

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Director of Legal & Governance, Graham Britten
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
Brigade HQ, Stocklake, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1BD
Tel: 01296 744441



Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Jason Thelwell

To: The Members of the Executive Committee

27 January 2020

MEMBERS OF THE PRESS
AND PUBLIC

Please note the content of
Page 2 of this Agenda Pack

Dear Councillor

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY** to be held in Meeting Room 1, Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Stocklake, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1BD on **WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2020 at 10.00 AM** when the business set out overleaf will be transacted.

Yours faithfully

Graham Britten
Director of Legal and Governance

Councillor: Clarke OBE (Chairman)
Councillors: Hopkins, Lambert, Marland, McCall, McLean, Roberts and Teesdale



MAKING YOU SAFER

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Recording of the Meeting

The Authority supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Requests to take photographs or undertake audio or visual recordings either by members of the public or by the media should wherever possible be made to enquiries@bucksfire.gov.uk at least two working days before the meeting.

The Authority also allows the use of social networking websites and blogging to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens.

Adjournment and Rights to Speak – Public

The Authority may, when members of the public are present, adjourn a Meeting to hear the views of the public on a particular agenda item. The proposal to adjourn must be moved by a Member, seconded and agreed by a majority of the Members present and voting.

Prior to inviting the public to speak, the Chairman should advise that they:

- (a) raise their hands to indicate their wish to speak at the invitation of the Chairman,
- (b) speak for no more than four minutes,
- (c) should only speak once unless the Chairman agrees otherwise.

The Chairman should resume the Meeting as soon as possible, with the agreement of the other Members present.

Adjournments do not form part of the Meeting and should be confined to times when the views of the public need to be heard.

Rights to Speak - Members

A Member of the constituent Councils who is not a Member of the Authority may attend Meetings of the Authority or its Committees to make a statement on behalf of the Member's constituents in the case of any item under discussion which directly affects the Member's division, with the prior consent of the Chairman of the Meeting which will not be unreasonably withheld. The Member's statement will not last longer than four minutes.

Where the Chairman of a Committee has agreed to extend an invitation to all Members of the Authority to attend when major matters of policy are being considered, a Member who is not a member of the Committee may attend and speak at such Meetings at the invitation of the Chairman of that Committee.

Questions

Members of the Authority, or its constituent councils, District, or Parish Councils may submit written questions prior to the Meeting to allow their full and proper consideration. Such questions shall be received by the Monitoring Officer to the Authority, *in writing*, at least two clear working days before the day of the Meeting of the Authority or the Committee.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To make all decisions on behalf of the Authority, except in so far as reserved to the full Authority by law or by these Terms of Reference.
2. To assess performance of the Authority against agreed organisational targets.
3. To determine matters relating to pay and remuneration where required by collective agreements or legislation.
4. To select on behalf of the Authority–the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, and deputy to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, or equivalent , taking advice from suitable advisers and to make recommendations to the Authority as to the terms of appointment or dismissal.
5. To consider and make decisions on behalf of the Authority in respect of the appointment of a statutory finance officer ; a statutory monitoring officer; and any post to be contracted to “Gold Book” terms and conditions in whole or in part taking advice from the Chief Fire Officer and suitable advisers.
6. To act as the Employers’ Side of a negotiating and consultation forum for all matters relating to the employment contracts of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, deputy to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, or equivalent; and where relevant, employees contracted to “Gold Book” terms and conditions in whole or in part.
7. To hear appeals if required to do so in accordance with the Authority’s Policies.
8. To determine any human resources issues arising from the Authority’s budget process and improvement programme.
9. To determine policies, codes or guidance:
 - (a) after considering recommendations from the Overview and Audit Committee in respect of:
 - (i) regulating working relationships between members and co-opted members of the Authority and the employees of the Authority; and
 - (ii) governing the conduct of employees of the Authority
 - (b) relating to grievance, disciplinary, conduct, capability, dismissals and appeals relating to employees contracted to “Gold Book” terms and conditions in whole or in part.
10. To form a Human Resources Sub-Committee as it deems appropriate.

AGENDA

Item No:

1. Apologies

2. Minutes

To approve, and sign as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 November 2019 (Item 2) **(Pages 7 - 10)**

3. Disclosure of Interests

Members to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in any matter being considered which are not entered onto the Authority's Register, and officers to disclose any interests they may have in any contract to be considered.

4. Questions

To receive questions in accordance with Standing Order S0A7.

5. Members' Allowances

To consider Item 5 **(Pages 11 - 36)**

6. Budget Monitoring Performance and Debt Management April - November 2019

To consider Item 6 **(Pages 37 - 48)**

7. The Prudential Code, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision

To consider Item 7 **(Pages 49 - 58)**

8. Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2020/21 to 2024/25

To consider Item 8 **(Pages 59 - 70)**

9. Response to the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2020/2021: Consultation Paper

To consider Item 9 **(Pages 71 - 106)**

10. 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan Consultation: Feedback & Recommendations

To consider Item 10 **(Pages 107 - 226)**

11. Exclusion of Public and Press

To consider excluding the public and press representatives from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the reports and appendices contain information relating to an individual; and Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the reports and appendices contain information which is likely to reveal the identity of

an individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the reports and appendices contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person (including the Authority); and on these grounds it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information:

12. Exempt Minutes

To approve, and sign as a correct record, the Exempt Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 November 2019 (Item 12)

13. Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 25 March 2020 at 10am.

If you have any enquiries about this agenda please contact: Katie Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) – Tel: (01296) 744633 email: knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk

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Minutes of the Meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2019 at 10.00 AM

Present: Councillors Clarke OBE (Chairman), Hopkins, Lambert, Marland, McCall, McLean and Teesdale (part)

Officers: J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), C Bell (Head of Service Development), A Stunell (Head Of Human Resources), A Collett (Organisational Development Manager), F Pearson (Consultation and Communication Manager) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Roberts
One member of the public

EX12 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 16 October 2019, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EX13 EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME (ESMCP)

The Vice Chairman introduced the report and advised Members that this report provided a further update regarding the national status of the programme and its impact on regional and local transition. The last briefing was provided to Members in July 2019.

The Vice Chairman read from the Summary of the Committee of Public Accounts Emergency Services Network: further progress review “ESN is now three years late and expected to cost the taxpayer at least £3.1 billion more than planned.” “The Committee has seen other examples where the lack of a market in certain technical or IT products and services put the Government in a weak contractual position. This is the eighth occasion that we have examined the programme. We will continue to be concerned about the progress of this programme until the department has a clear plan for delivery and can demonstrate that it has the skills and capacity to meet the substantial challenges ahead.”

The Head of Service Development advised that at the last briefing to Members in July, reference to the National Audit Office (NAO) report had been made which highlighted the poor management of the national programme which had, in turn, led to delays and an escalation in costs. Since the NAO report was produced, a further report had been released by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). This publication was also less than

complimentary of the management of the national programme and had made six recommendations which were highlighted within this report. The recommendations focused on the production of a detailed, achievable delivery plan; assurances regarding the availability and costs of maintain the current Airwave network; an identification of the skills and tasks that were required to deliver and integrate the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and assurances that these would be addressed when appointing a new delivery partner; and that a revised and approved business case was delivered by the end of 2019. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) had issued a statement responding to the release of the PAC report which could be seen at Appendix A of this report. This highlights NFCC concerns regarding the programme and notes their agreement with the latest report.

Members would recall that officers were continuing to engage with representatives of the national programme regarding the provision of a Direct Network Service Provider or DNSP link. The Authority had submitted a further letter to the central programme seeking a resolution to this issue and the Senior User (the Head of Service Development) had been invited to take part in discussions with the Programme Director. Members could be assured that officers from this organisation continued to monitor the progress of the national programme and to engage with colleagues at regional and national levels to prepare for ESN.

The Chairman read from the Summary of the Committee of Public Accounts Emergency Services Network: further progress review – Confidence of emergency services in the new approach “The Department did not fully recognise the diversity of the industry users, and feedback from users had not been acted on.”

The Chairman advised Members that the members of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee had also written to the Permanent Secretary, Sir Phillip Rutnam setting out their concerns regarding the Programme.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

EX14

RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2020-21: TECHNICAL CONSULTATION

The Vice Chairman introduced the report.

(Councillor Teesdale joined the meeting)

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the consultation was published on 3 October 2019, with a deadline for responses of 31 October 2019. In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, the response was discussed with the Chairman and Lead Member before submission. This

paper detailed the content of the submission for the attention of the Authority. The section of the Consultation most relevant to the Authority at the present time was Section 5: Council Tax. The current proposal within the Consultation was that the council tax referendum limit for fire and rescue authorities would be less than 2% (last year it was 3%). The response to this was that the Authority would recommend that fire and rescue authorities had flexibility to increase council tax by up to £5. This view was consistent with the consultation response provided by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that local MPs had been supportive in lobbying government on the Authority's behalf. The inspection report was still to come, probably in late December, although due to the election on 12 December the date might be put back further, and it wouldn't be surprising if the report mentioned how stretched the Service was and how difficult it would be to maintain it at the current level without further funding.

A Member asked if there was a legal way forward that would allow the Authority to the same precept flexibility as town and parish councils. This Authority received lower than the average parish council, band D equivalent.

A Member commented that the problem with percentage rises was that if you start on a low base, the percentage increase was very small and the gap between the highest and lowest just gets bigger.

RESOLVED –

That the response to the consultation be noted.

EX15

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED –

It was moved and resolved that the public and press representatives from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the reports and appendices contain information relating to an individual; and Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the reports and appendices contain information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the reports and appendices contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person (including the Authority); and on these grounds it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, so that the meeting could consider the following matters:

M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), C Bell (Head of Service Development),

F Pearson (Consultation and Communication Manager) and the member of the public left the meeting.

EX16 SUCCESSION PLANNING – BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND RESILIENCE

The Committee considered the report and appendices, details of which were noted in the confidential/exempt minutes.

EX17 INJURY PENSION OVERPAYMENTS

The Committee considered the report and appendices, details of which were noted in the confidential/exempt minutes.

EX18 SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM RESTRUCTURE: DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ASSETS AND DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

The Committee considered the report and appendices, details of which were noted in the confidential/exempt minutes.

EX19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date of the next Executive Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday 5 February 2020 at 10.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 11.22 AM

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	5 February 2020
OFFICER	Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE, Chairman
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Members' Allowances
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Authority is required to adopt a Scheme of Members' Allowances before 1 April each year and, in so doing, have due regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panels of the constituent authorities when considering its own Scheme of Members' Allowances and confirm that it has done so when it gives public notice of the Scheme of Allowances.</p> <p>The Independent Remuneration Panel of the scheme for Milton Keynes Council undertook a review in January 2018 and this is attached at Appendix A.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire County Council's terms of reference required a review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances to be undertaken every four years and this was carried out in January 2015 following a part review which was undertaken in 2013. A scheduled review by a new Independent Remuneration Panel for 2019 was postponed due to the proposed changes to governance arrangements. The Buckinghamshire Shadow Authority 2019 Order requires the Shadow Authority to prepare and make a scheme for the payment of allowances. The Independent Remuneration Panel has met and its report is due to go to the Shadow Authority Meeting on 27 February 2020.</p> <p>If the report is made available prior to the meeting of the Authority on 12 February, its recommendations will be circulated to Members before or by the date of the meeting.</p> <p>The Authority agreed at its meeting on 14 December 2011 that the index linking for the period 2012/13 to 2014/15 – for basic and special responsibility (and co-optee) allowances – be the pay award for the Authority's staff on National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services, Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book).</p> <p>It is recommended that the Authority continue this</p>

	<p>indexation for the period 2020/21.</p> <p>The NJC Circular NJC/3/19 of 5 September 2019 confirmed a 2% pay award effective from 1 July 2019. The effects of a 2% increase are reflected in Appendix B.</p>
ACTION	Decision
RECOMMENDATIONS	That the Authority be recommended to adopt a Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2020/21 (Appendix B)
RISK MANAGEMENT	The recommendation will have no adverse effect on the Authority's business.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>The current budget for Members' Allowances (Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances) is £72,780, including National Insurance.</p> <p>Costs will be incurred in publishing a notice that the Authority has made a Scheme of Members' Allowances in a newspaper circulating in its area. The cost is estimated to be in the region of £800 (<i>£788.40 last year</i>).</p>
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	The making or amendment of the Members' Scheme of Allowances is a function reserved to a meeting of the Authority. An amendment may be made by the Authority in year. Regulation 10(4) of Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provides that "A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index as may be specified by the authority and where the only change made to a scheme in any year is that effected by such annual adjustment in accordance with such index the scheme shall be deemed not to have been amended."
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DUTY TO COLLABORATE	The making of a scheme of allowances is the responsibility of each individual authority defined in the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The methodology for doing so is prescribed exclusively by those regulations.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	Not applicable.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	<p>The Authority's Scheme of Members' Allowances does not include any element for meeting costs incurred by a Member who has to arrange care in order to carry out their function as a Member of the Fire Authority.</p> <p>The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 exclude the Authority from including such a provision in its Scheme. However, with the exception of co-opted members, all Members are appointed by either Buckinghamshire County Council or Milton Keynes Council and are</p>

	entitled to claim "dependent carers' allowances" from their appointing authority. There are currently no co-opted members on the Authority.
USE OF RESOURCES	The recommendation is consistent with the extant Scheme of Allowances.
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	NJC/3/19 – NJC Circular 05/09/19
APPENDICES	Appendix A: Milton Keynes Council report of the Independent Panel of Members' Allowances January 2018. Appendix B: Draft Scheme for Members' Allowances 2020/21.
TIME REQUIRED	10 minutes.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Katie Nellist Knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744633

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**REPORT BY
THE MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

**An Independent Review of Members' Allowances
January 2018**

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Executive Summary

Milton Keynes Council's Independent Remuneration Panel has been asked to prepare this report in order to help the Council fulfil its statutory duty to review its scheme of allowances at regular intervals.

The Panel took account of a range of information prior to formulating their recommendations. This included information on the governance arrangements and structures of the Council, the views of councillors – via both face-to-face interviews, written submissions and a short survey – relevant benchmarking data, the economic and financial climate within which the Council operates and the desire to encourage citizens to participate in local democracy. The Panel also considered the statutory framework for members' allowances, including the relevant statutory instruments and the guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Panel took particular care to try to balance the need to ensure that citizens are able to participate in local democracy by standing for election against the reality of the prevailing financial climate. In doing so, the Panel have based their recommendations upon the existing scheme of allowances but have made a small number of recommendations in order to address the issues that they perceive to exist within the scheme.

In terms of the basic allowance, the Panel have also taken into consideration the increasing workloads of councillors and the demands in representing citizens and participating in decision making in one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing areas of the United Kingdom. While councillors expressed a general level of satisfaction with the level of the basic allowance, the Panel were conscious of the fact that the amount is not index linked and has therefore not changed for some time. The Panel hope that their recommendations will address this issue.

The Panel have given equally careful consideration to the special responsibility allowances payable to councillors who undertake additional duties, many of which are equivalent to a demanding full-time job. The Panel heard a range of views on these allowances, which they took account of alongside benchmarking data from other comparable authorities and the particular governance structures and political landscape at Milton Keynes Council. The Panel have taken the decision to leave this section of the scheme largely untouched, but have made some recommendations for the Council to consider. The first is the introduction of an index to ensure allowances keep pace with the rising cost of living. The second is the introduction of an allowance for the Deputy Leader of the Council as Milton Keynes is almost unique in not recognising this position within its scheme of allowances.

The Panel would like to thank all of the councillors who took part in the review by answering the many questions that the Panel posed. The Panel believes that these recommendations, if adopted, will result in a scheme of allowances that is fair, transparent and affordable. The Panel hope that the Council will approve these recommendations.

Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is required to make a scheme of allowances for its councillors in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulation 2003. The process for making and reviewing such a scheme is regulated so that the public can have confidence in the independence, openness and accountability of the process involved. The process requires that the Council must establish an independent remuneration panel and, before making or amending its scheme of allowances, must have regard to the views of the Panel.
- 1.2 This report presents the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel to the Council for consideration and approval.

The Panel

- 2.1 In accordance with the Council's constitution, the current Panel was appointed following a recruitment process established by the Council. The Panel comprises the following members:
 - Ms Ruby Parmar. Ruby is the Senior Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers' Milton Keynes Office. Ruby also sits on the Board of Trustees of the Magic Bus India Foundation, a charity dedicated to providing children living in poverty the opportunity to shape their future.
 - Ms Jan Flawn CBE. Jan is the founder and Chair of PJ Care, a leading Milton Keynes-based provider of specialist neurological care and neuro rehabilitation for people with progressive or acquired neurological conditions.
 - Mr Stewart Bailey. Stewart is Managing Director of Virtual Viewing, a company specialising in computer generated work aimed at inspiring inward investment and interest in construction and design projects.The Panel was assisted in their deliberations by Paul Hanson, Democratic Services Manager from the LGSS Northamptonshire office.

Terms of Reference for the Review

- 3.1 The Panel's terms of reference were based on the relevant statutory instrument (Members Allowances (England) Regulations 2003), as well as guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Regulation for Local Authority Allowances). It should be noted that the Panel is required to take these documents into account when preparing recommendations on the Council's scheme of allowances.
- 3.2 In line with the statutory requirements relating to schemes, the Panel's agreed terms of reference were as follows:
 - To determine the amount of basic allowance that should be payable to councillors;

- To determine the responsibilities or duties which should lead to the payment of a special responsibility allowance and the amount of such allowances;
- To determine the duties for which a travelling and subsistence allowance can be paid and the amount of such allowances;
- Whether the Council's allowances scheme should include an allowance in respect of the expenses of arranging for the care of children and dependants and the amount of this allowance and the means by which it should be determined; and
- Whether annual adjustments of allowance levels should be made by reference to an index, and, if so, for how long such a measure should run.

3.3 The Panel also agreed the following set of broad principles within which the review of allowances was undertaken:

- In line with the statutory guidance, the Panel took into account the principle that an element of the role of councillor must be voluntary, but that should not mean that councillors should suffer significant financial loss as a result of undertaking the role;
- Allowances should not be designed to reward councillors, but neither should the level of allowances prohibit individuals from considering standing for election; and
- The Panel were mindful that a reasonable percentage of councillors that should be eligible to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance.

The Evidence Considered

4.1 The Panel considered a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence, as well as benchmarking data. In the area of basic and special responsibility allowances, the Panel attributed greatest weight to the written and verbal testimony of councillors.

4.2 Benchmarking evidence was considered, however, the Panel had to be cautious in the application of this data. This was because the data, while helpful in determining the relative position of allowances paid by Milton Keynes Council in comparison to other comparable (statistical nearest neighbour) authorities, the data does not reveal the reasons for any discrepancies, nor the detail of the range of responsibilities covered by each post.

4.3 The Panel issued an open invitation to all councillors to meet with them and share their views. Individual interviews were conducted with ten councillors over the course of the review, representing all of the political groups on the Council. A simple questionnaire was also circulated at the Panel's request and nine responses were received. A range of opinions were heard, relating not just to allowances but also to the nature of the role of councillor, the time commitment involved and other forms of support that are available to councillors. Input was received from councillors who were employed, self-employed and retired.

4.4 There was a general consensus that the current rate of basic allowance is broadly sufficient, but some concerns were expressed about the lack of any form of indexation within the scheme and the long-term effect this could have on the viability of allowances. The Panel

felt that the basic allowance must be set at a level that allows councillors to make the not-inconsiderable time commitment required in order to fulfil their roles effectively, particularly now given the rapid growth within the Milton Keynes area.

- 4.5 On the issue of special responsibility allowances, a diverse range of opinions were expressed. There was a broad consensus on the level of allowances attached to such roles as group leaders and committee chairs, but rather less consensus about roles such as committee vice-chairs. The Panel took careful account of this information and used benchmarking data to determine how such roles were treated in other comparable authorities.
- 4.6 In terms of the expenses that may be claimed in the course of carrying out their roles, councillors were generally satisfied with the arrangements in place. Some small changes to the scheme were suggested, however, and the Panel has made recommendations based on their own views as to the fairness and transparency of this aspect of the scheme.
- 4.7 Some councillors expressed the view that a form of means testing could be used to ensure that the budget for allowances is apportioned efficiently. The Panel noted this issue but were mindful of the fact that the legislative framework which underpins local authority allowances provides no freedom to do this.
- 4.8 The Panel noted that most formal committee meetings take place in the evenings in order to make the best use of councillors' time and reduce the impact on those councillors who are in paid employment. The Panel welcomed the efforts made by the Council but felt that the Council could, and should, do more to support councillors who are also employed, particularly where they undertake additional roles within the Council.
- 4.9 In formulating recommendations about the special responsibility allowances within the new scheme, the Panel sought to examine the nature of the roles undertaken by councillors and determine the position of each role within the hierarchy of allowances. This approach was based on the principles that underpin every review of allowances and takes into account factors such as
- The level of decision making responsibility associated with each role;
 - Other responsibilities associated with each role (such as responsibility for chairing a committee, and attendance at outside meetings associated with the role);
 - The time requirement of each role; and
 - Any other specialist skills, knowledge or other factors needed to be able to carry out each role effectively.

The Panel's Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 In undertaking their review, the Panel were mindful of the fact that their recommendations would be subject to considerable internal and external scrutiny and would have to be supported by the evidence considered. The Panel also considered whether the current

financial and economic climate should inform their recommendations. The Panel took the view that this was an important factor and the public would rightly expect it to form part of the Panel's considerations. The Panel also felt, however, that it had to be balanced against other factors such as the need to encourage democratic diversity and participation in local democracy.

5.2 The councillors whose views were provided to the Panel represented a range of backgrounds, including employed, self-employed and retired members. The Panel took the view that no-one should be prevented from undertaking the role of councillor as a result of their personal circumstances. Having considered the range of information presented to them, they took the view that while there is evidence to suggest that allowances play a part in this issue, factors such as the time commitment required of councillors also has a direct bearing. The Panel have sought to make recommendations that will enable a diverse range of citizens are able to consider standing for election.

The Basic Allowance

6.1 The Panel considered a range of evidence and opinion about the basic allowance. The Panel felt that, although there was general satisfaction with the level of basic allowance currently paid to councillors, care needed to be taken to ensure that the allowance properly covers the costs associated with undertaking the role of councillor, particularly for councillors in full or part-time employment who may need to take unpaid leave and experience a corresponding loss of pensionable pay in order to undertake their role. The Panel were also cognisant of the additional workloads placed on all councillors as a result of the rapid growth taking place in Milton Keynes and the increasing complexity of the role as a result of this.

6.2 The Panel feel that the basic allowance should be seen as covering the reasonable costs associated with holding the office of councillor. In light of the above, the Panel recommend that the basic allowance should be set at £10,500 per year from 1 April 2018

6.3 The Panel also recommend that the basic allowance should increase by 2% every year from 1 April 2019 for a period of four years. This increase is the same as that recently announced for local government staff. The Panel feels that this recommendation will address a shortcoming of the Council's current scheme of allowances in a sensible and sustainable way.

Special Responsibility Allowances

7.1 On the subject of special responsibility allowances (SRAs), the Panel heard a wide range of views on the different roles that are necessary in order to facilitate the operation of the new governance arrangements. In some cases the message was fairly clear and consistent, while in other cases – such as committee vice chairs - there was far less consensus.

7.2 The Panel reviewed each role individually, using the evidence supplied by councillors, as well as written material supplied by the Council, as the basis for evaluating each role and determining an appropriate allowance.

7.3 Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members

7.3.1 In the case of the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet, the Panel were satisfied that councillors undertaking these roles continue to take on very significant decision making and other responsibilities. These include holding senior officers to account, negotiating with Government representatives and other external agencies and, in the case of the Leader, setting priorities for other decision makers and representing Milton Keynes at an international level. It was clear to the Panel that these roles also require a substantial time commitment. The Panel is satisfied that the allowance for both the Leader and members of the Cabinet are appropriate and should not be changed.

7.3.2 The Panel were, however, greatly concerned that the role of Deputy Leader is not recognised within Milton Keynes Council's scheme of allowances. The Panel have no doubt that the role of Deputy Leader is an important one which, by definition, is more onerous than that of Cabinet Member. The Panel also noted that Milton Keynes Council is the only one of the nearest neighbour authorities not to recognise the role of Deputy Leader within its scheme of allowances.

7.3.3 The Panel therefore recommend the following allowances:

Leader of the Council	£30,000
Deputy Leader of the Council	£15,000
Cabinet Member	£11,000

7.3.4 Additionally, the Panel could see no practical value in the application of a cap on the total cost of cabinet positions, particularly given the limitation on the size of the Cabinet prescribed by statute and the fact that no similar cap is in place for other positions such as scrutiny committee chairs. The Panel therefore recommend that the cap be removed from the scheme of allowances.

7.4 Overview and Scrutiny Committees

7.4.1 Unlike the Cabinet, roles associated with overview and scrutiny (Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee and Chairs of Scrutiny Committees) are not associated with significant decision making responsibility. The Panel felt that this continues to be an important distinction which must be taken into account. Nevertheless, the Panel acknowledge that scrutiny plays an important part in the governance of the Council, particularly at a time of significant challenge. It is clear to the Panel that the councillors responsible for leading the scrutiny function take on significant

responsibility in terms of holding decision makers (i.e. the Cabinet) and senior officers to account. The Panel acknowledges that chairing a scrutiny committee can be a time consuming role.

7.4.2 The Panel recommends no changes to the existing allowances:

Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee	£7,500
Chair of Scrutiny Committee	£4,500
Chair of Task and Finish Groups (pro-rata)	£4,500

7.5 Other Committees

7.5.1 The Panel acknowledged that chairing other committees (Licensing and Regulatory, Development Control, Audit Committee, Standards Committee and RegenerationMK Committee) are notable roles. The Panel are clear that councillors undertaking these roles are expected to carry out their duties diligently, but also acknowledged that the time commitment and level of subject matter knowledge required varied between committees.

7.5.2 The Panel heard a range of views about the role of vice chairs of these committees. Some councillors felt that vice chairs undertake an important and onerous role, while others felt that vice chairmanship of a committee is a developmental role which may be undertaken in preparation for a more onerous role in the future. The Panel considered this issue carefully but ultimately decided that, given the number of councillors who are already eligible to receive a special responsibility allowance, these roles do not merit an allowance

7.5.3 The Panel agreed that the allowances provided within the current scheme, and the relative hierarchy of roles, is correct. The Panel therefore recommend the following allowances:

Licensing and Regulatory Committee Chair	£8,000
Development Control Committee Chair	£8,000
Audit Committee Chair	£5,500
Standards Committee Chair	£3,000
RegenerationMK Committee Chair	£3,000

7.6 Opposition Group Leaders

7.6.1 The Panel felt that councillors undertaking the role of group leader undertake a responsible and demanding job, particularly given the current and historical political makeup of the Council.

7.6.2 The Panel recommend the following allowances:

Main Opposition Group Leader	£620 per group member
Smaller Opposition Group Leader	£620 per group member

7.7 Civic Allowances

7.7.1 Although civic allowances do not strictly form part of the Panel's remit, as they are included within the scheme of allowances the Panel saw fit to include these roles within their recommendations. The Panel recommend no changes to these allowances:

Mayor	£11,000
Deputy Mayor	£5,500

7.8 Indexation

7.8.1 The Panel considered the need to put in place a form of indexation for special responsibility allowances in order to ensure that the level of compensation provided to councillors who undertake these important roles does not fall behind the cost of living. The Panel discussed this point in depth and resolved to recommend that special responsibility allowances should increase by 2% every year from 1 April 2018 for a period of four years. It should be noted that one member of the Panel felt it was more appropriate to defer the introduction of this indexation until April 2019, for reasons of affordability. The remaining two members of the Panel, however, felt that this issue needed to be addressed immediately. This indexation should also apply to civic allowances.

Other allowances and expenses

8.1 The Panel considered and reviewed all of the other allowances and expenses under their terms of reference (set out in section 3). They have decided to make the following recommendations:

- The dependents' and carers' allowance should be retained at the present rate (living wage in respect of child care, £10 per hour or Milton Keynes Council Home Help rate in respect of care for adults);
- The amounts payable for travel expenses should continue to be paid at the same rates as those paid to officers;
- The amounts payable for subsistence expenses should continue to be paid at the current rates; and

- The amounts payable to co-opted members should continue to be paid at the current rates.
- The Panel have recommended small clarifications to the list of approved duties for which expenses can be claimed.

Other recommendations

9.1 The Panel heard much about the difficulties of balancing the demands associated with the role of councillor with employment and family life. The Panel were concerned to hear about the impact that this has on councillors, particularly when deciding whether to take on additional roles or even whether to re-stand for election once election.

9.2 The Panel therefore recommends that the Council should investigate ways of helping councillors manage their work-life balance effectively. This should extend to providing information about employment rights for councillors who are employed, as well as providing employers with information about the benefits of employing councillors.

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**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON
KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY**

***MEMBERS' SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES
2020/21***

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY

MEMBERS' SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES

Introduction

1. This Scheme is governed by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2003 – “the regulations.”
2. Elected Members of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Combined Fire Authority may claim basic allowances, special responsibility allowances, travelling allowances and subsistence allowances for approved duties in accordance with the provisions of this scheme.
3. Appointed (non elected) members may claim co-optees allowance, travelling allowances and subsistence allowances for approved duties specified in this scheme.
4. "Year" means the 12 months ending with 31 March.
5. The Scheme has four Schedules attached which are:
 - (a) Schedule 1 - Special Responsibility Allowances
 - (b) Schedule 2 - Payment of Travelling and Subsistence Allowances
 - (c) Schedule 3 - Duties Excluded from the Allowances Scheme
 - (d) Schedule 4 - Rates of Allowances

Creation and Amendment of the Scheme

6. This scheme comes into effect on 1 April 2020.
7. For subsequent changes in basic allowances, special responsibility allowances and co-optees allowances, new rates will be payable from the date the amendment takes effect as set out either in this scheme or the Regulations.
8. The Fire Authority will be responsible for amending the scheme and in doing so will have regard to any recommendations to its constituent councils of the independent remuneration panels set up by them.

Basic Allowances

9. The Fire Authority will pay equally to each Member of the Authority a basic allowance of an amount specified in Schedule 4.
10. Where the term of office of a Member begins or ends in the course of a financial year entitlement will be apportioned in accordance with the Regulations. The apportionment will not take place where a Member's term of office lasts less than one month.
11. Basic Allowances are payable monthly and are subject to tax and national insurance deductions.

Special Responsibility Allowances

12. The Fire Authority will pay each year to the Members of the Fire Authority who have special responsibilities by reason of the office(s) they hold the special responsibility allowances set out in Schedule 1.
13. Where a Member takes up or relinquishes any post that carries a special responsibility allowance in the course of a financial year the entitlement will be apportioned in accordance with the Regulations. The apportionment will not take place where a Member's term of office lasts less than one month.
14. Special responsibility allowances are payable in monthly instalments and are subject to tax and national insurance deductions. Where a Member is eligible for more than one special responsibility allowance (whether payable by the Fire Authority or another authority for Fire Authority duties) only the highest one will be payable, with the exception that a Lead Member may claim one Lead Member's Allowance in addition to one other Special Responsibility Allowance payable.

Approved Duties

15. Travelling and Subsistence Allowances are payable monthly and are only payable to Elected Members of the Fire Authority for the approved duties set out in Schedule 2.

Co-optees Allowance

16. A Co-optees Allowance may be paid to appointed members (i.e. non-Elected Members whether voting or not) for the performance of any approved duty as defined by this document.
17. The allowance will be payable in monthly instalments and are subject to tax and national insurance deductions.

Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

18. The term "Member" for the purpose of travelling and subsistence allowances applies to any person who is a Member of the Fire Authority, or who is a member of any committee, sub-committee or panel of the Fire Authority, and so includes appointed non-elected members of those bodies. The payment of these allowances is dependent upon the performance of an "approved duty" which is an attendance as a member at a meeting, or the carrying on of a duty, set out in Schedule 2.
19. The rates for travel and subsistence allowances are specified in Schedule 4.

Allowances are Maxima

20. The scales for all allowances are maxima and there is no obligation on any Member to claim any or all of the allowances.
21. A Member shall give notice in writing to the Chief Finance Officer that he/she elects to forego any part of his/her entitlement to an allowance under the scheme.

Social Functions and Occasions

22. Elected Members on occasions are invited, or feel it necessary to attend functions, or occasions which have a social element. No allowances are paid to Members of the Fire Authority on these occasions unless the Member is undertaking the performance of a positive duty and one of significant size, e.g. making a speech or distributing prizes when travel and subsistence allowances may be paid. Merely to attend because the member is interested or represents people in the district is insufficient to justify payment of any allowances.

Conference Expenses

23. If attendance at a conference has been approved by the Authority, conference expenses which are obligatory and outside the control of the Member, will be paid in advance on request or will be reimbursed. These expenses will include the conference fee. The actual cost of accommodation, meals and the like, will only be met or reimbursed if it is part of the inclusive charge for the conference or it is a requirement of the conference or its organisers that the Member should stay at a particular hotel.
24. Travel and subsistence allowances are payable where appropriate.

Telephones

25. A mobile phone will be provided to the Chairman of the Fire Authority, with the cost of supply, rental and business calls being met by the Fire Authority.

Avoidance of Duplication

26. A claim for an allowance under this scheme must include, or be accompanied by, a statement signed by the claimant that no other claim has been, or will be made for the matter to which the claim relates.

Records of Payments

27. Records of payments made to Members are available for inspection free of charge by any local government elector of the Fire Authority.
28. A person entitled to inspect a record may make a copy of any part of it.
29. Details of total payments made to each Member for allowances under this scheme will be published as soon as practicable after the end of the year to which they relate.

Expense Claims

30. All information requested for the expense claim must be provided, including the number of miles, the locations travelled from and to and the reason for travel. (It is always advisable for Members to make contemporaneous notes in their diary to assist in the completion of claims).
31. Claims for expenses should only be made when actually incurred, ie rail/bus, taxis, hotel accommodation. Receipts must be provided.
32. Claims for the same expenses (mileage, travel and subsistence etc) must not be made from more than one body.
33. Payments for basic and special responsibility allowances will be paid monthly in arrears and travel and subsistence payments will be paid monthly in arrears on the submission of a claim through the HR and Payroll Portal.
34. No claim from a Member for traveling or subsistence allowances which is submitted more than three months after the costs were incurred and no later than the end of April for the preceding financial year will be entertained, except in exceptional circumstances and approved in writing by the Chief Finance Officer.

SCHEDULE 1

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES FROM APRIL 2020

Special Responsibility Allowance per annum

• Position	£
• Chairman	12,708
• Vice-Chairman	4,259
• Chairman – Executive Committee	5,243
• Chairman – Overview and Audit Committee	3,434
• Chairman – Human Resources Sub-Committee	1,719
• Group Leaders	3,813
• Lead Members	3,314

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SCHEDULE 2

PAYMENT OF TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES

The duties in this Section have been approved for the payment of travel and subsistence allowances:

- (a) Attendance at a meeting of the Fire Authority;
- (b) Attendance at a meeting of any committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority;
- (c) Attendance at a meeting of any section, panel, working party or other meeting authorised by the Fire Authority or a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority or a joint committee of the Fire Authority and one or more other authorities to which the member has been specifically appointed provided that it is a meeting to which Members of at least two political groups have been invited.
- (d) Attendance at a meeting of an association of authorities of which the Fire Authority is a member and to which the member has been appointed by the Fire Authority to represent it.
- (e) Attendance at ad hoc meetings with other authorities, organisations or bodies authorised by a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority, or the Director of Legal and Governance on the advice of the relevant Chairman or Vice-Chairman if this is not practicable.
- (f) Attendance at briefing meetings to which Members of at least two political groups have been invited authorised by a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority, or the Director of Legal and Governance on the advice of the relevant Chairman or Vice-Chairman if this is not practicable.
- (g) Attendance at seminars and conferences arranged by the Fire Authority, a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority, or the Director of Legal and Governance on the advice of the relevant Chairman or Vice-Chairman if this is not practicable, about any of its functions.
- (h) Attendance at specific visits arranged by the Fire Authority, a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority, or the Director of Legal and Governance on the advice of the relevant Chairman or Vice-Chairman if this is not practicable, about any of its functions and where Members of at least two political groups have been invited.
- (i) Attendance at a meeting of any body or authority upon which the member has been appointed by the Fire Authority or a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority to represent it.

- (j) Attendance in connection with the discharge of any function of the Fire Authority conferred by or under any enactment and empowering or requiring the Fire Authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises.
- (k) Attendance at meetings of bodies where the Fire Authority makes appointments, where the Fire Authority has a major influence at national, regional, county or district level. These bodies are listed below:
- (i) Local Government Association
 - (ii) Fire Commission
- (l) Attendance at any disciplinary, grievance, dismissal or appeals sub-committee or panel.
- (m) The following duties if approved by the Fire Authority or a Committee:
- Attendance at briefing meetings held for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the Fire Authority or any of its committees or sub-committees.
 - Attendance at the official opening of new Fire Authority establishments or projects.
 - Attendance by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority and of committees at official functions in a representative capacity.
 - Duties undertaken by Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Fire Authority, committees or subcommittees acting in an official capacity.
 - Members' delegations to Government Departments.
 - Town Centre Management Meetings and Parishes.
- (n) Meetings organised by the Chief Fire Officer, Chief Finance Officer or Director of Legal and Governance or their nominated representatives with external bodies or persons to further the business and aims of the Fire Authority which the relevant officer certifies requires the attendance of members on the grounds of urgency which prevents approval being obtained from the Fire Authority, a committee or sub-committee

Note: In authorising attendances in accordance with the above, no member, official or officer of the Fire Authority shall act in a discriminatory manner reflecting party political preference. Members, officials and officers should take care to ensure that their actions can not be construed as having been discriminatory.

SCHEDULE 3

DUTIES EXCLUDED FROM THE ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The duties in this Section are those for which the Fire Authority has decided that no allowances will be paid.

- Members' surgeries
- Political activities

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SCHEDULE 4

RATES OF ALLOWANCES

From April 2020 the following rates of allowances will apply

Basic Allowance:

£1,272 per annum

Special Responsibility Allowances:

See Schedule 1

Co-optees Allowance

£318 per annum

Travel Allowances

(a) Car

The rate for travel by a Member's own private motor vehicle, or one belonging to a member of his/her family or otherwise provided for his/her use, other than a solo motor cycle, shall be 45 pence for the first 10,000 miles and 25 pence for each mile after that.

(b) Motorcycle

The rate for travel by a Member's own motorcycle, or one belonging to a member of his/her family, or otherwise provided for his/her use, shall be 24 pence per mile.

(c) Bicycle

The rate for travel by a Member's own bicycle, or one belonging to a member of his/her family, or otherwise provided for his/her use, shall not exceed 20p a mile.

(d) Public Transport

Members can claim the full cost of travelling on public transport at standard class rates whilst carrying out Approved Duties, provided a valid receipt, bus ticket etc is produced to substantiate the claim.

Subsistence

The rate of subsistence allowance shall not exceed the amounts which can be claimed under the Buckinghamshire County Council Members Allowances Scheme applicable at the time when the cost is incurred.

Uplift for Inflation

Basic, Special Responsibility and Co-optees allowances will be adjusted for inflation each year until, but not beyond 1 April 2021, in line with the pay award for the Authority's staff on National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services, Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book).



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	5 February 2020
OFFICER	Mark Hemming, Director of Finance & Assets
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor David Hopkins
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Budget Monitoring Performance and Debt Management April – November 2019
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>To present the provisional revenue and capital outturn position and debt management performance to 30 November 2019.</p> <p>The report in Appendix A sets out the Authority's revenue and capital spending position as at 30 November 2019, together with the projected outturn position for the financial year.</p> <p>Managers have positively and proactively controlled spend and forecast an underspend of £103k, against a revenue budget of £30.332m.</p>
ACTION	Noting
RECOMMENDATION	That the latest projected outturn forecast for the Authority as at 30 November 2019 be noted.
RISK MANAGEMENT	Management of our financial resources is a key risk to the Authority and the performance reports to Committee inform Members of the main financial risks facing the Authority in year.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	As set out in the main body of the report.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	None.
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DUTY TO COLLABORATE	None.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	None.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	None.
USE OF RESOURCES	The paper sets out how work has been progressing for

	achieving greater financial ownership and accountability for resources attached to the delivery of specific aims and objectives of the Authority.
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	Background Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2021/22, CFA Meeting 8 February 2019: https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/2715/4894/2543/ITEM_8c_Medium_Term_Financial_Plan_2019-20gb.pdf
APPENDICES	Appendix A – Budget Monitoring Performance and Debt Management April – November 2019
TIME REQUIRED	10 Minutes
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Asif Hussain ahussain@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744421

1. Revenue Forecasts by Service Area

Table 1 The table below shows the budget and actual expenditure for each directorate as at the end of November 2019. The budget of £30.3m is compared to the forecast outturn to give a forecast year-end underspend of £103k.

Directorate	Area Manager	Total Budget £	Actual Year to Date £	Forecast Outturn £	Projected Year End Variance £
Corporate Core	Corporate Management	1,089,200	621,906	1,023,144	-66,056
	Legal & Governance	332,100	212,508	336,671	4,571
Corporate Core Total		1,421,300	834,414	1,359,815	-61,485
Finance & Assets	Finance & Procurement	894,790	776,662	859,808	-34,982
	Resource Management	2,962,300	2,122,539	3,060,609	98,309
Finance & Assets Total		3,857,090	2,899,202	3,920,417	63,327
People & Organisation Development	Training & Development	2,020,400	1,968,212	1,892,519	-127,881
	Operations & Services	694,790	450,874	720,743	25,953
People & Organisation Development Total		2,715,190	2,419,086	2,613,262	-101,928
Delivery, Corporate Development & Planning	Service Delivery	17,538,300	10,103,572	16,373,551	-1,164,749
	Service Development	541,380	432,236	512,433	-28,947
	IT & Communications	1,810,900	1,192,369	1,825,189	14,289
Delivery, Corporate Development & Planning Total		19,890,580	11,728,177	18,711,173	-1,179,407
Statutory Accounting & Contingency	Capital Charges	1,713,000	0	2,273,000	560,000
	Contingency	500,000	0	893,387	393,387
	Non Distributed Costs	229,500	167,010	229,000	-500
	Savings	5,800	0	0	-5,800
Statutory Accounting & Contingency Total		2,448,300	167,010	3,395,387	947,087
Total Expenditure		30,332,460	18,047,889	30,000,054	-332,406
Total Funding		-30,332,460	-20,135,456	-30,102,649	229,811
Net Position		0	-2,087,568	-102,595	-102,595

The key variations in directorate budgets compared to year-end outturn shown above in Table 1 are:

Corporate Management £61k under – The underspend predominantly relates to a restructure of the Senior Management team whereby the Director of People & Organisational Development post has been removed.

Finance & Assets £63k over – This overspend is mainly attributable to employee costs predominantly within workshops as a result of vacant technician post which are currently being filled with agency cover. In addition to this, the Equipment team and Property team have posts which have been job re-evaluated or awarded temporary ARA's which resulted in in-year overspends.

People & Organisational Development (POD) £102k under - The overall underspend predominantly relates to the Human Resources restructure which went live 1 August 2019. As a result of the restructure, underspends are seen within employee costs due to vacant posts or new starters not at the top of their pay scale. In addition to this there was a vacant post within the operational training team for the first quarter, which has now been filled and a vacant position in the operational assurance team which is expected to be vacant until April 2020. Underspends are also being seen within supplies and services relating to operational assurance audit and consultancy fees, which have resulted in actual costs being lower than originally projected.

Delivery, Corporate Development & Planning £1,179k under - The overall underspend for the directorate is primarily due to on-call firefighter employment being significantly below budgeted establishment levels. Furthermore there are several vacant Wholetime posts throughout the Fire Authority which also contribute towards the favourable variance. The under established wholetime stations have a direct impact on the bank system as the cover provided to the stations is charged to the bank budget. Therefore underspends in under established stations are partially offset by overspends shown within the bank system.

Statutory Accounting & Contingency £947k over - The costs for all firefighter apprentices are seen here and therefore the overspend seen within Contingency primarily relates to their employee and training costs. In March 2019, a further 16 apprentice firefighters were recruited of which 14 completed their training and are now station based, with two leaving the apprenticeship. In total, we currently have 28 firefighter apprentices in post following 12 firefighter apprentices completing their apprenticeships in September and have been offered substantive Wholetime posts which they have transferred into.

The overspend of £560k seen within Capital Charges relates to the additional in-year revenue contribution to capital of which, £490k was approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 18 September 2019. The remaining £70k was approved by SMB for additional white fleet purchases within the capital programme.

2. Direct Employee Costs

Table 2 shows the budget and provisional outturn for each sub-heading within the direct employees subjective as at the end of November 2019.

Staffing	Total Plan £	Actual Year to Date £	Forecast Outturn £	Projected Year End Variance £
Wholetime	14,793,540	9,198,455	14,356,606	-436,934
On-Call	1,824,350	763,208	939,518	-884,832
Apprentices	0	666,809	893,387	893,387
Support	4,412,090	2,720,273	4,157,190	-254,900
Technicians	285,800	146,908	243,893	-41,907
Sessional	90,790	32,386	59,976	-30,814
Agency Staff	57,000	81,433	202,286	145,286
Grand Total	21,463,570	13,609,472	20,852,856	-610,714

Wholetime – The underspend relating to the wholetime firefighters budget is due to establishment levels being lower than budgeted.

On Call – On-call firefighter employment is currently significantly under budgeted establishment levels.

Apprentices – The expenditure for apprentices is seen under contingency. Apprentices assist in ensuring sufficient staff numbers are available to deliver our resourcing model. The overspend in apprentice costs is offset by the underspends seen in wholetime and on-call budgeted establishments.

Support Staff – There is a forecast net underspend on support staff budgets across the directorates.

Agency Staff – Agency staff have been used to cover interim vacancies within support staff roles and this offsets the underspend on support staff.

3. Bank cost analysis

The graph and Table 3 below show wholetime operational staff costs from 2015/16 onwards, with Bank payments forming a significant part of these from 2016/17. The total costs for 2019/20 for wholetime (excluding bank costs) have increased due to increases in employer contributions following Government’s decision to decrease the discount rate used to value unfunded public sector pension schemes.



Table 3

WT & Bank - including NI and Pension					
WT & Bank	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Wholetime	13,603,248	12,844,792	12,011,914	11,563,935	13,018,606
Bank	24,592	411,864	953,506	1,228,667	1,338,000
Total	13,627,840	13,256,657	12,965,420	12,792,602	14,356,606

The Authority has been proactive in developing resilient resourcing models in order to meet known risk and demand levels of the service, while maintaining response standards. Examples of this approach include operating with a smaller regular establishment, which is reinforced by on-call and wholetime firefighters working 'Bank' shifts, as well as a number of firefighters on more flexible local terms and conditions.

With a smaller regular establishment being achieved via falling staff numbers from 2013/14 due to retirements and leavers, the 'Bank system' offers a flexible resource, designed to maintain appliance availability in the event of crewing shortfalls.

4. Major Risk Areas

The monitoring process will focus more attention on areas identified by management as high risk. An initial assessment of the main financial risks faced has been undertaken by Finance against the following categories:

- High value budgets
- Historically volatile budgets
- Demand led income and expenditure budgets

		Total Budget	Actual Year to Date	Forecast Outturn	Projected Year End Variance
		£	£	£	£
A.	Employee Direct Costs	21,406,570	13,528,039	20,650,570	-756,000
B.	Knowledge & Information Services	1,635,830	1,097,773	1,649,543	13,713
C.	Employment Agencies /Consultants (Part of Direct Employees Costs)	57,000	81,433	202,286	145,286

- The variances for A. and C. are as noted in Section 2 above.
- The variance for B is closely being monitored due to the disparate software budgets identified in the previous year to ensure the budget reflects forecast expenditure.

5. Funding

The table below details the budget and forecast outturn for each category of funding.

Funding	Total Budget £	Actual Year to Date £	Forecast Outturn £	Projected Year End Variance £
Government Funding	-3,321,000	-1,731,799	-3,494,000	-173,000
Specific Grants	-1,097,330	-902,300	-1,106,441	-9,111
NNDR	-3,662,820	-2,630,548	-3,694,933	-32,113
Top-up / Pooling Receipts	-1,892,000	-1,044,143	-1,813,965	78,035
Precept	-19,993,310	-13,826,667	-19,993,310	0
Movement in Reserves	-366,000	0	0	366,000
Grand Total	-30,332,460	-20,135,456	-30,102,649	229,811

The level of funding (excluding the top-up funding and reserves) is forecast to exceed the original budget by £214k, which is predominantly due to the Treasury (Central Government) making additional funds (£173k) available to cover the increased cost of pensions as a result of the changes in employer pension contributions (notification of this increase was not provided until after the budget had been approved). The remaining increase (£32k) in funding was in relation to additional business rates income due to the rate used to compensate for under-indexation of the top-up grant being greater than estimated at the time the budget was set.

Due to the current levels of underspend, the planned transfer from reserves (£444k) will no longer take place in 2019/20. These transfers were planned to offset the funding shortfall originally forecast for 2019/20. Of the £444k variance, £366k is shown within Movements in Reserves and £78k within Top-up Funding (the latter being funding originally forecast to be received in 2019/20 but received at the end of 2018/19).

This results in an overall net adverse variance of £230k in funding.

6. Capital Summary

The capital programme for 2019/20 is £9.535m, which includes £6.378m worth of carry forward capital projects from 2018/19.

Project Name	Original Budget 2019/20 £	Carry Forwards 2018/19 £	In Year Approvals	Revised Budget 2019/20 £	Actual Year to Date £	Slippage £	Forecast Outturn £	Projected Year End Variance £
Property	500,000	0	0	500,000	115,753	0	500,000	0
Property Review	0	5,874,542	1,866,000	7,740,542	5,129,469	0	7,740,542	0
Total Property Portfolio	500,000	5,874,542	1,866,000	8,240,542	5,245,222	0	8,240,542	0
CCTV Cameras	0	24,485	0	24,485	0	0	0	-24,485
Digital Radios	0	90,000	0	90,000	0	0	90,000	0
Hydraulic Equipment	56,000	4,020	0	60,020	48,385	11,635	48,385	0
Operational Equipment	90,000	32,249	0	122,249	18,991	0	122,249	0
Operational Red Fleet Vehicles	500,000	314,656	0	814,656	205,403	256,300	558,356	0
Operational White Fleet Vehicles*	0	0	70,000	70,000	0	0	70,000	0
Total Fire Appliances & Equipment	646,000	465,410	70,000	1,181,410	272,779	267,935	888,990	-24,485
ICT	75,000	38,385	0	113,385	92,602	0	113,385	0
Total Support	75,000	38,385	0	113,385	92,602	0	113,385	0
Grand Total	1,221,000	6,378,337	1,936,000	9,535,337	5,610,604	267,935	9,242,917	-24,485

7. Capital Funding

The funding table provides a breakdown of how the capital programme will be funded.

Funding	Balance at 1 April 2019 £	Estimated Transfers (in) £	Estimates Transfers Out £	Estimate Balance at 31 March 2020 £
Revenue Contribution to Capital	-4,080,000	-2,226,000	5,730,827	-575,173
Other Capital Contributions	0	-3,446,000	3,446,000	0
Capital Receipts	0	-66,090	66,090	0
Total Capital Funding	-4,080,000	-5,738,090	9,242,917	-575,173

Property Portfolio

Property has been allocated £500k for 2019/20 in order to carry out essential property repairs. Actual capital expenditure includes the replacement of the air handling system located at Marlow Fire Station, along with minor works at both Aylesbury and Stokenchurch Fire Stations and the purchase of furniture for BHQ and Unit 7.

The carry-forward slippage from 2018/19 of £5.875m for Property Review relates to the Blue Light Hub (BLH) project, which is anticipated to be completed by the end of the 2019/20 financial year. An additional £1.866m has been approved in-year for further capital expenditure on the BLH, including the completion of a decked car park and the fit-out of the top floor for leasing to third parties at a commercial rate.

Fire Appliances & Equipment

A capital budget of £0.646m for 2019/20 has been allocated for the purchase of hydraulic equipment, operational equipment and operational vehicles red fleet. Hydraulic equipment will be purchased in line with delivery of red fleet appliances and to replace ageing hydraulic equipment that is nearing the end of its useful life. A slippage of £0.012m is being projected for hydraulic equipment. Operational Equipment will be purchased throughout 2019/20, in line with the equipment replacement programme with actual capital expenditure year to date being spent on fire hoses and rescue kits.

Several new operational red fleet vehicles have been introduced to the fleet in recent years. This is in line with the fleet strategy aiming to replace the ageing fleet, which have come to the end of their useful life. A slippage of £0.256m is anticipated following the delay in delivery of a further two red fleet appliances, which are currently in the build stage and are expected to be delivered in the next financial year (2020/21). Operational white fleet vehicles are projecting a spend of £0.070m. This relates to the purchase and fit out of four white fleet vehicles, which will be used as emergency response vehicles.

The carry-forward slippage of £0.465m from 2018/19 relates to the purchase of: CCTV, digital radios, hydraulic equipment, operational equipment and operational red fleet vehicles. During September 2019, it was agreed no further capital expenditure is expected on CCTV and therefore has been offered up as a saving and this has been reflected in the forecasts. Currently discussions are underway regarding the capital purchase of digital radios, with the Research and Development lead collaborating with other Thames Valley Fire Services to scope the possibility of a joint purchase. Slippage seen on operational equipment and operational red fleet vehicles relate to the delay in delivery of two red fleet appliances (relating to 2018/19), which are now in service.

Support

ICT has been allocated £0.075m for 2019/20, along with a carry-forward slippage of £0.038m, which will predominantly be utilised to purchase hardware, as per the ICT replacement strategy. Actual capital expenditure to date include laptops, tablets and cabling works.

8. Reserves

The reserves table provides a breakdown of the general fund and earmarked reserves (revenue and capital).

Reserves	Balance at Start of year £000	Projected Movement £000	Balance at End of Year £000
General Fund	-1,500	-103	-1,603
Earmarked Reserves (Revenue)	-1,818	216	-1,602
Earmarked Reserves (Capital)	-4,080	3,505	-575
Total Reserves	-7,398	3,618	-3,780

9. Performance Indicators

The table below shows the performance targets and actuals (rolling averages) for the year to date.

Description	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Target	2019/20 Actual (rolling average)
Budget Monitoring Training	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Managers accessing Integra Cost Centre Report	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% invoices paid within 30 days	91.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Budget Mon. Report turn-around (working days)	7 days	7 days	7 days

Budget monitoring training is provided to managers assuming responsibility for budget management and control. A risk based approach is applied to budget monitoring with resources allocated to high risk areas. This supports a proactive challenge role for Finance and budget holder engagement. Compliance to date has been at 100%.

The percentage of invoices paid on time is 100%. Suppliers have been reminded to send all invoices directly to finance.

10. Debt Management

The table below shows the key debtor performance figures for the year:

DEBTOR KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2019/20	August	September	November
Debts over 60 days overdue	£9,468	£9,594	£9,508
Total Debt outstanding	£37,157	£37,900	£50,756
Debts over 60 days overdue as a % of total debt outstanding	27%	15%	18.75%
Average time from raising invoices to receipt of income	9 days	9 days	15 days

The above figures show the average debt during 2019/20 in the respective months being reported. As at the end of November, the total debt outstanding was £51k, with the actual value of debts over 60 days overdue being £10k.

33% of the debts over 60 days overdue at the end of November relate to legal costs recoverable to Bucks Fire and Rescue Service against defendants after being successfully prosecuted for breaches of the fire safety regulations. Once a court order has been made the Authority has little control over the timing of these payments. 64% relates to recovery of employee pension contributions. 2% relates to small value invoices which are being actively chased. The remaining 1% is for recovery of employee benefits which is being recovered in installments.

The average time from raising invoices to receipt of income is 15 days.

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	5 February 2020
OFFICER	Mark Hemming, Director of Finance & Assets.
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor David Hopkins
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	The Prudential Code, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This report is being presented as the Prudential Indicators (Appendices A and B) and Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement (Appendix C) are required to be approved by the Fire Authority and to support the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).</p> <p>A review of the Balance Sheet indicates that the Authority is currently in an over-borrowed position. Due to prohibitive penalties the early repayment of borrowing is not currently an option. The Authority has no plans for additional borrowing in the foreseeable future, according to the current MTFP.</p> <p>Due to the uncertain timing of third-party contributions relating to the Blue Light Hub it is also recommended to increase the Authorised Limit for the current year by £2m with immediate effect in-case short-term borrowing is required to effectively manage cashflow.</p> <p>It is also recommended that the Authorised Limit for 2020-21 is set at £2m higher than the Operational Limit to allow for the effective management of cashflow in relation to capital receipts from land sales.</p>
ACTION	Decision
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>That the Executive Committee approve the recommendations below for submission to the Fire Authority.</p> <p>That the Authority be recommended to approve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Prudential Indicators for 2020-21; 2. an increase in the Authorised Limit for 2019/20 of £2m to £8.797m; and 3. the Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement.
RISK MANAGEMENT	The Prudential Code was established to ensure that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable, and that treasury management decisions

	<p>are taken in accordance with good professional practice. The indicators presented here demonstrate that the current plans for capital investment meet these criteria and present an acceptable level of risk to the Authority.</p> <p>Minimum revenue provision is a statutory charge to the General Fund, which ensures that an Authority has sufficient cash balances to repay borrowing upon maturity, reducing the refinancing risk.</p> <p>There are no direct staffing implications.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>The decision on the prudential indicators sets out the financial limits within which the Authority will operate in future years.</p> <p>The minimum revenue provision is a statutory charge against the General Fund, estimated at £47k for 2020/21 (no change from 2019/20).</p>
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003, SI 2003/3146 make provision for capital finance and accounts under the Local Government Act 2003 requiring the authority to have regard to the 'Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities' when determining, under the Local Government 2003 Act, how much money it can afford to borrow; and require the Authority to determine for the current financial year an amount of minimum revenue provision which it considers to be prudent.</p>
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DUTY TO COLLABORATE	<p>No direct impact.</p>
HEALTH AND SAFETY	<p>No direct impact.</p>
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	<p>No direct impact.</p>
USE OF RESOURCES	<p>The impact of the Prudential Code will allow the Authority to make informed choices between revenue and capital financing of procured services, to encourage invest to save schemes and will only allow capital investment to proceed where the Authority can fund projects within prudential limits.</p> <p>Making sufficient minimum revenue provision ensures that when borrowing matures, cash is available to make the repayment. This ensures that the Authority does not need to borrow additional money to repay existing loans.</p>
PROVENANCE SECTION	Background

<p style="text-align: center;">& BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>Realignment of Reserve Balances to Facilitate the Medium Term Financial Plan, Executive Committee, 18 November 2015: http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/7314/4612/0201/ITEM_6 . Reserve Balances - Update Post Pre-Brief.pdf</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<p>Appendix A – Prudential Indicators Appendix B – Summary Table of Prudential Indicators Appendix C – Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement</p>
<p>TIME REQUIRED</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>
<p>REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT</p>	<p>Marcus Hussey mhussey@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744680</p>

Appendix A – Prudential Indicators

1.0 Indicators for Affordability

1.1 The ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream

This indicator measures the percentage of the net revenue funding used to finance external debt. As no future borrowing is planned and a decision was made to reallocate reserves to reduce the capital financing requirement in 2015/16, the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream will remain consistently low:

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%

2.0 Indicators for Prudence

2.1 Gross borrowing and the Capital Financing Requirement

The table below shows gross borrowing and the capital financing requirement (CFR). The Authority should ensure that gross borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the CFR. However, due to the reallocation of reserves to reduce the CFR (excluding finance lease) to zero (see Provenance Section & Background Papers) gross borrowing will exceed CFR for the medium to long-term. This situation will exist until borrowing is repaid. Due to early repayment premiums it is prohibitively expensive to make any early repayments at the current time.

Gross borrowing at the start of 2018/19 financial year was £7.382m. A repayment of £585k was made in May 2018 which will reduced the gross borrowing to £6.797m. The figures shown below indicate the maximum level of borrowing during the year (i.e. repayments will reduce the limit for the following year):

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Gross borrowing (£000)	7,382	6,797	6,797	6,797	6,797
Capital financing requirement (£000)	1,684	1,637	1,590	1,543	1,496

3.0 Indicators for Capital Expenditure

3.1 Capital Expenditure

This indicator shows the expected level of capital expenditure for future years:

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Capital expenditure (£000)	7,658	9,243	1,484	1,466	1,966

3.2 Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

The CFR reflects the Authority's underlying need to borrow. This figure was reduced down to the level of the finance lease by the reallocation of reserves (see Provenance Section & Background Papers). No additional borrowing is planned in the medium term. The CFR should be looked at in relation to gross borrowing, as detailed in Section 2.1:

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Capital financing requirement (underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose) (£000)	1,684	1,637	1,590	1,543	1,496

4.0 Indicators for External Debt

4.1 Authorised Limit

This is the maximum limit on borrowing and other long-term liabilities (currently limited to the finance lease at Gerrards Cross). This amount cannot be exceeded without approval from the Fire Authority:

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Authorised limit for borrowing (£000)	7,382	8,797	8,797	8,797	8,797
Authorised limit for other long-term liabilities (£000)	1,684	1,637	1,590	1,543	1,496
Authorised limit for external debt (£000)	9,066	10,434	10,387	10,340	10,293

4.2 Operational Boundary

This indicator shows the most likely estimate of debt for future years:

The actual external debt for the year ending 31 March 2019 was **£9.066m**.

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Operational boundary for borrowing (£000)	7,382	6,797	6,797	6,797	6,797
Operational boundary for other long-term liabilities (£000)	1,684	1,637	1,590	1,543	1,496
Operational boundary for external debt (£000)	9,066	8,434	8,387	8,340	8,293

5.0 Indicators for Treasury Management

5.1 Adoption of CIPFA’s Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectorial Guidance Notes

The aim is to ensure that treasury management is led by a clear and integrated forward treasury management strategy, and a recognition of the pre-existing structure of the Authority’s borrowing and investment portfolios.

5.2 Upper limit on fixed interest rate exposures

This indicator shows the Authority’s upper limit of the net exposure to fixed interest rates. Currently all borrowing is at a fixed rate of interest:

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Upper limit on fixed interest rate exposures	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

5.3 Upper limit on variable interest rate exposures

This indicator shows the Authority’s upper limit of the net exposure to variable interest rates:

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Upper limit on variable interest rate exposures	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%

5.4 Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing

This shows the repayment profile of fixed rate borrowing. All loans are repayable on maturity:

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20		Estimate 2020/21		Estimate 2021/22		Estimate 2022/23	
	Actual Maturity	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Under 12 months	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%
12 months and within 24 months	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	15%
24 months and within five years	9%	0%	24%	0%	24%	0%	15%	0%	0%
five years and within 10 years	29%	0%	15%	0%	15%	0%	24%	0%	24%
10 years and within 20 years	20%	0%	20%	0%	20%	0%	11%	0%	11%
20 years and within 30 years	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
30 years and within 40 years	41%	0%	41%	0%	41%	0%	41%	0%	41%
40 years and above	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

5.5 Total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days

The purpose of this indicator is for the Authority to contain its exposure to the possibility of loss that might arise as a result of its having to seek early repayment or redemption of principal sums invested. The Authority currently has £2m invested with one local Authority, over a period longer than 364 days.

Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days (£000)	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000

5.6 Credit Risk

The duration of any investment with a counterparty will be restricted as advised by our treasury management advisors. The advisors will base their assessment of credit risk based on credit ratings provided by the major agencies, as well as reviewing credit default swaps (a proxy measure for the markets perceived risk of default).

Appendix B – Summary Table of Prudential Indicators

For reference, the following table summarises the key indicators detailed in Appendix A in a single table:

	Indicator	Actual 2018/19	Estimate 2019/20	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Indicators for Affordability						
1.1	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%
1.2	The incremental impact of capital investment decisions on the council tax	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Indicators for Prudence						
2.1	Gross borrowing (£000)	7,382	6,797	6,797	6,797	6,797
Indicators for Capital Expenditure						
3.1	Capital expenditure (£000)	7,658	9,243	1,484	1,466	1,966
3.2	Capital financing requirement (£000)	1,684	1,637	1,590	1,543	1,496
Indicators for External Debt						
4.1	Authorised limit for external debt (£000)	9,066	10,434	10,387	10,340	10,293
4.2	Operational boundary for external debt (£000)	9,066	8,434	8,387	8,340	8,293
Indicators for Treasury Management						
5.2	Upper limit on fixed interest rate exposures	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
5.3	Upper limit on variable interest rate exposures	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
5.5	Total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days (£000)	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000

The actual external debt for the year ending 31 March 2019 was £8.489m. The projected external debt for the year ending 31 March 2020 is £8.442m (both figures include the finance lease liability).

The following indicators are not shown above:

- 5.1 – the Authority has adopted CIPFA’s Treasury Management Code for 2019/20
- 5.4 – details of the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing (see Appendix A)
- 5.6 – narrative regarding credit risk (see Appendix A)

Appendix C – Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement

The two methods for calculating prudent provision are set out below and were approved by members in 2008/09. Regulation 28 of the 2003 Regulations (as amended by regulation 4 of the 2008 Regulations) requires a local authority to calculate for the current financial year an amount of MRP which it considers to be prudent. The Secretary of State recommends that, for the purposes of regulation 4 the prudent amount of provision should be determined in accordance with one of four options, two of which were agreed by members in 2008/09 and are outlined below.

The broad aim of prudent provision is to ensure that debt is repaid over a period that is reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits (asset life).

(a) CFR Method

MRP is equal to 4% of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at the end of the preceding financial years. Since the CFR (excluding finance lease) is now at zero, this method is no longer applicable (for finance leases, the MRP requirement is regarded as met by a charge equal to the element of the rent that goes to write down the Balance Sheet liability).

(b) Asset Life Method

Since 1 April 2008, where capital expenditure on an asset is financed wholly or partly by borrowing or credit arrangements, MRP is to be determined by reference to the life of the asset, based on an equal instalment method. This amount is projected to be nil for 2019/20.

Where assets have been purchased utilising Capital grants or Revenue Contributions no MRP calculation is required. Only assets purchased utilising borrowing require an MRP charge.

The asset life method calculation requires estimated useful lives of assets to be input in to the calculations. These life periods will be determined by the Director of Finance and Assets & Treasurer, with regard to the statutory guidance and advice from professional valuers.

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	5 February 2020
OFFICER	Mark Hemming, Director of Finance and Assets
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor David Hopkins
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2020/21 to 2024/25
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The main report (Annex A) presents the proposed revenue and capital Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25.</p> <p>The provisional settlement was announced on 20 December 2019 and is included in the funding assumptions. Final confirmation is expected in February 2019. Within the settlement it was announced that authorities without any specific council tax freedoms can increase Council Tax by up to 2% without the need for a referendum.</p> <p>Key assumptions are detailed in Section 4 of Annex A and are based on information received to date.</p> <p>Without sufficient time to undertake a full comprehensive spending review, the Government has effectively rolled-forward amounts within the settlement funding assessment for 2019/20 and increased these by the rate of inflation (i.e. zero real-terms increase). The exception to this is the pension grant funding, which is expected to be a flat-cash settlement (subject to official confirmation outside of the provisional settlement).</p> <p>Whilst it is welcome that the pension grant funding will continue for a further year (the previous MTFP forecast a one-off payment only) all funding will be subject to review next year as part of what is expected to be a three-year comprehensive spending review.</p> <p>This paper therefore shows two models, 1(a) and 1(b), which show the proposed budget and impact on the Authority should the pension grant be discontinued from 2021/22 respectively.</p> <p>Further uncertainty regarding pensions has been introduced by the ruling in December 2018 that the transitional arrangements introduced for the firefighters' schemes in 2015 were discriminatory. At the employment tribunal hearing on 18 December 2019 it was ruled that the claimants, members of the 1992 and 2006 firefighters' pension schemes, are now</p>

	<p>entitled to be treated as if they have remained members of their original pension scheme. However, it is too early at this stage to quantify the impact this may have on budgets in either the short or medium-term.</p> <p>This year officers adopted a zero-based budget approach when developing the budget proposal for 2020/21. As opposed to the incremental approach, which looks at last year's budgets and adjusts them up or down, the zero-based approach looked at all budgets to ensure the correct amount of money is being spent in the correct areas. This approach has been developed alongside the new Public Safety Plan and feedback from our recent inspection report from HMICFRS.</p> <p>Although our report noted that the inspectorate "would like to see improvements in the year ahead, but without increased funding, it is difficult to see where progress can be made" the zero-based budget approach has identified some key opportunities within the current budgetary constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the wholetime establishment by up to 20 firefighters in 2020/21, with the potential to increase by a further 10 in the following year (depending on the outcome of the comprehensive spending review) • Increasing the Protection Team by 4 FTEs and introducing a Team Leader role and two further FTEs into the Prevention Team. • Introducing a Head of Technology, Transformation and Programme Management Office (PMO) to manage the actions required following our inspection report. <p>The revenue budget for 2020/21 and indicative figures for future years are show in Appendix 1, which as noted earlier contains two models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model 1(a) shows the forecast budgets and reserves positions if the pension grant is continued until 2024/25 • Model 1(b) shows the impact on the Authority should the pension grant be discontinued in 2021/22 <p>It should also be noted that the figures for council tax and business rates are provisional. The statutory deadline for the billing authorities to provide this information to the Authority is 31 January. Any changes to the figures will be presented in a revised Appendix 1 at the meeting.</p> <p>Appendix 2 shows the latest summary of the capital programme for 2019/20 and approved schemes for the following years.</p> <p>Appendix 3 provides further detail on the level of council tax chargeable for each band if the Authority</p>
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	<p>accepts the recommendation to increase the band D equivalent amount by 1.98%.</p> <p>As well as the uncertainty regarding pensions noted above, there is also uncertainty regarding the upcoming Fair Funding Review, USAR funding and funding for Firelink/ESMCP.</p>
ACTION	Decision
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that the Authority be recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1(a) Note and have due regard to the report and Statement of the Chief Finance Officer (see section 8 of Annex A). 1(b) Approve a Council Tax precept of £65.85 for a band D equivalent property (a 1.98% increase from 2019/20 - equal to 2.5p per week) and the revenue budget as set out in Appendix 1(a). 1(c) Approve the capital programme as set out in Appendix 2. 2 Not hold a referendum to increase Council Tax above the 2% threshold for 2020/21 3 Note that a referendum may need to be considered for 2021/22 depending on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.
RISK MANAGEMENT	<p>Management of our Financial resources is a key risk to the Authority. By projecting forward and monitoring our financial plans, we are in a better position to avoid and mitigate the risk of adverse financial consequences.</p> <p>Section 9 of last year's report (see Background Papers) detailed the risk of holding a referendum to increase Council Tax above the threshold.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	All financial implications are shown in the main body of the report.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>The Local Government Act 2003 gives the responsible finance officer, namely the Chief Finance Officer of the Combined Fire Authority under s112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the responsibility to report to Members of the Authority on their assessment of the robustness of the estimates used within the budget and on the adequacy of reserves.</p> <p>Members must take account of the advice of the Chief Finance Officer in respect of the above and the highlighted associated risks before considering the recommendations as set out in the report.</p> <p>The legal implications of holding a referendum to increase Council Tax above the threshold were</p>

	<p>detailed in last year's report (see Background Papers).</p> <p>By operation of the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Finance) Regulations 2008 [2008/3022] the shadow authority for Buckinghamshire will be the billing authority for the purposes of Council Tax for 2020/21 (across Buckinghamshire) and will be the body to which the Authority's precept should be notified.</p>
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DUTY TO COLLABORATE	No direct impact.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	No direct impact.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	No direct impact.
USE OF RESOURCES	<p>The Medium Term Financial Plan, including capital and revenue budgets, identifies the financial resources required projected into the future based on the delivery of specific aims and objectives of the Authority as set out in the Public Safety Plan (PSP). Members, Senior Management Board and many staff have been involved in agreeing priorities and the budget setting process over the preceding months.</p>
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	<p>Background</p> <p>Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2019/20 to 2021/22 and Revised Appendices, Fire Authority, 6 February 2019:</p> <p>https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/9515/4841/6166/ITEM_8_Medium_Term_Financial_Plan_2019-20gb.pdf</p> <p>https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/7215/4946/7873/ITEM_8_Revised_Appendices.pdf</p>
APPENDICES	<p>Annex A – Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25</p> <p>Appendix 1(a) – MTFP Budget Model 1(a)</p> <p>Appendix 1(b) – MTFP Budget Model 1(b)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Capital Programme Summary</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Council Tax Funding</p>
TIME REQUIRED	20 minutes
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Mark Hemming</p> <p>mhemming@bucksfire.gov.uk</p> <p>01296 744687</p>

Annex A – Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2020/21 to 2024/25

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the proposed revenue and capital Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2020/21 to 2024/25.
- 1.2. The MTFP is closely linked to the Public Safety Plan (PSP) and Corporate Plan. The PSP sets out our strategic approach to the management of risk in the communities we serve. The Corporate Plan sets out how we intend to equip and develop our organisation and its people to meet the challenges that we face. The MTFP details the resources available to facilitate these plans.
- 1.3. As part of the Fire Authority's Terms of Reference and MTFP, the Authority reviews and sets a balanced budget each year in line with corporate priorities. The MTFP is expressed as a detailed annual budget for the first year, with outline indicative budgets for the following four years.
- 1.4. Under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Chief Finance Officer (as S.112 Chief Finance Officer of the Local Government Finance Act 1988) is required to report to Members on:
 - The robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget
 - The adequacy of the proposed financial reserves
- 1.5. The Local Government Act 2003 requires that Members have regard to the report in making their decisions (see section 8).
- 1.6. Section 42A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 also requires the Authority to have regard to the level of reserves for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the net budget requirement.

2. Local Government Finance Settlement 2020 to 2021

- 2.1. Without sufficient time to undertake a full comprehensive spending review, the Government has effectively rolled-forward amounts within the settlement funding assessment for 2019/20 and increased these by the rate of inflation (i.e. zero real-terms increase). The exception to this is the pension grant funding, which is expected to be a flat-cash settlement (subject to official confirmation outside of the provisional settlement).
- 2.2. Whilst it is welcome that the pension grant funding will continue for a further year (the previous MTFP forecast a one-off payment only) all funding will be subject to review next year as part of what is expected to be a three-year comprehensive spending review.
- 2.3. As part of this year's announcement, the Government published headline changes in core spending power between 2019/20 and 2020/21 for every authority. The headline change for BMKFA for was an increase of 3.2%:
- 2.4. However, this headline increase is based on two fundamental assumptions:
 - That the growth in council tax base between 2018/19 and 2019/20 will be 1.58% (actual increase was 1.75%)
 - That the Authority will increase its Band D council tax in 2019/20 by 1.99%, which is the maximum increase permissible without triggering a referendum.

3. Council Tax and Business Rates

- 3.1. In publicly declaring core spending power figures, the Government has clearly set an expectation that local authorities will continue to increase council tax every year by the maximum amount permissible.
- 3.2. The difference between a 1.98% increase in the precept and holding council tax at its current level for 2020/21 is just under £400k for the year. This is approximately equivalent to the cost of employing eight wholetime firefighters.
- 3.3. Council tax was increased by 2.99% in 2018/19 and by 2.98% in 2019/20.
- 3.4. Despite this Authority's response to the settlement consultation and the concerns noted by the inspectorate, no specific additional precept flexibility was afforded to fire and rescue authorities. Authorities with no specific additional flexibility may however increase their Band D equivalent by up to 2% without triggering a referendum (last year this figure was 3%).
- 3.5. The Authority currently sets a band D equivalent precept of £64.57 per annum (approx. £1.24 per week). This is significantly below the national average and is the lowest precept of any non-metropolitan combined fire authority.
- 3.6. Council tax chargeable for each band should the Authority resolve to increase the band D equivalent amount by 1.98% is shown in Appendix 3.
- 3.7. It is not recommended to hold a referendum to increase Council tax above the threshold for 2020/21. However, this option may need to be considered for 2021/22, depending on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

4. Risk Factors in Budget Assumptions

- 4.1. The budget proposed for 2020/21 at Appendix 1 has been compiled by looking in detail at current spending and future plans.
- 4.2. This year officers adopted a zero-based budget approach when developing the budget proposal for 2020/21. As opposed to the incremental approach, which looks at last year's budgets and adjusts them up or down, the zero-based approach looks at all budgets to ensure the correct amount of money is being spent in the correct areas. This approach has been developed alongside the new Public Safety Plan and feedback from our recent inspection report from HMICFRS.
- 4.3. Although our report noted that the inspectorate "would like to see improvements in the year ahead, but without increased funding, it is difficult to see where progress can be made" the zero-based budget approach has identified some key opportunities within the current budgetary constraints:
 - Increasing the wholetime establishment by 20 firefighters in 2020/21, with the potential to increase by a further 10 in the following year (depending on the outcome of the comprehensive spending review)
 - Increasing the Protection Team by 2 FTEs and introducing a Team Leader role into the Prevention Team.
 - Introducing a Head of Technology, Transformation and Programme Management office to manage the actions required following our inspection report.

- 4.4. At the time of writing the Authority had not yet received formal written notification of the continuation of the USAR grant for 2020/21, but it is expected imminently. However, the potential discontinuation of USAR funding in future years is a significant financial risk facing the Authority at present. As noted earlier, there is also a risk that the pension grant may not continue beyond 2020/21.
- 4.5. Pay inflation is projected at 2% per annum, in line with the actual award for 2019/20. However, the Authority is aware that there is a risk that the national agreement may set a level higher than this. For every additional 1% increase the cost to this Authority is approximately £200k each and every year. This would clearly have a significant adverse impact on the forecast position within the model.
- 4.6. Further uncertainty regarding pensions has been introduced by the ruling in December 2018 that the transitional arrangements introduced for the firefighters' schemes in 2015 were discriminatory. At the employment tribunal hearing on 18 December 2019 it was ruled the claimants, members of the 1992 and 2006 firefighters' pension schemes, are now entitled to be treated as if they have remained members of their original pension scheme. However, it is too early at this stage to quantify the impact this may have on budgets.
- 4.7. Areas where budgets have changed significantly from previous years have been subject to a series of challenges by Officers and Members. Risks which have been identified are to be covered from the reserves.
- 4.8. The detailed costings are based on the updated budget requirement including the annual uplift assumptions below:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Pay inflation	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
CPI	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%
Council tax increase	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%
Council tax base	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%
Business tax base	0.75%	0.75%	0.75%	0.75%	0.75%

5. Capital

- 5.1. The revenue impact of the capital programme has been factored into the base revenue budget requirement. This includes an annual revenue contribution to capital, details of which are shown in Appendix 1(a).
- 5.2. The table at Appendix 2 details the approved capital programme for 2019/20, the estimated provisional outturn position and any proposed slippage to the programme. Any slippage is then added to the new budget requests for 2020/21 to give a total capital budget requirement of £1.5m for 2020/21.
- 5.3. The Authority should also take cognisance of the prudential indicators when approving the capital programme (submitted as a separate paper at this meeting).

6. Scrutiny and Challenge Process

- 6.1. All budget changes have been determined based on a series of challenge panels held by officers and then Members during the MTFP process.

7. Adequacy of Reserves

- 7.1. A paper detailing our Reserves Strategy was approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 14 March 2018 (https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/4215/2024/7103/ITEM_5_Reserves_Strategy_2_018-19.pdf). There have been no subsequent events that require the level of the General Fund determined at that time to be adjusted at present

- 7.2. The latest forecast balances and reserves at year-end are:

- General Fund Balance - £1.5m
- Earmarked Reserves - £1.4m*
- Capital Reserves - £0.6m

* The earmarked reserves balance excludes the amount held by Oxfordshire County Council relating to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

This represents a decrease of £3.4m from the balances held at the start of the year.

8. Statement of the Chief Finance Officer

- 8.1. The purpose of this statement is to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003 whereby the Chief Finance Officer, in the Fire Authority's case the Director of Finance and Assets and Chief Finance Officer, must report on:

- The robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget and;
- The adequacy of the proposed financial reserves;
- In recommending the budget to the Authority, Members must take the advice of the Chief Finance Officer in respect of the above and the associated risks as highlighted within the report.

- 8.2. Given the level of the General Fund Balance and earmarked reserves available, the prudent approach to the budget setting process for the next financial year and the controls for budget management, it is my conclusion as Chief Finance Officer for the Authority that there is sufficient capacity in the reserves to cope with the financial risks the Authority faces for 2019/20 and future years and that the methodology applied provides the necessary assurance to the Authority about the robustness of the estimates used in constructing the budget.

Appendix 1(a) – MTFP Model 1(a)

The model below is based on the assumptions detailed in Sections 3 and 4 and all significant budget movements have been subjected to officer and Member scrutiny as noted in Section 6.1. The statutory deadline for the billing authorities to provide Council Tax and business rates information to the Authority is 31 January. Any changes to these figures will be presented in a revised Appendix 1 at the meeting.

Medium Term Financial Plan	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Base Budget			31,070	31,871	32,756	33,671
Pay Adjustment			418	433	439	448
Inflation Adjustment			78	78	78	78
Corporate Core	1,421	1,349		1	-28	-45
Statutory Accounting and Contingency	782	589				
Delivery, Corporate Development and Planning	19,891	21,513	403	156	-12	
People and Organisational Development	2,715	2,298	-96	10		
Finance and Assets	3,857	4,264	-100			
Revenue Contribution to Capital	1,666	1,046	98	218	438	463
Transfers to Reserves		11		-11		
Net Budget Requirement	30,332	31,070	31,871	32,756	33,671	34,615
Council Tax Receipts	-19,715	-20,460	-21,199	-21,964	-22,759	-23,583
Council Tax Receipts Surplus/Deficit	-278	-308	-250	-250	-250	-250
Revenue Support Grant/Business Rates	-7,841	-7,988	-8,108	-8,228	-8,348	-8,468
Fire Specific Grants (USAR/Firelink)	-1,097	-1,106	-1,106	-1,106	-1,106	-1,106
Pension Grant Funding	-1,035	-1,208	-1,208	-1,208	-1,208	-1,208
Transfers from Reserves	-366	0	0	0	0	0
Total Funding Available	-30,332	-31,070	-31,871	-32,756	-33,671	-34,615
Shortfall/(Surplus) for Year	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumulative Savings Requirement	0	0	0	0	0	0
General Fund Balance	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500
Other Earmarked Reserves (excluding Control Room Res.)	-1,428	-1,439	-1,439	-1,428	-1,428	-1,428
Earmarked Capital Reserves	-575	-2,137	-1,815	-1,211	-1,795	-2,592
Total	-3,503	-5,076	-4,754	-4,139	-4,723	-5,520

Appendix 1(b) – MTFP Model 1(b)

The model below is as per Model 1(a) but shows the impact that losing the pension grant funding from 2021/22 would have on the Authority’s level of forecast reserves:

Medium Term Financial Plan	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
Base Budget			31,070	30,727	32,689	33,087
Pay Adjustment			418	433	439	448
Inflation Adjustment			78	78	78	78
Corporate Core	1,421	1,349		1	-28	-45
Statutory Accounting and Contingency	782	589				
Delivery, Corporate Development and Planning	19,891	21,513	403	156	-12	
People and Organisational Development	2,715	2,298	-96	10		
Finance and Assets	3,857	4,264	-100			
Revenue Contribution to Capital	1,666	1,046	-1,046	1,295	-79	250
Transfers to Reserves	0	11		-11		
Net Budget Requirement	30,332	31,070	30,727	32,689	33,087	33,818
Council Tax Receipts	-19,715	-20,460	-21,199	-21,964	-22,759	-23,583
Council Tax Receipts Surplus/Deficit	-278	-308	-250	-250	-250	-250
Revenue Support Grant/Business Rates	-7,841	-7,988	-8,108	-8,228	-8,348	-8,468
Fire Specific Grants (USAR/Firelink)	-1,097	-1,106	-1,106	-1,106	-1,106	-1,106
Pension Grant Funding	-1,035	-1,208				
Transfers from Reserves	-366		-64	-1,141	-624	-411
Total Funding Available	-30,332	-31,070	-30,727	-32,689	-33,087	-33,818
Shortfall/(Surplus) for Year	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumulative Savings Requirement	0	0	0	0	0	0
General Fund Balance	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500	-1,099	-688
Other Earmarked Reserves (excluding Control Room Res.)	-1,428	-1,439	-1,375	-223	0	0
Earmarked Capital Reserves	-575	-2,137	-671	0	0	0
Total	-3,503	-5,076	-3,546	-1,723	-1,099	-688

Appendix 2 – Capital Programme

The table below summarises the capital programme from 2019/20 through to 2022/23 and is based on the revenue contribution to capital levels shown in Model 1(a):

Capital Programme Summary	Approved Budget 2019/20 £000	Provisional Outturn 2019/20 £000	Slippage 2019/20 £000	Budget Requests 2020/21 £000	Total Budget Requirement 2020/21 £000	Budget Requests 2021/22 £000	Budget Requests 2022/23 * £000
Property	500	500	0	500	500	500	500
Property Review	7,741	7,741	0	0	0	0	0
Fire Appliances & Equipment	1,181	889	268	641	909	891	1,391
Support	113	113	0	75	75	75	75
Total Expenditure	9,535	9,243	268	1,216	1,484	1,466	1,966
Funding b/fwd		-4,080			-575	-2,137	-1,815
In year funding		-5,738			-3,046	-1,144	-1,362
Funding (Available) / Deficit		-575			-2,137	-1,815	-1,211

The table below shows indicative future year's budgets and anticipated funding through to 2024/25:

Capital Programme Summary	Budget Requests 2023/24	Budget Requests 2024/25 £000
Total Expenditure	1,216	1,466
Funding b/fwd	-1,211	-1,795
In year funding	-1,800	-2,263
Funding (Available) / Deficit	-1,795	-2,592

* This contains an indicative amount of £500k for replacement of Breathing Apparatus – a future business case will require approval before commencement of that project.

Appendix 3 – Council Tax Rates

If the band D equivalent council tax were increased by 1.98% for 2020/21, the following rates would apply to properties in each band:

Bands	Proportion of Band D Charge	Per Week (£)	Per Month (£)	Per Year (£)
A	6/9	0.84	3.66	43.90
B	7/9	0.98	4.27	51.22
C	8/9	1.12	4.88	58.53
D	9/9	1.26	5.49	65.85
E	11/9	1.54	6.71	80.48
F	13/9	1.82	7.93	95.12
G	15/9	2.10	9.15	109.75
H	18/9	2.53	10.98	131.70

This would represent an annual increase of £0.85 per annum on a band A, £1.28 per annum on a band D and £2.56 per annum on a band H property.



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	5 February 2020
OFFICER	Mark Hemming, Director of Finance and Assets
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor David Hopkins
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Response to The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2020-21: Consultation paper
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Consultation was published on 20 December 2019, with a deadline for responses of 17 January 2020. In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, the response was discussed with the Chairman and Lead Member before submission. This paper details the content of the submission for the attention of the Authority.</p> <p>At its meeting on 13 November 2019, the Committee noted the response to the Technical Consultation, which requested that fire and rescue authorities have the flexibility to increase council tax by up to £5, rather than the proposed limit of less than 2%.</p> <p>In response to the Technical Consultation, there were 31 respondents that requested bespoke council tax principles. Of these, 16 were fire authorities or their representative body. Despite these responses, the provisional settlement retains a referendum limit of less than 2% for all fire authorities.</p> <p>The response to the Consultation refers to evidence not available at the time of the Technical Consultation, namely our HMICFRS inspection report that notes serious concerns as to whether the Service has the resources it needs to meet its foreseeable risk, despite being highly efficient and having an innovative deployment model which, if better funded, would be a cost-effective way of keeping people safe</p> <p>The Consultation also sought views on a number of other areas not directly relevant to the Authority, so a response of 'no comment' was submitted in relation to those questions.</p>
ACTION	Noting.
RECOMMENDATIONS	That the response to the consultation be noted.

RISK MANAGEMENT	No direct impact.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>In 2019/20 BMKFA had the lowest precept of any non-metropolitan combined fire and rescue authority. The band D equivalent charge is £64.57. The total council tax receivable for 2019/20 (excluding prior years' surpluses) is £19.7m.</p> <p>The current draft medium-term financial plan assumes that council tax will be increased by 1.99% every year. For 2020/21 this would result in total council tax receipts of £20.1m (ignoring the effects of any growth in the council tax base).</p> <p>If the band D equivalent was increased by £5 for 2020/21 the total council tax receipts (ignoring any increases in the council tax base) would be £21.2m.</p>
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	The Chief Fire Officer may make a formal response on behalf of the Authority to a Government Consultation Paper provided that such a response is subsequently referred to the appropriate committee for their attention.
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DUTY TO COLLABORATE	No direct impact.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	No direct impact.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	No direct impact.
USE OF RESOURCES	See Financial Implications.
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	<p>Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority Scheme of Delegation to Officers, June 2013</p> <p>Response to the Local Government Finance Settlement 2020-21: Technical Consultation, Executive Committee, 13 November 2019:</p> <p>https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/1915/7253/5552/ITEM_6_Response_to_Local_Government_Finance_Settlement_2020-21_Technical_Consultation_Appendices-min.pdf</p>
APPENDICES	<p>Appendix A – The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2020-21: Consultation paper</p> <p>Appendix B – Response to the Consultation</p>
TIME REQUIRED	10 minutes
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Mark Hemming</p> <p>mhemming@bucksfire.gov.uk</p>



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

The provisional local government finance settlement 2020-2021

Consultation paper

December 2019

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



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Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

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December 2019

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Scope of the consultation

Topic of this consultation:	This consultation covers proposals for the local government finance settlement for 2020-21.
Scope of this consultation:	<p>This consultation seeks views on proposals for the local government finance settlement for 2020-21, in particular from representatives of local government, before determining the final amount of Revenue Support Grant and its allocation to receiving authorities and the specified body.¹</p> <p>The consultation notifies representatives of local government of the general nature of the basis of distribution of Revenue Support Grant, and of the general nature of the basis of calculation of 'tariff' and 'top up' payments through this consultation document and accompanying documents, in particular the draft Local Government Finance Report for 2020-21.²</p>
Geographical scope:	These proposals relate to England only.
Impact assessment:	Since the Government does not envisage that the proposals within this consultation document will have an impact on business, no impact assessment has been produced.

Basic information

To:	The consultation will be of interest to local authorities and representative bodies for local authorities.
Body/bodies responsible for the consultation:	Local Government Finance Directorate within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
Duration:	This consultation is open to submissions for 4 weeks from 20 December 2019 to 17 January 2020.

¹ As required by section 78(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

² As required by section 78A(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and paragraph 12 of Schedule 7B to the same Act.

Enquiries:	For any enquiries about the consultation please contact lgfsettlement@communities.gov.uk
How to respond:	<p>You can respond to the questions in this consultation via a pro-forma at:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-finance-settlement-2020-to-2021-consultation</p> <p>If the link is inoperable, return address details and a list of consultation questions can be found in Annex B of this consultation document.</p> <p>Email details and an address for written responses can also be found in the pro-forma.</p>

About this consultation

This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent, and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal data, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, as a public authority, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is bound by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and may therefore be obliged to disclose all or some of the information you provide. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will process your personal data in accordance with the law and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties. A full privacy notice is included at Annex A.

Individual responses will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.

Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed the Consultation Principles? If not or you have any other observations about how we can improve the process, please contact us via the [complaints procedure](#).

1. Summary of proposals

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This consultation paper sets out the Government's proposals for the 2020-21 local government finance settlement. This document follows on from the technical consultation, launched in October 2019.³

1.1.2 We received 219 responses to the technical consultation, and a summary of responses has been published separately:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2020-to-2021-consultation>

1.1.3 We are very grateful for your continued participation in the consultation process and all the representations received have been considered carefully.

1.1.4 This chapter provides a summary of the proposals contained within the 2020-21 provisional settlement.

1.2 Background

Spending Round 2019

1.2.1 On 4 September 2019, the Government set out the outcome of Spending Round 2019. Core Spending Power for local authorities in England will rise from £46.2 billion to £49.1 billion in 2020-21. This is an increase of £2.9 billion, or an estimated 4.4% in real-terms, the largest year-on-year increase in almost a decade.

1.2.2 To reflect the one-year Spending Round, the Government is proposing to 'roll forward' core components of the 2019-20 local government finance settlement.

1.2.3 Under our proposals, local authorities will be able to access £1.5 billion of additional funding across adult and children's social care next year. This will support local authorities to meet rising demand and recognises the vital role that social care plays in supporting the most vulnerable people in society.

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836539/Local_Government_Finance_Settlement_2020-21_Technical_Consultation_.pdf

1.2.4 Alongside this injection of funding, the Government intends to increase elements of core settlement funding in line with inflation and maintain key local government grants at 2019-20 levels.

The distribution of additional resources

1.2.5 Local government will also see funding increases from wider resources under our proposals. This includes SEND funding for schools and colleges, which will increase by over £700 million. There will also be a real-terms increase in the Public Health Grant and the NHS contribution to the Better Care Fund will grow in line with the planned additional investment in the NHS.

1.3 Breakdown of proposals included in the 2020-21 provisional settlement

1.3.1 *Chapter 2 – Distribution of Settlement Funding Assessment:* This chapter outlines the Government’s proposals for distributing settlement resources in 2020-21:

- updating the 2019-20 Settlement Funding Assessment in line with the change in the small business non-domestic rating multiplier, to match the planned increase in Baseline Funding Levels and Business Rates Baselines; and
- eliminating negative RSG in 2020-21 through use of forgone business rates at a cost of £152.9 million.

1.3.2 *Chapter 3 – Council Tax:* This chapter details the Government’s intentions for council tax and referendum principles:

- a core council tax referendum principle of up to 2% for shire counties, unitary authorities, London boroughs, the Greater London Authority (GLA) general precept, and fire authorities;
- a bespoke council tax referendum principle of 2% or £5, whichever is higher, for shire districts;
- continuing the adult social care (ASC) precept at an additional 2%;
- setting no council tax referendum principles for parish councils; and
- setting no council tax referendum principles for mayoral combined authorities (MCAs).

1.3.3 Chapter 4 – Distribution of Additional Resources: The Government is making additional resources available to support vital front-line services, through the Social Care Grant and the improved Better Care Fund (iBCF). The Government is:

- proposing a new Social Care Grant for 2020-21 of £1.41 billion for adult and children’s services. Of this, £410 million is a direct continuation of 2019-20 Social Care Support Grant, with an injection of £1 billion of new funding;
- distributing these resources using the Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula, including a sum of £150 million for equalisation of the impact of the council tax adult social care precept;
- maintaining existing improved Better Care Fund funding at 2019-20 levels (£1.837 billion), as well as incorporating the £240 million which was allocated as Winter Pressures Grant in 2019-20 into the improved Better Care Fund, with the same distribution as this year;
- retaining the £900 million top-slice of Revenue Support Grant to fund a new round of New Homes Bonus allocations in 2020-21, in addition to an estimated £7 million from departmental budgets; and
- continuing with the Rural Services Delivery Grant at £81m, with all recipients receiving the same amount as in the previous year.

1.4 Equalities

1.4.1 Chapter 5 – Equalities Impacts of These Proposals: This chapter invites views and evidence on the impact that the Government’s proposals may have on persons who share a protected characteristic. It also contains a draft assessment of the impact of the 2020-21 settlement on persons who share a protected characteristic.

1.5 Additional Information

- 1.5.1** A return address for responses to this consultation, along with a full list of consultation questions, is included in Annex B, and a glossary of technical terms can be found in Annex D.

1.6 Exemplification of the proposals

- 1.6.1** The supporting tables accompanying this consultation exemplify the proposals for individual local authorities. These proposals represent the Government's intentions, following responses to the local government finance technical consultation, and the figures are presented on the basis of available information.
- 1.6.2** Data changes, new information or errors identified by either the department or local authorities between the publication of this consultation paper and the calculation of the final settlement may lead to changes to individual local authority exemplifications. The Government encourages local authorities to check their individual allocations.

2. Distribution of settlement funding assessment

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter outlines the Government's proposals for distributing central resources – the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA), which is comprised of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Baseline Funding levels (BFL), in 2020-21.

2.2 Business Rates Retention

2.2.1 From April 2013, local government has been funded in part through the business rates retention scheme, ensuring that local authorities have more control over the money they raise and are able to benefit directly from supporting local business growth.

2.2.2 When the scheme started in 2013-14, the Government committed that Baseline Funding Levels and Business Rates Baselines, which are used to determine tariffs and top-ups, would be fixed in real terms until the system was reset. The Government therefore proposes not to alter the existing mechanism for determining tariff and top-up payments in 2020-21. These elements will therefore be uprated in line with the change in the small business non-domestic rating multiplier.

2.2.3 Local authorities in Devolution Deal areas will continue to benefit from increased levels of business rates retention in 2020-21.

2.3 Distribution of Revenue Support Grant

2.3.1 Recognising the need to provide stability, the Government proposed at the technical consultation to pay Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to ensure all local authorities will receive a uniform change in Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) in 2020-21. This means RSG will also be uprated in line with the change in the small business non-domestic rating multiplier.

2.3.2 The Government has taken the responses to the technical consultation into consideration and has now confirmed its proposals for RSG, with over 90% of respondents expressing support for the proposals. A summary of the responses to the Government's proposals for the distribution of RSG are covered in paragraphs 8-12 of the summary of responses document.⁴

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-2020-to-2021-consultation>

- 2.3.3** Exemplifications published alongside this consultation paper are based on an assumption that the small business non-domestic rating multiplier, based on the CPI measure for September, will be set at 49.9p in 2020-21.
- 2.3.4** A draft Local Government Finance Report (LGFR) for 2020-21 has been published alongside this document which sets out the method for allocating Revenue Support Grant.

Question 1: Do you agree with the Government's proposed methodology for the distribution of Revenue Support Grant in 2020-21?

- 2.3.5** In 2019-20 the Government's approach to Settlement Funding Assessment included eliminating so-called negative RSG.⁵
- 2.3.6** At the technical consultation, the Government proposed to eliminate negative RSG again in 2020-21, using 2019-20 values of Settlement Funding Assessment as the baseline for this approach. This approach is consistent with the Government's previous commitment, made during the implementation of the business rate retention scheme in 2013-14, that authorities' retained business rates baselines would be fixed in real terms until the business rates system was reset.
- 2.3.7** In consideration of the responses to the technical consultation, eliminating negative RSG reflects the majority opinion on this issue and honours the Government's commitment not to adjust business rates tariffs and top-ups until the business rates system is reset. On this basis, the Government now confirms its proposals to eliminate negative RSG. The summary of responses document provides a breakdown of the views on negative RSG in paragraphs 13-17.

Question 2: Do you agree with the Government's proposal to eliminate negative RSG?

⁵ Please refer to section 5.1 of the 2019-20 Local Government Finance Settlement Technical Consultation for an explanation of the issue of negative Revenue Support Grant. The document is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728573/Settlement_Technical_Consultation_2019-20.pdf

3. Council tax

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 At the technical consultation, the Government invited views on its proposals for a package of council tax referendum principles. An overview of the representations received, and the Government's response to these, can be found at paragraphs 18-29 of the summary of responses.

3.1.2 Following the technical consultation, the Government remains committed to maintaining those council tax referendum principles, as they strike a balance between giving local authorities the flexibility to determine their own level of council tax and ensuring local residents have the final say on excessive increases.

3.1.3 The technical consultation also invited views on a separate council tax referendum principle of up to 2% or £5, whichever is greater, for shire district councils. Having considered the responses and the minimal potential impact on average bills, the Government is minded to implement this separate principle in 2020-21.

3.2 Council tax referendum principles

3.2.1 The Government proposes the following package of referendum principles for 2020-21:

- a core principle of up to 2%, applicable to shire county councils, unitary authorities, London borough councils, the Common Council of the City of London, the Council of the Isles of Scilly, the general precept of the Greater London Authority, and fire and rescue authorities (including Police and Crime Commissioner fire and rescue authorities);
- a bespoke council tax referendum principle of 2% or £5, whichever is higher, for shire district councils.
- an adult social care precept flexibility, for local authorities with responsibility for adult social care, of up to 2% on top of the core principle;

3.3 Council tax referendum principles for Mayoral Combined Authorities

- 3.3.1** Devolution Deals have created eight Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) since 2017, with powers in areas such as transport and planning. To date, seven MCAs have successfully applied for the powers to raise additional resources to meet the costs of their functions through a precept on local council tax bills, with the agreement of the Combined Authority.
- 3.3.2** In 2018-19 and 2019-20 the Government did not set a referendum principle for MCAs, on the expectation that mayors would exercise restraint and set a precept that was affordable and proportionate to their needs.
- 3.3.3** After consideration of the responses to the technical consultation, the Government proposes not to set council tax referendum principles for MCAs in 2020-21.

3.4 Council tax referendum principles for town and parish councils

- 3.4.1** In 2018-19, the Government announced that it did not intend to set referendum principles for town and parish councils for three years. This was contingent on the sector taking all available steps to mitigate the need for council tax increases and the Government seeing clear evidence of restraint in the increases set by the sector.⁶
- 3.4.2** In 2019-20, the average Band D parish precept has increased by 4.9%. This is the same percentage increase as in 2018-19 and compares to an increase of 6.3% in 2015-16. The Government remains concerned about the pressure placed on taxpayers by parish and town councils across England and continues to expect them to exercise restraint in 2020-21.
- 3.4.3** After consideration of the responses to the technical consultation, the Government proposes to continue with no referendum principles for town and parish councils in 2020-21. The Government will keep this matter under active review for future years.

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed package of council tax referendum principles for 2020-21?

⁶ Options open to local authorities include the use of reserves, where they are not already earmarked for other uses, or through “invest to save” projects which are intended to lower on-going costs.

3.5 Council tax referendum principles for Police and Crime Commissioners

3.5.1 The Government is minded to set a council tax referendum principle for Police and Crime Commissioners, as well as the Greater Manchester and London Mayors who are responsible for police services in their areas. Further information about police funding for 2020-21 will be provided as part of the police funding settlement process.

4. Distribution of additional resources

4.1 Social care funding

4.1.1 The Government is committed to addressing social care pressures. At Spring Budget 2017, an additional £2 billion over three years was provided for adult social care. In addition, at Autumn Budget 2018, the Government announced £650 million extra funding in 2019-20 for local authorities to help deliver the services communities need and to support the most vulnerable residents.

4.2 Social Care Grant

4.2.1 At the technical consultation, the Government proposed a new Social Care Grant of £1.41 billion for adult and children's services for 2020-21. Of this, £410 million is a direct continuation of 2019-20 Social Care Support Grant, with an injection of £1 billion of new funding from Spending Review 2019.

4.2.2 After considering the representations received during the technical consultation, the Government now confirms its proposal to use the Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula as the basis for distributing the Social Care Support Grant.

4.2.3 The Government will make £1.26 billion of direct allocations and proposes to use the remaining £150 million to equalise the impact of the distribution of the Adult Social Care council tax precept, using the current improved Better Care Fund equalisation methodology. An explanation of the methodology as well as a table of proposed Social Care Grant allocations is set out in Annex C.

4.2.4 The Government proposes that this grant will not be ringfenced, and conditions or reporting requirements will not be attached. In particular, it will be for local authorities to determine how much of it should be spent on adult social care and how much should be spent on children's social care.

4.2.5 For further information on the representations received in the technical consultation, please refer to sections 30-36 of the summary of responses document.

Question 4: Do you agree with the Government's proposals for the Social Care Grant in 2020-21?

4.3 Improved Better Care Fund

- 4.3.1** The purpose of the improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) is to meet adult social care needs, reduce pressure on the NHS, and ensure that the local social care provider market is supported.
- 4.3.2** The iBCF was first announced in Spending Review 2015 and is paid as a direct grant to local government, with a condition that it is pooled into the Better Care Fund (BCF). The iBCF grant allocations were increased at Spring Budget 2017 with an additional £2 billion funding. This additional funding was also pooled into the Better Care Fund over the period 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- 4.3.3** Following the technical consultation, the Government proposes to continue existing iBCF funding at 2019-20 levels (£1.837 billion), using the same methodology as in 2019-20. The condition that the iBCF must be pooled into the Better Care Fund will continue in 2020-21.
- 4.3.4** In 2019-20, the Government provided £240 million through a Winter Pressures Grant which was ringfenced for use by local authorities to alleviate winter pressures on the NHS. The Government proposes that, in 2020-21, this £240 million will not be ringfenced for that purpose. It will instead be incorporated into the iBCF and allocated using the existing Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula, as in 2019-20.
- 4.3.5** The summary of responses document provides further details on the responses to the technical consultation surrounding the Government's proposals for iBCF in 2020-21, in paragraphs 37-41.

Question 5: Do you agree with the Government's proposals for iBCF in 2020-21?

4.4 Better Care Fund 2020-21

- 4.4.1** As stated in the technical consultation, the Government remains committed to integrating health and social care and can confirm that the Better Care Fund (BCF) will continue in 2020-21. As well as announcing continued iBCF funding, the Spending Round announced that the NHS contribution to adult social care through the BCF will increase by 3.4% in real terms in 2020-21.
- 4.4.3** Details of the BCF for 2020-21 will be issued in due course.

4.5 New Homes Bonus

Background

4.5.1 The New Homes Bonus was introduced in 2011 to provide an incentive for local authorities to encourage housing growth in their areas. With the addition of this year's allocations, £8.8 billion has been allocated to local authorities through this fund to reward additional housing supply.

4.5.2 Although it was successful in encouraging authorities to support housing growth, New Homes Bonus did not originally reward those authorities who are the most open to growth. In December 2016, following consultation, the Government announced reforms to New Homes Bonus as follows:

- reducing the number of years New Homes Bonus payments are made (legacy payments) from 6 to 5 years in 2017-18 and to 4 years from 2018-19; and
- introducing a national baseline for housing growth of 0.4% of council tax base (weighted by band) from 2017-18, below which New Homes Bonus will not be paid.

New Homes Bonus in 2020-21

4.5.3 At the technical consultation, the Government proposed the following for the New Homes Bonus scheme in 2020-21:

- retaining the £900 million top-slice of Revenue Support Grant to fund New Homes Bonus payments;
- a new round of allocations for 2020-21, allocated in line with previous years; and
- making no legacy payments on these new allocations, but making legacy payments on allocations from earlier years.

4.5.4 Due to a continued upwards trend for house building, in the technical consultation the Government indicated that decisions on the payments baseline for 2020-21 would be made following the publication of council tax base statistics in November.

4.5.5 After careful consideration of the responses to the technical consultation and the additional housing stock numbers reported through the council tax base data, the Government has decided not to make any change to the payments baseline, and this will remain at 0.4% for the 2020-21 allocations.

4.5.6 Provisional New Homes Bonus allocations for 2019-20 are being announced alongside this provisional settlement. Based on the most recent council tax base data available, the cost of Bonus payments relating to 2020-21 is forecast to be £284 million. Combining this with the cost of legacy payments provides an estimated total Bonus payment of £907 million in 2020-21, with an estimated £7 million from departmental resources.

4.5.7 Details of the provisional allocations, and how the allocations have been calculated, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-england-2020-to-2021>

4.5.8 For details of the responses to the technical consultation, please see paragraphs 42-45 of the summary of responses document.

Question 6: Do you agree with the Government's proposal to fund the New Homes Bonus in 2020-21 with the planned £900 million from Revenue Support Grant, with additional funding being secured from departmental resources, and to allocate the funds in line with previous years but with no legacy payments?

4.7 Rural Services Delivery Grant

4.7.1 In recognition of additional cost pressures in rural areas, the Government proposes to roll-forward 2019-20 allocations of Rural Services Delivery Grant, totalling £81 million.

4.7.2 Allocations in 2019-20 were distributed to the top quartile of local authorities on the basis of the 'super-sparsity' indicator, which ranks authorities by the proportion of the population which is scattered widely, using Census data and weighted towards the authorities with the sparsest populations.

4.7.3 In consideration of the near even split of technical consultation responses to this question, and in the interests of stability of funding in a year in which the Government is proposing to roll forward the previous settlement, the Government has decided to include this proposal as part of the provisional local government finance settlement for 2020-21.

Question 7: Do you agree with the Government's proposed approach to paying £81 million Rural Services Delivery Grant in 2020-21 to the upper quartile of local authorities, based on the super-sparsity indicator?

5. Equalities impacts of these proposals

5.1 Draft Equality Statement

5.1.1 In the 2020-21 local government finance settlement technical consultation, we sought views on the impact of the proposals for the 2020-21 settlement on persons who share a protected characteristic. A draft assessment of the impact of the 2020-21 local government finance settlement has been published alongside this consultation document at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-england-2020-to-2021>

Question 8: Do you have any comments on the impact of the proposals for the 2020-21 settlement outlined in this consultation document on persons who share a protected characteristic, and on the draft equality statement published alongside this consultation document? Please provide evidence to support your comments.

Annex A: Privacy notice

Personal data

The following is to explain your rights and give you the information you are entitled to under the Data Protection Act 2018.

Note that this section only refers to your personal data (your name address and anything that could be used to identify you personally) not the content of your response to the consultation.

1. The identity of the data controller and contact details of our Data Protection Officer

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is the data controller. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@communities.gov.uk

2. Why we are collecting your personal data

Your personal data is being collected as an essential part of the consultation process, so that we can contact you regarding your response and for statistical purposes. We may also use it to contact you about related matters.

3. Our legal basis for processing your personal data

The Data Protection Act 2018 states that, as a government department, MHCLG may process personal data as necessary for the effective performance of a task carried out in the public interest. i.e. a consultation. This consultation fulfils mandatory statutory requirements to consult under sections 78(5), 78A(3) and paragraph 12 of Schedule 7B of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

4. With whom we will be sharing your personal data

Other Government Departments including:

- Attorney General's Office
- Cabinet Office
- Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
- Department for Education Department for Environment
- Food and Rural Affairs
- Department for Exiting the European Union
- Department for International Development
- Department for International Trade
- Department for Transport
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Department of Health and Social Care

- Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Her Majesty's Treasury
- Home Office
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Justice
- Northern Ireland Office
- Office of the Advocate General for Scotland
- Office of the Leader of the House of Commons
- Office of the Leader of the House of Lords
- Scotland Office UK
- Export Finance
- Wales Office

5. For how long we will keep your personal data, or criteria used to determine the retention period.

Your personal data will be held for two years from the closure of the consultation.

6. Your rights, e.g. access, rectification, erasure

The data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have considerable say over what happens to it. You have the right:

- a. to see what data we have about you
- b. to ask us to stop using your data, but keep it on record
- c. to ask to have all or some of your data deleted or corrected
- d. to lodge a complaint with the independent Information Commissioner (ICO) if you think we are not handling your data fairly or in accordance with the law. You can contact the ICO at <https://ico.org.uk/>, or telephone 0303 123 1113.

7. Your personal data will not be sent overseas.

8. Your personal data will not be used for any automated decision making.

9. Your personal data will be stored in a secure government IT system.

Annex B: Address details & list of consultation questions

If the pro-forma link is inoperable, written responses may be sent by email or post to:

LGfsettlement@communities.gov.uk

or

Local Government Finance Settlement Team
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2nd floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

When replying to this consultation please confirm whether you are replying as an individual or submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation and include:

- your name,
- your position (if applicable),
- the name of organisation (if applicable),
- an address (including post-code),
- an email address, and
- a contact telephone number

Question 1: Do you agree with the Government's proposed methodology for the distribution of Revenue Support Grant in 2020-21?

Question 2: Do you agree with the Government's proposal to eliminate negative RSG?

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed package of council tax referendum principles for 2020-21?

Question 4: Do you agree with the Government's proposals for the Social Care Grant in 2020-21?

Question 5: Do you agree with the Government's proposals for iBCF in 2020-21?

Question 6: Do you agree with the Government's proposal to fund the New Homes Bonus in 2020-21 with the planned £900 million from Revenue Support Grant, with additional funding being secured from departmental resources, and to allocate the funds in line with previous years but with no legacy payments?

Question 7: Do you agree with the Government's proposed approach to paying £81 million Rural Services Delivery Grant in 2020-21 to the upper quartile of local authorities, based on the super-sparsity indicator?

Question 8: Do you have any comments on the impact of the proposals for the 2020-21 settlement outlined in this consultation document on persons who share a protected characteristic, and on the draft equality statement published alongside this consultation document? Please provide evidence to support your comments.

Annex C: Social Care Grant provisional allocations and equalisation methodology

The proposed equalisation methodology for Social Care Grant in 2020-21 is based on identifying the total potential new resource for social care to be equalised.

This is the sum of the additional grant funding to be used for equalisation (in this case £150m) plus the total potential increase in council tax precept income in that year as a result of the proposed 2% Adult Social Care precept referendum principle (approximately £500 million). This amount is then allocated between authorities on the basis of the Relative Needs Formula.

The amount for each local authority is then reduced by its potential council tax precept income.

The resulting figure is then essentially that authority's share of the equalisation amount (£150 million).

However, for a small number of authorities, the precept income exceeds the needs share, and in these cases the equalisation component of the grant is set to zero and the authority concerned retains the potential council tax resources in excess of their calculated needs share.

This results in turn in a grant total for equalisation which exceeds £150 million; to reduce this to the required level, the grant payments for each authority are reduced, by amounts in proportion to the figure for each authority. The resulting amounts are shown in the second column of the table below and are added to the other grant components to give the overall total. From this, all authorities receive over 97% of their needs-based share of the total new resources.

As signalled in the technical consultation, these provisional figures have been updated to reflect the effect of local authority restructuring and proposed Alternative Notional Amounts on the council tax levels of restructuring authorities.

Social Care Grant 2020-21: Provisional Allocations				
Authority	Element used to equalise for 2% ASC precept flexibility	Remaining new funding, using 2013-14 ASC RNF	Rollover of 2019-20 Social Care Support Grant	Total 2020-21 Social Care Grant
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
England	150,000,000	850,000,000	410,000,000	1,410,000,000
Barking and Dagenham	1,077,136	3,233,759	1,559,813	5,870,708
Barnet	243,641	5,126,523	2,472,794	7,842,958

Barnsley	1,291,870	4,386,003	2,115,602	7,793,475
Bath & North East Somerset	99,124	2,584,541	1,246,661	3,930,326
Bedford	-	2,198,710	1,060,554	3,259,264
Bexley	232,632	3,287,993	1,585,973	5,106,598
Birmingham	7,344,771	19,834,379	9,567,171	36,746,322
Blackburn with Darwen	911,504	2,707,308	1,305,878	4,924,690
Blackpool	1,177,472	3,200,550	1,543,795	5,921,817
Bolton	1,342,899	4,923,279	2,374,758	8,640,937
Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole	445,961	6,197,541	2,985,959	9,629,461
Bracknell Forest	-	1,281,502	618,136	1,899,638
Bradford	2,024,642	8,135,950	3,924,399	14,084,991
Brent	1,000,126	4,756,589	2,294,354	8,051,069
Brighton & Hove	364,398	4,351,504	2,098,961	6,814,863
Bristol	1,026,196	7,183,796	3,465,125	11,675,117
Bromley	-	4,216,196	2,033,694	6,249,890
Buckinghamshire Council	-	5,919,253	2,855,169	8,774,422
Bury	481,770	2,892,518	1,395,214	4,769,502
Calderdale	562,076	3,260,518	1,572,720	5,395,314
Cambridgeshire	221,713	8,231,033	3,970,263	12,423,009
Camden	1,089,140	4,553,741	2,196,510	7,839,390
Central Bedfordshire	-	3,066,985	1,479,369	4,546,354
Cheshire East	-	5,137,675	2,478,173	7,615,848
Cheshire West & Chester	183,920	5,196,400	2,506,499	7,886,819
City of London	-	172,800	83,351	256,151
Cornwall	1,378,186	9,893,235	4,772,031	16,043,452
Coventry	1,287,752	5,493,344	2,649,731	9,430,827
Croydon	75,109	4,963,076	2,393,954	7,432,139
Cumbria	1,815,110	8,879,744	4,283,171	14,978,025
Darlington	321,147	1,774,984	856,169	2,952,300
Derby	1,020,114	4,067,849	1,962,139	7,050,102
Derbyshire	2,897,340	12,846,708	6,196,648	21,940,697
Devon	1,388,573	12,663,344	6,108,201	20,160,118
Doncaster	1,635,240	5,347,491	2,579,378	9,562,109
Dorset Council	-	6,044,757	2,919,150	8,963,907
Dudley	1,573,892	5,530,739	2,667,768	9,772,399
Durham	2,833,605	9,995,914	4,821,558	17,651,077
Ealing	924,385	5,020,555	2,421,679	8,366,618
East Riding of Yorkshire	439,595	5,121,138	2,470,196	8,030,929
East Sussex	1,055,842	9,157,513	4,417,153	14,630,508
Enfield	848,703	4,599,334	2,218,502	7,666,539
Essex	2,174,623	20,964,875	10,112,469	33,251,967
Gateshead	1,110,756	4,013,716	1,936,028	7,060,500
Gloucestershire	702,946	8,960,361	4,322,057	13,985,364

Greenwich	1,434,158	4,711,396	2,272,556	8,418,110
Hackney	1,911,290	4,976,053	2,400,214	9,287,557
Halton	651,482	2,263,593	1,091,851	4,006,926
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,134,384	3,252,600	1,568,901	5,955,885
Hampshire	-	16,838,843	8,122,265	24,961,108
Haringey	930,722	4,066,550	1,961,512	6,958,784
Harrow	47,276	3,434,809	1,656,790	5,138,875
Hartlepool	468,046	1,774,812	856,086	3,098,944
Havering	170,512	3,561,794	1,718,042	5,450,348
Herefordshire	251,853	3,118,840	1,504,382	4,875,075
Hertfordshire	-	14,642,720	7,062,959	21,705,679
Hillingdon	430,458	3,687,256	1,778,559	5,896,273
Hounslow	523,379	3,539,335	1,707,209	5,769,924
Isle of Wight Council	300,908	2,714,387	1,309,293	4,324,588
Isles of Scilly	629	44,841	21,630	67,100
Islington	1,430,704	4,554,190	2,196,727	8,181,621
Kensington and Chelsea	542,466	3,069,937	1,480,793	5,093,196
Kent	2,003,471	21,832,371	10,530,908	34,366,750
Kingston upon Hull	1,996,416	5,145,840	2,482,111	9,624,367
Kingston upon Thames	-	2,030,009	979,181	3,009,190
Kirklees	1,266,501	6,587,080	3,177,297	11,030,878
Knowsley	1,412,912	3,460,406	1,669,137	6,542,455
Lambeth	1,416,005	5,344,078	2,577,732	9,337,815
Lancashire	4,446,004	19,543,454	9,426,843	33,416,301
Leeds	2,272,625	11,725,500	5,655,829	19,653,954
Leicester	1,726,071	5,573,657	2,688,470	9,988,197
Leicestershire	349,079	8,550,459	4,124,339	13,023,877
Lewisham	1,252,929	4,844,582	2,336,798	8,434,310
Lincolnshire	2,803,312	11,928,156	5,753,581	20,485,049
Liverpool	4,002,162	10,473,090	5,051,726	19,526,978
Luton	549,655	2,791,275	1,346,380	4,687,310
Manchester	3,567,075	9,442,260	4,554,502	17,563,837
Medway	253,018	3,534,127	1,704,697	5,491,842
Merton	131,225	2,648,847	1,277,679	4,057,751
Middlesbrough	838,046	2,684,362	1,294,810	4,817,218
Milton Keynes	62,238	3,216,109	1,551,300	4,829,647
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,666,509	5,315,442	2,563,919	9,545,870
Newham	2,101,400	5,200,629	2,508,539	9,810,568
Norfolk	2,817,176	14,799,485	7,138,575	24,755,236
North East Lincolnshire	693,415	2,761,473	1,332,004	4,786,892
North Lincolnshire	519,828	2,694,922	1,299,903	4,514,652
North Somerset	250,601	3,272,307	1,578,407	5,101,315
North Tyneside	794,100	3,651,730	1,761,423	6,207,253

North Yorkshire	324,512	8,583,586	4,140,318	13,048,417
Northamptonshire	1,040,103	9,623,090	4,641,726	15,304,918
Northumberland	457,651	5,388,477	2,599,148	8,445,276
Nottingham	1,655,030	5,489,681	2,647,964	9,792,675
Nottinghamshire	1,869,769	12,491,707	6,025,412	20,386,888
Oldham	1,062,235	3,975,005	1,917,355	6,954,595
Oxfordshire	-	8,115,922	3,914,739	12,030,661
Peterborough	512,707	2,810,883	1,355,838	4,679,429
Plymouth	1,111,629	4,547,870	2,193,679	7,853,178
Portsmouth	716,845	3,153,561	1,521,129	5,391,535
Reading	-	2,016,987	972,900	2,989,887
Redbridge	538,806	3,952,416	1,906,459	6,397,681
Redcar and Cleveland	631,638	2,550,797	1,230,384	4,412,819
Richmond upon Thames	-	2,340,482	1,128,938	3,469,420
Rochdale	1,106,456	3,925,436	1,893,446	6,925,338
Rotherham	1,330,446	4,764,558	2,298,199	8,393,203
Rutland	-	480,676	231,855	712,531
Salford	1,206,504	4,666,741	2,251,016	8,124,261
Sandwell	2,615,054	6,544,745	3,156,877	12,316,676
Sefton	1,309,240	5,400,635	2,605,012	9,314,887
Sheffield	2,660,723	9,581,141	4,621,492	16,863,357
Shropshire	565,286	4,936,458	2,381,115	7,882,859
Slough	176,930	1,825,563	880,565	2,883,058
Solihull	214,852	3,082,511	1,486,858	4,784,221
Somerset	1,592,854	8,845,550	4,266,677	14,705,081
South Gloucestershire	-	3,311,620	1,597,369	4,908,989
South Tyneside	1,135,487	3,241,548	1,563,570	5,940,604
Southampton	871,259	3,929,075	1,895,201	6,695,535
Southend-on-Sea	534,851	2,918,335	1,407,667	4,860,852
Southwark	1,768,968	5,562,710	2,683,190	10,014,868
St Helens	995,810	3,410,114	1,644,878	6,050,802
Staffordshire	2,244,360	12,544,457	6,050,856	20,839,673
Stockport	277,984	4,544,721	2,192,160	7,014,865
Stockton-on-Tees	430,650	2,993,553	1,443,949	4,868,153
Stoke-on-Trent	1,698,773	4,717,131	2,275,322	8,691,225
Suffolk	2,061,180	11,550,789	5,571,557	19,183,526
Sunderland	2,017,998	5,552,545	2,678,287	10,248,830
Surrey	-	14,147,673	6,824,172	20,971,845
Sutton	-	2,611,208	1,259,524	3,870,732
Swindon	-	2,724,446	1,314,145	4,038,591
Tameside	1,138,354	4,087,211	1,971,478	7,197,043
Telford and the Wrekin	672,504	2,742,279	1,322,746	4,737,529
Thurrock	388,439	2,316,974	1,117,599	3,823,011

Torbay	766,249	2,934,553	1,415,490	5,116,292
Tower Hamlets	1,676,076	5,188,416	2,502,648	9,367,141
Trafford	492,676	3,349,371	1,615,579	5,457,625
Wakefield	1,434,847	5,839,767	2,816,829	10,091,443
Walsall	1,270,445	5,071,046	2,446,034	8,787,525
Waltham Forest	729,435	3,855,784	1,859,849	6,445,069
Wandsworth	2,073,740	4,595,157	2,216,487	8,885,384
Warrington	230,346	2,917,403	1,407,218	4,554,968
Warwickshire	-	7,914,152	3,817,415	11,731,567
West Berkshire	-	1,774,012	855,700	2,629,712
West Sussex	-	11,699,725	5,643,397	17,343,122
Westminster	2,208,622	4,686,189	2,260,397	9,155,207
Wigan	1,765,220	5,639,122	2,720,047	10,124,389
Wiltshire	-	6,456,684	3,114,401	9,571,085
Windsor and Maidenhead	-	1,687,452	813,947	2,501,399
Wirral	1,810,647	6,376,310	3,075,632	11,262,590
Wokingham	-	1,422,295	686,048	2,108,343
Wolverhampton	1,467,403	4,875,024	2,351,482	8,693,909
Worcestershire	983,581	8,445,547	4,073,734	13,502,862
York	130,876	2,591,794	1,250,159	3,972,829

Annex D: Glossary of technical terms

Baseline Funding Level

The amount of an individual local authority's 2013-14 Settlement Funding Assessment provided through the *local share* of the Estimated Business Rates Aggregate updated each year by the change to the small business multiplier (in line with CPI in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21).

Better Care Fund (BCF)

The Better Care Fund is jointly comprised of central Government and NHS funds. The NHS's contribution to the fund has been over £4 billion, growing in line with investment in the NHS. The BCF aims to improve joint working and promote partnerships in local health and social care.

Business Rates Baseline (BRB)

An authority's BRB determined on an individual basis at the outset of the business rates retention scheme. It is calculated by dividing the *local share* of the Estimated Business Rates Aggregate (England) between billing authorities on the basis of their proportionate shares, before the payment of any major precepting authority share.

Business rates retention

Business rates are a tax on non-domestic properties. Billing authorities have a responsibility to issue bills and collect rates in their areas. Since 2013-14, local government has retained 50% of its business rates – worth around £12.5 billion – which is distributed across the sector.

Central share

The proportion of business rates not retained by local authorities.

Core Spending Power

A measure of the revenue funding available for local authority services. This includes council tax; business rates; Revenue Support Grant; New Homes Bonus; adult social care grants; and, other grants.

Council tax referendum principles

These mark levels of council tax increases (either in percentage or cash terms) above which a local authority must hold a referendum which allows residents to approve or veto the increase. The comparison is made between the authority's average band D council tax level for the current financial year and the proposed average band D for the next financial year.

Devolution Deals

Introduced in 2014, Devolution Deals are a bespoke arrangement tailored to certain local authorities. Devolution Deals give local government greater powers and more autonomy over budgeting.

Equalisation

The process through which a proportion of Social Care Grant funding is used to take account of the impact of the distribution of the Adult Social Care council tax precept.

Local Government Departmental Expenditure Limit (LG DEL)

The departmental budget derived from central Government resources for the purposes of local government.

Local share

The percentage share of locally collected business rates that is retained by local government.

New Homes Bonus

The New Homes Bonus acts as an incentive to increase housing supply and spur growth. The level of funding for an area reflects additional housing supply in that area. Most authorities receive some form of New Homes Bonus funding from central Government.

Precept

A council tax charge from local authorities which do not issue bills themselves. These include county councils, police and crime commissioners, fire and rescue authorities, the Greater London Authority, combined authority mayors, and town and parish councils. Billing authorities – usually shire district councils or unitary authorities – collect council tax on behalf of precepting authorities and pass the proceeds to them.

Revenue Support Grant

Billing and major precepting authorities receive Revenue Support Grant from central Government in addition to their local share of Business Rates Aggregate.

Rural Services Delivery Grant

Funding provided in recognition of the possible additional costs of delivery services in sparsely populated areas.

Safety net

Mechanism to protect any authority which sees its business rates income drop, in any year, by more than 7.5% below their *baseline funding level* (with baseline funding levels being uprated by the small business rates multiplier for the purposes of assessing eligibility for support).

SEND

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities fund.

Settlement Funding Assessment

A local authority's share of the local government spending control total comprising its Revenue Support Grant and its *baseline funding level* for the year in question.

Small business non-domestic rating multiplier

If your property in England has a rateable value below £51,000, your bill will be calculated using the small business multiplier, which is lower than the standard one. This is the case even if you do not get small business rate relief.

Spending Review

The Spending Review sets out the long-term spending limits for all Government departments, typically covers the next three or four years.

Spending Round

The Spending Round sets out the short-term spending limits for all Government departments, typically covers a full calendar year.

Tariffs and top-ups

Calculated by comparing at the outset of the business rate retention scheme an individual authority's business rates baseline against its baseline funding level. Tariffs and top-ups are self-funding, fixed at the start of the scheme, then indexed in line with the change in the small business rating multiplier.

Tariff authority

An authority with, at the outset of the scheme, a higher individual authority business rates baseline than its baseline funding level, and which therefore pays a tariff.

Top-up authority

An authority with, at the outset of the scheme, a lower individual authority business rates baseline than its baseline funding level, and which therefore receives a top-up.



Sent by email to: LGFSettlement@communities.gsi.gov.uk

16 January 2020

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2020 to 2021: Consultation paper

Dear LGF Settlement Team,

This letter represents the response from Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority (the Authority) to the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement: Consultation paper. The Authority continues to call for enhanced precept flexibility for FRAs equivalent to that offered to shire district councils, being £5 on a band D property.

The Authority refers you to our response to the Technical Consultation dated 29 October 2019, as the responses noted there remain valid. This response provides additional compelling evidence not available at the time of the Technical Consultation.

Q1: Do you agree with the Government's proposed methodology for the distribution of Revenue Support Grant in 2020-21?

No comment.

Q2: Do you agree with the Government's proposal to eliminate negative RSG?

No comment.

Q3: Do you agree with the proposed package of council tax referendum principles for 2020-21?

The Authority strongly disagrees with the decision not to provide a bespoke council tax principle for fire authorities, despite the fact that over half of the respondents who requested bespoke principles were either fire authorities or their representative body.¹

Since the Authority's response to the Technical Consultation, it has received its inspection report from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The report noted a cause for concern in that:

*"We [HMICFRS] have serious concerns as to whether Buckinghamshire FRS has the resources it needs to meet its foreseeable risk. As a result of the financial position the service finds itself in, it doesn't have enough operational firefighters to resource its prevention and protection functions and crew the minimum number of fire engines it says it needs."*²

¹ Local Government Finance Settlement 2020-21 Responses to the Technical Consultation, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/854469/Consultation_Summary_Responses.pdf page 9 para. 27.

² Fire & Rescue Service Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19. An inspection of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/buckinghamshire-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2018-19.pdf> page 23.

The report also notes that “it [Buckinghamshire FRS] is highly efficient: it has an innovative deployment model which, if better funded, would be a cost-effective way of keeping people safe.”³

The overall summary of inspection findings concludes with:

“Overall, we [HMICFS] would like to see improvements in the year ahead, **but without increased funding**, it is difficult to see where progress can be made.”⁴ (emphasis added).

The Authority therefore calls upon the Government to provide enhanced precept flexibility for FRAs equivalent to that offered to shire district councils, being £5 on a band D property.

Q4: Do you agree with the Government’s proposals for the Social Care Grant in 2020-21?

No comment.

Q5: Do you agree with the Government’s proposals for iBCF in 2020-21?

No comment.

Q6: Do you agree with the Government’s proposal to fund the New Homes Bonus in 2020-21 with the planned £900 million from Revenue Support Grant, with additional funding being secured from departmental resources, and to allocate the funds in line with previous years but with no legacy payments?

No comment.

Q7: Do you agree with the Government’s proposed approach to paying £81 million Rural Services Delivery Grant in 2020-21 to the upper quartile of local authorities, based on the super-sparsity indicator?

No comment.

Q8: Do you have any comments on the impact of the proposals for the 2020-21 settlement outlined in this consultation document on persons who share a protected characteristic, and on the draft equality statement published alongside this consultation document? Please provide evidence to support your comments.

No comment.

Yours sincerely



Jason Thelwell QFSM
Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

³ Fire & Rescue Service Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19. An inspection of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/buckinghamshire-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2018-19.pdf> page 22.

⁴ Fire & Rescue Service Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19. An inspection of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/buckinghamshire-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2018-19.pdf> page 6.



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	5 February 2020
OFFICER	Calum Bell, Head of Service Development
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	2020-2025 Public Safety Plan Consultation: Feedback & Recommendations
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan (PSP) was approved for public consultation at the Authority's 18 September 2019 meeting. The consultation was open for an eight-week period from 23 September to 18 November 2019. The purpose of this report is to present to the Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the feedback received from the consultation; • management responses to the feedback; and, • recommendations following the outcomes of the consultation. <p>At the 18 September Fire Authority meeting, officers indicated that they would also review the draft PSP in light of findings of the HMICFRS inspection that was reported to the Authority at the Extraordinary meeting on 23 January 2020. Officers have done so, and consider that the recommendations relating to the 'causes of concern' have, or can, be addressed within the broad scope of the Public Safety Plan and its associated consultation programme. Areas identified for improvement by the HMICFRS will be considered and addressed in the 2020-2025 Corporate Plan, which underpins and programmes projects and key tasks arising from the proposals contained in the Public Safety Plan. The new Corporate Plan will be presented to the 25 March Executive Committee for recommendation for approval at the June Fire Authority meeting.</p>
ACTION	Decision
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended:</p> <p>that the Authority be recommend to approve that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan be adopted; 2. Officers be directed to proceed with the further development of the strategy proposals set out at Page 32 of the 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan

	<p>(Annex 3) having regard to the consultation feedback as they are progressed and to undertake further consultations with stakeholders potentially affected by any specific changes arising from their implementation; and,</p> <p>3. the Chief Fire Officer be granted discretion to determine the sequencing and timing of the work required to further progress the proposals.</p>
<p>RISK MANAGEMENT</p>	<p>Continued re-engineering of our service provision to reflect the changing nature of risk and demand in the community may present opportunities to further mitigate a number of our key corporate risks. However, as the HMICFRS found in their first inspection the “...service is facing significant financial constraints” and “fundamentally ...does not have enough people and money” (HMICFRS report at p.6).</p> <p>Staff availability is also another significant area of risk identified within our Corporate Risk Register. Modernising and continually improving the flexibility of our employment propositions, as envisaged in the 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan, will also present opportunities to improve staff retention and recruitment thus enhancing staff availability and general resilience relative to this important area of risk.</p> <p>Regarding the public consultation process, a detailed risk assessment was carried out with Opinion Research Services at the project planning stage and a risk log established within the Project Initiation Document with appropriate measures identified to control the identified risks. The key risks arising out of the research process include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the range of views expressed are not representative of those of the public as a whole; and, • that the research is poorly executed and fails to meet the specified requirements. <p>Both of these risks could impair the decision-making process in relation to the Public Safety Plan were they to crystallise. The first risk is controlled via the focus group recruitment process which is designed to ensure that a representative sample of the public is selected by using quotas for age, gender, ethnicity, disability and geographic factors. The second, via ORS’ training and research methods which are fully accredited to relevant British, ISO and Interviewer Quality Control Scheme standards. Opinion Research Services are also a Market Research Society (MRS) Company Partner and are fully compliant with the MRS Code of Conduct.</p>
<p>FINANCIAL</p>	<p>The cost of Phase One of the consultation was £13,550</p>

IMPLICATIONS	which was paid during the 2018/19 financial year. The cost of this phase of the consultation, was £17,315 (as well as a further five focus groups this included provision of an online consultation channel to facilitate a wider response from members of the public, Authority staff and other external stakeholders plus venue hire and ORS facilitator expenses). This cost has been met from existing revenue budget resources. Further consultation and other costs may arise depending on the nature of and outcomes of the various proposals contained in the plan. The costs and benefits arising from any recommended changes to service provision will be accounted for by our Medium-Term Financial Planning process.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	The approach to the consultation complies with National Framework requirements by ensuring that consultation is undertaken at appropriate points in the Integrated Risk Management/Public Safety Plan development process. The outcomes of the consultation are not binding on the Authority. However, it is required to have regard to them in reaching decisions associated with the Public Safety Plan where relevant
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DUTY TO COLLABORATE	The National Framework requires every fire and rescue authority to produce its own Integrated Risk Management/Public Safety Plan. However, officers share thinking on approaches to plan development and consultation practices with other fire and rescue services, in particular our Thames Valley partners. The draft Public Safety Plan also identifies opportunities to continue and further collaboration where appropriate.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	No direct implications arising from the draft Public Safety Plan. Any proposals for change arising from the Plan will include evaluation of the health and safety implications.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	<p>The selection process for the public focus groups was designed to ensure that a representative sample of the public was consulted. A socio-demographic profile of the public focus group participants is shown at page 15 of Annex 1. This indicates that they were a broad cross section of residents from local areas.</p> <p>Participation in the online survey was by open invitation so the views expressed via this channel cannot be certified as being necessarily representative of the views of the general public, staff or other stakeholders as a whole. However, all staff and a wide range of organisations were encouraged to take part in the feedback process which yielded a diverse range of views and opinions.</p>
USE OF RESOURCES	The Plan sets out the Authority's strategic approach to

delivery of its vision of making Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes the safest areas in England in which to live, work and travel.

Communication with stakeholders;

The development of the Plan was informed by an initial public consultation carried out in November / December 2018 to explore public expectations of the Service and awareness of the issues and challenges facing it together with some of the ways we might potentially respond to these. A summary of the outcomes of the consultation is contained in the Plan and was reported on in full to Members at the February 2019 Fire Authority meeting. Informal consultations have also taken place with Service Managers and the Representative Bodies during the development of the draft Public Safety Plan and formal 'gateway' reviews were undertaken by the Business Transformation Board on 1 August 2019 and Strategic Management Board on 13 August 2019.

The system of internal control;

The progress of the public consultation was overseen by the Business Transformation and Strategic Management Boards.

The medium-term financial strategy;

No direct implications arising from the consultation process. However, the medium-term financial strategy will be informed by the interdependencies between the Public Safety Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan. The balance between spending and resources. The immediate costs arising from the public consultation will be met from current financial year budgeted resources. Costs associated with the pursuit of the proposals contained in the draft Public Safety Plan will be factored in to future budget planning.

The management of the asset base;

The 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan may have implications for current property and fleet related assets. These will be considered in our Property and Fleet Management strategies. The arrangements to promote and ensure probity and propriety These are assured by compliance with National Framework requirements relating to the development of, and consultation for, Integrated Risk Management Plans.

Environmental;

The 2020–2025 Public Safety Plan commits the Authority to identifying and acting on opportunities to reduce its carbon footprint.

Also, where appropriate, any changes arising from the outcomes of the reviews of service provision contained in the Plan will be subject to environmental impact

	assessments.												
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>The consultation sought to obtain the views of a representative cross section of the public and engage a wide range of other stakeholders including staff, representative bodies, community and partner organisations in the consideration of the issues and proposals contained in the Public Safety Plan.</p> <p>Consultation programme</p> <p>This comprised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of five focus groups with members of the public facilitated by Opinion Research Services (ORS), independent research specialists; and • An online questionnaire, hosted by ORS and accessible via the Authority’s website, which was open to all staff, members of the public and representatives of partner and community organisations. Awareness of the consultation was raised by targeting a range of community and partner organisations by letter and email. The consultation was also publicised on the Authority’s website and via social media channels with the following effects: <table border="1" data-bbox="724 1084 1337 1361"> <thead> <tr> <th>Media</th> <th>Articles / Posts</th> <th>Views</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Website</td> <td>2</td> <td>1,200</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FaceBook</td> <td>7</td> <td>11,600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Twitter</td> <td>13</td> <td>37,100</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Response</p> <p>A total of 55 diverse members of the public participated in the focus groups. There was a total of 58 responses to the online questionnaire. Seven of these were from respondents identifying as Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service staff, although the actual level of response may have been higher with some preferring to identify as residents or not to say. Eight organisations also responded to the consultation via the questionnaire. A full profile of online respondents is shown at Tables 1 – 5 on pages 11–12 of Annex 1. A further nine responses were received by email or letter (seven from individual respondents and two from organisations). Summary feedback from these is included at Annex 2.</p> <p>Background Papers</p> <p>Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018):</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-</p>	Media	Articles / Posts	Views	Website	2	1,200	FaceBook	7	11,600	Twitter	13	37,100
Media	Articles / Posts	Views											
Website	2	1,200											
FaceBook	7	11,600											
Twitter	13	37,100											

	<p>and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2</p> <p>2015-2020 Public Safety Plan: https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/8114/2116/4524/2015-20-PUBLIC-SAFETY-PLAN Updated after 17 Dec CFA.pdf</p> <p>2020 – 2025 Public Safety Plan – “Listening & Engagement” Research Report: https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/4915/4894/2682/ITEM-12-Outcomes-of-2020-2025-PUBLIC-SAFETY-PLAN Focus Groups Report Appendix.pdf</p> <p>Draft 2020-2025 PSP & Consultation Plan as approved at the 18 September 2019 Fire Authority meeting: https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/8915/6797/6225/ITEM-10 Draft 2020-25 PSP 18 September CFA Cover Paper Annexes-min.pdf</p>
APPENDICES	<p>Annexures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ORS Report of Consultation Findings 2. Service management responses to consultation feedback. 3. Finalised 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan for decision.
TIME REQUIRED	30 Minutes
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Stuart Gowanlock, Corporate Planning Manager sgowanlock@bucksfire.gov.uk</p>



Buckinghamshire
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
we save lives

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan

Report of Consultation Findings





Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan Report of Consultation Findings



Buckinghamshire
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
we save lives

Report by Opinion Research Services

Opinion Research Services

The Strand · Swansea · SA1 1AF

01792 535300 | www.ors.org.uk | info@ors.org.uk

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As with all our studies, findings from this report are subject to Opinion Research Services' Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract.

Any press release or publication of the findings of this report requires the advance approval of ORS. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation

This study was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252:2012 and ISO 9001:2015.

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Acknowledgements

Opinion Research Services (ORS) is pleased to have worked with Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) on the consultation reported here.

We are grateful to the members of the public who took part in the focus groups. They were patient in listening to background information before entering positively into the spirit of open discussions. They engaged with the service, with the issues under consideration and with each other in discussing their ideas readily. We would also like to thank the 58 people who took part in the survey, without whose valuable input the research would not have been possible.

We thank BFRS for commissioning the project as part of its programme of consultation. We particularly thank the senior staff and officers who attended the sessions to listen to the public's views and answer questions. Such meetings benefit considerably from the readiness of fire officers to answer participants' questions fully and frankly.

At all stages of the project, ORS' status as an independent organisation engaging with the public as objectively as possible was recognised and respected. We are grateful for the trust, and we hope this report will contribute usefully to thinking about BFRS's future service planning at a time of serious financial constraints. We hope also that ORS has been instrumental in strengthening BFRS's public engagement and consultation through the focus group participants.

The ORS Project Team

Project design

Kelly Lock

Hannah Champion

Alastair Layne

Fieldwork Management

Robyn Griffiths

Amy Bone

Max Davies

Focus Group Facilitators

Kelly Lock

Hannah Champion

Data Services

Joseph De Marco

Data Analysis

Richard Harris

Sheng Yang

Peter Maggs

Callum Irvine

Report Authors

Kelly Lock

Hannah Champion

Alastair Layne

1. Executive Summary

Introduction

- ^{1.1} In 2019, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) launched its Public Safety Plan 2020-2025 (PSP), which sets out how it will provide a fire and rescue service in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes for the five-year period from 2020-2025. Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by BFRS to offer independent advice on the design and conduct of the consultation programme, undertake a programme of key consultation activities, and provide an interpretative report of the findings.

Summary of main findings

- ^{1.2} The following paragraphs summarise the main findings from 58 responses to BFRS' online consultation questionnaire and five focus groups with members of the public across Buckinghamshire. However, readers are referred to the detailed chapters that follow for the full report. The suite of ORS reports also includes full cross-tabulations.

Infrastructure

- ^{1.3} Focus group participants were satisfied with BFRS' strategic proposals for responding to infrastructure challenges: they were described as '*sensible*', '*flexible*' and '*responsive*'. It is not to say, though, that there were no concerns and reassurances sought - and just under half (46%) of questionnaire respondents reported that there are specific aspects and risks associated with infrastructure projects that they think BFRS should consider in its planning.
- ^{1.4} Feedback across both research strands around these specific concerns mainly related to **new housing developments**, which are reportedly causing **access issues** for emergency and other large vehicles due to narrow roads and many parked cars. It was also argued that **new buildings are not being constructed as safely as they could be**, and that developers and commissioning authorities should be held more accountable. Furthermore, focus group participants suggested that more **collaboration between BFRS, housing developers and local authorities** is needed so the Service has ample opportunity to ensure safety regulations are being met.
- ^{1.5} More generally, there were concerns about **high housing density, population growth** and the resulting increases in safety risks caused by **congestion** throughout the area.
- ^{1.6} Additional worries were around the alleged **number of collisions within roadwork stretches** (on the M1 for example), as well as whether there is sufficient resourcing to respond to challenges relating to **large-scale projects such as HS2**.

Population

Helping the most vulnerable

1.7 BFRS was **praised for the work undertaken** to date in the community and specifically with vulnerable people. Moreover, there was widespread **agreement** with the proposal for BFRS **to continue to collaborate** with partner organisations in order to engage with those at higher risk from fire and other emergencies.

1.8 Suggestions as to how BFRS could further improve its engagement were as follows:

- Doing more to **bring health and social care together** in offering a joined-up approach – for example via more collaboration with charities and healthcare trusts
- Using **best practice to share information** about vulnerable populations within partnerships and with other services
- **Increasing its presence in the community** by ‘patrolling’ local areas and regularly visiting care homes, sheltered housing schemes and schools
- Increasing its presence and awareness more generally through **media campaigning** such as radio broadcasting
- Investing in the roll out of **fire safety ‘advocates’ or ‘champions’**
- Running community workshops and seminars to **educate people** with vulnerable relatives, carers and volunteers on **how to undertake ‘basic safety checks’**
- Undertaking **early intervention and prevention activities**, such as: actively identifying and offering vulnerable people a home safety visit; and educating the next generation in schools and social clubs
- Encouraging the use of **assistive technology devices** like ‘Alexa’ to help maintain safety and wellbeing without putting added pressure on the FRS or adult social care
- Ensuring those with **learning or physical disabilities** are also a focus, as well as the elderly

The automatic fire alarms (AFAs) attendance policy

1.9 Changes to AFA attendance are not included as part of the 2020-25 Public Safety Plan, and therefore did not feature in the questionnaire. However, as this is a policy BFRS may consult on in future, views on it were explored in the focus groups.

1.10 Overall **reviewing the policy was considered sensible**, although the majority of participants would not necessarily agree with BFRS ceasing to attend AFAs altogether. Instead, there was reasonable support for BFRS **only attending an AFA if evidence is provided to indicate a real fire**; for example, via a phone call from an employee/member of the public or via technology such as drones and ‘smart smoke alarms.’

1.11 In addition, consensus among the groups was that **businesses should take more responsibility** in improving equipment and training for staff to reduce the number of false AFA alarms. It was also suggested that **businesses should be fined** if the FRS attends three or more false alarm call outs.

- 1.12 A few questionnaire respondents also raised concerns about the impact of responses to false alarms in the free-text comments, and felt that **BFRS should take action** to decrease the number of these call-outs.

Technology, information and systems

- 1.13 Focus group participants were **very positive about the proposals** for responding to technological advancements: they were especially keen to discuss the **use of drones** and whether **autonomous vehicles** could respond to specific incidents such as pumping flood water or minor RTCs.
- 1.14 Just under two fifths (38%) of questionnaire respondents and a reasonable proportion of focus group participants felt there were additional specific aspects, opportunities or risks associated with technological change that need to be considered. Specific safety concerns were raised in relation to: fire risks associated with the **rechargeable batteries used in electric vehicles**; the number of **accidents on ‘smart’ motorways**; **cyber-attacks** and **terrorism**; and whether firefighters will be adequately **trained to respond to advancing technological risks**. More generally, whether or not BFRS should be **investing more money into frontline services rather than technology** was discussed among focus group participants.
- 1.15 It was suggested that BFRS could mitigate these risks through being **more involved at the implementation stage** of new technology development to fully understand any impacts on the Service and society.

Civil emergencies

- 1.16 BFRS’s plans for mitigating risks associated with civil emergencies were also **well received** among the focus groups. However, around four fifths (41%) of questionnaire respondents reportedly had additional concerns - mainly around tackling carbon emissions and climate change and **whether BFRS has the resources in place** to deliver the proposals. Specifically, there were doubts about how well **the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF)** is being utilised in practice, along with worries around the Service’s overall **lack of funding**.
- 1.17 Suggestions as to how BFRS could do more to mitigate risk were around better **educating the public** on how to prepare for and what to do during a civil emergency; partnership work with **companies specialising in security**; and ensuring that the service has the **correct appliances** to respond to incidents that are more likely to affect Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, such as emergencies within **heavily forested areas**.
- 1.18 In terms of reducing its **carbon footprint**, it was acknowledged that this may be difficult for BFRS to do, especially with appliances travelling greater distances to cover areas that are struggling with resourcing. However, it was recommended that BFRS follows an official recycling regime.

Workforce

- 1.19 Focus group participants felt that **BFRS is taking the correct approach** to responding to challenges around workforce: they particularly supported **flexible working hours, apprenticeships** and **targeted recruitment** for a more diverse workforce.

- 1.20 Moreover, questionnaire respondents were presented with a list of factors and asked what they thought were most important when considering BFRS as an employer. The top three were as: **engaging with and listening to staff** (53%); **offering opportunities to develop skills** (40%); and offering **enhanced employee benefits** (such as local weighting allowances) (38%).

Funding

- 1.21 In response to being asked whether they would support an increase in the part of council tax that funds BFRS during 2020-21, the largest proportion of both focus group participants and questionnaire respondents (47%) said they would be **willing to pay a one-off £10 increase** to the current annual charge for a Band D property. Indeed, BFRS was considered a 'worthy cause' to pay more towards. Moreover, it was deemed sensible to increase funding so that rates are closer in line with the national average. Only 15% of questionnaire respondents indicated a preference for no increase at all.
- 1.22 However, there were concerns that this would be the **'thin edge of the wedge'** insofar as other services may also increase their portion of council tax rates. **Alternative suggestions** put forward across both research strands were **charging for false alarm call outs** as well as the provision of **safety advice and training**. Moreover, some queried whether BFRS would be able to generate more future funding as a result of the **large number of housing developments** being built across the county.

2. Project Overview

The commission

- 2.1 In 2019, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) launched its Public Safety Plan 2020-2025 (PSP), which sets out how it will provide a fire and rescue service in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes for the five-year period from 2020-2025. The plan builds on BFRS' Public Safety Plan 2015-20 and considers changes to risks and how it plans to change its services to keep residents, communities and businesses safe from fire and other emergencies.
- 2.2 In this context, on the basis of our experience of the fire and rescue service and many statutory consultations, Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by BFRS to offer independent advice on the design and conduct of the consultation programme, undertake a programme of key consultation activities, and provide an interpretative report of the findings.

Extensive consultation

- 2.3 BFRS' consultation period ran from 23rd September to 18th November 2019, and included elements conducted by ORS as an independent organisation - for example, providing feedback on the consultation document; designing presentation material for focus groups; recruiting, facilitating and reporting five deliberative focus groups; designing and analysing responses to an online and paper version of an Open Consultation Questionnaire; and writing interim and final reports.

Consultation proportionate and fair

- 2.4 The key legal and good practice requirements for proper consultation are based on the so-called Gunning Principles, which state that consultation should: be conducted at a formative stage, before decisions are taken; allow sufficient time for people to participate and respond; provide the public and stakeholders with sufficient background information to allow them to consider the issues and any proposals intelligently and critically; and be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken.
- 2.5 In this case, the formal consultation for BFRS' PSP followed an earlier engagement programme - also undertaken by ORS - which was carried out in 2018. It involved five focus groups across its service area (in Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham, High Wycombe and Milton Keynes), with BFRS's key priority being to understand public opinions and to 'test' some very general ideas and principles at a very early stage.
- 2.6 The eight-week formal consultation period gave the public and stakeholders sufficient time to participate, and through its consultation documents and website information the Fire Authority sought to provide sufficient information for staff, stakeholders and residents to understand the proposals and to make informed judgements about them and the supporting evidence.

- 2.7 The final Gunning principle listed above is that consultation outcomes should be properly taken into consideration before authorities take their decisions. In this case, regular formal and informal briefings allowed the progressive reporting of people’s opinions.
- 2.8 Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and consider public and stakeholder views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully. Consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what are the right or best decisions in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine authorities’ decisions.

Summary of consultation strands

Open Questionnaire

- 2.9 The open consultation questionnaire (with an accompanying Consultation Document) was available online and as a hard copy between 23rd September to 18th November 2019. The survey was available to residents, representatives from business, public and voluntary organisations and BFRS employees.
- 2.10 In total, 58 questionnaires were completed, all of which were submitted online.
- 2.11 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 Buckinghamshire population, 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 strength of feeling of residents who were motivated to put forward their views about the proposals.

Respondent Profiles

- 2.12 The tables below show the profile characteristics of respondents to the questionnaire.

Table 1: Gender – All Respondents

Gender	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
Male	27	69
Female	12	31
Not Known	19	-
Total	58	100

Table 2: Age – All Respondents

Age	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
16 to 34	6	15
35 to 54	12	31
55 to 64	13	33
65 or over	8	21
Not Known	19	-
Total	58	100

Table 3: Disability – All Respondents

Disability	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
Yes	4	10
No	38	90
Not Known	16	-
Total	58	100

Table 4: Ethnicity – All Respondents

Ethnicity	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
White British	38	100
Not Known	20	-
Total	58	100

Table 5: Respondent Type – All Respondents

Respondent Type	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
Own personal response	48	86
On behalf of an organisation	8	14
Not Known	2	-
Total	58	100

Responses from organisations

- 2.13 Most responses to the consultation questionnaire were personal responses (86%; 48 respondents), which included just under a fifth (18%; 7 respondents) who work for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service. More than one eighth (14%; 8 respondents) were from local organisations or business respondents.
- 2.14 Of the eight respondents who stated that they were responding on behalf of an organisation, seven gave the name of the organisation they were representing. These were:
- Broughton and Milton Keynes Parish Council
 - Central Milton Keynes Town Council
 - Camphill Milton Keynes Communities
 - Hambledon Parish Council
 - Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust Community – Learning Disability Team
 - Padbury Parish Council
 - Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

Duplicate and co-ordinated responses

- 2.15 Online questionnaires must be open and accessible to all while minimising the possibility of multiple completions (by the same people) that distort the analysis. Therefore, while making it easy to complete the survey online, ORS monitors the IP addresses through which surveys are completed. On this occasion, the monitoring showed that there were no duplicates generated.

Interpretation of the Data

- 2.16 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers.
- 2.17 The example comments shown throughout the report have been selected as being typical of those received in relation to each proposal.
- 2.18 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with:
- Purple/blue shades to represent neutral responses (neither positive nor negative)
 - Grey shades to represent ‘other’ responses

Focus groups with members of the public

- 2.19 BFRS commissioned a programme of five deliberative focus groups with members of the public across Buckinghamshire (in Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham, High Wycombe and Milton Keynes) in order to involve a diverse and broadly representative cross-section of residents. ORS worked in collaboration with BFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the groups before facilitating the discussions and preparing an independent report of findings.

Attendance and representativeness

- 2.20 The focus groups were designed to inform and ‘engage’ the participants both with the issues and with BFRS - by using a ‘deliberative’ approach to encourage members of the public to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing important issues and proposals in detail. The meetings lasted for two hours.
- 2.21 In total, there were 55 diverse participants at the focus groups. The dates of the meetings and attendance levels by members of the public can be found in Table 6.

Table 6: Focus groups (Area, Time and Date and Number of attendees)

Area	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
Aylesbury	6:30pm – 8:30pm Tuesday 8 th October 2019	11
Milton Keynes	6:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 9 th October 2019	10
Buckingham	6:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 9 th October 2019	11
High Wycombe	6:30pm – 8:30pm Thursday 10 th October 2019	13
Chesham	6:30pm – 8:30pm Thursday 10 th October 2019	10

- 2.22 The attendance target for the focus groups was between eight to 10 people, so the recruitment programme was successful. Participants were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS’ Social Research Call Centre. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent and broadly representative of the wider community. Participants who took part in focus groups as part of BFRS’ engagement process were also invited to take part. As standard good practice, people were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part.

- 2.23 Overall (as shown in the table below), participants were a broad cross-section of residents from the local areas:

Table 7: Focus groups criteria

Criteria	Focus Group Count
Gender	
Male	26
Female	29
Age	
16-34	21
35-54	21
55+	22
Ethnicity	
BME	11
Disability	
Limiting Long-term Illness	2

- 2.24 In the recruitment process, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors, and the venues at which the focus groups met were readily accessible. People's needs were taken into account in the recruitment and venue selection.
- 2.25 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 Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes 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. In summary, the outcomes reported here are reliable as examples of the needs and wants of diverse informed people reacting to the possible challenges facing BFRS.

Discussion Agenda

- 2.26 The focus group agenda covered all of the following topics:

Background information in relation to:

- Incident profile and numbers
- BFRS' Public Safety Plan 2015-20 achievements and performance

Future challenges in relation to six key areas:

- Technological changes and advancements
- Civil emergencies

- Infrastructure projects
- Population changes
- Workforce and funding pressures

What BFRS is already doing and will continue to do to mitigate risks associated with these challenges

BFRS' Public Safety Plan proposals around how to mitigate these risks and challenges, which include:

- Temporarily relocating appliances & other resources to reduce impact of infrastructure projects
- Reviewing current capacity, capabilities and approaches to meet emerging civil emergency risks
- Improving preventative engagement with vulnerable groups
- Possibly reviewing automated fire alarm (AFA) attendance policy
- Improving recruitment and retention via flexible employment opportunities and developing the roll on the on-call firefighter
- Increasing Council Tax by more than 3% in order to avoid reductions to service provision.

^{2.27} The questions were accompanied by a presentation devised by ORS and BFRS to inform and stimulate discussion of the issues - and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they wished throughout the discussions.

Reporting

^{2.28} The qualitative research chapter concisely reviews the sentiments and judgements of focus group participants about BFRS and what they expect and desire of it. Verbatim quotations are used, in indented italics, not because we agree or disagree with them – but for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of view. ORS does not endorse the opinions in question, but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly. The report is an interpretative summary of the issues raised by participants.

3. Open Consultation Questionnaire

Introduction

- 3.1 The open consultation questionnaire (with an accompanying Consultation Document) was available online and as a hard copy between 23rd September and 18th November 2019. 58 questionnaires were completed, all of which were submitted online.

Infrastructure projects

The Public Safety Plan identifies a range of major infrastructure projects, along with plans for new housing development - particularly in the Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes - that have implications for future fire and rescue service provision.

Some of these projects have the potential to cause, or have already, caused disruption to local transport networks. Consequently, they may have an impact on BFRS service provision, particularly emergency response times.

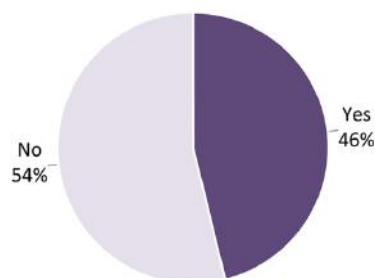
Its nearest-appliance mobilisation system will help BFRS mitigate this risk. It will also consider temporarily relocating appliances and other resources to avoid excessive impacts on its ability to respond to emergencies or deliver other services during construction. In addition, BFRS will continually review risk, and identify any additional training, equipment and vehicle requirements needed.

Are there any other specific aspects or risks associated with these projects that you think BFRS should consider in its planning?

If yes, what are these risks and how should BFRS mitigate them?

- 3.2 Figure 1 shows that 46% of respondents think there are other specific aspects or risks associated with the infrastructure projects in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes that BFRS should consider in its planning, whilst more than half (54%) do not.

Figure 1: Are there any other specific aspects or risks associated with these projects that you think BFRS should consider in its planning?



Base: All Respondents (52)

- 3.3 Some of these concerns were related to construction and the impact of new housing developments.

“New buildings are not being constructed as well as the architects who design them... compartmentation design means fires that should be contained can spread. BFRS need to try and talk to local authorities, to ensure inspections, to make sure the buildings have been constructed as specified, and corners haven't been cut by builders, who don't understand why they need to build in the specified way, and not the way they've always done it.”

“Pursuant to the Grenfell fire, the Parish Council felt that the fire service should lobby for developers and commissioning authorities to continue to be held accountable for their deployment of materials and building designs which are found to be intrinsically unsafe for both occupiers and emergency services.” (Broughton and Milton Keynes Parish Council)

“Ensure that the right plans are considered, especially [relating to] cladding” (HPFT Community Learning Disability Team)

- 3.4 Other areas of risk that respondents expressed concern about were related to insufficient and inconsiderate parking and the obstructions this can cause.

“Planning authorities are allowing what feels like quite dense concentrations of housing with a woefully insufficient number of parking spaces, causing residents and their visitors to park all over the place and obstruct larger vehicles such as fire engines, delivery lorries, and refuse, and recycling lorries. Can more pressure be brought to bear on these planning authorities to ensure that they provide sufficient parking?”

Population: helping the most vulnerable

BFRS continually seeks to improve its ability to engage with people who are at higher risk from fire and other emergencies, such as the 80+ age group.

It uses a number of data sources and works very closely with partner organisations to achieve this, for example carrying out visits to homes and participating in education programmes.

Through its Fire and Wellness programme BFRS has broadened its home visits to look at other issues which are often linked to fire safety, while also assisting key partners in helping people to be safer and healthier in their homes.

BFRS welcomes feedback on how it can improve its engagement with those at higher risk from fire and other emergencies. In what ways, if any, do you think it could do this better?

- 3.5 In terms of how BFRS can improve its engagement with those who are at higher risk from fire, suggestions included: engagement through local radio broadcasts; working closely with charities and care agencies; and running seminars for those who care for vulnerable people.

“Perhaps using the local community radio stations to talk about fire risks, and work with parish councils to run events for the same reasons.”

“Work closer with charities, to try to reach those people that are maybe not on any service radar. Also, work closer with businesses that supply equipment to vulnerable persons; [...] not every older or vulnerable person who needs assistance is registered with the authorities.”

“Work with agencies that provide daily care to vulnerable people. Train their staff to recognise hazards and the risks they present, and how to assess and mitigate those risks.”

“[...] run seminars for carers, volunteers, and people with older relatives, so that they could carry out some of the basic safety checks for vulnerable people. For example, checking their smoke alarms every month, checking they are warm during cold weather, and encouraging them to eat healthily. It's about time more people stepped up to the plate and took more responsibility for older members of their families.”

Technology, information and systems

The growth in both the number and complexity of cyber-attacks means that BFRS must be constantly vigilant and work with partners and suppliers to mitigate these threats. BFRS is also aware of the way that new information technologies are being increasingly embedded into infrastructure, industrial plant, public buildings, homes, transportation networks and urban environments.

BFRS currently uses a range of capabilities to mitigate the risk of cyber-attacks, it is diligent in its selection of partners and suppliers, and has disaster recovery systems in place.

During the period of this Public Safety Plan, BFRS expects that progress will be made with the Government's Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP). This will provide more secure and resilient communication capabilities to deliver more real-time information to improve incident management and other services.

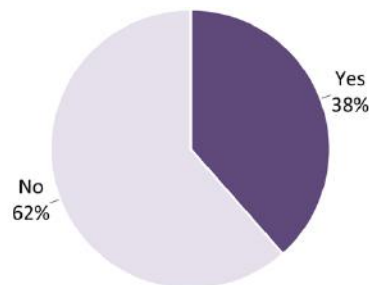
BFRS will also monitor the evolution and implementation of a range of new technologies and systems such as 5G cellular network technology, autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence, robotics, the development of 'Smart Cities' and 'Smart' transportation networks.

Are there any other specific aspects, opportunities or risks associated with technological change that you think BFRS should consider in its planning?

If yes, what are these and how should BFRS mitigate them?

- 3.6 Figure 2 shows that more than one third (38%) of respondents felt that there are other specific aspects or risks associated with technological change that BFRS should consider in its planning, whilst more than three fifths (62%) did not.

Figure 2: Are there any other specific aspects, opportunities or risks associated with technological change that you think BFRS should consider in its planning?



Base: All Respondents (39)

- 3.7 Of the respondents who thought there were specific aspects, opportunities or risks to consider, common themes were related to cyber-attacks and terrorism:

"The risks of cyber-attacks can be mitigated by setting up a closed intranet for operations and communications."

"In response to a cyber-attack, we might well find cellular networks out of action. We might well anticipate our power supply grid disabled. We might find our landline phone system out of action. There could even be widespread disruption of water supplies including hydrants. A cyber-attack might well be timed to coincide with a spell of extreme weather, such as a prolonged period of snow, which could disrupt road traffic. You are already well equipped with radio comms. Those systems may be more than just a way of enabling you to respond to calls from the public. You may well be an essential link in communications in the event of civil unrest in such a concerted attack."

- 3.8 Others had reservations about new technological systems and the potential issues they may cause:

"Need to consider whether the use of 'smart' technology, including the motorways, increases the risk to some individuals, for example, the number of deaths on smart motorways in what was the hard shoulder. Was this risk identified in the planning? Does 'smart' technology enable the service to reach some of the older population, will they be able to understand the technology, will it help support and reassure? If smart technology is used, backup systems need to be available and immediate to counter loss in network, for example, if smart technology is to be used to manage incidents. There is a risk - relying on technology."

Civil emergencies

As well as evaluating current and emerging local risks, BFRS contributes to national preparedness for a range of civil emergencies. These include risks such as flooding, wildfires, terrorist related incidents and other emergencies that might have local, regional or national dimensions.

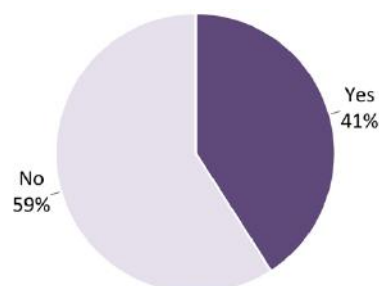
There is a statutory requirement for BFRS to be prepared for civil emergencies and, as Category One responder, it is an active member of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF). This is where the police, fire, ambulance, local authorities and other key agencies come together to plan, exercise and work together to prepare and respond. BFRS will continue to review its current capacity and capabilities to meet emerging risks in collaboration with TVLRF.

BFRS will also continue to identify and act to reduce its own ‘carbon footprint’, for example, utilising solar panels and introducing electric vehicles.

Are there any other specific aspects or risks associated with this area of work that you think BFRS should consider in its planning?

If yes, what are these and how should BFRS mitigate them?

Figure 3: Are there any other specific aspects or risks associated with this area of work that you think BFRS should consider in its planning?



Base: All Respondents (44)

- 3.9 In Figure 3 shows that more than two fifths (41%) of respondents felt that there are other specific aspects or risks associated with civil emergencies that BFRS should consider in its planning, whilst almost three fifths (59%) did not.
- 3.10 Of the respondents who thought that BFRS should consider additional risks in relation to civil emergencies, most of the concerns were related to tackling carbon emissions and climate change.

“Carbon footprint - stations have to adopt their own recycling regime, as there are no facilities, or guidance documents provided to carry out this task.”

“The carbon footprint will always be a problem when appliances have to travel greater distances due to the lack of resources – i.e. wholtime pumps covering, unmanned station grounds and incidents. Moving personnel from their designated station to cover gaps in the manning levels will also be difficult for your ‘footprint.’”

“Climate change would appear to be having a big impact upon emergency services not just in the UK, but across the globe. BFRS must consider all eventualities when planning for the future.”

- 3.11 It was also said that there should be collaboration with other organisations (both private and public) to help tackle security threats.

“Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, as a neighbouring service, welcomes the ongoing collaborative activity in this area to combat security threats.” (Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service)

“[BFRS should] work with the security of companies like BT Security who are excellent at identifying security threats to its assets.”

- 3.12 Further concerns were around BFRS’ ability to deal with local wildfires, with one respondent suggesting the Service should review its fleet to ensure it has appropriate vehicles (4x4s for example). A few respondents also raised doubts as to whether BFRS has the funds or resources to respond to civil emergencies, for example to be able to fully support the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF).

“With the increase in wildfires both nationally and globally, and the fact that, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes sits within an area of outstanding natural beauty, with a heavily forested area, should you not consider whether you really have the correct type of fire appliances to deal with this type of incident. Looking at the current range of fire engines on your website, it would appear that you don't - only three 4x4 fire engines!”

“Do you have the resources to support TVLRF in practice, i.e., in an event of an emergency, will there be sufficient staff to manage national issues, as well as remaining available for local response? Will this work include spread of viruses? Do you have the capability, knowledge, and resources, to manage the risks?”

Workforce pressures

There are a range of issues that affect the ability of BFRS to retain, recruit and develop its workforce - especially frontline operational firefighters. Particular challenges include:

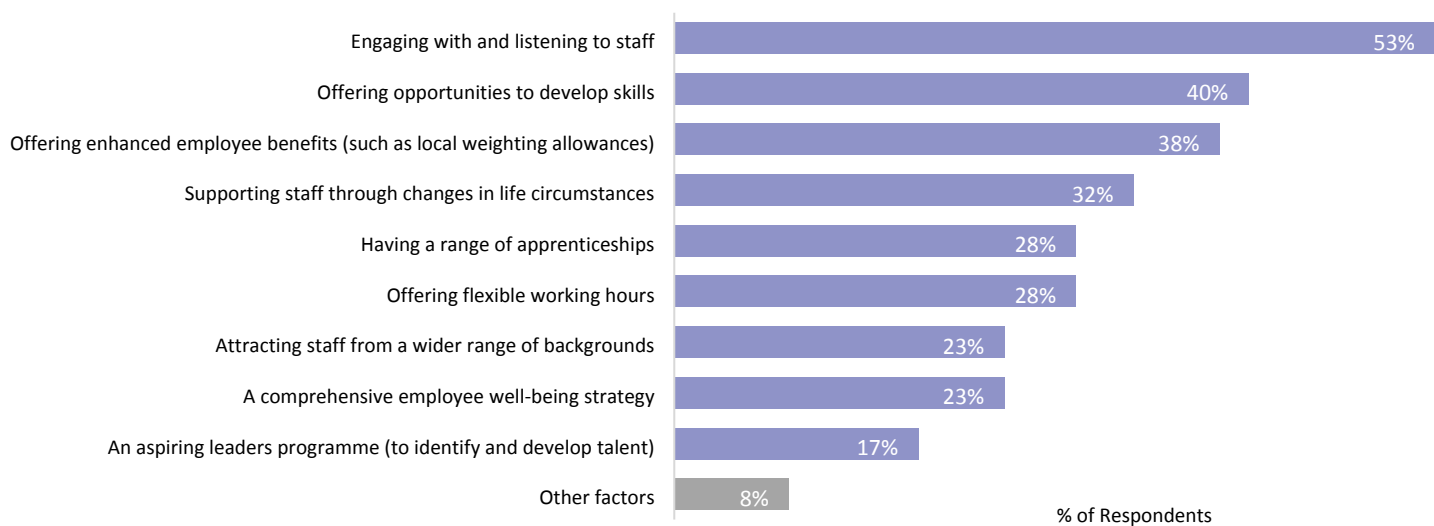
- » An ageing workforce and retirement ‘bulge’ due to legacy recruitment patterns from the 1980s and 1990s.
- » Loss of staff to neighbouring fire and rescue services (for example London Fire Brigade which pays weighting allowances).
- » Changes in society and the way people live and work which have affected the ability of BFRS to recruit On-Call firefighters.

BFRS regularly engages with and listens to its staff in a variety of ways. It also actively reviews and develops employment opportunities to include flexible contracts, employee benefits and opportunities for staff to develop and earn more. BFRS also aims to explore new and additional ways to reduce workforce pressures over the course of this Public Safety Plan.

BFRS will continue to develop and roll out more flexible employment opportunities; use innovative marketing to attract staff from a wider range of diverse backgrounds; further develop the roll of the On-Call firefighter; and align training strategies and priorities to meet future needs.

Which three factors do you think are most important when considering BFRS as an employer?

Figure 4: Which three factors do you think are most important when considering BFRS as an employer?



Base: All respondents (53)

3.13 shows that, when considering BFRS as an employer, more than half (53%) of respondents thought that engaging with and listening to staff is the most important factor. This was followed by offering opportunities to develop skills (40%) and enhanced employee benefits (e.g. local weighting allowances) (38%).

3.14 8% of respondents mentioned 'other' factors, which included: recruitment from local communities; evidence that BFRS is open, honest and consistent; and for BFRS to open negotiations around new pay scales for experienced staff.

Funding pressures

Despite the success of efficiency measures already taken during the period 2015-2020, BFRS faces a range of financial pressures.

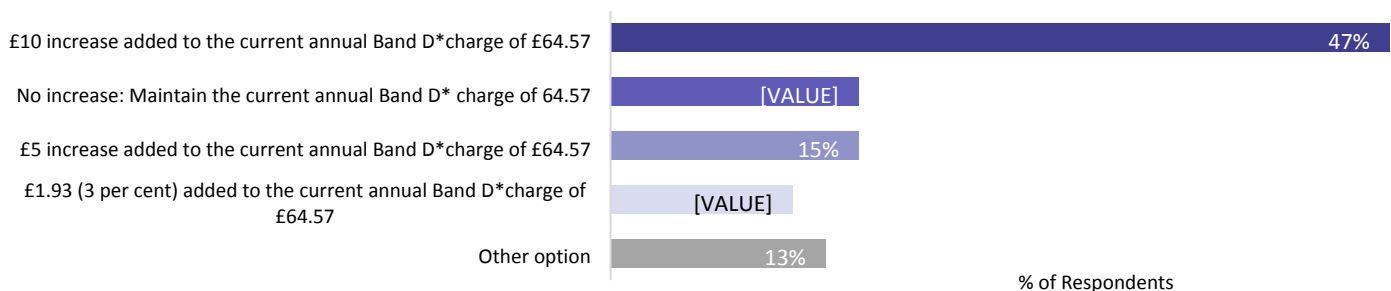
For example:

- » Significant Government funding reductions for fire services since 2010.
- » The lowest council tax rates of any Combined Fire Authority (CFA) in the country (fire authorities that currently charge a higher rate of council tax than BFRS, get a correspondingly larger increase in their funding).
- » Any proposal to increase fire and rescue service council tax rates by more than three per cent currently requires approval from local residents by means of a referendum. A referendum on this in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes could cost BFRS up to £600,000 - potentially leaving it in a worse financial position if a proposed increase were rejected.

These may affect its ability to maintain current levels of service provision to the public in the future. Given the financial challenges, BFRS believes that a council tax increase by more than the current limit of three per cent will be necessary to help it deliver fire and rescue services in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

- » **An increase of £10 per household** (for a Band D property*) would provide **£3 million** which would provide more money to invest in the Service.
- » **An increase of £5 per household** (for a Band D property*) would provide **£1.5 million** which would cover the projected funding shortfall for 2020/21.
- » **An increase of three per cent per household** in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (the most currently allowed by Government without a referendum) would provide **£600,000** and would cost an extra **£1.93 per year** for Band D property*. This would require BFRS to use its reserves to help cover the funding shortfall for 2020/21 and, depending on longer term funding settlements, could mean future reductions to frontline services.
- » **No increase** in council tax would present a greater risk of BFRS having to make reductions to front-line services in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Figure 5: Based on the information above, which of the following options would you prefer for the part of your council tax that funds BFRS during 2020-21?



Base: All Respondents (55)

- 3.15 Figure 5 (on the previous page) shows that nearly half (47%) of respondents would prefer a £10 increase for part of their council tax to fund BFRS during 2020-21. More than one eighth (15%) of respondents would prefer no increase, with the same (15%) proportion preferring a £5 increase. Less than one eighth (11%) of respondents would prefer a £1.93 increase, with 13% of respondents preferring another option.
- 3.16 Other options put forward were around raising funds through charging for false alarms and safety advice and training.

“Charge for special service calls and false alarms. If not in good intent, people have insurance claims of their insurance.”

“Have you considered potential income generation activities, diversifying the fire service – e.g. charging companies for fire safety advice, or training when the fire officers are not dealing with incidents, charging for the use of fire attendance at events, charging for continuing fault alarms? All public sector bodies are now having to find ways to plug the gaps and maximise resources, how is BFRS responding to this?”

- 3.17 Some respondents did not give specific suggestions for how BFRS could raise funds, but simply wanted to see a general increase in funding from central government for the Fire and Rescue Service. Others raised concerns about other services also deciding to increase their council tax rates, which they argued some would not be able to afford.

“As much as I would like to pay the additional £10 per year for a great service to become even better, it's a question of ‘will the police and council also be asking for a significant increase?’ Which, if yes and it's granted, will mean some households falling below the poverty line and becoming vulnerable, therefore putting additional strains on all services and it becomes false economy.”

Other areas of interest

Figure 6: Have you identified any positive or negative impacts on human rights or any of the protected characteristics within the Public Safety Plan, that you believe should be taken into consideration?

- 3.18 In the four responses identifying impacts on human rights or protected characteristics within the Public Safety Plan, a concern was raised about the aging workforce of BFRS:

“Ageing workforce and the very demanding physical role that active firefighting plays. When determining budgets, the impact of such a job on the individual should be taken into account to ensure active fire fighters are not forced to continue working past the time that they feel is right for them.”

- 3.19 One respondent felt that there should be more focus on Buckinghamshire’s disabled residents.

“I think BFRS could potentially pre-visit some properties, such as [the] block of flats at Buckingham View, which has a higher proportion of disabled residents.”

- 3.20 There was also some concern about the lack of representation and diversity within BFRS:

“Yes, you have/are working with older people, but what about everyone else? What are you doing to break barriers and squash negative perceptions about the fire service being white male dominant?”

“The service should be inclusive to all regardless of protected characteristics, inclusivity and valuing diversity are key.”

4. Focus Group Findings

Introduction

- 4.1 Overall, the five focus group sessions considered a wide range of important issues that are reported fully below. The report has been structured to address each of the areas of discussion in some detail. The views of the five meetings have been merged to give an overall report of findings, rather than five separate and potentially repetitive mini-reports – but significant differences in views have been drawn out where appropriate.

Infrastructure

Overview of proposals

BFRS WILL...

Consider temporarily relocating appliances/other resources during construction

Continue to work with local authorities to understand the potential impact of development plans

Ensure resources are in the right place

Keep the current number of immediately/rapidly available appliances to maintain attendance times and capacity to deal with simultaneous larger incidents

There was strong support for and confidence in BFRS' proposals

- 4.2 The proposals for mitigating against the risks associated with the infrastructure projects affecting Buckinghamshire were well received by participants, who described them as '*sensible*', '*flexible*' and '*responsive*'. Indeed, participants were confident that these strategies will effectively help in responding to BFRS' challenges.

"The four bullet points under infrastructure are a sensible approach to mitigating the risks." (Chesham)

"Within financial constraints, the FRS appears to be working smart." (Aylesbury)

"The plan appears flexible and responsive." (Buckingham)

"The proposals seem sensible." (High Wycombe)

"We agree with the infrastructure proposals." (Chesham)

"[The proposals] seem to be mitigating the challenges well by using flexible locations and flexible resourcing for firefighters." (Chesham)

- 4.3 The High Wycombe group considered the temporary relocation of appliances and other resources to be particularly important, and sought reassurance that all areas of the town will be considered when BFRS implements its plans so that '*no one is disadvantaged*'.

“Having appliances in strategic locations and reviewing appropriateness would mitigate risks/challenges.” (High Wycombe)

“Relocating appliances in peak times will provide a quicker response and be very useful, especially in places like Handy Cross, so we agree with that.” (High Wycombe)

There were concerns around safety due to narrow roads, housing increases and roadworks

- 4.4 When asked if they had any specific concerns in relation to current and planned infrastructure changes, a reasonable proportion of participants identified narrow roads and often inconsiderate parking as issues that can result in difficult access for emergency vehicles.

“The roads are very narrow on the new developments - they’re like a single track by the time people have parked their cars along the roads.” (Chesham)

“Narrow roads are a concern.” (Aylesbury)

“Single track roads caused by parking.” (Chesham)

- 4.5 There were also discussions around the increase in new housing across the county and how this may impact on road congestion and access, as well as concern about a growing number of HMOs. Moreover, a few participants were concerned that recent roadworks, for example on the M1, have caused collisions: they asked whether BFRS is involved with road change planning or offered opportunities to raise potential safety concerns.

“Increased population, road congestion, access issues, the lack of ring roads.” (Aylesbury)

“HMOs are increasing.” (Aylesbury)

“I go on the M1 every day and about a year ago it was closed about once a week because they were putting in the smart motorways. To me it seemed that the way they were doing the work was badly designed because accidents were happening frequently and in the same place - around J13 - which I’m sure you would have been called out to. Are you guys involved when they do road changes? Do you check what’s going to make sure what they are doing is not more dangerous?” (Milton Keynes)

There were concerns around population growth

- 4.6 There was also worry around whether current infrastructure can keep pace with population increases across the county.

“We are concerned that infrastructure is not going to keep up with the growth of population in the area. Therefore, response times will inevitably increase.” (High Wycombe)

There were concerns around cost and resourcing

- 4.7 Some participants questioned BFRS’ ability to afford and resource its planned response to infrastructure risks and challenges. Indeed, it was deemed ‘unfair’ that the Service is required to fund mitigations when it has little say in development decisions, especially against the backdrop of austerity.

“Within the financial constraints they appear to be working quite smartly. But going forward, things like access issues, more HMOs, roadworks, congestion – then you can only see it getting harder for people to manage. I’m worried they don’t have the resources to deal with it going forward.” (Aylesbury)

“A lot of our discussions kept coming back to finance and the unfairness of BFRS being expected to fund their projects. Funding cuts would be a significant risk!” (Buckingham)

“Concern that infrastructure is not going to keep up with the growth of population in the area. Therefore, response times will inevitably increase.” (High Wycombe)

The importance of collaboration between BFRS, housing developers and local authorities was stressed

- 4.8 The High Wycombe group was particularly keen to suggest additional ways in which risk associated with infrastructure developments could be reduced. Many comments involved the need for BFRS to collaborate with housing developers and local authorities from an early stage so the Service is able to: raise any general safety concerns; ensure the usage of inflammable building materials and install fire safety devices; keep up-to-date with building legislation; help improve road access; and advise the public of changes and risks. Indeed, it was felt that BFRS should be continually ‘part of the process’ and able to have a say around planned infrastructure changes.

“Engage with new housing developments about making streets more accessible in the early stages.” (Milton Keynes)

“Building regulations are changing all the time; it’s about making sure you [BFRS] are part of that process.” (High Wycombe)

“Working with the local authority...early communication with the fire brigade is essential to get our resources in the right place. Must all work together.” (High Wycombe)

“More consultation with housing developers about building materials etc.” (High Wycombe)

- 4.9 Other suggestions included more cross-border collaboration and working with other fire and rescue services to ensure response times are not affected by access issues, and BFRS having access to CCTV footage of motorways.

“More cross-border collaboration on procurement, technology etc. and with firefighters e.g. people across the border of Bucks may be closer to another fire/station.” (Chesham)

Population

Overview of proposals

BFRS WILL...

Review station duty systems in high growth areas
Continue to improve its ability to target/engage with vulnerable groups
Possibly review its current response to automatic fire alarms (AFAs)

Greater BFRS presence in the community, ‘fire safety champions’, advice lines and technology could further engagement with vulnerable groups

- 4.10 The consensus was that BFRS’ engagement with people who are at higher risk from fire and other emergencies is positive, and the Service was praised for the work it puts into prevention. In response to being asked how the Service can further improve the way it targets and engages with vulnerable people, several suggestions were made. Interestingly, as the table below shows, the ideas ranged from BFRS having a greater community presence through regular visits and workshops, and encouraging others in the community to take more responsibility for the safety of vulnerable people or using technology such as smart speakers and advice helplines.

Doing more to **bring health and social care together** by offering a joined-up approach - for example via more collaboration with charities and healthcare trusts

Using best practice to **share information about vulnerable populations** within partnerships and with other services

Increasing its presence in the community by ‘patrolling’ local areas and regularly visiting care homes, sheltered housing schemes and schools

Increasing its presence and awareness more generally through media campaigning such as radio broadcasting

Investing in the roll out of fire safety **‘advocates’ or ‘champions’**

Running community workshops and seminars to **educate people with vulnerable relatives, carers and volunteers** on how to undertake ‘basic safety checks’

Undertaking **early intervention and prevention activities**, such as: actively identifying and offering vulnerable people a home safety visit; and educating the next generation in schools and social clubs

Encouraging the use of assistive technology devices like ‘Alexa’ to help maintain safety and wellbeing without putting added pressure on the FRS or adult social care

Ensuring those with learning or physical disabilities are also a focus, as well as the elderly

- 4.11 However, there was some concern that the combination of an ageing population and BFRS’s lack of funding will place increasing pressure on the Service in continuing with its prevention work.

“We kept coming back to the issue of funding, and funding cuts would be a big risk.”
 (Buckingham)

“It’s probably increasingly harder to engage and access all these people when even more care homes and extra care housing are being built.” (Chesham)

The attendance policy for automatic fire alarms (AFAs) should be reviewed

- 4.12 Although possible changes to AFA attendance are not included in the current Public Safety Plan, it may be a policy that BFRS consults on in future, so views around it were explored in the focus groups.
- 4.13 Participants recognised and understood the benefits of BFRS attending all AFAs, but agreed that the Service should at least review its current policy in order to fully assess its advantages and disadvantages.

“BFRS should review its policy and look at other counties who don’t attend AFAs. Have their response rates been any worse? Is it a luxury Bucks can afford?” (Chesham)

“Review the AFA response strategy.” (Milton Keynes)

“BFRS should definitely review.” (Aylesbury)

“We think it’s great that you are reviewing the AFA strategy. Hopefully you will consider the size of the building and how that determines what your response should be. I do think the point about the benefits of going to the calls is also very important, but you would need to look at the cost-benefit ratio.” (Milton Keynes)

“There are social benefits of attending - advice, information etc. The cost/benefit impact needs to be thought about.” (Milton Keynes)

There was no overall commitment to ceasing attendance to AFAs, but support for only attending AFAs that have been confirmed as a real incident

- 4.14 Views on whether the policy should change, and in what way, varied. A few participants felt that BFRS should not attend AFAs at all, while others argued that three or more call-outs due to false alarms should result in a warning that the Service will no longer attend.

“There was general agreement in our group that we don’t think they should be attending an automatic alarm.” (Buckingham)

“I don’t think they should be attending an unconfirmed automatic alarm.” (Buckingham)

“After three times of being called out by a business, don’t attend anymore. Give them a warning.” (High Wycombe)

“BFRS must attend AFAs - there could be serious damage or loss of life. After multiple call outs they should be given a warning.” (High Wycombe)

- 4.15 However, the majority reasoned that attendance should continue, but only if evidence is provided to indicate a real fire - for example via a confirmation phone call from a dedicated member of staff or a member of the public. The Buckingham group also discussed using technology to confirm whether or not there is a real incident via ‘smart smoke alarms’ and drones.

“Propose calling the sites where automatic alarms are raised to get positive feedback of whether fire service is required.” (High Wycombe)

“Agree with AFAs requiring a property owner becoming responsible to have a dedicated call-out personnel to verify alarm to assist.” (Buckingham)

“I think there should be a call for it to be backed up, otherwise I’m happy for the FRS to not attend.” (Aylesbury)

Businesses need to take more responsibility and improve their equipment and training

- 4.16 It was suggested that businesses should take more responsibly - and that those who repeatedly call out BFRS to AFA false alarms should be fined or disciplined. Moreover, some felt that non-domestic properties should be compelled to ensure they have the most up-to-date smoke alarms and other safety devices, while others felt that staff should be trained to prevent and deal with AFAs caused by false alarms to avoid BFRS being alerted.

“Charge for the service (if false alarm).” (Aylesbury)

“Fine repeat offenders.” (Aylesbury)

“Discipline users by removing the service.” (Aylesbury)

“If they keep calling out you out and using your resources, fine them. It their (businesses) responsibility.” (High Wycombe)

“It just sounds like there needs to be better alarm systems.” (High Wycombe)

“Could you have better equipment in places like hospitals so that you don’t have to be called out for things like a toaster? And also train staff to deal with it.” (Milton Keynes)

Technology and civil emergencies

Overview of proposals

Technology

BFRS WILL...

Continue to improve security and resilience of information/communication systems

Identify and resolve gaps to keep pace with new/emerging risks

Monitor new technologies/systems for opportunities e.g. 5G cellular network, artificial intelligence, robotics etc.

Civil emergencies

BFRS WILL...

Review its current capacity/capability to meet emerging risks (with partners, including other FRs)

Review its approach to responding to terrorist attacks involving improvised weapons and/or firearms

Continue to reduce its carbon footprint

Utilise solar panels at HQ

Ensure the new Blue Light Hub will be ‘environmentally-efficient’

Potentially introduce electric support vehicles

There was widespread agreement with the proposals and discussions around opportunities

- 4.17 There was widespread agreement across all five groups that the proposals for technology and civil emergencies are sensible and that it is important for the service to ‘*move with the times*’ in terms of monitoring and responding to risks.

“You’ve got to embrace to new technologies like social media – use the more day-to-day type of things.” (High Wycombe)

“I think the prevention stuff with tech is great, particularly as there’s so much social media.” (High Wycombe)

“It’s essential to invest in mitigating against the risks. Hybrid cars are using 48 volts, which are extremely dangerous – especially when you put water in them.” (Milton Keynes)

- 4.18 Participants were particularly interested to hear about how specific technologies such as drones and autonomous vehicles are being developed and utilised within Buckinghamshire and by BFRS. For example, it was reasoned that the increased use of autonomous vehicles could potentially safeguard BFRS resources by being used for, say, pumping flood water (rather than a crewed appliance). It was also questioned whether BFRS would be required to attend incidents involving driverless vehicles.

“I’ve only had experience with the FRS once and that was during a flood. I thought that might be where autonomous vehicles come in useful. People could book like they do with those little robots we have in Milton Keynes, where you can order your own pumping. It might mean you can get the water pumped out quicker, but it would also be less expensive because it doesn’t have to be manned.” (Milton Keynes)

“I’d be interested to know that, in the future, whether the FRS would go to a traffic accident if it were a driverless vehicle?” (Aylesbury)

- 4.19 Others discussed drone technology and whether it could be used to capture aerial view images of incidents such as large-scale fires or to deliver defibrillators. In addition, a participant from Milton Keynes was keen to know how technology could be used to improve and develop the communication network among emergency services during civil emergencies.

“Could use some sort of aerial platform to an [observation] of a fire incident, like a drone?” (High Wycombe)

“Drones dropping defibrillators is popular in the Netherlands – is this something [BFRS] would consider?” (High Wycombe)

“What about things like fire service drones with cameras? Do you have those?” (Milton Keynes)

“I have a question around technology and communication network in a civil emergency. From an army and an air force perspective, soldiers on the ground are now able to talk to planes in the sky. Something like that would be useful – having some way of talking to each other.” (Milton Keynes)

- 4.20 It was also suggested that information and advice could be better communicated to the public around ways in which they can help prevent civil emergencies, as well as what to do if one happens.

There were concerns around the complexities of implementing the proposals and the safety of smart motorways

- 4.21 It was acknowledged - especially by the Milton Keynes group - that responding to these challenges and opportunities may not be straightforward for BFRS. Indeed, there was some concern around cost, and a few comments were made around whether money spent on things such as electric vehicles and solar panels should instead be invested in frontline services. It was also questioned whether the increasing need to respond to new technological risks would change the traditional skill sets required of firefighters, with more complex specifications.

“Investing in all these new technologies must be a challenge for BFRS because the introduction of new technology means you’ve got change transformation which is difficult to handle...”
(Milton Keynes)

“Sounds expensive replacing vehicles and equipment with electric stuff.” (Chesham)

“To me, solar panels feel like a ‘nice to have’ versus ...do you need more fire engines? I’m just thinking of the balance between being green and saving lives.” (Chesham)

“I was also thinking in terms of your workforce and the impacts on that. Will all this new technology mean the skill sets required will need to be different? A generic fireman might not be able to be a generic fireman anymore? It’s becoming more complicated.” (Milton Keynes)

- 4.22 The Chesham group expressed particular safety concerns around the use of the hard shoulder as an extra lane during busy periods on smart motorways, and the lack of access for both emergency vehicles and for members of the public needing to pull over in the event of issues.

“I’ve heard that as part of the smart motorways, the hard shoulder is being got rid of... It seems terribly unsafe... I’ve heard about people being killed on the ‘smart’ bit. Where are cars going to go if they have a problem?! And there is no room for emergency services.” (Chesham)

“Do the smart motorways understand when there is an emergency vehicle needing the hard shoulder?” (Chesham)

Workforce and funding

Overview of proposals

Workforce

BFRS WILL CONTINUE TO...

Develop/roll-out more flexible and innovative employment and apprenticeship opportunities

Use more innovative marketing to attract staff from wider range of backgrounds

Continue to explore ways of supporting/enhancing health and wellbeing of staff as life circumstances change

Further develop the role of the on-call firefighter

Funding

BFRS will continue to lobby for greater council tax setting flexibility

There was agreement with the workforce proposals and the importance of using social media for recruitment

- 4.23 Participants felt that BFRS is taking the correct approach in responding to workforce. They particularly supported flexible working hours, apprenticeships and targeted recruitment for a more diverse workforce. Additional suggestions as to how the service could improve retention and recruitment included: allowing career breaks; networking with universities and schools; and attending employment fairs. Using social media to garner interest in the fire and rescue service in order to reach a wider demographic of people was also a popular recommendation.

There was agreement with increasing council tax rates by more than 3% and particular support for a one-off increase of £10 per household (for a Band D property)

- 4.24 Participants were given information about BFRS' current and future financial challenges, which mainly focused on (but was not limited to): the significant reductions in government funding; the fact BFRS has the lowest council tax rates of any Combined Fire Authority (CFA) in the country; and the government's current council tax rate cap of 3%. A summary of how BFRS has responded to these challenges thus far was also provided.
- 4.25 The groups were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed that BFRS should be able to increase council tax by more than 3% to maintain or improve its services. In response, the largest proportion said they would not only support this, but also that they would be willing to pay a one-off £10 increase to raise the council tax base. Moreover, a few said they agreed with paying enough to ensure BFRS' council tax rates are in line with the national average.

Current council tax levels were considered too low compared to other combined fire authorities

- 4.26 In general, current council tax rates were considered too low. Indeed, many participants were shocked to see how much money BFRS yields from council tax compared to other combined fire authorities and rationalised that it makes sense to bring the charge closer in line with the national average. BFRS was also considered a 'worthy' cause to be spending money on, and many participants said they would 'gladly' pay more towards the Service. Some of the many typical comments were:

"Council Tax is too low in Bucks in general for such a wealthy county." (Chesham)

"Because you've done so well to keep costs down, you're almost being penalised for it?! Really the one-time increase is just to get you to more of an even level/in line with others." (Chesham)

"Yes, I agree! It is surprising and shocking how low it is." (Buckingham)

"Happy to give £10 as a one-off." (Chesham)

"We agree to a one off £10 increase." (Aylesbury)

"Agree with increase to national average." (Buckingham)

"General consensus is a yes to paying £5 or £10 one-off payment to keep current services/improve funding." (Milton Keynes)

"£10 one off payment – would gladly pay." (Milton Keynes)

“We would pay £10 as a one off because we think it’s worth supporting.” (Aylesbury)
“We thought an increase to national average – pretty unanimously.” (Buckingham)
“It doesn’t seem right that there’s such a discrepancy between our fire service and another.” (Buckingham)

- 4.27 There was also concern about the possible reduction or removal of non-statutory services, with one participant asking: *‘if you (BFRS) don’t provide these services, who will?’*

There were caveats and questions around the additional money generated from housing growth and possible increases to council tax for other services

- 4.28 Some of the support for a council tax increase was accompanied by caveats, questions and concerns. A main query was around the amount of housing development across the county, and whether the increase in households paying council tax would significantly help in providing more funding for BFRS, thus resulting in less need to increase rates.

“Isn’t some of the concern around council tax offset by all the building work going on?” (Chesham)
“What about the increase in population/households?” (Aylesbury)
“Agree with increasing council tax by more than 3%, but it must be related/limited by the increase in house building.” (Chesham)

- 4.29 There was also concern that an increase to the BFRS portion of council tax may be the ‘thin edge of the wedge’ insofar as it may encourage other services to increase their precept too. Moreover, a few participants from Milton Keynes acknowledged that although they could afford to pay an extra £10, others may not.

“Personally, I’d be happy to give you a tenner, but I do accept the fact I can afford to do that. Not everyone is fortunate to be able to do that.” (Milton Keynes)
“I worry that the 3% uplift...every other service will want to do the same. As councils are strapped for cash at the moment, you can see that it wouldn’t play well. But I think if you could sell it that in fact we are paying the least for our fire service in the whole country and it is under threat because we are paying so little for it...” (Chesham)

- 4.30 In light of these concerns, the Chesham group considered it important that BFRS thinks carefully about how it ‘sells’ the proposal to increase council tax to the public, particularly in terms of explaining its disproportionately low rates compared to other combined authorities.

“I agree, as long as you sold it as it is disproportionately disadvantaging you because of it (paying less than other combined authorities).” (Chesham)

Introducing a one-off council tax increase payment is a short-term fix. It is also too complex an issue to deliver a view on in a short space of time

- 4.31 Some participants at Aylesbury and High Wycombe said they probably would not support a council tax increase of more than 3% because of the points noted above: more money will be collected

through the rise in housing developments; and salaries are not keeping pace with council tax rates (a particular issue if multiple services all decide to increase their precepts). BFRS was also urged to ‘live within its means’ - and there was a feeling that a one-off council tax payment increase would not solve funding issues in the long-term.

“We all have to live within our allocated budget – if we have to do it, BFRS should too.”
(Aylesbury)

“I don’t agree on more than 3% - with rising population you have more people to contribute anyway. We think it should increase to the cap – no more.” (Aylesbury)

“This year you could be that service asking for an extra £10, but next year it could be the ambulance service, then the police ...when does it stop. I think this is a bigger issue that needs to be taken higher up.” (High Wycombe)

“A one-off payment may help for a couple of years but it won’t solve the problems.” (High Wycombe)

- 4.32 A few at Aylesbury felt that the question around council tax was too complex to decide upon in such a short space of time and without more information.

“I think you’re asking hugely important questions without enough info. It’s all very rushed. I also think you’re asking leading questions. Maybe focus on this issue in greater depth and more briefings.” (Aylesbury)

- 4.33 Moreover, a few participants argued that it is not as simple as agreeing or disagreeing to a council tax increase, and that their decision would be largely based on how the additional funding would be invested.

“I will only pay if I see some clear accountability of where the money is going.” (High Wycombe)

“I would pay £10 but only if it went towards supporting vulnerable people, but not businesses (i.e. response to businesses in terms of false alarms).” (Milton Keynes)

“This is the cart before the horse. We don’t know what you’d spend this money on? Would it be staff or other things? It just feels meaningless when we don’t know the facts.” (Aylesbury)

Additional and alternative suggestions were offered

- 4.34 Some alternative or additional ways in which BFRS could increase its funding were suggested by a minority of participants, which included:

Seeking funding from HS2 contractors (Chesham)

Cutting back on non-statutory services (Aylesbury)

Attending fewer false alarm calls (Milton Keynes)

Introducing increased charges for businesses (Milton Keynes)

Charging for services that are over and above statutory provision (Buckingham)

Restructuring BFRS and merging with others to create a 'Thames Valley Fire Service' (Chesham)

Other comments

- 4.35 In terms of the information provided to the groups around funding challenges, a participant in Buckingham praised the material as '*intelligent and informative*', although another in Milton Keynes felt that the information demonstrating that BFRS receives less funding from council tax than other combined fire authorities is 'misleading' as the chart did not include demographic populations or the relative number of properties other than 'D'.

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**Service management responses to feedback received during the
2020-2025 Public Safety Plan Consultation (23rd September – 18th November 2019)**

The following report includes responses and recommendations relating to issues raised and suggestions made during the consultation, together with a note of the organisation and / or consultation channel in which they were raised.

“Individual Response” includes responses received via the online questionnaire facility and other channels such as email.

Feedback from BFRS staff and members of the public is presented anonymously.

In many cases verbatim quotes are included where these illustrate the issue or question vividly or succinctly. These are shown in italics.

1. General feedback on the PSP document and focus group stimulus materials

Comment / Issue / Suggestion	Source	Management Response
<p>1.1 <i>"It is a well-written document, clearly expressed and composed, succinct yet with sufficient detail, including the supplementary information, to be useful and credible... I recognise the financial position for the Fire Authority, not of its own making, and applaud the care with which reductions have been managed... I found the risk profiles, challenges and opportunities in general to be well-identified and described whether national or our area and reassuringly addressed. Thank you."</i></p>	<p>Individual response</p>	<p>We thank the respondent for their feedback. The HMICFRS, in their first inspection of our Service, also confirmed that we have an "...effective rolling five-year public safety plan" which is informed by a "...well- developed and wide-ranging local and community risk profile." The full HMICFRS report can be viewed here.</p>
<p>1.2 <i>"I have read in full the document, and I am very impressed by its depth and practical reasoning."</i></p>	<p>Individual response</p>	<p>We thank the respondent for their feedback.</p>
<p>1.3 <i>"Our Planning, Infrastructure and Transport Committee considered the Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service new Public Safety Plan on behalf of the Parish Council, at their meeting last week. The Committee resolved to support the draft strategy for the provision of fire and rescue services in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes from April 2020 to March 2025."</i></p>	<p>Campbell Park Parish Council</p>	<p>We thank the Council for its support for our new Public Safety Plan (PSP).</p>
<p>1.4 <i>"As a town which includes a fire station, we agree with the general public's consensus view that closing or consolidating stations is the worst of alternate options for future strategies and welcome the authority following strategies that keep Newport Pagnell station open. The local watch(es) are a valued part of our community and lead the way for the local blue light community in public engagement."</i></p>	<p>Newport Pagnell Town Mayor</p>	<p>We thank Mayor for his support for the station and the work undertaken by local station personnel.</p>

Comment / Issue / Suggestion	Source	Management Response
1.5 In terms of the information provided to the groups around funding challenges, a participant in Buckingham praised the material as <i>'intelligent and informative'</i> .	Buckingham Focus Group	We thank the participant for their feedback.
1.6 A focus group participant in Milton Keynes felt that the information demonstrating that BFRS receives less funding from council tax than other combined fire authorities is <i>'misleading'</i> as the chart did not include demographic populations or the relative number of properties other than 'D'.	Milton Keynes Focus Group	<p>The chart shows the relative Band D equivalent charges to illustrate how Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) is disadvantaged by the imposition of a single percentage limit on potential increases.</p> <p>The chart is not intended to show the total funding that authorities receive from council tax.</p>
<p>1.7 <i>"I think you're asking hugely important questions without enough info. It's all very rushed. I also think you're asking leading questions. Maybe focus on this issue in greater depth and more briefings"</i></p> <p><i>"This is the cart before the horse. We don't know what you'd spend this money on? Would it be staff or other things? It just feels meaningless when we don't know the facts."</i></p>	<p>Aylesbury Focus Group</p> <p>Aylesbury Focus Group</p>	<p>We are grateful to the participants for raising this. Aylesbury was the first in the sequence of focus groups and we therefore improved the depth and range of financial information provided to the subsequent focus groups to address this issue.</p> <p>The funding is required to meet the challenges set out throughout the PSP. The PSP is strategic in nature and provides the framework for the Medium-Term Financial Plan and budget, which (in conjunction with our Corporate Plan) will set out in more detail where the money will be spent to achieve our strategic objectives.</p>

2. Infrastructure projects		
Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>2.1 <i>“New buildings are not being constructed as well as the architects who design them... compartmentation design means fires that should be contained can spread. BFRS need to try and talk to local authorities, to ensure inspections, to make sure the buildings have been constructed as specified, and corners haven't been cut by builders, who don't understand why they need to build in the specified way, and not the way they've always done it.”</i></p>	Individual Response	Thank you for your response. We continue to work with Local Authority regulators to ensure that all those involved in the design, planning and build processes carry out their duties as required. We also continue to support the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in lobbying for better regulation and accountability of all those involved.
<p><i>“Pursuant to the Grenfell fire, the Parish Council felt that the fire service should lobby for developers and commissioning authorities to continue to be held accountable for their deployment of materials and building designs which are found to be intrinsically unsafe for both occupiers and emergency services.”</i></p>	Broughton and Milton Keynes Parish Council	We continue to support the NFCC in lobbying for better regulation and accountability of all those involved. A number of National consultations have taken place over recent months, involving ‘Approved Document B’, The Fire Safety Order and the Competency Framework. We have responded to these consultations and support the NFCC’s responses and position.
<p><i>“Ensure that the right plans are considered, especially [relating to] cladding”.</i></p>	HPFT Community Learning Disability Team	
<p><i>“Engage with new housing developments about making streets more accessible in the early stages.”</i></p>	Milton Keynes Focus Group	The Fire and Rescue Service has limited powers in relation to building developers. We are consulted and make comment in relation to ‘Approved Document B (ADB) B5’, which stipulates access and facilities for the fire and rescue service.
<p><i>“Building regulations are changing all the time; it’s about making sure you [BFRS] are part of that process.”</i></p>	Wycombe Focus Group	We thank the participants for their feedback and will continue to engage at every opportunity.

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>2.2 <i>“Planning authorities are allowing what feels like quite dense concentrations of housing with a woefully insufficient number of parking spaces, causing residents and their visitors to park all over the place and obstruct larger vehicles such as fire engines, delivery lorries, and refuse, and recycling lorries. Can more pressure be brought to bear on these planning authorities to ensure that they provide sufficient parking?”</i></p> <p><i>“The roads are very narrow on the new developments - they’re like a single track by the time people have parked their cars along the roads.”</i></p> <p><i>“Narrow roads are a concern.”</i></p>	<p>Individual Response</p> <p>Chesham Focus Group</p> <p>Aylesbury Focus Group</p>	<p>BFRS receives a large number of building and licencing consultations every month, and responds to each one as a statutory duty. We are consulted and make comment in relation to ‘Approved Document B (ADB) B5’, which stipulates access and facilities for the fire service.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the fire and rescue service has limited powers to influence particular areas of planning, such as parking spaces.</p> <p>Fire crews regularly visit known areas of concern to ensure that access is being maintained. When concerns are raised by members of the public, or partner agencies, crews will also carry out targeted community activities, to raise awareness and promote compliance.</p>
<p>2.3 <i>“HMOs are increasing”</i></p>	<p>Aylesbury Focus Group</p>	<p>Prevention advice can be given to those living in HMOs with regard to their individual, private rooms. However, regulation and licensing of HMOs lies with housing depts at local councils who operate under a number of different pieces of legislation.</p>
<p>2.4 <i>“We are concerned that infrastructure is not going to keep up with the growth of population in the area. Therefore, response times will inevitably increase.”</i></p>	<p>Wycombe Focus Group</p>	<p>Our operational resourcing model is linked to risk modelling and incident data which allows for us to be smarter with our resources and provide more effective service delivery.</p>
<p>2.5 <i>“More cross-border collaboration on procurement, technology etc. and with firefighters e.g. people across the border of Bucks may be closer to another fire/station.”</i></p>	<p>Chesham Focus Group</p>	<p>In accordance with the National Framework document and the requirements of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, we have well established collaboration arrangements with neighbouring services.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
2.6 <i>“Within the financial constraints they appear to be working quite smartly. But going forward, things like access issues, more HMOs, roadworks, congestion – then you can only see it getting harder for people to manage. I’m worried they don’t have the resources to deal with it going forward.”</i>	Aylesbury Focus Group	The PSP acknowledges funding constraints as one of our key challenges. This has also been noted by HMICFRS as a cause for concern.
2.7 <i>“A lot of our discussions kept coming back to finance and the unfairness of BFRS being expected to fund their projects. Funding cuts would be a significant risk!”</i>	Buckingham Focus Group	We will continue to lobby Government for them to relax the council tax referendum limit for fire authorities and to ensure that service is adequately funded during the next comprehensive spending review.
3. Population		
3.1 Do more to bring health and social care together.	Focus Groups	Close collaboration with Public Health occurs through participation in the Healthy Communities Board and associated task and finish groups in Buckinghamshire and the Workforce Affiliate Boards in Milton Keynes. Related workstreams focus on addressing social isolation, reducing the demand of high intensity users, as well as smoking cessation and alcohol reduction.
3.2 Use best practice to share information about vulnerable populations within partnerships and with other Services. <i>“Work closer with charities, to try to reach those people that are maybe not on any service radar. Also, work closer with businesses that supply equipment to vulnerable persons; [...] not every older or vulnerable person who needs assistance is registered with the authorities.”</i>	Individual Response	The Service participates in a number of multi-agency boards established to address vulnerable adults at risk and high intensity users. Within the bounds set by data protection regulations, the Service works with a wide range of charities and support groups to engage with members of the community with additional vulnerabilities, providing client information sessions and raising the awareness of support workers in how to identify and address the risk of fire.

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>3.3 Increase presence in the community by ‘patrolling’ local areas and regularly visiting care homes, sheltered housing schemes and schools.</p>	<p>Focus Groups</p>	<p>The Service has an education engagement program offering fire prevention lessons to all Year 5 children in primary schools, home educated groups and all children in ‘SEND’ settings. This is supported by the Safety Centre Milton Keynes which provides immersive safety education experiences.</p> <p>Where the Fire Safety Order applies, Protection Officers carry out a programme of pre-planned fire safety audits at premises such as Care homes and others deemed as high risk, such as a significant sleeping risk.</p>
<p>3.4 Increasing presence and awareness more generally through media campaigning such as radio broadcasting.</p> <p><i>“Perhaps using the local community radio stations to talk about fire risks, and work with parish councils to run events for the same reasons.”</i></p> <p><i>“Work with agencies that provide daily care to vulnerable people. Train their staff to recognise hazards and the risks they present, and how to assess and mitigate those risks.”</i></p>	<p>Individual Response</p> <p>Individual Response</p>	<p>We welcome and encourage publicity and interview opportunities with all media outlets, but appreciate that we are competing for space and airtime with many other organisations and news topics.</p> <p>Our key messages about exercising common sense and preventing emergency incidents from happening are not always followed up on by the media unless issued after a serious incident has occurred.</p> <p>Fire crews from our stations often attend parish events in their local area, and we encourage event organisers to invite us to take part by contacting CentralAdmin@bucksfire.gov.uk</p> <p>The Service provides awareness sessions to raise carer’s awareness of the risk of fire in premises attended by care agencies. This also raises their awareness of how the Service can access further support for their clients by referring them for Fire and Wellness Visits.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>3.5 Investing in the roll out of fire safety ‘advocates’ or ‘champions’.</p>	<p>Focus Groups</p>	<p>We continue to explore alternative ways of delivering key functions, such as sessional workers and staff with additional roles. We work with, and deliver training to, a number of partners who can then identify fire safety issues as part of their work and champion safety on our behalf. A volunteer scheme is being explored, however there are a number of issues to overcome, due to the nature of the work involved and the vulnerabilities of some of those with whom we engage.</p>
<p>3.6 Running community workshops and seminars to educate people with vulnerable relatives, carers and volunteers on how to undertake ‘basic safety checks’.</p> <p><i>“[...] run seminars for carers, volunteers, and people with older relatives, so that they could carry out some of the basic safety checks for vulnerable people. For example, checking their smoke alarms every month, checking they are warm during cold weather, and encouraging them to eat healthily. It’s about time more people stepped up to the plate and took more responsibility for older members of their families.”</i></p>	<p>Individual Response</p>	<p>See 3.2</p>
<p>3.7 Undertake early intervention and prevention activities, such as: actively identifying and offering vulnerable people a home safety visit; and educating the next generation in schools and social clubs.</p>	<p>Focus Groups</p>	<p>See 3.2 and 3.3</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>3.8 Encourage use of assistive technology devices like 'Alexa' to help maintain safety and wellbeing without putting added pressure on the FRS or adult social care.</p> <p><i>You can say to Alexa "Turn all the Lights Blue" which turns on every Smartbulb in the property blue (other colours available!). "Turn all the lights 100%". You can also create your own routines in Alexa so you could very easily setup one so if you say "Alexa Emergency - Emergency" it turns all the lightbulbs blue. Alexa can also send a message to all householders signed into the Alexa account *even if they are elsewhere as long as they are connected to internet*. You can also have Alexa announce on maximum volume, which is very loud any other useful information... Number to key safe... Details of neighbour with a key to house... Phone numbers for relatives.</i></p>	Individual Response	The Service is aware of a number of assistive technologies which can support people to continue to be independent in their homes and refers people to these, with the caveat that the equipment supplied is quite often means tested. This can include the use of GPS wristbands for those with dementia, basin flood protection devices etc.
<p>3.9 Ensure those with learning or physical disabilities are also a focus, as well as the elderly.</p> <p><i>"I think BFRS could potentially pre-visit some properties, such as [the] block of flats at Buckingham View, which has a higher proportion of disabled residents."</i></p>	Focus Groups Individual Response	<p>Through engaging with support services and care agencies we continue to prioritise Fire and Wellness Visits to those with disabilities.</p> <p>Bespoke education sessions are also offered to children and young people with learning or physical disabilities, both within school or lifelong learning settings and through engagement with home educated groups.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>3.10 Review attendance policy for automatic fire alarms. <i>“BFRS should review its policy and look at other counties who don’t attend AFAs. Have their response rates been any worse? Is it a luxury Bucks can afford?” (Chesham)</i></p> <p><i>“After three times of being called out by a business, don’t attend anymore. Give them a warning.” (High Wycombe)</i></p> <p><i>“I think there should be a call for it to be backed up, otherwise I’m happy for the FRS to not attend.”</i> <i>“Charge for the service (if false alarm).”</i> <i>“Fine repeat offenders.”</i></p> <p><i>“Could you have better equipment in places like hospitals so that you don’t have to be called out for things like a toaster? And also train staff to deal with it.”</i></p> <p><i>“These alarms should properly be regarded as a ‘local alert to those at the premises involved, rather than a real emergency requiring the attendance of fire and rescue services”.</i></p> <p><i>“I applaud the brigade’s caution... on AFAs. Where the statistics show significant resource going on False Alarm attendance the question is of course how many of the actual fires/threats discovered would have escalated to a significant and demanding extent before discovery, were AFA attendance withdrawn? The Stony fire of three years ago showed in older property in a densely packed High Street how escalation can occur even when the fire is promptly spotted”</i></p>	<p>Chesham Focus Group</p> <p>Wycombe Focus Group</p> <p>Aylesbury Focus Group</p> <p>Milton Keynes Focus Group</p> <p>Individual Response</p> <p>Individual Response</p>	<p>We welcome this feedback and the various suggestions for different ways of approaching our response to this type of incident. We will take these into consideration as part of our planned review of our policy.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>3.11 Do the call centres carry out checks before making the 999 call – for example, to establish whether the [alarm] activation requires a response from the emergency services? If not, I can't help wondering why. It would seem sensible to filter out the false alarms at this point, thus freeing up time in the control room and preventing an unnecessary emergency response of one or sometimes two fire engines, which could then be temporarily unable to attend a real emergency in the same area."</p>	<p>Individual Response</p>	<p>Call challenge already exists within Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) which allows for incidents to be categorised and the appropriate resources mobilised according to the risk. The pre-determined attendance (PDA) is based on the number of firefighters and equipment required to deal with the category of incident and risk, this may still require more than one appliance for a small incident at high-risk premises (e.g. a high-rise building).</p>

4. Technology, information and systems security

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>4.1 Use of social media and associated technologies. <i>"You've got to embrace to new technologies like social media – use the more day-to-day type of things."</i> (High Wycombe)</p>	<p>Wycombe Focus Group</p>	<p>Our main Twitter and Facebook pages have been running since 2012 and 2017 respectively, and more than 30 other pages are run by our fire stations and road safety officer. They generate millions of impressions a year and help promote safety messages and job opportunities, and connect people and communities with our website. We are conscious that some of our key safety messages, such as the importance of testing smoke alarms regularly, can lose their impact if used to often. Although our resources are limited we are committed to devoting more time to creating helpful and interesting social media content and widening our base of followers.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>4.2 Consider potential of autonomous vehicles. <i>"I've only had experience with the FRS once and that was during a flood. I thought that might be where autonomous vehicles come in useful. People could book like they do with those little robots we have in Milton Keynes, where you can order your own pumping. It might mean you can get the water pumped out quicker, but it would also be less expensive because it doesn't have to be manned."</i></p>	<p>Milton Keynes Focus Group</p>	<p>Whilst we have, and, will continue to explore the use of new technologies to improve the range of and quality services we provide, this specific area is not something we anticipate as becoming autonomous. Every flooding incident has its unique elements, requires onsite risk assessment, professional judgment and engagement with the occupiers, be that through an officer attending on their own or a crew on an appliance.</p>
<p>4.3 Consider wider potential of drone technology. <i>"Could use some sort of aerial platform to an [observation] of a fire incident, like a drone?"</i></p> <p><i>"Drones dropping defibrillators is popular in the Netherlands – is this something [BFRS] would consider?"</i></p>	<p>Wycombe Focus Group</p>	<p>We already have this capability on our current high reach aerial appliances.</p> <p>We currently have drone capability which fulfils a range of functions including assisting other agencies searching for missing persons. Whilst we will continue to work with other partners in expanding the capability of what we use our drones for, with the development of medical response and increasing placement of automated external defibrillators in community and populated areas, using drones to deliver them is not something we envisage at this time.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>4.4 Enhance incident and inter-agency communications via new technologies.</p> <p><i>"I have a question around technology and communication network in a civil emergency. From an army and an air force perspective, soldiers on the ground are now able to talk to planes in the sky. Something like that would be useful – having some way of talking to each other."</i></p>	Milton Keynes Focus Group	<p>We remain fully engaged with the national Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) which will provide an Emergency Services Network (ESN). This network will be available to all emergency services and other first responders and will deliver improved voice and data services. It aims to transform mobile ways of working, particularly in remote areas and will provide a platform which will improve front line operations and enable services to work more closely together. ESN will also provide an extended service reaching 12 miles out to sea and 500 feet above ground, therefore allowing communications with vessels and aircraft.</p>
<p>4.5 Embrace collaborative approaches to mitigating information systems security risks.</p> <p><i>"[BFRS should] work with the security of companies like BT Security who are excellent at identifying security threats to its assets."</i></p> <p><i>"Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, as a neighbouring service, welcomes the ongoing collaborative activity in this area to combat security threats."</i></p>	<p>Individual Response</p> <p>RBFRS</p>	<p>We have an established security group forum and continue to explore opportunities with partner agencies seeking to share best practice in dealing with all foreseeable security threats, be that cyber-attack, loss of assets, resources or other. Furthermore, we just invested in new Business Continuity Planning processes and cyber security training.</p>
<p>4.6 Recognise risks posed by new technologies such as electric vehicles.</p> <p><i>"It's essential to invest in mitigating against the risks. Hybrid cars are using 48 volts, which are extremely dangerous – especially when you put water in them."</i></p>	Milton Keynes Focus Group	<p>All our appliances have mobile data terminals (MDTs) which enable our crews to access a wide range of risk information which includes a system called "Crash Recovery Data" that details all known hazards associated with each vehicle, including high voltage.</p>
<p>4.7 <i>"I'd be interested to know that, in the future, whether the FRS would go to a traffic accident if it were a driverless vehicle?"</i></p>	Aylesbury Focus Group	<p>Yes, if the incident involved persons trapped or any spillage of hazardous substances.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>4.8 <i>"I was also thinking in terms of your workforce and the impacts on that. Will all this new technology mean the skill sets required will need to be different? A generic fireman might not be able to be a generic fireman anymore? It's becoming more complicated."</i></p>	<p>Milton Keynes Focus Group</p>	<p>Our operational front-line staff work in ever changing critical environments and can be called upon at any time to respond to a wide range of emergency situations. The continuing development and maintenance of both practical and technical skills are vital in meeting the vast array of operational demands placed upon firefighters, both at operational incidents and in realistic simulation.</p> <p>To underpin this, elements of operational safety critical training are delivered in partnership with the Fire Service College, a well-established and respected trade name within the fire sector. This partnership ensures all operational firefighters and commanders within BFRS, have the right skills to effectively apply recognised operational procedures and comply with appropriate health and safety legislation.</p> <p>Furthermore, all available operational information, performance criteria and training materials, are aligned to accepted guidance and standards relating to operational competence across the UKFRS, namely National Operational Guidance (NOG) and accompanying training specifications.</p>
<p>4.9 Risks associated with 'Smart' motorways. <i>"I've heard that as part of the smart motorways, the hard shoulder is being got rid of... It seems terribly unsafe... I've heard about people being killed on the 'smart' bit. Where are cars going to go if they have a problem?! And there is no room for emergency services... Do the smart motorways understand when there is an emergency vehicle needing the hard shoulder?"</i></p>	<p>Chesham Focus Group</p>	<p>The Fire and Rescue Service was involved in the early planning stages in relation to these particular motorway improvement works. Regular planning meetings were attended by local fire and rescue service managers to ensure adequate access for emergency services, this included communication and emergency procedures for road crews in the event of an emergency.</p>

5. Civil emergencies		
Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
5.1 <i>“With the increase in wildfires both nationally and globally, and the fact that, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes sits within an area of outstanding natural beauty, with a heavily forested area, should you not consider whether you really have the correct type of fire appliances to deal with this type of incident. Looking at the current range of fire engines on your website, it would appear that you don't - only three 4x4 fire engines!”</i>	Individual Respondent	The Service routinely reviews the type, nature and frequency of the incidents it responds to (via the application of its ‘Risk and Demand’ resourcing model) and uses this information to inform the type and capability of all the equipment it sources, which includes vehicles. Based on that evidence, we believe the current 4 x 4 capability within Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, working in partnership across the Thames Valley, meets the needs for all foreseeable risks.
5.2 <i>“Do you have the resources to support TVLRF in practice, i.e., in an event of an emergency, will there be sufficient staff to manage national issues, as well as remaining available for local response? Will this work include spread of viruses? Do you have the capability, knowledge, and resources, to manage the risks?”</i>	Individual Respondent	We carry out a range of activities to review regularly the risk profile of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, and the capability we have to meet that risk. We work with all partners in the Local Resilience Forum to prepare for and test arrangements for major emergencies. This includes our ability to sustain an emergency response capability and, as with other emergency services, we have established mutual assistance arrangements with neighbouring Services.
5.3 <i>“Sounds expensive replacing vehicles and equipment with electric stuff”</i>	Chesham Focus Group	We will only replace vehicles and equipment with new electric technology where it is efficient to do so. Currently the cost of electric fire appliances is prohibitive, but we will keep this under review.
5.4 <i>“To me, solar panels feel like a ‘nice to have’ versus ...do you need more fire engines? I’m just thinking of the balance between being green and saving lives.”</i>	Chesham Focus Group	We have installed solar panels only on the stations where there has been a clear cost benefit. Again, this is something that we will keep under review as installation costs and energy costs may change in the future.
5.5 <i>“Carbon footprint - stations have to adopt their own recycling regime, as there are no facilities, or guidance documents provided to carry out this task.”</i>	Individual Response	We will review what arrangements can be implemented and what guidance documentation is required.

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>5.6 <i>“The carbon footprint will always be a problem when appliances have to travel greater distances due to the lack of resources – i.e. wholetime pumps covering, unmanned station grounds and incidents. Moving personnel from their designated station to cover gaps in the manning levels will also be difficult for your ‘footprint.’”</i></p>	<p>Individual Response</p>	<p>We constantly monitor the amount of vehicle and personnel movements and are assessing alternative ways to reduce the overall carbon footprint. This could be through innovation such as ultra-low or, zero carbon emission vehicles, or by carbon offsetting initiatives.</p> <p>By being smarter with our resourcing model we can also reduce the number of journeys staff make when attending their place of work by directing them to another station prior to their shift. We also encourage our staff to be aware of their carbon footprint when going to and from work and provide information on alternative travel schemes to reduce carbon emissions.</p>

6. Workforce Pressures		
Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>6.1 Participants felt that BFRS is taking the correct approach in responding to workforce challenges. They particularly supported flexible working hours, apprenticeships and targeted recruitment for a more diverse workforce. Additional suggestions as to how the service could improve retention and recruitment included: allowing career breaks; networking with universities and schools; and attending employment fairs. Using social media to garner interest in the fire and rescue service in order to reach a wider demographic of people was also a popular recommendation.</p> <p>When considering BFRS as an employer, more than half (53%) of respondents thought that engaging with and listening to staff is the most important factor. This was followed by offering opportunities to develop skills (40%) and enhanced employee benefits (e.g. local weighting allowances) (38%).</p>	Focus Groups	<p>We welcome this feedback and will have regard to it as we continue to develop our employment policies and workforce plans. We have a range of retention and recruitment strategies in place, such as career breaks, enhanced maternity, paternity, adoption leave and flexible working arrangements. Our employees' wellbeing is of utmost importance, we have a range of measures to ensure employees are supported, such as Mental Health First Aiders, an employee assistance programme, occupational health, trauma support and through our Welfare Officer</p> <p>We interact with the local community at skills fairs, schools, through 'have a go' days, open days at Fire Stations and at regional events such as the World Skills show. Collaboration with Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services mean that we are able to work with them to ensure value for money.</p> <p>We are currently working on our corporate website, to ensure that it reaches our communities to inform and educate them as well as celebrate our successes. As part of our recent Wholetime recruitment we worked with Global to ensure that we attract diverse talent.</p>
	Online responses	<p>Engaging and listening to our employees is very important to us, we do this in a number of ways, for example regular 1:1's, appraisals, bi-annual culture survey, station visits and weekly blogs by senior management.</p> <p>All employees are offered the opportunity to develop their skills, as well as ensuring that they undertake mandatory training. Learning and training is carried out in a number of ways: e-learning, face to face, shadowing, coaching and mentoring, secondments, formal internal and external training, and recognised qualifications such as Institute of Fire Engineers and Apprenticeships.</p> <p>Our employee benefits are reviewed regularly, we have enhanced Firefighter and Support Staff pensions, flexible working, employee assistance programme, childcare vouchers, cycle to work scheme, gyms / fitness equipment in all of our fire stations, opportunities for all staff to develop and learn in their role.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>6.2 Viability of on-call employment model.</p> <p><i>“Critical’ is a much-used word nowadays, but I believe that we have reached that stage now with our On-Call staff. We clearly can, indeed have for some time, largely managed without most of them. I attach no blame to them; there are now so many pressures on people’s time, and other opportunities to help your community, that committing to being available night and day is no longer an attractive option. This plan commits us to developing the role of the On-Call firefighter over the next 5 years, Our current On-Call recruitment strategy seems to be, at best, uncoordinated and half-hearted, as if we didn’t really want to recruit more people but were just going through the motions. A more flexible On Call contract MAY attract more people but will cause significant issues around training and the maintenance of competence if new staff are only providing a few hours cover per week. What seems to me be ‘critical’ is the need to make a major decision - ASAP - about all our On Call and whether we need them at all...”</i></p>	<p>Individual Response</p>	<p>We regularly review our workforce plans to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills at the right time. We review planned and unplanned leavers and retirements.</p> <p>We have introduced innovative solutions for our staff to enable and maintain the requisite level of cover. We continue to explore opportunities for on-call staff, and now offer a range of flexible options to recruit and retain highly motivated and qualified staff. We continue to welcome new staff into this Service.</p> <p>Our response model relies on Wholetime, Flexi- Firefighters, On-Call staff and bank shifts to ensure it can operate. We believe it is vital that we look at range of different contracts to ensure the diversity of the Service and our On-Call employees are part of this.</p> <p>We constantly review the recruitment and retention of our On-Call employees to make sure that it is as efficient and effective as possible.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>6.3 Ageing workforce implications: <i>“Ageing workforce and the very demanding physical role that active firefighting plays. When determining budgets, the impact of such a job on the individual should be taken into account to ensure active fire fighters are not forced to continue working past the time that they feel is right for them.”</i></p>	<p>Individual Response</p>	<p>We are acutely aware of the issues that an ageing workforce presents, and work hard with our employees at all stages of their career to ensure they are supported with their physical and mental health.</p> <p>Our Health, Safety and Wellbeing Group meets regularly to review issues of concern, performance statistics and plans for the future. We have a wellbeing strategy in place.</p> <p>All of our Fire stations have fitness equipment. Regular medicals and training take place for employees and if an employee becomes ill there are a range of mechanisms in place to support them for example Mental Health First Aiders, Occupational Health, Physiotherapy, Welfare Officer, Employee Assistance Programme and the Firefighters Charity.</p> <p>Our managers and human resources team work closely with the individual and the agencies above to support them in their work, alternative duties are sometimes suitable and, as a last resort, ill health retirements if the individual is not able to return to operational duties.</p>
<p>6.4 Workforce Diversity. <i>“Yes, you have/are working with older people, but what about everyone else? What are you doing to break barriers and squash negative perceptions about the fire service being white male dominant?”</i></p> <p><i>“The service should be inclusive to all regardless of protected characteristics, inclusivity and valuing diversity are key.”</i></p>	<p>Individual Response</p> <p>Individual Response</p>	<p>We are working hard to ensure that our Service is diverse, inclusive and reflective of the communities we serve, and to break down negative perceptions of our workforce. Our policy statement states our intention https://bucksfire.gov.uk/about-us/our-policies/employment-related-policies/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-policy/</p> <p>Examples of ways we are trying to increase our diversity across all of the protected characteristics are through our targeted recruitment, ‘have a go days’, flexible working opportunities, daily interaction with the public, redesign of our website, and, attendance at national equality conferences to learn from other organisations.</p> <p>The views of our workforce are very important to us. We do this in a number of ways, for example regular 1:1’s, appraisals, bi-annual staff survey, exit interviews, station visits and weekly blogs by senior management.</p> <p>We report regularly to our Fire Authority on progress against our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives, performance indicators and also on gender pay statistics and plans.</p>

7. Funding Pressures

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>7.1 Support for increasing Council Tax above the level that would require a referendum.</p> <p><i>“Council Tax is too low in Bucks in general for such a wealthy county.... Because you’ve done so well to keep costs down, you’re almost being penalised for it?! Really the one-time increase is just to get you to more of an even level/in line with others.”</i></p> <p><i>“We agree to a one off £10 increase.”</i></p> <p><i>“Agree with increase to national average.”</i></p> <p><i>“General consensus is a yes to paying £5 or £10 one-off payment to keep current services/improve funding.”</i></p> <p>Nearly half (47%) of respondents would prefer a £10 increase for part of their council tax to fund BFRS during 2020-21. More than one eighth (15%) of respondents would prefer no increase, with the same (15%) proportion preferring a £5 increase. Less than one eighth (11%) of respondents would prefer a £1.93 increase, with 13% of respondents preferring another option.</p>	<p>Chesham Focus Group</p> <p>Aylesbury Focus Group</p> <p>Buckingham Focus Group</p> <p>Milton Keynes Focus Group</p> <p>Online Responses</p>	<p>We recognise the support for potentially increasing council tax if the referendum limit were to be relaxed, whilst also noting the concerns raised in section 7.2 overleaf.</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>7.2 Reservations relating to increasing Council Tax above the referendum limit.</p> <p><i>“As much as I would like to pay the additional £10 per year for a great service to become even better, it's a question of ‘will the police and council also be asking for a significant increase?’ Which, if yes and it's granted, will mean some households falling below the poverty line and becoming vulnerable, therefore putting additional strains on all services and it becomes false economy.”</i></p> <p><i>“Personally, I’d be happy to give you a tanner, but I do accept the fact I can afford to do that. Not everyone is fortunate to be able to do that.”</i></p> <p><i>“I worry that the 3% uplift...every other service will want to do the same. As councils are strapped for cash at the moment, you can see that it wouldn’t play well. But I think if you could sell it that in fact we are paying the least for our fire service in the whole country and it is under threat because we are paying so little for it... Isn’t some of the concern around council tax offset by all the building work going on?”</i></p> <p><i>“Agree with increasing council tax by more than 3%, but it must be related/limited by the increase in house building.”</i></p>	<p>Individual Response</p> <p>Milton Keynes Focus Group</p> <p>Chesham Focus Group</p> <p>Chesham Focus Group</p>	<p>Any decisions made regarding Council Tax increases will be made by the Fire Authority, which will take into the account both the needs of the Service as well as the issue of affordability for residents.</p> <p>The illustrative £10 increase would be based on a band D property. Those in bands A-C would pay less than this, and indicative amounts for each band for both a £5 and £10 increase in the band D amount are shown on page 48 of the Public Safety Plan.</p> <p>The Service does receive additional council tax as additional homes are built. Projections for future growth are already built in to our funding forecasts. However, as well as having areas of high growth, there are some areas in the county that have relatively little building. The overall rate of increase in the number of properties paying council tax has slowed in recent years.</p>

8. Other Issues / Proposals		
Issue / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>8.1 Effect of station consolidation within Milton Keynes. <i>"The demand patterns with West Ashland in operation... whether for incidents, residential or non-residential, show a geographical layout of fire stations south to north aligned towards the east of the city. This at a time when the Western Expansion area is being rapidly built out with an eventual population equivalent to Buckingham. It also exposes Stony Stratford, being an old town with a very high density of vulnerable structures, as graphically shown three years ago when two buildings were destroyed and two more affected before the brigade gained control...the Authority's confidence that the choice of West Ashland as a location will not increase response times has not, to my knowledge, been publicly supported with the kind of detail that would re-assure [routes and timing from Great Holm versus West Ashland, for example]. It would be appalling to find out the hard way. I do wonder if the Authority appreciate the extent to which public opinion has been disturbed by this, given three years ago and 1991 (I think it was) when the Peking Restaurant was severely damaged?... It would seem that, in its apparently undisclosed calculations, the Authority has placed reliance on the A5 dual-carriageway being fully open to the north, not slowed or blocked by now normal rush-hour demand or by accident or incident... Or the old A5, Watling Street V4, being freely negotiable."</i></p>	Individual Response	The proposal to consolidate the existing Bletchley and Great Holm fire stations onto a new site at West Ashland was subject to a full public consultation in 2015. Very similar issues to these were raised during the consultation. The outcomes of this, together with our responses and recommendations in relation to the issues, are available from our website here . We keep our operational performance under regular review. This will include consideration of the potential to use standby points strategically located across Milton Keynes where these can enhance the overall effectiveness of our emergency response to incidents.
<p>8.2 <i>"...the map showing locations of fire stations and incidents, on page 43 of the draft plan, clearly shows that there will be inadequate coverage of North-West Milton Keynes, including Stony Stratford and its environs. Seconds are vital when it comes to a response to real emergencies, especially fire. Has the establishment of a "voluntary" (not "retained") unit based in Stony Stratford been considered? This is the way things work in isolated towns in the USA, for example."</i></p>	Individual Response	We have introduced innovative solutions for our staff to enable and maintain the requisite level of cover. We continue to explore opportunities for on-call staff, and now offer a range of flexible options to recruit and retain highly motivated and qualified staff. We continue to welcome new staff into our Service.

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>8.3 Responding to 'non-emergency' incidents.</p> <p><i>"I have noticed a trend (which I expect your own statistics would confirm) for increasing calls to the fire and rescue service to incidents such as internal domestic flooding or various objects in 'precarious positions'. Such incidents are, of course, unfortunate but they are not emergencies. Front-line fully-manned appliances should not be tied up in attending such incidents. I suggest that the fire and rescue service re-examines its attitude to such calls. There is a similar situation with regard to the fire and rescue service receiving calls to road traffic accidents. Unless persons require extrication or there is a significant fuel spill, the fire and rescue service has little role to play. Unfortunately there is a public perception (seemingly coming from the media) that there is a danger of 'explosion' following vehicle collisions! Again, I suggest that the fire and rescue service, in conjunction with the other emergency services, should re-examine its attitude to such calls. The service gives good publicity on the topic "What to do in the event of a fire", -perhaps it should also do a topic "What to do in the event of a road traffic accident"?"</i></p>	Individual Response	We carry out a range of activities to review regularly the risk profile of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, and the capability we have to meet that risk.
<p>8.4 Proposal to respond to pressures on maintaining on-call workforce by re-focusing on specific roles / areas:</p> <p><i>"1) Early back-up when Aylesbury's two Wholetime pumps are committed. Aylesbury is somewhat isolated by geography and the relative poor road network so, even if we were to despatch a Milton Keynes or Wycombe pump to cover Aylesbury it would be a good 20 minutes away... Relying on over the border pumps from Thame and Tring - themselves On-Call - is not sufficient and our own pumps at Waddesdon, Haddenham and Risborough just do not provide the regular availability that we need. A recent 7-pump fire in Aylesbury was attended by 3 Aylesbury pumps, but the other 4 came from over the border – Thame, Tring, Wheatley and Berkhamstead. I'm actually ashamed that we had to use this many over the border pumps and I can't believe that an On-Call crew from Wheatley can get to Aylesbury quicker than a Wholetime pump from Wycombe or Amersham? I'm sure those On Call crews appreciated the turnout fee but what must they think of us as a service when we have to rely on crews from so far away?"</i></p>	Individual Response	<p>We thank the respondent for their comments. The specific incident mentioned needs to be looked into further to ascertain reasons why those mobilisations occurred.</p> <p>The on-call resourcing model has yet to be fully implemented which will reduce the number of over the border mobilisations and there will also be a review of its impact once data has been collated.</p> <p>There is also a process in place for staff to challenge mobilisations to specific incidents so that these can be checked and cross referenced against the BFRS mobilisation policy. We encourage staff to do this as part of their role</p>

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
<p>2) Early cover for Milton Keynes. Two two-pump jobs at the same time in MK and we are left very vulnerable. Buckingham and Aylesbury are too far away to provide back up quickly enough and our own, and surrounding over the border pumps, are all On-Call and therefore unreliable.</p> <p>3) Early cover for the southern 'corridor' - Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Gerrards Cross. Once again, two two-pump jobs in this corridor leaves us vulnerable, particularly if pumps are committed to the M40."</p>		<p>within Service Delivery. This will be emphasised at the next round of management forums.</p>
<p>8.5 Proposal for strategic re-configuration of fire-cover and associated fire station footprint.</p> <p>"A) Close all On Call stations that we don't need 'to ensure we can reach all parts of the geographical area that we serve in a timely manner'. A hugely political decision... but one that we must be prepared to make...</p> <p>B) Keep any On Call staff that want to remain employed but concentrate them on 3 On Call 'hubs' where they go for weekly training and their pumps are based. I would suggest the new MK Hub, Aylesbury, and Wycombe. Allow them to work on the bank, as many do now, which helps us keep pumps on the run and helps them to maintain their competency.</p> <p>C) Find a new location for a new Wycombe fire station (or blue light hub) as a matter of urgency. This would probably be to the west of the town along the West Wycombe Road corridor, or just north of the town. This station would only have one W/T pump plus special (see point D below).</p> <p>D) Move one W/T pump from Wycombe to Marlow permanently. This would cover the Marlow area, as well as being second pump into Wycombe and cover Beaconsfield. It would also be the first pump onto the M40 in either direction as it can reach Handy Cross the quickest. It will also reduce our reliance on the pump from Maidenhead.</p> <p>E) Pursue, with Oxon FRS, the option of a new, shared W/T station at junction 6 of the M40. This could cover Stokenchurch and the M40, as well as Watlington (allowing Oxon to close that On Call station), plus the expanding areas around Chinnor and Thame (which could be reduced one pump).</p> <p>F) Consider moving Amersham fire station and making it W/T, so it better covers not only Amersham itself but Chesham and Great Missenden, as well as continuing to provide back up to Gerrards Cross, Beaconsfield and Wycombe, and even Aylesbury. Putting a new station on the A413 near Great Missenden, maybe at the currently - derelict petrol garage at Deep Mill, would provide that cover, as well as being near the northern portal of the HS2 tunnel under the Chilterns."</p>	<p>Individual Response</p>	<p>We carry out a range of activities to regularly review the risk profile of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, and the capability we have to meet that risk. This includes our ability to sustain an emergency response capability and, as with other emergency services, we have established mutual assistance arrangements with neighbouring services.</p>

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**Buckinghamshire
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**
we save lives



Public Safety Plan

2020-2025



**IT ONLY TAKES
ONE ACCIDENT
TO START A FIRE.**

ARE YOU SURE YOUR SMOKE
ALARMS ARE WORKING?

TEST YOURS NOW.



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Your new Public Safety Plan

As Chairman and Chief Fire Officer, together we would like to introduce you to your new Public Safety Plan. We have achieved many things in the last five years, and these are summarised in this document. It also outlines the future risks and challenges we think need to be addressed, and reflects what you have told us is important to you and what you expect from us.

Over the last five years (2015/2016 - 2019/2020) we have continued to see a change in the profile of the types of incidents we attend. Over the same period we have had to absorb a cut in revenue support grant provided by the Government of 57 per cent. We have risen to all the financial challenges we have faced and continue to deliver a service our staff and those we serve can be incredibly proud of.

We have fewer firefighters, but they have never been so busy, broadening the scope of what we do while maintaining our levels of service. This could not have been achieved without the dedication of our staff, who have increased their flexibility through new ways of working.

The next five years will be about consolidating our unique operating model and making sure we are ready for the challenges up ahead by remaining on a sound financial footing. We will look to improve our resilience so that we are able to meet future challenges and changes to our operating environment.

However, with continued financial pressure, we will have to make some difficult decisions. We will ensure that these are based on sound evidence and consult with the public accordingly. We will strive to make sure we provide equality of service throughout Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and also equality of opportunity as an employer.

We look to the future as that is where we will spend the rest of our lives



Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE
Chairman, Buckinghamshire &
Milton Keynes Fire Authority



Jason Thelwell QFSM
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

What is a Public Safety Plan?

And why you should read it

Part of the council tax you pay directly funds your fire and rescue service and it is important to us that we hear your views on the service we provide and how this may develop. This plan sets out how we will provide a fire and rescue service in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes for the five-year period from 2020-2025. The plan builds on our achievements over the last five years, considers changes to the risks you face and how we plan to change our services to keep residents, communities and businesses safe from fire and other emergencies.

We work in a fast-changing environment. We work closely with colleagues nationally across Government supporting the national resilience infrastructure, and we work with individual residents to make them safer in their homes, and there is a range of work in between. Government guidance requires that fire and rescue authorities consider national and regional as well as local risks.

This Public Safety Plan has been developed using integrated risk management planning methods and is designed to conform to the Government's guidance in relation to the preparation of integrated risk management plans.

This year we will open our new joint emergency response facility for Police, Fire and Ambulance in West Ashland, Milton Keynes. This site provides a fantastic facility for the public. We will continue to work with police and ambulance colleagues to improve the service we provide, and we will extend our collaboration work more widely.

We are very proud of the work that we do, and we care passionately about your safety from fire and other emergencies.

Please refer to the supplementary information section of this plan for more information on the Government's guidance and the legal requirements for fire and rescue service plans.

Who we are



We serve a population of more than 800,000 in the South East of England. The area stretches from the outskirts of London to the South Midlands. It comprises Buckinghamshire, which will have a unitary council from 1 April 2020, and Milton Keynes, which has had a unitary council since 1997.

The area we serve includes stretches of the M1, M4, M25 and M40 motorways, a section of the West Coast Main Line, several miles of the River Thames, part of the Silverstone motor racing circuit and Chequers, the Prime Minister's country residence.

Around 400 firefighters operate from 20 fire stations (19 when Bletchley Fire Station and Great Holm Fire Station are amalgamated on to one site at West Ashland in Milton Keynes in 2020), sometimes responding to 999 calls when they are out and about doing community safety work. There are fire safety offices in Aylesbury, Milton Keynes and Marlow.

Fighting fires is only part of the work of the present-day fire and rescue service. Releasing people trapped in vehicles after road traffic collisions, dealing with chemical spills and fitting smoke alarms in people's homes make up an increasing proportion of our work. Our operational crews have therefore changed the focus of their work to help prevent emergency incidents from happening in the first place.

Our community safety team includes officers who work in partnership with local statutory and voluntary organisations at a range of locations throughout the county.

Around 100 people work in a variety of support services, including teams in risk assessment, vehicle workshops, finance and human resources.



Who we are

Our vision

To make Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes the safest areas in England in which to live, work and travel.

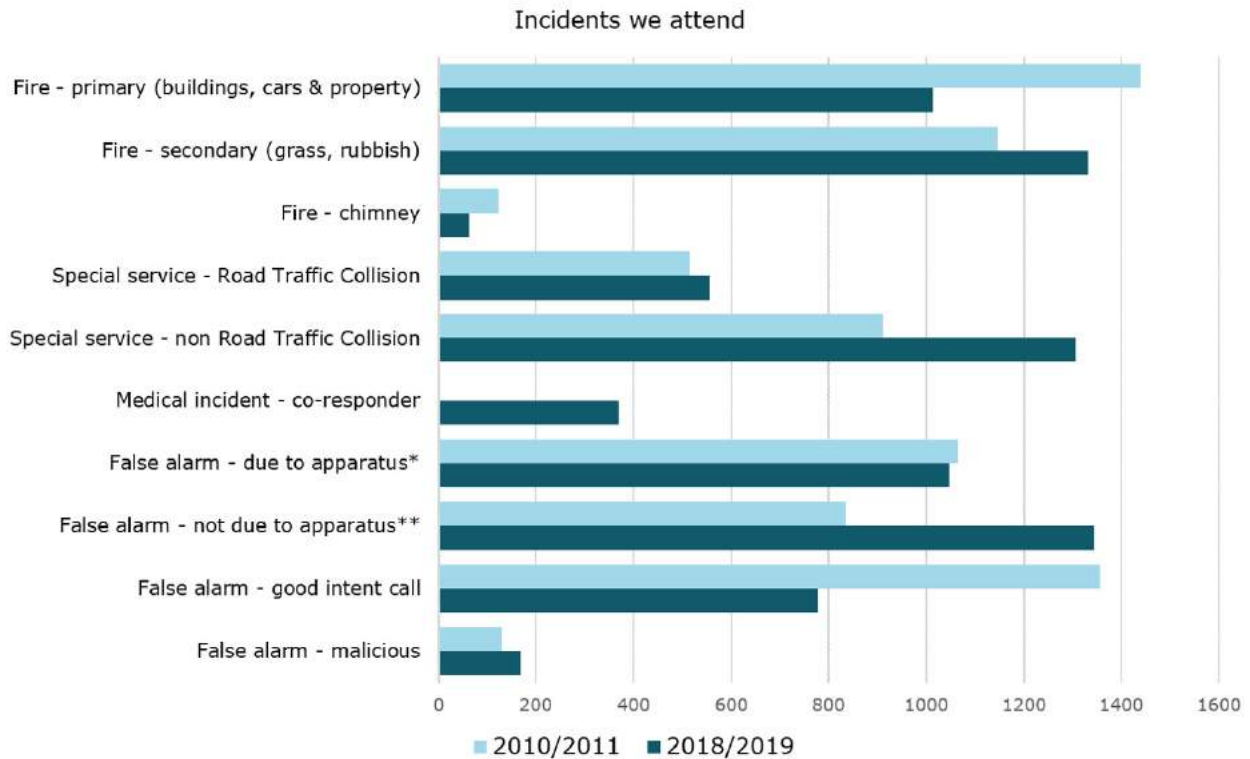
Our strategic objectives

- Prevent incidents that cause harm from happening
- Protect homes, public buildings and businesses from the effects of fire
- Provide a timely and proportionate response to incidents by allocating our assets and resources in relation to risk and demand
- Offer best value for money to our residents and businesses and ensure that the Service is compliant with regulatory requirements and recognised 'good practice' standards and can readily evidence this at all times



What we do

We now go to a broader range of incidents than we did in 2010. We go to fewer fires, but other types of incidents have taken their place. This is partly as a result of societal changes and busier roads. It is also through our collaboration with other emergency services. We provide assistance to other fire and rescue service areas and more medical incidents as first responders.



* False alarm - due to apparatus is where a detector/alarm has sounded, but no cause for the alarm sounding could be identified.

** False alarm - not due to apparatus covers incidents where the service has been called to an address due to an alarm/detector activating, and the cause of the alarm was due to external factors such as dust from builders, cooking fumes and unintentional activations such as break glass.

We have also been developing our services in response to changing patterns of risk and need in the communities we serve. Examples of this include:

- Expanding our home safety visits to look at wellness and health.
- Promoting awareness of dementia-related risks in our community.
- Locating publicly accessible defibrillators at most fire stations, and providing training to the public.

Our Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capabilities form a fully integrated part of our local service provision. However, they are also available to respond to regional and national incidents as in the case of the Didcot power station collapse in 2016. In 2017 we completed a project to enhance our water rescue capabilities and successfully applied to be on the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) register for deployment to assist in response to flooding.

What we've done - the numbers

April 2015 - March 2019

Below we show the range and scale of the work we have done over the first four years of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan across the scope of our prevention, protection and emergency response services



31,408

Emergencies attended



16,687

Detectors fitted



13,237

Home safety visits



1,955

Businesses inspected



386

Schools we work with



2,192

Road Traffic Collisions attended



85

Apprenticeships



3,662

Co-responder incidents attended



815

People rescued from lifts



13,582,800

Impressions on Twitter



14,500

Water hydrants maintained every year



1,760

Messages in a bottle supplied*



15

Enforcement notices served



4,794

Post-visit feedback letters sent

*Message in a Bottle is where you keep essential personal and medication details in a small bottle in the fridge.

Paramedics, police, fire-fighters and social services know to look in the fridge when they see the Message in a Bottle stickers.



**IT ONLY TAKES
ONE ACCIDENT
TO START A FIRE.**

ARE YOU SURE YOUR SMOKE
ALARMS ARE WORKING?

TEST YOURS NOW.



The 2015-2020 Public Safety Plan

What did we achieve?



In this next section you can read about what we achieved against the last Public Safety Plan. We think it is important to demonstrate that we use public consultation and planning to change and improve our services. In our 2015-2020 PSP we identified seven key areas where we would work to improve. We have delivered effective changes against each one of these areas. On the next two pages we have provided some of the key headline performance figures for our prevention, protection and response activities over the lifetime of the plan.

What we delivered

Against our 2015-2020 Public Safety Plan



1. Modernising our approach to resourcing for emergencies

- New resourcing model
- Flexi firefighter contracts
- Mixed crewing - eg. wholetime & on-call riding the same appliance together

2. Implement the right balance between prevention, protection and response across the service

- Reductions in the number of accidental dwelling fires, fire related injuries and primary fires
- Average attendance times broadly unchanged



3. Establish the right number of staff, fire engines and specialist appliances to respond to our risk and demand levels

- Apprenticeship scheme
- Flexi firefighter contracts
- 4x4 appliances
- Small fire unit trial

4. Identify the right number and location of fire stations, which may involve moving, merging, closing or co-locating with other blue light services

- Blue Light Hub - New combined police/fire/ambulance station for Milton Keynes, including community facilities



5. Consider alternative service delivery models

- New Resourcing Model
- A single Thames Valley Fire Control Service for all three Thames Valley fire and rescue services
- Joint procurement of fire engines, firefighting equipment and uniform
- Medical Co-responding

6. Using our capacity, resources & assets to meet a wider range of community needs in partnership with others

- Co-responding
- Dementia friendly service
- Milton Keynes Safety Centre
- Falls clinics
- Blood transfusion clinics



7. Consider new effective ways of generating extra capacity to quickly upscale for risk

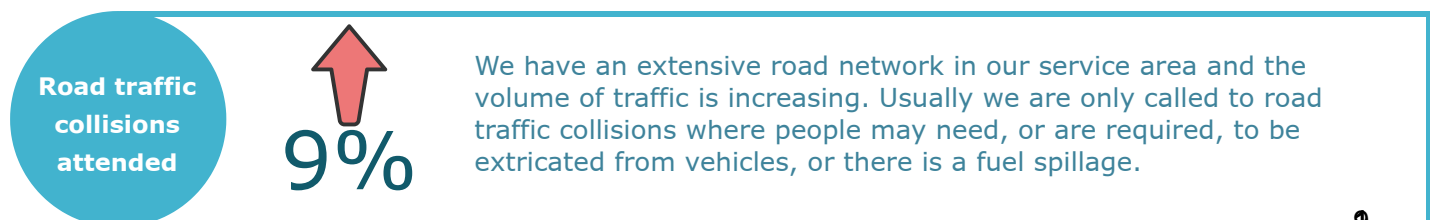
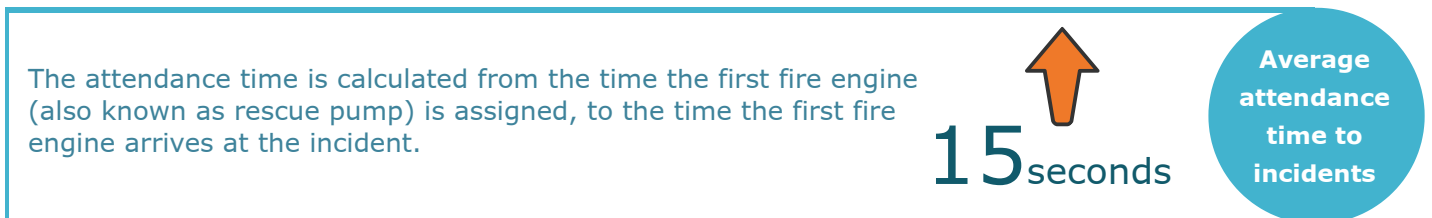
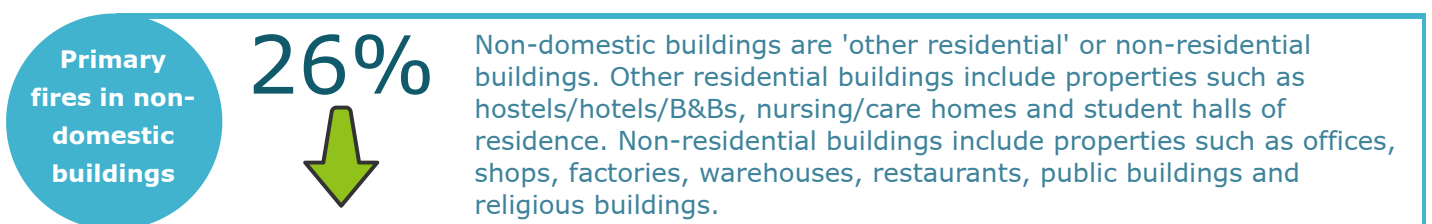
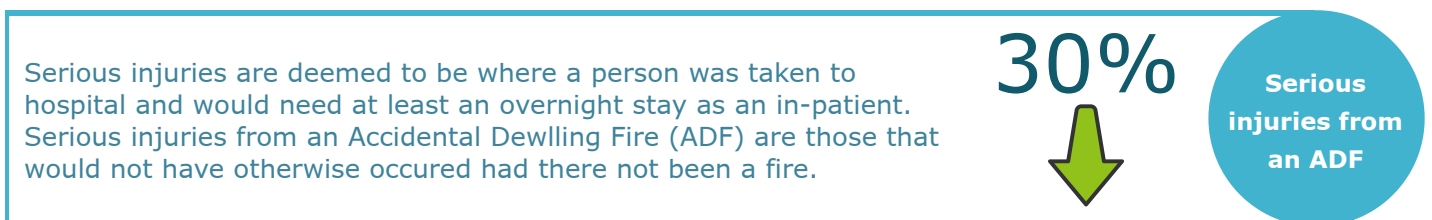
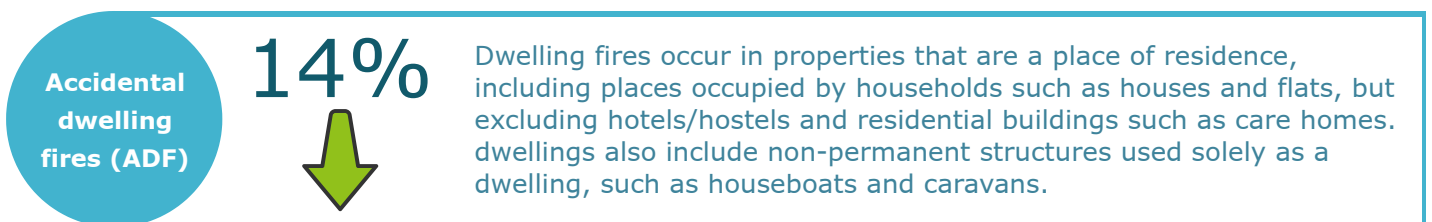
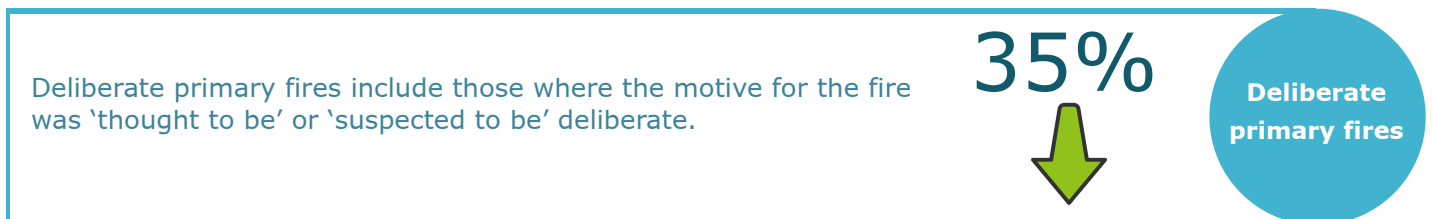
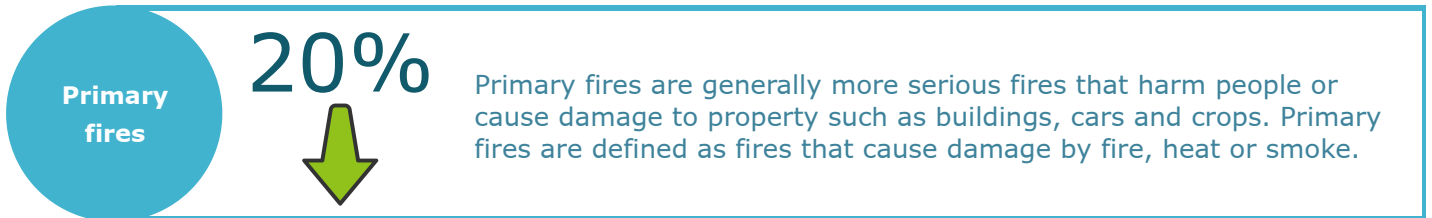
- Tiered approach to appliance availability
- New on-call model
- Resource management team

The 2015-2020 Public Safety Plan

How did we perform?

Headline performance figures - prevention, protection and response

The following figures reflect the difference between 2010-15 and 2015-19 (average per year) as at April 2019

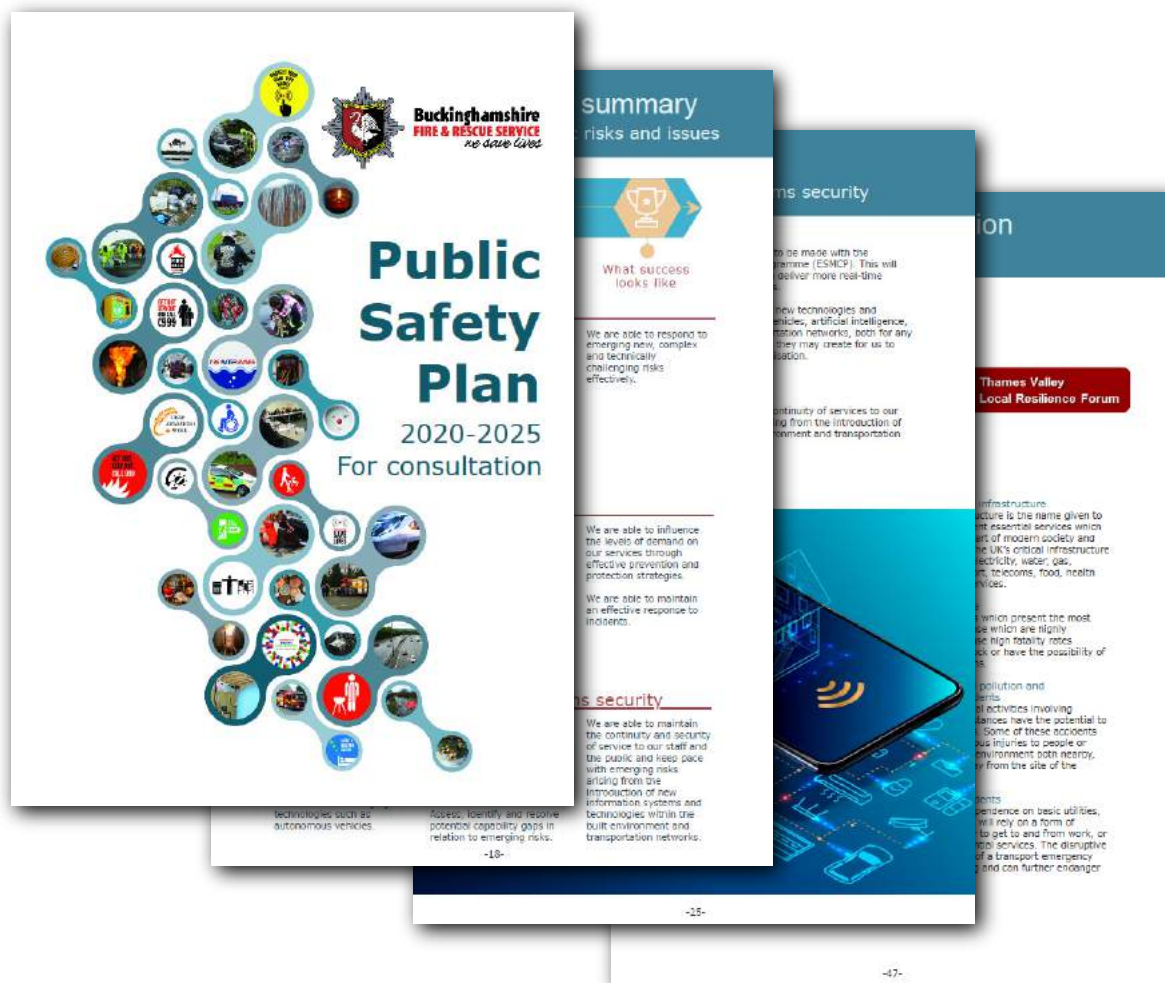




**You can't concentrate on the road and
your mobile phone**

THINK
PUT YOUR PHONE
AWAY

The challenges ahead



In this section we explore a number of future challenges that will have implications for the type, range or scale of services that we provide and/or our ability to deliver them. In relation to these, we set out the nature of the challenges, what we do now to address them and what more we will need to do in the future to control and reduce the emerging risks and potential demand arising from these challenges. Our approach to this has also been informed by consultation work undertaken with a cross-section of the public to explore their perceptions of the issues that we face and their preferences in relation to how we might deal with them in the future.

Views from the public

To help inform the development of this plan we carried out a consultation exercise with the public. The purpose of this was to explore the public's:

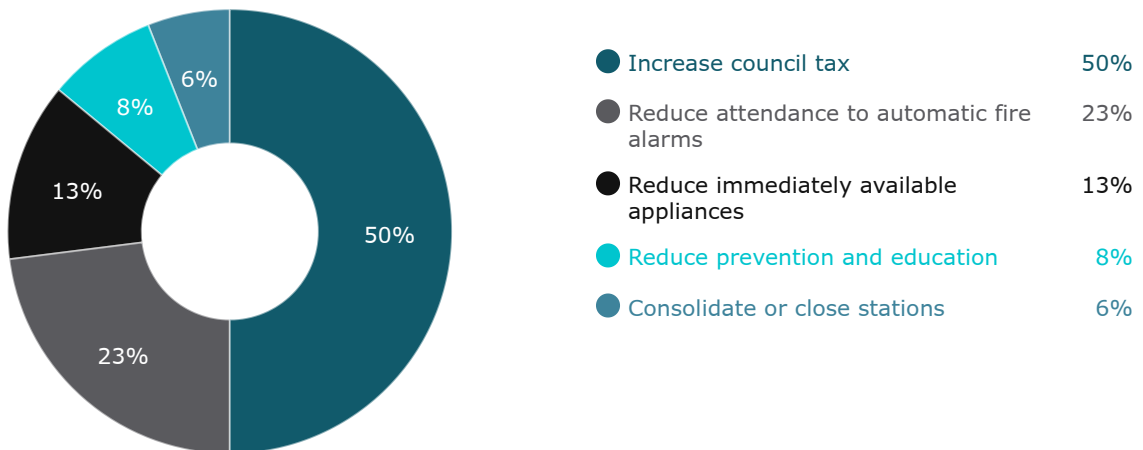
- Awareness of and attitudes towards risks.
- Perceptions of the fire and rescue service, our services and any expectations in relation to these.
- Awareness of the issues and challenges facing our service and general feelings about potential ways that we could respond to these.

A flavour of the range of views expressed by the participants about some of the issues explored in the consultation is shown on the next page. The full findings of the consultation which were held in November and December 2018 can be seen [here](#).

Future options

Some possible strategies to meet future challenges were outlined to participants. These were based on the assumption that we will have done everything possible to make savings from 'back office' functions and that our service would receive no additional Government money with which to provide services. Participants were asked to allocate 100 points between the options, and the overall preference across the five groups was that we should pursue an increase in council tax (a one-off payment of £5 to increase the base charge was favoured) and reduce our attendance at, or cease to attend, automatic fire alarms:

**Possible future strategies
(no extra money)**



Participants were also asked to rank some other possible strategies in the event of us receiving more Government money or raising additional funds ourselves through increased council tax levels. The overall ranking across all five groups was as follows:

- 1. Make on-call firefighting more attractive**
- 2. Keep existing stations and assets**
- 3. Recruit more firefighters**
- 4. Enhance protection (to be fit for the post-Grenfell environment)**
- 5. Upgrade crewing levels at stations**
- 6. Deliver additional services such as co-responding**
- 7. Ensure fairer urban versus rural service provision**

Views from the public

Fire

“ I think one of the risks from a fire perspective is the cheap imports, like phone chargers. Really understanding that they can be a real risk.

“ I think health and safety generally has improved incredibly because if you go out to a function in the community, it's a public place and you get your five minutes of 'these are the exits and fire safety'. Twenty years ago you didn't get that . . . and nobody was actually aware of this. The facilities of public places are now much better and regulated better as well, which means people are safer.

Road traffic collisions

“ There must be more risks with car accidents and things like that rather than fire . . . as the population is growing is it a big element of resources? For me personally because I travel quite a lot that's quite a big thing.

“ Roads are getting busier so there isn't the space for traffic to go. Accidents happen every day of the week somewhere. So the rescue aspect is as much of a consideration now as individual fire problems.

Finances and value for money

“ Central government is a challenge facing the fire and rescue service . . . it seems bonkers that they can keep cutting and cutting and stick their heads in the sand and think it will be fine and do more with less; that doesn't work forever.

“ There are so many other organisations that want this extra £10-£15 so where does it stop? £5 itself isn't a lot, but if you add everything else up . . .

“ As an insurance policy [it] isn't bad at all.

Response times

“ Given how rural and spread out Bucks is, I think the attendance time figures are very impressive; I think it's really good.

“ It would be impractical to expect the same level of response in a rural as an urban area and it wouldn't be an appropriate use of funding to have a fire engine in a rural area all the time when it's not going to be used very much.

Tolerance of risk

“ No death is acceptable is it, whether it's a fire or an accident. Obviously, we would all want them to be zero wouldn't we. But we don't live in a society where everyone drives around wearing a seat belt or doesn't use a phone while driving.

A changing world

“ I think population growth is a key issue . . . How long do you continue to run a single pump before you hit a threshold? At some point that service will really be squeezed as the population expands. And that seems to be a theme across all emergency services. I think particularly with the fire and rescue service there will be a big threshold moment where they need new kit and stations.

Perception of BFRS

“ I filled in a survey at an event I went to and they came and fitted a smoke alarm and they looked at access points . . . It was very useful and they're very approachable.

“ I live near a dangerous road and there have been a couple of high-profile accidents. They are on site very rapidly; so a good impression.

The challenges ahead - summary

Draft proposals aligned to strategic risks and issues



Infrastructure projects

Road closures during construction leading to slower emergency response times.

On-site risks during construction such as working at heights or depths.

New technical risks following project completion such as tunnel rescues.

Consider temporary re-location of fire appliances to reduce impact.

Review range of potential risks and identify any additional training, equipment and vehicle requirements.

We are able to respond to emerging new, complex and technically challenging risks effectively.

Population

Potential for increases in all types of emergency response.

Potential increase in accidental dwelling fire injuries and fatalities particularly in vulnerable groups such as the 80+ age group.

Consider changing current response to automatic fire alarms policy potentially freeing up capacity to deal with an increase in higher risk incident types.

Review station duty systems in high growth areas.

Continue to improve our ability to target and engage with vulnerable groups.

We are able to influence the levels of demand on our services through effective prevention and protection strategies.

We are able to maintain an effective response to incidents.

Technology information and systems security

Disruption to our ability to deliver emergency response and other services due to cyber-attack.

New risks arising from the introduction of emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles.

Continue to improve resilience of information and communication systems via opportunities such as the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

Assess, identify and resolve potential capability gaps in relation to emerging risks.

We are able to maintain the continuity and security of service to our staff and the public and keep pace with emerging risks arising from the introduction of new information systems and technologies within the built environment and transportation networks.

The challenges ahead - summary

Draft proposals aligned to strategic risks and issues



Civil emergencies

Increase in frequency and/or severity of incidents.

Review current capacity and capabilities to meet emerging risks in collaboration with Local Resilience Forum partners.

Continue to identify and act to reduce our own carbon footprint by using electric vehicles, for example.

The Local Resilience Forum partnership approach provides a coordinated capability which responds to, and resolves, civil emergencies and returns affected communities to normal.

Workforce pressures

Maintenance of range or level of service to the public due to staff retention and recruitment challenges.

Continue to develop our approach to workforce planning to inform recruitment and staff development strategies.

Continue development and roll-out of more flexible and innovative employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

Align training strategy and priorities to meet future needs.

Continue to explore ways of supporting and enhancing the health and well-being of our staff as their life circumstances change.

A proud and happy workforce.

We are able to resource our appliances and all the functions that go to support our organisation with the right people.

Recruit and retain a more diverse workforce.

Funding pressures

Insufficient funding to maintain current range or level of service to the public.

Introduce zero base approach to budgeting to ensure that the right amount of money is being spent in the right areas.

Continue to pursue the case for relaxation of the Government's Council Tax referendum limits.

Consider withdrawing from some non-statutory services to reduce costs.

We are able to maintain a balanced budget, and sufficient level of reserves. We do not have to implement cuts to our services that would adversely affect the safety of the public we serve.

The challenges ahead

Infrastructure and population

The challenge

This document sets out our plans for the next five years. In formulating it, we have had regard to potential developments that are likely to affect the future provision of fire and rescue services over the 30-year period to 2050.

A number of major regional and national infrastructure projects are already underway, or have the potential to begin during the lifetime of this plan. These projects already, or have the potential to, cause disruption to local transport networks and consequently have an impact on our service provision, particularly emergency response times. Our nearest-appliance mobilisation system will help us mitigate this risk. We will also consider temporarily relocating appliances and other resources to avoid excessive impacts on our ability to respond to emergencies or deliver other services during construction.

These projects also have the potential to create new risks, both during the construction phase and following completion. For example, some involve mobile workforces sited in temporary residential accommodation during construction or involve the creation of tunnels and viaducts involving working at heights and depths with associated risks that will require specialist technical rescue capabilities in the event of an incident.

Looking further afield, the National Infrastructure Commission's plans for the region between Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford, up to 2050, envisage significant amounts of new housing and businesses that will also potentially affect areas that we serve - particularly Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale. We will monitor the development of these plans closely to determine the likely implications for long-term future service provision.

We have learnt in recent years that an increase in the number of homes does not necessarily correspond with a linear increase in fires. This is in part due to modern building materials and the safety features built into modern homes. With more people and busier roads, we expect to see further changes to the type of incidents we attend.



The challenges ahead

Infrastructure and population

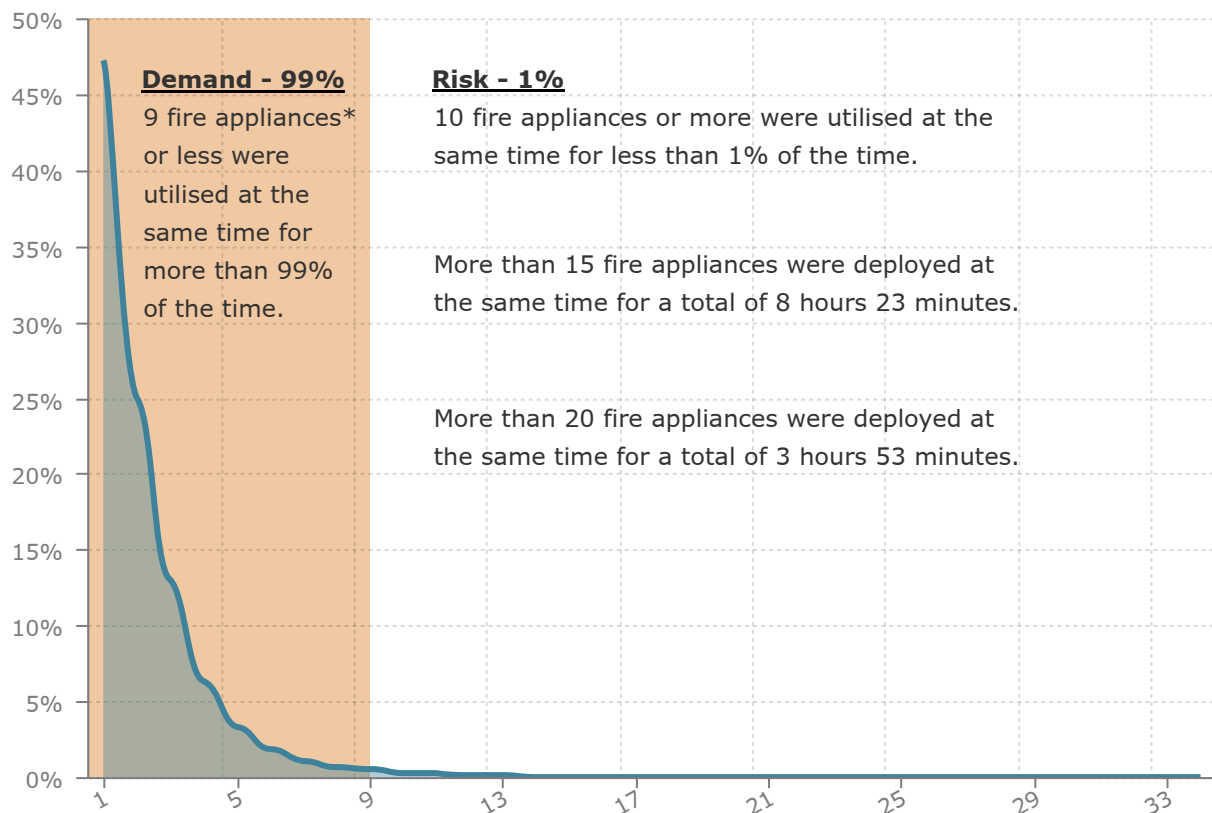
How we manage this risk now

Under our previous Public Safety Plan, we undertook a review of our approach to resourcing for emergency incidents to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency with which this is done. In particular, analysis of our appliance deployment patterns indicated that, for 99% of the time, demand on our emergency response capacity could be met by 12 or fewer fire appliances located in the right areas. This led us to move from an approach that sought to maintain our entire fleet in a high state of readiness, to one which ensured that sufficient appliances are immediately available to meet normal levels of day-to-day demand with the remainder held at graduated levels of availability to ensure that we can rapidly respond to occasional events which stretch us past our normal demand profile. To enable this approach to work, we developed a new resourcing model that introduced more flexible working arrangements for our staff, including:

- The introduction of a range of innovative employment contracts that are unique in UK fire and rescue services; and
- New communication systems that enable us to contact and roster On-Call and off-duty Wholetime staff rapidly if we need to crew extra appliances during very busy periods or respond to exceptional events.

As part of the preparation of this plan, we refreshed the analysis of our demand patterns (as shown in the graph). The updated analysis indicates that between April 2018 and March 2019 only nine appliances were needed at high states of readiness to meet our day-to-day demand. However, we propose to keep our current number of immediately and rapidly available appliances in order to maintain:

- Our emergency incident attendance times, as although our analysis indicates that nine appliances are sufficient to meet our typical level of day-to-day demand, a larger number, suitably located, is needed to ensure we can reach all parts of the geographical area that we serve in a timely manner.
- The standing capacity to deal with two medium sized incidents simultaneously as required by our operational planning assumptions.

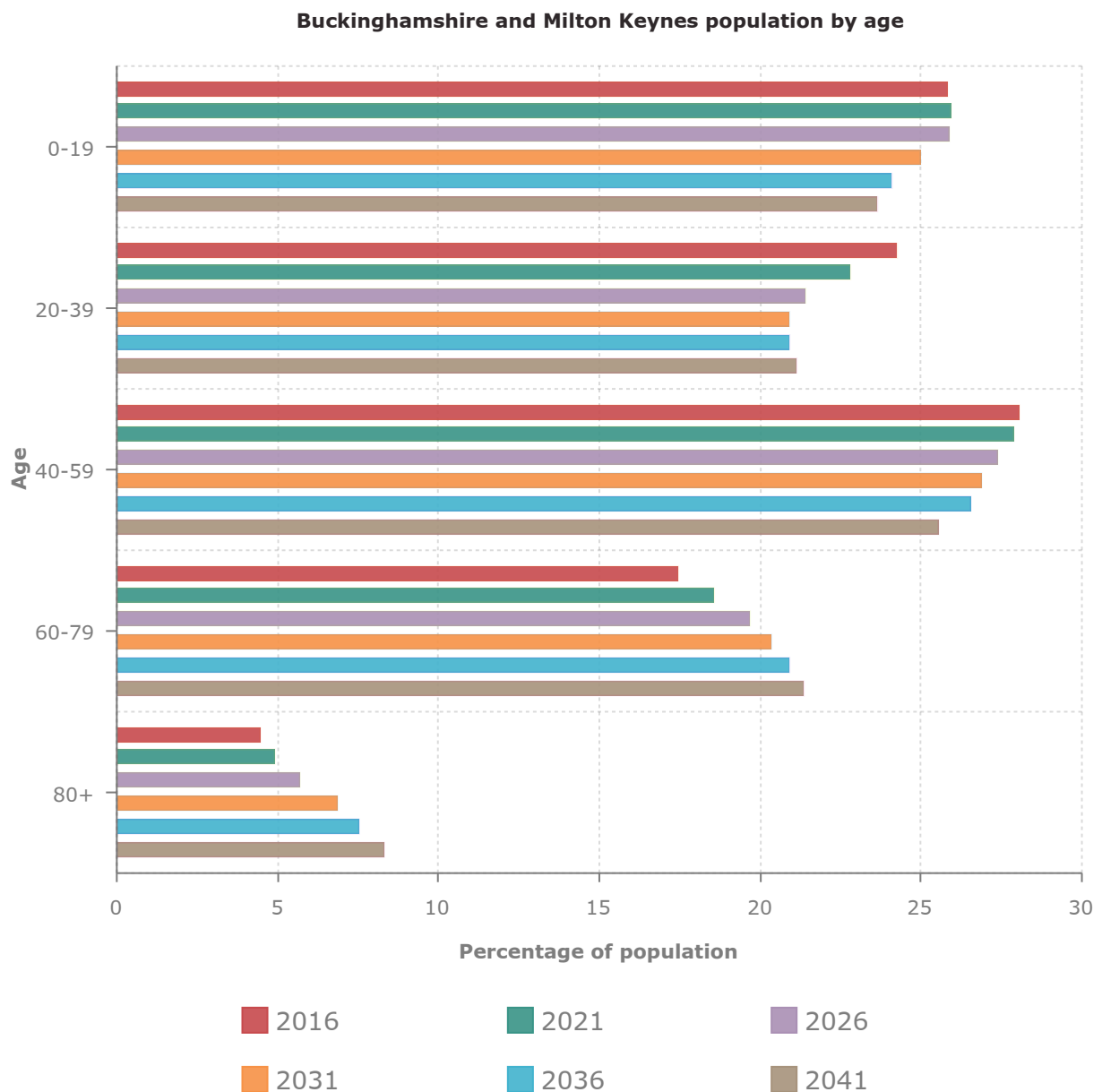


*Fire appliances include: fire engines (also known as pumps), turntable ladders, boats, command units, support vehicles and Urban Search and Rescue units.

The challenges ahead

Infrastructure and population

We also use data to make sure we are targeting those most vulnerable to fires. We use a number of data sources and work very closely with our partners. Through this we carry out visits to homes and also participate in education programmes. We still fit free smoke detectors for those who need them. Through our Fire and Wellness programme, we have also broadened our home visits to look at other issues which are often linked to fire safety, but also assist our key partners in helping people to be safer and healthier in their homes. We also have a wide range of initiatives for helping people to be safer on the roads.



Our protection teams actively engage businesses to help them be safer and more resilient. We have legal powers to inspect and enforce fire safety regulations. We continue to focus our activities on those who are most at risk when at work, leisure or in provided care to ensure that they are kept safe by those who are responsible for such types of buildings.

The challenges ahead

Infrastructure and population

What more do we need to do?

The changing demographics such as the ageing and diversification of the population, coupled with the expansion of our towns and new infrastructure projects, means we constantly need to review the scale and balance of our resourcing between prevention, protection and response.

We will continue to work with our local authority partners to understand the potential impact of their development plans. Currently, the plans that have been shared with us by our partners indicate that generally our stations are well located with the right resources. However, we will continue to review our resource and demand data. If we decide that we need to make fundamental changes to our emergency response provision we will consult publicly on any proposals.

Across our prevention, protection and response functions we will continue to improve and be more effective at how we identify and manage risk information and risk modelling. We may change how we mobilise to incidents, the capabilities we use, and where we mobilise from. Specifically we will review our approach to attending reports of automatic fire alarm (AFA) systems operating. We are one of only two fire and rescue services that routinely attend such reports as they are predominantly false alarms. However, we do occasionally attend and discover that there is a fire. This happened on 53 occasions in 2018/2019. We use them as an opportunity to engage businesses and help them improve their business continuity. However, this does cost us resources and time in doing so, so we will review our current policy. If the outcome of the review recommends significant changes to our current policy, we will consult with affected stakeholders before making any decisions.

We will continue to evolve how we resource and staff our fire appliances. We are developing new resourcing and staffing models across a range of areas so that we get the right resources to the incident.

Should our financial position improve, we will look to enhance resourcing in other areas to improve our service. Such development would be based on the latest risk information and also planned developments such as town expansions and the effects of new transport infrastructure.

Depending on the nature of the construction programmes in our area, significant investment in specialist firefighting, rescue and training capabilities will be required.

What does success look like?

We will know if we have been successful if we are able to influence the levels of demand on our services through effective prevention and protection strategies while maintaining an effective response to incidents. We will also have been successful if we are able to respond effectively to the emerging new, complex and technically challenging risks. If the outcome of the review recommends significant changes to our current policy, we will consult with affected stakeholders before making any decisions.

The challenges ahead

Technology, information and systems security

The challenge

The growth in both the number and complexity of direct and indirect cyber-attacks means that we must be constantly vigilant and work with partners and suppliers to mitigate these threats.

We are also aware of the way that new information technologies are being increasingly embedded into infrastructure, industrial plant, public buildings, homes, transportation networks and urban environments, a process that will only gather pace in future years. We are already beginning to see the effects of these changes in some of the areas that we serve, particularly in Milton Keynes where autonomous vehicles are already in use and with the introduction of 'Smart' technology across the local motorway network.

How are we managing this risk now

- We use a range of capabilities to mitigate the risk of cyber-attacks on our communication and information systems and continue to invest in technological solutions, security processes and employee education and training.
- We are diligent in our selection of partners and suppliers to ensure that systems are configured effectively and use expert testers to verify this.
- We have disaster recovery systems in place that enable us to restore our critical service operations rapidly.



The challenges ahead

Technology, information and systems security

What more do we need to do

During the period of this Public Safety Plan we expect progress to be made with the Government's Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP). This will provide more secure and resilient communication capabilities to deliver more real-time information to improve incident management and other services.

We will monitor the evolution and implementation of a range of new technologies and systems such as 5G cellular network technology, autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence, robotics, the development of 'Smart Cities' and 'Smart' transportation networks, both for any new risks that they may present and also for opportunities that they may create for us to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and resilience of our organisation.

What does success look like?

We will know that we have been successful if we maintain the continuity of services to our staff and the public and keep pace with any emerging risks arising from the introduction of new information systems and technologies within the built environment and transportation networks.



The challenges ahead

Civil emergencies

The challenge

As well as our current and emerging local risks, we contribute to national preparedness for a range of civil emergencies. These include risks such as flooding, wildfires, terrorist related incidents and other emergencies that might have local, regional or national dimensions.

The Met Office predicts more summertime heatwaves, colder winters and more frequent heavy rainfall events. This suggests that we can expect to see more summertime outdoor fires and increased flooding events. Historically, the combination of school holidays and outdoor leisure spots (parks and woodland) sees increased incident demand with hot, dry conditions. We have some forested areas and can still be affected by numerous rural fires as we were in the summer of 2018 which culminated in a significant fire in Little Marlow which required us to invoke our resilience arrangements.

More stormy weather is likely to affect travel across the county as a result of debris from fallen and damaged trees. We can expect greater disruption to travel owing to extremely cold winter conditions (ice and snow).

How we manage this risk now

A key aspect of our preparedness for civil emergencies is our work with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). This is where the police, fire, ambulance, local authorities and other key agencies come together to plan, exercise and work to manage significant local emergencies.

We form part of an effective multi-agency response in line with Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP). Also we are aligned with National Occupational Guidance (NOG) to ensure we demonstrate best practice and work effectively within interoperable environments. We use and contribute to Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) and have reported on areas where we feel learning from local incidents can support national learning.

Some of our fire appliances have an off-highway capability, which enables us to provide an effective response to wildfires and also harsher winters, with potential greater snowfall as experienced in the winter of 2017/18.

Our water rescue capabilities are based at Beaconsfield and Newport Pagnell to respond to flooding in and around Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. We have also made these assets available for national deployment in cases of serious flooding elsewhere in the country.

We maintain a range of specialist capabilities to deal with other risks. Our Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team based in Aylesbury is available to be deployed to major regional or national emergencies as well as being integrated into local services.

Our National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers (NILOs) and Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) Officers operate within the organisation as well as at regional and national level and are routinely mobilised to local incidents across the Thames Valley.

The challenges ahead

Civil emergencies

What more do we need to do?

We will continue to keep pace with the impact on demand and risk of climate change on our resources. We will review our off-highway capability and also the provision of local specialist capabilities.

We are fully committed to working with our Local Resilience Forum partners in developing our understanding, intelligence and response to local, regional and national emergencies. During this Public Safety Plan we will review our approach to responding to terrorist attacks involving improvised weapons and/or firearms and what equipment and training our staff may need. We will explore whether any required capabilities can be achieved collaboratively with other fire and rescue services.

In addition to ensuring that we are properly prepared to deal the effects of climate change on our risk and demand profile, we are also committed to reducing the impact on the environment from our own operations and infrastructure. We already utilise solar panels to offset our power usage at our headquarters site. The new Blue-Light-Hub in Milton Keynes will be an environmentally efficient building. During the course of this Public Safety Plan we will review the opportunity to introduce electric vehicles and equipment into our fleet of support vehicles. While the early indications are that electric powered fire engines may not be practical for us now, we will monitor the technological developments and affordability as electric large goods vehicles start to be manufactured.

What does success look like?

We will be successful if the LRF partnership approach provides a coordinated capability which responds to, and resolves, civil emergencies and returns affected communities to normal.



The challenges ahead

Workforce pressures

The challenge

The size and composition of our workforce, especially the frontline operational firefighting component, has changed significantly. Societal changes have also impacted on our ability to attract and retain on-call firefighters. This is a national problem and does not just affect us. Our operational staff are now expected to work longer, and austerity has led to pay restraint, which is acutely felt in our area where the cost of living and housing is particularly high. Particular challenges include:

- An uneven retirement profile as a legacy of recruitment patterns during the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in highly experienced wholetime operational personnel retiring simultaneously.
- Loss of staff to neighbouring fire and rescue services, including London Fire Brigade who pay weighting allowances.
- Changes in society and the way people live and work have affected our ability to recruit our on-call firefighters (this issue is particularly acute for some of our more remote rural locations).
- Recruitment and retention of specialist support staff, particularly where we are in competition with private sector companies.
- As with the population as a whole our workforce is ageing which, in addition to the staff retention issues mentioned above, could, in future, potentially reduce the numbers of staff remaining fit enough to perform some key operational functions such as deploying to incidents requiring use of breathing apparatus.



The challenges ahead

Workforce pressures

How we manage this risk now

- We regularly engage with and listen to our staff in a variety of ways.
- We review and develop our employment propositions to include flexible contracts, employee benefits and opportunities to develop and earn more.
- We have a range of apprenticeships. For new entrants to the Service these include firefighter apprenticeships and apprenticeships in supporting roles. For existing staff we also offer a range of management apprenticeships.
- We have developed a comprehensive employee well-being strategy designed to meet the needs of staff at every stage in their career with us from when they join to the point they leave. It recognises the different stressors and pressures that people may face at different stages of their working lives. It embraces psychological and physical well-being, work life balance and flexible working opportunities for staff with caring responsibilities such as for children or elderly relatives. It also caters for the needs of an ageing workforce by supporting staff to remain fit and well in their roles throughout the entire length of their career and into retirement.
- We have developed an Aspiring Leaders Programme to help us identify and develop talent in our organisation.
- We have developed a sophisticated workforce planning model that enables us to predict numbers of staff likely to leave our Service due to retirement or to pursue other employment opportunities. This informs our recruitment strategy, training plans, staff development programmes and the design of our employment propositions.

What more do we need to do?

- We will continue to develop opportunities for our staff and also how we attract the best people for all the roles in our service.
- As part of our recruitment we will look to use more innovative marketing to attract staff from a wider range of backgrounds so we can improve our diversity and better represent the community we serve.
- We will continue to explore ways of supporting and enhancing the health and well-being of our staff as their life circumstances change throughout their career.
- In the next five years we will further develop the role of the on-call firefighter and how this will improve our resilience to deal with local, regional and national emergencies.
- We will monitor how the range of incidents we are attending is evolving. We will look to provide our firefighters with more skills, training and equipment to deal with this changing picture. We are developing our use of technology such as drones, telemetry, advances in firefighter clothing and breathing apparatus to enhance our effectiveness and safety in the future.

What does success look like?

We will know we have been successful if we:

- Appropriately resource our front-line services and the functions that support them with the right people – people who can work flexibly, are adaptable and have been provided with the right skills to perform their roles effectively and efficiently.
- Recruit and retain a more diverse workforce that better represents the make-up of the working population as a whole.
- Achieve low levels of sickness and ill-health retirements.
- Achieve high levels of satisfaction in feedback from staff surveys and other forms of engagement where we ask them what it is like to be part of this organisation.

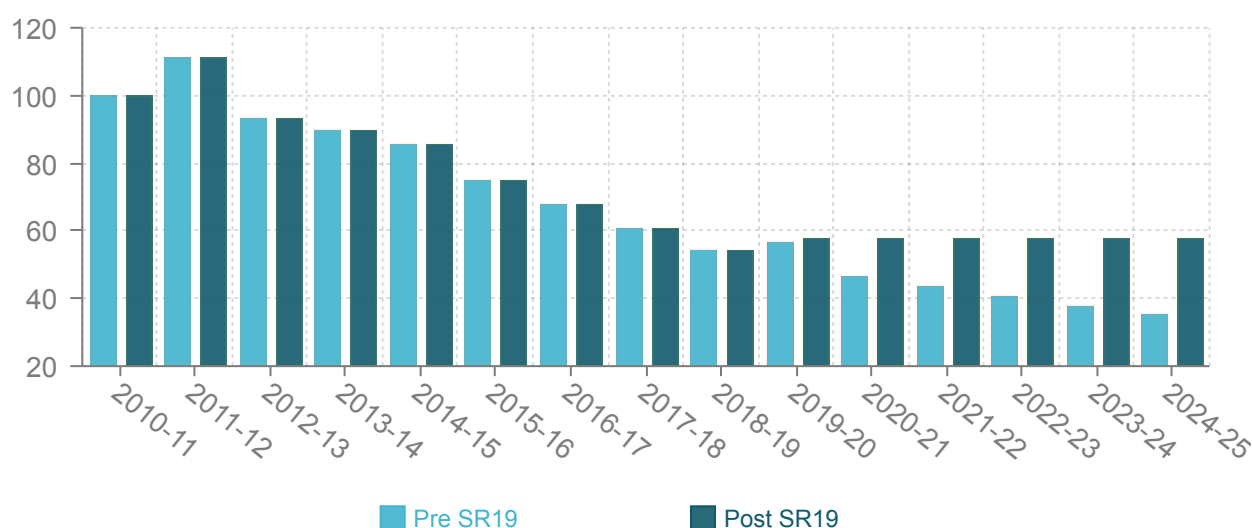
The challenges ahead

Funding outlook

The challenge

Since 2010, as part of its efforts to reduce the size of the national budget deficit, the Government has made significant reductions to its funding for fire and rescue services. However our ability to offset reductions to Government funding has also been constrained by the imposition of council tax referendum limits. The effects of these pressures since 2010 amount to a real-terms reduction in overall funding of 25 per cent, including a real-terms reduction of 42 per cent in funding from central government. Prior to Spending Round 2019 (SR19) we were forecasting that real-terms central government funding would continue to fall over the period of this PSP. Since SR19 was announced we have updated our forecasts to show this now being flat in real-terms (as detailed below)

Forecast change in Government funding 2010-11 to 2024-25
(real terms, indexed 2010-11=100)



However, SR19 only covers a one-year time period, and future Comprehensive Spending Reviews may require these forecasts to be revisited. Also, despite the effect of efficiency measures already taken during the period 2015-2020, we continue to face other financial uncertainties that potentially require us to find additional funding and/or make further savings. These uncertainties arise from: increases in the amount that employers are required to contribute to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme due to changes made by the Government; uncertainty over long-term funding that we receive from Government to provide Urban Search and Rescue as part of national resilience arrangements to deal with major civil emergencies such as terrorist attacks; and changes to the allocation of business rate receipts to local authorities.

How we manage this risk now

We manage our financial risks through strong governance and budgetary control frameworks. We have received substantial assurance from independent auditors as to the robustness of these over the last six years.

We continue to meet our statutory requirement to deliver balanced budgets and are forecast to do so by our medium term financial planning. However, in order to continue to balance our budget over future years, we may need to reduce the contribution we make from our revenue budget to fund our capital programme. Were we to continue to do this for a prolonged period, our capital reserves would be close to exhausted before the end of the 2024-25 financial year. This means that, in that case, we would only be able to fund essential property work and replacement of vehicles and equipment, with no funding available for future investment (unless we chose to borrow in order to finance it, although further savings would need to be found to fund the revenue cost of any additional borrowing).

The challenges ahead

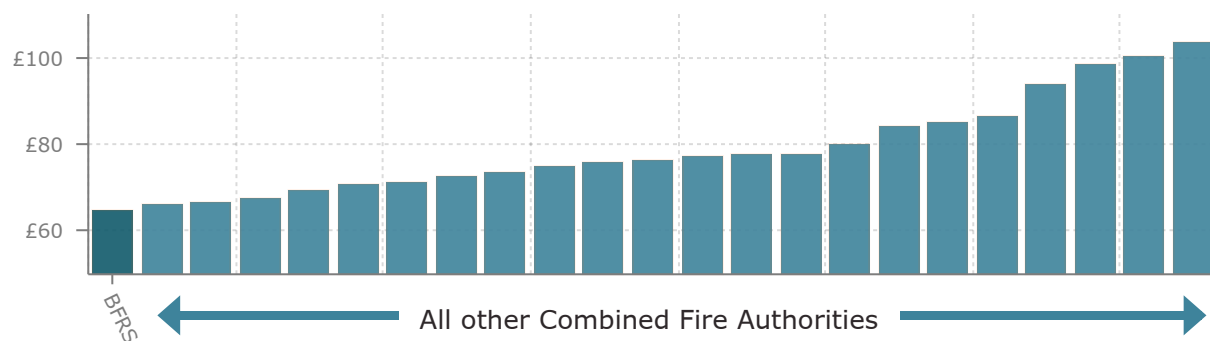
Funding outlook

In view of this, and in addition to an ongoing search for further efficiencies, we have been actively lobbying Government, with support from all our Members of Parliament, to review its policy on fire funding. In particular we are keen to see a relaxation of the council tax referendum limits which would enable us to mitigate the risk of our reserves being reduced below the level considered prudent for us to maintain, and avoid cuts to services that would have an adverse effect on the safety of the public should central government funding reduce again.

We already have the lowest council tax rates of any Combined Fire Authority* (CFA) in the country. As such, we are disadvantaged by the imposition of a single percentage limit (i.e. fire authorities that currently levy a higher rate of council tax than us than us get a correspondingly larger increase in their funding). The chart below shows our council tax charge relative to that of all other CFAs.

To view an illustration of what a potential rise in council tax could mean to you, please see page 48 'Future funding - your council tax'.

CFA band D council tax 2019-2020



*A CFA (Combined Fire Authority) is one which covers more than one local authority area – in our case the areas served by both Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes Council.

What more do we need to do?

Alongside our efforts to find further savings from efficiencies and gain more flexibility to raise additional revenue from council taxes, we plan to move to a 'zero based budgeting' approach. In contrast to the incremental approach used in previous years, which looks at taking the prior year budget and adjusting up or down, this looks to review all costs to ensure that the right amount of money is being spent in the right areas. This will help to ensure that our spend is as closely aligned as possible to delivering our strategic objectives.

What does success look like?

We will know that we have succeeded if we are able to maintain a balanced budget and a sufficient level of reserves without having to implement cuts to our services that would adversely affect the safety of the public.

Risk management

Strategy proposals

What we plan to do to mitigate the risks

Below is a summary of what we plan to do to mitigate the emerging risks within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Infrastructure projects

Consider temporary re-location of fire appliances to reduce impact.

Review range of potential risks and identify any additional training, equipment and vehicle requirements.

Population

Consider changing current response to automatic fire alarms policy, potentially freeing up capacity to deal with an increase in higher risk incident types.

Review station duty systems in high growth areas.

Continue to improve our ability to target and engage with vulnerable groups.

Technology information and systems security

Continue to improve resilience of information and communication systems via opportunities such as the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

Assess, identify and resolve potential capability gaps in relation to emerging risks.

Civil emergencies

Review current capacity and capabilities to meet emerging risks in collaboration with Local Resilience Forum partners.

Continue to identify and act on opportunities to reduce our own carbon footprint by using electric vehicles, for example.

Workforce pressures

Continue to develop our approach to workforce planning to inform recruitment and staff development strategies.

Continue development and roll-out of more flexible and innovative employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

Align training strategy and priorities to meet future needs.

Continue to explore ways of supporting and enhancing the health and well-being of our staff as their life circumstances change.

Funding pressures

Introduce zero base approach to budgeting to ensure that the right amount of money is being spent in the right areas.

Continue to pursue the case for relaxation of the Government's Council Tax referendum limits

Consider withdrawing from some non-statutory services to reduce costs.

Consultation

This plan was approved by Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority on 12 February 2020 following the outcomes of a public consultation which took place between 23 September and 18 November 2019.

The consultation exercise included focus groups comprised of members of the general public resident in Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes, meetings with union representatives and, an online feedback facility which was open to the public as well our own staff.

Hundreds of partner and community organisations were also invited to participate in the consultation.

A full report of the outcomes of the public consultation can be viewed [here](#).

Contact us

Although formal consultations on this stage of our public safety planning process have now ended, we always welcome feedback on our plans and ideas about how to improve our service. You can do this using the following methods:

Email:

irmp@bucksfire.gov.uk

Post:

Public Safety Plan
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
Brigade Headquarters
Stocklake
Aylesbury
HP20 1BD

Supplementary information



Supplementary information

What is a Public Safety Plan?

All fire and rescue services in England have to publish their plans for delivering fire and rescue services in their area. Plans have to be consulted on with the public they serve. In creating our Public Safety Plan we have used Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) principles.

IRMP is a statutory requirement placed on fire authorities by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. However, in formulating their plans and policies, local fire and rescue authorities are also required to have regard to guidance issued by central government in its National Framework document. This sets out the government's expectations and requirements for all fire and rescue authorities in England.

The current National Framework, which was published in May 2018, requires that fire and rescue authority integrated risk management plans must:-

- reflect up to date risk analyses including an assessment of all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the area of the authority;
- demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a way that makes best use of available resources;
- outline required service delivery outcomes including the allocation of resources for the mitigation of risks;
- set out its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators, and the Enforcement Concordat;
- cover at least a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as it is necessary to ensure that the authority is able to deliver the requirements set out in this Framework;
- reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies and partners; and
- be easily accessible and publicly available.

The National Framework document also requires fire and rescue authorities to:

- collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the services they provide;
- develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

Supplementary information

Sources of risk information

Here are a range of sources that we have used to inform the development of this plan and where you can find out more about some of the risks and issues that we have considered in formulating it:

Infrastructure and population

HS2:

www.hs2.org.uk/

East-West Rail:

www.networkrail.co.uk/our-railway-upgrade-plan/key-projects/east-west-rail/

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway:

<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway/>

National Infrastructure Commission Growth Arc:

www.nic.org.uk/our-work/growth-arc/

Crossrail:

<http://www.crossrail.co.uk/>

Heathrow Expansion:

www.heathrowexpansion.com/the-expansion-plan/

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan:

<https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/valp-proposed-submission>

Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan:

<https://www.chiltern.gov.uk/planning/localplan>

Wycombe Local Plan:

<https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/browse/Planning-and-building-control/New-local-plan/New-local-plan.aspx>

Milton Keynes Development and Infrastructure Plans:

<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/growing-mk>

Technology, information and systems security

Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2018:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/702074/Cyber_Security_Breaches_Survey_2018_-_Main_Report.pdf

Emergency Services Network / ESMCP Overview:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-emergency-services-mobile-communications-programme/emergency-services-network>

Supplementary information

Sources of risk information

Civil emergencies

Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum Community Risk Register:

<http://thamesvalleylrf.org.uk/assets/risk%20register/tvlrf%20risk%20register%20oct%202016.pdf>

National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies 2017:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-risk-register-of-civil-emergencies-2017-edition

World Economic Forum Global Risk Report 2019:

<https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-risks-report-2019>

Met Office Climate Change Guide:

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate-guide>

Workforce pressures

Our People Strategy:

<https://people.bucksfire.gov.uk/>

Funding outlook

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Medium Term Financial Plan:

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/9515/4841/6166/ITEM_8_Medium_Term_Financial_Plan_2019-20gb.pdf

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/7415/1756/5779/Revised_Appendix_1.pdf

Legislative and regulatory context

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

Civil Contingencies Act 2004:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/36/contents

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/1541/contents/made>

Policing and Crime Act 2017:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/3/contents/enacted>

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2

Supplementary information

incident trends

Incident trends

The data below is presented in a form of trends. Viewed in this way it allows us to better understand our changing demand profile in more detail. It also allows us to understand how effective our prevention and protection activities are. This data is also benchmarked against similar fire and rescue services as well as nationally. This allows us to spot any trends that are unique to us which may require our own tailored interventions.

Primary fires

Primary fires are generally more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property. Primary fires are defined as fires that cause damage by fire/heat/smoke and meet at least one of the following conditions:

- any fire that occurred in a (non-derelect) building, vehicle or (some) outdoor structures
- any fire involving fatalities, casualties or rescues
- any fire attended by five or more pumping appliances.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Building	783	810	728	748	677	643	594	587	576
Road Vehicle	469	354	315	319	289	285	316	253	310
Outdoor	186	174	125	115	100	90	79	106	127
Other transport vehicle	2	3	2	1	1	5	3	1	1

Chimney fires

Chimney fires are fires in buildings where the fire was contained within the chimney structure and did not involve casualties, rescues or attendance by five or more pumping appliances. Chimneys in industrial buildings are not included.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Chimney Fires	123	109	108	123	82	75	89	70	64

Secondary fires

Secondary fires are generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property. These include refuse fires, grassland fires and fires in derelict buildings or vehicles, unless these fires involved casualties or rescues, or five or more pumping appliances attended, in which case they become primary other outdoor fires.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Deliberate - others property	308	298	152	160	133	147	154	193	230
Deliberate - unknown owner	196	181	122	136	114	174	164	201	188
Accidental	261	244	190	250	150	170	164	184	318
Not known	112	129	102	107	99	78	61	44	68
Grand Total	877	852	566	653	496	569	543	622	804

RTCs (Road Traffic Collisions)

RTCs represent the number of incidents that a fire and rescue service attended. These incidents can include duties ranging from making the road safe to extrication of casualties. Please note, some RTCs may be included in other incident figures should the incident have included other aspects i.e. a fire as a result of the RTC.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
RTCs	535	494	486	515	458	489	530	595	569

Supplementary information

incident trends

Special Service - Non RTC

The below data shows the breakdown of incidents attended that were not a fire or RTC.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Advice Only	23	17	23	50	43	29	17	16	10
Animal assistance incidents	69	64	59	74	58	46	55	75	42
Assist other agencies	38	44	44	50	56	65	60	74	108
Effecting entry/exit	165	152	170	202	164	214	216	330	381
Evacuation (no fire)	3	6	3	7	7	3	12	8	8
Flooding	186	172	144	241	136	138	230	251	222
Hazardous materials incident	21	25	21	17	32	51	51	67	61
Lift release	77	77	81	70	70	68	102	136	123
Making safe (not RTC)	29	28	32	62	37	34	37	32	37
Medical Incident	4	7	14	9	6	1492	1152	689	384
No action (not false alarm)	39	41	36	38	32	80	86	80	71
Other rescue/release of persons	73	86	64	76	57	26	29	41	37
Other Transport incident	10	16	13	12	8	22	15	28	7
Removal of objects from people	52	61	53	68	62	62	57	56	50
Removal of people from objects						29	28	20	35
Rescue or evacuation from water	7	10	24	10	10	8	6	19	13
Spills and leaks (not RTC)	75	73	57	68	55	27	30	35	28
Suicide/attempts	15	13	22	14	19	8	19	29	28
Other	28	20	20	16	8	17	19	22	23
Total	914	912	880	1084	860	2419	2221	2008	1668

False alarms

The table below shows the causes of false alarms attended.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Apparatus - Animal				2	1	1	4	1	
Apparatus - Contaminants	306	308	276	245	293	234	293	277	278
Apparatus - External factors	17	19	28	23	24	16	24	32	39
Apparatus - Human	512	435	426	505	474	697	834	857	1027
Apparatus - System	699	539	650	632	642	631	635	582	546
Apparatus - Unknown	366	370	318	308	318	382	430	440	502
Good Intent - Fire	1100	1121	1146	942	1023	709	719	743	667
Good Intent - Special Service	257	156	67	108	50	65	71	102	111
Malicious	129	105	122	126	104	93	114	110	170
Total	3386	3053	3033	2891	2929	2828	3124	3144	3340

Fatalities and serious injuries

The information below shows the number of fatalities and injuries recorded at incidents attended. These figures are broken down between RTCs and fire related casualties.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Fatalities - fire related	6	5	5	2	5	3	2	6	2
Serious Injuries - fire related	9	5	1	4	10	8	3	4	6
Slight injuries - fire related	36	31	25	40	32	45	30	35	37
Fatalities - RTC	19	16	11	16	14	13	13	25	14
Serious Injuries - RTC	101	88	82	111	85	85	89	83	82
Slight injuries - RTC	255	238	231	284	245	245	234	324	280

Supplementary information

Incident trends

Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF)

Dwelling fires are fires in properties that are a place of residence i.e. places occupied by households such as houses and flats, excluding hotels/hostels and residential facilities. Dwellings also include non-permanent structures used solely as a dwelling, such as houseboats and caravans.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Accidental Dwelling Fires	349	399	402	385	381	362	305	340	313

Fire related fatalities in ADFs

Fire-related fatalities are, in general, those that would not have otherwise occurred had there not been a fire. i.e. 'no fire = no death'. This includes any fatal casualty that is the direct or indirect result of injuries caused by a fire incident. Even if the fatal casualty dies subsequently, any fatality whose cause is attributed to a fire is included.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Fire related fatalities - ADFs	0	2	1	2	3	2	0	3	2

Key facts about fire related fatalities in ADFs within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes:

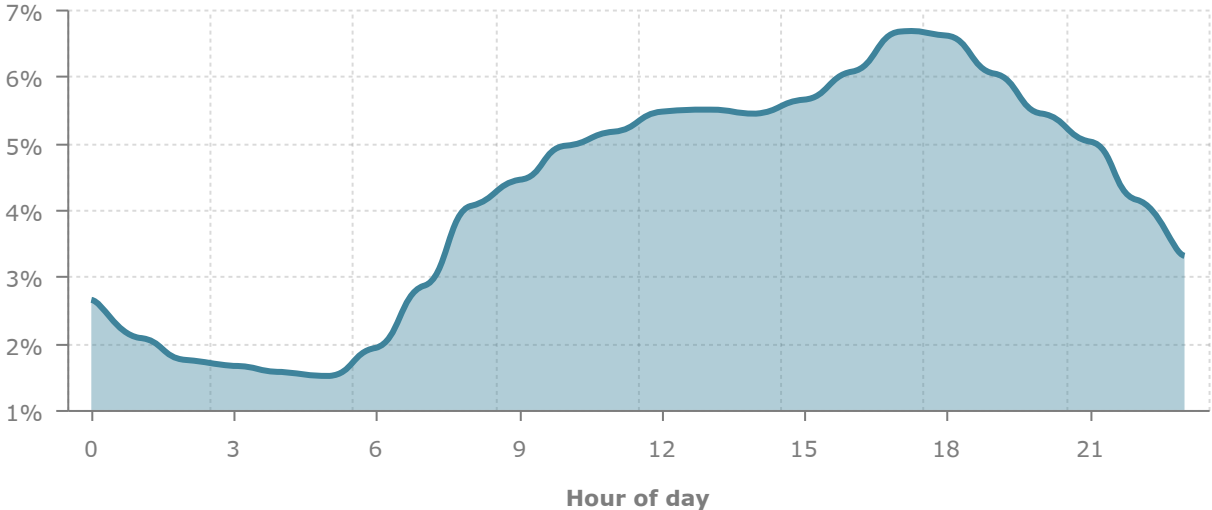
- 14 of the 15 fatalities were older than 55
- Over half of the incidents were smoking related
- The average attendance time to the ADFs where a fire related fatality was recorded was eight minutes and five seconds (8:05)
- There were no obvious trends in relation to the time of day the incidents occurred

Supplementary information

Demand patterns

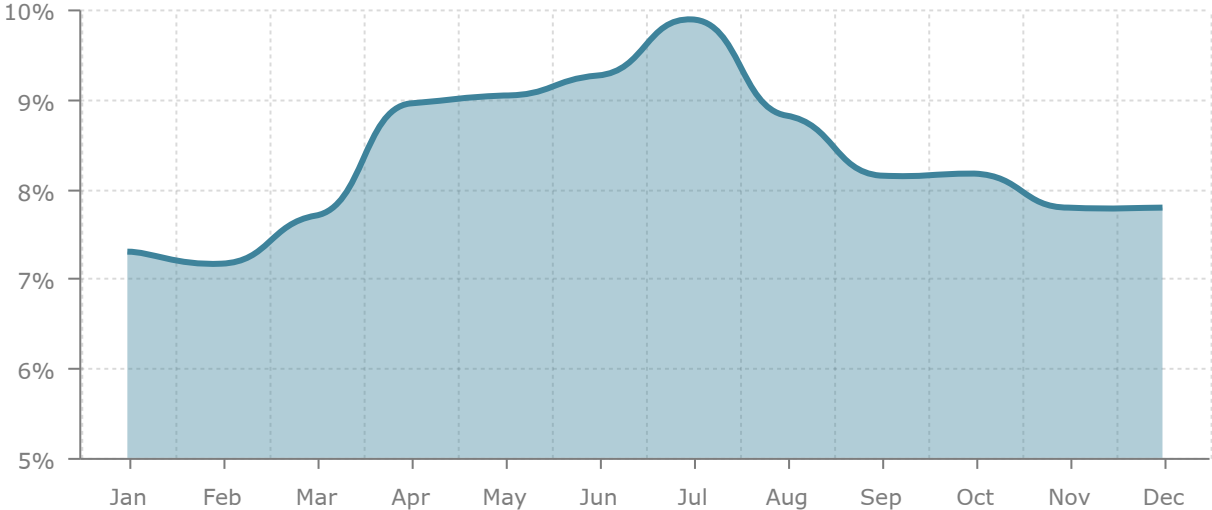
Demand - hour of day

The graph below shows the time of day we are called to incidents. This data is made up all incidents within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes over the last five years.



Demand - broken down by month

The graph below shows percentage of incidents we attend broken down by month. This data is made up all incidents within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes over the last five years.



Supplementary information

Demand patterns - attendance times

Attendance times to incidents

Our strategic aim is to provide a timely and proportionate response to incidents by allocating our assets and resource in relation to demand and risk.

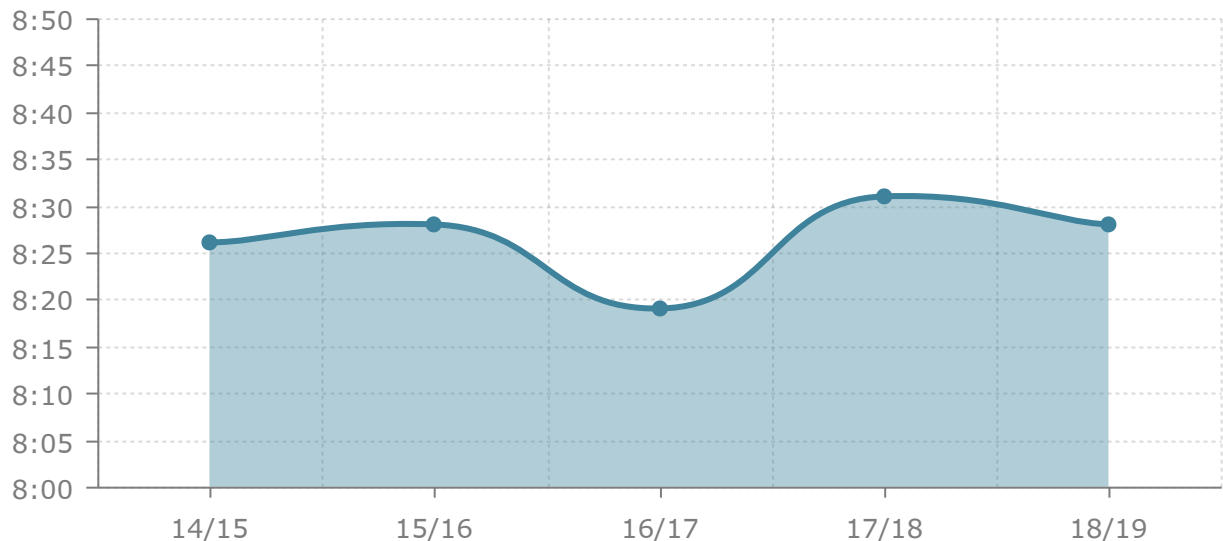
Why attendance times are important to us:

- Faster attendance times may result in a better outcome for persons and property
- Attendance times provide us with benchmarking data for resource and risk modelling
- Attendance times allow us to identify areas for improvement as well as change in the make up of the county
- Allow the public to have an informed expectation

Why attendance times aren't the full picture:

- Attendance times do not include any delay prior to the call being made
- Attendance times do not identify if the resources sent were appropriate or proportionate
- Attendance times do not identify how performance of crews at an incident impacted the outcome

The chart below shows the average attendance time to incidents in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes over a five year period.



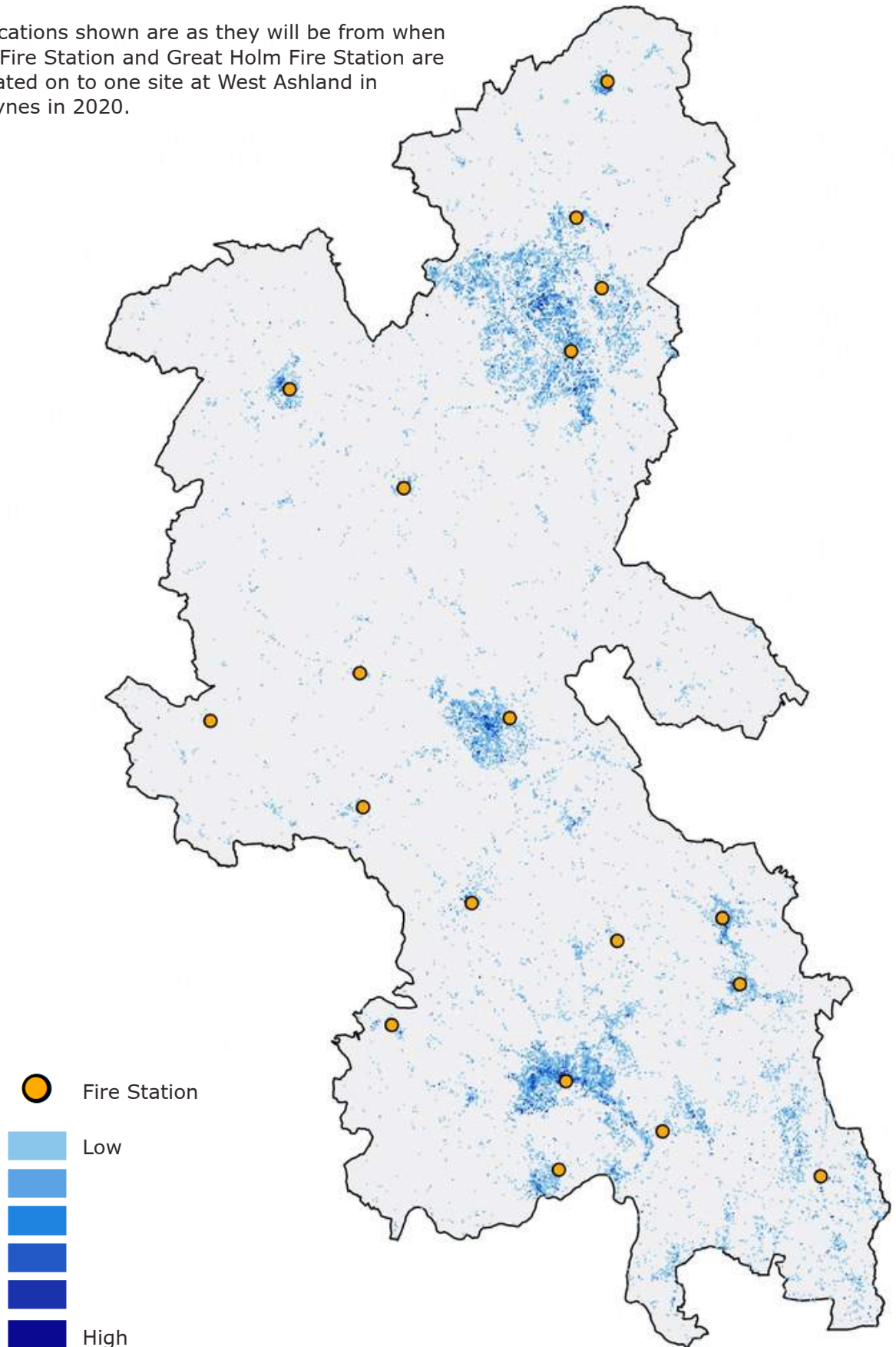
Supplementary information

Demand patterns - Incidents

Incidents attended Apr 2014 - Mar 2019

The map below shows the the location and density of demand based on incident locations.

Station locations shown are as they will be from when Bletchley Fire Station and Great Holm Fire Station are amalgamated on to one site at West Ashland in Milton Keynes in 2020.



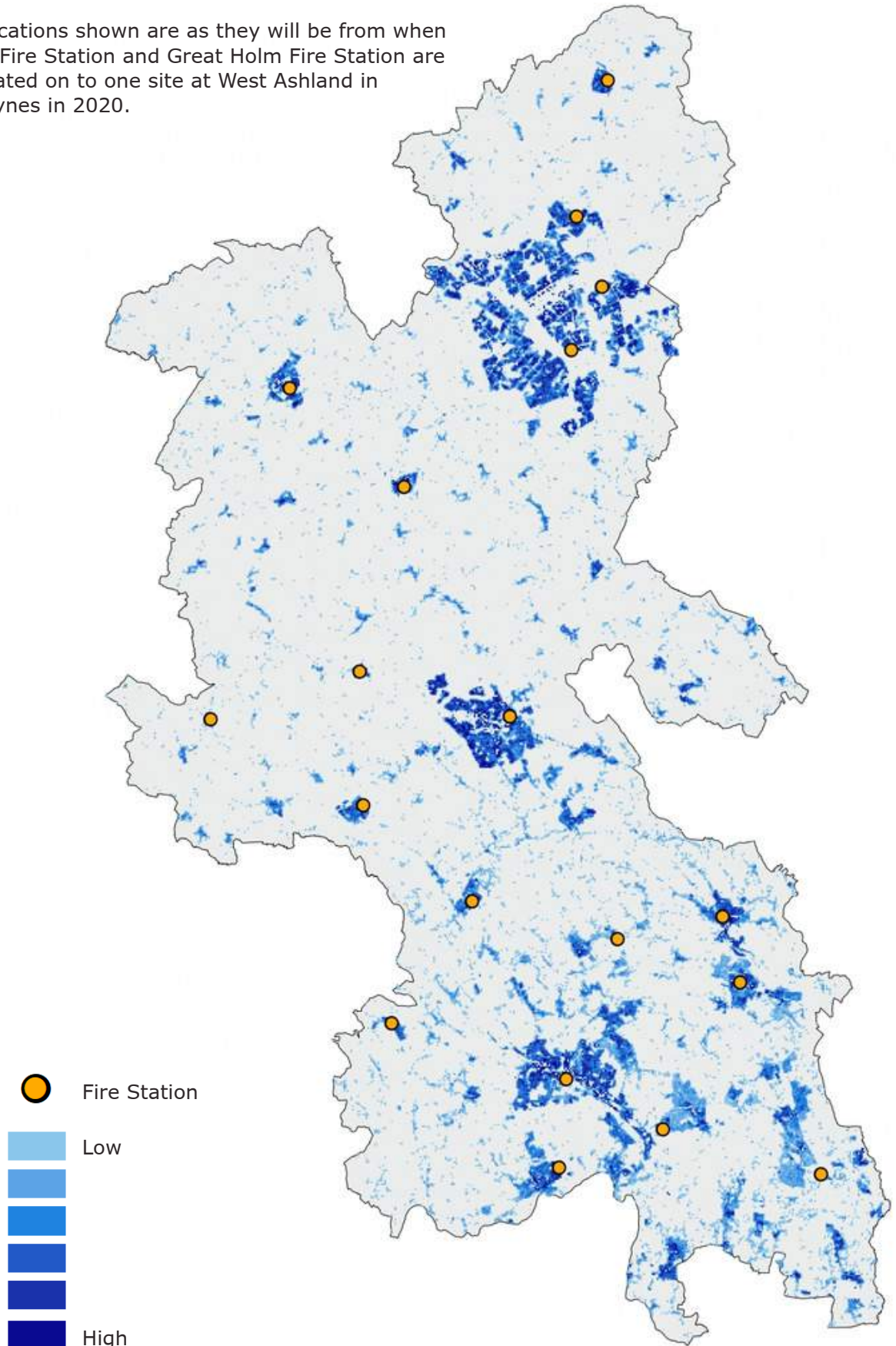
Supplementary information

Demand patterns - Residential properties

Residential property density 2019

The map below shows the location and density of residential properties within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Station locations shown are as they will be from when Bletchley Fire Station and Great Holm Fire Station are amalgamated on to one site at West Ashland in Milton Keynes in 2020.



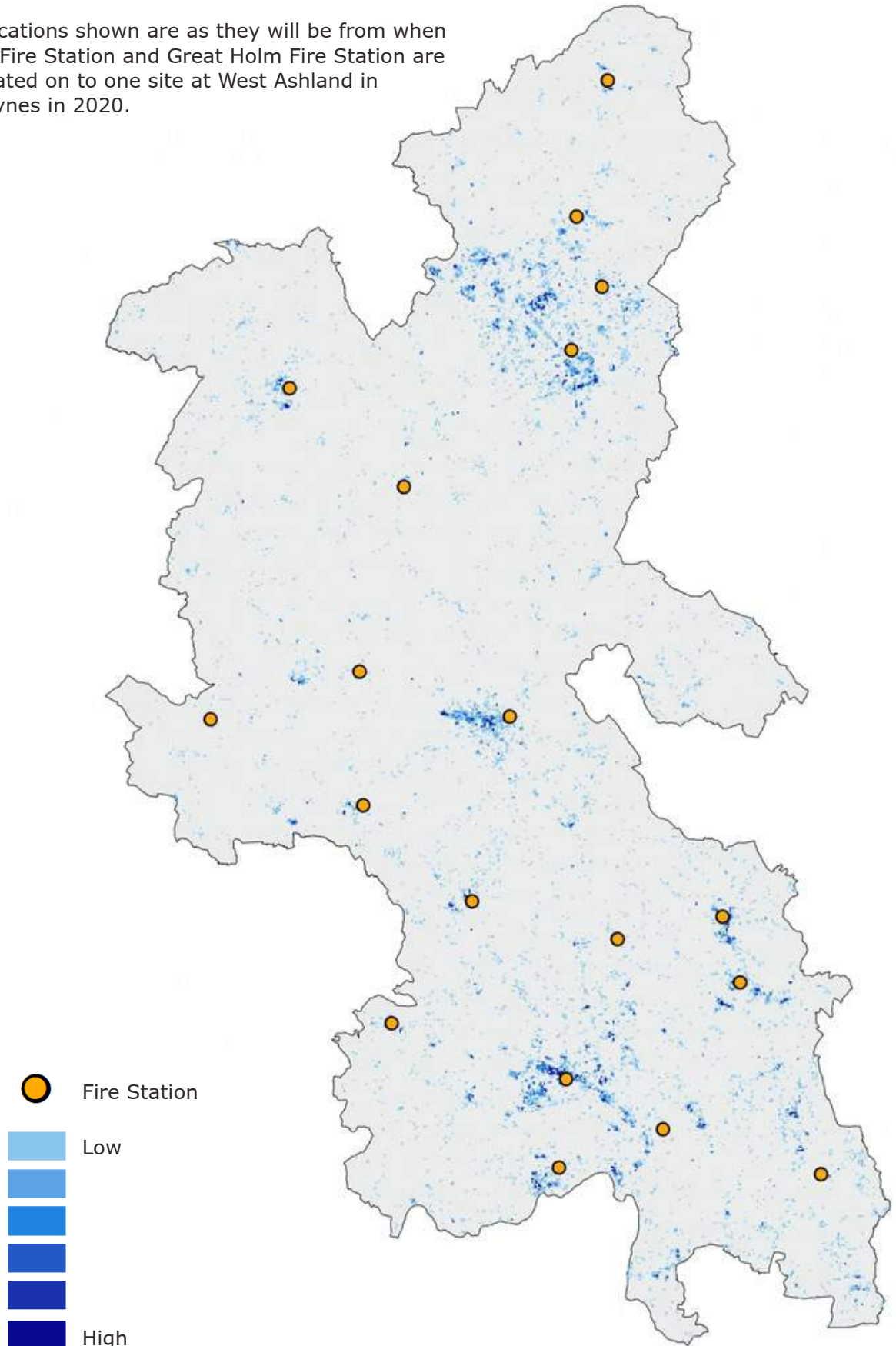
Supplementary information

Demand patterns - Non-residential properties

Non-residential property density 2019

The map below shows the location and density of non-residential properties within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Station locations shown are as they will be from when Bletchley Fire Station and Great Holm Fire Station are amalgamated on to one site at West Ashland in Milton Keynes in 2020.



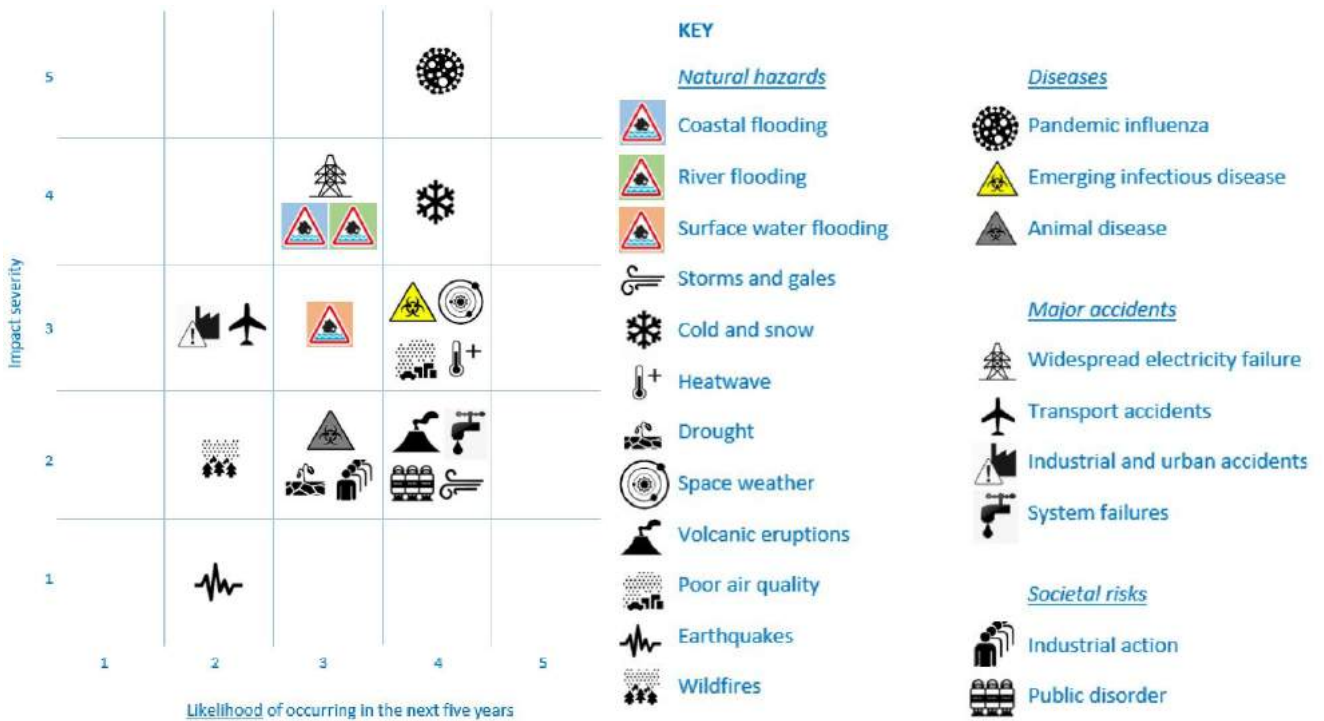
Supplementary information

Risk analysis

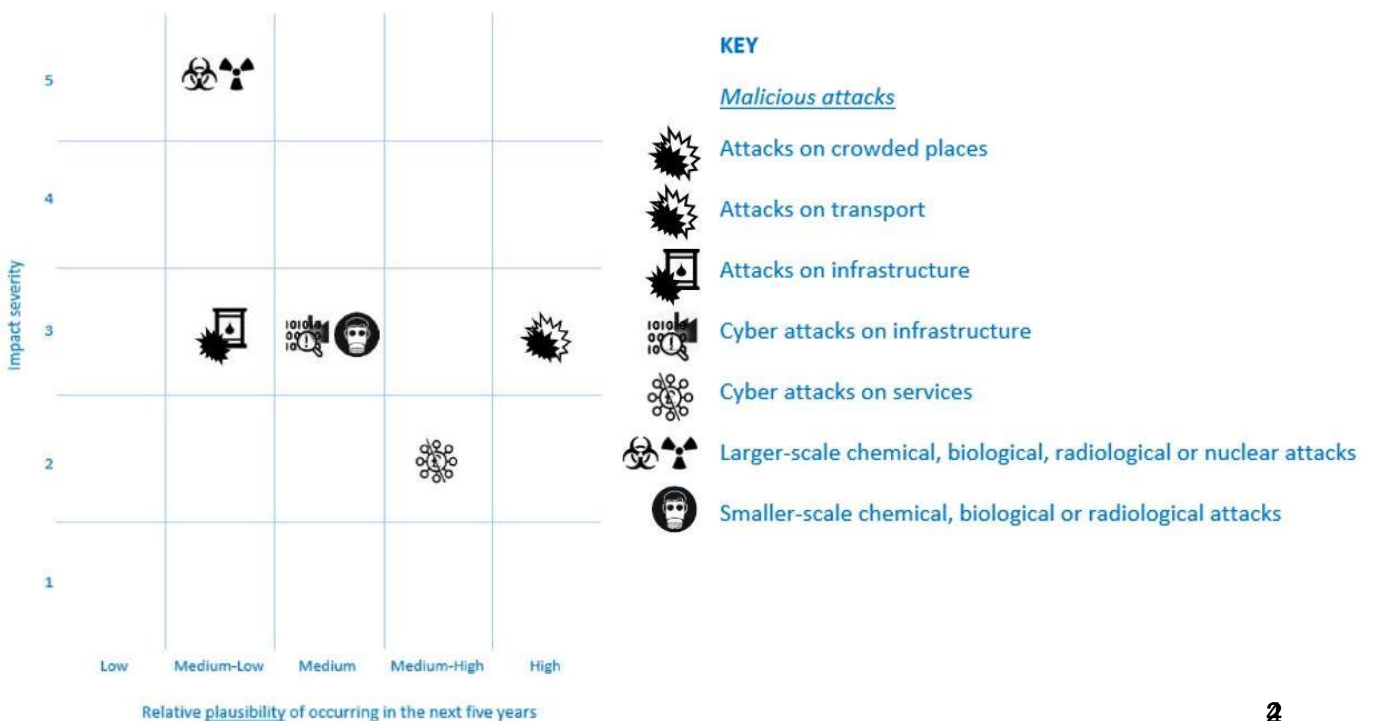
National risk register

Government guidance indicates that fire and rescue authorities should consider national risks when preparing their plans. The charts below provide a summary of the Government's current national risk assessment published by the Cabinet Office. The full assessment can be seen in the National Risk Register

Hazards, diseases, accidents, and societal risks



Malicious attack risks



Supplementary information

Risk analysis

Community risk register for the Thames Valley

The Thames Valley Community Risk Register (CRR) provides information on major emergencies that could happen in the Thames Valley, together with an assessment of how likely they are to happen and the impacts if they do. This includes the impacts to people, their homes, the environment and local businesses. These risks are regularly reviewed and have led to this [updated CRR](#).



Top Risks

Influenza type diseases

An influenza (flu) pandemic is a worldwide event in which many people are infected with a flu virus in a short time.

Fluvial/River flooding

The events of the winters of 2012/13 and 2013/14, and the summer of 2007, showed that flooding can affect many different aspects of our daily lives.

Severe weather

The United Kingdom does experience severe weather due to its maritime temperate climate with occasional continental and Arctic influences. These can bring with them heavy rain or snow, strong winds and extreme temperatures. As experience has shown, severe weather can take a variety of forms and at times can cause significant problems and disruption to normal life.

Fuel shortages

All organisations rely to some extent on fuel, whether it is for getting staff to work, distributing products or providing services. The availability of fuel within the UK is generally very good, however there have been examples within recent years of brief disruptions to supply on both a regional and national basis.

Loss of critical infrastructure

Critical Infrastructure is the name given to all of the different essential services which we rely on as part of modern society and the economy. The UK's critical infrastructure is made up of electricity, water, gas, oil/fuel, transport, telecoms, food, health and financial services.

Animal disease

Animal diseases which present the most concern are those which are highly contagious, cause high fatality rates amongst livestock or have the possibility of infecting humans.

Environmental pollution and industrial accidents

Certain industrial activities involving dangerous substances have the potential to cause accidents. Some of these accidents may cause serious injuries to people or damage to the environment both nearby, and further away from the site of the accident.

Transport accidents

Just like our dependence on basic utilities, almost all of us will rely on a form of transport either to get to and from work, or to receive essential services. The disruptive consequences of a transport emergency are far-reaching and can further endanger life.

Supplementary information

Future funding - your Council Tax

What's the cost to you if we raise our Council Tax rate?

The table below indicates the 2019/2020 Council Tax charge for Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service. The subsequent columns indicate a direct comparison of the cost per household, per year, in pounds and pence, if the rates were increased by the amount shown.

Please note, these amounts are purely for illustrative purposes. Anything above three per cent would be subject to us receiving approval from central government or the outcome of a referendum.

Council Tax Band	2019/2020	3% increase	£5 Increase (Band D)	£10 Increase (Band D)	Increase to National Average
A	43.05	44.33	46.38	49.71	51.36
B	50.22	51.72	54.11	58.00	59.92
C	57.40	59.11	61.84	66.28	68.48
D	64.57	66.50	69.57	74.57	77.04
E	78.92	81.28	85.03	91.14	94.16
F	93.27	96.06	100.49	107.71	111.28
G	107.62	110.83	115.95	124.28	128.40
H	129.14	133.00	139.14	149.14	154.08