just can’t be met and is completely unrealistic so if this a better way of measuring things and getting right measurements is key...” (Herefordshire)

- 3.18 Indeed, this was considered more representative and transparent, and important in managing expectations and raising awareness of potential wait times in rural areas – as well as the corresponding need to implement protective measures.

“From a relationship perspective, it’s a much better way of dealing with things; to have an honest representation of when you think you will be able to attend and to manage expectations, and if you manage to get there a bit quicker you are on a win” (Worcestershire)

“...If we have a, ‘We will get to you in 10 minutes’ and that is completely impossible... People take that as gospel and [if they] get there in 11 minutes then it’s not ok. I think it’s really good to manage expectations and give people more information as to how to cope with that situation... if you know they are going to be 15 minutes, it is more comforting sitting around waiting after those 10 minutes have passed than going ‘where are they?’” (Worcestershire)

“I think it is an excellent idea... I am in one of the 20-minute zones which is fine because I think I would be happier knowing it was going to take 20 minutes rather than being told it will take on average 10-minutes...” (Herefordshire)

“We could have more accurately reported data that could show in real terms the consequences of living in green [20 minute] ones and [what] needs to happen for those areas if they are less safe... Basically we see that written down, quantified and take some action” (Herefordshire)

- 3.19 As the second quotation above suggests, one of the perceived benefits of the proposed change was that people would have a much clearer idea of how long they might expect to wait in the event of an emergency incident. It was thus strongly suggested (at the Worcestershire group in particular), that if the new Attendance Performance Measure is approved, it should be well publicised to all those living and working in the two counties.

“... My question is whether that map will be published to the wider public? ... People who live in those really rural areas understand that they are rural because they have to travel quite a way to the shops etc. But it would be valuable to have that published and known outside of the fire community so that the public knows that, ‘I am calling 999 and I am in an area that has poor coverage because of the locality and geography of the place’ (Worcestershire)

- 3.20 However, it was said that care will need to be taken with the messaging so as not to exacerbate any concerns among those living within and especially just outside the 20-minute zone.

“... I would be in favour of the zones and that makes more sense to me. My worry would be if I lived in a green [20 minute] zone and what that meant and what the consequences were...” (Herefordshire)

- 3.21 There were some questions about how the proposed change would work in practice, not least whether the response from neighbouring fire and rescue services had been factored in in relation to border areas.

“... If there was another neighbouring fire service that had a shorter distance to that location, do you call them in or do you just go for the 20 minutes...?” (Worcestershire)

- 3.22 Clarification was also sought on whether the nature of a call would affect the attendance time within the travel zones (for example, whether a house fire would attract a faster response than, say, a small animal rescue), and how exactly HWFRS will use the data it gathers through its Attendance Performance Measure.

“...So, you would look at a map and... figure out where your locations are and say, ‘We expect to reach this place in twenty minutes’. You are not doing that on importance of call; you know, cat up a tree or a building fire. It’s regardless of the call out how fast you would expect yourselves to get there?” (Worcestershire)

“What do you do with those measurements because at the end of the day you can get as much raw data as you want but it’s what you do with it? How do you process it? What is the outcome of the analysis? Is that going to provide a better or more targeted service? That to me makes the fire service better for us as the customers” (Herefordshire)

Written submission from the FBU

- 3.23 The FBU disagrees with the creation of a “*postcode lottery*” for emergency response, stating that the integrated risk management planning process is designed to determine the necessary speed and weight of response according to the type of risk. Therefore, properties of a similar nature, be it residential or commercial, should expect the same attendance standard.
- 3.24 The FBU also questions the method used to predict and map attendance times, which it says has neither taken account of historical attendance times over a period of time, nor considered the availability of the fire engines in different areas.

“It is assumed that all ten fire engines that are crewed by wholetime personnel are available 100% of the time, but due to crewing shortages and current duty systems this is not the case”
(FBU)

- 3.25 Furthermore, the FBU says that the travel time analysis/mapping does not appear to consider:
- Risk information
 - The effect of road closures due to maintenance, flood, landslide, or another event
 - Congestion due to the time of day or natural features, such as rivers and hills
 - The resources required to adequately deal with a range of incidents (for example, the distribution, availability and number of key skills and assets, such as Rope Rescue, Water Rescue, Large Animal Rescue, All Terrain Vehicles, Ultra Heavy cutting equipment and Road Traffic Collision platforms)
 - The impact of a nearest station’s crew having already mobilised to another incident or being unavailable due to insufficient staff numbers/competencies.
- 3.26 The results of the exercise are also questioned: for example, the predicted attendance times from Upton upon Severn fire station show a ten-minute difference immediately around the station depending on the direction of travel.

Should a broader range of emergency incidents be measured?

Outline

- Since 2009-10, the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure has only been calculated for fires in buildings (‘primary building fires’). However, the Service now attends a much broader range of incidents.

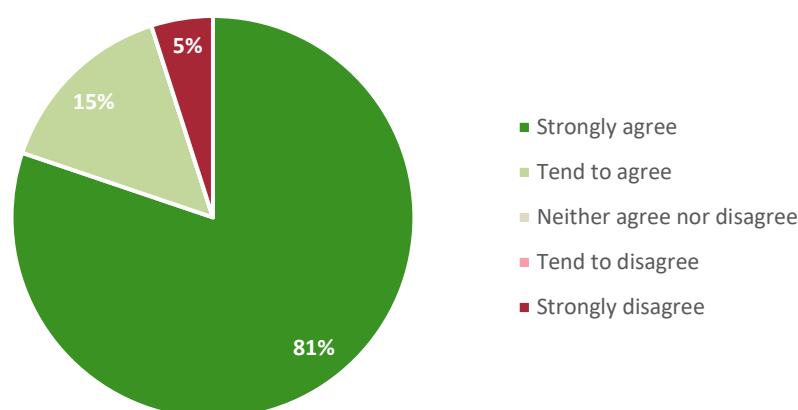
Proposal

- HWFRS is proposing that the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure is extended to include a broader range of emergency incidents (such as fires, road traffic collisions and flooding incidents) instead of only ‘primary building fires’.

Open questionnaire

- 3.27 Of all the proposals, the proposal to extend the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure to include a broader range of incidents instead of only ‘primary building fires’ received the highest level of support from personal respondents to the open questionnaire; the vast majority (95%) of all respondents agreed with this proposal, with around four fifths (81%) strongly agreeing (Figure 3). However, all of those who did not agree, strongly disagreed with the proposal (5%).

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure should be extended to include a broader range of incidents (such as fires, road traffic collisions, and flooding incidents) instead of only ‘primary building fires’?



Base: All respondents giving a personal response (62)

- 3.28 There are no significant differences between sub-groups for this question, with a high level of agreement demonstrated across the board.
- 3.29 Of the three organisations who answered this question, two strongly agreed with the proposal to extend the Measure to include a broader range of incidents, while one neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 3.30 While the majority of open questionnaire respondents agreed that the Attendance Performance Measure should include a broader range of incidents, one respondent who provided a further comment felt that less serious or non-life-threatening incidents are not relevant to the measure and that fire should be the primary measure as it is the main risk to life.

“The main risk to life and costly damage is fires and so this should be the primary measure. Yes, the fire brigade might attend many other types of incidents but these, unless they are serious or life threatening, are not really relevant to the main statistic that matters to people...”

Resident focus groups

- 3.31 Focus group participants overwhelmingly supported the proposal to measure attendance to a broader range of incidents, particularly considering only 7.2% of incidents are currently being measured. This, it was felt, would allow the Service to undertake a much more nuanced analysis of its current attendance times, and determine what resources it might need to make improvements.

“... It makes sense. If you are going to measure something, then... if you are only doing 7.2% of what you are currently engaged in then it is a very small measure of your overall remit” (Herefordshire)

“... When you can record and measure things in any area, I think it really helps performance... There [are] so many things that we aren’t recording... So, I think it is a right step in the right direction” (Worcestershire)

“Measuring a broader and wider facet of what the organisation is involved in makes sense to me, because if you measure it, you can presumably do some analysis based on that and it might then influence the types of equipment you are going to use... We are very rural here, so looking at smaller vehicles that can get through and 4-wheel drives and that sort of thing... If you are doing a lot of other things other than just primary house fires, then looking at the equipment that you need for that” (Herefordshire)

- 3.32 Indeed, there was some feeling that this should have been done some time ago given the much broader remit of the fire and rescue service nowadays.

“I think it’s an excellent idea and is probably overdue... I am fully in favour of this...” (Herefordshire)

“I think it is logical to measure as broad a level of incidents as you can. I am just interested in why it has taken so long to reach the conclusion that that needs to happen?” (Worcestershire)

- 3.33 When asked what types of incidents they would like or expect to see measured, participants offered mixed views. Some supported measuring attendance times to *all* incidents, resources permitting, on the basis that ‘the more information, the better the understanding’.

“If the resources are there to measure everything or a lot of the incidents then they should be because for me, it’s a lot more beneficial to have information about everything so you understand any type of emergency” (Herefordshire)

- 3.34 More, though, preferred a more targeted approach that measures only those incidents that threaten life, property and/or the environment.

“If you are going to a domestic fire with lives at stake and then comparing that to a cat up a tree... They are obviously very different... I think you are quite right that the targeting should be about what the appliances are going to...” (Herefordshire)

“I did wonder [about] a more staged approach... Could you prioritise certain key areas with the most important factors? It seems to be that the most important factor is to do with safety and risk so could we pilot ‘x’-many areas where you target an increased number of activities and not suddenly say you are going to go from one to... absolutely everything? (Herefordshire)

“... You want to measure your resource-intensive things don’t you rather than every cat up a tree? Do you actually need to measure the very small, the insignificant, which are not insignificant to the person involved but not the best way to use your resources...”
(Worcestershire)

- 3.35 Ultimately, participants were happy to *“leave it to the Fire and Rescue Service to decide what is appropriate to measure and if they want a wider range of measurements... It should be left to the experts to know what to measure.”* (Herefordshire)

Written submission from the FBU

- 3.36 The FBU feels that the Attendance Performance Measure should apply to all incident types where there is a foreseeable risk to the lives of the public and firefighters.

Other issues

Written submission from the FBU

- 3.37 The FBU also discussed attendance times more generally in its submission, stating that *“when a 999 call is made the responding crews are already against the clock”*. For example, on arrival at a Road Traffic Collision (RTC), as a guide they will be working to a ‘Platinum 10 minutes’¹ and a ‘Golden Hour’². It is said that *“the earlier the call is made, and the sooner a call is taken, and a fire crew mobilised, the quicker they can respond and make an intervention”*, and the Union is concerned that while there has been an overall improvement in HWFRS’s attendance time in the past year, over a longer period crews are taking longer to arrive at incidents.
- 3.38 In light of this, the FBU suggests that the (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” (FBU)

- 3.39 The FBU also references the Service’s latest HMICFRS (His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services) report which noted that while the Service is only meeting its response standards on 52% of occasions, the availability of fire engines has increased by seven percent between 2019/20 and 2020/21 and that ‘if the Service sustains this improvement, it could meet its response standards to fires and other incidents.’ As such, the FBU recommends that

“Rather than change the response standard HWFRS need to concentrate on improving the availability of fire engines” (FBU)

¹ A concept which places a time constraint on the pre-hospital care of seriously injured patients. Crews will work to gain access to a casualty, stabilise, extricate, and package them ready for transportation to definitive care within 10 minutes of arrival.

² The term “Golden Hour” dictates that the first hour after injury will largely determine a critically injured person’s chances for survival.

3.40 Other issues raised in the FBU's submission were that:

- There is no proposed attendance measure for the second or third appliances (including special appliances) which, if fire crews are to successfully resolve an operational incident, is "vital"
- While it is not proposed to include a target for the percentage of times the Measure should be met, "It is important to have an output target for attendance so the FRS can be performance managed"
- One fire engine cannot deal with a house fire; it needs a minimum of two fire engines and nine firefighters. HWFRS's minimum crewing level is four, whereas Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have a minimum crewing level of five. So, in order to safely deal with a house fire HWFRS would need to mobilise a minimum of three fire engines compared to two in Shropshire. In light of this:

"It is impossible to draw a direct comparison between the two Services given this important factor, and therefore there must be no alignment of attendance standards as they are proposed, unless all factors are equal and HWFRA increase the minimum crewing level to five" (FBU)

Open Questionnaire – Further Comments

3.41 Several further comments were given by respondents giving a personal response to the open questionnaire; mostly in general support of the proposals to revise the Measure.

3.42 Those in support of the changes feel they are reasonable, more realistic, sensible, and clearer to understand.

"I think these are reasonable changes to performance measures."

"Pleased to see that the original measure with its artificial target is being overhauled. It isn't needed when the fire service says it will get there as quickly as it can, and it was always going to be difficult to meet anyway given the size of Herefordshire and Worcestershire."

"Sounds sensible and a lot clearer to understand."

3.43 Some respondents had some general queries about the proposed changes or gave some general suggestions which they felt would help improve the Measure or response times generally, for example:

"In my opinion as much information as possible should be collected and used in making policy decisions regarding all 3 policy decisions. By narrowing study fields less true information will be available regarding true attendance times."

"It would have been helpful if you provided a list of all potential emergency incident types that you may report on in the future."

"Have you considered changing crewing systems at selected fire stations in Herefordshire, as this seems to have an impact on the turnout and travel times?"

"Prompt response should be reviewed. With appliances attending a prompt response incident we are delaying time that this appliance can be back on the run and available for further incidents. Availability is everything to cut [down] on attendance times."

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Overall, focus group participants were supportive of the proposed changes to the Attendance Performance Measure.
- 4.2 Removing the call handling time was generally supported in the focus groups, mainly on the grounds that it is often affected by issues outside the Service's control. However, it was considered essential that this element continue to be recorded, analysed, and reported separately to identify potential issues and improvements.
- 4.3 There was also widespread support for the proposal to separate the Attendance Performance Measure into 10-, 15- and 20- minute zones among focus group participants. This was considered more representative and transparent, and important in managing expectations, raising awareness of potential wait times, and highlighting the importance of implementing protective measures in rural areas.
- 4.4 The FBU, however, disagreed with both of the above proposed changes in its written submission because:

"Discounting call handling time from the Attendance Standard and measuring to three time zones will likely mean that HWFRS are likely able to report that it is achieving the Standard. However, if implemented as proposed, the lives of the people living in, visiting, and travelling through Herefordshire and Worcestershire will not be safer, and neither will the lives of our members"

- 4.5 It was agreed in the focus groups that HWFRS should measure attendance to a broader range of incidents given its wider remit nowadays. There were mixed opinions as to which incident types should be measured, but participants ultimately felt that the Service (as 'the experts') should decide on this. The FBU, in its submission, suggested that the Attendance Performance Measure should apply to all incident types where there is a foreseeable risk to the lives of the public and firefighters.
- 4.6 The open questionnaire respondents were also generally supportive of the proposed changes to the Attendance Performance Measure. There was particularly strong support for the proposal to extend the measure to include a broader range of incidents. A few respondents voiced some concerns that were similar to those given by focus group participants, but these did not represent the views of the majority.

List of Tables

Table 1: Age – All respondents who gave a personal response	10
Table 2: Gender – All respondents who gave a personal response	10
Table 3: Disability – All respondents who gave a personal response	10
Table 4: Ethnic Group – All respondents who gave a personal response	10
Table 5: Working for HWFRS – All respondents who gave a personal response	11
Table 6: Area – All respondents who gave a personal response.....	11
Table 7: Focus groups (area, time and date and number of attendees).....	12
Table 8: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to remove ‘call handling time’ from the Attendance Performance Measure.	15
Table 9: Differences by sub-group – Proposal to measure the Attendance Performance Measure across three travel time zones.....	19

List of Figures

Figure 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that ‘call handling times’ should be removed from the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure so that attendance times are now measured from the point of mobilisation to the arrival of the first fire engine? 15

Figure 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Attendance Performance Measure should be measured across three travel time zones? 19

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Service’s Attendance Performance Measure should be extended to include a broader range of incidents (such as fires, road traffic collisions, and flooding incidents) instead of only ‘primary building fires’? 23