

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Director of Legal & Governance, Graham Britten
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Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Mark Jones

To: The Chairman and Members of Buckinghamshire
And Milton Keynes Fire Authority

8 December 2014

Dear Councillor

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY** to be held in Meeting Room 1, Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Stocklake, Aylesbury on **WEDNESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2014 at *10.00 am** when the business set out overleaf will be transacted.

Yours faithfully

Graham Britten
Director of Legal and Governance

*** Please note earlier start time.**

Chairman: Councillor Busby
Councillors Bendyshe-Brown, Chilver, Dransfield, Exon, Glover, Gomm, Huxley, Lambert, Mallen, Morris, Reed, Schofield, Vigor-Hedderly, Watson, Webb and Wilson



MAKING YOU SAFER



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY - TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To appoint the Authority's Standing Committees and Lead Members.
2. To determine the following issues after considering recommendations from the Executive Committee, or in the case of 2(a) below, only, after considering recommendations from the Overview and Audit Committee:
 - (a) variations to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;
 - (b) the medium-term financial plans including:
 - (i) the Revenue Budget;
 - (ii) the Capital Programme;
 - (iii) the level of borrowing under the Local Government Act 2003 in accordance with the Prudential Code produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy; and
 - (c) a Precept and all decisions legally required to set a balanced budget each financial year;
 - (d) the Prudential Indicators in accordance with the Prudential Code;
 - (e) the Treasury Strategy;
 - (f) the Scheme of Members' Allowances;
 - (g) the Integrated Risk Management Plan and Action Plan;
 - (h) the Annual Report.
3. To determine the Code of Conduct for Members on recommendation from the Overview and Audit Committee.
4. To determine all other matters reserved by law or otherwise, whether delegated to a committee or not.
5. To determine the terms of appointment or dismissal of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, and deputy to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, or equivalent.
6. To approve the Authority's statutory pay policy statement.

AGENDA

Item No:

1. Apologies

2. Minutes

To approve, and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held 22 October 2014 (Item 2) **(Pages 7 - 18)**

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. Chairman's Announcements

To receive the Chairman's announcements (if any).

5. Petitions

To receive petitions under Standing Order SOA6.

6. Questions

To receive questions in accordance with Standing Order SOA7.

7. Recommendations from Committees

Executive Committee - 19 November 2013

(a) Members' Allowances

"That the Authority be recommended to accept the Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2015/16".

The report considered by the Executive Committee is attached at Item 7(a) **(Pages 19 - 50)**

(b) Appointment of the Authority's future Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive

"That the Authority be recommended to approve the remuneration for the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive as £138,500 per annum on appointment".

NB: under Standing Order D16 MOTIONS AFFECTING PERSONS EMPLOYED BY THE AUTHORITY, If any question arises at a Meeting of the Authority as to the appointment, promotion, dismissal, salary, superannuation, or conditions of service or as to the conduct of a particular person employed or formerly employed by the Authority, the Chairman shall move a motion that shall immediately be put without debate to exclude the public under Section 100A(4) and Schedule 12A paragraph 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The report considered by the Executive Committee is attached at Item 7(b) (Appendix 2 exempt) **(Pages 51 - 56)**

8. Exclusion of Press and Public

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 report contains information relating to an individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person; and on those grounds it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, so that the meeting may consider the following matter:

Appointment of the Chief Operating Officer/DCFO

9. Appointment of the Chief Operating Officer/DCFO

To consider Item 9

10. Exclusion of Press and Public

To consider excluding the public and press representatives from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as Annex to Appendix 1 contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person (other fire and rescue authorities); and on those grounds it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, so that the meeting may consider the following matter:

Interim report into injury compensation payments

11. Injury Awards: Interim Report

To consider Item 11 (Annex to Appendix 1 exempt) **(Pages 57 - 86)**

12. Interpreting the Accounts : Key Financial Ratios

To consider Item 12 **(Pages 87 - 92)**

13. Thames Valley Fire Control Project

To consider Item 13 **(Pages 93 - 96)**

14. Protection Policy and Strategy

To consider Item 14 **(Pages 97 - 112)**

15. LGA Peer Review Challenge Report

To consider Item 15 **(Pages 113 - 142)**

16. Public Safety Plan

To consider Item 16 **(Pages 143 - 312)**

17. Health and Safety Annual Report

To consider Item 17 (**Pages 313 - 340**)

18. Date of next meeting

To agree the date of the next meeting of the Fire Authority to be held on either Wednesday 18 February or Wednesday 25 February 2015 at 11.00am.

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

Minutes of the meeting of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2014 at 11.00 am

Present Councillors Bendyshe-Brown, Busby, Dransfield, Exon, Glover (part), Gomm, Huxley (part) Lambert (part), Mallen, Morris, Reed, Schofield, Vigor-Hedderly (part), Watson, Webb and Wilson

Officers: M Jones (Chief Fire Officer), J Thelwell (Chief Operating Officer), G Britten (Director of Law and Governance), D Skinner (Director of Finance and Assets), L Swift (Director of People and Organisational Development) G Smith (Head of Service Development), M Osborne (Head of Service Transformation), M West (External Auditor), M Hemming (Head of Finance [Deputy Director]), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) and F Pearson (Group Manager Communications).

One Member of Public

Apologies: Councillors Chilver and Webb

FA19 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 24 June 2014, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that:

- a) he and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) attended the South East Fire Improvement Partnership on 31 July at the LGA in London. The main agenda item was a report discussing the possibility of merging fire authorities in the South East Region.

It was clear that the counties are not in favour of mergers at this time, but at his request however, on behalf of this Authority, officers of the 9 services would now put together a matrix which would detail the amount of collaboration and partnership already occurring in the region.

Also under 'Any Other Business', the issues of the review of the National Joint Council arrangements were raised and the on-going industrial dispute on pensions. It was clear that the other services were willing to bear the extra costs of the strike, with some CFOs citing reasons such as inadequate contingency arrangements, not wishing to localise the strike and 'having to work with the staff afterwards'.

- b) during the summer whilst the Chief Fire Officer was on leave and away on a course he took the opportunity to promote the Chief Operating Officer to acting Chief Fire Officer and the Head of Service Transformation as deputy. They led the

service through some significant challenges with an excellent performance. He was delighted to note that there were officers in this organisation who demonstrate the skills to operate successfully at the highest levels and he was pleased that the Chief Fire Officer had ensured that sufficient skills, knowledge and understanding were present in the senior staff to ensure that the Authority's business would continue to be successfully managed.

- c) He was sending each Authority member a letter which explained the position in respect of staff, especially the senior ones. Staff have for the last year endured an outrageous amount of abuse and pressure from a wide range of sources and social media activists and the resilience is remarkable and admirable. He would be sharing with each member of the Authority a letter regarding the Authority's responsibilities as an employer and its duty of care to all in its employment.
- d) he was sure all Members had received lobbying from people who seemed concerned about the FBU strikes and some officers' actions. He was shocked that none of the lobbyists seemed bothered about the firefighters going on strike but more concerned about the officer's genuine attempts to keep some form of protection for our taxpayers.
- e) he, the Vice Chairman, and the Chief Operating Officer, met with the new Fire Minister Penny Mordaunt on 1 October at Great Holm Fire Station in Milton Keynes. As well as spending time with the firefighters, she expressed appreciation of the Authority's achievements and listened with great interest. It was clear that the relationship between senior officers and the Government was strong and the Authority should be proud that this allows for a fair amount of influence on the national agenda.
- f) he and the Vice Chairman made a presentation at the annual Combined Fire Authorities Conference on the 17 October in which they detailed the approach taken on the issue of partial performance. They had used the opportunity to demonstrate why this Authority was the best in the country, using the Authority's financial and community protection performance and the outcomes from the year long national dispute as examples of what could be achieved with strong leadership.
- g) he and some of the senior managers, would be attending an MP's briefing in the House of Commons on Thursday 23 October day. He had agreed with the Chief Fire Officer that a meeting with local MPs together would be a productive exercise and the Speaker of the House of Commons had agreed to host the delegation.
- h) the Authority would host its annual Long Service Awards Ceremony on the evening of Friday 24 October and he hoped many Members would be able to attend.
- i) in partnership with the British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association, The Authority would be holding a "Warehousing &

Logistics Seminar" at the MK Dons Stadium on 27 November. The Authority was one of the leading advocates for commercial sprinklers and had invited a number of planning officials from the service's area to attend.

- j) he was pleased to report that the proposed collaboration between Buckinghamshire County Council and this Authority to establish a law firm continued to receive national coverage. The proposed terms of entry would be subject to approval by the Executive Committee when it met on 19 November.
- k) because of the deadlines involved the Chief Fire Officer had responded to the "Thomas Review" into the National Joint Council arrangements and he had asked for a copy to be placed in the member's library.
- l) the 'Carr Review' into Trade Union tactics and 'leverage' was published last week. Several Fire Authorities had submitted evidence and this Authority featured quite prominently as one in which officers received particularly vitriolic and nasty treatment at the hands of internet abusers. This would be placed in the members' library.
- m) he was delighted to announce that the Authority had been successful in its bid for some of the Government's Transformation Funding and that it had been awarded over £2.8 million for a joint project with Thames Valley Police to rationalise the station arrangements in Milton Keynes. Officers would bring more detailed proposals forward when the outcome from the IRMP (Public Safety Plan) consultation was reported at the December Fire Authority meeting.
- n) the Authority had received a rebate of around four thousand pounds from the Audit Commission as part of its winding up process.
- o) he would like to remind Members of the forthcoming Members' Workshop to be held on 29 October. Sir Ken Knight who had agreed to act as the Authority's independent professional adviser on the Public Safety Plan, would be attending.
- p) he would like to remind Members of the Annual Christmas Carol Service, on 10 December at The Church of Christ The Cornerstone, 300 Saxon Gate West, Milton Keynes, MK9 2ES.

FA21

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

Executive Committee – 12 September 2014

The Authority considered the recommendations of the Executive Committee held on 12 September 2014 relating to:

Minute EX11 (Industrial Action – verbal Update)

"That the Authority be recommended to agree that the Chief Fire Officer and the Senior Management Team continue to enjoy the

support of the Authority for the manner in which the periods of industrial action have been handled”.

One member was not in agreement of the above statement and asked for a recorded vote.

Other Members in support of the above statement gave their reasons.

(Cllr Huxley joined the meeting)

It being moved by Councillor Wilson and seconded by Councillors Dransfield and Reed it was agreed that the vote would be recorded:

	For	Against	Abstained
Bendyshe-Brown	✓		
Busby	✓		
Dransfield	✓		
Exon	✓		
Glover	✓		
Gomm	✓		
Huxley	✓		
Lambert	✓		
Mallen	✓		
Morris	✓		
Reed	✓		
Schofield	✓		
Vigor-Hedderly	✓		
Watson	✓		
Wilson		✓	
Totals	14	1	

RESOLVED –

That the Chief Fire Officer and the Senior Management Team continue to enjoy the support of the Authority for the manner in which the periods of industrial action have been handled

THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE (TVFCS) PROGRAMME

The Head of Service Development introduced the report and advised Members that the purpose of the report was to update the Authority on key aspects of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Programme; and for the Authority to agree the terms of reference and constitution of the joint committee and to appoint Authority members to it.

The Head of Service Development updated Members on recent progress within the project. There was an issue with BT Openreach which was delaying the site and user acceptance testing of equipment that had arisen since the report had been submitted.

The Vice Chairman felt the programme was going reasonable well, but there was a high risk that the 10 December 2014 cut over date would be delayed. This was not the fault of the officers leading the project, but the issue with BT Openreach.

A Member wanted to thank the current control room staff for working so diligently whilst all the changes were taking place.

In answer to a question whether an allowance was paid to Members on the Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee, the Chairman confirmed there was no allowance only travelling expenses.

In answer to a question asking if North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service used the same system as the new control room, the Head of Service Development confirmed the reason North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service was chosen was its remoteness and that it used the same mobilising system (Vision 4).

In answer to a question regarding mapping and whether a control room situated outside the county would be sufficient, members were assured that the new control room would use location software so whether a caller was on a mobile phone or landline their location would be identified.

The Director of Legal and Governance advised members that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) had imposed certain conditions on the Authority in March 2013 with various pre conditions on entry before they would let the Authority participate. Two of those conditions related to the service delivery model which would be by a collaborative discharge of functions, and in that respect most of the detail would be set down in a 'steady state partnership agreement' the detail of which had still to be agreed by officers; and the other element of the pre-condition was governance by way of a principal officer coordination group and a joint committee.

First, the Authority had to agree to constitute the joint committee; secondly it had to agree to give it terms of reference and thirdly it had to agree to appoint members.

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) had agreed at its meeting on 22 September 2014 to similar terms of reference and to constitute a joint committee. It had also agreed without question the standing orders which were the rules with which the joint committee would govern itself. Subsequently, the Director of Legal and Governance had received an email from the Chairman of the RBFA raising some questions about the text of the standing orders.

The Director of Legal and Governance felt that if the new joint committee was not happy with the standing orders, it could make it the first item of business at its first meeting and make the necessary changes.

With that caveat the Director of Legal and Governance recommended that the standing orders and terms of reference be agreed.

The Director of Legal and Governance stated that there was no legal obligation to appoint by political proportionality to a joint committee.

RESOLVED -

1. That the progress report be noted.
2. That the Authority constitutes and participates in the Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee comprised of representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.
3. That the Authority delegates such of its functions to the Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee as are necessary to enable it to fulfil its terms of reference and its Standing Orders.

Councillor Wilson moved the following Motion which was seconded by Councillor Lambert:

Of the two members and the substitute member from this Authority, that at least one of those three would not be from the majority political group.

On being put to the vote, members voted against the Motion.

The Authority considered the appointment of representatives to the Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee.

It being moved by Councillor Morris and Seconded by Councillor Glover that the two members referred to in recommendation 4 be Councillors Dransfield and Reed.

On being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

4. That the Authority appoints Councillors Dransfield and Reed as its representatives on the Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee.

It being moved by Councillor Morris and seconded by Councillor Dransfield that the substitute member referred to in recommendation 5 be Councillor Busby.

On being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

5. That the Authority nominates Councillor Busby as a substitute member in the event that neither of its appointed members are able to attend a meeting of the Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee.

FA23

IN YEAR AMENDMENTS TO BMKFA PAY POLICY PRINCIPLES AND STATEMENT 2014/15

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised members that the current pay policy statement for the years 2014/15 was approved in February 2014 and at that time it was highlighted that the Authority may require an in-year review to accommodate any outcomes from the Support Services Staff Conditions of Service Review.

The Support Services Staff Conditions of Service Review was completed back in April 2014 and the outcomes were summarised for the Executive Committee for information at the meeting on 14 May 2014. This report was simply proposing minor amendments to the policy which accommodates the outcomes of that review.

A Member asked if the following could be noted 'that this Authority receives a report to its next meeting on the processes and issues required to consider seeking accreditation as a 'living wage employer'.

Members were reminded that they could approach officers at any time if they had questions or if they thought there was something the Authority should be doing.

RESOLVED:

That the amendments made to the Pay Policy Principles and Statement at Appendix 1 be agreed by the Fire Authority as its statutory Pay Policy Statement for the remainder of 2014/15.

FA24

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR INJURY AWARDS TO FIREFIGHTERS

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had

brought to the Authority's attention a potential issue arising from the implementation of amendments to the firefighters' pension scheme in 2006. The Chief Fire Officer had commissioned an independent investigation.

In the meantime, there was a need to account for the issue that had arisen and the Director of Finance and Assets had agreed with the External Auditor that the potential liability would be treated as a provision in the accounts and money should be transferred from reserves to cover this provision. Should the provision not be required then this amount would be returned to the reserves.

The Vice Chairman advised members that until recently he was unaware of the issue and, as already mentioned, there was now an investigation to establish how this came about.

The External Auditor had also been unaware of the issue until DCLG had sent out a circular to all authorities in July 2014. The circular asked all authorities to check their position on injury compensation payments and where they were being charged within their accounts. As a result of the circular, a number of authorities had found that they had charged to the firefighters' pension fund rather than to the operating account.

The Chief Fire Officer advised members it was intended that the matter would be brought to the December 2014 Fire Authority meeting for full discussion. There were a number of authorities with the same issues, but few had been as transparent as this Authority. Three authorities had already declared they had a problem. It was estimated that it could be more than twelve of England's forty-six fire authorities affected. Some had detected it since 2006 and before 2010.

The Chief Fire Officer would also be asking the Audit Commission that, if some authorities had become aware of this problem and corrected it back in 2007 and 2008, why it was not made known nationally that the problem might exist, especially if DCLG were aware in 2007/2008.

The Chief Fire Officer was optimistic that the Authority would have a clear picture as to how it happened in this service and what had happened elsewhere once investigations were complete. He also reiterated that Councillor Dransfield was not made aware of the issue until recently because the Chief Fire Officer wanted to get as much information as possible before it was taken to the Authority.

One Member stated he was glad an investigation had been commissioned and members should keep an open mind until the outcome was known, and another Member wanted assurance from the External Auditor that the auditors would cooperate fully with the investigation.

(Councillors Glover and Lambert left the meeting)

The Chief Fire Officer advised members that, although the DCLG had yet to cite its statutory authority for its entitlement to demand the money from the Authority, any proposals not to approve the recommendations would delay the signing off of the accounts by the Audit Director.

A discussion was held as to whether to transfer the amount from the revenue contribution to capital reserve. The Chairman of the Overview and Audit Committee stated this was the correct thing to do.

On being put to the vote, all agreed with one abstention.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Authority authorise a transfer from the revenue contribution to capital reserve to create a £1.38m provision, which will cover the potential liability for the period 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2014.
2. That the Authority delegate authority to the Chief Fire Officer to approve a permanent virement of £193k from contingency in the event the Authority is required to meet on-going future payments from the operating account subject to the outcome of the independent investigation.

FA25

AUDIT RESULTS REPORT

The External Auditor explained to the Authority that at the meeting of the Overview and Audit Committee on 24 September 2014, due to the issue with the injury awards payable to Firefighters an amendment was made to the Letter of Management Representation and there were further amendments to the Statement of Accounts which had delayed them being signed off.

The External Auditor advised members that the following amendments had been made to the Statement of Accounts:

Injury awards payable to a firefighter attributable to a qualifying injury are not part of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme and must be paid from the Fire Authority's operating account, not from the pension fund. The Fire Authority had been charging the continuing payments for injury awards that started before 2006 to the pension fund. This had resulted in a claim for reimbursement by DCLG of £1.4m.

There was an amendment to the valuation of fixed assets. The Authority had its land and buildings valued at 31 March 2014 and used these valuations as at 1 April 2013. It depreciated these higher opening valuations. This overstated the depreciation and impairment in the year and understated the 31 March 2014 net

book value of land and buildings. Amendments had been made to bring the two into line.

The localisation of business rates had introduced new accounting requirements to reflect the Authority's share of business rates income from its five billing authorities. The Authority reported the cash received from the billing authorities as business rates income, but the Authority was required to account for its share of actual business rates income and should include in its accounts its share of ratepayers' debts and prepayments and the provision for unsettled valuation appeals. An adjustment was required to match the impact on council taxpayers to statutory precepts received.

Billing authorities act as agents for precepting bodies. This means that precepting bodies should show in their accounts their share of the council tax transaction including taxpayers' arrears and prepayments. These are regarded as balances with the taxpayers not with the billing authority. The Authority misclassified the balances.

The External Auditor also stated that additional fees may be charged to cover the additional work.

The completion certificate which draws to an end the audit for 2013/14 had not been issued and the accounts remained open pending the investigation and legality of reimbursing the firefighters pension scheme money. The External Auditor had taken the view that he could not sign off the accounts until he had assurance that there was statutory authority enabling the Authority to make such a payment to DCLG.

(Councillor Ruth Vigor-Hedderly left the meeting).

RESOLVED –

That Members note the content of the report.

FA26 ADOPTION OF THE AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Adoption of the Audited Statement of Accounts had been discussed with the previous item the Audit Results Report.

RESOLVED –

1. That Members approve the Letter of Representation.
2. That Members approve the adoption of the Statement of Accounts.

FA27 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Authority noted that the next meeting of the Fire Authority is to be held on Wednesday 17 December 2014.

It was agreed that due to the large number of items of business on the agenda, the start time would be 10am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 1.20pm

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Report considered by the Executive Committee – 19 November 2014

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	19 November 2014
OFFICER	Graham Britten, Director of Legal & Governance
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Adrian Busby
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 Scheme of Members' Allowances and confirm that it has done so when it gives public notice of the Scheme of Allowances.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire County Council's terms of reference require a review of the Scheme of Members Allowances to be undertaken every four years and this is currently in the process of being carried out. A part review was undertaken in 2013 and is attached at Appendix A.</p> <p>The Independent Remuneration Panel of the scheme for Milton Keynes Council undertook a review earlier this year and this is attached at Appendix B.</p> <p>Previously 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 for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services, Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book).</p> <p>It is recommended that the Authority continue this for the period 2015/16.</p> <p>The pay award for the Authority's staff on Grey Book conditions for 2014/15 was 1% with effect from 1 July 2014.</p>
ACTION	Decision.
RECOMMENDATIONS	That the Authority be recommended to adopt the Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2015/16.

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 £70,780, 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. This additional cost is estimated to be in the region of £800.</p>
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	Set out above.
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 entitled to claim "dependent carers' allowance" from their appointing authority. There are currently no co-opted members on the Authority.</p>
USE OF RESOURCES	The recommendation is consistent with the extant Scheme of Allowances.
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	<p>BMKFA Scheme for Members' Allowances 2014/15:</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/1114/0438/9728/Scheme-Allowances201415.pdf</p>
APPENDICES	<p>Appendix A: Report of the Independent Panel on Member Allowances for Buckinghamshire County Council 2013.</p> <p>Appendix B: Milton Keynes Council report of the Independent Panel of Members' Allowances March 2014.</p> <p>Appendix C: Draft Scheme for Members' Allowances 2015/16.</p>
TIME REQUIRED	10 Minutes.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Katie Nellist</p> <p>knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk</p> <p>01296 744633</p>

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT PANEL ON MEMBER ALLOWANCES FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Introduction: The Regulatory Context

1. The following report notes the proceedings and recommendations made by Buckinghamshire County Council's Independent Panel on Member Allowances.

2 The Panel was established under Regulation 20 of the Local Authorities (Member Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 2003 No 1021) to produce a report and make recommendations as required by Regulation 21. These regulations, made under relevant provisions in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 2000, require all local authorities to maintain an Independent Panel on Member Allowances to review and make recommendations in respect of member allowances.

3. Councils are required to have regard to the recommendations of their Independent Panel before they make or amend a Member Allowances Scheme.

The Panel

Richard Benz, Partner, Kidd Rapinet, Solicitors, Aylesbury and founding Director and initial Chairman of Bucks Economic Partnership
Alex Pratt JP BSc OBE, Managing Director, Serious Brands Ltd, and Chairman of Bucks Business First
Lisa Williams, Managing Director of John Lewis, High Wycombe.

Terms of Reference

A review of the Scheme has to be undertaken at least every four years. A part review was undertaken in 2012 and revisions made to the Special Responsibility Allowances after approval of the Panel's recommendations by full Council. Following the recent County Council Elections, the Panel has now been asked by the Deputy Leader to consider some further changes to the Scheme. The four-yearly review will be undertaken in 2014.

The Deputy Leader (Mr M Appleyard) – Presentation to the Panel

Since July last year, the Council has recently been through the four-yearly Election process. Elections for 49 councillor seats (reduced by 8 from 57) were held on 2nd May.

Following the Elections, the Conservatives have 36 seats, UKIP, 6, Liberal Democrats 5, Labour 1 and Independent 1. The Independent Councillor has

joined the UKIP Political Group and the Labour Member has joined the Liberal Democrat Group. The Council therefore now has three Groups rather than the two it had before 2nd May.

In terms of political management of the Council, the Leader and Cabinet model will continue. Martin Tett was elected for a four year term at the Council's AGM on Thursday last week, 23rd May. At that meeting, he announced that his Cabinet would be as follows

Deputy Leader and Education and Skills - Mike Appleyard (Deputy – tbc)
Children's Services - Angela Macpherson (Deputy – tbc)
Community Engagement - Martin Phillips (Deputy - Margaret Aston)
Environment - Lesley Clarke (Deputy – Netta Glover)
Finance and Resources - Peter Hardy (Deputy – John Chilver)
Health and Wellbeing - Tricia Birchley (Deputy – Noel Brown)
Planning and Transportation - Janet Blake (Deputy – Ruth Vigor-Hedderly)

Carl Etholen was elected Chairman of the Council and Zahir Mohammed as Vice-Chairman, both for the ensuing year.

Andy Huxley is the Leader of the UKIP and Independent Group and Avril Davies, Leader of the Liberal Democrats with Buckingham Labour Group.

Proposed Changes to the Allowances Scheme

Mike Appleyard explained the proposed changes, which are briefly outlined below.

The Panel had previously approved the payment of allowances to (11) Cabinet spokespersons. This role has now been disbanded and Deputy Cabinet Members (DCMs) have been established instead. Five have been appointed (as above) and two positions remain vacant. It is proposed that these DCMs receive an allowance of £5,046, being half that received by the Statutory Committee Chairmen who it is recommended should receive £10,092 in the future. The four existing Statutory Committees (Development Control; Rights of Way; Regulatory and Audit; Senior Appointments and Buckinghamshire Pay) will continue.

Prior to the Elections, the Council had two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Commissioning and Health. At the Council's meeting on 25th April the Constitution was amended to disband those two Committees and replace them with four Select Committees (Children, Education and Skills; Health and Adult Social Care; Finance and Resources; Environment and Transportation). The Allowances previously paid to Commissioning Committee members will therefore be removed.

The only other change proposed to the list of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) is to remove the SRA paid to the Vice-Chairman of Health.

As there are now have three Political Groups, an SRA would be paid to the UKIP/Independent Leader and one to the Liberal Democrats with Buckingham Labour Group Leader in line with the normal formula. The Council only pay a maximum of two allowances per member (basic plus one other), so there is a saving on the Conservative Group Leader's allowance. There are also one or two other "cross overs" where a saving can be made.

It is proposed to keep the Basic Allowance at £10718. With the reduction in members from 57 to 49, the amount spent on Basic Allowances has been reduced.

A list of the current SRAs and a list of the proposed future SRAs are attached for comparison (Appendices 1 and 2). Taking into account non-take up, "cross overs" etc, a saving of approximately £50k can be made from the total sum being paid previously.

The Panel's response to the proposals

The Panel discussed the proposals with Mr Appleyard and understood the reasoning behind them. They felt they were reasonable.

The Panel did, however, remind Mr Appleyard of their recommendation last year that the Council should consider implementing a system of performance management for all members and particularly for those afforded specific responsibilities. They were disappointed that no action had been taken to implement that recommendation and hoped that the Council would now do so. Whilst recognising the electoral process, the Panel pointed out that all organisations need a system of appraisal to measure performance, prove competency and to ensure value for money. Mr Appleyard accepted the Panel's comments and assured the Panel that he recognised the importance of effective performance management. Mr Appleyard indicated that the matter would receive further consideration.

Views of the Opposition Group Leaders

The proposals were circulated to the two opposition Group Leaders and they were invited to comment.

Mr Huxley, representing the UKIP/Independent Group, expressed his Group's agreement with the proposed Allowances but expressed the wish to be consulted when the four-yearly review is undertaken in 2014.

Mrs Davies, representing the Liberal Democrats, with Buckingham Labour, Group, expressed concern about the number of SRAs and the perceived patronage of the majority group, resulting in over 50% of the 49 members receiving an SRA. This could be avoided, Mrs Davies feels, by increasing the basic allowance. This is too low, she feels, and few people can currently

afford to take up the role of councillor unless they give up work, are retired, own their own business or are flexibly self employed.

With regards to performance management, Mrs Davies mentioned that her group had adopted the Local Government Association's scheme whereby members are asked to assess their own performance against a set of agreed criteria that encapsulate the role of member. The Councillor's development needs are then recommended in discussion with the group leader and possibly others.


Mrs Davies also feels that much more needs to be done by the Council in provision of member development and support to the political groups, particularly the opposition groups. These matters need to be taken up with the Member Development Working Group.

Both Group Leaders will be consulted when the Panel's four-yearly review is done in 2014.

THE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL

1 That the changes to the Scheme of Allowances mentioned above, and outlined in detail in Appendix 1 to this Report, be approved;

2 That an appropriate system of performance management for members be developed.



RICHARD BENZ
CHAIRMAN OF THE PANEL 3RD July 2013

APPENDIX 1

PROPOSED SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES FROM JULY 2013

Post	SR Allowance (pa)	Total
Leader	£39,709	£39,709
Deputy leader	£26,473	£26,473
Cabinet Member (6)	£20,172	£121,032
Select Committee (Ch) x 4	£10,092	£40,368
Statutory Committee (Ch) x 4	£10,092	£40,368
Deputy Cabinet Members (7)	£5,046	£35,322
Group Leaders *		
Conservative (36)	£10,948	£10948
Liberal Democrat (6) (5 Lib Dem / 1 Labour	£2,938	£2,938
UKIP (7) (6 UKIP / 1 Independent)	£3,205	£3,205
Chairman of the Council	£12,610	£12,610
Vice-Chairman of the Council	£3,156	£3,156
Chairman of Police & Crime Panel **	£10,092	£10,092
Police and Crime Panel	£1,500	£1,500
Representative		
Basic Allowance x 49	£10,718	£525,182
TOTAL		£872,903

*Allowances derived from formula: £1,336 basic plus £267 per member

** This is only payable in the case where the Panel elects the Buckinghamshire County Council's representative as its Chairman

APPENDIX 2

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES PAID FROM JULY 2012

Post	SR Allowance (pa)	Total
Leader	£39,709	£39,709
Deputy Leader	£26,473	£26,473
Cabinet Member (6)	£20,172	£121,032
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Ch) (2)	£10,092	£20,184
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Vice)	£1,500	£1,500
Statutory Committee (Ch) (4)	£5,049	£20,196
Cabinet Spokesman (11)	£1,500	£16,500
Commissioning Committee Member (9)	£1,500	£13,500
Group Leaders*		
Conservative (46)	£13,618	£13,618
Liberal Democrat (11)	£4,273	£4,273
Chairman of the Council	£12,610	£12,610
Vice-Chairman of the Council	£3,156	£3,156
Chairman of Police and Crime Panel**	£10,092	£10,092
Police and Crime Panel Representative	£1,500	£1,500
Basic Allowance	£10,718	£610,926
TOTAL		£915,269

* Allowances derived from formula: £1,336 basic plus £267 per member

** This is only payable in the case where the Panel elects the Buckinghamshire County Council's Panel representative as its Chairman

**MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL - REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES:
MARCH 2014****Introduction.**

1. The Independent Panel on Members' Allowances met on Tuesday 18th February and Friday 7th March to make recommendations about the allowances to be paid to elected members. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 requires councils to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel. The Council's existing scheme was approved by Council in 2009 and the Panel's most recent work was in 2010 when it was tasked with reviewing the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs). It is for each local authority to decide its scheme and the amounts to be paid under that scheme but the Panel provides advice on the amounts to be paid and the Council must have regard to this advice. The Panel comprised:

Don Latham, Private Local Government Consultant (Chair)
John Moffoot, former Assistant Director Democratic Services
Julie Mills, Principal at MK College
Ruth Stone, Director of Community Action MK
Paul Griffiths, Chief Executive MK Chamber of Commerce
Helen Davies, Resident of MK

2. The Panel was made aware that the Council currently faces a significant budget shortfall and that in a time of austerity it is vital to ensure that public money is well spent and that all allowances are justified and merited. We noted that in line with staff pay there has been no increase in allowances in 2010/11/12 and only 1% in 2013. Nevertheless the Panel recognises that the allowances awarded to Members of Milton Keynes Council are above average when compared to other similar Councils and that the number of Councillors is being increased from 51 to 57 from May 2014 as recommended by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

3. Given the financial situation being faced by the Council the Panels overarching discussion was about the appropriateness of recommending an increase, albeit a small one, at a time when frontline services are being cut. The level of allowances did not appear to be a barrier to recruiting councillors but time commitment was the prime argument presented for increasing allowances. This is exacerbated by the specific structure and chair/vice chair scheme operated, through choice, by councillors. Caseload/constituency work was not presented to us as the real issue. Members seemed much more concerned about the workload linked to committees and other formal meetings. Nevertheless the overall financial package is being stretched by £60,000 (8.4%) on the appointment of 6 additional members and we considered, but have not recommended, that this be absorbed by reducing the Basic Allowance to £9,000 so that there would be no overall increase in the members' allowances budget.

4. The Panel considered the published material and comparisons with other Councils similar to Milton Keynes Council concerning remuneration of councillors. We were made aware of the National Census of Local Authority Councillors and also took into consideration the requirements of Government Regulations on Member Allowances. For reasons set out in our report we consider that the existing scheme is soundly structured and consider that the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) are set at an appropriate level so would not recommend new allowances being introduced other than to provide an extra £60,000 required to fund the additional six Councillors

5. The Panel reviewed the National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2010 and noted that

Councillors have various roles and work to carry out. Also councils have different decision making structures. The census information was considered in the changing context in which local government works, with economic and social pressures, and a growing public scrutiny in a time of austerity. There is now an increasing focus on councillors as community leaders and the main findings of the census showed that councillors as individuals are dedicated people who devote a great deal of their own time to serving their communities. Councillors spend on average 23 hours per week on Council business and this is consistent with surveys previously undertaken in both 2004 and 2006. The Panel believes that the situation in Milton Keynes Council reflects this national position.

6. The Panel would especially like to record its thanks to June Allen, Corporate Leadership Team Support Manager, who supported the Panel throughout the review; also to the Leader of the Council, Group Leaders and other Members who presented their views verbally or in writing to the Panel. Careful consideration was given to all the points raised.

7. In the light of the information provided by members the Panel discussed four options:

a) That there be no increase in the Council budget for Member allowances in 2014/15 and that the additional cost of six additional members be absorbed by a reduction in existing allowances and that the workload of members be reduced by a streamlining of the democratic process.

b) That the existing scheme be updated from April by the increase in the NJC pay award. (This is the approved Index used in the existing scheme of allowances). Councillors expressed the view that particularly in the financial circumstances being faced by the Council that it would not be acceptable to increase allowances at a rate in excess of that applied to staff pay.

c) That after years of indexing, the scheme be consolidated (Annex 1) by rounding up allowances and simplifying expenses in a way to ensure control, ease administration and encourage transparency. Expressing the levels of SRAs in a way which makes their basis more evident may encourage future evaluation of performance for which, the Panel were pleased to note, job descriptions are already in place.

d) **That the new Council, to be elected in May, be encouraged to make urgent changes in the democratic process to reduce demands on Members' time** which was the prime argument presented to us for increasing allowances. This streamlining may well include Scrutiny. We consider this to be an early essential to avoid the Council falling back into existing patterns and make desired changes more difficult to achieve. The Panel did consider a reduction in allowances as a result of streamlining the democratic decision making process which could greatly reduce the demands on members' time. It could also be argued that six additional councillors will decrease workload for the extant 51 – an 11% increase in headcount with no increase in workload.

Panel Recommendations.

8. In the light of evidence examined and the input of Members **the Panel recommends that the existing Scheme be updated in April by the consolidation recommended in our report (Annex 1) and that £60,000 be added to the budget to fund six new councillors.**

Consolidated (updated) Scheme.

9. The Panel's recommendations for consolidation (the third option) are as follows:

- That £60,000 be added to the Budget to fund six new Councillors
- That the Basic Allowance be set at £10,000 for 2014 - 15. (Annex 2)
- That SRAs be updated and expressed as a % of the Basic Allowance. (Annex 3)
- The Civic Allowances paid to the Mayor be set at £11,000 and Deputy Mayor £5,500.
- That Members should continue to be restricted to one SRA.
- That the Co-opted Members allowance be set at £640.
- That the SRA for Chair of Budget Review be reduced by £868 to bring it into line with Chair of Audit Committee.
- That no changes be made to other aspects of the existing scheme other than for indexing where appropriate.
- That the Council takes appropriate action on the results of the current Government/Treasury consultation exercise on pensions - which is anticipated to happen in 2014. (Annex 4)
- That the costs of telephone and broadband be met by Members from their Basic Allowance from 1st April 2014.
- That the consolidated Basic and SRA allowances remain unchanged i.e. not indexed for three years until the Panel meets again.
- That the new Council, to be elected in May, be encouraged to make urgent changes in the democratic process to reduce demands on Members' time.

Basic Allowance.

10. **The Panel recommends that the Basic Allowance (including inflation) be set at £10,000 for 2014/2015.** (See Annex 2) It was suggested by the Labour Group that if some 'disentanglement' between remuneration and expenses could be made and discussed with HMRC that this could be helpful to members. The Panel takes the view that allowances compensate for expenses and are not intended to be a form of salary. (See Annex 4). This would be a matter for the Council to discuss with HMRC.

11. Members of Milton Keynes Council also receive reimbursement of telephone and broadband costs at a current annual cost of £7,700. We recommend that the Council streamlines the administration of the scheme, reduces costs and makes it more transparent by withdrawing this additional support with Members meeting these costs directly from their Basic Allowance from 1st April 2014. We were made aware, during our Member consultation that this could create problems for some low income earning Members but we believe with the Council under pressure to reduce costs of administration it should take this step that would also bring it into line with best practice. It would save costs and simplify administration.

Special Responsibility Allowances.

12. The Council also pays Special Responsibility Allowances to those councillors it considers to have *significant, additional responsibilities* over and above the generally accepted duties of a councillor. These special responsibilities are related to the discharge of the Council's functions.

13. The most significant is the Leader of the Council and the Panel recommend that the allowance

be increased by £668 to £30,000 (3 x basic allowance). The Panel considered the current practice of ring-fencing a total sum for the Cabinet, which is distributed per Cabinet Member. This has the benefit of enabling the Leader to determine the Cabinet structure without increasing the cost. The Cabinet Members are currently being paid £10,647, a total of £74,529 and the Panel recommends that this be rounded to and capped at £77,000. If the current Cabinet structure continues, the SRA per Cabinet Member, excluding the Leader, would be £11,000.

14. We were requested by a number of Members to consider additional SRAs but the Panel were totally agreed that there should be no additional SRAs. The Regulations make it clear that only *significant additional responsibilities* should be recognised and only a *minority of members* should receive an SRA. Our recommendations would result in 39% of the new Council receiving a SRA which would be in line with good practice. A case was made by a number of members for the introduction of SRAs for Vice Chairs. The reasons the Panel would not support this are set out in Annex 5. We do recommend that the SRA for Chair of Budget Review be reduced by £868 to bring it into line with Chair of Audit Committee.

15. We believe that SRAs are soundly structured but recommend that the use of the Basic Allowance as a bench mark for SRA calculations should be made explicit and that figures should be rounded as after a time of indexing they appear to have a degree of accuracy that cannot be justified. In other words we can re-establish a fresh baseline for the scheme which we believe, based on the work of previous Panels, establishes SRAs at an appropriate level.

16. It was suggested that consideration should be given to a "*de minimus*" payment for Group Leaders and the Panel recommend this should be £2,480 (i.e., £620 per Member for a notional minimum of 4 Members). The full details of our recommended changes are set out in Annex 3. This would produce a increase, including inflation, of £2,583 (1.2%) on the SRA budget of £211,713.

17. The Panel recommends, in line with current practice, that Members should continue to be restricted to one SRA. We do not support arguments for exceptions to this rule and we would not recommend the practice of transferability of allowances.

Co-opted Members of Committees

18. Persons co-opted to serve on Committees, Sub Committees or Panels, and who have voting rights, receive an allowance currently £634. This is paid in 12 equal, monthly instalments and will be liable for tax and National Insurance. All co-optees are eligible for travel and subsistence at the Members' rate when carrying out the duties for which they are co-opted. If the co-opted person ceases to serve the Council reserves the right to recover any overpayments of this allowance. **The Panel recommends that the Co-opted Members' allowance be increased to £640.**

Civic Allowances.

19. Currently the Mayor of Milton Keynes receives a civic allowance of £10,647 per annum, in line with that paid to Cabinet Members, paid in two equal instalments of £5,323 in May and November. The Deputy Mayor receives a civic allowance of 50% of the Mayor's allowance, i.e. £5,324 per annum, payable in two equal instalments of £2,662 in May and November. As part of a local agreement with HM Inspector of Taxes, these civic allowances are not liable for tax or National insurance contributions. In the event of a Mayor or Deputy Mayor ceasing to hold office the Council reserves the right to recover any overpayments of the Civic Allowance.

The Panel is recommending that Cabinet SRAs be increased to £11,000 and if this increase were also applied to Civic Allowances there would be a budget increase of £529 (3%). **The Panel recommends that the allowances paid to the Mayor be increased to £11,000 and Deputy Mayor to £5,500.**

Travel and Subsistence.

20. The Panel fully endorses the Council's existing arrangements for travel and subsistence. Reimbursement to councillors for travel and subsistence is paid at the current rates agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC) for the reimbursement of Council officers. In some instances Mileage claims may be liable for tax and National Insurance contributions. Councillors are reimbursed the full cost of travel by the most appropriate means of transport at standard class rates whilst carrying out Approved Duties, provided a valid receipt (bus ticket etc) is produced to substantiate the claim. All reasonable claims for subsistence are paid for carrying out Approved Duties and as there is no profit element in the payment of subsistence, this allowance is not subject to tax or National Insurance contributions.

Child Care and Dependent Carer's Allowance.

21. The Panel recommends that the scheme should continue unchanged except that for child care the minimum wage rate applicable to the age of the carer should be updated to October 2013 wage rates, and should continue to be adjusted to meet any future changes in the applicable minimum wage:

£6.31 per hour (21 years and over)

£5.03 per hour (18 -20 year olds)

£3.72 per hour (for workers under 18 who are above compulsory school leaving age)

Some Members suggested that the Council should adopt the Living Wage but the Panel received no evidence that the allowance set at the present level discourages people standing.

Claimable Allowances.

22. The Panel noted and endorsed the Council's current scheme. There is a 3 month time limit for submitting claims i.e. Child Care and Dependent Carers Allowance and Travel and Subsistence Allowances. Any claims made outside of this limit will only be paid in exceptional circumstances with the approval of the Service Manager, Legal and Democratic Services and the Service Manager Audit and Risk Management.

Dual Authority roles.

23. The Panel notes the Council's decision that Councillors should not receive an allowance for more than one authority (e.g. Fire Authority) for the same duties. The Panel support the continuation of this position.

Forgoing Allowances.

24. A councillor may forgo all or part of any allowances to which he or she is entitled, provided he or she has given notice in writing to the Service Manager, Legal and Democratic Services.

Suspension and Withholding Allowances.

25. The Panel confirms the existing arrangements. In the event of a councillor being suspended from duty following an investigation by the Council's Standards Committee allowances will not be paid to the councillor concerned during the period of suspension. If necessary, a pro rata calculation will be made based on the number of days in the Council year concerned to determine if an adjustment for under or overpayment needs to be made to ensure that the correct amount is withheld during the suspension period. The Council should reserve the right to recover any overpayments.

Approved Duties.

26. The Panel endorses the list of 'Approved Duties' under the regulations and note that these include attendance at conferences, seminars and other Member Development and training events as approved by the Council or Service Manager, Legal and Democratic Services. The Panel was mindful of the training costs of a new Council with the prospect of many new Councillors and for Member Development training being a priority. We understand that appropriate budget provision has been made. We also discussed how appraisal of performance could play an important role in a situation where Members work under great pressures.

We noted that attendance at casework surgeries organised at advertised times and venues within the Member's own ward is an Approved Duty. The Panel considered recommending that this cost should in future be incurred as part of the Basic Allowance. However, in the light of the answers to our questions by Members and the low cost, we are not recommending change. We do not agree with the request that general casework should be included. We considered other issues raised by the Leader of the Council but we do not propose changes to Approved Duties.

Indexing.

27. The Panel considered recommending that the NJC award for staff pay should continue to be used as the basis for updating allowances but that having set a new baseline for allowances in our report we recommend that there should be no indexation for three years of the Basic Allowance and SRAs until the Panel meets again. But we recommend that the Dependent Carer's allowance should continue to be indexed to the maximum hourly rates for minimum wage for age of carer/average hourly cost of Milton Keynes Council. Travel and Subsistence allowances should be paid at the same rates and conditions applicable to Officer and HMRC rates where applicable.

Pensions.

28. All Councillors are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. Both Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance will be taken into account when calculating pension entitlement. The Panel noted that on 19th December 2012 the Local Government Minister, Mike Brandon Lewis, made a statement to the House of Commons setting out the Department's intention to remove access for councillors to the LGPS in England from April 2014 (Annex 4) and that a separate paper be issued as part of the planned consultation on the wider reform of the LGPS - which is anticipated to be completed in 2014.

Basic Allowance

1. The Statutory Guidance is very specific on the questions a Panel must consider when arriving at the recommended Basic Allowance:

'Having established what Councillors do, and the hours which are devoted to these tasks the local authorities will need to take a view on the rate at which, and the number of hours for which, Councillors ought to be remunerated.'

2. The underlying approach in setting the recommended Basic Allowance is based on the above statutory guidance as published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), par.67. As a result, the Panel is under a duty to arrive at answers for the following three variables when setting and recommending an appropriate Basic Allowance:

- a) Time required to fulfil roles of ordinary Members
- b) The voluntary principle, the notion that part of the time put in by a Member in their back bench roles should be unremunerated, often known as the Public Service Discount (PSD)
- c) The worth of a backbench Member's time, or rate of remuneration.

3. **Time required to fulfil back bench roles = 140 days annual equivalent.** The 2003 Panel acknowledged that the role of the back bench councillor was at least 60 hours per month, or at least 90 - 95 days per year. The 2010 Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) census of Councillors shows that Councillors not in senior positions put in at least 23 hours per week, but that includes all types of councils. The Panel has translated this research by the IDeA into just over half a working week, or equivalent of 140 days per year.

4. **Public Service Discount: = 30%.** The previous Panel made the assumption that anything over 60 hours per month was the voluntary element or public service. However the common discount applied to English authorities is around 30%. In other words, of the 142 days expected time input, one third has been determined as public service, say 42 days, with 98 being left as the remunerated time.

5. **Rate for the job = £102 per day.** The Local Government Association no longer provides advice on a recommended daily session rate. The annual average wage/salary in the UK is £26,500 which the Panel have translated into £102 per day.

6. Thus, following the statutory guidance with the variables outlined above produces the following Basic Allowance:

- Time for the job: 140 equivalent days per year
- Public Service 30% (42 days)
- Rate for the job £102 per day

98 remunerated days x £102 = £9,996 say £10,000 Basic Allowance 2014 - 2015.

7. This is paid in 12 equal instalments and is subject to both tax and National Insurance contributions where applicable. If a councillor ceases to be a councillor before the end of his or her term of office, payment of the allowance ceases and a pro rata calculation is made to ensure that the councillor receives the right amount of allowance. The Council reserves the right to recover any overpayments of Basic Allowance.

8. The Basic Allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time at meetings with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs, such as the use of their

homes for council business.

ANNEX 3

Special Responsibility Allowances

The Panel believes that SRAs are soundly structured but recommend, in line with good practice, that the use of the Basic Allowance as a bench mark for SRA calculations be made explicit and that figures should be rounded as, after a time of indexing, they appear to have a degree of accuracy that cannot be justified. We did not have evidence to justify a significant increase or proposal for change in the existing scheme. We do recommend that the SRA for Chair of Budget Review be reduced by £1,000 to bring it into line with Chair of Audit Committee. What is set out below is a fresh baseline for the scheme which we believe, based on the work of previous Panels, sets SRAs at an appropriate level.

	Current £	Revised £	+/- £
Leader of the Council (300% basic allowance)	29,332	30,000	668+
Main Opposition Group Leader - per Group Member (16) (£614 increased to £620)	9,824	9,920	96+
Smaller Opposition Group Leader - per Group Member (15) (£614 increased to £620)	9,210	9,300	90+
Cabinet Members (7) - (Pool Cap of £77,000) (110% basic allowance)	10,647	11,000	2,471+
Chair of Development Control Committee (80% basic allowance)	8,051	8,000	51-
Chair of Licensing & Regulation Committees (80% basic allowance)	8,051	8,000	51-
Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee (75% basic allowance)	7,368	7,500	132+
Chair of Budget Review Group (55% basic allowance)	6,368	5,500	868-
Chair of Audit Committee (55% basic allowance)	5,368	5,500	132+
Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Select Committee (5) (45% basic allowance)	4,549	4,500	245-
Chair of Executive Scrutiny Panel (45% basic allowance)	4,368	4,500	132+
Chair of Standards Committee (30% basic allowance)	2,933	3,000	77+

This would increase the SRA budget (including inflation) of £211,713 by £2,583 (1.2%).

ANNEX 4

Written Ministerial statement of 19 December 2012 on Councillors Pensions.

On 12 September 2001, the then Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions announced plans to give taxpayer - funded pensions to councillors, through access to the LGPS. The proposals came into force in 2003. The Councillors' Commission report of the last administration noted that 912 councillors in England had joined that pension scheme by 2004. A Taxpayers' Alliance survey in February 2009, across the whole United Kingdom, found that 3,527 councillors had pensions as of 2007 to 2008; a further survey in January 2012 found that figure had increased to 4,548 councillors by 2010 to 2011. The trend is clear.

Abolition of taxpayer-funded pensions

Ministers in this government take a fundamentally different view from the last administration. We do not believe that taxpayer-funded pensions are justified. Councillors are volunteers undertaking public service; they are not and should not be employees of the council and on the municipal payroll. They are not professional, full-time politicians, nor should they be encouraged to become so. Councillors do not receive a salary; rather, they receive allowances to compensate for their out-of-pocket expenses. Yet following changes made by the last administration, allowances have slowly become a form of salary, a situation worsened by the state-funded pensions. This is a corrosive influence on local democracy and independent thought, blurring the distinction between council staff and councillors. Every bit of the public sector needs to do its bit to help pay off the deficit inherited from the last administration. Local government grants are being reduced. Ministers have cut and then frozen their salaries. Public sector pensions, including parliamentary pensions, are being reformed to reduce the burden on taxpayers. It is only right that councillors do their bit as well. We do not believe that an occupational pension scheme intended for employees, and paid for by taxpayers, is an appropriate vehicle for councillors.

Existing pension rights

Subject to consultation, we propose that there will be no access for councillors to the LGPS in England from April 2014. In the interests of fairness, those councillors already in the scheme would have their accrued rights up to April 2014 fully protected, but would not be able to accrue any further benefits after that date in the existing scheme. This will not prevent councillors contributing to a personal pension: if they put aside part of their (taxable) allowances into such a pension, then that is a matter for them; they will continue to receive income tax relief like any ordinary member of the population, subject to the prevailing tax rules. Although central records on councillors' participation in the scheme are not held by my department, initial rough estimates suggest that this could save £7 million a year in taxpayers' money. There is absolutely no case for increasing councillor allowances to compensate. Instead, councils may want to consider earlier, voluntary closure of the scheme to their councillors as a sensible saving.

Civic duty

Eligibility regulations for the LGPS are overseen by my department. Although this is a centrally mandated change (as was its original introduction), we believe these reforms will assist localism and local democracy by encouraging a greater separation between councillors and officers. Robust local scrutiny of council spending requires councillors to be substantively independent of means and of thought from the body they are overseeing. Civic duty should not be bought. We do not believe it will have any detrimental effect on people choosing to become councillors. The best thing we can do to encourage more people to take part in municipal public life is to decentralise

power to local communities so being a councillor is a meaningful and rewarding role.

Elected mayors

We recognise that there is a greater expectation that an elected mayor is a full-time position. We therefore propose to consult on allowing elected mayors to remain in the scheme as a voluntary option (but not as an expectation), subject to local scrutiny, challenge and determination. The salaries of the mayor of London, members of the Greater London Assembly and police and crime commissioners will remain pensionable.

Timing

Statutory consultation is required and will commence in due course, as part of the planned consultation on the wider reform of the LGPS. We will consult with the Welsh Assembly government in respect of access to the LGPS for councillors in Wales.

As a former councillor myself, I would like to pay tribute to their often unsung and on-going work in standing up for their local residents. We hope these reforms will further strengthen the integrity and independence of councillors and increase the respect within their communities for the voluntary work they undertake as champions of the people.

Vice Chair Allowances

1) A number of Councillors including the Leader and in particular the Labour Group, in a written submission, made the argument for payment of Vice Chairs as follows:

'For some years now, it has been the practice of the Council to have two Vice-Chairs of each Select Committee, one each from the parties not holding the Chair. This, we feel, can ensure cross-party buy-in to the Select Committee process, a factor that we think is specifically important for the Administration Party. The effectiveness of the scrutiny system relies on effective planning meetings, which involves the vice chairs every bit as much as the Chair. This is not an assertion we make wildly - the planning meetings are documented and I am sure agendas, and notes, will be made available to the Panel by Officers. It has been said, perhaps with some justification that the only thing the Chair does which the Vice-Chairs don't, is to chair the meetings. We feel that this situation should again be reflected in the Allowance system, as it was for some years in the past.

We feel there is a particular injustice with respects the Vice-Chairs of the Licensing and Regulatory Committees. Here also, the bi-party arrangement re Vice Chairs operates. The Vice-Chairs are constitutionally required to chair hearings panels in the absence of the Chair. They frequently do this and we can supply supporting evidence if this is required. There must be an injustice here and we invite the Panel to consider it.'

2. There are a number of reasons why the Panel would not support in principle the payment of SRAs to Vice Chairs.

Basic Allowance. Setting the Basic Allowance at an above average rate of £10,000 implies that the whole membership is widely engaged in the work of the Council. For some members fulfilment, satisfaction, training and experience can be gained through a vice chair role. For others it may be joint working, task and finish groups, working with other agencies or a priority for community engagement. The Basic Allowance set at this level assumes all those activities are covered. Some Councils will have a lower Basic Allowance and more Members on SRAs. But it is regarded as bad practice to pay the majority of members a SRA.

Significant Additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a councillor is the clear guidance of the Regulations. The Panel has an obligation to take heed of the New Constitutions: Guidance on Regulation for Local Authority Allowances, republished by the Department for Communities and Local Government on 5th May 2006.

Can a small allowance - even if it were allowed to be taken out of the Chair's allowance - be an indicator of significant additional responsibilities? The Panel was informed that for this reason it was, in the experience of the Chairman, common for Panels not to recommend such payments. The Panel were made aware of the challenge that had been made previously to such payments and the response of the District Auditor. We were aware of the legal arguments but our decision is based solely on the merits of the case and the principle of keeping SRA payments to the minimum (1/3rd) in line with best practice.

Minimum number of Councillors should be receiving a SRA. If the majority of members of a council receive a SRA the local electorate may rightly question whether this was justified. Indeed this was questioned on the audit of another authority on the Audit of Accounts and the District Auditor supported the member of the public in their challenge and the allowances were withdrawn.

The current scheme provides for 22 allowances in a membership of 51 shortly to increase to 57 (39%). Vice chair allowances would have the potential to double the number of SRAs being paid. The reality is that 6 should be a maximum additional allowances to keep within the spirit of the Regulations. If they are small they can be challenged and they would add to the overall budget cost in a time of austerity when staff and services are being reduced.

Cost of politics is a matter of concern to the Panel. Recognising the challenges of being in a 'hung council' we do not believe that the additional costs of being in that position should fall on the community. We believe that political balance can be achieved without it having to be built in at Vice Chair level. We would much prefer to have a realistic Basic Allowance. Indeed, with the 'non-political' roles of the Regulatory Committees, it could be seen to be more above politics not to have politically defined Vice Chairs. We were pleased to note that the Overview and Scrutiny Panels were chaired by members of the minority parties. Sometimes the hidden agenda may be to find ways of financially rewarding those members of minority groups who are not the Administration. The move to vice chair allowances can be used as a mechanism to get the majority of members on a SRA. This can be the 'hidden agenda' but we believe is not the case in Milton Keynes where there is a history of parties working together for the benefit of the community.

Summary

The arguments against making provision for SRAs for Vice Chairs have been set out clearly by previous Panels and we concur with their views. We strongly believe that the existing scheme provides allowances at the right level and would not recommend a proliferation of smaller SRAs. In the end this is a matter for the Council to determine but the Panel would strongly recommend against such a move.



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**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON
KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY**

***MEMBERS' SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES
2015/16***

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 2015.
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 Treasurer 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.

Claim Forms

30. All information requested on the claim form must be provided, including details of start and finish times, journeys made and meetings attended. (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 should be provided.
32. Claims for the same expenses (mileage, travel and subsistence etc) must not be made from more than one body.
33. Claim forms should be completed and submitted to the Treasurer, preferably within seven working days after the end of each calendar month.
34. 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 form.
35. 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.

SCHEDULE 1

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES FROM APRIL 2015

Special Responsibility Allowance per annum

• Position	£
• Chairman	11,855
• Vice-Chairman	3,972
• Chairman – Executive Committee	4,891
• Chairman – Overview and Audit Committee	3,204
• Chairman – Human Resources Sub-Committee	1,604
• Group Leaders	3,557
• Lead Members	3,091

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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, Treasurer 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 2015 the following rates of allowances will apply

Basic Allowance:

£1,187 per annum

Special Responsibility Allowances:

See Schedule 1

Co-optees Allowance

£297 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 2016, 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).

Travel and Subsistence allowances will be adjusted for inflation each year in line with the Buckinghamshire County Council Members Allowances Scheme applicable at the time when the cost is incurred.

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Report considered by the Executive Committee – 19 November 2014



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	19 November 2014
OFFICER	Lynne Swift, Director People and Organisational Development
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Adrian Busby
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Appointment of the Authority's future Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The current Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive has confirmed his intention to retire in February 2015. Appointment of a successor is a business critical decision.</p> <p>The approach for the selection process was agreed by the Executive Committee, and is outlined in Appendix 1.</p> <p>Selection took place on 13 November 2014.</p> <p>The outcome was that the panel members were unanimous in their determination to recommend to the Executive Committee that it select on behalf of the Authority Jason Thelwell, currently Chief Operating Officer to be the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive commencing on the date immediately following CFO/CE's last day of employment.</p>
ACTION	Decision.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jason Thelwell be selected as Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive to commence in post on 7 February 2015. 2. Jason Thelwell becomes Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive designate on 1 January 2015. 3. the Authority be recommended to approve the remuneration for the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive set out in Appendix 2.
RISK MANAGEMENT	Senior management succession for Principal Officers (PO) including the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive role was identified as a risk to resilience and performance as part of the workforce planning process in early 2011. This risk was mitigated through a blended approach to senior management resourcing and development including reductions in numbers of

	<p>POs, introduction of rigorous, transparent assessment centre processes and a mix of meritocracy based internal and external appointments and tailored personal development programmes.</p> <p>Appointment of an internal candidate that has already made significant contribution to setting direction and who shares the vision mitigates the risk of performance dips, which is a potential risk when there is a leadership change at the top of the organisation. With the current CFO/CE declaring his intention to retire some time ago throughout the organisation and with the Chief Operating Officer covering the CFO/CE role for an extended period during the summer of 2014 this further mitigates this risk.</p> <p>By appointing the new CFO/CE ahead of the current CFO/CE retirement date, this allows for a thorough handover and smooth transition, which will minimise any risk of performance dipping or slippage on key projects.</p>
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p>	<p>Costs associated with this recommended appointment will be accommodated within existing budgets.</p> <p>The proposed salary will need to be approved by the CFA as it is over £100,000 as per section 1 of the Pay Policy Statement.</p>
<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p>	<p>In allowing the Authority the opportunity to vote before a salary package of over £100,000 is offered in respect of a new appointment, the Authority's Pay Policy Statement (most recently approved by the Authority on 22 October 2014) the recommendations; and the Executive Committee's terms of reference all accord with the statutory guidance issued by the DCLG under section 40 of the Localism Act 2011 on 20 February 2013.</p>
<p>HEALTH AND SAFETY</p>	<p>No implications.</p>
<p>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY</p>	<p>The selection and appointment processes are transparent and follow relevant Authority policy.</p>
<p>USE OF RESOURCES</p>	<p>Selection process resources</p> <p>The appointment of the Authority's Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive is critical to the on-going success of the Fire Authority. All Executive Committee members were invited to participate and an independent advisor appointed to support the process. The independent advisor has significant fire sector experience at CFO/CE level across several services and has worked closely with key external stakeholders, for example DCLG and CFA.</p> <p>Communication with stakeholders</p>

	<p>The outcomes of the selection and appointments processes will be communicated internally through normal channels.</p> <p>A communications plan will be agreed with the Authority for action at the point of CFA approval.</p>
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>Background</p> <p>Since 2011, the Authority's approach to senior management appointments has been to identify critical leadership roles and source talent with promotion potential. This is part of a strategic approach to longer term workforce and succession planning, resourcing talent and management development. The approach aims to ensure high calibre senior leadership is continually in place to deliver the Authority's challenging agenda and provide business continuity and resilience. There are significant costs for advertising for senior executives and the cost of running selection centres to derive suitable candidates is also high.</p> <p>With the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (CFO/CE) and wider Principal Officer (PO) predicted retirement timings identified over three years ago, senior management organisational restructures and appointments have considered opportunities for succession in a transparent way, supported by rigorous selection and assessment processes.</p> <p>Outcomes for successful candidates included personal development programmes to enhance performance and gain exposure to requirements for further career development specifically relating to future organisational requirements. A benefit of developing internal talent is a reduced selection cost for future appointments. An example of this approach was the appointment to the newly created Chief Operating Officer position, which deputises for the CFO/CE in December 2012.</p> <p>Openness and accountability in local pay: Guidance under section 40 of the Localism Act 2011 - Supplementary Guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/openness-and-accountability-in-local-pay-supplementary-guidance</p> <p>Pay Policy Statement 2014/15 in year review. http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/4214/1320/6133/ITEM_9_In_Year_Amendments_to_BMKFA_Pay_Policy_Principles_and_Statement_2014-15_and_Appendix.pdf</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<p>Appendix 1: CFO/CE Recruitment and Selection process.</p>

	<p>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 report contains information relating to an individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person; and on those grounds it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, so that the meeting may consider the following matter:</p> <p>Appendix 2: Proposed Starting Salary Recommendation to Authority.</p>
<p>TIME REQUIRED</p>	<p>10 minutes.</p>
<p>REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT</p>	<p>Lynne Swift, Director People and Organisational Development lswift@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744679</p>

Appendix 1

Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Recruitment and Selection process.

1. Options for the recruitment and selection process for the next CFO/CE were considered by the Executive Committee. Considerations took account of the significant succession and development planning undertaken by the Authority and ensuring tax payer value for money.
2. A phased process was agreed as outlined below.
3. It was agreed to consider internal succession as the first stage by way of a thorough assessment process.
4. It was agreed that if the first stage was not successful no appointment would be made, and the selection would be widened to external candidates. The internal candidate may or may not be included, depending on performance at the first stage.
5. All members of the Authority's Executive Committee were invited to participate.
6. The first stage selection process was conducted on 13 November 2014 by a panel of seven Executive Committee members.
7. The panel was supported with technical advice by an external independent advisor (Sir Ken Knight, former HM Government Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and former London Fire Commissioner and Chief Fire Officer of Dorset and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services).
8. Panel members agreed the standards expected in advance of the process.
9. The process consisted of:
 - Internal candidate provided CV and personal statement to show evidence against the key elements of the job description and person specification.
 - A presentation on an agreed topic. The topic and supporting material was distributed to member's in advance to allow familiarisation.
 - A structured and formal interview with questions and typically successful responses provided to panel members.
10. The processes were independently scored by each panel member.
11. On completion of the process it was unanimously agreed that the internal candidate had demonstrated suitability for the post of CFO/ CE.

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	17 December 2014
OFFICER	Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Adrian Busby
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Injury Awards: Interim Report
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The purpose of this report is to apprise the Authority of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) the investigation that has been commissioned by the Monitoring Officer into the circumstances in which the Authority has been making compensation payments to former employees for "service related injury" from its Firefighters' Pension Fund, rather than from its operating account. The interim report (Appendix 1) explains the progress of the investigation; and ii) correspondence (attached as Appendices 2 and 3) sent to the DCLG requesting confirmation of its intentions in order that the Authority's auditor can issue the audit completion certificate for the 13/14 accounts.
ACTION	Information.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the contents of the Injury Awards: Interim Report be noted. b) the correspondence from the Authority to the DCLG be noted.
RISK MANAGEMENT	<p>Officers of the Authority identified issues arising from the payments made from the Pension fund in July 2014. There is now provision within its accounts for 2013/14 for the treatment of injury awards charged to the pension fund since 1 April 2006 based on the probability of having to reimburse DCLG for the cumulative relevant expenditure. The accounts were approved as amended in line with a verbal update provided by the Chief Finance Officer at the Overview and Audit Committee meeting on 24 September 2014. The Audit Director has taken the view that he cannot issue a completion certificate until he has an</p>

	assurance that there is statutory authority enabling the Authority to make such a payment. A request for reimbursement has yet to be made by DCLG.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	The barrister is engaged to undertake the investigation at a rate of £80/hour. The total time charged up until 16 November 2014, amounts to £15,893.40.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	The investigation has been undertaken in order to assist the Monitoring Officer in the event that he may need to report to the authority if it appears to him that a decision or omission by any person holding any office or employment under the authority has given rise to, or is likely to, or would give rise to a contravention by the authority, by any committee, or sub-committee of the authority, or by any person holding any office or employment under the authority of any enactment or rule of law.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	None arising from the recommendations.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	None arising from the recommendations.
USE OF RESOURCES	<p>The interim report is presented whilst evidence that is needed before the investigation can be completed is still awaited from third parties, and for other procedural issues. The substance of the interim report was completed on 24 November 2014 and has been shared with members of the Overview and Audit Committee.</p> <p>On 25 November 2014 Kieran Timmins Deputy Chief Executive, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority and convenor of the Fire Finance Network (a network of chief finance officers from fire and rescue authorities) contacted the author and the Chief Fire Officer with information that he believed that in total there are or have been 17 fire and rescue authorities (including BMKFA) that have been directly affected by the issue, which is a substantial increase in the proportion of authorities affected; and that Essex FRA has set up a national meeting of affected authorities to take place on the 19 December 2014.</p> <p>There are a number of fire and rescue authorities who had yet to respond to BMKFA's direct requests for information. Reminders have been sent to those authorities who have not provided substantive responses.</p>
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	The Monitoring Officer was requested by the Chief Fire Officer /Chief Executive to undertake an investigation, who in turn commissioned Tom Ogg. The Terms of

	<p>Reference (Appendix 4) required Counsel to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear account of how these events transpired. • An account of what happened in other combined fire and rescue authorities and other fire and rescue authorities • Details of the scale and depth of the financial problem and an informed account of what the Authority’s liabilities and future costs might be. • An analysis of the opportunities to uncover this issue that might have been missed and whether due to managerial actions, controls, practices and/or processes and the role and adequacy of internal and external audit. • Other relevant issues relating to the on-going service related injury payments. <p>Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Audit Committee 24 September 2014</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/7914/1682/6936/ADocPackPublic.version0001.pdf</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<p>Appendix 1 – Injury Awards: Interim Report dated 2 December 2014</p> <p>Appendix 2– Letter from BMKFA Chief Finance Officer to Anthony Mooney, DCLG dated 6 October 2014</p> <p>Appendix 3– Letter from BMKFA Chief Operating Officer to Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, DCLG dated 18 November 2014</p> <p>Appendix 4 –Letter of Instruction from BMKFA Monitoring Officer to Counsel dated 15 September 2014</p> <p>Exempt Annex to the Injury Awards: Interim Report</p>
<p>TIME REQUIRED</p>	<p>15 minutes.</p>
<p>REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT</p>	<p>Graham Britten</p> <p>gbritten@bucksfire.gov.uk</p> <p>01296 744441</p>

Injury Awards: Interim Report

Introduction

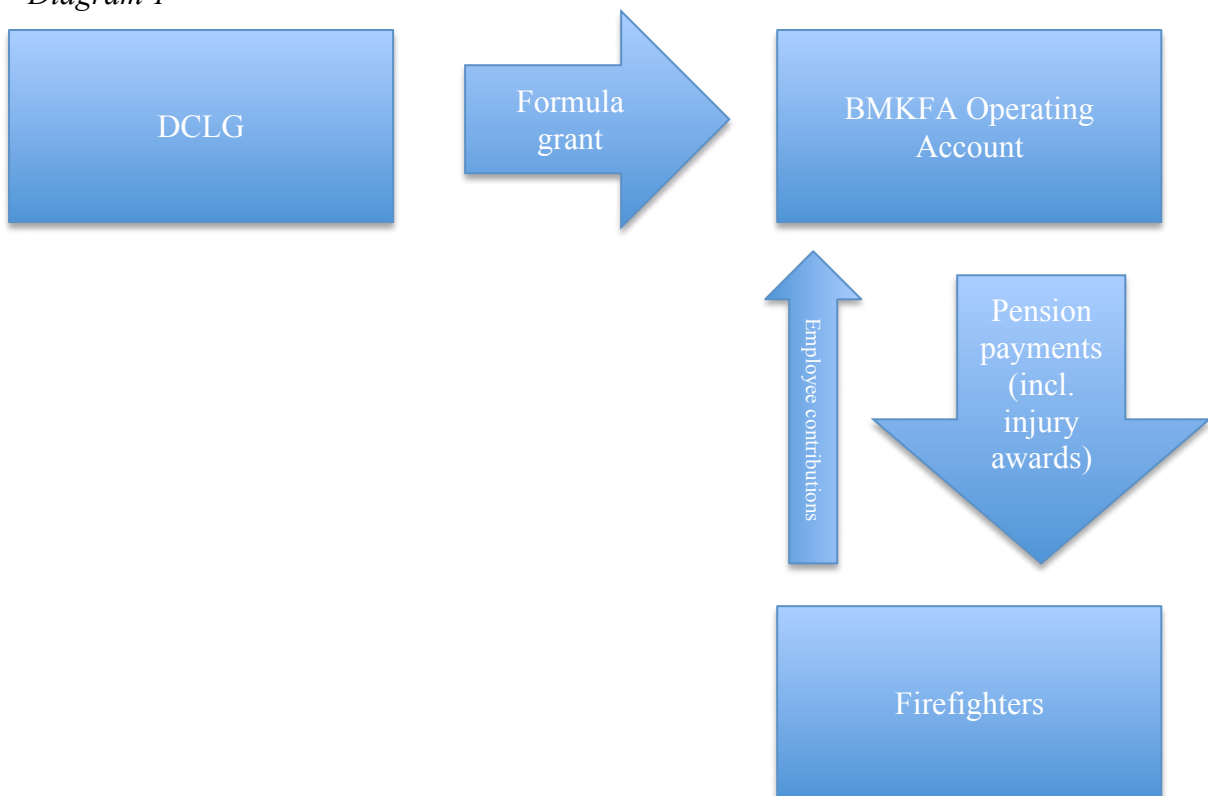
1. I have been asked to undertake an investigation by Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer at Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (“**BMKFA**”) into issues relating to the payment of injury awards by BMKFA since 2006.
2. I have been asked to address the following issues set out in my terms of reference:
 - 2.1. A clear account of how these events transpired.
 - 2.2. An account of what happened in other combined fire and rescue authorities and other fire and rescue authorities.
 - 2.3. Details of the scale and depth of the financial problem and an informed account of what the Authority’s liabilities and future costs might be.
 - 2.4. An analysis of the opportunities to uncover this issue that might have been missed and whether due to managerial actions, controls, practices and/or processes and the role and adequacy of internal and external audit.
 - 2.5. Other relevant issues relating to the on-going service related injury payments.
3. I am asked to make recommendations as well as findings in my final report.
4. I have been asked to produce this interim report to provide information about the progress of the investigation to date, and so far as I can, to set out my interim findings.

5. I emphasise, at this point, that a number of important matters that I will address in my final report cannot be addressed in this interim report. That is because, as set out in my terms of reference, the individuals involved in the investigation process are to be given a fair opportunity to comment on certain findings of the report that concern them prior to the report being finalised. Consequently, my interim findings are largely confined to paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 above.
6. I take my terms of reference in turn.

A clear account of how these events transpired

7. An injury award is series of payments made to a firefighter who retires or dies as a result of a service-related injury.¹ Prior to 1 April 2006, an injury award was, in effect, a type of pension (see further the discussion below). In order to understand the issue with injury awards, therefore, it is important to understand the financial arrangements for firefighters’ pensions. Diagram 1 summarises the system prior to 1 April 2006:

Diagram 1



8. Prior to 1 April 2006, as illustrated by Diagram 1, responsibility for making pension payments rested directly² with Fire Authorities (“**Authorities**”). In other words, Authorities made pension payments to retired firefighters directly from

¹ DCLG state this includes injury payments to retained firefighters in respect of their protected rights on ill-health pensions, and both injury awards and injury gratuities paid to retained fire-fighters who were employed before 6 April 2006 and who retired on ill-health grounds due to a qualifying injury.

² See e.g. Rule L1 of Schedule 2 to the *Firemen’s Pension Scheme Order 1992*.

their operating accounts.³ To support Authorities to make those payments, part of the formula grant made to Authorities by the Department of Communities and Local Government (“DCLG”) was provided for the purpose of funding pension payments to firefighters.⁴ Firefighters paid their employee contributions towards their pensions directly into Authorities’ operating accounts. Compared with the new financial arrangements outlined below, the system was relatively simple.

9. From 1 April 2006, the financial arrangements for firefighters’ pensions changed. Instead of making payments directly from an Authority’s operating account, pension payments had to be made from a separate ‘pension fund’. Diagram 2, explained below, illustrates the new arrangements. The pension fund was Authority-specific; there was required to be one pension fund per Authority. The arrangement was that an Authority would pay employer contributions into its pension fund, and employees would also pay employee contributions into the pension fund. If there was not enough money in the Authority’s pension fund to pay for pension payments to firefighters, DCLG would make a ‘top-up grant’ to the ‘local’ pension fund to fund the deficit. The norm was that a top-up grant would be made.
10. At the same time as the new financial arrangements for firefighters’ pensions were introduced, a change was made to injury awards. Prior to the change, injury awards were made under the same legal instrument as that under which all other pension awards were made: the Firemen's Pension Scheme Order 1992 (the “**1992 Pension Scheme**”). Injury awards under the 1992 Pension Scheme included an injury gratuity component and, under certain conditions, an injury pension component.⁵ In effect, as injury awards were made under the 1992 Pension Scheme, injury awards were a type of pension. In other words, an injury was simply one of a number of grounds on which a series of payments could be awarded under the 1992 Pension Scheme.
11. The reason for the changes to injury awards were related to changes in taxation law.⁶ The effect of those changes was that from 1 April 2006 the government could no longer support firefighters who had been injured in the line of duty through the pension system. Injury awards were instead to be made through a new compensation scheme that was entirely separate from the pension arrangements.⁷ In the event, no BMKFA firefighters received an injury award under the new compensation scheme, and in fact, no injury award has been made to a BMKFA firefighter since 2004. However, crucially, under the changes that applied from 1 April 2006, injury awards that had been made prior to 1 April 2006 (under the 1992 Pension Scheme) were required to continue being paid from the operating account of the Authority. In other words, injury awards could no longer

³ See the Parliamentary written answer: HC Dec 29 Nov 2005, cc 5WS-6WS. See here (last checked 27 October 2014): <http://tinyurl.com/pwgkx4p>

⁴ *Ibid.* Under the new financial arrangements, that element of the formula grant was removed. Its effective replacement was the ‘top-up’ grant for the pension fund.

⁵ See rule B4 of the 1992 Pension Scheme.

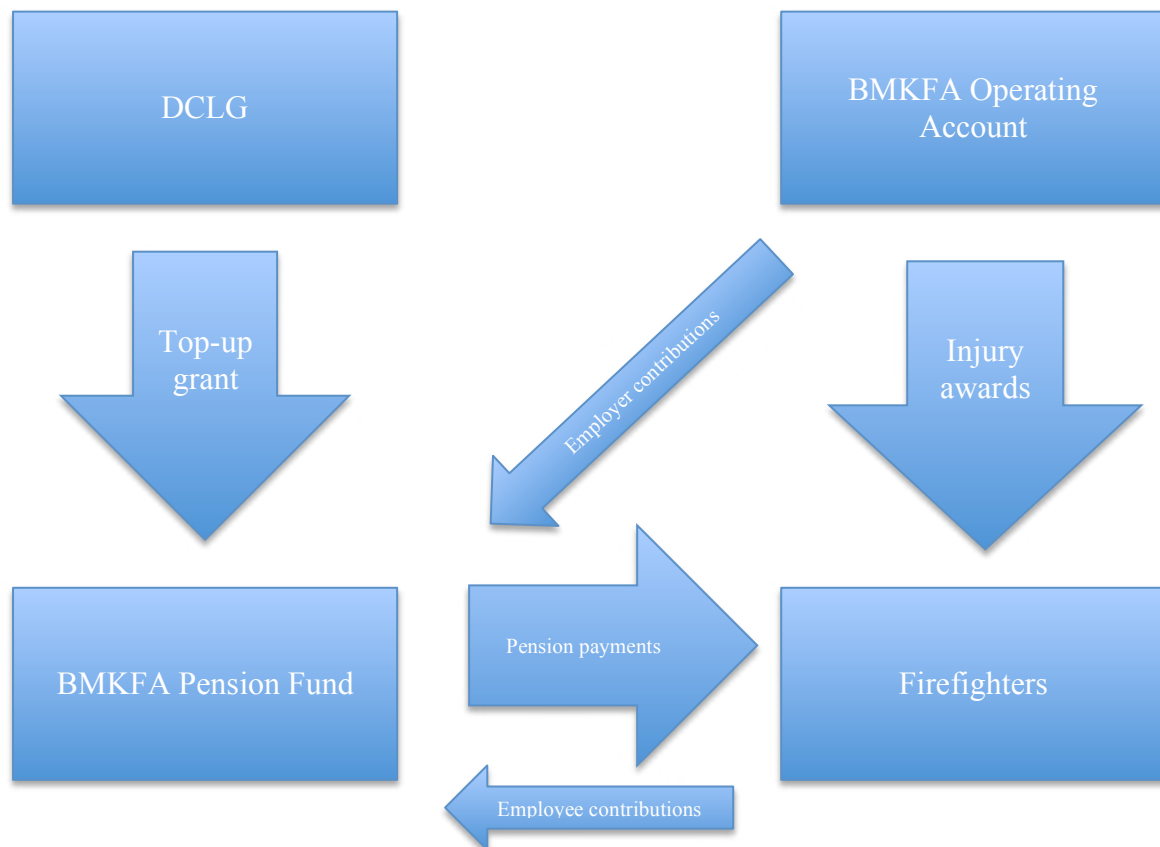
⁶ See paragraph 2.2 of the Explanatory Memorandum to the Firefighters’ Compensation Scheme (England) Order 2006/1811.

⁷ The Firefighters' Compensation Scheme (England) Order 2006.

be treated as pensions, and so injury awards could not be paid from the pension fund under the new financial arrangements for firefighters' pensions.

12. It is important to appreciate that prior to 1 April 2006, under the old financial arrangements, injury awards were already being paid from the operating account. Under the new financial arrangements, injury awards were to continue to be paid from the operating account. In that sense, it could be said that there was little 'to do' as regards injury awards: they were required to be paid from the operating account, as they always had been.
13. The new financial arrangements, including the changes to injury awards, are illustrated by Diagram 2. Diagram 2 shows the flows of payments between firefighters, the DCLG, the pension fund and the operating account of BMKFA. As can be seen, the pension fund receives employee and employer contributions, and a top-up grant from the DCLG. The payments to firefighters of their pension monies are paid from the pension fund. Injury awards, however, are paid from the operating account of BMKFA.

Diagram 2

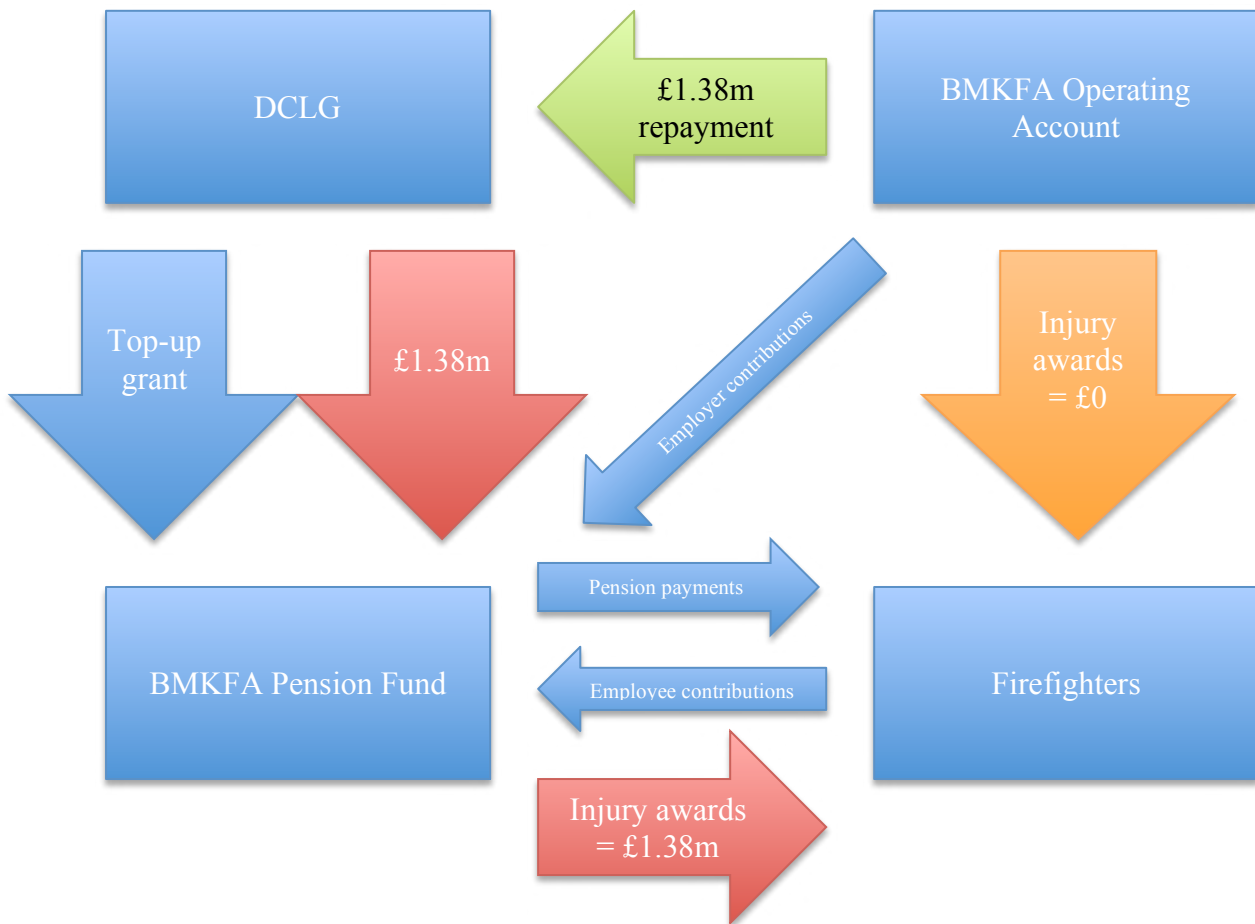


14. Unfortunately, at BMKFA, from 1 April 2006, injury awards were not paid from the operating account. Rather, injury awards were paid from the pension fund. The problem was identified following an email from Anthony Mooney of the

Firefighters' Pension Scheme section at the DCLG to all Authorities on 4 July 2014. Mr Mooney asked, in his email, for Authorities to confirm that injury awards were being paid from each Authority's operating account and not its pension fund. Following Mr Mooney's email, it was discovered that from 1 April 2006, injury awards at BMKFA had been paid from the pension fund, contrary to the requirements of the new financial arrangements.

15. It appears, therefore, that *all* pensions payments were moved from the operating account to the pension fund, including injury awards (which should have continued to be paid from the operating account). How exactly this occurred, and why, will be addressed in my final report.
16. What occurred at BMFKA from 1 April 2006 to July 2014 may be illustrated by Diagram 3 below.
17. The red arrows in Diagram 3 show the erroneous payments that took place. In particular, approximately £1.38m of injury awards were paid to firefighters from the BMKFA pension fund (for further details of the sums involved please see the sections below). Consequently, over that period the pension fund was in deficit by £1.38m more than it would otherwise have been. As a result, DCLG sent BMKFA's pension fund £1.38m more by way of top-up grant than BMKFA was entitled to during that period.
18. As I emphasise above, the £1.38m in injury awards paid from the pension fund should, in fact, have been paid from the operating account of BMKFA. The orange arrow, labelled 'Injury awards = £0', shows how the injury awards should have been paid, but were not in fact paid.
19. The green arrow in Diagram 3 represents the potential demand by DCLG for repayment of the £1.38m that was erroneously paid to the BMFKA pension fund.
20. DCLG have not yet set out the legal basis upon which they propose to make the demand represented by that green arrow. It is also unclear whether the payment will be made directly to DCLG, or whether a virement to the pension fund will be required (it is possible that the payment may be made directly to the pension fund and recouped by the DCLG under its existing powers to recoup a surplus in the pension fund). I have not been asked to examine the DCLG's legal powers to recover the sum under discussion, and so I say no more on the matter.

Diagram 3



An account of what happened in other combined fire and rescue authorities and other fire and rescue authorities.

21. In relation to this issue, I have spoken in particular to Anthony Mooney of the DCLG, and Kieran Timmins in his capacity as the Chair of the Fire Finance Network. Mr Timmins is Deputy Chief Executive at Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, and he has kindly put me in touch with other individuals responsible for finance matters at other Authorities.
22. I spoke to Anthony Mooney at DCLG on 17 October 2014. He told me that approximately 20% of the 46 Authorities in England have had a problem relating to the miscategorisation of injury awards, and consequently face at least some financial issue. I spoke to Kieran Timmins on 31 October 2014. Mr Timmins told me that he was aware of 10 Authorities that have a problem with injury awards, which is roughly the same proportion as that reported by Mr Mooney.
23. Those number have increased slightly since August. I have seen a set of minutes distributed amongst the Fire Finance Network on 28 August 2014 (the “**Pensions Meeting Minutes**”). The Pensions Meeting Minutes are a record of a meeting between Kieran Timmins, Andrew Cornelius of DCLG, and David Aldous of the

Audit Commission.⁸ In that meeting, a somewhat lower figure of 7 authorities (15%) was discussed as having been identified as having an issue with injury awards. The Pensions Meeting Minutes record the total estimated over-claim by Authorities as being approximately £30m, not including previously identified problems which are discussed below.

24. According to the Pensions Meeting Minutes, the issues faced by other Authorities in respect of injury awards are varied. They include:

- 24.1. Charging all injury awards to the pension fund;
- 24.2. Charging part of the cost of injury awards to the pension fund, and part to the operational account;⁹
- 24.3. Charging historic injury awards to the pension fund, but charging injury awards made post-2006 to the revenue account;
- 24.4. Other systems or procedural errors, including differences in the types of injury award that was mistakenly paid from the pension fund.

25. BMKFA falls within the first category, in that all injury awards were charged to the pension fund.

26. Mr Mooney told me that the financial issue at BMKFA is smaller than at some other Authorities, but for various reasons was unwilling when I spoke to him to go into greater detail as to how exactly BMKFA's financial issues compare. He also told me (on 17 October 2014) that the national picture remained unclear.

27. I asked Mr Mooney how DCLG discovered that there was a problem with injury awards. Mr Mooney told me there were two events that led to the discovery of the problem:

27.1. First, in 2014, an Authority noticed an error in its accounts, by unspecified means, and contacted the DCLG. It is unclear whether this refers to Essex Fire Authority, who on 12 August 2014 announced that £15m would be paid to the government on account of miscategorised injury award payments. Essex set up an independent external inquiry under the Treasurer and Finance Director of the neighbouring Kent Fire and Rescue Service.¹⁰

27.2. Second, in 2014 the government introduced reforms to the pension and injury compensation arrangements for retained firefighters. In the process of making arrangements for those reforms, DCLG became aware of the errors relating to injury awards.¹¹

⁸ I have assumed, on what are I believe reasonable grounds, that Andrew Cornelius was representing DCLG in that meeting. I asked Kieran Timmins whether the Audit Commission representative was David Aldous (who I have also spoken to), and Mr Timmins told me that he believed so.

⁹ Kieran Timmins told me that Essex Fire Authority had been making some payments from the correct account, but the level of payments was insufficiently high.

¹⁰ See here: http://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/news/Reserves_to_fund_pensions_injury_deficit/

¹¹ Retained firefighters were retrospectively given the right to participate in the 1992 Pension Scheme, so as to avoid discriminating against retained firefighters. As part of that process, retained firefighters lost their 'protected right' to full-time equivalent benefits in respect of injury awards. See *Retained Firefighters' Pension Settlement: A consultation to provide access to a modified pension scheme: Summary of responses to the consultation* (March 2014, DCLG).

28. There is only one example of an over-claim on the pension fund relating to injury awards that was discovered prior to 2014. That was at Cheshire Fire Authority,¹² in which an over-claim of approximately £1m was discovered in 2010/11 (relating to the years 2006/07 to 2010/11). The Finance Director of Cheshire Fire Authority, Paul Vaughan, told me that the error was discovered internally by the Cheshire Fire Finance Team in the Autumn of 2011. The Pensions Meeting Minutes state that DCLG considered this to be a one-off error at the time, and not something requiring further review, on the grounds that there was no other evidence of a problem.
29. The Pensions Meeting Minutes also state that there was another similar error at Staffordshire Fire Authority in 2006/07, the first year of the operation of the scheme. The Pensions Meeting Minutes state that the error was discovered during an audit of the accounts, and the value of the over-claim was approximately £1m. They also state: “*DCLG do not believe they were explicitly aware of this issue*”. However, David Greensmith, the current Director of Finance at Staffordshire Fire Authority told me that this description of the events is not entirely correct (although he cautioned that he was not employed by Staffordshire at the relevant time). Mr Greensmith told me that there was no over-claim from DCLG by Staffordshire; the error was a failure to make provision in the budget for the relevant payments, rather than an accounting error. Accordingly, it was an internal problem at Staffordshire. This would also explain why DCLG expressed some doubt about whether it was aware of this issue.
30. It is relevant that there is a great deal of variability across England in the prevalence of injury awards, as measured by the proportion of the total budget taken up with injury award payments. Table 1 and Graph 1 below were compiled by Mr Timmins, and they illustrate the range of injury award spend by different Authorities.
31. It should be noted that Table 1 and Graph 1 do not contain a complete list of Authorities. However, they appear to use up-to-date data that reflects the actual spend by Authorities on injury awards. Given the current uncertainties amongst Authorities about injury awards, however, I would caution against too heavy reliance on such figures. Nevertheless, in my view two points may be drawn from the data. The first is the variability across Authorities in the injury award spend referred to above. Of those shown in Table 1 and Graph 1, the percentage of the total Fire Authority budget taken up by injury awards varies from 0.28% to 3.73%. The second point is that, as can be seen, BMKFA has a relatively small proportion of its overall budget taken up by injury award payments as compared with other Authorities.

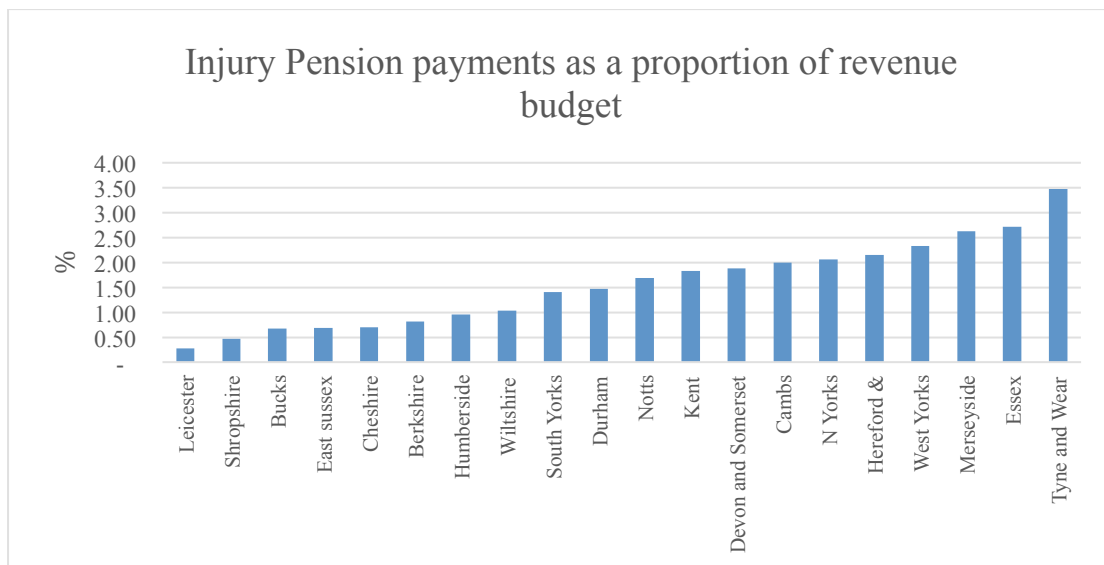
¹² Kieran Timmins told on 31 October 2014 me that the Fire Authority referred to in the Pensions Meeting Minutes, which is not named in those minutes, was Cheshire Fire Authority.

Table 1: Selected Authorities' expenditure on injury awards (£m)

	Injuries	Budget	%	Proportion of average
Leicester	0.106	38.35	0.28	0.18
Shropshire	0.1	21.4	0.47	0.30
Bucks	0.193	28.8	0.67	0.43
East Sussex	0.264	38.775	0.68	0.44
Cheshire	0.3	43	0.70	0.45
Berkshire	0.27	33	0.82	0.52
Humberside	0.443	46.4	0.95	0.61
Wiltshire	0.257	24.804	1.04	0.66
South Yorks	0.744	52.7	1.41	0.90
Durham	0.433	29.336	1.48	0.94
Notts	0.723	42.9	1.69	1.08
Kent	1.3	70.9	1.83	1.17
Devon and Somerset	1.4	74.58	1.88	1.20
Cambs	0.579	29.093	1.99	1.27
N Yorks	0.633	30.7	2.06	1.32
Hereford & Worcester	0.7	32.5	2.15	1.38
West Yorks	2	86	2.33	1.49
Merseyside	1.694	64.356	2.63	1.69
Essex	1.995	73.3	2.72	1.74
Tyne and Wear	1.8	51.9	3.47	2.22
AVERAGE			1.56	

32. Graph 1 illustrates the data in the table.

Graph 1: selected Authorities' injury pension payments as a proportion of revenue budget



33. Mr Timmins told me that there does not appear to be a pattern to the variations in injury award expenditure by governance type or region, which (it was noted in the Pensions Meeting Minutes) suggests that the differences may be accounted for by different management practices across authorities.¹³
34. National data on injury awards was also provided to me by BMKFA. That national data appears to pre-date that used in Table 1 and Graph 1 above. The national data records seven Authorities as having no expenditure on injury awards whatsoever as at 31 March 2013. Those Authorities were Durham, Cleveland, Cambridgeshire, BMKFA, Avon, Surrey, and Northamptonshire.
35. I have also been provided with the results of a survey of other Authorities' experience of injury awards using the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOIA"). I have been asked to produce the results of that survey in a separate exempt Appendix, which is Appendix 1. I am, however, able to note in this document that whilst the FOIA survey provides details in relation to the injury award issues at particular Authorities, the results of the survey do not change the overall national picture described above.

Details of the scale and depth of the financial problem and an informed account of what the Authority's liabilities and future costs might be.

36. There are three aspects to the financial issue facing BMKFA as a result of the miscategorisation of the injury payments:
- 36.1. The capital sum;
 - 36.2. Interest on the capital sum; and,
 - 36.3. On-going liabilities.
37. The capital sum is the amount that DCLG paid to BMKFA in error due to the miscategorisation of the injury awards, which is represented by a red arrow in Diagram 3 above. The capital sum is £1.38m. As discussed below, DCLG may seek to charge interest on that capital sum, which is the second problem identified above. Finally, the on-going liability is the Authority's unanticipated liability to pay injury awards from its operational account in the future. In 2013/14, the injury awards that BMKFA should have paid from its operational account amounted to approximately £193,000.
38. For accounting purposes, the capital impact and on-going liability would be accounted for in the 2013/14 accounts. However, the 'cash position' may differ from the accounting impact, depending on whether DCLG permit BMKFA to pay back the capital sum (and, if applicable, interest) by instalments.

¹³ On this point, I note the implicit suggestion at paragraph 3.3 of the Parliamentary research note entitled "*Firefighters' Pension Scheme – Background*" (15 August 2013) that there may have been some 'gaming' of the system prior to the reforms introduced in 2006.

The capital sum

39. The total amount paid in error from the pension fund since 2006 is £1,380,069.63. That £1.38m sum is the starting point for considering the financial problem BMKFA faces, and is the ‘presumed baseline virement’ from BMKFA’s general funds to the pension fund and/or thereby DCLG.
40. To put the £1.38m figure into context, the total annual budget for BMKFA in 2013/14 was £38,987,650. The £1.38m figure is therefore about 3.5% of BMKFA’s annual budget.
41. Table 2 provides the summary accounts for the BMKFA pension fund.

Table 2: Summary accounts of the BMKFA pension fund, £000s

Year	Income to pension fund¹⁴	Fund expenditure¹⁵	‘Top-up grant’ from central government	Injury award payments
2006/07	3,668	4,013	345	152
2007/08	3,993	4,263	270	159
2008/09	3,849	4,555	706	164
2009/10	3,816	5,587	1,771	165
2010/11	3,928	4,989	1,061	170
2011/12	3,650	6,231	2,581	179
2012/13	3,643	5,642	1,999	191
2013/14	3,773	7,172	3,399	193
Totals:	30,320	42,452	12,132	1,380

42. As can be seen from Table 2, the DCLG has paid a total of £12.1m to the BMKFA pension fund since 1 April 2006. The total injury award payments of £1.38m are around 11.3% of the total top-up grant provided by central government since that date.
43. Table 2 also shows that each year the total injury award payments are less than the top-up grant that was required; in other words, in each year a top-up grant would have been required even if injury payments had been paid from the correct account (if it were otherwise, the potential liability to central government would be smaller than £1.38m).
44. It may be that DCLG will accept repayment over a number of years. If DCLG permit BMKFA to do so by means of equal annual instalments, that would be helpful to BMKFA.¹⁶ Table 3 sets out the size of those instalments.¹⁷

¹⁴ This include employee and employer contributions to the pension fund, but not the top-up grant from DCLG.

¹⁵ The figures on the expenditure from the fund include (a) expenditure on pension awards and (b) expenditure on injury awards, which were erroneously paid from the pension account.

¹⁶ I was provided with models for a deferred lump-sum payment of the whole amount, using the Treasury discount rate. However, I consider it unlikely that the government will permit the lump sum payment to be simply deferred; part-payment over time seems far more plausible an outcome.

Table 3: Size of annual repayment by permitted number of years of repayment

Number of years of repayment	Annual repayment (nearest pound)
1	1,380,070
2	690,035
3	460,023
4	345,017
5	276,014
6	230,012
7	197,153
8	172,509

45. The longer the period over which repayment is permitted, the better for BMKFA, because it would permit BMKFA to hold a potentially large quantity of money for a period of time. There are two reasons for this. First, it would allow for flexibility in the accounts. For example, the timings of various expenditures could be moved to minimise the impact of the repayment to DCLG. Second, BMKFA would receive interest on the money held in its bank account during the period of repayment.
46. Table 4 shows, by way of illustration, the cash sums BMKFA would hold were BMKFA permitted to pay back the capital sum over a period of eight years rather than being required to repay the sum immediately.

Table 4: Cash held by BMKFA, assuming repayment over an 8-year period

Year (assuming repayment by equal instalments over an 8-year period)	Cash held compared with immediate full repayment (nearest pound)
1	1,207,561
2	1,035,052
3	862,544
4	690,035
5	517,526
6	345,017
7	172,509
8	0

47. Clearly, the longer the timescale for repayment, the more cash BMKFA will hold in the short-term. Table 5 shows the total interest receivable on the cash held by BMKFA by the period over which BMKFA is permitted to repay the capital sum.

¹⁷ In other words, repayment by equal installments over a period of 8 years would entail 8 payments of £172,509. Repayment by equal annual installments over a period of 5 years would entail 5 payments of £276,014.

Table 5: Total interest received by BMKFA by years over which repayment is permitted

Years over which repayment is permitted	Total interest received by BMKFA (nearest £)
1	0
2	4,189
3	8,363
4	14,577
5	24,778
6	39,434
7	58,536
8	80,994

48. Table 5 shows that the interest earned by BMKFA will be relatively small unless repayment is permitted over a significant period of time. As I set out above, there may nevertheless be a benefit in respect of the timings of expenditures that minimises the impact of the repayment to DCLG.

Interest on the capital sum

49. It is currently uncertain whether the DCLG will require interest to be paid on the capital sum. The argument would be that BMKFA has held monies (and received interest on those monies) when it should not have held those monies, and DCLG has lost out by not receiving that interest. It is, however, unclear what interest rate the DCLG might demand.

50. Two scenarios have been modelled for the interest that DCLG might charge in respect of the relevant monies held by BMKFA.

51. The first model applies an interest rate of 2.5%. In that case, the total interest charged by DCLG would be £139,256.23, which would increase the total sum recoverable by DCLG from £1.38m to £1.52m.

52. The second model applies a punitive interest rate of 8.5%. In such a case, the total interest charged by DCLG would be £540,315.76, which would increase the total sum recoverable by DCLG from £1.38m to £1.92m.

53. Both models apply interest only to the sums held by BMKFA, rather than simply applying interest to the capital sum of £1.38m. That is because BMKFA did not hold the entire £1.38m sum for the whole period; the £1.38m was received in staged payments, and so interest was only earned on those payments after they were received by BMKFA. Table 6 illustrates this point by showing the calculations for the amount owing as of 30 September 2014, assuming an interest rate of 2.5% being applied throughout.

Table 6: Interest received by BMKFA on over-payments from DCLG

Date of DCLG over-payment	Sum of DCLG over-payment	Interest incurred	Cumulative balance of over-payments, plus interest owing to DCLG
31 March 2007	152,204.35	3,815.53	152,204.35
31 March 2008	158,914.09	7,873.35	314,933.97
31 March 2009	164,292.12	12,177.49	487,099.97
31 March 2010	171,054.86	16,758.29	670,311.79
31 March 2011	170,491.08	21,498.27	857,581.16
31 March 2012	178,587.75	26,441.68	1,057,667.18
31 March 2013	191,241.55	31,883.76	1,275,350.41
31 March 2014	193,283.83	18,807.86 (to 30/9/14)	1,500,518.00
30 Sept 2014			1,519,325.86

54. As stated above, it remains to be seen whether DCLG will apply interest to the sums owing.

The on-going liability

55. The on-going liability to make injury awards is in respect of 29 firefighters who received an injury award under the 1992 Pension Scheme. There were 32 firefighters in receipt of injury awards as at 1 April 2006, but three have since passed away.

56. I have been provided with three models of BMKFA's likely financial liability to pay injury awards in the future.¹⁸ Each model is, in effect, an illustration of what might happen if certain events occur. The models are comparable to weather forecasts: some are more reliable than others, but all are merely predictions. Consequently, none of the models should be relied upon completely. Table 7 summarises the predicted expenditures on injury pensions over the next five years, under the three models.

Table 7: Models of the on-going liability of BMKFA to pay for injury awards (to the nearest £)

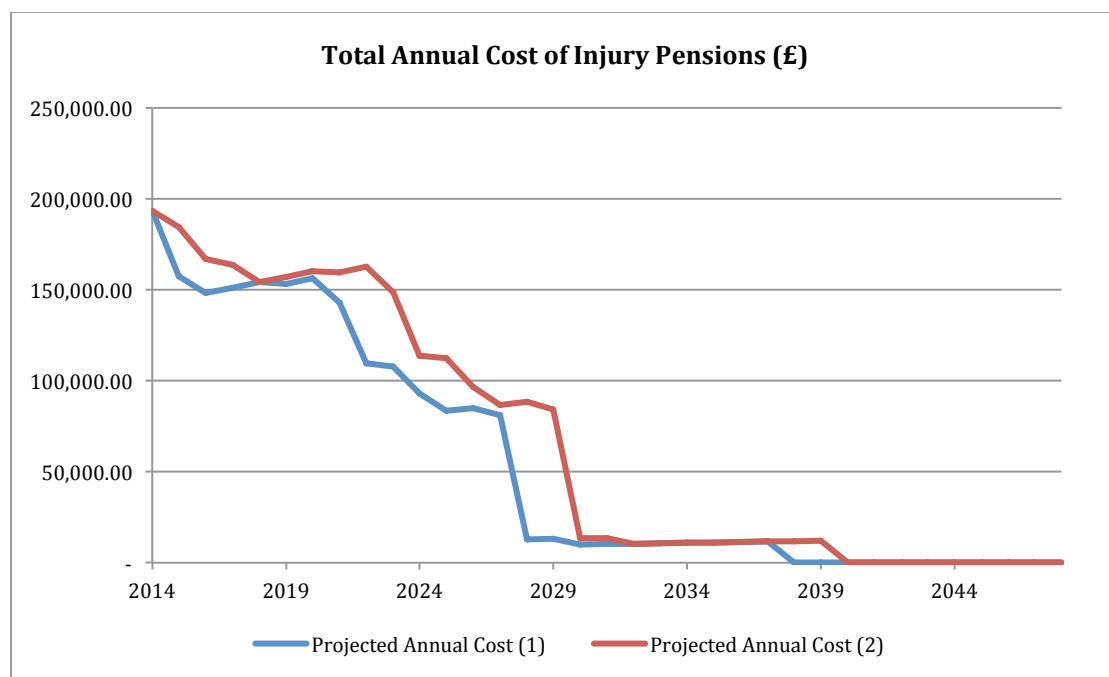
Year	Liability of BMKFA ¹⁹		
	Model (1)	Model (2)	Model (3)
2014	193,284	193,284	253,524
2015	157,408	184,542	262,458
2016	148,134	167,061	271,417
2017	151,097	163,767	280,351
2018	154,119	154,119	289,285

¹⁸ There are no other costs or liabilities other than the obligation to pay the injury awards.

¹⁹ Note that the liability rises each year as injury pensions are increased in line with inflation. However, (save under Model (3)), as servicemen pass away, the total liability falls. This is why the liability falls then rises.

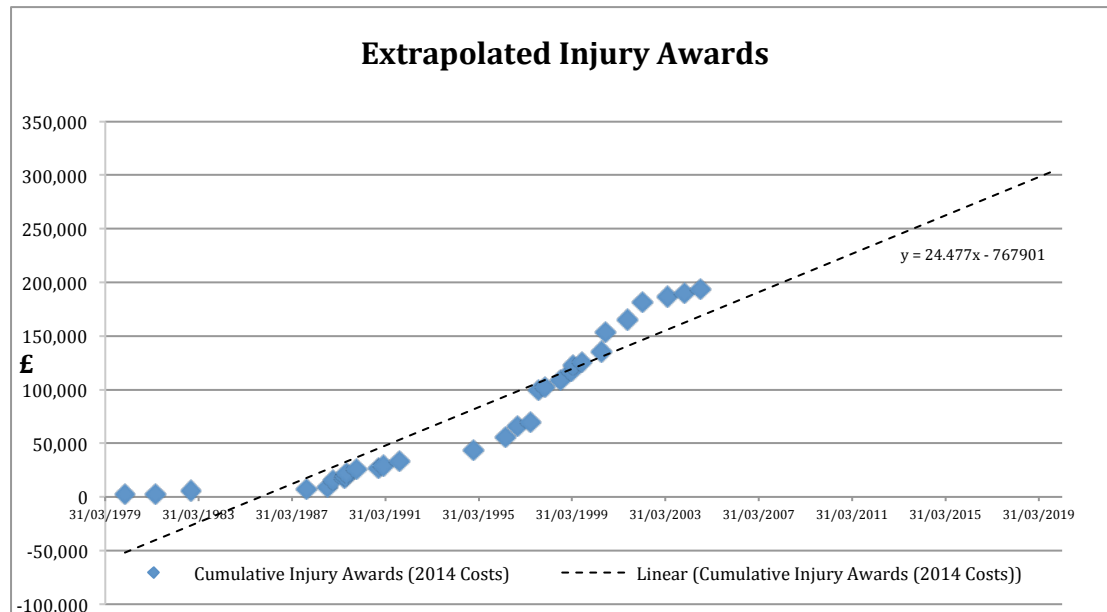
57. Model (1) and (2) are very similar. They both assume that there will be no new injury awards made to firefighters, and then use population averages of life expectancy to predict the expenditure BMKFA will face until all the firefighters currently in receipt of injury awards have passed away. The assumption that no further injury awards will be made is, of course, questionable. However, there have been no injury awards since 2004, so it seems sensible to see what might occur if that trend continues.
58. Model (3) assumes that there will be more injury awards, and specifically, that the rate of injury awards in the future will be the same as that seen during the 1980s and 1990s. Model (3) relies on local data – *i.e.* injuries at BMKFA – rather than national data as to injuries, I am told because of the difficulties in acquiring reliable national data. There are two implausible assumptions made by Model (3). The first is that none of the firefighters currently in receipt of injury pensions will die in the next five years; in reality, some of the firefighters in receipt of injury pensions are likely to, unfortunately, pass away between now and 2018. The second is that rate of injury awards seen in the 1980s and 1990s continued during the period 2004-2014, which did not in fact occur. Nevertheless, despite these fundamental problems with Model (3), it is a helpful illustration of what could have happened had the rate of injury awards seen in the 1980s and 1990s continued.
59. The expenditure predicted by Model (1) and (2) are shown on Graph 2 below. The liability for BMKFA to pay for injury pensions will run until 2037 under Model (1), and 2039 under Model (2). Model (1) assumes that the average life expectancy of the injured servicemen is 68, whereas Model (2) assumes more conservatively that the average life expectancy is 70 years of age. Both Model (1) and (2) assume that inflation will run at 2%, and so that each injury award increases at that rate each year.

Graph 2: Total annual cost of injury awards under Model (1) and (2)



60. Model (3) is shown on Graph 3 below. It shows the linear trend of the cumulative cost of injury awards at 2014 prices.

Graph 3: Total annual cost of injury awards under Model (2)



61. The likely trajectory for the actual injury award expenditure will be somewhere between Models (1)/(2) and (3). If it is correct that the reason why there have been fewer injury awards is that health and safety standards have improved, perhaps particularly at BMKFA, then Model (1)/(2) may best approximate the actual path of future expenditure. However, to the extent that the low numbers of injury awards in recent years (none since 2004) is down simply to good fortune, which may change, then the actual expenditure may to a small degree approach that of Model (3). I emphasise again, though, that Model (3) as an outcome is very unlikely given its questionable assumptions. I am told that the Authority's current expenditure on injury awards is some £65,000 less than the £253,524 predicted for 2014 by Model (3).

62. In my view a prudent budget would put aside a greater sum of money than would be required under Model (2), but only by a small amount. A sum that is 5% greater than that required under Model (2) may be appropriate, but that is a judgment that is best made by the finance team at BMKFA.

The scale and depth of the financial problem (1): introduction

63. Above, I analysed the financial problem facing BMKFA in three parts. For the purposes of considering the scale and depth of the financial problem, however, it is convenient to consider the capital sum and interest together because they are likely to be treated as a single liability. Consequently, there are two financial problems that I will consider in this section. Those two financial problems will be addressed by payments from different BMKFA accounts:

63.1. The capital sum (and any interest payable on that sum) will be met by a payment from the reserves. The relevant portion of the reserve that will be used is the ‘Revenue Contribution to Capital’ portion of reserves.

63.2. The on-going liability will be met by the operational account. It will take up a proportion of the contingency put aside for unexpected events (discussed below).

The scale and depth of the financial problem (2): the capital sum and the reserves

64. Table 8 below reproduces parts of Appendix C to BMKFA’s Medium Term Financial Plan (“**MTFP**”), dated 14 February 2014. Table 8 shows that there were total reserves of £12.8m available on 1 April 2013, and the total useable reserves was estimated to be £13.3m on 31 March 2014. The MTFP describes the level of reserves as ‘limited’, by which I understand the reserves were of a moderate level (neither dangerously small nor very substantial).

Table 8: Reserves as set out in the MTFP (£000s)

Reserve	Balance at 1 April 2013	Estimated Balance at 31 March 2014	Estimated Balance at 31 March 2015
General Fund	3,700	3,700	3,700
Fire Control Reserve	150	150	0
Invest to Save Reserve	500	500	500
Moving Forward Agenda Reserve	617	0	0
s.31 Grant – New Dimensions (USAR) Reserve	1,000	1,000	1,000
Asset Management Reserve	124	0	0
Redundancy & Early Retirement Reserve	180	320	320
Vehicle Replacement Reserve	51	69	76
Funding Pressures Reserve	2,000	717	717
Control Room Reserve	684	1,351	0
RDS Contribution Reserve	650	650	0
Continuing Projects Reserve	300	300	230
Total Revenue Reserves	9,956	8,757	6,543
Usable Capital Receipts Reserve	40	46	0
Control Room Capital Grant Unapplied	800	800	0
Other Capital Grants Unapplied	51	380	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital	1,936	3,357	3,419
Total Capital Reserves	2,827	4,583	3,419
Total Useable Reserves	12,783	13,340	9,962

65. Table 8 shows the different potential risks and expenditures that the reserves are earmarked for. The default category is the General Fund, which stood at £3.7m in 2013. However, another category of reserves, the ‘revenue contribution to capital’ (“**RCC**”) has been chosen to fund the repayment to DCLG.²⁰ RCC is the proportion of revenue income each year that is diverted to the reserves and earmarked to pay for capital projects. The RCC stood at £1.9m in April 2013.

²⁰ I gather this decision was taken at the 22 October 2014 CFA meeting.

66. I discussed at length with David Skinner, Director of Finance at BMKFA, whether it made any difference that the £1.38m payment would constitute a large proportion of the £1.9m RCC ‘pot’. I accept that it does not: the appropriate sum to consider is the total useable reserves (*i.e.* £12.8m to £13.3m). Accordingly, the £1.38m payment to DCLG will use approximately 10% of the total reserves available.
67. I was told by Mr Skinner that the payment from the reserves will not put any pressure on existing capital commitments or envisaged capital projects over the next five years. He told me that no financial plans are being amended because of the discovery of the liability to pay the capital sum, because it can be funded from the existing reserves. I accept that analysis.

The scale and depth of the financial problem (3): the on-going liability and the contingency

68. I was told by Mr Skinner that there is a contingency in the revenue budget of around £1m. The on-going liability to pay for injury awards is likely to be around £200,000 in 2014/15, and so this means that approximately 20% of the Authority’s revenue contingency will be used for the purpose of making injury award payments. The change would be a ‘permanent virement’; in other words, the revenue contingency would be permanently reduced and the monies allocated in the budget for injury awards.
69. The contingency in the revenue budget is often used for matters as pay rises (the extent of which each year is uncertain), and uncertain weather-based events such as snow, ice, flooding, and wildfire. Table 9 below summarises the extent to which the contingency has been used.

Table 9: BMKFA contingency fund budget and usage, £000s

Year	Budgeted Contingency	Transfers out of contingency
2006/07	130	130 (100%)
2007/08	63	13 (21%)
2008/09	153	27 (18%)
2009/10	295	54 (18%)
2010/11	596	18 (3%)
2011/12	576	266 (46%)
2012/13	977	614 (63%)
2013/14	1112	456 (41%)

70. Putting aside 2006/07, Table 9 shows that from 2007/08 to 2010/11 there has been relatively little use of the contingency as compared to the budgeted contingency. However, in 2011/12 to 2013/14 there has been greater use of the contingency. I was told by Mr Skinner that the greater use of the contingency was, to an extent, a deliberate policy of utilising the contingency when particular risks crystallise. For example, in 2012/13, an ICT review, and senior officer cars, were one-off costs

for which the contingency was utilised. In 2013/14, a cost relating to industrial action and certain property projects were one-off costs charged to the contingency. Overall, I consider that BMKFA has been fortunate since 2007 in its modest use of the contingency.

71. It is tempting to compare the 20% figure (that injury awards take up 20% of the budgeted contingency of £1m) with the percentages in Table 9. Compared with the percentages in Table 9, the 20% figure is not high. However, the use of the contingency shown in Table 9 has largely been in relation to one-off costs, and so those percentages are not strictly comparable to the 20% figure for injury awards. This is because the virement required to fund the injury award payments will not be a one-off cost but an on-going liability in the future. In other words, the contingency will be permanently reduced by 20% in every year going forward as a result of the virement.
72. It is, however, important to put the on-going c£200k liability in the wider context of BMKFA's financial affairs. The total budget for 2014/15 according to the current MTFP is some £28.8m, and so an on-going liability of approximately £200k constitutes about 0.7% of that total budget. Whilst hardly a small sum in absolute terms, the on-going liability is a small sum compared to the overall annual budget.

The scale and depth of the financial problem (4): conclusion

73. Overall, in my view, the discovery of the financial problem relating to injury awards has somewhat reduced what was previously a substantial financial cushion held by BMKFA. Mr Skinner agreed that were a financial problem of a similar magnitude discovered, then certain financial plans would have to change, at least as regards their timing. For example, future savings plans might have to be brought forward, or BMKFA might have to borrow to finance aspects of the capital programme, or other make changes. However, Mr Skinner emphasised to me that, were a similar problem discovered, the financial situation is nevertheless sufficiently positive that no additional savings plans would have to be put in place.
74. Consequently, I consider that a fair summary of the scale and depth of the financial problem relating to injury awards is that it is a moderate financial problem that somewhat reduces the financial resilience of BMKFA over the medium term. It is not, however, a significant problem with serious short-term consequences, as may be the case in other Authorities.

An analysis of the opportunities to uncover this issue that might have been missed and whether due to managerial actions, controls, practices and/or processes and the role and adequacy of internal and external audit.

Other relevant issues relating to the on-going service related injury payments.

75. These headings of my terms of reference will be addressed by my final report. I have under consideration a range of potential opportunities to uncover the issue. I am also considering a number of recommendations in relation to managerial practices / processes. I will set out my analysis of those opportunities and those managerial practices / processes in my final report.
76. I also take this opportunity to outline the work that I have undertaken on the investigation so far. The individuals that I have spoken either by email or in person include:
- 76.1. Ali Chart, Health and Safety Manager, BMKFA;
 - 76.2. Andy Hickmott, formerly Director of Human Resources at BMKFA;
 - 76.3. Anthony Mooney, DCLG;
 - 76.4. Carol Culling, Employee Services and Payroll Manager, BMKFA;
 - 76.5. Cynthia Changer, formerly Director of Finance at BMKFA;
 - 76.6. David Aldous, Audit Commission;
 - 76.7. David Greensmith, Director of Finance at Staffordshire FRA;
 - 76.8. David Skinner, Director of Finance at BMKFA;
 - 76.9. Faye Mansfield, Human Resources, BMKFA;
 - 76.10. Gerry Barry, Governance and Compliance Manager, BMKFA;
 - 76.11. Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance, BMKFA;
 - 76.12. Ian Dyson, Head of Internal Audit, BMKFA;
 - 76.13. Jacqui May, former Head of Finance, BMKFA;
 - 76.14. Jason Thelwell, Chief Operating Officer, BMKFA;
 - 76.15. Julie Edwards, Pensions Team, Buckinghamshire County Council;
 - 76.16. Kieron Timmins, Fire Finance Network;
 - 76.17. Lynne Swift, Director of Human Resources at BMKFA;
 - 76.18. Mark Ridder, Employee Relations Manager at BMKFA; and,
 - 76.19. Mick West, External Auditor, Ernst & Young.
77. In the course of my investigation I have considered more than 1,500 pages of evidence, and undertaken a review of BMKFA's electronic records of emails and other documents that are relevant to the investigation. I have concentrated particularly on the 2006/07 period in which the new financial arrangements were implemented, in relation to which I will make findings in my final report.
78. The next stages of the investigation entail the production of a draft final report, and then I will permit certain of the witnesses set out above an opportunity to comment on relevant parts of my findings. Once that process is completed, I will present my final report.

2 December 2014

Thomas Ogg
11KBW

11 King's Bench Walk
Temple, London
EC4Y 7EQ



Appendix 2

Anthony Mooney
DCLG
Workforce, Pay and Pensions
Firefighters' Pension Scheme

Our ref: DS/JV/061014
Contact: Dave Skinner
Direct line: 01296 744671
Date: 06 October 2014
E-mail: dskinner@bucksfire.gov.uk

Dear Anthony,

As you may be aware, this Authority, has been obligated to ensure there is a provision within our accounts for 2013/14 for the treatment of injury awards charged to the pension fund since 1 April 2006.

This has caused some problematical issues for the final sign off of our accounts with the Audit Director taking a view that he cannot do so until he has an assurance that there is statutory authority enabling the Authority to make such a payment.

I would be grateful, if it is your assertion that money is due from my Authority to the DCLG, for the legal basis on which you rely for that assertion.

Please could you also provide me with an overview on how many other fire authorities are affected by this and the full extent of the sum involved nationally or at least your best estimate. This would help put the matter in some context with both our Members and senior officers.

Also, given the information supplied to you by e-mail on 27th August 2014 by our Head of Finance and her subsequent discussion regarding possible interest, are you in a position to set out what is now expected of the Authority in respect of a possible repayment, i.e. do you have any plans to verify the calculations made for this Authority, are you proposing to subsequently bill the Authority and whether interest is chargeable (and if so at what rate) and what the repayment terms may be in which case our accounting treatment might perhaps differ. If you could confirm what you feel are the next steps in the process I would be grateful. Please provide the legal authority for your opinions as to the quantum for the principal sum and for any interest.

Anecdotally I am aware that differing approaches are being taken by affected fire and rescue authorities; and there may not be a consistency either in accounting treatment or the approach by auditors; nor by the DCLG in this respect.

I look forward to your earliest response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Skinner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Dave Skinner
Director of Finance and Assets & Treasurer



Appendix 3

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Communities and
Local Government
Eland House,
Bressenden Place,
London SW1E 5DU

Our ref: JTEA 32-14
Enquiries to: Elizabeth Andrews
Ext no: 134
Direct line: 01296 744434
Date: 18th November 2014
E-mail: eandrews@bucksfire.gov.uk

Dear Minister,

As I am sure you are aware this Authority has been in dialogue with your department since July concerning the issue around the injury compensation scheme arrangement for firefighters and the potential overpayment since April 2006. We contacted Andrew Cornelius on the 27th October and we are still awaiting confirmation from the Department for Communities and Local Government as we had requested for the legal basis for the potential overpayment and the next steps in relation to any potential repayment schedule or if interest will be charged.

Our auditor from Ernst & Young will not sign off the accounts for 2013/14 until the basis for DCLG's claim and its intentions are confirmed by the DCLG. This delay in responding is causing the Authority some concern and I would request that a decision is made as soon as possible or the timing of any decision be communicated to allow this Authority to resolve the matter.

Attached is the letter sent on 6th October with additional correspondence via email on 20th October with Neil O'Connor and Andrew Cornelius on 27th October.

I look forward to your earliest response.

Yours sincerely,

Jason Thelwell
Chief Operating Officer
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service

Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive: Mark Jones
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
Brigade Headquarters, Stocklake, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1BD
Tel: 01296 744434 Fax: 01296 744419



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11 King's Bench Walk
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London
EC4Y 7EQ

Your ref:
Enquiries to: Graham Britten
Ext no:
Direct line: 01296 744441
Fax no: 01296 744419
Date: 15 September 2014
E-mail: gbritten@bucksfire.gov.uk

Attn: **Thomas Ogg**

Dear Tom

**FIREFIGHTERS' COMPENSATION SCHEME (ENGLAND) ORDER 2006 AND THE
FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEME (AMENDMENT) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2006**

LIABILITY FOR INJURY COMPENSATION PAYMENTS FROM REVENUE ACCOUNT

I am writing to you in my capacity as Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority's monitoring officer appointed under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Sometime before 10 July 2014, BMKFA became aware that since 2006 it had been erroneously making compensation payments for "service related injury" to former employees from BMKFA's Firefighters' Pension Fund, rather than from BMKFA's operating account. Consequently, it seems likely that BMKFA Executive Committee will be required to authorise a virement of a large one-off payment from BMKFA revenue to capital reserves.

I have commissioned you to investigate, as my agent, and report to me in relation to the matter in order that I can ascertain:

- A clear account of how these events transpired.
- An account of what happened in other combined fire and rescue authorities and other fire and rescue authorities
- Details of the scale and depth of the financial problem and an informed account of what the Authority's liabilities and future costs might be.

- An analysis of the opportunities to uncover this issue that might have been missed and whether due to managerial actions, controls, practices and/or processes and the role and adequacy of internal and external audit.
- Other relevant issues relating to the on-going service related injury payments.

Your final report should include recommendations as well as findings.

In order to assist you I shall procure that all documents and information that you deem relevant to the investigation are made available to you, and shall procure that BMKFA employees and BMKFA auditors are made available where required as interviewees or assistants.

The scope of the investigation will require a comparison exercise with other fire and rescue authorities; and will therefore to some extent be dependent on their responsiveness and cooperation. It will also require interaction and liaison with third parties such as auditors and DCLG; and may require the opportunity for certain parties to comment on your findings and recommendations whilst the report is in draft, and for these to be taken into account by you before you issue your final report.

Depending on your findings and recommendations, you may be required to present your final report at a meeting of members; and/or to assist me in making any report, if needed, in my role of monitoring officer in accordance with subsections 5(3) and (5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

In the absence of the Chairman calling an extraordinary meeting (which would not be optimum), full Authority meetings are scheduled as follows: Wednesday 22 October 2014, and 17 December 2014.

Taking into account the foregoing dependencies you should aim to have your report completed and returned to me before 21 November 2014, in order to report in December.

Yours faithfully



Graham Britten
Director of Legal and Governance

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	17 December 2014
OFFICER	David Skinner, Director of Finance & Assets
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Andy Dransfield
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Interpreting the Accounts – Key Financial Ratios
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>In 2009, the Audit Commission highlighted financial reporting as an important tool to promote the accountability of public bodies for their spending decisions. A number of financial ratios were identified that help put aspects of local government finances, such as income, assets, debt and reserves, into context. These ratios could then be used by senior managers, elected Members and taxpayers to scrutinise and challenge financial management decisions based on the data in their accounts. The key financial ratios identified were;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Current assets to current liabilities (ii) Usable reserves to gross revenue (iii) Long-term borrowing to tax revenue (iv) Long-term borrowing to long-term assets <p>The report at Appendix A details how these ratios can be used to examine financial performance. The report calculates the 2012/13 and 2013/14 ratios for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) and compares the results with our constituent councils and districts; Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC), Milton Keynes Council (MK), Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC), Chiltern District Council (CDC), South Bucks District Council (SBDC) and Wycombe District Council (WDC).</p> <p>The initial analysis shows that the Authority is currently in a strong financial position. The Authority has already taken action to strengthen its position further, by ensuring that no additional borrowing is required to fund the ongoing capital programme. The ratios will strengthen as long-term borrowing is repaid in line with the maturity profile (there is currently no incentive to repay borrowing early due to the substantial early repayment premiums that would be incurred).</p> <p>Further work will be carried out to compare the ratios</p>

	for BMKFA against all other combined fire authorities and reported to the Fire Authority in February 2015 as part of the budget and medium term financial plan papers.
ACTION	Information.
RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that the report be noted.
RISK MANAGEMENT	Management of our financial resources is a key risk to the Authority. The use of ratio analysis to monitor performance can be used to inform Members of the main financial risks facing the Authority.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	No direct impact.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	No direct impact.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	No direct impact.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	No direct impact.
USE OF RESOURCES	Ratio analysis can be used to interpret our financial performance and support accountability of resources required to deliver the objectives of the Authority.
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	Interpreting the accounts – A review of local government financial ratios 2007/08 to 2012/13 [Audit Commission, September 2014] http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FR-briefing-final-22-Sept-2014.pdf
APPENDICES	Appendix A – Key Financial Ratios
TIME REQUIRED	10 minutes.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Graham Young gyoung@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744429

Appendix A – Key Financial Ratios

This appendix examines each of the key financial ratios in turn.

(i) Current assets to current liabilities

This ratio measures the relationship between an organisation’s current assets and its current liabilities. While it is commonly used to examine whether organisations are able to pay their debts in the short term, this is unlikely to be a significant risk for local government organisations given their ability to take short-term borrowing (though there may be additional costs to organisations that rely on short-term borrowing to pay debts). It does, however, act as an indicator of how short-term finances are managed and highlight possible future cash-flow problems. If a local government organisation did experience cash-flow difficulties which resulted in, for example, problems paying creditors this could present a significant reputational risk to the organisation. Conversely, authorities with a high ratio, over 4.0, should possibly consider if they are managing their current assets in the most effective way.

Current assets include cash and cash equivalents, payments in advance, debtors, short-term investments, inventories, assets held for sale and current intangible assets.

Current liabilities include bank overdrafts, receipts in advance, creditors, short-term borrowing, provisions, liabilities held by groups awaiting disposal and other short-term liabilities (e.g. current finance lease liabilities).

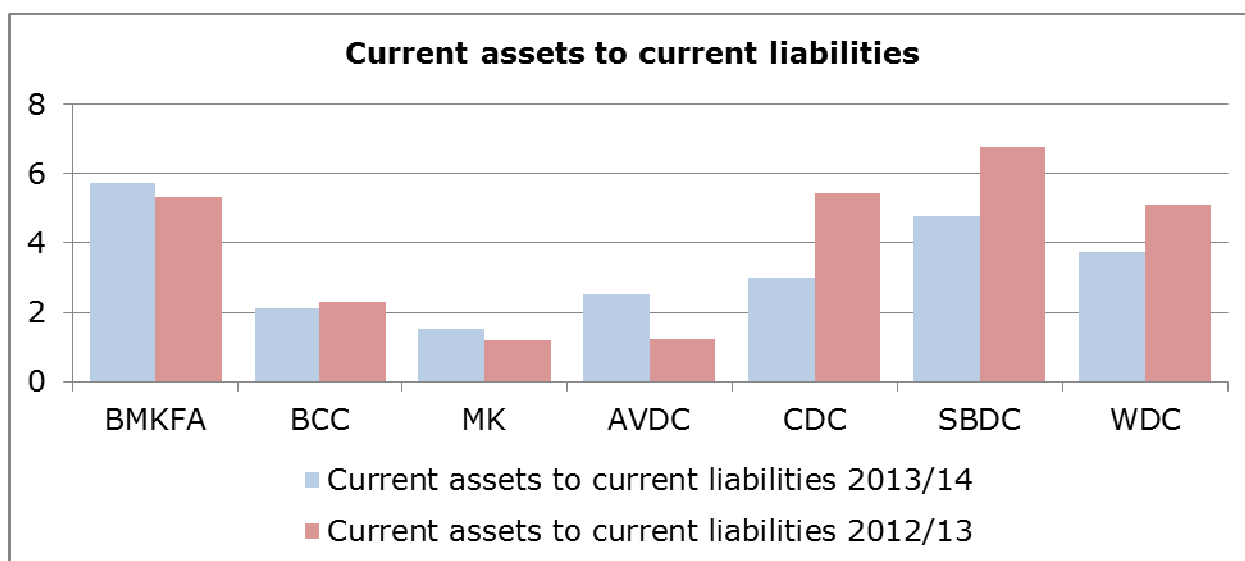


Chart 1

Chart 1 above shows that all the organisations have a ratio over 1.0 in both 2013/14 and 2012/13. This indicates that they have a higher level of current assets than current liabilities and are therefore managing their current assets effectively. BMKFA has the highest figure in 2013/14 with a ratio of 5.7. This high ratio is due to the number of short-term investments currently held in order to manage liquidity. This figure will reduce as cash is used to repay long-term borrowing in future years.

(ii) Usable reserves to gross revenue expenditure

This ratio measures the relationship between an organisation’s usable reserves, which is the money it is retaining to fund future spending commitments and to meet unpredictable variations in spending, and its annual gross revenue expenditure. Organisations make local decisions on the amount of reserves they need in response to their local circumstances. Elected Members are responsible for ensuring that the levels of reserves are appropriate and the purposes for holding these reserves should be clearly communicated through the annual accounts. Authorities with very high levels of reserves relative to their spending should review the purposes for which these are held to ensure that they are still required.

Usable reserves include the General Fund, other earmarked reserves and usable capital receipts.

Gross revenue expenditure is the total cost of services shown in the comprehensive income and expenditure statement within the accounts.

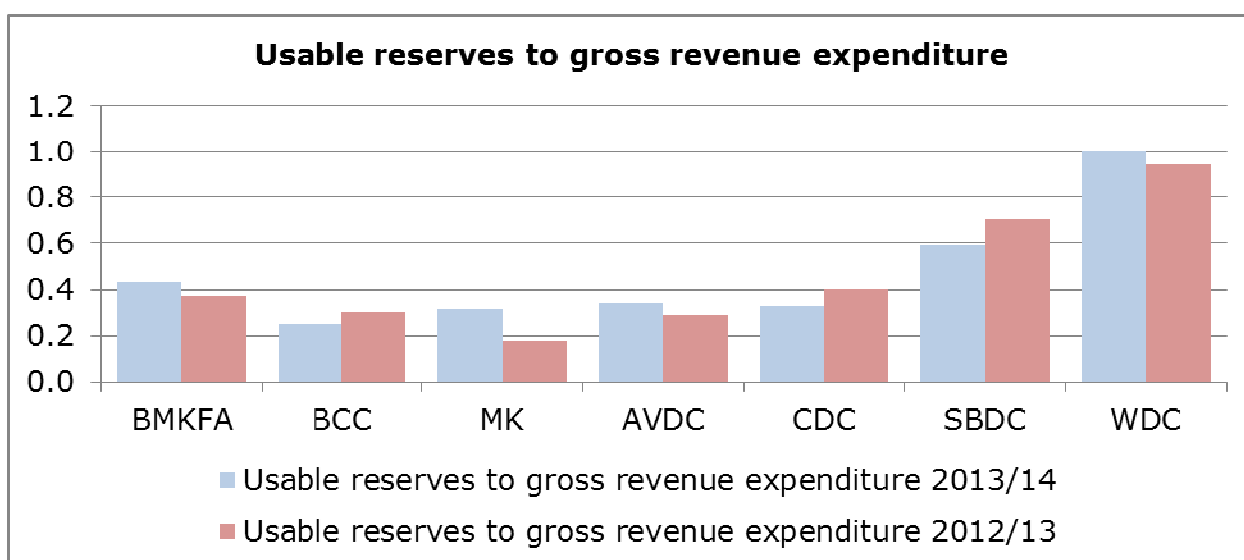


Chart 2

The usable reserves to gross expenditure ratios are shown in Chart 2. The reason for a high ratio here is generally as a consequence of a reduction in spending as organisations change the way they deliver services at lower cost, combined with increasing levels of reserves being held due to the uncertainty of future funding levels. The graph indicates that BMKFA are holding reserves of approximately 40% of gross revenue expenditure, which whilst fairly high, is in line with most of the other authorities. WDC have the highest ratio in both 2012/13 and 2013/14, with a ratio over 1.0 in the latter year, indicating that they currently hold in reserves more than 100% of their revenue spending.

(iii) Long-term borrowing to tax revenue

This ratio measures the relationship between an organisation’s long-term borrowing and its tax revenue. When interpreting this ratio, consideration should be given to the reasons for long-term borrowing. Local government organisations enter into long-term borrowing to finance large-scale investment in the buildings and equipment they need to deliver services. Organisations need to ensure that their medium-term financial strategies take sufficient account of the level of debt repayments to minimise any impact these may have on future spending plans. Currently interest rates are at a historically low level, making borrowing more affordable, however, with interest rates set to rise in the years ahead, future borrowing will become more expensive.

Long-term borrowing includes long-term loans, long-term liabilities relating to Private Finance Initiatives and finance lease liabilities.

Tax revenue includes the revenue support grant, Council Tax income and business rates income (non-domestic rates).

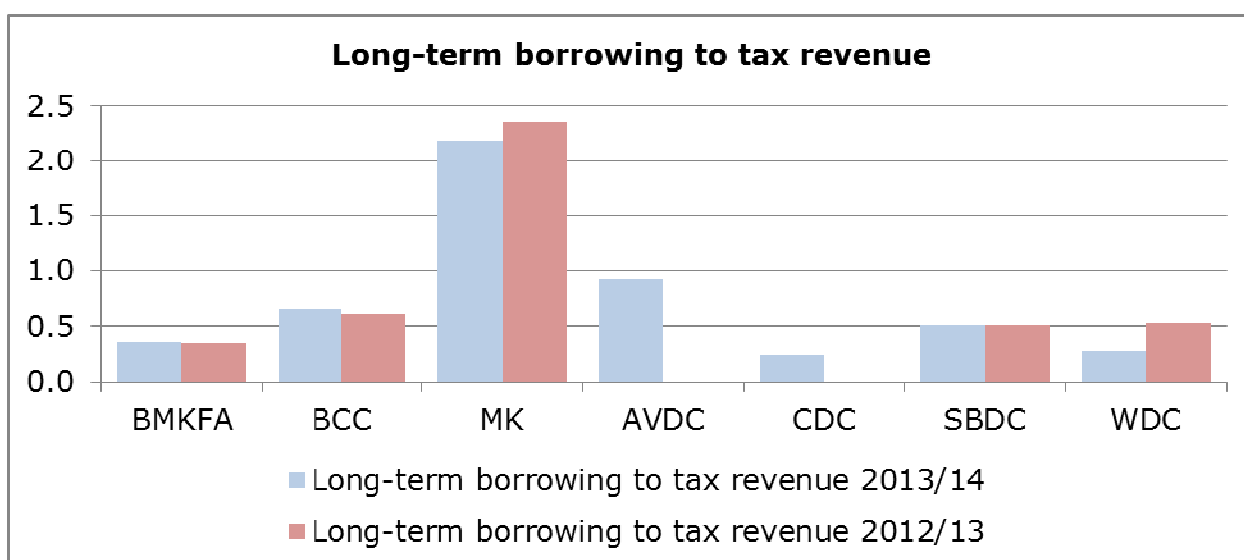


Chart 3

Chart 3 shows the long-term borrowing compared with tax revenues. The comparison below shows that BMKFA has a fairly low reliance on long-term borrowing with outstanding borrowing at approximately a third of tax revenue. This is primarily because in recent years the capital programme has been funded from capital grant and contributions from revenue. MK has the highest long-term borrowing when compared with tax revenues with over £400m in long-term debt in 2013/14 in respect of the funding of capital projects. Both AVDC and CDC had no long-term borrowings in 2012/13.

(iv) Long-term borrowing to long-term assets

This ratio measures the relationship between an organisation’s long-term borrowing and long-term assets. This ratio provides insight into what borrowing has funded and the potential need for future borrowing to finance investment in delivering services. Once again, interpretation of this ratio requires consideration of the historical reasons for long-term borrowing. The amount that organisations need to borrow to finance their long-term capital investment plans will be influenced by their ability to raise funds from the sale of existing long-term assets.

Long-term borrowing includes long-term loans, long-term liabilities relating to Private Finance Initiatives and finance lease liabilities.

Long-term assets includes property, plant and equipment, heritage assets, investment property, intangible assets (e.g. computer software), assets under construction, long-term investments and long-term debtors.

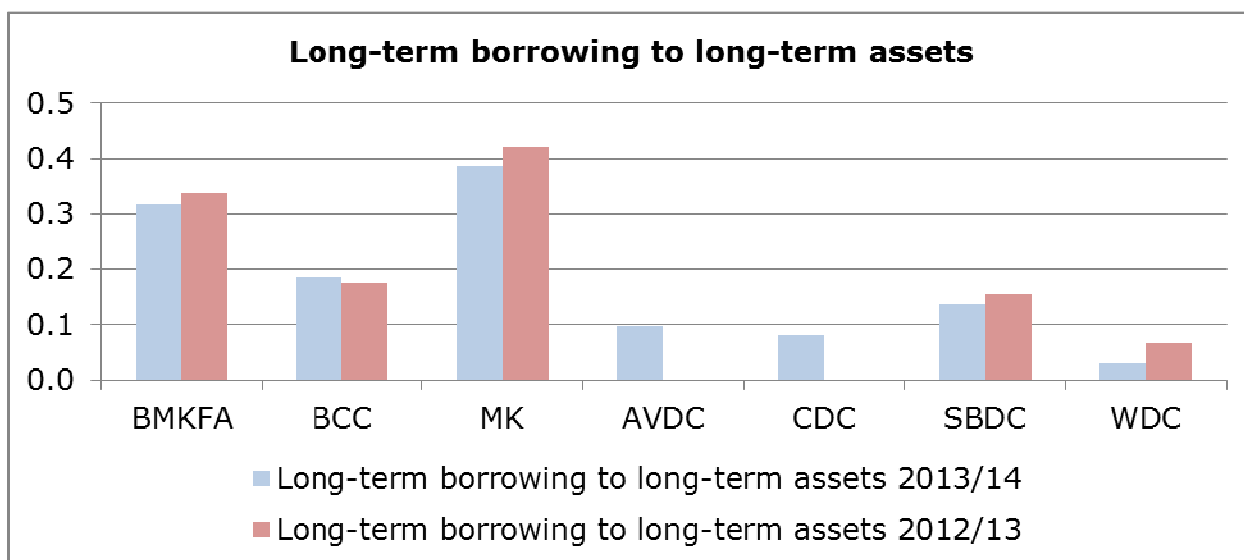


Chart 4

Chart 4 indicates how much outstanding borrowing each Authority has compared with their long-term assets. Currently BMKFA has outstanding borrowing equivalent to approximately a third of the value of its long-term assets. The Authority has no current plans to borrow further, instead funding future capital expenditure through revenue contributions. MK is shown as having the highest level of borrowing compared with long-term assets, again due to its high level of outstanding debt. Both AVDC and CDC had no long-term borrowings in 2012/13.



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	17 December 2014
OFFICER	Greg Smith, Head of Service Development
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Andy Dransfield
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Programme
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>At its meeting on 22 October 2014 the Authority noted the progress of the TVFCS programme. The stated 'cut over' go-live date was given as 10 December 2014.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to update the Authority that the 'cut over' go-live date has now moved to a potential revised date at the end of March 2015.</p> <p>This delay is due fundamentally to the on-going inability of British Telecom (BT) and its contractors to deliver the network and associated telephony. This has impacted on other major areas of the programme, such as acceptance testing of the mobilising system, which has resulted in Capita Fortek having to reschedule their work-plan.</p>
ACTION	Information.
RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that the report be noted.
RISK MANAGEMENT	<p>Options are being considered to ensure that effective call handling and mobilisation arrangements are maintained within the Service and that a resilient Control Room function is preserved leading up to the new 'cut over' date.</p> <p>A revised cut over date will be formalised as soon as possible. However, this is dependent on the delivery of the network and associated telephony to ensure all systems operate effectively.</p> <p>Consideration is being given to the impact on our Control Room staff with this delay. The settlement agreements previously discussed with staff (retaining their services until 31/01/15) are being reviewed as one option as well as resourcing the Control Room with an alternative staffing model. Further options being discussed include resources from elsewhere within the organisation to assist with both maintaining the call handling function and achieving the</p>

	<p>deliverables that are not impacted upon by the technical delay.</p> <p>A review is being undertaken for those staff who expressed their wish to transfer across to the TVFCS.</p> <p>Work continues to ensure those deliverables of the programme that are not directly affected by the lack of infrastructure are completed at the earliest opportunity.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>It is estimated that delays to the project will cost the Authority circa £76K a month in staff salaries and on-costs.</p>
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>The basis of the collaboration in establishing the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) was set out in a Programme Partnering Agreement (PPA) between Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) dated 14 September 2012 and a further agreement between OCC and RBFA on the one part and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) on the other part dated 22 March 2013. The TVFCS has been established by the fire and rescue authorities in order to fulfil the statutory responsibilities placed on them by sections 7(2)(c); 8(2)(c); and 9(3)(c) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.</p>
HEALTH AND SAFETY	<p>It was identified in the last update paper regarding this Programme that additional shifts provided by remaining Control Room staff may have a negative impact. It is pleasing to report that, to date, shifts continue to be covered and that sickness levels continue to remain very low.</p> <p>It should be noted however, that this delay is likely to have an impact on staff morale and as a result, their on-going health, safety and welfare will be monitored regularly.</p>
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	<p>An initial Person Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the initial Fire Control project plan.</p>
USE OF RESOURCES	<p>The core delivery team still consists of two officers; however this has been temporarily enhanced by a further resource who has been tasked with the development and delivery of programme awareness and training to all affected BFRS personnel.</p> <p>All operational staff will be undertaking a training programme through an e-learning platform. Flexible duty officers are taking part in joint officer training with Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire officers related to the TVFCS.</p>

<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>Fire Authority Extraordinary Meeting – Fire Control Report - 31 October 2012.</p> <p>Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2012.</p> <p>http://10.0.99.2/NR/ronlyres/0A2255BE-5D72-40AB-A89D-9D1383B1454E/0/FireAuthority19December2012.pdf</p> <p>Fire Authority Meeting – Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Programme – 18 December 2013.</p> <p>Fire Authority Meeting – Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Programme – 22 October 2014.</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>TIME REQUIRED</p>	<p>20 minutes.</p>
<p>REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT</p>	<p>Greg Smith gsmith@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744400</p>

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	17 December 2014
OFFICER	Julian Parsons, Head of Service Delivery
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Catriona Morris
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Protection Policy
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>In the Autumn Statement 2012 HM Government announced that it would introduce a package of measures to improve the way regulation is delivered at the frontline such as; the Focus on Enforcement review of appeals, the proposed Non-economic Regulators: Duty to Have Regard to Growth, and the Accountability for Regulator Impact measures.</p> <p>The previous Regulators' Compliance Code was clarified in a shorter and accessible format and has statutory effect as of 6 April 2014.</p> <p>The Protection Policy has been reviewed and amended to take into account Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority's (BMKFA) requirement under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, to enforce the provisions of the Order and to do so in accordance with the recently published Regulators' Code.</p> <p>The Policy is also designed to reinforce BMKFA's strategy of encouraging and supporting business development through education and information coupled with light touch enforcement when necessary.</p>
ACTION	Decision.
RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that the Protection Policy be approved.
RISK MANAGEMENT	Compliance with the Regulators' Code protects the Authority by ensuring that it is enforcing the provisions of the Fire Safety Order.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	Continued training costs of Protection Inspecting Officers and managers under section 2.1 (iii) in line with the Protection Training Strategy covering legal and regulatory requirements. This ensures that the Service can demonstrate that it operates in a consistent approach based on nationally recognised

	qualifications.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	The Regulators' Code was laid before Parliament in accordance with section 23 of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 ("the Act"). Regulators whose functions are specified by order under section 24(2) of the Act must have regard to the Code when developing policies and operational procedures that guide their regulatory activities. Regulators must equally have regard to the Code when setting standards or giving guidance which will guide the regulatory activities of other regulators. □
HEALTH AND SAFETY	No implications envisaged.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	No implications envisaged with regard to the new policy.
USE OF RESOURCES	The work on updating this policy to date has been from existing resources from Service Delivery. Communications of the policy will also be managed from within existing resources in liaison with the communications team. Once approved the policy will be published on the BMKFA website in accordance with the Regulators' Code.
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	The Regulators' Code (2014) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/300126/14-705-regulators-code.pdf
APPENDICES	Appendix A - Protection Policy 80-01-001 Appendix B - Protection Strategy 2014/15-2019/20
TIME REQUIRED	5 minutes.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	GM Neil Boustred nboustred@bucksfire.gov.uk 07768 367 484



Information Asset Owner:	Head of Service Delivery
Protective Marking:	Not protectively marked
Page :	1 of 5

Policy Note: **80-01-001****Protection Policy**

To:	Document Type:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Document Summary:
All employees	Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This document outlines how Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority (hereafter known as the Authority) will go about its regulatory duties in supporting and enforcing business compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (hereafter known as the Order).
	Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Guidance Note	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Technical Note	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Information	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Safety Critical	<input type="checkbox"/>	


Keyword: Protection, Fire Safety, Regulators Code, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Please note that as Documents are frequently updated, if you print a document, its accuracy cannot be guaranteed, always check for latest version.

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Version:	Final	Status of document:	Draft
Author:	Protection Manager	PIA:	N/A
Issue Date:	To be arranged	Review Date:	To be arranged
File Name	BFRS to be arranged		

	Information Asset Owner:	Head of Service Delivery
	Protective Marking:	Not protectively marked
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1 Policy statement

1.1 Policy Aim

The principal aim of the Authority is to make Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes the safest places in England to live, work and travel. Securing compliance with regulatory fire safety requirements is an important part of achieving this aim.

1.2 Statutory Requirements

The Authority is required to enforce the provisions of the Order and any regulations made under it in relation to premises for which it is the enforcing Authority. In performing this duty, the Authority must have regard to such guidance as the Secretary of State may give it.

1.3 Guidance


It is the Authority's policy to support regulated entities to understand and meet regulatory requirements more easily and respond proportionately to regulatory breaches. In order to achieve this, the Authority will use guidance provided by the Secretary of State, and other statutory and non-statutory codes, such as the Regulators' Code and Enforcement Management Model.

2 Principles

2.1 The Authority will carry out its activities in a way that supports those we regulate to comply and grow by:

- i. Developing procedures and practices which will support compliant businesses to grow.
- ii. Avoiding imposition of unnecessary regulatory burden on businesses we regulate and adapt our approach to be proportionate with business size, capacity etc.

Version:	Final	Status of document:	Draft
Author:	Protection Manager	PIA:	N/A
Issue Date:	To be arranged	Review Date:	To be arranged
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	Information Asset Owner:	Head of Service Delivery
	Protective Marking:	Not protectively marked
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- iii. Having Officers with the necessary knowledge and skills in relevant areas in order to support the businesses we regulate.

2.2 The Authority will provide simple and straightforward ways to engage with those it regulates and hear their views by:

- i. Having mechanisms in place to encourage communication with those it regulates, especially whilst responding to non-compliance so as to ensure that advice, actions taken and decisions made are clearly explained.
- ii. Providing an impartial and clearly explained route of appeal against regulatory decisions, ensuring that the appeal is considered by a separate Officer to that which made the initial enforcement.
- iii. Providing explanation in writing to any relevant parties on their rights to representation or appeal in plain language.
- iv. Providing a publicly available complaints procedure for those it regulates.
- v. Seeking regular feedback from those it regulates.


2.3 The Authority will base its regulatory activities on risk by:

- i. Adopting an evidence-based approach to determining and prioritising risks in its area and allocating resources accordingly.
- ii. Regularly reviewing our chosen risk assessment framework to ensure our regulatory approach remains current in response to risk.
- iii. Taking account of compliance record, risks posed by non-compliance and other relevant factors when planning regulatory activity and, where necessary, enforcement action.

2.4 The Authority will share information about compliance and risk by:

- i. Maintaining regular contact with other regulators in order to follow the 'collect once, use many times' principle.
- ii. Utilising secure mechanisms to share information about businesses and other bodies it regulates, to help target resources and minimise duplication.

Version:	Final	Status of document:	Draft
Author:	Protection Manager	PIA:	N/A
Issue Date:	To be arranged	Review Date:	To be arranged
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	Information Asset Owner:	Head of Service Delivery
	Protective Marking:	Not protectively marked
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2.5 The Authority will ensure clear information and guidance is available to help those it regulates meet their responsibilities to comply by:

- i. Ensuring that all information and guidance is in plain language, accessible and in the appropriate media for those it targets and seeking feedback on its effectiveness.
- ii. Clearly distinguishing between legal requirement and suggested good practice. Where good practice is suggested it should be achievable and not pose a burden in itself to the recipient.
- iii. Promoting an environment in which those it regulates have confidence in the guidance offered and feel able to seek advice without fear of enforcement action. When responding to such requests, its advice will be checked as reliable and aimed at supporting compliance.
- iv. Entering into collaborative schemes in order to offer consistent advice and work towards consistency.

2.6 The Authority will ensure that its approach to regulatory activities is transparent by:

- i. Publishing clear, up-to-date standards on its website, setting out what those it regulates can expect in terms of:
 - a. Contact details and communications.
 - b. Information and guidance.
 - c. Practice in relation to checks on compliance, risk assessment and conduct.
 - d. Enforcement policy.
 - e. Fees and charges, where applicable.
 - f. Ways to comment or complain about service or appeal against decisions.
- ii. Ensuring mechanisms are in place to ensure a consistent standard is set by all officers in following agreed policies and procedures.
- iii. Publishing regular updates on its performance against agreed standards, including feedback, complaints & compliments, as well as outcomes of enforcement actions.

Version:	Final	Status of document:	Draft
Author:	Protection Manager	PIA:	N/A
Issue Date:	To be arranged	Review Date:	To be arranged
File Name	BFRS to be arranged		


Information Asset Owner:

Head of Service Delivery

Protective Marking:

Not protectively marked

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Policy Note: **80-01-001****Protection Policy**

3. Document Control

Title: Protection Policy

Version	Date	Author	Role	Status	Changes
0.1	28/3/14	SM Wilson	Protection Manager – MK	Draft	N/A
0.2	23/4/14	WM Pennick	WM – Protection Policy	Draft	To align with Reg. code & Enforcement Con.
0.3	30/4/14	WM Pennick	WM – Protection Policy	Draft	To align solely with Reg. code
0.4	6/5/14	WM Pennick	WM – Protection Policy	Draft	Formatting
Final	22/5/14	GM Boustred	GM – Prevention & Protection Policy	Draft	Content check and minor changes

Version:	Final	Status of document:	Draft
Author:	Protection Manager	PIA:	N/A
Issue Date:	To be arranged	Review Date:	To be arranged
File Name	BFRS to be arranged		



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority
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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE & MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY

PROTECTION STRATEGY 2014/15 TO 2019/20

PROTECTION STRATEGY

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Our Vision

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

To achieve this vision we will engage in activities and partnerships that will contribute to community well-being and promote better levels of safety by:

Prevention - Providing education on how to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Protection - Enforcing, advocating and campaigning for high standards of safety.

Response - Where risk levels remain intolerable, despite our efforts to educate, engineer and eliminate them, providing appropriate high quality response services.

Our Protection Strategy directly underpins our Service's Corporate Plan. It provides a clear plan, for our own staff, our partners and the community to show how we are contributing towards making the communities we serve safer.

The Fire and Rescue Service has a role to fulfil across a broad safety agenda. This requires us to continually improve our prevention, protection, intervention and education activities; making them appropriate, meaningful and accessible to our diverse community.

We will help people take responsibility for their own safety, identify risks and put effective control measures in place to prevent any potential harm, loss or damage.

This strategy has been written to reflect CFOA's over-arching Protection publications and provides strategic guidance for the Service over the next two years. This is reflected in the Service's Protection Strategic Aim and Priorities:

AIM

"We will ensure that our public buildings and workplaces are protected from risk of fire by promoting ways of making all types of property safer, proactively targeting premises most at risk, and where necessary enforcing fire safety legislation."

PRIORITIES

1. To support and maintain a risk based inspection programme to enforce fire safety legislation, targeting premises that pose the greatest risk to life.
2. To provide education and advice to promote a better understanding of how fire protection measures can reduce the impact of fire on life safety, the environment and economy.
3. To promote the use of fire suppression systems, sprinklers and fixed installations in non-domestic properties to reduce the risk to life, property, the economy and environment from fire.

Our Protection Strategy outlines the key areas of focus that Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service will undertake in the period between April 2014 and March 2017. It brings together our overarching ethos of engagement, education and supporting business to achieve compliance with fire safety law whilst also demonstrating a consistent approach to providing advice, enforcement and sanctions; supporting economic and business growth. It also expands on our Protection policy statement:

"The principal aim of the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority (hereafter known as 'The Authority') is to make Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes the safest places in England to live, work and travel. Securing compliance with regulatory fire safety requirements is an important part of achieving this aim.

The Authority is required under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (hereafter known as 'The Order') to enforce the provisions of the Order and any regulations made under it, in relation to premises for which it is the enforcing Authority. In performing this duty, the Authority must have regard to such guidance as the Secretary of State may give it.

In accordance with such guidance provided by the Secretary of State, and other statutory and non-statutory codes, such as the Regulators' Code, it is the Authority's policy to help and encourage regulated entities to understand and meet regulatory requirements more easily and respond proportionately to regulatory breaches."

There is a strong link between our Prevention and Protection methodologies. We will use accurate, informed data to ensure that we target our resources effectively. We will educate and support business in fire safety compliance and business continuity. We will therefore contribute to improving the safety, competitiveness, and prosperity of businesses in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes by:

- Improving our understanding of the workplace risks.
- Effectively engaging with the business community to assist in developing their understanding of how to ensure the safety and prosperity of their organisations.
- Promoting growth and healthier lifestyles through better regulation and increasing awareness of the responsibilities in the Order.
- Educating on the benefits of having robust business continuity plans and arrangements.
- Applying lessons learnt from fire investigations.
- Working with the business community to help reduce the impact of unwanted fire alarms.
- Lobbying for greater use of sprinklers in business and commercial premises.

Our vision is to achieve safer business and community sectors where preventable fire deaths or injuries in fires and fire losses are reduced to all-time minimal levels. We will also provide businesses with consistent and common advice, information and enforcement practices.

We will enhance firefighter safety and sound operational decision-making through the use of training and information exchange between Protection officers and Response departments, focussing on the built environment.

Our Protection Training Strategy document will evolve to reflect national guidance whilst satisfying local need, providing a framework of qualifications and competence for inspecting officers and Protection managers. This will assist in having the appropriate skills to ensure that we promote consistency and

common approach of the legislation by delivering clear processes, effective development of staff and up to date guidance to inspecting officers and Protection managers.

This consistency will be enhanced by our involvement in Primary Partnership Authority Schemes, with our overall aim to target our protection activities consistently and professionally in support of the economic needs of local and national business.

1. Periodic Audit Programme.

The current audit process uses a well-established "high risk" based programme.

The FRS National Framework Document directs FRAs to:

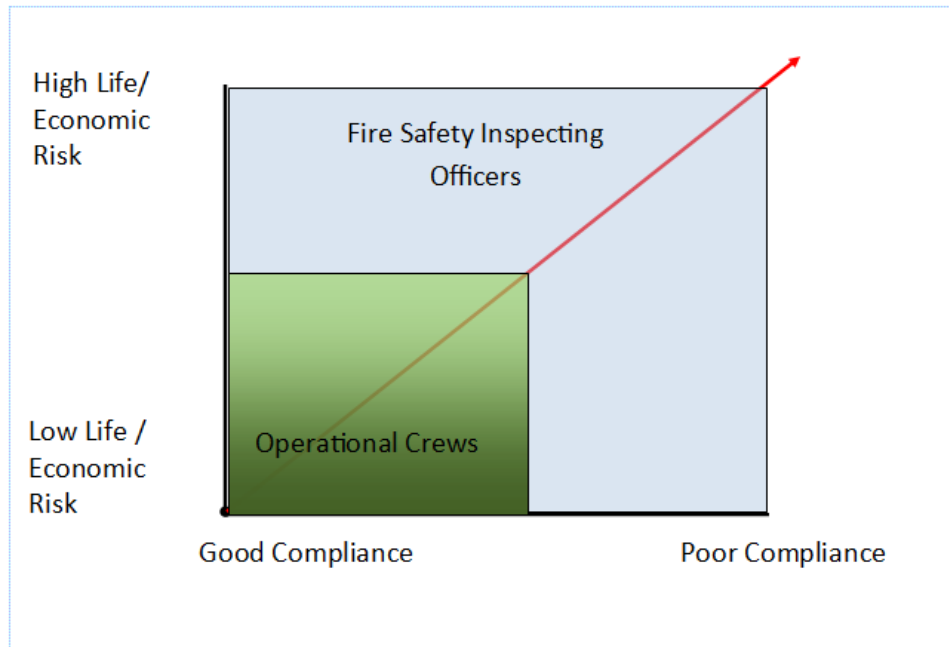
"Set out its management strategy and risk- based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators."

The Statutory Regulators' Code is a central part of the Government's 'Better Regulation Agenda'. Its aim is to embed a risk-based, proportionate and targeted approach to regulatory inspection and enforcement among regulators and seeks to ensure that the enforcement of regulation does not unnecessarily inhibit economic progress. It comprises five principles, one of which is risk assessment, stating:

"Regulators should take an evidence- based approach to determining the priority risks in their area of responsibility, and should allocate resources where they would be most effective in addressing those priority risks."

There is a need to focus Protection audits on the most vulnerable premises. This would focus on risk to life, premises with historically poor compliance and premises with a greater risk of high economic, social value and historic value loss. Use of a risk profiling model will enable BMKFRS to make an intelligence- led decision on where the key areas of activity should be. This will assist us in identifying those businesses that are less likely to comply with legislation and more likely to have a severe fire that will have a greater impact on business and the local community. Once identified, these premises would receive support and education on risk assessment awareness and business continuity. They would also receive information on common causes of fire in these types of premises. Additionally operational site specific risk information will be updated.

This will be achieved by a closer relationship between Protection and Response personnel and by the use of integrated Management Information Systems, sharing this data.



2. Firefighter Safety and Sound Operational Decision- Making.

Protection activities can significantly improve firefighter safety in three ways.

Firstly, Protection activity will reduce the future risk to firefighters by supporting fire risk management. This will reduce the number of fires and their severity, exposing firefighters to fewer, smaller fires. Fewer fires and early fire extinguishment will allow premises to return to business sooner, promoting economic growth.

Secondly, educating firefighters about building construction, specially provided firefighting facilities, access facilities and water supplies will enable them to plan an effective firefighting strategy using this essential knowledge.

Thirdly, by liaising closely with firefighters on site specific risk assessment of buildings, Protection can improve firefighter's risk assessment skills in relation to building hazards and inherent control measures. This would further enhance a consistent approach to the gathering of Site Specific Risk information and will subsequently improve awareness of the significant hazards, enabling better informed command decisions based on an understanding of risk.

We will utilise Management Information Systems which join both risk data from Protection activity with accessible risk information of the build environment for operational personnel to achieve cross-cutting information exchange.

3. Automatic Fire Detection (AFD) and Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS).

BMKFRS continues to lead nationally on FRS process and procedures to reduce the occurrence of false alarms and unwanted fire signals. We will continue to work with business and Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs) to progress our aim of supporting business and reducing the burden on our response resources. Businesses understandably want to know when a real fire has started and for a message to be sent so that BMKFRS resources make an attendance. This avoids risk to life, reduces fire damage and supports business continuity and growth. Working closely with fire alarm engineers at the development and planning stage, business owners and ARCs, we aim to achieve a greater consistency to call reductions. In so doing businesses will be free to grow without disruption and cost from UFS and escalating incidents.

4. Training Framework

In order to achieve our desire to provide business with consistent advice, information and enforcement, it is imperative that our Protection managers and inspecting officers work to a nationally recognised standard. This provides business with assurance that we are applying legislation consistently across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. This recognised standard supports business growth and ensures that all activities undertaken by inspecting officers will have due consideration on compliance, enforcement and economic growth.

We will continue to ensure that personnel engaged in protection activities on behalf of the Service are qualified in line with our Protection training and development template, which will be continually monitored to ensure that it reflects nationally recognised qualifications and skills.

5. Primary Authority Scheme/ Consistency and Common application of Legislation.

BMKFRS can support a consistent approach to fire safety legislation and support business through the Primary Authority Scheme (PAS). PAS is a statutory scheme available to businesses with a presence in more than one local authority area. A business can enter into a legal partnership with a single local authority to secure greater coordination of regulatory and enforcement activities. It applies to a range of regulations, including the Order.

The advantages to business include: consistency of interpretation of Fire Safety regulations, better intelligence, advice and guidance, and access to specialist advice about Fire Safety. This in turn saves time and money whilst also ensuring compliance and supports economic growth and business continuity.

The advantages to BMKFRS include: more productive relationships with business, wider input into the safety agenda, quicker enforcement actions and enhancement of compliance across the relevant industries.

This scheme not only assists with a less punitive approach towards fire safety compliance but also provides the opportunity for BMKFRS to expand its Protection knowledge within the Service.

A full business case setting out detailed costs including full charging of overheads and recovery schedule (income) will be set out for each MOU.

6. Business Engagement

With a move to an enhanced advisory and educational role of the Service, we will deliver advice in the workplace and target the business community with initiatives which provide information on fire safety, arson prevention and sprinkler systems, in addition to our work on AFDs and UFS.

The overarching aim of our engagement with businesses is to make our communities safer, healthier and more prosperous environments for individual citizens, businesses and their employees across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. We will achieve this by promoting best practice across business sectors, provide advice and guidance to businesses on fire safety and listen and understand the challenges and barriers that businesses face to achieve compliance.

This strategy document is supported by Service policy, procedures, guidance and information notes. **The index for these is located: N/common/Standard Forms/Templates/SD Index/Prevention & Protection**

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	17 December 2014
OFFICER	Julian Parsons, Head of Service Delivery
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Adrian Busby
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge Report
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The LGA Fire Peer Challenge took place from 10-12 June 2014.</p> <p>Following their visit the Peer Team produced a report. The report provides comment and areas for consideration on three core questions under the theme of Leadership and Corporate Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective is Leadership and Governance? • How well are outcomes for citizens being achieved? • How effective is the organisational capacity to meet current requirements and future needs? <p>The peer team were also asked to focus on three key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Risk Management • Prevention • Response <p>The Strategic Management Board (SMB) received the final report from the Peer Review team and subsequently analysed the areas for consideration raised. The report did not identify any aspects that the Service was not already well aware of. All areas for consideration were either captured in the existing Corporate Plan, departmental work plans or the Public Safety Plan which has recently completed its consultation phase.</p> <p>Members can be assured that there is nothing noted in the report that is not already being addressed by the Service.</p> <p>SMB were disappointed that the Peer Review team did not mention any of the notable practices within the Service that have been recognised nationally and internationally.</p>

ACTION	Information.
RECOMMENDATIONS	That the LGA Fire Peer Challenge final report be noted.
RISK MANAGEMENT	The LGA report identifies various areas 'for consideration'. This report is presented to enable SMB to agree the subsequent work streams where any areas for consideration are captured. The risks associated with each work stream will be considered individually.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	The Peer Challenge was an offer from the LGA which was delivered at no cost to the receiving fire and rescue service. The outcomes and report from the process have assisted in shaping further organisational improvements and efficiencies for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA).
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	None directly from the Peer Challenge.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	None directly from the Peer Challenge.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	None directly from the Peer Challenge.
USE OF RESOURCES	The outcomes from the Peer Challenge final report will be communicated utilising our internal communications team.
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	<p>Background</p> <p>The LGA Fire Peer Challenge took place from 10-12 June 2014. The peer challenge consisted of a range of on-site activities that included interviews, observations and focus groups. The Peer Team met with a broad cross-section of elected members, our staff, stakeholders and partners. Due to the reduced team and the industrial action (one day of the peer challenge coincided with a 24 hour FBU strike) the visit was truncated by one day.</p> <p>Following their visit the Peer Team produced a report. The report provides detailed information on three core questions under the theme of Leadership and Corporate Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective is Leadership and Governance? • How well are outcomes for citizens being achieved? • How effective is the organisational capacity to meet current requirements and future needs? <p>The peer team were also asked to focus on three key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Risk Management – with particular reference to the Service's gathering

	<p>of data; how data is turned into intelligence and how effectively this inter-relates with Prevention, Protection and Response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention – How a smaller streamlined central community safety team can support the needs of local stations to drive forward Prevention initiatives. Given that partnerships had been reduced over the past two years, how the Service could make best use of its partners particularly around evaluating local initiatives • Response – The Service is facing significant change and asked the team to provide some scrutiny of its response model going forward; opportunities for further innovative ideas to enhance efficiencies and the effectiveness and communication of its risk information particularly in operational assurance. <p>The areas of Protection, Health and Safety, Call Management and Training and Development received a lighter consideration by the peers.</p> <p>The LGA Peer Challenge has been a standing item on the SMB agenda throughout 2013-14. A paper detailing the confirmation of the focus and brief for the Peer Challenge Team within the three focused Key Assessment Areas was presented at SMB on 30 July 2013.</p> <p>The LGA Peer Challenge final report has been compiled to demonstrate BMKFA strengths as well as areas for consideration, enabling an opportunity to build on those already identified by the Service.</p>
APPENDICES	Appendix A - LGA Peer Challenge Final Report.
TIME REQUIRED	15 minutes.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>GM Neil Boustred nboustred@bucksfire.gov.uk 07768 367484</p>



CFOA
Chief Fire Officers
Association



Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Authority Fire Peer Challenge

Report

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1. Introduction, Context and Purpose

This report captures the outcomes and presents the key findings from the Local Government Association's (LGA) Fire Peer Challenge at Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Authority) in June 2014. For ease of reference the report will refer to the Service as Buckinghamshire FRS (BFRS).

The Fire Peer Challenge is part of sector-led improvement. It is a key component of the LGA's 'Taking the Lead' offer (www.local.gov.uk/taking-the-lead).

The Fire Peer Challenge took place from 10-12th June 2014. One day of the peer challenge coincided with a 24 hour Fire Brigade Union strike. Consequently one peer team member was unable to attend. Due to this and the operational commitments of some members of the peer team, it was agreed with BFRS to shorten the peer challenge by one day.

The peer challenge consisted of a range of on-site activity that included interviews, observations and focus groups. The peer team met with a broad cross-section of elected members, officers, staff, frontline firefighters, stakeholders and partners. Due to the reduced team and the industrial action the team were only able to visit two wholtime and two retained fire stations to talk to fire fighters. During their time with BFRS the peer team were well looked after and everyone the team met was fully engaged with the process and appeared open and honest.

The peer team also undertook background reading provided to them in advance, including the BFRS OpA self-assessment and key supporting documentation.

The evidence and feedback gathered was assimilated into broad themes and a discussion of the findings was delivered to the Service's senior management team and members of the fire authority.

Context and Purpose

The OpA self assessment process is designed to:

- form a structured and consistent basis to drive continuous improvement within the fire and rescue service, and
- provide fire authority elected members and chief officers with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust.

In addition to undertaking OpA self-assessment the sector-led peer challenge process is part of the LGA's approach to self-regulation and improvement which aims to help councils and FRAs strengthen local accountability and revolutionise the way they evaluate and improve services. Peer Challenge is a voluntary process that is managed by, and delivered for, the sector. It is not a form of sector-led inspection and is a mechanism to provide fire authorities and chief officers with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust

The report provides detailed information on three core questions under the theme of Leadership and Corporate Capacity:

- How effective is Leadership and Governance?
- How well are outcomes for citizens being achieved?
- How effective is the organisational capacity to meet current requirements and future needs?

The peer team were also asked to focus on three key areas:

- Community Risk Management – with particular reference to the Service's gathering of data; how data is turned into intelligence and how effectively this inter-relates with Prevention, Protection and Response.
- Prevention – How a smaller streamlined central community safety team can support the needs of local stations to drive forward Prevention initiatives. Given that partnerships had been reduced over the past two years, how the Service could make best use of its partners particularly around evaluating local initiatives
- Response – The Service is facing significant change and asked the team to provide some scrutiny of its response model going forward; opportunities for further innovative ideas to enhance efficiencies and the effectiveness and communication of its risk information particularly in operational assurance.

The areas of Protection Health and Safety, Call Management and Training and Development received a very much lighter touch consideration by the peers.

2. The Peer Challenge Team

Fire peer challenges are managed and delivered by the sector for the sector. Peers are at the heart of the peer challenge process. They help services with their improvement and learning by providing a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge.

The peer challenge team for BFRS was:

- Mark Yates CFO Hereford and Worcestershire FRS – Lead Peer
- Cllr Mac McGuire – Cambridgeshire County Council
- Andy Johnson – Assistant CFO – Shropshire FRS
- George Marshall – Group Commander - Hereford and Worcestershire FRS
- Gill Elliott – Local Government Association

3. Background

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service serves a population of more than 750,000 in the South East of England. The area stretches from the outskirts of London to the South Midlands. It comprises the four districts of Buckinghamshire – Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe and Milton Keynes. Milton Keynes is the northernmost part of the area, bordering the East of England and the East Midlands and is one of the fastest-growing places in England. Since 1971, its population has risen from 67,000 to around 249,000. Government plans for housing in the region could see tens of thousands of new homes built in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes over the next 25 years or so, with most of this development taking place in Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale.

The area served by Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service 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. Heathrow and Luton Airports lie just outside the area. The proposed HS2 high speed rail link will travel through the county.

Although many parts of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes enjoy the affluence associated with the Home Counties, there are pockets of deprivation throughout the area. Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service receive around 18,000 calls for assistance every year, of which about 8,000 are emergency incidents. It has 42 frontline and specialist fire and rescue vehicles and hosts an Urban Search and Rescue team, an Incident Response Unit and a shared response with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service for a Detection Identification and Monitoring Unit.

More than 500 firefighters operate from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's 20 strategically placed fire stations. There are three protection offices, Great Missenden (covering Aylesbury Vale and Chiltern Districts), Broughton (covering Milton Keynes) and Marlow (covering Wycombe and South Bucks Districts).

The Service is overseen by Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority, whose membership is drawn from Buckinghamshire County Council (12 members) and Milton Keynes Council (5 members). It has an annual net revenue budget of around £28 million.

4. Summary of Findings

BFRS has been on a significant improvement journey since 2010 when it was severely criticised by an Audit Commission inspection that took place in 2009. Since then the Service has had a new Chief Fire Officer and Authority Chair and together they have driven through a change agenda which included restructuring the senior management team; reducing the number of authority members and reducing the number of wholetime firefighters by natural wastage. At the same time a culture of empowerment has been cascaded from top to middle managers. Human Resource (HR) policies and procedures

have been updated to facilitate this approach and to support managers to deal with issues around capability, performance, and attendance of their staff. Members of the Fire Authority have been very supportive of the change agenda. They are well briefed on proposals and relationships with officers are good. One example of this which was brought to the team's attention is around the Service's new approach to dealing with unwanted fire alarms.

The Service is delivering good outcomes for its citizens and key response targets are either being met or are improving. The tri-service Thames Valley Control project is progressing well and BFRS has the capacity to ensure this is delivered effectively for its communities. Equipment and appliances are improving and this is recognised by staff. Health and Safety processes are very good and there is a strong and improving culture of safety in the Service.

The availability of On Call crews and appliances remains a challenge but the organisation has started to explore this via an On Call improvement forum which is looking at the issue in a holistic way that includes recruitment, retention and training. All the On Call staff peers spoke to were proud of the service they provide to the community. On Call staff appear optimistic that improvements to their part of the service will be forthcoming. The peer team felt that management engagement with frontline staff going forward will be the key to the success of future changes.

The organisation is currently focussing on its new Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) referred to as the Public Safety Plan (PSP) for 2015-2020. The Plan sets out how the organisation will respond to the changing environment including reduced demand for operational services. The Plan also details how the Service will deliver further savings of £4.6M. It sets out possibilities for a new response model for the Service which could result in station closures and changed crewing arrangements. Members have given their support and appear ready to take the tough decisions that will be needed to implement it. It will be important for the Service to carefully consider the staff and public consultation process around the Plan as so far efficiencies have not affected the number or location of stations or arrangements for crewing which is widely accepted as contentious and emotive. Both Members and senior officers demonstrated innovation in their thinking but as yet this hasn't manifested itself as significant innovation in delivery of the Authority's business or services.

BFRS is a business focussed and ambitious service and one that in recent years has been very much externally focussed as its reputation has been rebuilt. It will be important going forward to ensure that it also seeks out the innovations that are taking place in other Services and uses the good practice that it finds elsewhere to inform its own thinking around new ways of working. This may be around response models, crewing arrangements, On Call improvement, and data systems.

The Service is working on a number of major projects currently and as it implements the Public Safety Plan there are going to be even more work streams. It will be important to make sure that this programme of change is managed in a way that does not over stretch BFRS' capacity both in terms of management but also ICT infrastructure. Several ICT systems were described as "creaking" including the intranet, and the database that records home

safety fire checks (HFSC). The HR system ideally requires greater functionality. Performance Plus has not been used to its full potential due to the system's design, management buy-in and lack of ownership. The importance of capturing performance data across the Service is a major cultural shift and it remains a challenge for the service. Ensuring the ICT infrastructure and maintenance is adequate to support the Service through their self-set change programme is fundamental to the Service as it addresses the challenges of the future.

As part of its efficiencies since 2012 the Service has revised the way it approaches Prevention activities. The number of partnerships it maintains were reduced to ensure that those that remain are contributing to fire service aims and objectives. The central Community Safety Team was reduced from 28 to 7 posts and wholtime fire stations have been tasked with delivering Prevention activities at a local level with support from the three area based community support co-ordinators. This model has the potential to deliver some good results however the structure is in the early stages and creating effective links between the Community Safety Team and station personnel will be key to its overall success. There is improved identification and targeting of vulnerable households and some good local prevention initiatives. The peer team did have a concern that locally driven initiatives may not always be linked to the central strategy and not always evidence and data based in their design. It was difficult to identify examples as the structure was new but staff did articulate this potential. The Service has good links with Thames Valley Police but going forward it will be important for the Service to maintain good working relationships with all its partners, particularly if there are staff changes. BFRS has expressed a desire to utilise volunteers to support its Community Safety functions. Consideration should be given to exploring volunteers systems in existence in partner organisations and other FRSS.

Key Areas of Focus

5. Leadership & Governance

Strengths

The Chief Fire Officer and his team provide a strong vision for the Service to be the best fire and rescue service and for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes to be the safest areas in England in which to live work and travel. They also provide good leadership on change in the organisation. The Service is currently implementing a tri-service control room project with Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire Fire Services. A joint fire control provision was originally planned with Cambridgeshire FRS but this option was not pursued as BFRS considered that the current tri-service project would be a better option in terms of financial efficiencies and service delivery.

Since 2010 the “Moving Forward” programme has seen significant costs taken out of the organisation. The number of Members in the Fire Authority and committees were reduced, the senior management team was re-structured and new managers were brought in from outside the Service. Managers further down the structure feel empowered to “get on with things” and have demonstrated a desire to deliver. This culture of continuous improvement is being embedded in the management and support structure.

The Leader of the Fire Authority and its Members fully support the senior officers. Relationships are very good and Members receive open briefings on key issues. Workshops are held for Members to consider proposals early on in the planning process and these informal meetings ensure issues are thoroughly discussed before proposals go before to the committee stage. There are good communications between officers and Authority Members including a regular Members’ newsletter.

The new IRMP, termed the Public Safety Plan 2015-2020, has just been approved by Members with some caveats and the document will be ready for staff and public consultation shortly. The Plan details savings of £4.6m from the annual budget and contains proposals to revise the response model that could include station relocation and potential closure and revised crewing arrangements. Authority Members appear to be ready and able to take the tough decisions that will be needed to implement the outcome of the Plan.

Members support for innovative solutions to issues has already been demonstrated by their support for a new approach by the Service for dealing with unwanted fire alarms.

Relationships with the Fire Officers Association (FOA) which represents middle managers have improved over the past six months which is perhaps an indication of the way changes are being perceived more positively by this group of staff.

Areas for consideration

Although consultation with both staff and public on the new IRMP had not commenced at the time of the review, this is now on-going, including with staff groups. Consultation on the Public Safety Plan to date has involved

stakeholder forums, involving a total of approximately 50 members of the public and staff forums, with approximately 40 staff from various departments. However, few of the staff peers had spoken to were aware of what it contained and certainly none of the frontline firefighters were aware of it.

Effective engagement and consultation with employees and the public around the Public Safety Plan will be crucial to its implementation. The document is very clear that a number of measures have not been ruled out including outsourcing, privatisation, station closures and changes to crewing patterns. All are potentially controversial so it will be important for the Service to convey the message about why such changes are necessary and to actively consider any alternative models that may be suggested. Dialogue with the workforce over the rationale for and pace of change needs to continue, more two-way communication would help.

The Service has dealt with the national dispute over pensions and series of strikes in a robust and effective way which has not adversely affected the public. The dispute has inevitably affected employee relations with wholetime firefighters and their representatives, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). Improved relationships with representative bodies would help to deliver future service plans. It would also be useful to have more discussions with employees and their representatives around new ways of working and any alternative delivery models. Once they have become clearer, any potential options need to be communicated throughout the organisation with that communication being repeated and reinforced.

There is a clear need for strong political leadership to address the Service's future challenges, explore all options and embrace the difficult decisions. All Members of the Authority need to be advocates for the fire service and engage with their local communities on fire service issues. There needs to be a better shared understanding of future potential options for going forward. The limited number of station based staff who were seen said that they have little contact with the Fire Authority and other councillors. The Service should consider how it can provide more opportunities for Members to attend community events that staff are involved with. Members can also be a good source of generating volunteers for the Fire Service from the community.

Since 2010 BFRS has developed a strong external focus both within the UK and abroad. Staff have been seconded to the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the CFO and senior officers have high external profiles. This along with service improvement has undoubtedly helped to improve the Service's reputation. Going forward, however, the Service should consider whether it has the capacity and resources to sustain this strong external focus whilst delivering a significant internal change agenda.

6. Outcomes For Citizens

Strengths

Partners spoke very positively about BFRS as a partner in prevention activities. They value the fact that the Service has a “can do” attitude and is always willing to take part in initiatives. They also appreciated the fact that fire service premises were often made available for community events. The Biker Down initiative to reduce collisions involving motor bikes was singled out as a really good initiative and partners praised the knowledge and commitment of the Service’s Community Safety Team.

The Service has exceeded its HFSC target and is now starting to better use its data better to target the most vulnerable 1700 homes in the community. This self-set target is considered to be modest and should look to be extended.

BFRS is performing well against their targets for making people safer in their homes, work and public places, for example reduced fires, injuries and false alarms. BFRS is working towards meeting their targets for making people safer on the roads’.

Emergency call handling response times are improving. This is significant as emergency control staff have faced considerable uncertainty over their future in recent years with a proposed merger with Cambridgeshire FRS and now a Thames Valley tri-service project with the control room being located in Reading. The Service has been effective in addressing resourcing problems in the Control Room and this has contributed to the improved performance.

The Service has well established contingency plans for dealing with industrial action that has occurred over the past nine months. The response has been effective in keeping the community safe and responding to emergencies.

The Authority has taken a robust stance on controlling rises in council tax to ensure citizens pay as little as possible for their fire service. This is evidenced by the Authority being the only Authority in England to not raise the council tax by £5.00 (Band D) when given the opportunity to do so.

Areas for consideration

The availability of On Call appliances remains a challenge for the service with officers accepting that up to ten or more On Call appliances can be off the run due to staff unavailability at any given time during the working day. A recent On Call Review Workshop and Management Information document, indicated that the Service was facing a period of unprecedented numbers of On Call staff leaving the Service. Of those who are serving members, the majority are aged between 45 – 54. Recruitment and retention into the current system has been limited in its success; of the 115 leavers in a six year period, 36 have left without completing one years’ service. This is an area that urgently needs to be addressed.

Partners based in the Milton Keynes area seem to have maintained their access to the Fire Service and its data better than those in other areas. It was

clear that in the past community and statutory partners had been used to having a close relationship with the Community Safety Team. Now that the team is smaller some partners feel that they have lost that personal contact. Several didn't know who their main contact with the Service was, others said that they no longer have the same access to data that they used to have.

Community Safety partners were keen to work with BFRS, however they felt that a better understanding of their strategic aims would create a more effective working relationship. Partners praised the fact that BFRS were always keen to be involved in projects but some partners said that they would like to see the Service take the initiative as they had in the past when BFRS was leading and resourcing partnerships across a wide spectrum.

7. Organisational Capacity

Strengths

Managers and support staff are clearly very proud to work for the Service. All those that peers spoke to were highly motivated and keen to deliver.

The approach which the Service has to being both cost focussed and business minded is tangible throughout all managerial levels of the organisation. Even operational crews appreciate that this will stand the Service in good stead for reaching future cost targets.

The organisation is successfully starting to tackle sickness absence and poor performance. One example of this robust approach is the reduction in the number of staff on light duties from an average of 8 each month to zero. Overall levels of sickness absence have dropped significantly since 2012. There are a relatively high number of discipline cases which again reflects the robust approach. Station managers are embracing their line management role and seem keen to attend the training offered.

The Service and its staff are confident that it can deliver its part of the tri-service Thames Valley Control Room project with Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire FRSs. An Operational Support Room will be set up to deal with out-of scope issues. This will reduce the potential savings but nevertheless the project will deliver substantial cost reductions to the Authority. The Operational Support Room 'Budget Growth Bid' states that a time and motion study has been conducted which has indicated that the Service will need to retain 5 people to do all 'Out of scope' activities, after the Thames Valley Control has been implemented. The work identified as activities detailed for this new team covers the management of all information to and from the TVFCS, as well as other internal information processes (e.g. distribution of 'After the fire' letters and performance reporting) and also includes business continuity arrangements during very busy periods. The Peer Team are of the view that this level of resourcing should provide a good level of resilience to the Service.

Areas for consideration

BFRS will be embarking on some significant change projects from 2015 onward as it implements the Public Safety Plan 2015-2020. This is in addition to a number of projects already started such as the On Call Improvement Forum; a new website, an improved intranet, and the VIPER upgraded Performance Plus system. It will be important for the Service to be able to manage the cumulative effect of all these projects. A robust approach to programme management will be needed to co-ordinate the various projects.

Peers gained the impression that resources to deliver future change are being well used but also that they are already being stretched. All the new projects will require ICT support as well as HR, Finance and other managerial resources if they are to be delivered effectively.

A key area of concern is the Service's ICT infrastructure. A number of systems were described to peers as "creaking" including the HFSC data base, the I-Drive intranet and the website. HR would like its system to have a direct employee user facility. The Performance Plus system is being upgraded and re-launched, hopefully to be more effective. The Service needs to fully understand the issues in the ICT function and infrastructure and then rectify them if it is to have any hope of successfully delivering all the change it wants to over the next five years. This is a major risk area for the Authority and caused the peer team the greatest concerns during our field work.

Since 2010 efficiency savings have been achieved by restructuring, a programme of redundancies and by not filling posts resulting from natural wastage. Whilst this has created opportunities for staff to take on new work and be empowered to take decisions, it has also meant a loss of managerial skills and knowledge. Skills of engaging, consulting and operational delivery are being lost. This may affect the ability of the Service to deliver in the future. BFRS has adopted targeted development and succession planning to minimise the impacts of these departures.

The Service has expressed the desire to build up a cohort of volunteers to help it across a variety of work around community safety and community engagement with the Service. Peers would commend this approach and suggest that the Service explore working with the County Council volunteer infrastructure as it develops its own volunteer groups as well as approaching other FRSs that have established volunteer schemes.

8. Community Risk Management

Strengths

The Service has good data systems for determining risk profiles. It has recently moved from Mosaic to Acorn which incorporates a unique property reference. The Service is proactively reviewing its current risk modelling systems and is currently exploring solutions provided by CadCorp. An effective system will be required to support the potential changes detailed in the Public Safety Plan 2015-20. The Corporate Gazeteer was recognised as an effective systematic approach to storing risk information. It is linked to the Site Specific Risk Inspection programme and has the potential to be developed further by creating links to areas such as Technical Fire Safety inspections and Partnership data.

The Service has undertaken significant statistical analysis, looking at the correlation of various population characteristics and the prevalence of fires across their area. This information has been used to good effect in the identification and subsequent targeting of those properties likely to be at greatest risk.

The risk analysis team has explained the processes by which the vulnerable groups have been identified, to the community safety team, which has ensured that staff have an understanding of their target audience when undertaking Home Fire Safety checks. The data obtained from the analysis has been entered into the HFSC database and is used to direct this important work.

All appropriate statutory legislation and guidance has been taken into account during the development of the new Public Safety Plan. This includes the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The requirements placed on the Fire Authority by the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework Document has also been considered.

In considering changes in the risk profile of the Authority area going forward across the five year period covered by its new Public Safety Plan, the Service has sought and gained intelligence from its partner agencies about their plans for regeneration across the county. This includes changes in the transport infrastructure and the built and natural environments. These possible changes have been appropriately included within their future planning.

Areas for consideration

Although the Service has implemented a plan to target the vulnerable in high risk properties in the more urban areas (e.g. Milton Keynes), this is not the case across the whole of the Service's area. Due to rural properties being more widely dispersed the Service does not use the analysis results in the same way in what are predominantly On Call areas. The new Prevention Strategy also encourages more local decision making, around where CFS

activity should be targeted, which could result in the Service not realising the benefits in the more rural areas so this issue may be compounded.

The changes implemented to date, to meet the financial challenges placed upon the Authority, have been achieved with minimal impact on frontline service delivery which is commendable. However, although the Service has clearly demonstrated it has a comprehensive understanding of risks across the county, the peer team feels unable to draw any firm conclusions and/or predictions about how the Service will balance risk and resources into the future, especially in relation to the potentially more significant options being explored within the new Public Safety Plan.

As highlighted previously, the risk analysis work, undertaken by the Service over the last few years, is of an excellent quality and should be able to support decision making well into the future. However, the Service is conscious that the skills and abilities within this area are invested in very small numbers of people and would therefore be severely impacted if these staff were to leave. The Service may wish to consider how resilience in this area could be improved.

Performance Plus received strategic backing however it only realised 20% of its capability. The re-launch of the system upgrade 'VIPER' will need to be carefully managed. Lessons will need to be learnt from the implementation of Performance Plus and consideration given to the skills lost within the department. In addition to the provision of appropriate training, identifying clear lines of responsibility and appropriate performance management at all levels will be key to the success of the new system.

9. Prevention

Strengths

The Service launched its new Prevention Strategy on 1st April 2014. The Strategy underpins the Corporate Plan and sets out the high level strategy for how the Service will continue to make its communities safer. The Strategy outlines the key activities that the Service will undertake from 2014 to 2016 and it provides a good steer for delivery. The launch of the new prevention strategy, station plans and the Community Safety Team structure provides the foundation for effective change and there are examples of innovative local initiatives.

Since the Community Safety Team was restructured in 2011 the emphasis has been on station based prevention activity based on data from systems like Acorn, partner referrals and the community safety intelligence. Station plans for Wholtime stations outline the prevention activity for the area including the On Call station areas. Each station has an annual target for completing HFSCs. Evidence provided shows that there are a range of good local initiatives including school visits, youth courses, fire and road safety roadshows, advertising at leisure centres, links with colleges and joint training for housing tenants. Stations are being encouraged to set objectives for their activities and to evaluate their success.

Activity at station level is supported by the Central Community Safety Team and three area based community safety co-ordinators. Partners were very complimentary about the Community Safety Team and co-ordinators and praised their knowledge and commitment. However, some were concerned that if individuals left or the post was lost these good links would not continue.

The Service maintains good links with other agencies, e.g with Thames Valley Police around arson control. It has memoranda of understandings with the police, the prison service, and cross border fire services. The Service also has data sharing protocols with Bucks County Council and Milton Keynes Council. It has formal agreements with national charities like Age UK and the British Red Cross which has trained volunteers who carry out HFSCs. A representative from BFRS sits on the Adults and Children's Safeguarding boards in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

The Service has improved its targeting of vulnerable groups, homes and premises. The Acorn system is able to generate risk information about specific addresses with other information coming from local knowledge and signposting from other agencies. The 1700 most vulnerable households have been identified and are targeted for HFSC checks and "warm calling".

Comments from the Community Safety Coordinators indicate that they appreciate that the changes are still bedding in and therefore it is too early to make a judgement on how effective the changes have been. However, they are quite optimistic that, despite the significant reduction in the number of staff within the community safety team, they will gradually be able to focus their

work on the most vulnerable groups in their respective areas, thereby overcoming the loss in capacity.

Also based on comments from the Community Safety Coordinators, verified by comments from the local Station Managers, it would appear that the change in policy, towards more local decision making on the targeting of safety campaigns, has been implemented to a varying degree across the Service area. There again appears to be a Milton Keynes and County split here, possibly due to it being easier for the MK Community Coordinator to keep in touch with the Station Manager and other Partners, and therefore give more directional support than it is in the larger more rural areas.

The same point also applies to the ability for Partners to get involved in evaluating local initiatives. Partners in the rural areas may not be in a position to help here. The Community Safety Coordinators commented that, in relation to setting up data sharing agreements with partners, they felt this was very difficult due data protection issues and they were also concerned that if they received data about vulnerable persons, the Service may not be in a position to respond to all of the properties that might be identified.

Areas for consideration

Since 2011 there have been a number of significant changes to the way prevention activities are carried out by the Service. Community Safety was restructured from a centralised team of 28 posts to small central team of 4 and 3 area co-ordinators. Prevention became station focussed using local intelligence and data, with this change of culture still being embedded, with some station commanders slow to really take on their new role. At the same time specialist knowledge has been lost and some of the professional links with the central team have been broken. The Service has also reduced the number of partners it works with to focus on those they felt were able to contribute to fire service aims and objectives.

Station based prevention activity in an area is planned and delivered by whole-time station crews that also cover the On Call areas. The On Call crews that peers spoke to both said that they would like to be more involved in community safety. They felt that because they no longer carry out HFSCs or visits to vulnerable businesses like care homes, they are becoming less familiar with their local area which has had an impact on their performance at incidents.

Although the restructure of the Community Safety Team took place in 2011 several of the partners that peers spoke to were still unfamiliar with the new structure or who their main point of contact in the Service is. All appreciated that the Service had to operate in more difficult economic times and that this would mean reorganisation and changed roles. However, they all felt that at times like this partnership working was more important than ever. Several partners said that they needed a better understanding of the Service's strategy for community safety, the community safety organisational structure and the names of station managers. BFRS should ensure that the Community Safety Team, station personnel and partners have a full understanding of the

new structure, including individual responsibilities, in order to deliver the Community Safety Strategy.

There appeared to be inconsistencies in the way partnerships work across the fire service's area. Partners based in Milton Keynes said that partnership working now was better than 5 or 10 years ago and they always had access to a fire safety officer. Partners in other areas like Chilterns and South Bucks were less satisfied with the contact they had with the fire service. One partner said they now only had an e-mail contact with Community Safety.

Partners generally felt that the Fire Service was less focussed on working in partnership and more on each station "doing their own thing". Links with the area co-ordinators are still good but there were comments that there was often no feedback from fire stations after a partner referral. Access to fire service data appeared to be an issue for several partners, arson data was mentioned by several partners. A partner working on road safety said that fire station staff were keen to visit schools but there was a lack of co-ordination around what they said and to whom. Schools visits seemed to be ad hoc and often led to a negative impact on other road safety initiatives organised across the wider area. There was concern that road safety activities were not based on data but the fire service's own information. The local authorities stressed that they are keen to work in partnership with the fire stations, so that common messages can be delivered using a data led approach.

10. Response

Strengths

The two main strands to the Service's response model in the future are around the On Call fire fighter service delivery and the new IRMP or Public Safety Plan 2015-2020. The On Call service has by the Service's own admittance been poorly managed in the past and that has resulted in poor recruitment, high turnover, low morale and problems of availability of appliances. This is well understood by many officers who spoke to peers. A new on-call working group has been established which has already started working on a range of On Call issues including availability, contracts, training, recruitment and retention. This is a very positive step and for the first time in a while On Call staff feel optimistic about their future in the Service and have confidence in their management. On Call staff feel that they are no longer being kept in the dark about service developments with communications improving

Staff appreciate that the standard of their appliances and equipment has improved and is still improving. All the operational staff peers spoke to were proud of the service they provide to the community.

Robust Emergency Planning arrangements are in place and this was evidenced by the industrial action plan implemented during the review. BFRS also has effective business continuity arrangements in place. This includes a regional approach through the South East Business Continuity Group and national links through the CFOA lead for Business Continuity Working Group.

Operational Assurance is delivered by a highly motivated and well-resourced team. This has led to a proactive approach to incident monitoring and feedback, monthly performance reports, debriefs and gap analysis, with actions influencing training, operational intelligence and health and safety. There is scope within the current system to create closer links with training, for example identifying inexperienced or infrequent Incident Commanders and providing support and monitoring opportunities.

Thematic reviews are completed to provide evidence for future initiatives, such as watch visits covering a range of practical, technical and risk based assessments. This evidence based approach promotes positive engagement with operational personnel but it is important that the rationale behind initiatives is clearly communicated to operational personnel to ensure understanding and positive engagement.

Innovation is demonstrated through involvement with the Assessment Development Centre, use of Survey Monkey and co-responding arrangements with South Central Ambulance Service.

Areas for consideration

The draft Public Safety Plan 2015-20 sets out the way the Service will respond to the risks within the community. The Plan is still at the consultation stage so it provides a good opportunity for the Service to consider how it can

further innovate. Peers felt that the current response model lacks innovation seen in many other FRSs, which is possibly a reflection of the fact that since 2010 the Service has had to concentrate on cost cutting and rebuilding its reputation, all of which have been achieved without impacting on the level of service delivered to the public.

There are a range of innovative response models around the country that could be considered and BFRS is encouraged to tap into its external focus to harvest innovative solutions that already exist. The multitude of CFOA groups and work streams could provide “rich pickings” for assistance. The Service has a lot of information on the risk across the area, but will need to consider how this can be communicated most effectively to the public and other stakeholders.

The Service has started to explore the many issues affecting the On Call system. This is commendable, but expectations have been raised which need to be met. There are good opportunities to capitalise on the On Call enthusiasm for change.

Members have expressed their appetite to support the challenging changes contained in the new response model. These include the possibility of closed or re-located stations as well as new crewing patterns. So far the Service has managed its efficiency savings without appearing to significantly affect frontline services. Delivering the new model will impact on sections of the public and on operational staff and there may well be difficult decisions to be taken by Members. It will be important to ensure that Members really understand the changes they will be asked to support and the impacts that the communities may feel

The ongoing industrial action has inevitably coloured the views of operational staff, but there does seem to be a lack of understanding about other changes the Service is experiencing. Going forward the management team may need to look at how effective their communications with wholetime personnel have been in the past and to consider and consult on the best ways to communicate with operational staff.

The following areas received a lighter touch consideration from the peer team

11. Training and Development

Strengths

Peers noted the Service’s awareness of opportunities for delivering training with different models such as privatisation or outsourcing. BFRS has ambitious plans and are currently carrying out a review of operational and commercial training in addition to piloting an e-learning system. The Service is already involved in inter-agency working with Thames Valley Police and local authorities using its incident command suite

Areas to explore

When changes are made to the way training is delivered it will be important to consider the impact this is having, including the cumulative impact of a series of changes.

As training is driven down to station level it will be important to know early on if there are problems. Both On Call and wholetime staff said that there was an overemphasis on assessment rather than training, e.g. breathing apparatus training. Some On Call staff thought that cascading training to stations via I-Drive was not always fully effective, e.g. high rise training. Training at station level needs to be high quality and station managers may need additional support to be really effective trainers.

Over the next five years there may be a skills gap amongst managers in the future that could become a serious issue. The Service needs to recognise where there this may occur and ensure training plans are in place to address it.

12. Protection

The Service has an agreed approach to automatic fire alarm (AFA) reduction. It currently attends all calls for assistance and does not attempt to delay/filter calls on the basis of number of previous unwanted fire signals (UWFS) or premises type. BFRS consider that this approach gives a consistent safety message to industry and commerce and fosters an improved fire safety culture within premises based on education, guidance and where necessary, through enforcement, by use of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Peers feel that the BFRS approach, whilst innovative and encouraging a fire safety aware culture in premises, may not fully demonstrate a risk based approach to AFA reduction and may not fully encourage premises owners to take proactive steps to deal with their alarm systems, rather relying on BFRS staff to assist them to do so. This approach also relies on a specialist post which is commendable but does also rely on the post being reliably available.

During the visit it was made known that consideration is being given to crews carrying out basic fire protection inspections. This is commendable and may provide positive benefits to the operational arena but an effective structure will need to be established and operational personnel will need appropriate training to carry out inspections. In addition consideration must also be given to introducing this alongside other initiatives that will also require greater involvement at station level, such as Community Safety initiatives and a proposed increase in station based training.

It was not clear whether the recent decision to stop supporting FSEC will impact on BFRS BFS prioritisation process. Another FRS adopted an approach whereby they sent out a self-evaluation questionnaire to all businesses in the Service area, asking them to provide relevant fire safety information. BFRS may wish to consider a similar approach in an effort to help inform its property gazetteer and future enforcement programme.

13. Health and Safety

The Service has a good focus on Health and Safety. There are appropriate processes that are being improved constantly. Staff are well qualified. A Health and Safety Strategic Review has recently been carried out.

14. Call Management

The peer team had no contact or examination of Bucks Fire Control except exploration of the resilience of the function until cut over to TVFCS – resilience appears to be in place. Peers were satisfied (within the confines of the available time and staff contacts) that the organisation has the capacity to deliver the project and to continue delivering an effective service until “cut-over” to the new service.

15. Conclusion and contact information

Throughout the peer challenge the team met with enthusiastic and committed officers and staff. It is clear that BFRS is determined to provide an excellent service. There is enthusiasm and commitment from all staff and the peer team believe that by harnessing this and by seeking out more innovative and creative solutions BFRS will continue on its improvement journey.

For more information regarding the Fire Peer Challenge of BFRS please contact:

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Appendix – Presentation Slides

Leadership & Governance

Strengths

- Strong vision and leadership on change from the senior team
- Empowerment from the top appears to cascade down to middle managers
- Culture of continuous improvement is being embedded in the management structures
- Authority Leader and Members support the senior officers and are ready for the future challenges
- Acceptance that the new IRMP may mean changes to the response model
- Members support has been demonstrated for innovative solutions such as unwanted fire alarms
- Engagement with FOA has improved in the last six months

Areas for consideration

- Limited involvement in the development of new IRMP below SMT level
- Consultation on Public Safety Plan
- Improved relationships with representative bodies
- Station based operational personnel, especially On Call, have little contact with Fire Authority and other councillors
- Success or otherwise of direct engagement with operational staff
- The available capacity within the change agenda to maintain the strong external focus

Outcomes For Citizens

Strengths

- BFRS is a valued partner within Bucks and Milton Keynes
- Service has exceeded its HFSC targets and is now better targeting vulnerable homes The direction of travel around accidental and

deliberate fires is positive with numbers reducing in line with national trends. Targets are broadly being met for non-domestic fires

- Emergency call handling response time is improving
- Strike contingency planning is established and well understood
- Control of Council Tax

Areas for consideration

- Availability of On Call appliances remains a challenge
- CS Partner relationships (notably outside Milton Keynes)
- Impact in relation to the scale and speed of CS restructure

Organisational Capacity

Strengths

- Managerial staff throughout the organisation are proud to work for BFRS and are a major asset to the service
- Service is cost focussed and business minded
- Organisation is successfully tackling sickness absence and poor performance
- BFRS has the capacity to deliver their part of the TV Control project

Areas for consideration

- Is the organisation sufficiently aware of the impact of the scale and pace of change, especially considering the PSP 2015-2020 – programme management
- Resources needed to deliver future change agenda
- Sustainability and effectiveness of ICT in order to deliver current and future improvements
- Loss of managers may affect skills to deliver services in the future
- Use of volunteers

Community Risk Management

Strengths

- Service has good understanding of local risks and this informs targeting
- Development of IRMP has taken statutory responsibility and national guidance into account
- Considers future risks for partner agencies e.g. transport, planning and regeneration

- BFRS are moving towards a targeted approach

Areas for consideration

- Good data is available to inform strategies but may not be fully utilised on the ground
- Service has ability to balance risk and resources but no evidence of how this will work in practice
- There is limited resilience within the risk analysis team
- Learn lessons from Performance Plus in the re-launch of Viper

Prevention

Strengths

- New Prevention Strategy launched on 1st April 2014
- Good range of positive initiatives across BFRS
- Within Wholetime areas there are examples of good engagement with crews regarding local initiatives
- Highly motivated and experienced Community Safety team
- Links with other agencies e.g. Thames Valley Police
- Accurately identified vulnerable groups and premises

Areas for consideration

- On Call involvement in Community Safety
- Partners' understanding of new structure, strategy and contacts.
- Use of Partners data
- Inconsistent approach to Partnership working between Districts
- Stakeholders understanding of the framework linking strategy to station initiatives
- Ad hoc nature of initiatives

Response

Strengths

- Establishment of an on-call working group that has commenced work
- Sense of optimism within On Call personnel for future improvements
- On Call stations now receiving far more information
- Improving appliances and equipment

- All personnel demonstrated pride in delivering services to the community
- A proactive, well-resourced and innovative approach to operational assurance and Emergency Planning

Areas for consideration

- Consider innovations within response model detailed in Public Safety Plan 2015-20
- Use external focus to inform innovations in response model
- On Call issues
- Member appetite for the very challenging changes to the response model
- Effectiveness of communication with wholetime personnel and therefore their understanding of changes within the Service

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	17 December 2014
OFFICER	Jason Thelwell, Chief Operating Officer/Deputy Chief Fire Officer
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Catriona Morris
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	2015 -20 Public Safety Plan Consultation: Feedback & Recommendations
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The 2015-20 Public Safety Plan (PSP) was approved for public consultation at the Authority's 24 June 2014 meeting. The consultation was open for a 12 week period from 22 July to 13 October 2014.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present to the Authority the feedback received to the consultation; • the Service managers' responses to that feedback; and, • recommendations from the Chief Operating Officer /Deputy Chief Fire Officer
ACTION	Decision.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan be adopted subject to the following modification – that the active consideration or pursuit of alternative service delivery models (proposal five at page 20 of the PSP shown at Annex 1) for core services i.e. those required to meet statutory duties, be excluded from the Plan; 2. officers be directed to proceed with the further development of proposals one to four specified at Page 20 of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan (Annex 1) having regard to the consultation feedback as they are progressed and undertake further consultations with stakeholders potentially affected by any specific changes arising from their implementation; 3. the Chief Fire Officer be granted discretion to

	determine the sequencing and timing of the work required to further progress the proposals.
RISK MANAGEMENT	The Public Safety Plan sets out Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA)'s strategic approach to the management of future risk in the community. The PSP process seeks to contribute to the management of future corporate risk by aligning resourcing with anticipated demand for fire and rescue services and expected levels of funding.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	The precise financial implications arising out of the Public Safety Plan (PSP) are to be determined. In particular, there are likely to be further costs associated with follow on work to specify and model changes to our operational 'footprint' in and across the five response 'catchment' areas identified in the PSP and to consult on any recommended changes arising from this. However achieving a better balance between anticipated future demand, contingent risks and the resourcing needed to manage this is expected to yield significant reductions to current operating costs via changes to the structure of the establishment and the equipment and asset bases.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	The approach complies with National Framework requirements by ensuring that consultation is undertaken at appropriate points in the Integrated Risk Management Planning/Public Safety Plan (PSP) development process. The outcomes of the consultation are not binding on the Authority. However it is required to take them into account before reaching decisions associated with the PSP/integrated risk management planning process.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	Any material changes to operational configuration will be subject to appropriate and proportionate assessments of implications for public and staff safety.
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY	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 12 of Annex 2. This indicates that they were a broad cross section of residents from local areas. Recruitment to the staff focus groups was by open invitation and the participants cannot therefore be certified as being a representative cross section of staff as a whole. However the groups attracted a good mix of operational and support staff and yielded a diverse range of views and opinions. Participation in the online survey was also by open invitation, so again, views expressed via this channel

	<p>cannot be certified as being necessarily representative of the views of the general public or staff 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>
<p>USE OF RESOURCES</p>	<p>Communication with Stakeholders</p> <p>BMKFRS staff, representative bodies and a wide range of partner and community organisations and representatives were invited to participate in the consultation process.</p> <p>An individual meeting with the local Fire Brigades Union (FBU) representative was held to provide them with an opportunity to discuss with and question planning staff on the content of the PSP and the process by which it was developed.</p> <p>CFA members have been engaged via a series of workshops as well as in formal Authority meetings.</p> <p>System of internal control</p> <p>All key decisions relating to the development of the PSP have been made in strict conformance with the Authority’s established governance processes comprising of scrutiny by relevant internal management board, engagement with the relevant lead member, BMKFA Member scrutiny and approval at Authority meetings.</p> <p>Medium Term Financial Planning</p> <p>The Public Safety Plan (PSP) will be a key input to the development of the next Medium Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>The balance between spending and resources</p> <p>The PSP process seeks to achieve an optimal balance between demand, contingent risks and the resources needed to balance these.</p> <p>The management of the asset base</p> <p>The follow on work arising out of the PSP will inform future asset strategy in relation to the configuration of the Authority’s equipment and property assets.</p> <p>Environmental</p> <p>The PSP contains a top level assessment of national, regional and local risks which will inform the Authority’s strategic approach to the management of these.</p>
<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 a number of elements:-</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; • Two staff focus groups facilitated by the Authority’s planning staff; • 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. <p>Awareness of the consultation was raised by targeting a range of community and partner organisations by letter and email. The consultation was also publicised in the Media, notably in articles by Mix 96 and the MK Citizen, and promoted on ‘Twitter’ by the Authority’s communication team generating 6,118 views.</p> <p>Response</p> <p>A total of 49 diverse members of the public participated in the public focus groups.</p> <p>A total of 19 members of staff took part in the staff focus groups (10 operational and 9 support). Additionally, 22 respondents to the online questionnaire declared themselves to be Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS) staff members or relatives although the actual level of response may have been higher with some preferring to identify as residents or not to say.</p> <p>A range of organisations also responded to the consultation via the questionnaire or by email or letter. A list of the organisations that responded to the online consultation is shown at page 9 of Annex 4.</p> <p>There were a total of 160 responses to the online questionnaire. A full profile of online respondents is shown at Tables 1 – 6 on pages 7 – 8 of Annex 4.</p> <p>Overview of Findings</p> <p><u>Public Focus Groups (Annex 2)</u></p> <p>Participants were generally accepting of the rationale for the main proposals albeit with some reservations and a degree of realism about the challenges of implementing some of them from a public acceptance perspective e.g. changes that might involve station closures and consequent need for robust evidence to support any changes. The only proposal that was largely disfavoured was the exploration of alternative service delivery models particularly if these resulted in the adoption of a</p>
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	<p>privatised, profit driven business model.</p> <p><u>Staff Focus Groups (Annex 3)</u></p> <p>The reception given to the proposals differed somewhat between the two staff focus groups with the first group (6 support / 2 operational) tending to be more positive and accepting of the rationale for the proposals – this even extended, in contrast with the public, to a willingness to consider alternative business models if they were of the social enterprise – mutual variety. The second group (8 operational and 3 support staff) tended to be more challenging and in some cases sceptical of the basis and rationale for the Plan and raised more concerns about the impact of changes already made which some perceived as detrimental to our ability to maintain an effective operational response in some locations.</p> <p>Both groups felt it was paramount to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness to the public, for example, making optimal use of our assets such as office space that could be better used by sharing with partner agencies, which would not only share the overheads but would also facilitate knowledge sharing across sectors. Furthermore it was suggested that officers be relocated from headquarters to work from Retained Duty System stations where we struggle to provide cover and thus help improve emergency cover.</p> <p><u>Online feedback (Annex 4)</u></p> <p>A summary of the main findings from the online questionnaire is shown at page 6 of Annex 4. As well as a quantitative analysis of the findings, the report also includes analysis of qualitative feedback received in the form of textual comments. These have been analysed to show how often a particular theme or issue was raised. In general the issues raised tended to mirror those arising in the other consultation channels albeit that opinion was more divided in relation to proposals relating to response capacity or making changes involving the location of stations (potential mergers and relocations). As with the Public Focus Groups respondents strongly disfavoured the pursuit of alternative service delivery models (privatisation etc.).</p> <p><u>FBU Response (Annex 5)</u></p> <p>The FBU submitted an extensive response to the consultation. In general the FBU took the view that the proposals were not specific enough to engender meaningful engagement with or responses from stakeholders. They also challenged what they perceived to be selective use of data and statistics and asked the Authority for assurance on a range of issues such as a commitment to further consultation on any changes arising out of follow on work specified in the Plan.</p>
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	<p>Detailed responses to the questions and issues raised by the FBU are shown at Annex 7.</p> <p><u>Other Responses (Annex 6)</u></p> <p>A number of other responses were received by email or letter. These, together with any replies issued are shown at Annex 6.</p> <p>Management Response to consultation Feedback</p> <p>Annex 7 summarises the key issues and suggestions arising out of the consultation and sets out BMKFRS Management’s responses and recommendations in relation to these.</p> <p>In general the feedback was found to be constructive and useful in terms of helping to progress with the development of the Service over the next five years. In light of the consultation feedback and the evaluation of this we propose to proceed with the further development of four of the five proposals set out at page 20 the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan (PSP). Namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1/ The review of our ‘geo-spatial’ capacity in each of the five ‘catchment’ areas identified at page 16 of the PSP. This will begin with the review of the Milton Keynes area as proposed in the PSP. The scheduling of the other catchment area reviews will be set out in our 2015-20 Corporate Plan; 2/ The identification and implementation of the level of capacity we need to respond to major local, regional and national emergencies; 3/ Engaging and working with our staff and other stakeholders to develop the very best resourcing models for both the Service and those we serve and protect; 4/ Continue to develop opportunities to increase the benefits and value that we deliver to the public by using our capacity, resources and assets to meet a wider range of community needs in partnership with others. <p>It is proposed that the feedback from the consultation be used to help with the further development of these proposals, in particular their scope and focus.</p> <p>In light of the consultation feedback, we do not recommend that the consideration of alternative service delivery models (proposal five at page 20 of the 2015-20 PSP) that would affect delivery of core services is prioritised at this point in time although there may be some scope to consider them for specialist or support functions.</p> <p>The PSP was approved for public consultation at the Authority’s 24 June 2014 meeting:</p>
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	<p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/7614/0292/6640/PublicSafetyPlan.pdf</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/4514/1320/5765/ITEM_2_24-06-14_DRAFT_MINUTES_FINALv4SMT.pdf</p> <p>The PSP was published for public consultation on 22 July 2014:</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/8914/1086/7389/2015-20PSPFinal.pdf</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annex 1 – Public Safety Plan Proposals extracted from 2015-20 Public Safety Plan (page 20); 2. Annex 2 – ORS report on outcomes of public focus group consultations; 3. Annex 3 – In-house report on outcomes of staff focus group consultations; 4. Annex 4 – ORS report on outcomes of online consultation feedback 5. Annex 5 – FBU response to PSP consultation 6. Annex 6 – Other Responses by letter or email 7. Annex 7 – Management responses and recommendations to consultation feedback
<p>REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT</p>	<p>Stuart Gowanlock, Corporate Planning Manager</p> <p>sgowanlock@bucksfire.gov.uk</p> <p>01296 744435</p>

WHAT WE PROPOSE TO DO

Over the next five years we will:

1/ Systematically change our current approach to managing risks in each of the five catchment areas identified at page 16 of this plan. This will embrace identifying and implementing:

- the right balance between measures to prevent and protect against risks and residual capacity needed to respond to emergencies;
- the most appropriate crewing models relative to current and expected levels of demand and risk;
- changes to the number of staff, fire appliances (fire engines) and other specialist appliances required to better fit with normal, day to day demand patterns;
- the right number and location for fire stations which may involve moving, merging, closing or co-locating with other blue-light services.

Our detailed approach to this task is set out overleaf.

2/ Identify and implement the level of capacity we need to respond to major local, regional and national emergencies and meet our mutual assistance obligations to neighbouring fire and rescue services.

This will include consideration of more cost effective ways of quickly generating additional capacity than the current model of maintaining standing resources sufficient to deal with contingencies that we may typically only experience once a year or less frequently.

3/ Engage and work with our staff and other stakeholders to develop the very best resourcing models for both the service and those that we serve and protect. This will embrace identifying and implementing changes to:

- staff terms and conditions of employment;
- Crewing models and shift patterns

Our approach to this is set out at page 22.

4/ Continue to develop opportunities to increase the benefits and value that we deliver to the public by using our capacity, resources and assets to meet a wider range of community needs in partnership with others.

Our approach to this is set out at page 23.

5/ Consider alternative delivery models for some or all of our services. This will embrace consideration of opportunities to deliver services more effectively and efficiently through private sector or employee models of ownership.

There are precedents for this in both in the UK and overseas. For example:

- the privatisation of the UK helicopter [Search and Rescue Services](#) previously operated by the military;
- in [Denmark](#) fire services have been successfully delivered via private contractual arrangements for many years;
- UK public service employee ownership [models](#).



**Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes
Fire and Rescue Service:
*Continuing the Journey:
Public Safety Plan 2015-20***

Report of Consultation Outcomes

**Opinion Research Services
October 2014**



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

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

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Acknowledgements

Opinion Research Services (ORS) is pleased to have worked with Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) 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 thank B&MKFRS for commissioning the project as part of its ongoing 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 B&MKFRS's future service planning. We hope also that ORS has been instrumental in strengthening B&MKFRS's public engagement and consultation through the focus group participants.

The ORS Project Team

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Executive Summary

The Commission

1. ORS was commissioned by Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) to design, facilitate and report five public focus groups (in Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham, High Wycombe and Milton Keynes) to discuss its *Public Safety Plan 2015-20*. We worked in collaboration with B&MKFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

Discussion Agenda

2. The meeting agenda covered all of the following topics:

- Staff and financial resources

- Distribution of emergency cover resources

- Incident profile and numbers

- Reality of reducing risk

- Role of prevention, protection and response

- B&MKFRS'S *Public Safety Plan 2015-20*, especially in relation to...

 - Crewing models - particularly the on-call duty system

 - Response capacity and the need to balance the resources needed for low-level day-to-day demand and infrequent high risk

 - Using resources differently through the extension of co-responding

 - Ways of delivering services differently, for example through privatisation or mutualisation

 - The potential need to reconfigure fire stations to match demand.

Attendance and Representativeness

3. In total, there were 49 diverse participants at the focus groups – 12 at Aylesbury, 10 at Buckingham, 11 at Chesham, eight at High Wycombe and eight at Milton Keynes. 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

meetings (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions.

Executive Summary

4. While this Executive Summary seeks to give a balanced assessment of the discussion outcomes, readers are referred to the detail of the full report for a more comprehensive account of the views expressed – in particular, for an account of people’s priorities, assumptions and reasons for these views.

Main Findings

Crewing Models (improving the resilience of the On-call Duty System)

Encourage sprinklers in more remote areas

5. Although participants supported the idea of sprinkler systems in principle, they were sceptical about the degree to which people might be persuaded to install them given the cost of doing so – particularly retrospectively. Also, some misconceptions remain about sprinkler systems (for example that they are large and unsightly and ‘soak everything’ when activated) that must be addressed.

Prioritise prevention work in more remote communities

6. There was no objection to B&MKFRS prioritising prevention work in more remote communities, with participants at Buckingham suggesting that the Service should capitalise on the ‘close-knit’ nature of Buckingham in enlisting community volunteers to promote its safety messages in rural areas.

More use of smaller ‘rapid intervention’ appliances

7. Making more use of smaller ‘rapid intervention’ appliances was encouraged insofar as they could: offer flexibility; be used to assess an incident and establish the need for a full fire engine; and be deployed to manage and control incidents and prevent escalation. Further, at High Wycombe it was said that utilising smaller vehicles more frequently would *motivate the firefighters who will go out more often*. (High Wycombe)

Move full-time crew around to support on-call stations when RDS cover is low

8. Using full-time firefighters to support on-call stations when RDS cover is low was considered sensible.

‘Simplify’ training for on-call firefighters

9. This was the proposal that caused participants the most concern insofar as, if RDS firefighters are trained to tackle only the more ‘routine’ incidents, they may be somewhat skill deficient if called upon to attend anything more ‘complex’ (or indeed something that seems routine at the outset but escalates into something that requires specialist skills).

Modernise the on-call working contract

10. Participants supported B&MKFRS's proposal to modernise the on-call working contract by allowing RDS firefighters to 'book on' for fewer hours a week when cover is needed rather than the current 120 hours a week. This, it was felt, would make the role inherently more attractive.

Incentivise by paying a premium for on-call cover during working hours

11. Incentivising, while considered sensible in principle, was considered unworkable by some who asked: *are the people actually there in the area to incentivise?* (High Wycombe). Further, others were concerned that such a scheme could attract the 'wrong' people to the Service – and also questioned how incentive payments could be afforded and would be viewed by the Service as a whole.

Other suggestions

12. Participants across the five groups made a number of additional suggestions to overcome B&MKFRS's on-call crewing difficulties, namely: widening the five minute catchment area; incentivising local employers to release staff for on-call duties; relaxing the on-call recruitment criteria where possible; and targeting home workers, the self-employed and early retirees to a greater degree.

Overall

13. Overall, it was generally agreed that B&MKFRS should attempt to improve daytime on-call availability by at least trialling most of the proposed measures discussed above. However, several cautioned against simplifying on-call training for the reasons specified earlier.

Response Capacity (balancing the resources needed for low-level, day-to-day demand and rare, large-scale or multiple incidents)

14. The discussions highlighted some initial concern about the proposal to consider more economical ways to deal with rare and high risk, most notably around B&MKFRS's ongoing ability to respond to infrequent high risk with fewer resources and relying on support from neighbouring FRSs who may themselves be 'in the same boat'. Other worries were around: potential response delays if relying on 'over-the-border' cover; and the cost of mutual aid.
15. Ultimately though, most participants understood the need to examine and possibly rationalise response capacity, even if they worried about the implications of doing so. Indeed, those at Buckingham unanimously considered it reasonable for B&MKFRS to review (and possibly reduce) the level of resourcing needed to deal with large or multiple incidents if there is resilience from nearby areas, as did majorities at the other groups – on the condition though that any potential reductions are made to a sensible level that offers a degree of flexibility.
16. There was also a sense that this would simply be a case of formalising existing cross-border (and indeed wider) co-operation – and that it may even be a positive change in the context of reducing incidents insofar as a smaller pool of firefighters would be mobilised more frequently and would more easily maintain their skills and competencies.

17. The few who objected to B&MKFRS even considering reducing its resource capacity typically made comments along the following lines: *fire is a big risk to life and you can't really put a value on a life that could have been saved had the facilities be available. So to try and economise too much is too big a risk.* (Milton Keynes)

Using Resources Differently (Co-responding)

18. Initially, some participants could not understand how Co-responding benefits the Fire and Rescue Service, and there was concern that it could result in conflicting priorities; that is, that fire engines could be taken 'off the run' to fulfil duties to the Ambulance Service.
19. Participants at Buckingham and especially Milton Keynes also questioned how compatible Co-responding is with B&MKFRS's RDS availability issues. As one participant commented: *I'm trying to get my head around the fact that on the one hand you are lacking in staff and on the other hand you are donating staff to another service* (Milton Keynes)
20. Overall, most people agreed that Co-responding is a positive initiative that should be rolled-out as widely as possible, providing it is cost-effective for B&MKFRS and that it does not negatively impact on the Service fulfilling its core responsibilities. In addition to its obvious benefits, there was recognition that Co-responder activity could improve the resilience of some quieter rural stations – and that the reduction in incident levels increases the feasibility of firefighters being able to do 'other things'.
21. It was, however, said at Buckingham that explanations must be offered to the public as to exactly how the Co-responder scheme works in practice – as people may be somewhat nervous about being attended to by a firefighter in a medical emergency (though others at Milton Keynes disagreed and said that *when you're having an asthma attack and can't breathe you don't care who's holding that oxygen mask*).

Delivering Services Differently (Privatisation and Mutualisation)

22. The overwhelming majority of participants were firmly opposed to privatising B&MKFRS both in principle and for fear that the quality of service would suffer in the pursuit of profit and from a lack of accountability – and it should be noted here that people's typically negative views of privatisation seem to have been strongly influenced by previous experiences.
23. Participants were certainly very keen to see B&MKFRS exploring other avenues for efficiency savings (such as station mergers and fire engine rationalisation) rather than privatisation – and there was a definite feeling that the emergency services should be protected as far as possible from the threat of it.
24. Despite the general antipathy towards privatisation, some were keen to see it being explored in relation to specific specialist functions (or even part-privatisation of the whole service) – and one participant at High Wycombe, who was against privatisation in principle, was of the view that it should be pursued as an option if the Service does not address what they saw as its over-resourcing.

Fire Stations (examining optimal size and location requirements)

25. The need to examine the location of fire stations was raised spontaneously at Buckingham, Chesham and High Wycombe – not only in the context of BMKFRS’s stations generally, but especially in relation to possibly merging those near the borders with other FRSs. Indeed, several participants were surprised that such monitoring is not an ongoing process.
26. Despite this, although participants understood B&MKFRS’s need to examine fire station locations and sizes in principle, there was significant concern (especially at Chesham and Milton Keynes) about the possible implications of this in practice. People are very ‘attached’ to their local stations and it was said that, as a result, there would be strong public opposition to any proposed changes to them. As such, given that any future proposals in relation to fire stations are likely to be controversial, it was said that the reasoning behind them must be carefully and widely explained to ensure that as many people as possible understand their rationale.
27. Finally, participants at Milton Keynes demonstrated a great deal of trust in B&MKFRS, commenting that anything it decides to propose in future would be done in the public interest – and that it would certainly not jeopardise the safety of the people of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes in any way.

Overall Comments

28. Participants were generally very tolerant of B&MKFRS’s intentions as set out in its Public Safety Plan 2015-2020, even if there was some concern about the future implications of certain proposals as outlined above. Indeed, on the whole it was accepted that the Service must evolve and modernise in accordance with changing risk levels and the proposals under discussion were considered to be sensible and positive in enabling it to do so.

Project Overview

The Commission

29. On the basis of our long-standing experience with the UK fire and rescue service, ORS was commissioned by Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) to undertake five focus groups across its service area (in Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham, High Wycombe and Milton Keynes). The groups were part of the second stage in an ongoing consultation process, with B&MKFRS having undertaken a very early-stage 'listening and engagement' process in November/December 2013 to understand public opinions and to 'test' some very general ideas and principles.
30. The point or purpose of these (and the earlier) deliberative sessions was to allow B&MKFRS to engage with, and listen to, members of the public about some important issues - so that the participants would become more informed about the fire and rescue service and the current constraints upon it; but also so that the discussions around people's perceptions of risk and ideas about their Fire and Rescue Service could contribute to B&MKFRS's planning for the future.
31. The consultation programme conforms to the Gunning Principles, which require, above all, that consultation should be at a 'formative stage', before authorities make decisions. The same principles also require that people should be given sufficient information and time to consider the issues in an informed manner, and also that their views should be taken conscientiously into account by the authority.
32. In this context, ORS' role was to design, facilitate and report the consultation in September and October 2014. We worked in collaboration with B&MKFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

Deliberative Research

Attendance and Representativeness

33. The focus groups were designed to inform and 'engage' the participants both with the issues and with B&MKFRS – 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 in detail. The meetings lasted for two hours.
34. In total, there were 49 diverse participants at the focus groups. The dates of the meetings and attendance levels by members of the public were as follows:

AREA	TIME AND DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
High Wycombe	6:30pm – 8:30pm Tuesday 9 th September 2014	8
Aylesbury	6:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 10 th September 2014	12
Chesham	6:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 10 th September 2014	11
Buckingham	6:30pm – 8:30pm Thursday 11 th September 2014	10
Milton Keynes	6:30pm – 8:30pm Thursday 11 th September 2014	8

35. The attendance target for the focus groups was around 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. Overall (as shown in the table below), participants were a broad cross-section of residents from the local areas and, as standard good practice, were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part.

CRITERIA	FOCUS GROUPS
Gender	Male: 25 Female: 24
Age	16-34: 9 35-54: 22 55+: 18
Social Grade	AB: 17 C1: 15 C2: 6 DE: 11
Ethnicity	4 BME
Limiting Long-term Illness	7

36. ORS typically over-recruits for focus groups to compensate for last minute 'no shows': on this occasion 12 people were recruited to achieve eight to 10 participants. While the overall drop-out

rate was low, six of the 11 'no-shows' were in the 16-34 age bracket which explains the lower overall numbers of younger people at the sessions.

37. In recruitment, 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 special needs were taken into account in the recruitment and venues.
38. 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 on the basis of similar discussions. In summary then, the outcomes reported here are reliable as examples of diverse informed people reacting to B&MKFRS's *Public Safety Plan 2015-20*.

Discussion Agenda

39. ORS worked in collaboration with B&MKFRS to agree a suitable agenda and informative stimulus material for the meeting, which covered all of the following topics:
- Staff and financial resources
 - Distribution of emergency cover resources
 - Incident profile and numbers
 - Reality of reducing risk
 - Role of prevention, protection and response
 - B&MKFRS'S *Public Safety Plan 2015-20*, especially in relation to...
 - Crewing models - particularly the on-call duty system
 - Response capacity and the need to balance the resources needed for low-level day-to-day demand and infrequent high risk
 - Using resources differently through the extension of co-responding
 - Ways of delivering services differently, for example through privatisation or mutualisation
 - The potential need to reconfigure fire stations to match demand.
40. The questions were accompanied by a presentation devised by ORS and B&MKFRS to inform and stimulate discussion of the issues – and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they wished throughout the discussions.

The Report

41. This report concisely reviews the sentiments and judgements of focus group participants about B&MKFRS's *Public Safety Plan 2015-20*. 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.

Consultation Findings

Introduction

42. 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 rather repetitive mini-reports – but significant differences in views have been drawn out where appropriate.

Main Findings

Crewing Models (the On-call Duty System)

43. B&MKFRS is experiencing significant on-call crewing difficulties, particularly in relation to maintaining availability during the daytime when incident demand is at its highest. The Service is suggesting a number of measures to try and overcome these difficulties – and participants' views on these are reported below.

Encourage sprinklers in more remote areas

44. Although participants supported the idea of sprinkler systems in principle, they were sceptical about the degree to which people might be persuaded to install them in practice given the cost of doing so (particularly retrospectively):

We should encourage sprinklers generally but what is the cost? (Buckingham)

Sprinklers are brilliant in terms of prevention but once the premises is built there's a horrendous cost to the owner as well as the ongoing maintenance...and that's got to put people off (Milton Keynes)

Not a lot of people will put sprinklers in their home will they? Only people who can afford to do it and not everyone can (Milton Keynes)

When you encourage sprinklers is that self-funded by the individual? (High Wycombe)

45. Also, as the following quotations show, some misconceptions remain about sprinkler systems that will need to be addressed if more people are to be persuaded to install them:

Would you want these big things dangling from your ceiling? (Milton Keynes)

What are the statistics on sprinklers going off accidentally? Don't they go off all over the place and soak everything? (Milton Keynes)

Prioritise prevention work in more remote communities

46. There was no objection to B&MKFRS prioritising prevention work in more remote communities, with participants at Buckingham suggesting that the Service should capitalise on the 'close-knit'

nature of Buckingham in enlisting community volunteers to promote its safety messages in rural areas:

Education and prevention makes sense doesn't it? (Milton Keynes)

Bucks is a close-knit community and there are people who will volunteer to promote prevention work in the community. (Buckingham)

More use of smaller 'rapid intervention' appliances

47. Making more use of smaller 'rapid intervention' appliances was encouraged insofar as they could: offer flexibility; be used to assess an incident and establish the need for a full fire engine; and be deployed to manage and control incidents and prevent escalation:

More flexible levels of response are needed... (High Wycombe)

That would make sense for the rural areas where they're going up lanes rather than roads (Milton Keynes)

You can use the smaller vehicles to go out and assess the incident to see if a full fire engine is needed (Buckingham)

The idea of using different pumps is a good idea to get the resources at the incident...two may turn up in their smaller vehicle initially and the response can then be made up from elsewhere (High Wycombe)

Having a small vehicle that gets there quicker has got to be good...it may have the potential to control something until back-up comes so that it is less serious in the long-term. (High Wycombe)

48. Further, at High Wycombe it was said that utilising smaller vehicles more frequently would *motivate the firefighters who will go out more often. (High Wycombe)*

Move full-time crew around to support on-call stations when RDS cover is low

49. Using full-time firefighters to support on-call stations when RDS cover is low was considered sensible. One participant at Aylesbury also suggested recruiting RDS firefighters in urban areas *to cover for wholetime firefighters who could then be moved out to support the rural areas. (Aylesbury)*

'Simplify' training for on-call firefighters

50. This was the proposal that caused participants the most concern insofar as, if RDS firefighters are trained to tackle only the more 'routine' incidents, they may be somewhat skill deficient if called upon to attend anything more 'complex' (or indeed something that seems routine at the outset but escalates into something that requires specialist skills). Some typical comments were:

Don't change training; it is a risk (Aylesbury)

Is there a risk of when you have a more complicated job and need them to provide extra resource then you have to contend with mixed skill levels rather than having the same across the board? (High Wycombe)

It's fine saying they're only going to do basic stuff but I'd worry about those incidents that look routine at the outset but turn out to be something a lot more complicated...especially if there's only a retained crew there to deal with them (Chesham)

I went to Great Missenden station and was really impressed with the knowledge and confidence of the guys there. I'd just be concerned that if they become under-trained and under-experienced, will they know enough to keep themselves safe? (Chesham)

Would the on-call crews be called as a secondary 'force' to a larger fire where those specialist skills would come into play? (Chesham)

There can be chemical spills even in the very rural areas so the on-call firefighters need to be able to cover it. Risk is very dispersed around small industrial estates and farms (Buckingham)

Modernise the on-call working contract

51. Participants supported B&MKFRS's proposal to modernise the on-call working contract by allowing RDS firefighters to 'book on' for fewer hours a week when cover is needed rather than the current 120 hours a week. This, it was felt, would make the role inherently more attractive:

You need to reduce the time they're available (Aylesbury)

120 hours seems like a no-goer (Chesham)

Maybe it's the 120 hours that's the real issue and it's about changing the working contract (Milton Keynes)

You should definitely negotiate hours with the firefighters to make the job more attractive. (High Wycombe)

Incentivise by paying a premium for on-call cover during working hours

52. Incentivising, while considered sensible in principle, was considered unworkable by some who asked:

Are the people actually there in the area to incentivise? (High Wycombe)

This isn't going to work is it because the people aren't there to incentivise? (Chesham)

53. Further, others were concerned that such a scheme could attract the 'wrong' people to the Service – and also questioned how incentive payments could be afforded and would be viewed by the Service as a whole:

Would incentivising be feasible within the budget? (Milton Keynes)

The risk with incentivising is that you may not get the people who actually want to do it for the good of the job; they're just doing it for the money (High Wycombe)

Would incentive salaries be unpopular or popular in the service? (Buckingham)

Other suggestions

54. Participants across the five groups made a number of additional suggestions to overcome B&MKFRS's on-call crewing difficulties, namely: widening the five minute catchment area; incentivising local employers to release staff for on-call duties; relaxing the on-call recruitment criteria where possible; and targeting home workers, the self-employed and early retirees to a greater degree:

You could lengthen the time and distance beyond five minutes to widen the catchment area (Aylesbury)

Offer to train some employees to gain different skills in return for RDS availability from employers (Aylesbury)

Can you look at your criteria for recruitment to see if there is somewhere where you can be more flexible? Is there any way to relax some of the criteria so it's not so rigid (Milton Keynes)

More people work from home now; you should target them (Buckingham)

More people are working part-time now and there are increasing numbers of self-employed people these days (Chesham)

What is the retirement age for an on-call firefighter? People retire early now so they could be targeted. (Chesham)

Overall

55. Overall, it was generally agreed that B&MKFRS should attempt to improve daytime on-call availability by at least trialling most of the proposed measures discussed above. However, several cautioned against simplifying on-call training for the reasons specified earlier.

Response Capacity

56. One of B&MKFRS's key challenges is to balance the resources needed for low-level, day-to-day demand and rare, large-scale or multiple incidents. As such, it feels it must consider more economical ways to deal with rare and high risk (for example via more collaboration with and support from neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services).
57. The discussions highlighted some initial concern about this proposal, most notably around B&MKFRS's ongoing ability to respond to infrequent high risk with fewer resources and relying on support from neighbouring FRSs who may themselves be 'in the same boat':

I have big alarm bells ringing at the idea of reducing an emergency service because I think of the 'what ifs' (Aylesbury)

What happens if next year we have a ridiculously hot summer and there are fires all over the place and we've got no resources to deal with them? (Chesham)

It's impossible to predict how many fires there will be in Buckinghamshire each year so you surely have to model it on the maximum possible (Chesham)

The surrounding areas are thinking in the same terms (Aylesbury)

How will this work if all the surrounding counties are running down their resources? (Buckingham)

They're all in the same boat and are going through the same process so will the resources be available from elsewhere. (High Wycombe)

58. Other worries were around: potential response delays if relying on 'over-the-border' cover (though there was also some acknowledgement that this may be less critical in the case of large-scale incidents that require significant resources from many areas); and the cost of mutual aid:

What is the 'community cost' of bringing in resources from a wider area to assist in covering big incidents if that delays an effective response? (Aylesbury)

How much of an impact does the additional time taken to deploy across counties have on the quality of the response? Is response going to be adversely affected? Or is it the case that so many resources are needed that a delay in one fire engine or one not being available around the corner is not going to make much of a difference? (High Wycombe)

What if Royal Berkshire or whoever have an incident and they need their engines and we're stuck with nothing...and it's the travelling time as well from other areas (Milton Keynes)

What would the funding implications of mutual aid be? (High Wycombe)

59. Ultimately though, most participants understood the need to examine and possibly rationalise response capacity, even if they worried about the implications of doing so. Indeed, those at Buckingham unanimously considered it reasonable for B&MKFRS to review (and possibly reduce) the level of resourcing needed to deal with large or multiple incidents if there is resilience from nearby areas, as did majorities at the other groups – on the condition though that the potential reductions are made to a sensible level that offers a degree of flexibility. Some typical comments were:

This sounds like a good and feasible idea (Buckingham)

It's about risk management (Chesham)

Do the research and risk assessment (Aylesbury)

The incident curve is going down and down so it probably needs to be looked at; there has to be a cut-off point somewhere (Chesham)

There is some movement with the smaller, quieter stations; something could be done (Aylesbury)

I think it's ok as long as you can mitigate risk by using resources from outside the area (Chesham)

It doesn't make a lot of economic sense to retain the level of resources that they've had from when the risk was a lot higher. They have to be reviewed but you have to have contingencies (Milton Keynes)

This idea is ok if it is feasible and reduces costs without increasing risk... (Buckingham)

Risk is very low in this county so these situations are manageable; we should not exaggerate risk (Buckingham)

You need to retain overall flexibility to cover the incidents where they occur (Aylesbury)

If you take it to baseline level there will be people who won't like it, you have to get the balance right. (High Wycombe)

60. Essentially, the following quotation epitomises the view of most participants on this issue:

As long as the reduction in service is not more than the reduction in risk then we're always going to be safer day-to-day. But those big incidents are going to defy that kind of thinking entirely and you have to be able to get the resources there when you have them...but ideally in a way that means you don't have to have them in reserve the whole time. (Chesham)

61. There was also a sense that this would simply be a case of formalising existing cross-border (and indeed wider) co-operation – and that it may even be a positive change in the context of reducing incidents insofar as a smaller pool of firefighters would be mobilised more frequently and would more easily maintain their skills and competencies:

Surely you do this now already? (Buckingham)

If we take Buncefield, all those resources from all over the country were there and the country coped. And the fire at Windsor Castle; there were resources from neighbouring counties there. It's about how we can do that more routinely and effectively in future (High Wycombe)

If the firefighters don't go to enough incidents they lose their skills so reductions in numbers can be a positive thing. (High Wycombe)

62. The few who objected to B&MKFRS even considering reducing its resource capacity typically made comments along the following lines:

Fire is a big risk to life and you can't really put a value on a life that could have been saved had the facilities be available. So to try and economise too much is too big a risk. (Milton Keynes)

63. Finally, on a related note, one participant at High Wycombe asked: *what drives keeping the wholetime firefighters around during the early hours when the risk is lower?* (High Wycombe)

Using Resources Differently

64. B&MKFRS supports other emergency services like the Ambulance Service through, for example, the Co-responder Scheme - whereby the former responds to emergency 999 calls such as heart attacks, strokes and asthma attacks. Such a scheme has been operating with the South Central Ambulance Service from Great Missenden Fire Station since 2011. This trial has been extended to Amersham/Chesham, High Wycombe and Marlow and the Service is looking to develop and expand it into other areas.

65. Initially, some participants could not understand how Co-responding benefits the Fire and Rescue Service, and there was concern that it could result in conflicting priorities; that is, that fire engines could be taken 'off the run' to fulfil duties to the Ambulance Service:

I can see how this is great for the Ambulance Service and for society but I don't see how it helps the Fire Service (Chesham)

If you have a simultaneous call - if a fire call comes in when you're Co-responding - what do you do? (Milton Keynes)

Is the fire engine taken out of action when you do Co-responding? (Aylesbury)

66. More notably though, participants at Buckingham and especially Milton Keynes questioned how compatible Co-responding is with B&MKFRS's RDS availability issues:

But if you cannot get on-call firefighters how will this work? (Buckingham)

In theory I think it's great but I worry that it's taking resources away from the Fire Service, especially if they're struggling for on-call staff. I worry that one person not being available would stop a fire engine going out in those areas that are short-staffed (Milton Keynes)

I'm trying to get my head around the fact that on the one hand you are lacking in staff and on the other hand you are donating staff to another service (Milton Keynes)

Doesn't it drain your workforce? You're complaining that you don't have enough on-call firefighters... (Milton Keynes)

67. Overall, however, most people agreed that Co-responding is a positive initiative that should be rolled-out as widely as possible, providing it is cost-effective for B&MKFRS and that it does not negatively impact on the Service fulfilling its core responsibilities:

There is a lot of free Fire and Rescue time that could be used effectively (Aylesbury)

It makes perfect sense! (Aylesbury)

If he's a firefighter he's multi-skilled and should be helping out in other areas...doing something else to help lives (Milton Keynes)

It would be a local person helping a local person which would be beneficial (High Wycombe)

It will depend on the costs but you can make better use of some personnel. (Buckingham)

68. In addition to its obvious benefits, there was recognition that Co-responder activity could improve the resilience of some quieter rural stations – and that the reduction in incident levels increases the feasibility of firefighters being able to do ‘other things’:

It will make it more feasible to keep what you have got (Buckingham)

I keep thinking about that graph of incidents coming down and thinking about all the time the firefighters aren't being used...it's not really acceptable so I think 'why not?' (Milton Keynes)

69. It was, however, said at Buckingham that explanations must be offered to the public as to exactly how the Co-responder scheme works in practice – as people may be somewhat nervous about being attended to by a firefighter in a medical emergency (though others at Milton Keynes disagreed and said that *when you're having an asthma attack and can't breathe you don't care who's holding that oxygen mask*):

Is this a matter of last resort if there is nothing else available? I wouldn't want a firefighter to come to me for a heart attack unless it was a last resort (Buckingham)

There will be some concerns about what the Fire and Rescue Service will be called out for. People could question what they can do in medical emergencies (Buckingham)

The public need to know what might happen in what cases. (Buckingham)

Delivering Services Differently

70. B&MKFRS is looking to explore ways to deliver services more efficiently and for opportunities for revenue generation. Possibilities might include privatisation and employee-owned ‘public service mutuals’. The discussions in all five focus groups centred on the former.
71. Only a very small minority of participants were in favour of privatisation (and a few others were undecided but felt they might be able to support it if done properly):

I'm in favour. They would be governed and would take over existing expertise (Aylesbury)

I know the Surrey example which works well...privatisation is the coming trend in all services if it cuts costs (Buckingham)

I think we should look at all the options...look at why it's been successful in Denmark (Chesham)

I would need more information but I suppose it could work (Buckingham)

I have a divided opinion. A lot of airport functions are privatised and this is smaller scale but it is also a bit scary. (Aylesbury)

72. The overwhelming majority though was firmly opposed to privatising B&MKFRS both in principle and for fear that the quality of service would suffer in the pursuit of profit and from a lack of accountability. Some of the many typical comments were:

I dislike the principle (Buckingham)

It's not compatible with a quality service (Buckingham)

It would have to be profit-making and accountable to shareholders (Milton Keynes)

It would cease to be a service...companies are not going to say they will run it at a loss; they will be trying to screw as much as possible out of it (Milton Keynes)

It's directly accountable to Government when it's a public service...not to a bank somewhere in London (Milton Keynes)

There's a mindset that goes with who you're accountable to. If it's privately owned there is a mindset that's about profit. When it is publicly-owned...the mindset is different as they are accountable to the public (Milton Keynes)

Tenders can be good but it is about profit. It will all be about low prices and reducing quality (Aylesbury)

Keeping the public sector public is important; you get better quality and accountability (High Wycombe)

It would be all about profit and money; we should provide a service (Aylesbury)

I don't like privatisation and selling our assets for others' profit. (Aylesbury)

73. Participants were certainly very keen to see B&MKFRS exploring other avenues for efficiency savings (such as station mergers and fire engine rationalisation) rather than privatisation – and there was a definite feeling that the emergency services should be protected as far as possible from the threat of it:

I would prefer to see combining stations and measures like that...like Beaconsfield and Gerrard's Cross for example (High Wycombe)

I think there are other things to consider first before we look at privatisation...value for money, efficiency and reform (High Wycombe)

I would be dead against it. I think our Fire Service is well run and offers value for money. So I want to see them be creative and think differently with the threat of privatisation threatening from behind! Like a Sword of Damocles over their heads to improve and become more efficient (High Wycombe)

I think there needs to be a distinction between emergency services being privatised and other services. With rail, there's often a sense that profit is being put above service quality...this is upsetting but wouldn't cause the same kind of moral outrage as if it was done in the emergency services (Chesham)

I'm against it for this specialist public service; not for emergencies (Buckingham)

There are certain services in our country that should be maintained by the Government and this is one of them (Chesham)

Indeed, as one participant strikingly commented:

I would rather have a public fire service and lose an engine at the end of my road than have a private one at the end of my road. (High Wycombe)

74. There was concern at Chesham that controversial proposals would not be subject to the same rigorous scrutiny as they are currently; for example, one participant questioned whether a private company would undertake consultation sessions to discuss important issues (such as the one in which they were taking part):

Would a private fire service do the same sort of consultation sessions as this or would it just be 'we're shutting this station'. (Chesham)

75. It should also be noted that people's typically negative views of privatisation seem to have been strongly influenced by previous experiences, as the following comments show:

The way privatisation has gone here so far hasn't been great has it? (Chesham)

Privatisation through the years has mean losses to services. All these mistakes have already been made so why go down that road? (Milton Keynes)

Look at the railways...disaster. Look at the energy providers... (Milton Keynes)

I have seen the effects of privatisation and it leads to falling quality at the expense of making a profit (High Wycombe)

Something needs to be done but I wouldn't like to see it privatised on the basis of experience elsewhere. (High Wycombe)

76. Despite the general antipathy towards privatisation, some were keen to see it being explored in relation to specific specialist functions (or even part-privatisation of the whole service) – and one participant at High Wycombe, who was against privatisation in principle, was of the view that it should be pursued as an option if the Service does not address what they saw as its over-resourcing:

I'm unsure but risk is reducing and it might be feasible for some services (Aylesbury)

I am in favour for some specialist roles like rope rescue if it saves money (Aylesbury)

It is feasible for specialist functions (Buckingham)

I'm not against the idea of individual things being privatised...like fire engine maintenance (Chesham)

You could look at individual services. The vehicle leasing is possibly the optimal one to look at as you could have standards and performance indicators (Chesham)

Is there an incentive for some big businesses to have their name attached to the Fire Service? So some part of it would be public and some private...it would be overseen by a public body but part-privatised to allow for some extra funding. You could have the 'NatWest fire engine' down the road! (Chesham)

It's not surprising that private companies are looking at this and saying 'we could do this cheaper' given the level of over-resourcing at the moment. They must be looking at areas to save and deliver things in a much more cost-effective way. If things are the same in five years' time it should happen. I'm against it but if we are in the same position in terms of over-resourcing then it should be considered. (High Wycombe)

77. Further, one participant at Chesham commented that:

I'd rather not see privatisation; I'd rather move towards higher taxes and better services on a national level. But if we're in a situation that we can't control and the country's political climate is moving towards more privatisation and less tax...if the quality of service could be compromised if they don't privatise then I can see that it has to be an option. (Chesham)

Fire Stations

78. Fire Stations have historically been located in town and village centres to respond to house and commercial fires, but the Fire and Rescue Service now responds to a far wider range of incidents (such as road traffic collisions and animal rescues) which often do not occur in built-up areas. As such, the optimal location and size requirement of fire stations is constantly changing, and B&MKFS suggests a need to examine and possibly reconfigure station locations and sizes to match demand – considering options such as relocating, merging with nearby stations and co-locating with other emergency services.
79. The need to examine the location of fire stations was raised spontaneously at Buckingham, Chesham and High Wycombe – not only in the context of BMKFRS's stations generally, but especially in relation to possibly merging those near the borders with other FRSs:

Where stations are, is that historical? They may not necessarily be in the right place... (Chesham)

You could re-site some of your stations to be better located for risk; you could reduce appliances by strategic station re-sitings (Buckingham)

You could have strategic alliances and re-site stations to get better and more economical overall cover (Buckingham)

The question is do you really collaborate and do things like shut down two stations across county boundaries and put one in the middle to serve the two counties? (High Wycombe)

80. Indeed, several participants were surprised that such monitoring is not an ongoing process – and some even suggested specific areas that could potentially be considered for change in future:

I would have thought you'd be doing that anyway...all organisations and businesses should be looking at them (Chesham)

Surely this has been ongoing for years hasn't it? (Milton Keynes)

It would be unreasonable not to do this! (Buckingham)

Risk is changing...the Buckingham station has been there for a long time but is it in the right place now? (Buckingham)

In Milton Keynes it would make a lot of economic sense to merge Great Holm and Bletchley into one bigger station on one of the grid roads. It doesn't seem to make sense having two manned stations so close to each other (Milton Keynes)

81. Despite this, although participants understood B&MKFRS's need to examine fire station locations and sizes in principle, there was significant concern (especially at Chesham and Milton Keynes) about the possible implications of this in practice. People are very 'attached' to their local stations and it was said that, as a result, there would be strong public opposition to any proposed changes to them. Some typical comments were:

Objectively I think 'of course they should be looking at whether they're in the right places' but I also think 'don't take Great Missenden away'. That would be a general reaction I think...our hearts will be saying 'yes, relocate' but our heads will be saying 'no, not mine' (Chesham)

If you propose to do something with a particular station you are going to have to have rock solid evidence that says 'you won't be any less safe than you are'. Closing stations is going to be your hardest sell out of anything you do so by all means look at it - you have to - but it's going to be a tough one to get approval for (Chesham)

If your local fire station has two big, red shiny engines and these are replaced with one engine and one smaller vehicle, we're not really going to notice much difference...whereas if your station disappears, that's going to hurt. And even if your pattern of risk is such that it will make no difference, it's still going to hurt as these buildings (like police stations and libraries) are symbols for people and are more than the sum of their parts...they're talismans and it's more than just about the physical building (Chesham)

If you merged, I suppose my feelings on it would all depend on where you were putting the new one (Milton Keynes)

I would be very happy for you to move any fire station you want as long as you leave my nearest one where it is! And that would be the way everyone would feel. (Milton Keynes)

As such, given that any future proposals in relation to fire stations are likely to be controversial – it was said that the reasoning behind them must be carefully and widely explained to ensure that as many people as possible understand their rationale:

You need to have a good PR person to make it palatable for people. Unless you sit here for two hours listening to this information you are just going to be like 'it's my fire station, don't take it away'. (High Wycombe)

82. There was some debate at Chesham as to whether communities could contribute to the running of their local fire station via a 'community charge' of sorts. Some endorsed the idea, but most did not for fear of creating a two-tier, undemocratic system whereby those who can afford to pay have a vastly superior service to those who cannot:

Could communities be persuaded to pay, say, £50 a year for their local fire station? (Chesham)

Doesn't that separate communities into those who can pay and can't pay? It would be unfair because you'll have communities like Prestwood who can afford to pay for a community fire station but in another area in somewhere like Aylesbury they won't be able to. It's how the Fire Service started but we don't want to go back to that do we? (Chesham)

Anything that creates a two-tier system where 'this fire station is better than that one' is a bad idea for society in general. (Chesham)

83. Finally, participants at Milton Keynes demonstrated a great deal of trust in B&MKFRS, commenting that anything it decides to propose in future would be done in the public interest – and that it would certainly not jeopardise the safety of the people of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes in any way:

If the Fire Service decide to move or merge fire stations they'd be doing it for the benefit of the community not just to save money...the job they do they're not going to put people's lives in danger. Some people overlook that at times (Milton Keynes)

I don't think they would put anyone's lives at risk. (Milton Keynes)

Overall Comments

Participants across all groups were generally very tolerant of B&MKFRS's intentions as set out in its Public Safety Plan 2015-2020, even if there was some concern about the future implications of certain proposals as outlined above. Indeed, on the whole it was accepted that the Service must evolve and modernise in accordance with changing risk levels (though it was said at Aylesbury that public services *are very entrenched in the way things are and are very reluctant to change*) - and the proposals under discussion were considered to be sensible and positive in enabling it to do so.



This project was carried out in compliance with ISO 20252:2012.

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Report of Staff Focus Groups 2015 – 20 Public Safety Plan

Purpose

The purpose of the focus groups was to give staff an opportunity to engage in a structured discussion of the Public Safety Plan with colleagues, question management associated with the organisation's planning processes and offer feedback on the Plan's content.

Facilitation

The focus groups were facilitated internally by the following officers:

- **Stuart Gowanlock** Corporate Planning Manager (Both Groups)
- **Nadia Al-Sabouni** Senior Risk Management Analyst (Both Groups)

The role of the facilitators was to answer technical questions associated with the content of the Plan and to record the views and issues raised by the participants.

Participants were assured that any feedback or comments offered would not be attributed to any named individual when reporting the findings / outcomes of the meetings.

Schedule of Meetings

Date	Number of Participants	Recruited from
30 th Sept 2014	6	Support Staff: People and Organisational Development, Service Development, Service Delivery and Service Transformation
	2	Operational Staff: People & Organisational Development and Service Delivery
2 nd Oct 2014	3	Support Staff: Finance and Assets, People and Organisational Development and Service Transformation
	8	Operational Staff: People and Organisational Development and Service Delivery

Recruitment

Participants were recruited via advertisements on the BFRS Intranet and through line management channels. Participation was on a voluntary basis. Also all BFRS staff were given the opportunity to feed back their views on the Plan using the online facility hosted by

Opinion Research Services Limited (ORS), online blog on the BFRS website or any other method convenient to them.

Representativeness

A total of 19 staff from across the organisation took part in the two focus groups – ten operational and nine support staff. Slightly more than half (11/19) were male, 3/19 were middle and 6/19 were supervisory operational managers. There was greater representation from the north of the county than the south.

The range of views expressed cannot be certified as necessarily being representative of staff as a whole. However all participants engaged in the process constructively and, as the findings demonstrate, offered a wide range of views and opinions.

Discussion Agenda

The basic format and process for the meetings was similar to that used by ORS for the Public Engagement Forums, however less time was devoted to providing background information in relation to the nature of the Fire & Rescue Service and its operations given much greater familiarity with this as would be expected from staff.

The meetings were structured as follows:

1. **Commercial risk** (pages 5-7): Participants were given some information about European sprinkler policy, statistics on automatic fire alarms, explanation of business continuity planning and the primary authority scheme. They were then asked whether we should consider new ways of managing risk in commercial and non-domestic buildings, such as sprinkler installation, reviewing our AFA policy, exploring business continuity planning and the primary authority scheme.
2. **Response capacity** (pages 8-10): Participants were shown information on patterns of risk and demand, which highlighted the challenge of striking the right balance between daily demand, whilst also maintaining a proportionate and cost-effective way of managing more infrequent risks. They were then asked whether we should consider new ways of dealing with infrequent large emergencies (managing resilience).
3. **Station footprint** (pages 11-13): Participants were shown information on geographic patterns of demand, highlighting natural response catchment areas. They were then asked whether we should consider adjusting our station footprint to help balance our response capacity with demand and if so, should we consider moving, merging or relocating stations.
4. **Crewing models & safeguarding communities in low demand areas** (pages 14-16): Participants were shown the challenges we are facing with providing RDS cover when and where it is needed. They were then asked to consider a range of methods for managing risk in more remote locations where we currently rely on RDS.
5. **Using our resources in different ways** (page 17-18): Participants were reminded of the different ways we currently use resources across the service and asked whether they thought our resources should be used in this way.
6. **Alternative service delivery models** (pages 19-21): Participants were first briefed on the wider economic and financial context and then shown an example of an alternative

service delivery model that grew out of the public sector. They were then asked whether they felt it was reasonable to explore other ways of delivering our service, for example: employee-owned businesses, mutuals, co-operatives, social enterprises, and/or privatisation.

7. **Other comments** (page 22-23): Finally participants were asked whether they had any final questions or comments

The meetings alternated between the presentation of key concepts and principles and group discussion and feedback. Participants were also encouraged to ask questions freely throughout the process. All feedback was captured through audio recordings which were transcribed.

Each meeting lasted from two and a half to three hours.

The Report

The report overviews the range of opinions and views offered by staff and summarises the main points made and issues raised at the meetings rather than providing a verbatim transcript. Verbatim quotes are used, in **blue**, where they capture a point succinctly or vividly and where possible assigned to the group that raised them. Each section is summarised at the beginning in a **paragraph**.

The fact that a particular view point or issue is included does not mean that it was agreed with or endorsed by the group(s) as a whole as the purpose of this report is to represent the range of views offered within and across the two groups rather than to necessarily reflect the 'weight' of opinion in relation to particular issues.

Commercial risk:

Should we consider new ways of managing risk in commercial and non-domestic buildings?

The groups were reasonably well aligned on this topic. **Sprinklers** were seen as a reasonable option in principle, though the financial constraints of businesses we target could be a limiting factor to its uptake, so a tiered approach might be better, furthermore some thought it could be considered hypocritical of us to push for sprinklers when we don't have them in our own buildings. **Reviewing the AFA policy** was considered justifiable based on the high numbers that turn out to be false alarms, but concerns were raised with regard to how this might conflict with our corporate policy of attending every AFA and this change of direction could have implications for our organisational reputation. **Providing Business Continuity Planning** was met positively by the groups as it was considered a good opportunity to diversify and adapt in line with the external changing world, however some group members had reservations in terms of how it might impact our current service delivery and how it would be implemented. The **Primary Authority Scheme** was considered good in principle, though many raised concerns surrounding the impact on our reputation if we selected our partners poorly.

e.g. Sprinkler installation

Both groups:

- **It might be considered hypocritical of us to expect businesses to install sprinklers, "when we don't have them in our own buildings"**
- **Could have cost implications for small businesses, where "it could be financially prohibitive in terms of installation and upkeep and may do more harm than good"**
- **Legislation is needed to ensure consistency across the country. The Welsh Assembly policy was highlighted, whereby all new build residential properties have to have sprinklers installed**

Group 1:

- **A more tiered approach (compartmentalisation) would be better than a blanket approach (entire premises) to help make it less financially prohibitive for businesses**
- **What scope there is for applying more pressure via building regulations?**

Group 2:

- **We should encourage but can't enforce**
- **Should consider residential properties where risk is greater, not just commercial premises "realistically, the last death in a workplace due to fire was in Milton Keynes in 1996 and yet since 1996 we know that people have died in their homes...work place**

legislation is a lot tighter now and the onus is on those companies to manage their own risk”

- **Consider working more closely with insurance companies to help incentivise making homes safer in return for reducing their pay outs**

e.g. Review AFA policy

Both groups:

- **Seem like an unnecessary drain on resources**, “the emergency services should be the last resort, they shouldn’t be relied upon to do their [business’s] job for them,” **and whilst we should still respond, we could reconsider amending the weight of response**, “just because an alarm sounds, doesn’t mean we need to generate an emergency response”, **and our call challenging process could be improved** “we ask whether they have spoken to the site manager, but we go regardless of whether they have or haven’t...a lot of the time, we turn up on site and they tell us that they tried calling back to say they don’t need us and it was a false alarm...but we still turn up.”
- **Work being done to reduce the number of false alarms is highly beneficial and should be continued**
- **Attending all AFAs sets us apart from other fire and rescue services and we should be mindful of our current policy encouraging businesses to relocated to Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes because we respond to every AFA**
- **If we have the capacity we should attend AFAs**, “if you get just one AFA that turns out to be a fire, then you have done more good than harm”

e.g. Business continuity planning

Both groups:

- **Should use our expertise and experience wherever it is beneficial to make the community safer** “we should consider raising people’s awareness so that they can preserve their businesses”
- **Should enhance our operating model to be more future proofed** “but we have to think beyond core, if you want us to have some kind of future, and potential to still be around, we’ve got to say we can do more than our core stuff, we’ve got to be prepared to be flexible”

Group 1:

- **Is there any liability when offering this kind of service?**

Group 2:

- **Diversifying and expanding our function beyond what we are legislated to do, could impact on our core work putting the organisation at risk, and introduce cost implications during the setup**, “it is not a statutory duty, so why are we proposing to use resources doing it”, “when the budget is coming down, we can’t then start taking on new things, because we haven’t got the money to do it”

e.g. Primary Authority Scheme

Both groups:

- **Mindful of brand or ethos of company you partner with, otherwise we might inadvertently damage our reputation**, “it is a really good idea if you partner with a company that fits in with our ideas and the authority’s as well”, “Hertfordshire have a partnership with Tesco’s...but last week Tesco’s didn’t have a particularly good week [in the press]...there’s reputation to consider, if we have gone into partnership with these people and we end up becoming more reliant on revenues”
- **Need to understand how our organisation might benefit**, “do we get additional funding?” and “why would we want to partner with any of them, when there is no benefit to us”
- **Could introduce some unhealthy competition between fire and rescue services** “with everyone becoming focussed on trying to get the big blue chip ones”

Response Capacity:

Should we consider new ways of dealing with major infrequent emergencies (managing resilience)?

Both groups considered that there was scope to restructure the response delivery model, though the extent to which response could be re-scaled in absolute terms was viewed differently between the groups.

Participants in Group 1 discussed how changing the planning assumptions can enable greater flexibility to do more with less. In general they felt a review was long overdue and with better strategic and tactical management, there was plenty of capacity within the system for a safe reduction in overall resourcing. They wanted to take this one step further and see more analysis looking at precise skill sets and equipment needed to efficiently match response to demand, rather than the more top-level appliance-based approach.

Group 2 were less convinced that there was sufficient capacity in the system to manage a reduction safely highlighting local areas where the service is currently struggling to maintain cover.

Both groups suggested that the current RDS model (terms and conditions) was prohibitive to fundamentally reshaping the service. They also recognised that measuring capacity could be improved by reviewing the number of personnel and skill sets needed not just appliances.

Group 1:

- **A review is long over-due, there is plenty of capacity within the system if greater flexibility was enabled to manage it properly,** “it hasn’t fundamentally changed for a long time...we have plenty of people in the system, we are just using them very badly at the moment”
- **Change our planning assumptions, move away from generic appliance-based perspective and consider personnel and skill sets required,** “we still view it very much as we need an appliance and an appliance needs a minimum of four persons with certain skill sets, so thinking about personnel and not just appliances”
- **Some duty-systems statuses are political remnants and not a reflection of risk,** “there are a number of stations that have the duty systems they do for political reasons, not risk based reasons”
- **Not necessary to resource for risk all of the time, we should adopt a tiered approach for scaling up from demand to risk,** “the first call would be to go to neighbouring brigades, because that is what you would naturally do, that is why we have regional arrangements with them...rather than having everybody here ready for Buncefield all of the time”
- **Joint recruitment with the TA to recruit the public to scale up from demand to risk,** “in terms of getting the public to help, I think that could be really beneficial...but it would need to be structured. You could use the TA to recruit and interview lots of

people...because we are probably going to be chasing the same kinds of people. There is also more we could do with big companies"

- **Recruit RDS according to risk and need**, "Every day is RDS recruitment day, yet we still have lots of RDS, we just use them really badly...the RDS tell us when they want to work. If we planned and recruited according to risk and need, then it might be easier to retain...we might only want them a couple of evenings or a couple of days a week. That would be better on them, better on their families and better on the employer"

Group 2:

- **Need to understand how many appliances we realistically use and have available as well as where they are coming from?** "How many times have we actually had 30 pumps available, we are lucky if we have a dozen", **if reducing overall resourcing, we need to ensure this doesn't systematically reduce the available capacity below a safe level.** "Although we have put 12 pumps there, 12 of those pumps might not even be ours anyway". **Need to understand why we don't use all of our own pumps e.g. defects, unavailable crew, not the nearest appliance etc.**
- **Need to define our public safety performance measures, the public value and understand response times and those should be preserved**, "if you were to ask a member of the public what they would measure...it would be response times...obviously 1 minute is better than 2 minutes, which is better than 3 minutes and so on...if you reshape the service, but keep the response times at the same level or better, would be my opinion".
- **Public value reassurance**, "even if you weren't doing any [operational] good, but the public were reassured, are you not doing good in a different way?"
- **If a station is moved, the rationale will have to be explained to the public, since they may have chosen to live in that location owing to the proximity to the fire station**, "you have longer response times in more remote areas and people accept that, you moved there, you live there, you know you haven't...but if you've got a fire station next door, those are the ones whose response times are going to go up and you've got to ask why"
- **Need to understand the measurable impact of Prevention versus Response before shifting away from Response, furthermore the public value Response over Prevention**, "If you can't quantify how many lives you've actually saved by doing one activity versus doing prevention work, we can put 20,000 smoke alarms up, but we can't tell you how many people we would have actually saved. So the public that pay our money and our wages, are not overly worried about the safety measures you have put in there and how you made them safer, all they want to know is that when they pick up the phone when they need you that you will be there as soon as possible."
- **Don't want to lose our good reputation as a dependable emergency service**, "I think we need to look at better ways of resourcing for it [infrequent high risk events]...the public pick up the phone and expect us to be there, we have a good reputation for doing that compared to other emergency services"
- **We need to understand how the incident type profile has changed over the past 10 years, to understand what kind of resourcing is needed and the time commitment associated with that**, "we are beginning to see more big incidents creep in, Swinley Forest in 2012, Floods in 2013/14 and then with climate change we can expect

longer drier summers and wetter warmer winters...what about chemical suicides, they might only use 2-3 pumps, but they last at least 24 hours and are multi-agency”.

- **We need to better understand what our neighbouring brigades are doing, if they are reducing their pumps as well, that could have implications for our reliance on them when scaling up for risk**
- **Need to consider how many personnel are on a pump** “historic data will be showing pumps going out with 5-6 crew on, whereas now they are going out with 4 crew, so we may need more pumps to provide personnel”,...“But then you don’t necessarily need more fire engines to get them there”
- **The RDS model is out of date and we shouldn’t factor it into our plans** “the reason we don’t have 31 pumps available is because the RDS model is out of date. If we are talking about remodelling the service around them, we are not going to get it, so there is no point talking about it”

Station Footprint:

Should we consider adjusting our station footprint to help balance our response capacity with demand and if so, should we consider moving, merging or relocating stations?

Both groups were open to considering altering the station ground footprint, but highlighted the importance of considering the cost-implications of change both financially and in terms of impact on staff and the community, who may have strong views if a station close to them was to be moved further away.

Group 1 identified the Milton Keynes and M40 corridor catchments as areas where station mergers would likely be appropriate, given the close proximity of some of the stations within those catchments. This group also highlighted the reducing significance and relevance of the concept of station footprints with the introduction of dynamic mobilising.

Group 2 were keen to see more resource modelling to better understand the implications of reconfiguring resources, however intuitively felt that there was scope for change within the Amersham/Chesham and M40 catchment areas. Participants in this group tended to take a different view from Group 1 on reconfiguring the Milton Keynes catchment area by moving peripheral stations to the centre, as it was felt this did not sufficiently reflect future demand as the city/town expands outwards. This group suggested that the willingness to realign stations has always been there, but external factors, such as lack of political will or infeasibility of finding staff in the right locations were preventing this.

Group 1:

- **Be mindful of the terminology used between merging and closing**, “we should define what a merger is, because one would probably be closing and resources will be sent to the new one, you might face a lot of resistance from the first station and their community”
- **Ability to merge stations is dependent on the layout of the urban and rural areas within the catchment areas and planning assumptions.** “In Milton Keynes we could have the same number of pumps going out with fewer personnel, whereas it probably wouldn’t work in Aylesbury, given the shape of the station ground. However, Wycombe, Marlow and Beaconsfield, something could be done...there aren’t any targets within the latest Public Safety Plan in terms of turnout times for example. If you had something centrally in Milton Keynes you could get everywhere with the grid roads, so that would make sense”
- **Retirement degradation profiles are causing problems for maintaining cover and training [in the current management framework], so it would be good to formalise merging stations either physically or virtually.** “It [merging] could be positive for Milton Keynes, because of the retirement profile leading to shortages of staff on each station, when combined with leave, this is throwing up issues. We are being sent to support other stations anyway because we can’t maintain levels on our own. This creates a lot of problems for management and moral. One of the things we struggle with

is maintaining our training and competencies, there are ways of managing it, but it is often very reactive and makes it difficult for us to plan”.

- **Need to consider human resources when embarking upon change**, “they are all options we need to look at, but no matter what we look at, we need to consider the impact on staff, because there will be costs associated with merging stations, new ones, closing them and only having a short-term benefit of selling them, but that money could be reinvested”.
- **Should move away from fixed station grounds and consider resources dynamically**, “this is where scenario modelling would come in. I think one way to approach it would be to move away from station grounds completely and identify optimal locations and then build up to determine the resourcing needed and the training”.

Group 2:

- **Mindful of how information was presented in terms of reputation**, “to a general member of the public, it is going to look as though a firefighter is just sitting around for 50% of the time, not doing anything”.
- **Would like to see [historical] analysis of station locations and rationale**, “haven’t we done previous research that says our stations are roughly in the right location?”
- **Impact on public safety of reconfiguring station locations. This shouldn’t be a purely financial decision.**
 - “There is debate around whether you should have 3 stations in Milton Keynes on the periphery versus a more central station, Milton Keynes has the advantage of the grid road network, which allows you to get across more quickly”
 - “Milton Keynes centre might be high risk during the day, but at night the risk is at the periphery”
 - “Peripheral stations versus a central location, seems to be more about the line of thinking at the time [a fad]. Ideally we have a site there and another there and they all come into the middle and it seems now that we are deciding that now that isn’t right and we should be coming out from the centre. We also need to consider that Milton Keynes is growing further and expansion, so I think our stations are probably in the right locations, especially in Milton Keynes where it is sprawling and growing outwards. If we are going from the middle outwards, then our response times will be affected, but if we start from the periphery going inwards, we are in a much better position. We run the risk in 5 years’ time of saying that we have moved to the wrong position, because we won’t get out in time”
- **Managing clusters of stations as collective enterprises will require careful consideration into how you manage the process**, “I think that is a different discussion, because that talks about how well you train and maintain those people, how they will keep their skills up, how you move them around, what arrangements have we got in place to move them around”
- **Could consider holding points**, “I know Oxfordshire have gone down that route, where a wholtime pump goes to a holding point. That has been successful for them”.
- **Consider cost-implications of change**, “but no matter what change you make, you are going to need as many people in head office to organise it, so the number of firefighter roles you save, you will have to create in head office or more. So there is no point in doing that in the first place”

- **Should be sharing our resources and assets with other agencies more effectively,** “sharing services would be a better option in my mind...whenever you walk into headquarters there are tonnes of empty spaces, why aren't we using that space more effectively”
- **Scope for merging some stations, but the political will hasn't been there,** “there is scope for one station at Amersham and Chesham, or Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross, we have all encountered opposition whenever we have gone outside the service, because people don't want the fire station on this location, or the council don't want to sell that piece of land, because whilst it would make a great location for a fire station, it also makes a great location for a motorway service station”
- **It isn't always about community risk, sometimes it is about the feasibility of finding the staff,** “it is not about whether we have the right amount of stations, or the right amount of people on them or whether they are in the right place, it is about recruitment, which is going to make things happen in a way you can't do something about. For example, there is no way you can have a day-crewed fire station if you haven't got the personnel to crew it. So it can't always be about what is best for the public, it is about what you've got left and that is what is happening at the moment”

Crewing models & safeguarding communities in low demand areas

What options should we consider when trying to safeguard our communities in low demand areas, such as rural areas (where we currently rely on RDS)? For example: Encourage installation of sprinklers in remote locations, where it takes longer to get there; prioritise prevention work in more remote locations above urban areas; make greater use of smaller rapid intervention appliances that require fewer crew to be made available; prioritise training given to RDS so they are trained to tackle more routine incidents, thus leaving more specialist skills to WT firefighters, who have more time available for training; modernise the RDS working contract to align it with demand. For example, instead of contracting 120 hours per week of the FFs choosing (usually evenings and weekends when demand is lowest), to contract fewer hours when it is actually needed; pay a premium for RDS cover during working hours to help incentivise people to work those hours; move crew around to provide support to RDS stations when cover is low at those stations.

This topic drew out some interesting and insightful debate, both groups suggested that we could have **officers working on stations** rather than in headquarters to provide extra cover and resilience where it is needed. It was also felt that a late response is better than no response, so we could **amalgamate RDS crews** to enable movement between stations more easily and provide greater coverage.

Group 1 felt that prevention initiatives and fire suppression systems should be **prioritised** in areas with weaker response coverage (e.g. more remote rural areas). They also thought we should explore **more time- and cost-effective ways** of reaching dispersed communities such as attending parish council meetings rather than door-to-door visits. It was also considered that we could increase our emergency cover by **requiring fewer crew on smaller rapid intervention vehicles**. This group also felt that **RDS training should be tiered and focused on the basics** as this would aid with recruitment, retention and support supervisory managers in ensuring their crews are competent.

In terms of **amending the crewing structure**:

An interesting observation came from Group 1, suggesting that we might be artificially constraining the scope of the crewing reviews by thinking of them in terms of terms and conditions and we **should be thinking of staff holistically**, including the use of volunteers. In response to the idea of paying a premium for RDS at peak demand, it was suggested that this may result in **unforeseen consequences**, where more personnel book available, which could end up costing more. Instead it was felt that RDS should be **paid more in general, reduce the numbers of them we require and ask for better commitment**.

Participants in Group 2 also made some insightful observations, e.g. we should **stop trying to struggle** with the resource intensive process of trying to fit RDS into the Wholetime model **and actually fit Wholetime into the RDS model** - if we have plenty of RDS available at night, then we should use RDS to provide the majority of night time cover and rely on Wholetime during the day and redistribute them as needed **irrespective of minority political views challenging changes to terms and conditions**. It was also highlighted

that it is inappropriate of us to request support from other businesses for RDS **until we can demonstrate that we are using our current workforce to its maximum efficiency.**

Group 1:

e.g. Sprinklers in remote locations

- **Sprinklers in remote locations is a good idea, but there could be cost implications of retrofitting them**
- **What are the building regulations in terms of sprinkler fitting in new-builds?**

e.g. Prioritising prevention work in remote locations

- **Worth considering prioritising prevention work in remote locations, but not using crews,** "four crew in a truck in remote locations, I would question whether the cost can be justified"
- **Worth considering other outreach methods for communities in remote locations such as talking at Parish meetings**
- **Should consider our staff holistically, including volunteers,** "so not having a day crewing review, an RDS review, let's look at what we need, when we need it and where we need it, rather than reviewing things by terms and conditions".

e.g. Pay a premium for RDS at peak demand

- **May have unforeseen consequences where more personnel book available and could end up costing more**
- **Consider paying RDS more in general and reduce numbers and ask for better commitment,** "we might see people who can commit part of the day and cover the peak demand periods"

e.g. Rapid intervention vehicles

- **Could increase emergency cover through requiring fewer personnel to make it available**

e.g. Prioritise training given to RDS

- **Prioritised or tiered training would help with recruitment and retention and support supervisory managers ensure their crew are skill competent,** "so that they could make sure those crews are good at the basics"

Other comments

Both groups:

- **Amalgamate crews to enable movement between stations more easily and provide more robust cover,** "for example, Haddenham, Waddesdon, Brill and Thame", "we could have two RDS at Waddesdon and two at Haddenham, coming to one station and yes it might take longer, but it is better than nothing"

- **Have more officers working on retained stations to provide extra cover where it is needed**, “we don’t all need to be based at headquarters”, “if you look at stations, we have got sites across the county where staff could be working on them and provide on-call cover and when I look at headquarters there are a lot of people there that don’t need to be”, “we have a lot of people at headquarters, but are we fully utilising our other buildings. Let’s establish which locations we struggle to have on the run and locate staff in those buildings for their day job”.

Group 2:

- **Have to be careful who you target to recruit and understand the likely cover they can commit to**, “careful moving towards the ideas like stay-at-home mums, which is great until you get a fire call at 14:30 and they have to collect their kids from school, so it’s just not realistic”, “I disagree...in fairness that is what we do with RDS anyway, when they say they have to get away at 17:00”.
- **Need to make RDS model more attractive to modern lifestyles**
- **What is the return on investment of the RDS review/project**, “the work you are highlighting shows that we don’t need RDS anyway, we only need them once a year, so [why are] we are investing a massive amount of money and resources in the on-call project?”
- **Can’t assume that what works in other countries will work here**, “the comment about, it works in Europe and they don’t get paid, we don’t have that culture”
- **We should look at what cover RDS can provide and build the resourcing model around that, use wholetime during the day and RDS at night**, “if you’ve got RDS at night and they aren’t available during the day when we are busiest, shouldn’t we look at what we’ve got and then adapt around it. More wholetime during the day and more RDS at night, redistribute our wholetime during the day and use RDS at night. Instead of struggling with something we have no control over.”
- **Should consider different ways of working such as the bank system, rostering for duty. The political views of those preventing that move do not necessarily reflect the views of the wider organisation**, “if you have loads of wholetime available at night that could have been used during the day, we could utilise them better if we adopted a system like the bank system”, “so there have to be other ways of working and more openness to different ways of working”, “there are some who don’t like the bank system and they seem to be quite influential and that’s not right. If I want to earn my living as a firefighter on my days off I should still be allowed to and not be worried that if I go on that station, I will get hard [time].”
- **Need to demonstrate net improvement of one crewing model versus another**, “there is no point having that bank system if it doesn’t give you more flexibility or savings, if you’ve got to have three people on every single shift in the bank system, you might as well employ three more people.”
- **We should demonstrate that we use our current staff to maximum effect before attempting to recruit from other organisations**, “I don’t think it is right that we go to other organisations and attract their staff to come and work for us part-time, unless we can show them that we use our staff to maximum effect and how we do it and be an example of good practice in the first place and I don’t think we are using our staff effectively e.g. making our own staff available to drive appliances. It isn’t that the staff

are reluctant, but their line managers are...all the staff at headquarters that don't need to be, so I think we should start by setting an example and practice what we preach."

Using our resources in different ways:

We currently use our resources for non-fire and rescue purposes such as co-responder; renting office space to other agencies; refuel tanks; mobile phone aerials on drill towers; and solar panels on roofs. Do you agree that we should be using our resources in this way?

Both groups felt it was a good idea to use our resources and spare capacity in different ways, provided it didn't impact negatively on what we are legislated or expected to do. Group 1 felt that anything that can bring in extra revenue is a good idea. Group 2 voiced a recognition that the world is changing and that the fire service needed to embrace change and accept the need to adapt. A pertinent point was made, whereby most firefighters are motivated by wanting to save lives and the circumstances under which this is achieved shouldn't matter, i.e. co-responding or firefighting. It was also identified that using resources differently and expanding our function could make us more essential and therefore resilient to future cuts. Preserving assets was deemed important, irrespective of their use because selling assets only generates a short-time benefit, whereas using them for something else could generate an on-going revenue. Again the issue of empty building space was raised and it was suggested that we partner with organisations that can not only share the overhead costs, but shared learning and training i.e. organisations we naturally work closely with, in areas such as emergency planning.

Both groups:

- **Worth considering using our resources and spare capacity in different ways such as long as it doesn't affect what we are legislated to do**

Group 1:

- **Anything that brings in extra revenue is a good idea**

Group 2:

- **Need to embrace change and adapt to the changing environment**, "It is a changing world and we need to look at different ways of working"
- **Key motivator of any firefighter is to save lives, the situation under which this is done is irrelevant**, "our first priority is to save lives, we shouldn't differentiate how we achieve that"
- **Using resources differently could help make the fire and rescue service more essential and resilient**, "if we look at the history of New York in the 1970's, they were closing 3-4 fire houses a year and the commissioner at the time saw the model in Los Angeles and said we'll run that model and since took on the paramedic role, they haven't closed a fire house since, firefighters have a combined role, the more they do, the harder it is to get rid of them"
- **It is better to use our assets rather than sell them on, which is not an ongoing saving**

- **Should partner with other agencies we are required to work closely with to share the cost of overheads, knowledge and training,** “at certain times of the week we have a vast amount of empty office space across all of our brigade buildings, if we got into partnership with the right people such as the council, there is scope to spread the costs there...perhaps we should consider people we need to work closely with, for example other emergency planners...it is important to think about what other value we can get, what other benefits, like ambulance crews for joint training, it is not just about getting revenue.”

Alternative service delivery models:

Is it reasonable to explore other ways of delivering our service? For example: Employee-owned businesses (e.g. John Lewis), mutuals, co-operatives, social enterprises, and/or privatisation?

Both groups were willing to explore the idea of alternative service delivery models to help make the fire and rescue service more robust in its economic and 'business' context. However, there was a dichotomy between the two groups in terms of approaching this alternative model route, with participants in Group 1 being more willing to consider this challenge outright and Group 2 tending to want to see more evidence on how a new model could be achieved first. Both groups felt very strongly that a private takeover was a bad idea, since they considered that the public sector rarely comes out well under that model and that profits may become the overriding driving force, rather than offering a proper service to the public at the point of need. Group 2 felt that merging with other fire and rescue services could be beneficial in terms of sharing support and senior management functions, whereas Group 1 felt that this wouldn't bring the innovation and scrutiny required in the sector.

Group 1 raised an interesting comparison with the private sector, stating that a private business wouldn't just sit back and watch their market shrink away, which suggested a desire to diversify the business model, identify opportunities and capitalise on them. It was suggested that the public sector model is perhaps not flexible enough to allow us to adapt at a sufficient rate with the changing external world, so a more flexible service delivery model may be worth considering. There was interest in the idea of a cooperative or social enterprise model, where it was felt that staff could have greater influence in how the service was run and where money could be invested where we saw fit, such as more vulnerable communities and fire sector research. The group considered that the appetite to be pioneers was greater in Buckinghamshire than Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire fire and rescue services, and given the joint control project, we may have to factor in their mind set as well moving forward. This group was also interested in the Fire Authority's view on whether they wish to be free of government funding. Participants also related consideration of business models to the things that motivate our staff to work for the Service stressing that it was because they "love it" and that ethos should be protected and preserved in any future arrangements.

There were some concerns raised in Group 2 as to whether our Medium Term Financial Plan was overly pessimistic, and could precipitate a degree and rate of change that was greater than that needed to address the issues faced by the Service, potentially doing more harm than good by cutting back too far and too quickly. The group could see the benefit of generating revenue and introducing greater flexibility, but were concerned about how success would be measured in the future, particularly if profits were given more weight over public service at point of need.

Group 1:

- **Worth exploring, but should consider what other fire and rescue services are doing and how this may affect us,** “would be interesting to explore, but would we need to factor in Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire, who have less of a risk appetite for change, and how might this affect the vision?”
- **Does the Fire Authority want us to be free of government funding?** “Important to understand how the Fire Authority views us, is this something they wish to explore, namely to be free of government funding?”
- **Public sector model is not adaptable enough for a changing world,** “at the moment we are constrained by not being able to generate profits”, “Most private businesses don’t just sit around watching their market shrink away”, “we could find another way to venture out, rather than just shrinking back”
- **Would enable greater flexibility and influence on how we run the service,** “Could bring greater scope to run the fire service as more of a business and have greater control of how revenue is reinvested”, “Co-ownership would allow us to make money and bring it back into the organisation and redistribute it as we saw fit”
- **We could be empowered to invest in areas where more money is needed such as research, or more vulnerable communities,** “I think if we could reinvest, then we could put it into areas that aren’t served well such as research, so that we can better understand what is going on, we don’t have a lot of resources in that area, but we are expected to have all the answers”, “or we could invest into our best customers [the vulnerable]”
- **Should avoid privatisation, but a cooperative or social enterprise would enable staff to buy in to what they do, namely we do it because we love it,** “I was looking at it from a privatisation route, with somebody coming in and taking over, but if you are doing it from a cooperative or a social enterprise, then you are buying into what you do, which is what I think the fire service is, you do it because you love it. You do your role to the best of your ability, because it isn’t a private company, you don’t get a bonus, you do it because you love it. If we did it as a cooperative, then you are building on what you love”
- **Should avoid privatisation because the public sector rarely comes out well through this process, but we could work more closely with private sector companies such as delivering parts of our service or collaboration,** “I think we should do this [explore alternative service delivery models] immediately, we should avoid privatisation because public services don’t come out well through that model, so that should be avoided, but there are other things in there, could we work with private sector companies to deliver parts of our service, or work with them and go into collaboration”
- **Should think beyond partnering with other fire and rescue services, because we need more innovation and scrutiny, which will be better achieved through opening ourselves up externally,** “I would be very hesitant about merging with other fire and rescue services, because we are only as good as a fire service and there is no external scrutiny, we are our own little kingdoms and we don’t bring in any new skill sets or experience, we just have the same ideas going around the fire service”

Group 2:

- **Shrinking the service too far and too hastily relative to a worst-case scenario may be detrimental and not needed,** “you are saying that the medium term financial plan says we need to get down to £26m, but what I am saying is I don’t think it will be

like that. That is the worst case scenario, we shouldn't be getting rid of things until we need to...we aren't really that dependent on government grants, so it isn't that much money"

- **Generating our own revenue would enable greater flexibility in how to run the fire and rescue service,** "you could put all the money back into the business again...you can go and explore other areas of the business, you can grow the business".
- **Not convinced that generating our own revenue is better than lobbying government for more money,** "how does making money help you [fire and rescue service]...we could lobby government to say we could do that in the fire service anyway".
- **Does the current service delivery model need changing?** "The most sensible financial sense is that if it ain't broke don't fix it" - "but it is broke, the whole country is broken, the money isn't there to do the things the way we used to".
- **If you run the fire service as a private enterprise with the objective of making profits, it might lead to reduced resources from the front line where it is needed,** "if you take it [ownership] away from the public sector, then someone will be looking to make a profit from it, you'll need people to run the business, which takes it away from where it is needed [front line]", "If you were quite happy to see two guys on a hydraulic platform, going round pointing chimneys for private builders so that we get more money, then that is what you will end up with".
- **What would be the measure of success of private versus public?** "If you move something out of the public sector, then what kind of service are you actually getting?", "If you compare the British Health model to America, our input and output is a hell of a lot better, I think we are ranked about 9th in the world and they are about 37th. It is how you measure success with privatisation: Is it the shareholder, or is it better for the person that rings the fire brigade?", "isn't there a model of private sector involvement in the fire service anyway, and society decided they didn't want it? It is about offering a service that is available to the user at the point of need. If we go down the private route, what are the benefits?"
- **Can you provide an example of where it has worked?** "Can you give us an example of where this [privatisation] has happened and the service given is now better, without the model to actually see it [don't feel qualified to provide an opinion]", "Point me to a good example of where it has happened, until we see a model where we can be convinced that it has been working and it will benefit the community that we are serving then [we can't really comment]", "because we care passionately about the service, we only have concerns that we don't have enough information, we can only see bad things, because you haven't really shown us any good things"
- **Perhaps we could look at partnerships or shared services with other fire and rescue services,** "there are lots of things the fire service can still do, we could do more with Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire, those sorts of partnerships, shared resources...it doesn't matter how it is run at the top, at the front it will always be local"

Other comments:

Group 2 had some additional commentary relating to the engagement process and how decisions will be made and implemented following the proposals: It was felt by some that there had not been enough publicity in local papers or on radio, whilst others suggested the limitations in terms of return on investment when adopting those outreach methods. It was also voiced that the public may not be engaging in the process because fire and rescue is not a primary concern for them relative to other day-to-day factors such as bin collections, but perhaps this viewpoint will change if the service we offer is reduced. It was felt that there was a degree of discontentment surrounding change across the workforce, but that staff generally aren't willing to do something about it e.g. many haven't even read the latest PSP. Concerns were also raised regarding the integrity of the decision making and implementation process following the proposals, which were considered to be too vague. There are concerns that many of the proposals are a 'done deal'.

Group 2:

Engagement process

Public:

- **Felt there was insufficient publicity surrounding the PSP, but recognised the limitations in return for investment**, "I don't think we can call it a public safety plan, because we haven't put it out to the public enough...I don't think the normal run of the mill person is getting any input", "There is an element though, that you can throw a lot of money at it and not get anything in return"
- **Fire and Rescue is not a primary concern to the majority of the public, but if service was diminished it could be**, "people care about their libraries, schools, pot holes. There are lots of other things out there that are being changed, in the scheme of things, if you go to your local council meeting they get very animated about their bins not being collected every week", "the public aren't worried about fire because they know the back-up is there"

Staff:

- **Some felt that many staff seem disgruntled by the change of direction**, "lots of people are willing to say, I don't like this, I don't like that, but if you're not willing to do something about it [then they don't have a leg to stand on]"
- **Our own staff aren't as engaged as they should be**, "to be honest, I don't think many firefighters have read it"

Decision making and implementation

- **PSP seems like a 'done-deal'**, "I think the document is very good, but you can almost see where the outcomes are going, what I worry about is that it is very vague in what we

can do, so once this gets passed, we can pretty much do whatever we want...I know it is part of the process, but it does look like a done deal...you have drawn up something that nobody can argue with, yeah of course you should look at this, should look at that, well yeah of course, look at everything"

- **Would like greater clarity around the decision and implementation process,** "I don't get how the infrastructure works, so once this is done how the rest all fits, so once you've got that, does it make it easier to say, right now we are going to shut that station", "but some of the proposals have already started, the day-crew review, the RDS review, the Milton Keynes review", "with the degradation policy, you are kind of forcing the shape of things"



**Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes
Fire and Rescue Service:
*Continuing the Journey:
Public Safety Plan 2015-20***

Report of Questionnaire findings

**Opinion Research Services
October 2014**



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

Any press release or publication of the findings of this survey 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

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Acknowledgements

Opinion Research Services (ORS) is pleased to have worked with Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) on the consultation reported here.

We would also like to thank the 160 people who took part in the survey, without whose valuable input the research would not have been possible.

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Executive Summary

Summary of Main Findings

- 1.1 The following paragraphs selectively highlight some key issues, but readers are referred to the detailed graphics for the full story. The suite of ORS reports also includes full cross tabulations.
- 1.2 Nearly 7 in 10 respondents (68%) agreed that the fire and rescue service should assist with business continuity plans. Just over a fifth (23%) disagreed with this.
- 1.3 When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) should consider more economical ways of dealing with infrequent large scale or numerous simultaneous emergencies, less than half of respondents (45%) agreed. Over half of respondents (53%) disagreed with this statement, with over a third (35%) strongly disagreeing.
- 1.4 When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider relocating to help balance response capacity with demand, just over half of respondents (52%) agreed. Less than 3 in 10 respondents (29%) disagreed and around a fifth (19%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.5 When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider merging with nearby stations to help balance response capacity with demand, similar proportions of respondents agreed (43%) and disagreed (44%).
- 1.6 When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider co-locating (on the same site) with other emergency services to help balance response capacity with demand, just over three fifths of respondents (62%) agreed. Only around a quarter (24%) of respondents disagreed and just over 1 in 10 (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.7 Respondents were asked to rate how effective various options would be in safeguarding communities. The option that respondents thought would be the most effective was paying a premium for on-call cover during working hours to help incentivise people to work during those hours. On the other hand, the option that respondents thought would be least effective was making greater use of smaller rapid intervention appliances such as smaller fire engines and vans, that require reduced crew sizes, such as three personnel as opposed to four, to help counteract the difficulties faced with finding enough available firefighters particularly during working hours.
- 1.8 Almost three fifths (57%) of respondents agreed that B&MKFRS should use their skills and resources to support other emergency services such as the ambulance service to help save lives. However, more than a third (36%) of respondents disagreed with this.
- 1.9 Around a quarter (26%) of respondents agreed that B&MKFRS should consider alternative service delivery models. However, two thirds (66%) of respondents disagreed with this.
- 1.10 Less than two fifths of respondents (36%) reported feeling well informed about Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority's future plans. Just over two fifths (42%) of respondents said that they were either very poorly (27%) or fairly poorly (16%) informed and just over a fifth (22%) reported being neither well nor poorly informed.

Project Overview

Introduction

- ^{1.11} Opinion Research Services was commissioned by Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) to undertake an online survey as part of their 'Continuing the Journey: Public Safety Plan 2015-20' consultation.
- ^{1.12} The online survey supplements the qualitative part of this consultation which involved five public focus groups (in Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham, High Wycombe and Milton Keynes).
- ^{1.13} The online survey was available to complete from the 22nd of July 2014 until the 13th of October 2014. The survey was available to residents, representatives from business, public and voluntary organisations and Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) employees. 160 surveys were completed during this period.

Respondent Profiles

- ^{1.14} The gender split was uneven, with 73% male and 27% female respondents. Generally, there was more of a balanced split with the age groups (16 to 44 (32%), 45 to 54 (27%) and 55 and over (40%)). The tables below show the profile characteristics of respondents to the survey.

Table 1: Gender - All Respondents

Gender	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
Male	88	73
Female	33	27
Not Known	39	-
Total	160	100

Table 2: Age - All Respondents

Age	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
16 to 44	39	32
45 to 54	33	27
55 or over	49	40
Not Known	39	-
Total	160	100

Table 3: Disability - All Respondents

Disability	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
Yes	11	9
No	109	91
Not Known	40	-
Total	160	100

Table 4: Ethnicity - All Respondents

Ethnicity	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
White	103	94
Non-white	7	6
Not Known	50	-
Total	160	100

Table 5: Postcode - All Respondents

Postcode	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
HP	42	38
MK	57	51
Other	13	12
Not Known	48	-
Total	160	100

Table 6: Representation - All Respondents

Representation	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
A member or relative of member of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service	22	19
A representative of a business, council, public sector, community or voluntary organisation	26	22
A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes	69	59
Not Known	43	-
Total	160	100

Responses from organisations

^{1.15} Of those who were asked, most responses to the consultation questionnaire were from residents of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes (59%; 69 respondents). Similar proportions of local organisations and businesses (22%; 26 respondents) and members of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service (19%; 22 respondents) responded.

^{1.16} Figure 1 overleaf details those organisations that submitted responses.

Figure 1: Summary of organisations responding to the questionnaire (who gave their details) – 17 responses

Abbey and Ryemead Neighbourhood Action Group.
Bierton with Broughton Parish Council.
Buckinghamshire Chamber of Commerce.
Buckinghamshire New University.
Bucks County Council.
Calverton Resident's Association.
Chiltern District Council.
Hambleden Parish Council.
Lacey Green Parish Council.
Moulsoe Parish Council.
Newport Pagnell Town Council.
North Marston Community Shop Association Ltd.
Old Woughton Parish Council (Milton Keynes).
Parish Council (unspecified)
Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School.
Wendover Parish Council.
Wycombe District Council.

Duplicate and Co-ordinated Responses

^{1.17} Online questionnaires have to 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 was only 1 IP address which generated more than one response. Given that more than one person at an IP address might want to complete the questionnaire) we have not excluded any online submissions.

Interpretation of the Data

^{1.18} Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers.

^{1.19} Where differences between demographic groups have been highlighted as significant there is a 95% probability that the difference is significant and not due to chance. Differences that are not said to be ‘significant’ or ‘statistically significant’ are indicative only. When comparing results between demographic sub-groups, on the whole, only results which are significantly different are highlighted in the text.

- ^{1.20} The example comments shown throughout the report have been selected as being typical of those received in relation to each proposal.
- ^{1.21} 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 a 'traffic light' system in which:
- Green shades represent positive responses
 - Beige and purple/blue shades represent neither positive nor negative responses
 - Red shades represent negative responses
 - The bolder shades are used to highlight responses at the 'extremes', for example, very satisfied or very dissatisfied

DRAFT

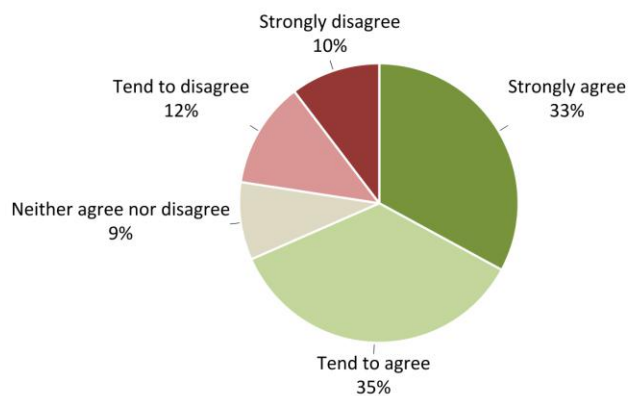
Findings

Commercial risk

^{1.22} Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the fire and rescue service should assist with the development of business continuity plans. Nearly 7 in 10 respondents (68%) agreed that the fire and rescue service should assist with business continuity plans. Just over a fifth (23%) disagreed with this.

Figure 2: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service should assist with the development of business continuity plans

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service should assist with the development of business continuity plans?



Base: All Respondents (155)

*Why do you feel this way?***Table 7: Why do you feel this way? Commercial risk**

Theme	Count
FRS offers relevant expertise and insight	20
Business continuity planning is a good idea	19
Outside the scope of FRS/public sector, not the FRS responsibility	12
Could be an effective way of reducing commercial risk	6
Potential revenue generator	5
Good idea as long as it doesn't impact on the front line	5
FRS should promote business continuity planning but not enforce it	5
FRS doesn't currently have the necessary skills and expertise to deliver this service	4
FRS hasn't been very proactive about this in the past	2
Not a good idea because it could impact on the front line	1
FRS and Businesses should be working more closely	1
Would be better with a Nationalised approach	1
FRS offers impartial/objective advice	1
Impartial advice from the FRS is more trustworthy	1
Could benefit smaller businesses who struggle more financially to manage their own risk	1
Front line is better for safety than business continuity planning	1
Don't understand what this would involve	1
Residential fire prevention is the priority not commercial because they have enough money to manage their own risk	1
FRS should select which personnel conduct business continuity planning to be as cost effective as possible	1
Firefighting is the priority not business continuity planning	1
Good use of FRS resources	1
TOTAL	90

^{1.23} When asked if the fire and rescue service should assist with the development of business continuity plans, a number of respondents thought that the fire and rescue service offers relevant expertise and insight and that business continuity planning is a good idea.

The fire authority has vast amounts of knowledge and experience and will advise companies on all areas of fire safety. Many companies think that they have people in place who are capable of making very important fire related decisions, but many of these people are not fully competent when it comes to fire strategy and means of escape. (Buckinghamshire new university).

If B&MKFRS assist commercial risks this may lower the commercial fires you attend hence reducing the cost of these incidents. (Representation not specified).

^{1.24} However, some respondents thought that this was outside the scope of the FRS/public sector and was not the FRS's responsibility:

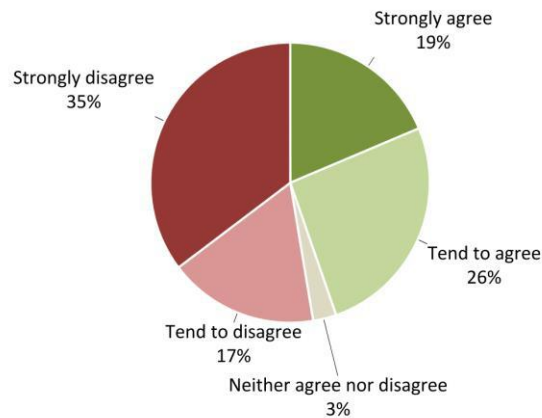
Business continuity is the responsibility of the business in question. The fire service shouldn't be moving into commercial ventures. It should be focusing on its core objectives as a service: community fire safety, fire safety and intervention. (Representation not specified).

Response capacity

1.25 When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service should consider more economical ways of dealing with infrequent large scale or numerous simultaneous emergencies, less than half of respondents (45%) agreed. Over half of respondents (53%) disagreed with this statement, with over a third (35%) strongly disagreeing.

Figure 3: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree that Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service should consider more economical ways of dealing with infrequent large scale or numerous simultaneous emergency incidents

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service should consider more economical ways of dealing with infrequent large scale or numerous simultaneous emergency incidents – for example, by increasing collaboration with and support from neighbouring fire and rescue services?



Base: All Respondents (150)

*Why do you feel this way?***Table 8: Why do you feel this way? Response capacity**

Theme	Count
Concerns about delays in attendance /increased risk	19
It makes economic sense/cost savings are needed	13
I agree with collaboration/assistance from other services	12
B&MKFRS shouldn't/can't rely on neighbouring services	10
Reduction of resources should be avoided	10
I pay council tax for the service/it's an insurance policy/we deserve the protection we pay for	6
Need to work smarter/make better use of personnel and equipment	6
Resources need to be aligned to risk/demand	5
BFRS already co-operate with neighbouring FRS's	4
Focus on the quality of service as it is/Leave it as it is	3
More resources are needed	3
There isn't enough information to provide an informed response	3
B&MKFRS know the local area/knowledge of the local area is an issue	2
B&MKFRS should have enough capacity to not need to rely on services	2
I am happy to pay for the fire service	2
It doesn't cover all eventualities/It's not sustainable	2
The statistics are misleading/skewed	2
All FRS's are facing cuts so these resources may not always be available	1
B&MKFRS should move to a 'hub' model	1
Economical approaches would need rigorous testing	1
Education on fire prevention and improvements in fire retardants will lessen demand on services	1
It will mean job losses and less fire engines	1
Joint training would be needed to ensure consistency between FRS's	1
The question is biased	1
The service already receives enough money (which mainly goes to the frontline)	1
The various parties need to be supportive of collaborating	1
What if everyone just borrowed from next door?	1
Working with other FRS's may only work for major issues	1
TOTAL	115

- 1.26 Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider more economical ways of dealing with infrequent large scale or numerous simultaneous emergency incidents (for example, by increasing collaboration with and support from neighbouring fire and rescue services). A number of respondents expressed concern about delays in attendance/increased risk:

Sharing resources is cost effective, but this should not be implemented at the expense of delays in deploying resources and increase lead times in attending incidents. (Moulsoe Parish Council).

- 1.27 Others thought that B&MKFRS shouldn't/can't rely on neighbouring services and that a reduction of resources should be avoided.

An FRS can't rely on neighbouring services as they too might be dealing with large scale incidents. (A member or relative of member of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service).

Because if the brigade is stretched due to multiple incidents it's likely that other brigades will also be stretched for the same reasons. The reduction of resources within the service should be avoided. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

- 1.28 However, other respondents agreed with collaboration/assistance from other services and thought that the proposals make economic sense/cost savings are needed.

It's common sense to increase collaboration with services that are not far apart and have additional assets. (A member or relative of member of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service).

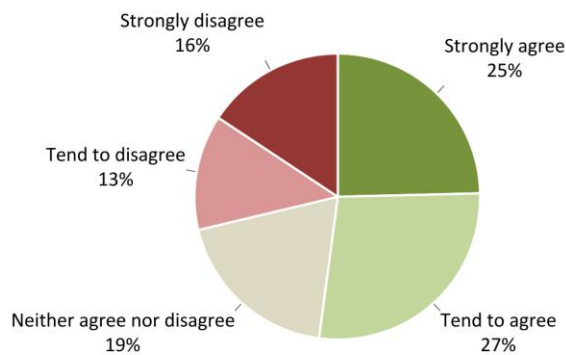
Collaboration ideally creates cost effective action. You cannot cover all potential eventualities all of the time - you need to be realistic as there is not a bottomless budget available. (Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School).

Station footprint

1.29 When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider relocating to help balance response capacity with demand, just over half of respondents (52%) agreed. Less than 3 in 10 respondents (29%) disagreed and around a fifth (19%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 4: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service should consider relocating to help balance response capacity with demand

To what extent would you agree or disagree that we should consider relocating to help balance our response capacity with demand?



Base: All Respondents (146)



*Why do you feel this way?***Table 9: Why do you feel this way? Balancing response capacity with demand**

Theme	Count
Location based on risk/demand is a good idea	26
No closures/reductions in services/cuts	15
Concerns with increased response times	12
Concerns with cost	6
More information is needed	6
Demand is unpredictable	5
Inaccuracy of risk/demand data	5
Makes economic sense	5
Equal access to fire service	4
Standby vehicles would be a good idea	4
More stations needed	3
It is unreasonable to relocate every time trends change	2
Concern that FRS wastes time	1
Concerns that community bonds will be broken	1
Concerns that full-time stations will be affected	1
Concerns that retained staff will be negatively affected	1
Concerns with staff reductions	1
Consolidation will be appropriate	1
Flexibility is important	1
FRS know best	1
Future developments may affect demand	1
Growth of towns is not centralised	1
Increase funding for retained stations	1
Location in town centres is important	1
Location near motorways is important	1
Location should be based on population	1
Public consultation is needed	1
Review of staffing/equipment is important	1
There should be a maximum response time	1
TOTAL	110

- 1.30 Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider relocating to help balance response capacity with demand. The majority of respondents that answered this question thought that location based on risk/demand is a good idea.

This makes sense, particularly as you are always going to be further away from some homes than others, wherever the stations are located. Perhaps you could also consider being parked up at 'hot-spots', just as the police and ambulances services do on some evenings and at weekends. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

- 1.31 However, other respondents thought that there should be no closures/reductions in services/cuts while others expressed concerns with increased response times.

I believe that relocation is inevitable; however, any reduction in fire stations is a bad idea. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

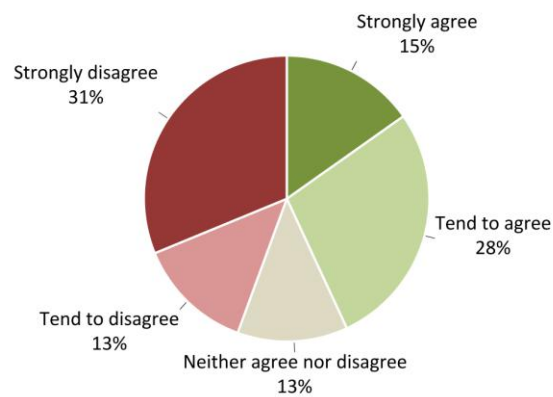
If the costs of relocation do not mean cuts to the service and provided the response times to the original catchment areas remain the same. (North Marston Community Shop Association Ltd.).

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- 1.32 When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider merging with nearby stations to help balance response capacity with demand, similar proportions of respondents agreed (43%) and disagreed (44%).

Figure 5: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service should consider merging with nearby stations to help balance our response capacity with demand

To what extent would you agree or disagree that we should consider merging with nearby stations to help balance our response capacity with demand?



Base: All Respondents (144)

Why do you feel this way?

Table 10: Why do you feel this way? Merging nearby stations to help balance response capacity demand

Theme	Count
Concerns about increased response times	24
It makes economic sense/cost savings are needed	13
Concerns about cuts to frontline services	7
Merging should be considered/ makes sense	5
Risk to public/possible loss of life	5
Concerns that the merger is only to cut costs	4
For cross-border services	4
Concerns about availability of crew and appliances	3
As long as staff are accommodated	2
Community may lose faith in BFRS	2
Concerns about job losses	2
Concerns that population increase is not being considered	2
Merging is a possible waste of money/will not solve the problem	2
More information is needed in the questionnaire	2
Against cross-border service	1
BFRS should have the final say	1
Concerns about a loss of FRS identity	1
If it improves services	1
It would decrease response times	1
Only supports specific mergers	1
Some stations are already merged	1
There is no proof that this option would be effective	1
There should be a public consultation before a decision is made	1
TOTAL	86

- ^{1.33} Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider merging with nearby stations to help balance response capacity with demand. The majority of respondents that answered the question expressed concerns increased response times.

Local stations offer a faster response to incidents. Merged stations would see an increase in attendance times for a number of communities. (A member or relative of member of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service).

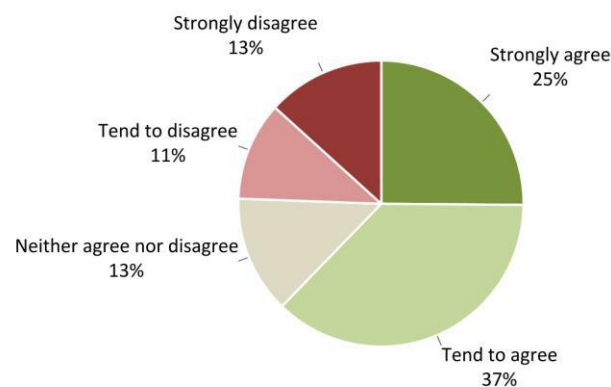
- ^{1.34} However, other respondents were of the opinion that this would make economic sense and that cost savings are needed.

If merging reduces cost without impacting on the service, then, obviously, do it. Especially if the service is improved as a result. (BCC County Councillor).

1.35 When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider co-locating (on the same site) with other emergency services to help balance response capacity with demand, just over three fifths of respondents (62%) agreed. Only around a quarter (24%) of respondents disagreed and just over 1 in 10 (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 6: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service should consider co-locating (on the same site) with other emergency services to help balance our response capacity with demand

To what extent would you agree or disagree that we should consider co-locating (on the same site) with other emergency services to help balance our response capacity with demand?



Base: All Respondents (143)

Why do you feel this way?

Table 11: Why do you feel this way? Co-locating with other emergency services to help balance response capacity demand

Theme	Count
It makes economic sense/would save money	15
Co-locating is efficient	14
Fire service should be kept neutral/independent of police	8
Would improve cross service collaboration	8
Would improve training	7
Depends if there are adequate sites to support co-location	6
Would not improve the FRS	4
Concerned about the effect on response times	3
Concerned that this would result in cuts to services	3
More information needed	3
Would improve facilities	3
Would make no difference	3
It is already happening	2
It may be a pointless exercise	2
Argument for a fully integrated service	1
Concerned that this would reduce their reputation	1
Concerns that it is a tick box exercise	1
Concerns that savings won't be made	1
Council tax concerns	1
Yes - if the service does not decrease	1
Providing that risk profiles are compatible for all three services	1
Resources need to be aligned to risk/demand	1
Services should support each other	1
The decision must be based on risk to users and not money	1
There would be a culture clash	1
Too many differences in services	1
Would benefit the community	1
Would improve standard of service	1
TOTAL	95

^{1.36} Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider co-locating (on the same site) with other emergency services to help balance response capacity with demand. The main themes that came out were that this proposal would save money/make economic sense and that co-locating is efficient.

Co-locating can only lead to better collaboration, shared costs, shared ideas, even shared back-office costs. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

Co-location would make sense, especially if some aspects could be combined between the different services. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

Crewing models and duty systems

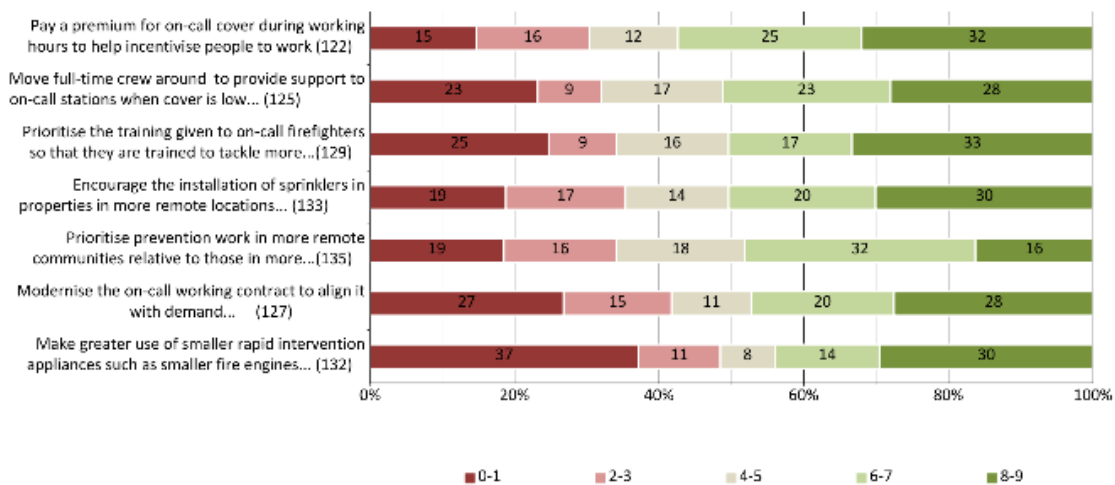
1.37 Respondents were asked to rate how effective various options would be in safeguarding communities. The chart below shows how respondents rated the various options. The option that respondents thought would be the most effective was paying a premium for on-call cover during working hours to help incentivise people to work during those hours.

1.38 On the other hand, the option that respondents thought would be least effective in safeguarding communities was making greater use of smaller rapid intervention appliances such as smaller fire engines and vans that require reduced crew sizes, such as three personnel as opposed to four, to help counteract the difficulties faced with finding enough available firefighters particularly during working hours.

Figure 7: Extent to which respondents think the options shown below would be effective in safeguarding communities.

Please rate on a scale of 0-9 how effective you think the following options would be in safeguarding our communities, where 0 is not effective at all and 9 is very effective at safeguarding.

How effective would it be for the fire and rescue service to:



Base: All Respondents (see numbers in brackets)

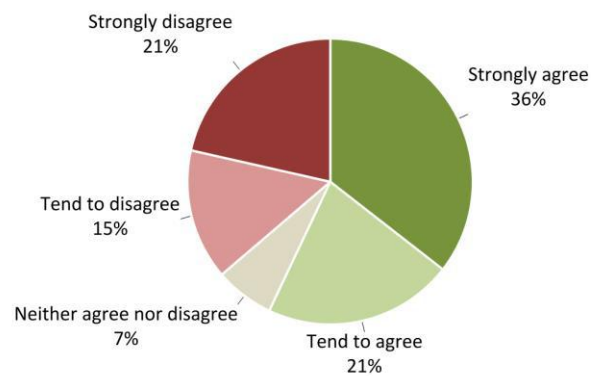
Using our resources in different ways

1.39 Almost three fifths (57%) of respondents agreed that B&MKFRS should use their skills and resources to support other emergency services such as the ambulance service to help save lives. However, more than a third (36%) of respondents disagreed with this.

Figure 8: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service should use their skills and resources to support other emergency services such as the ambulance service to help save lives

We currently use our skills and resources to support other emergency services such as the ambulance service to help save lives. For example the community responder (co-responder) scheme, where we respond to time-sensitive life-threatening 999 calls such as heart attacks, strokes and asthma attacks.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should be using our resources in this way?



Base: All Respondents (135)

*Why do you feel this way?***Table 12: Why do you feel this way? Using resources in different ways**

Theme	Count
Efficient use of resources	18
It's important for emergency services to work together	10
Only ambulances should be dealing with medical emergencies	10
Would help the community/save lives	10
Concerns around a drop in service	9
Ambulance service should be better funded	7
FRS would have limited training compared to the ambulance service	7
The FRS have the capacity	7
Concerns that this option is due to failings in the ambulance service	6
Some medical emergencies are inappropriate for the FRS	6
Worry that the FRS doesn't have the capacity	5
Ambulance service could help with FRS duties	3
Inaccuracies in the PSP	2
Only if a smaller appliances/fewer staff members are used	2
Three tiered system should be used like in Canada	2
As long as the FRS gets more funding	1
Concerns about increased response times	1
Concerns that it is only to achieve KPIs	1
Co-responding has been successful in the past	1
it is not necessary	1
Only if the FRS can get there first	1
Only if the proper training was provided	1
Police could also support other emergency services	1
Risk to public/possible loss of life	1
Should only happen if absolute emergencies	1
Shows innovative thinking	1
There will be a move towards a specialised service for both medical and fire/rescue emergencies	1
Training should be provided to the public for additional help	1
TOTAL	117

- 1.40 Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should use their skills and resources to support other emergency services such as the ambulance service to help save lives. The majority of respondents who answered this question thought that this would be an efficient use of resources.

If your people have the skills and are available it makes sense to use them to save lives. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

- 1.41 Others commented that it would help the community/save lives and thought that it is important for emergency services to work together.

The crews have skills that can be utilised. If it helps save lives, and also save jobs, then it has to be useful. (A member or relative of member of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service).

Working as a team with other services is definitely the way to go and makes better use of resources and should get better results. It is the kind of service the public needs and will deliver the best results. Saving lives is a primary concern for the fire service and a price can't be put on that. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

- 1.42 However, some respondents thought that only ambulances should deal with medical emergencies.

Although someone turning up is better than nobody turning up, the public want an ambulance if they ring 999 for medical emergency, not a fireman. (A member or relative of member of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service).

Alternative service delivery models

^{1.43} Around a quarter (26%) of respondents agreed that B&MKFRS should consider alternative service delivery models. However, two thirds (66%) of respondents disagreed with this.

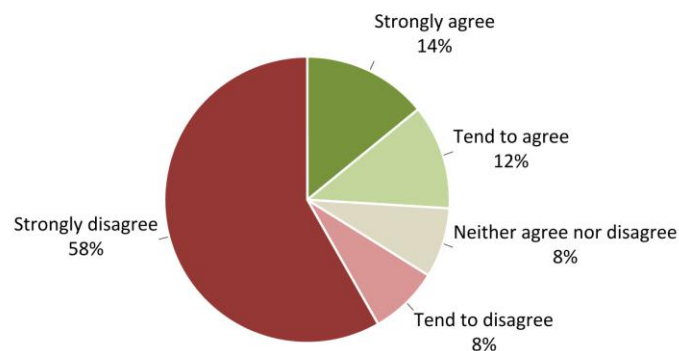
Figure 9: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service should explore whether there are more ways of delivering some or all of our services that may be more viable in the future

It is expected that the Government will continue to reduce the amount of funding support it provides to the fire and rescue service during the lifetime of the next parliament (up to 5 years).*

We therefore wish to explore whether there are more ways of delivering some or all of our services that may be more viable in the future and that might, for example, allow us to generate additional revenue and/or operate more efficiently.

This would include consideration of options such as privatisation, where the Fire Authority would contract private companies to deliver services rather than provide them directly itself, or via employee owned 'public service mutuals'.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should consider such options?



Base: All Respondents (127)

*Why do you feel this way?***Table 13: Why do you feel this way? Alternative service delivery models**

Theme	Count
Against privatisation	43
Fire service should not be for profit	17
Concerned that privatisation will lead to a reduced standard of service	14
Concerned that privatisation will lead to increased costs	11
Worth considering	6
Create revenue through alternative means	5
Concerned about public confidence in fire service	4
I want an effective FRS/It's a basic requirement	3
Concerned about the reaction of Fire Brigades Union	2
Limited use of private companies for non-emergency services	2
Use alternative delivery options to improve standard of service	2
Use alternative delivery options to increase revenue	2
Against mutuals	1
Concerned about job losses	1
Create savings elsewhere	1
I don't know enough to comment	1
Increase efficiency/efficient use of resources	1
Maintain standards	1
Make changes to FRS management	1
No effects to front line services	1
Use alternative delivery options to increase efficiency	1
TOTAL	120

- 1.44 Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that B&MKFRS should consider alternative service delivery models. The majority of respondents who answered this question were against privatisation.

A public service such as the fire service should never be trusted to the vagaries of commercial interests. Limited privatisation within the fire service has proved to be an abject failure and cost more in all occasions. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

- 1.45 Others commented that the fire and rescue service should not be there to make a profit and some were also concerned that privatisation will lead to a reduced standard of service and increased costs.

How is saving people or prevention about profits or costs? What is the cost of a death to the economy? (A representative of a business, council, public sector, community or voluntary organisation; organisation not specified).

Emphasis will shift to profits, rather than quality of service. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

Outsourcing will always cost you more in the long run, you only get what you pay for in life. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

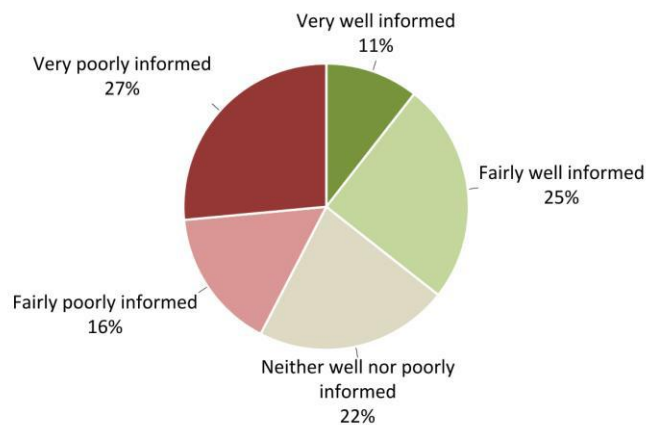
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Feeling informed

^{1.46} Less than two fifths of respondents (36%) reported feeling well informed about Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority's future plans. Just over two fifths (42%) of respondents said that they were either very poorly (27%) or fairly poorly (16%) informed and just over a fifth (22%) reported being neither well nor poorly informed.

Figure 10: Extent to which respondents feel either well or poorly informed about Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority's future plans

Overall, how well or poorly informed do you feel about Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority's future plans?



Base: All Respondents (132)

Additional comments

Are there any comments you would like to make about our 2015-20 Public Safety Plan?

Table 14: Additional comments

Theme	Count
Unclear/uninformative/biased document	9
A lot of thought has gone into ways of improving and best utilising resources	7
Excellent/clear/informative document	5
Survey wasn't publicised enough	3
Preference for an increase in council tax instead of cuts	2
Argument for a more risk-based plan/IRMP	2
Concerns that the questionnaire results will be overlooked	2
Concerns with accessing the PSP document	2
Cut down on managerial staff	2
Education/training for the public/vulnerable groups	2
There isn't enough information/it's not clear what the plan is proposing	2
Concerns about a reduction in service	1
Do what is best for residents not employees	1
Don't privatise	1
Firefighters should be more involved in the plan	1
Get rid of officer's cars	1
Improve appliance efficiency	1
Improve frontline staff/equipment	1
It will result in job cuts which will lead to job losses/ greater response times/ increased risk	1
Little mention of flooding in the document	1
Managers should be more hands-on	1
Reserve money should be used to pay for temporary strikes	1
Worry about political influences	1
TOTAL	58

^{1.47} Some respondents put forward additional comments regarding the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan. While some thought that the document was unclear/uninformative/biased.

The authority provides a lot of options without clearly stating what its objectives are in the short, medium and long term. You should openly state where you want to introduce co-responding, merge stations or reduce fire-fighter numbers. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

^{1.48} Others thought that a lot of thought has gone into ways of improving and best utilising resources.

A lot of thought has gone into ways of improving and best utilising the resources with the amount of budget available, it is good to explore all options. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

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This project was carried out in compliance with ISO 20252:2012.

Fire Brigades Union consultation submission on the Authority draft Public Safety Plan/Integrated Risk Management Planning Document

This consultation submission comprises of, and is representative of, the views of Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union (FBU) members. It also incorporates observations from FBU officials and representatives collated during the consultation period.

A Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) is more directly answerable to the public it serves than ever before. The breadth, depth and quality of service it provides must be determined by **informed** consultation with the public and with key stakeholders.

The majority of members of the public have little or no knowledge about the intricacies of large-scale risk management services or their cost. What this means is that FRS's have a responsibility to inform and educate before they embark on consultation exercises.

In support of this ethos, The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework states that a Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) **must:**

'reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies, and partners'

One of the more prominent theme's that has emerged from Fire Brigades Union members during the consultation process is the failure of the document to incorporate any specific, defined proposal to change or amend current service provision.

Instead there are vague and difficult to understand descriptions of what strategies are being proposed, in the form of broad review topics, which **may** result in a change to service provision dependent upon the outcome of the review (s). There is also no detail of what impacts to risk levels are likely to result from any outcome.

This is a somewhat unorthodox approach when compared with IRMP/PSP documents of other FRS's. The majority of other Fire and Rescue Service IRMP/PSP's include clear strategies and defined outcomes which detail exactly what change is being proposed to current/existing service provision and the corresponding impact this proposed change will have on risk levels.

It is commendable that the Authority is trying to engage the public and key stakeholders at the very formative stages of development of any proposals. However, rather than encourage engagement in the consultation process the lack of any clearly defined strategies or proposals actually impedes and deters the public from contributing to the consultation.

Until the Fire Authority detail what change to service provision **is** being proposed as opposed to what is change **may** follow a broad review then there is little incentive for people to contribute to this PSP consultation process.

Q.Would it not be better to delay the publication of the PSP until such time as the outcomes of the review process have been clearly identified including the impact that any defined proposal will have on service provision and risk levels?

The public, employees, representative bodies and partners would then have something tangible to consult on. A clearly defined proposal would greatly encourage engagement from these groups. There is not a single specific outcome included in the document. In its current format it is little more than an elaborate hypothesis.

However, the document does provide assurances on page 21 that any proposed change to service provision **will be consulted upon.**

Q.Will the Authority confirm that consultation on the outcomes of the review process, including any specific proposals which change or amend current levels of service provision, will take place over a minimum of 3 months so as to mirror the length of consultation afforded on the PSP?

Q.Who will be consulted?

Q.When will that consultation commence?

Members of the public were not consulted when the Authority implemented changes resulting from reviews that were carried at as part of the existing PSP. Specifically, the Authority did not seek the views of the public when changes were made to crewing models at Aylesbury Fire Station which had a direct impact upon service delivery.

The outcome of the PSP review resulted in the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) provision being amalgamated into Aylesbury Fire Station. Previously USAR resources functioned separately from Aylesbury Fire Station. Therefore if USAR resources were required there would be no direct impact on the front line service provision provided by Aylesbury.

However, the amalgamation of the two functions meant that now if USAR resources were mobilised to an incident there would be a direct impact upon Aylesbury Fire Station in effect reducing the current level of service the public received. The public were not included in this decision making process which resulted in a change and a reduction of service provision.

Q.Does the Authority now recognise that it was a mistake not to consult at the very least the communities of Aylesbury and the surrounding areas of a change to their Fire Service which could have a detrimental impact on the availability of front line fire appliances?

Q.Will the Authority **guarantee** that any outcome from proposed areas of review will be subject to meaningful consultation with the public and key stakeholders, including the provision of necessary information such as risk and impact assessments?

PSP Page 20**PSP Proposal's**

'Systematically change our current approach to managing risks in each of the five catchment areas identified at page 16 of this plan.'

Q.What is the current approach to managing risk, what does it incorporate, how is it measured, have targets been reached and why is this information not contained within this PSP?

Q.Why is the current approach to managing risk no longer viable, and why does it need to change?

*'This will embrace **identifying** and implementing.'*

This repeated statement acknowledges that BMKFRS has not yet identified any specific strategies to manage risk but instead is proposing to do so. It would be most appropriate to consult with the public when these strategies are no longer hypothetical aspirations for a review process but are actual specific proposals for the public and stakeholders to consult on.

Q.How does the Authority expect members of the public to engage effectively in this consultation when they are being asked to provide a view, a comment or opinions on effectively what are a broad range of aspirations?

What response is being invited from the 5 proposals? It is giving people information but in a format that does not encourage a response. The parameters for each review and the potential outcomes are so broad and vague that it is impossible for a meaningful consultation to take place. It is an informative statement telling people what is going to be done and therefore greatly restricts the response that someone can give.

Q. Does the Authority acknowledge that as part of a sound business plan service managers should be constantly reviewing performance to determine if improvements can be realised? If the answer is yes, does the Authority then acknowledge that telling the public that they will conduct reviews of performance and/or service provision to ascertain if improvement can be made will be an expectation of the public and thus unlikely to elicit a response? If the answer to the previous question is no, then what kind of response, views or comments was the Authority trying to get from the public given that there is not really a specific question being asked?

Q. How does the Authority expect the public to respond to a series of proposals which contain insufficient information to enable an informed response?

Instead of being entitled 'what we propose to do' it could be re-written to read 'what we should do'. The public would expect its fire service to constantly review how it manages risk

and to identify the best strategies to mitigate the impact of risk combined with identifying efficiencies wherever possible.

These ‘proposals’ cannot really be disputed because it details what a public sector service should be doing.

- *‘The right balance between measures to prevent and protect against risk and residual capacity needed to respond to emergencies’*

Q.How is the current balance wrong or no longer the right balance? Where is the information to support this statement so that an informed contribution can be made?

Q.What factors are used to measure the right balance between risk and capacity needed to respond?

Q.What is the current balance?

Q.What are the current risks, how are they measured and what current strategies are in place to mitigate the impact of these risks?

- *‘The most appropriate crewing models relative to current and expected levels of demand and risk;’*

Q.What are the current crewing models?

Q.Are these models no longer appropriate and if so why are they not appropriate?

Q.Is there an option of staying the same?

Q.What change has already been undertaken in terms of crewing models?

- *‘Changes to the number of staff, fire appliances (fire engines) and other specialist appliances required to better fit with normal, day to day demand patterns;’*

The document should inform the reader of what changes have already taken place in terms of the number of staff, any changes to the fire appliances or how they are crewed. It should also include response standards and what the current availability of fire appliances is.

It would appear that the only direction of travel in terms of the number of staff would be downward.

The PSP should include data regarding changes to the establishment level during the last few years. For example: (statistics from DCLG website)

Between March 2010 and Sept 2014 there has been a reduction in the number of whole-time firefighters in the role of firefighter from **203 FF's in 2010 to 171 FF's 2014.**

There has been a reduction in the number of FF's in the role of crew manager and watch manager from **141CM/WM in 2010 to 90 CM/WM in 2014.**

Closing the Fire Service's control room has also resulted in a loss of **25 front line FF's**

Therefore there has already been a reduction of 109 frontline fire fighters in the last 4 years.

It should also be noted that during that period there has been a reduction of **41** on-call or retained FF's employed by the service (217 to 176).

Q. Does the Authority agree that if proposing a review of numbers of FF's/staff that the public should be given information as to what reductions or changes have already taken place.

According to the Medium Term Financial Plans produced by the Authority the cost of the Authority Finance department has increased by £1.5 million from £3.67million in 2012 to £5.1million in 2014.

Q. Will the Authority guarantee that before making any further cuts to front line service provision that all possible savings will be achieved from back office functions?

Q. Will the Authority outsource back office functions such as Human Resources and Finance in order to protect front line service provision?

- *The right number and location for fire stations which may involve moving, merging, closing or co-locating with other blue light services'*

Q. What kind of response is the Authority expecting from this statement?

Q. Would the Authority not agree that until such time as a decision has been taken on what will be involved in terms of moving, merging, closing or co-location that there is too little information for the public to provide a considered response to this proposal?

The overwhelming response from FBU members and family and friends that they in turn have consulted with is that these proposals are too generic; they provide no real detail or information which makes it very difficult to put forward any views or comments.

The Authority should not need to seek the public's views in order to carry out a review of the service. There is an expectation that these types of reviews would form part of a sound business model. No one would disagree that a business should not undertake regular reviews of its functions in order to try and identify areas where it could improve and provide a better service to end users. When those review produce possible outcomes, then it would be most appropriate and beneficial to seek the views of the public and stakeholders.

PSP Page 21

Very few people understood what the page title 'reviewing the geo-spatial distribution of our capacity' actually means. It is difficult to relate to and therefore difficult to respond to.

The first paragraph states that 'it is evident that there is a genuine need to seek alternative ways of delivering front-line services in a more efficient and economical way' but it does not substantiate this claim with any evidence.

Q.What is the evidence to support that there is a genuine need to change current levels of service and where is found; or is the genuine need based on the responsibility the Authority has to constantly review service delivery to ensure efficiency and effectiveness?

Data and Statistics

The provision of information is integral to an effective consultation process. Some of the information incorporated into the PSP, particularly in relation to fire statistics, is misleading and does little to afford members of the public a wider understanding of risk in their communities. This will impede the ability of the public to provide an informed contribution to the consultation process.

Rather than inform the public one could argue that some of the information is being presented in a non-objective and biased manner in an attempt to lead people into a false belief or understanding about risk levels.

On page 7, entitled 'strategic context' and under the heading 'fewer incidents...reducing risk...a safer environment' it states that:

"There has been a dramatic reduction in the number of fire related incidents and consequent deaths and injuries"

The above statement and the statistics showing a 54% reduction in Fires and 68% reduction in non-fatal fire casualties is misleading.

Using the same statistics taken from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) website you could present a very different picture.

For example:

Accidental dwelling fires between 2002/03 to 2012/13 have gone up 9%

Or

Non-fatal fire casualties have gone up 50% in the last year.

The document acknowledges that to review over a period of ten years leads to an inaccurate representation or portrayal of risk because it fails to factor in the many changes that have taken place over that period.

BMKFRS has taken steps to manage and reduce risk gradually over that period of ten years. This has been achieved primarily through previous IRMP/PSP processes. Society and the Fire Service have changed and adapted over that timescale to try and reduce risk. It is therefore unreasonable to draw comparisons over a period of ten years. It is misrepresentative and ultimately it is misleading the public on the subject of risk.

The current IRMP/PSP reviewed similar data streams not over a ten year period but over a 2 year period. These are two extremes. 2 years is insufficient to examine enough data to be able draw reasonable conclusions and data over 10 years is too long.

A five year period would be more appropriate to give the public a better understanding of levels of risk.

Yes, there has been a considerable reduction in the number of fires in the last 10 years but much of that reduction has been around fires that very rarely pose a risk to life.

For example, there has been a significant reduction in the number of secondary fires and road vehicle fires.

Comparing the DCLG statistics from 2002/3 to 2012/13, secondary fires have fallen from 2137 in 2002/3 to 852 in 2012/13. During the same period primary fires in vehicles has seen a significant decline from 1109 to 308. These two categories of fire account for over 70% of the total fires for the year.

As presented, the statistics will lead people to believe that exposure to life risk or property risk, from fire has more than halved in the last ten years. This is inaccurate.

Whilst there has indeed been marked reduction in total fires during the last ten years the types of fire related incidents which pose the greatest risk to life and property have not seen such a

decline and if fact have remained relatively stable over that period albeit with an increase in population and the number of dwellings.

In order to give the public a better understanding of risk it should be broken down into various categories to better and more accurately represent the type and number of incidents that pose a greater risk to life and property (see the tables below). This approach would support the FRS National Framework which states that an IRMP **must:**

‘Reflect up to date risk analyses and the evaluation of service delivery outcomes.’

The following data has also been taken from the DCLG website.

Fires last 5 years

09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
2842	2708	2575	2089	2128

Primary fires dwelling

09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
433	422	457	463	389

Accidental dwelling fires

09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
372	365	417	431	362

Non-fatal casualties accidental dwelling fires

09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
34	41	50	42	61

To use very generic figures as the PSP does on page 6 does embrace the principles of an ‘informed’ consultation process. To not breakdown and categorise the types of fire will result in members of the public having to draw their own conclusions as to what type of fire or incident the statistics are referring to.

Q. Does the Authority agree that it would be better to give the public a breakdown of fire statistics over a 5 year period which will mean that they are better informed and have a better understanding of risk and, from a response perspective, the work that the BFRS is involved in?

The presentation of information in more prescriptive format will invariably support a more effective consultation process because individuals will have a better understanding of risk, and of the response work BFRS is regularly engaged in.

A reduction in the number of incidents does not necessarily always correlate with a reduction in serious life risk. It depends very much on the type and severity of the incident in question and the response standards of the FRS. For example, if you compare the data from 2008/09 and 2011/12 there was a considerable reduction in the number of fires attended and number of RTC’s attended. However, there was a significant increase in the number of lives saved in those types of incidents between those two years.

This is represented in data reported in the Annual Statements published by the Fire Authority:

‘Activity levels’ taken from BFRS Annual Statements 2008/09-2012/13

Year	Emergency incidents attended	Fires attended	Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) attended	Other incidents attended excluding false alarms	Lives saved from fire	Lives saved from RTC’s	Major incidents
08/09	7958	2918	545	4485	25	170	9
09/10	7346	2787	506	4069	34	401	12
10/11	7459	2749	544	4109	40	292	11
11/12	7469	2664	474	4291	41	329	8
12/13	6420	2071	471	3413	28	312	9

The statistics should represent a wider information base to promote knowledge and understanding on the number and types of incidents and also their correlation to risk.

Furthermore, people are not just at risk from fire but other incidents such as Road Traffic Collisions and Flooding. The data encapsulating different types of incidents and corresponding risk should also be included to help inform the public and give them the necessary knowledge and understanding to engage effectively in the consultation process.

Flooding

09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
88	184	172	145	184

RTC

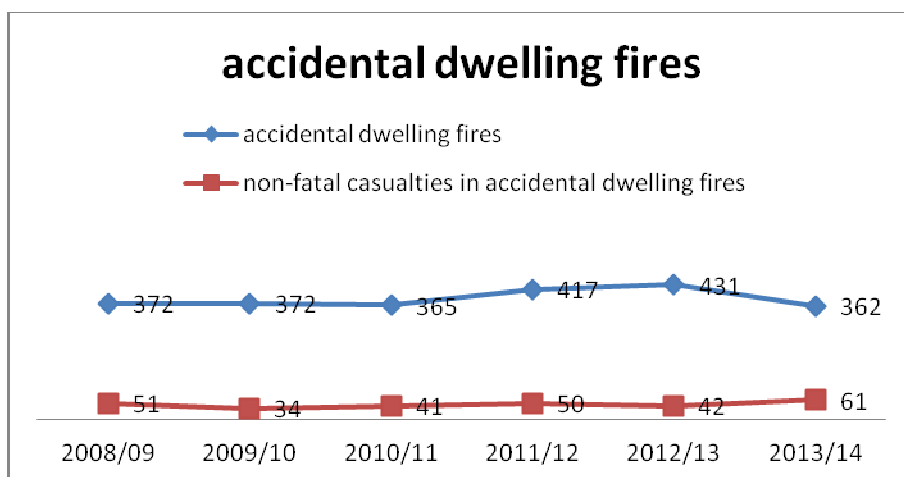
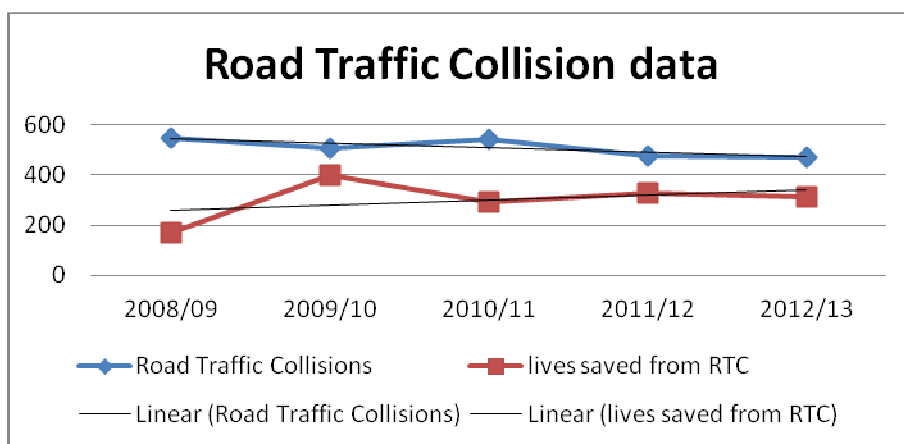
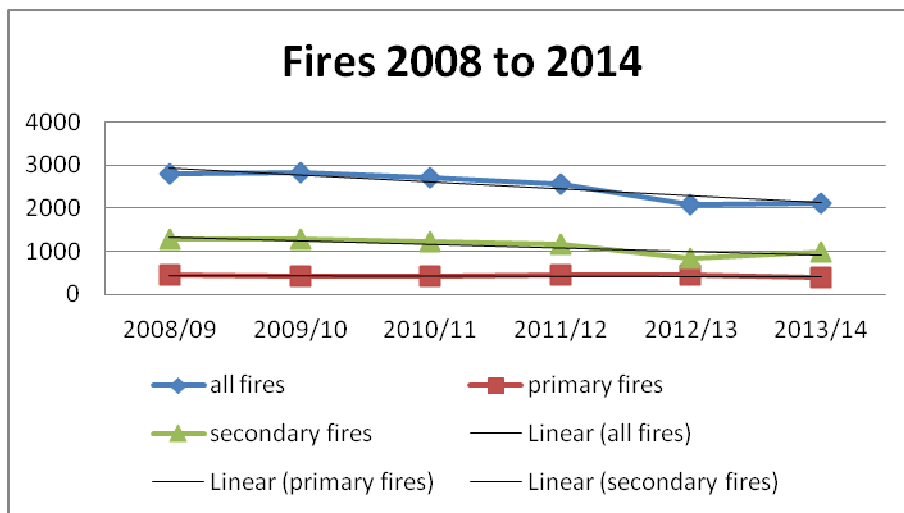
09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
543	516	466	481	456

Page 9 of the PSP includes a graph showing a downward trend in the total number of incidents. Similar to the previous arguments, a better and more accurate representation of incident trends would be achieved if incidents types were categorised into appropriate groupings. This approach would better demonstrate compliance with the FRS National Framework which states that an IRMP **must:**

'Identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks ...'

The below graph's give an example of how information relating to incidents and risk could be better portrayed and give the public and key stakeholders a much clearer understanding of fire and rescue related risks.

Q. Does the Authority agree that this approach would be beneficial and that by providing people with this information would mean that they have a better understanding of fire and rescue related risks and would be better informed to respond to the consultation?



Current IRMP data and performance monitoring

As well as data detailing risk in terms of number and type of incidents the PSP should also provide information/data which demonstrates how the Fire Authority is performing against its targets, what future targets are being set and what specific strategies there are for achieving these aims. This approach would comply with the FRS National Framework which states that an IRMP **must:**

'Reflect up to date risk analyses and *the evaluation of service delivery outcomes.*'

For example, when showing the number of accidental dwelling fires the public should also be given information about what targets the Authority had set to reduce accidental dwelling fires in a given year and how if the Authority has achieved these targets. It should also show what the Authority expects to do in future to further reduce risk by reducing certain incidents such as accidental dwelling fires.

The provision of this type of information would help to ensure that the public and stakeholders have a good understanding of risk, types of risk, current measure to reduce risk, performance standards and if and what may need to change.

Basically, it is educating the public as to what we do and providing this information in a non-biased format. This would promote understanding and encourage direct engagement from these groups in the decision making process of the Authority.

Historically, the Authority would review its performance against agreed IRMP targets on a quarterly basis. However in recent years this has not been the case and in the last year there was only one meeting where members of the Fire Authority could scrutinise the Service's performance against agreed standards.

The PSP/IRMP should include performance data and targets such as:

- Number of accidental dwelling fires.
- Number of accidental dwelling fires confined to room of origin.
- Number of fires in non-domestic premises
- Number of Road traffic collisions (RTCs)
- Number of people killed or seriously injured in in RTC's
- Number of deliberate dwelling fires

Also the document should inform the public of key response targets so that they have a better understanding of current levels of service provision and can see where the Authority is performing well and where it may need to improve. Any proposal to change service provision must include a measure of current performance so that necessary comparisons can be made.

- % of incidents where persons confirmed trapped and response is within 10 minutes.
- % of incidents responded to in 10 mins

- % of incidents receiving correct pre-determined attendance in 20 mins
- % of Wholetime pump availability
- % of Retained availability

Q. DCLG statistics relating to fire incident response times documents that Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has an average response time to fires and dwelling fires **2 mins slower** than the National average. Does the Authority agree it would be detrimental to public safety if any changes resulted in a further increase in response times?

PSP Page 22: Day Crewed/Establishment levels

The document states:

'The day crew system has been adopted as a middle ground between wholetime and on-call'

Unlike the on-call of retained duty system, the day crew system provides 24/7 cover. It is misleading to refer to day crew FF's as a middle ground when they guarantee appliance availability 24/7 365 days a year.

One of the areas that the PSP is proposing to review is the Day Crew duty system. On page 22 the PSP notes that:

'The scope of the new review is to consider operational alternatives to safeguard the sustainability and resilience of maintaining effective operational cover for the communities in these areas.'

The Authority has adopted a deliberate strategy of **not** recruiting frontline firefighters. This is despite the establishment level falling below agreed levels coupled with a retirement profile which indicates that there will be a serious shortage of front line FFs within 12 months. This shortage will not just impact upon the sustainability of the day crew duty system but all duty systems.

There has not been a commitment to maintain an agreed establishment level. Instead, a strategy has introduced in which the Authority 'manages vacancies' with short term solutions such as the use of overtime or the 'bank system' in order to save money.

Q. Does the Authority acknowledge that the long term sustainability of any crewing model relies on resourcing that crewing model to agreed establishment levels?

Q. Does the Authority agree that a policy of not recruiting FF's and therefore not committing to maintain agreed establishment levels is the primary reason why the day crew duty system in particular is becoming unsustainable?

Failure to recruit, a forced change?

The sustainability of any crewing system relies first and foremost on a commitment by the Authority to provide the agreed necessary resources (the right number of FF's) required for that particular duty system to function efficiently and effectively.

Members have raised serious concerns that the Authority is forcing a change in all crewing models by not recruiting frontline FF's and consequently driving down the establishment figure.

By continuing to adopt this strategy the Authority will have no choice but to change crewing models in order to accommodate a year on year reduction in the number of front line FFs. The public and key stakeholders will have very limited influence over any decision to revise crewing models if they are being retro-fitted to align with a falling establishment.

Therefore any consultation process or any review on the issue of staff numbers and duty systems is somewhat disingenuous. The decision to change crewing models has to a large extent already been pre-determined. The public and key stakeholders will at best be afforded a limited opportunity to effect what change takes place, but will have to accept or agree that a change will take place.

It is of course the prerogative of the Authority to make decisions around the budget and establishment levels. However, this should be done in a genuine consultation process with public and key stakeholders.

Q. Is there an opportunity for no change following any review on duty systems or crewing models.

Q. Will the Authority recruit to maintain current front line establishment levels?

Q. Is it already a forgone conclusion that each review will return an outcome which proposes a reduction in front line service provision?

Additional comments/queries

Pg 6

how is the average cost of a wholetime FF calculated, and what posts does it include? It must be acknowledged that when you refer to a wholetime FF the public will generally interpret this to mean a frontline operational FF who is on a salary of just under 29k.

They will not associate senior managers, including the chief fire officer who is on a salary of 145k, to be included in the category of wholetime FF.

It is therefore potentially a misleading statistic from the point of view of cost. It is also misleading from the point of view that it will lead people to believe that there are 309 operational frontline firefighters when the actual figure is closer to 260 with approximately 45 non station based FF's.

As the statistics also include WT fire appliances it leads one to conclude that 309 WT FF's are employed to ride 13 fire engines. This is clearly wrong but it is what is being presented. It makes it appear that there is an abundance of frontline FF's in relation to the number of fire engines and consequently could be used as an argument to further reduce the number of frontline operational ff's.

It is recognised that the general public are unlikely to know the difference between the roles of CM,WM,SM,GM,AM and BM however the statistics in terms of numbers and associated costs may be better presented and understood if they were to reflect station based personnel and non-station based personnel.

WINSLOW TOWN COUNCIL

28 High Street, Winslow, Buckinghamshire, MK18 3HF

CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

Mr C Loch - Clerk

Ms K Oddey – Deputy Clerk



Tel: 01296 712448

e-mail: clerk@winslowtowncouncil.gov.uk

BY E-MAIL: mosborne@bucksfire.gov.uk

FAO: M Osborne
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service,
Brigade Headquarters Stocklake,
Aylesbury,
Buckinghamshire,
HP20 1BD.

22nd October 2014

Dear Mick,

Re: 2015-20 Public Safety Plan Consultation

Please find below the response from Winslow Town Council (WTC).

Winslow Town Council appreciates the need to review the existing model in Buckinghamshire due to the current economic situation. WTC's particular focus during consideration of the Plan was to establish any risks, particularly those to the local area, Winslow and surrounding rural districts.

Following, a very brief but informative presentation to WTC on the 2nd October, Councillors were encouraged by the statement that Winslow Fire Station was not viewed as a likely closure, but that problems occurred during the daytime due to shifting work patterns of the retained Firemen.

Various suggestions were made to overcome this deficiency including from the floor a suggestion of making Winslow a nucleus station with up to two full time members of staff in the normal business hours Monday to Friday. Further mention was made regarding the possibility of changes to the payment system of retained firemen.

In fact, Winslow was given some praise due the current management structure and the long service of many members.

Risks.

From studying the Public Safety Plan the following risks applicable to our local area became apparent:

- Building fires due to older properties, many with thatched roofs
- Road Traffic accidents, large number of rural roads with high traffic density
- Remote locations of properties, and a lack of water supplies
- Farm Fires, large number of arable and dairy farms with significant storage of flammable material
- Growing density of population both locally and in nearby towns, i.e. Milton Keynes having a possible effect on support services (backup)
- On Call availability in daytime due to staff shortages.

Conclusion:

The above risks make it very apparent that Winslow needs to maintain its current fire cover, particularly when the development of a new business park and the East West Railway Station are considered.

Winslow Town Council is prepared to work with the fire authority to examine avenues that will ensure it retains its current facility, such as basing other blue light services at the fire station and involving the fire authority with greater integration with the local town.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Oddey, Deputy Clerk.

Newport Pagnell Town Council (by email)

Our Town Planning & Management Committee met last week to discuss this consultation and this is our formal response:

1. An informative and helpful document that sets out the key issues well.
2. It is clear that the Chief Fire Officer has taken into account the salient comments of the Knight Report and this has influenced the plan.
3. The plan could set out more information on back office costs and overheads and a methodology as to how these important elements are to be addressed and reduced.
4. The risk management plan should be themed as strategic, operational financial and political.
5. The 'blue light' co -responding approach is to be welcomed and more detail would be helpful.
6. Reference to international good practice where fire and rescue personnel are trained paramedics also would be helpful; as it links into the co-responder issue e.g. New York USA.
7. The statistics demonstrate an underused service with spare capacity that need to be addressed.
8. The B&MK area is part of Thames Valley Police area and the South Central Ambulance Service which is geographically TVP plus, as Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are included. TVP are increasingly co-operating with Hampshire Constabulary so it may be both financially prudent and innovative to consider mergers to create a South Central Emergency Service where opportunities would present themselves in respect of cost reductions in respect of back office, removal of duplication, capitalisation of assets, reduced senior management costs, sale of redundant assets and a greater number of shared sites.
9. The plan is silent regarding project management of the proposals and the expected milestones

Regards

Patrick Donovan
Deputy Clerk

Newport Pagnell Town Council
80 High Street
Newport Pagnell
Buckinghamshire MK16 8AQ

Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley (By email)

Dear Mark,

There will be increasing pressure for the 'Blue Light Services' to combine a number of their functions in the future. This is being done already in many areas, but not in Thames Valley. It does not seem to be mentioned in the 5 Year Plan. I can see it is much easier in smaller areas where the Police Force and Fire and rescue Services are coterminous. Do you have any views on the combining of call centres? I have looked at the Ambulance Service and I do not believe that the service they offer would be suitable for combining with other services, but I cannot see any major reasons for not combining Police and Fire and Rescue call centres. Whether it would make significant savings needs to be looked at, but I believe we should be looking into this over the next year. Maybe you could mention this to your opposite numbers in Ox and Berks.

Many thanks,

Anthony Stansfeld
Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

WWW.BUCKSFIRE.GOV.UK

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Ext no: 134
Direct line: 01296 744434
Date: 28th August 2014
E-mail: eandrews@bucksfire.gov.uk

Dear Anthony,

Thank you for your contribution to our consultation for the Authority's business over the next 5 years. Your thoughts will be shared with our Authority members as they deliberate in the coming months.

I tend to agree with your views on the combination of call centres and agree with the likely impracticality of combination with the ambulance control and mobilising centre. Between the three Fire and Rescue Services in the Thames Valley Area, we are combining our Fire Control Centres and, in December of this year, both Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services will start to receive their services from Royal Berkshire under a tri-partite partnership governance arrangement.

This very much creates the possibility of a future combination with Thames Valley Police's arrangements as you suggest although I imagine that project would require some detailed planning and resources. The ultimate aim of continued high quality mobilising and communications services for those we serve and protect, at an ever decreasing cost remains a commitment for all Chiefs and the fact that, as PCC, you have asked the question certainly creates an environment in which all future possibilities can be considered and modelled.

By way of information sharing, I am copying our correspondence with my friends who lead Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services. I

Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive: Mark Jones
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
Brigade Headquarters, Stocklake, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1BD
Tel: 01296 744434 Fax: 01296 744419



thank you once more for your submission and I shall of course keep you informed of our Public Safety Consultation's progress and outcomes.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Jones', written in a cursive style.

Mark Jones
Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service

cc CFO Fry, CFO Etheridge, Councillor Busby Chairman, Councillor Dransfield
Vice Chairman, Councillor Reed

Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive: Mark Jones
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**Management responses and recommendations relating to feedback received during the
2015-20 Public Safety Plan Consultation (22nd July – 13th October 2014)**

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

“Individual BMKFRS¹ Staff Feedback” includes responses received via the online questionnaire facility and other channels such as email.

Responses from individual members of the staff and public are 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 Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service

1. Who We Are and What We Do			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>How is the average cost of a wholetime ²FF³ calculated, and what posts does it include? It must be acknowledged that when you refer to a wholetime FF² the public will generally interpret this to mean a frontline operational FF² who is on a salary of just under 29k.</i>	Fire Brigades Union	This information was supplied with the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan in a supplementary table accessible via a hyperlink. The £38k per year average cost shown related to those of firefighter rank only, as clearly stated in the supplementary table, and covers total payroll costs.	None.
<i>As the statistics also include WT fire appliances it leads one to conclude that 309 WT FF's are employed to ride 13 fire engines. This is clearly wrong but it is what is being presented. It makes it appear that there is an abundance of frontline FF's in relation to the number of fire engines and consequently could be used as an argument to further reduce the number of frontline operational ff's².</i>	Fire Brigades Union	The breakdown of staff by type is that used by the Department of Communities & Local Government in its standard reporting. The table shown in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan provided a top level summary of staff numbers but also contained a hyperlink to more detailed information which clearly showed numbers of firefighters by role type from 'Firefighter' through to 'Brigade Manager' (all of whom are generically classified as 'firefighters' and are available for firefighting duties if needed).	None.

² Wholetime = Full-time, provide 24/7 cover.

³ FF = Firefighter

2. Strategic Context			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Selective use of information / statistics in a <i>“non-objective and biased manner in an attempt to lead people into a false belief or understanding about risk levels”</i> e.g. 54% reduction in fires and 68% reduction in non-fatal casualties is <i>“misleading. Using the same statistics... you could present a very different picture”</i> e.g. accidental dwelling fires between 2002/3 to 2012/13 up 9% or non-fatal fire casualties up 50% in the last year.	Fire Brigades Union	The ten year period was used in order to facilitate local comparison with national trends being reported by central government. Also the figures shown are a raw count of incident and injury numbers and do not take into account the significant increase in population that has occurred over this period, both nationally and locally, thereby understating the degree of real improvement that has actually been achieved. Selection and use of year on year changes to numbers are not necessarily representative of long term trends or, in the case of very small numbers, always statistically significant as they are likely to be subject to considerable volatility.	None.
Presenting data or statistics over a ten year period <i>“leads to an inaccurate representation or portrayal of risk because it fails to factor in the many changes that have taken place over that period... Does the Authority agree that it would be better to give the public a breakdown of fire statistics over a 5 year period which will mean they are better informed and have a better understanding of</i>	Fire Brigades Union	We disagree. Significant changes to trends in risk and demand can only be seen over a long period of time. However we agree that more detailed breakdowns and analyses of incidents by type and severity will be required as part of any risk analysis undertaken to inform the development of any specific proposals for changes to our approach to managing risk and demand.	Detailed analysis of incident numbers by type and severity to be used, alongside other risk modelling methods, to inform the development of specific proposals for change.

<i>risk, and from a response perspective, the work that the BFRS⁴ is involved in?”</i>			
3. Trends in Demand			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Although there has been a significant reduction in the number of fires in the last 10 years much of the reduction has been in fires that pose little risk to life e.g. secondary fires and primary vehicle fires – <i>“As presented, the statistics will lead people to believe that exposure to life risk or property risk, from fire has more than halved in the last ten years. This is inaccurate... A reduction in the number of incidents does not necessarily always correlate with a reduction in serious life risk”</i> e.g. increases in numbers of lives reported as ‘saved’ over a period of falling incident numbers.</p>	<p>Fire Brigades Union</p>	<p>We agree that a reduction in incident numbers does not always correlate with a reduction in serious life risk. However the reverse is also true. Many of the interventions made by the Fire and Rescue Service such as home fire risk checks and the installation of smoke alarms correlate with a significant reduction in fatalities and injuries, but do not necessarily prevent incidents from occurring in the first place, or only have a very marginal effect on the likelihood of occurrence. A number of factors are likely to have contributed to the long term reductions in deaths and injuries in domestic fires, including the widespread ownership of smoke alarms, legislative changes such as changes in foam filled furnishing regulations, and it is these that make the environment safer rather than trends in raw incident numbers.</p>	<p>Quantifying cause and effect relationships for life risk is extremely complex owing to the number of interacting variables. As such, continued collaboration with other FRSs and academics through attendance at specialist meetings and conferences will aid our understanding, such that this can inform our ways of working.</p>

⁴ BFRS = Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, a former abbreviation for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS)

4. National & Regional Risks			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations

- No issues raised -

5. Local Risk Profile			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations

- No issues raised -

6. Future Risk Factors			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Plan seems to treat HS2⁵ as “just another business operating in your area” and does not sufficiently consider the impact of the construction phase on response times e.g. mud on roads, temporary road-works, construction traffic, ‘assets tied up in traffic delays and an increase in RTAs⁶’.</p> <p>“BCC⁷ together are concerned about the use of key emergency service routes by the Nominated Undertaker (HS2) during construction, particularly the A4010, A413 and A41 and also between the two hospitals on the Aylesbury to High Wycombe road and how this will impact on emergency response times. We feel that the emergency services will need resources and training to deal with any accidents within the new infrastructure being created by the scheme (HS2) i.e. tunnels, viaducts.”</p>	<p>Parish Councillor (Wendover)</p> <p>Safer Bucks Partnership (Buckinghamshire County Council)</p>	<p>The top level of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan only covered the High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) risk in brief. However there was also a hyperlink to supplementary information which states that “The construction and operation of HS2 will represent the greatest single change to the risk profile in Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes in modern times”. Therefore we do not regard this as just another business in our operating area. We are actively monitoring the implications of HS2 to assess what, if any, changes may be required to our resourcing arrangements. We are well aware that during construction, there will be an increase in heavy vehicle movements, specialist plant machinery and temporary accommodation for construction workers. During operation, established contingency plans will have identified the need for any specialist response capability and regular scenario based emergency exercises will be undertaken involving other blue light services and civil authorities as appropriate.</p>	<p>Resource scenario modelling to be developed specifically for understanding the impact of HS2, during both the construction phase and the business-as-usual phase. We will investigate whether any of the costs of this work can be recovered from HS2.</p>

⁵ HS2 = High Speed Rail 2 (<http://www.hs2.org.uk/>)

⁶ RTA = Road Traffic Accident, now known as Road Traffic Collision (RTC)

⁷ BCC = Buckinghamshire County Council (<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/>)

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7. Current Resourcing			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations

- No issues raised -

8. Risk Management Strategy			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“What is the current approach to managing risk, what does it incorporate, how is it measured, have targets been reached and why is this information not contained within this PSP⁸?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	Our risk management strategy is outlined at page 17 of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan. We publish and publically report performance against a range of targets that are designed to measure progress towards achieving our vision and strategic aims. Performance against these targets was most recently reported to the Fire Authority’s Executive Committee in July. This information is freely available from our website (http://bucksfire.gov.uk/fire-authority/fire-authority-committee-meetings/executive-committee-meetings-2014/)	We will continue to conduct research and analysis in conjunction with other fire and rescue services and academic institutions through attendance at specialist meetings and conferences, in order to develop our understanding of ways to appropriately balance risk and demand with our resources.
<i>Why is the current approach to managing risk no longer viable, and why does it need to change?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	It is not a question of ‘viability’ as such but whether it is proportionate and appropriately balanced relative to the changes to patterns of risk and demand that have taken place over recent years.	
<i>How is the current balance [between prevention, protection and response] wrong or no longer the right balance? Where is the information to support this statement so that an informed contribution can be made?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	There are not simple ‘black and white’ answers to questions of this kind and the balance will need to continuously change in line with changes to risk and demand for our services. However the significant changes to risk and demand that have occurred over the	

⁸ PSP = 2015-20 Public Safety Plan

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p><i>“What factors are used to measure the right balance between risk and capacity needed to respond? What is the current balance? What are the current risks, how are they measured and what current strategies are in place to mitigate the impact of these risks?”</i></p>	<p>Fire Brigades Union</p>	<p>last few years suggest that a more strategic review of the balance is timely.</p> <p>Identifying the ‘right’ or ‘safe’ balance will be assessed through resource modelling in the next phase of the plan, when the catchment areas on p16 of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan are reviewed in more detail. It is during this phase that risk types will be profiled in more detail such that tailored risk mitigation can be applied.</p> <p>The current balance was measured by calculating what was actually used in terms of number of appliances, against what the service is financially configured to provide for day-to-day demand conditions as well as infrequent risk/spate conditions (p15 and 16 of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan). This was the first step in quantifying our resourcing needs based on demand and risk and aimed to provide a top-level objective measure of our latent capacity as opposed to a subjective impression.</p>	<p>Resource modelling of the catchment areas on p16 of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan will be conducted to assess the impact on safety and performance of any proposed changes.</p>
<p><i>“I do not see any strategy in Plan to reduce the number of False Alarms, thus saving staff time, perhaps reducing manning and equipment levels and generating operating economies.</i></p>	<p>Parish Councillor (Great Linford)</p>	<p>Dealing with false alarms is a ‘business as usual’ activity for us and we have tried and tested approaches for reducing all types of false alarms, as well as actively engaging in national working groups and current studies. As a result of these, numbers of false alarms have fallen from a peak of 4,247 in 2006/7 to 2,684 in 2013/14 – a reduction of 37%. We</p>	<p>We will continue to review our Automatic Fire Alarm Policy in line with changing demands for our resources.</p>

<p><i>Do you know the reason why an alarm has been raised but later is classified as Good Intent and do you analyse the reason for the call being made and consider what steps could be taken to avoid a reoccurrence in future?</i></p> <p><i>Are False Alarms classified as Electrical, also reviewed to determine if there is a pattern of equipment failure that could be identified and then eliminated by education or inspection where similar situations could occur?"</i></p>		<p>will continue to sustain our efforts to drive down numbers of all types of false alarm over the lifetime of the Public Safety Plan. We acknowledge that given the high proportion (95%) of automatic fire alarms that turn out to be false, there are perhaps other areas our resources could be used to greater effect. The purpose of the plan was to get a sense of public opinion on this issue.</p> <p>Understanding cause and effect relationships can be complicated. As such we are working with analysts from other services to better understand this relationship and are promoting that this relationship be further investigated at a National Level through the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA).</p> <p>Yes we have an active programme of engagement with owners of defective alarm systems which identifies, in particular, those generating repeat signals and assists them to resolve the issues giving rise to them. Thanks to these efforts False Alarms Electrical have been reduced by nearly half from a peak of 3,285 in 2006/7 to 1,712 in 2013/14.</p>	
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9. Prevention Strategy			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“Target those at risk of fire...and ensure that measures taken are effective, and represent good value for money”</i>	Safer Bucks Partnership (Buckinghamshire County Council)	Our latest home fire risk checks (HFRCs) are targeting ACORN ⁹ lifestyle groups that were experiencing significantly (>1standard deviation) more accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) than other ACORN lifestyle groups using regression analysis. We also identified the common causal factors behind ADFs amongst each ACORN lifestyle group. Once a year has passed we will be able to assess whether the HFRC intervention method has impacted on the excessive number of ADFs within each ACORN lifestyle group and/or the causal factor.	None.

⁹ ACORN = a demographic dataset that profiles every household by lifestyle type (<http://acorn.caci.co.uk/>)

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p><i>BCC¹⁰ could provide names (with permission) of chaotic alcohol users in treatment who are evidenced as having a higher risk profile regarding fires. Services could weave this into the assessment process and then refer onto the fire service for home safety checks and general advice”.</i></p> <p><i>“We could do some shared community events and collectively save on staffing costs. We could assist each other with campaigns, for example the Fire service could hand out door step crime leaflets to households with older residents that could be vulnerable and, in the same vein, PCSO’s¹¹ and CS¹² teams could hand out fire safety literature to when the call at older properties (that are a higher fire risk)”.</i></p>	<p>Safer Bucks Partnership (Buckinghamshire County Council)</p>	<p>This is being explored following a recent meeting between Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS) and Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and attendance of BMKFRS on the Alcohol Strategy Group. Plans are being compiled which involve PCSOs adding Home Fire Risk Check leaflets to their “cocoon” packs that are given out to elderly residents at risk of door step crime, also engagement for BMKFRS personnel with those residents that attend the Alcohol Recovery Café at BCC (approx. 500 people) and Drug Recovery. This is to provide some contact with “at risk” groups within our communities.</p>	<p>We will continue to work closely with partners to help make communities safer together.</p>

¹⁰ BCC = Buckinghamshire County Council (<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/>)

¹¹ PCSO = Police Community Safety Officer

¹² CS = Community Safety

10. Managing Fire Risk in Commercial and Non-Domestic Buildings

- To what extent do you agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service should assist with the development of business continuity plans?

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Sprinkler installation			
It might be considered hypocritical of us to expect businesses to install sprinklers, <i>“when we don’t have them in our own buildings”, “we can encourage but we shouldn’t enforce”</i>	Staff Focus Group	To date it is true to say that we haven’t installed sprinklers in our premises. However, most of our real estate is legacy or of some age. Sprinklers will be considered in any new fire and rescue facilities we build with a view to take advantage of not just the safety features and business continuity advantages, but also the design freedoms sprinklers offer.	Sprinklers will be considered in any new fire and rescue facilities we construct.
Would it be better to consider a tiered approach to installing sprinklers to make it less financially prohibitive to small businesses, for example compartmentalisation as opposed to a blanket approach of recommending installing sprinklers across the entire premises?	Staff Focus Group	There may be some merit in this, depending on design restrictions, as part of a cost benefit analysis in reducing fire damage. The benefit of sprinklers over compartmentalisation are that any fire is controlled while with compartmentalisation you will always run the risk of losing everything in that compartment.	Compartmentalisation versus entire premise sprinkler fitting will be considered when liaising with businesses, depending on what is appropriate for their business.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Should we consider focussing on residential risk as opposed to commercial risk, because <i>“the last death in a workplace due to fire was in Milton Keynes in 1996, yet since 1996 we know that people have died in their homes”</i>, furthermore, the Welsh Assembly have set a precedent for this, with their policy legislating for sprinklers in all new build properties.</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>The most significant innovations and recognition for the inclusion of sprinklers has been in residential properties. Certainly the recent cost benefit analyses published over the last few years indicate that fitting sprinklers in higher risk residential properties has the greatest cost benefit. It has been a consistent message from Government for the last few years that blanket fitting of sprinklers in all residential property is not cost beneficial. A lot depends on what longer-term view you take. The Welsh Assembly certainly believe that a blanket policy of fitting sprinklers in all residential properties will have significant long term benefits. Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) will certainly take a risk assessed approach (and actively do) in promoting and supporting sprinkler installations in high risk premises.</p> <p>The benefits of sprinklers in commercial premises do tend to be less in terms of reducing life risk and much more in protecting commerce and the environment. There is a growing mass of evidence to demonstrate that sprinkler controlled fires in commercial premises allow a quick reversion to business normality and also a vastly reduced impact on the environment. Therefore, it is still a priority for the Protection officers to seek opportunities to encourage</p>	<p>We will continue to take a risk assessed approach in promoting and supporting sprinkler installations in high life-risk residential premises.</p> <p>Given the body of evidence demonstrating how sprinklers limit the damage caused by fire to property and the environment, and in turn a quicker reversion time to business normality, we will continue to promote sprinklers in business premises.</p>

		business to install sprinkler systems.	
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Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Could we apply more pressure, such as via building regulations or by working more closely with insurance companies to help incentivise making homes safer through reduced premiums?</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) is an active partner of the National Fire Sprinkler Network in lobbying both Government and Insurers to promote the adoption of sprinklers in Building Regulations.</p> <p>There has been some success in increased recognition of sprinklers in the Approved Documents which support the Building Regulations. This has been through lobbying and also custom and practice influenced by fire and rescue services nationally.</p> <p>The wider inclusion of sprinklers in schools and the Domestic Sprinkler Measure in Wales were as a direct of lobbying by fire and rescue Services.</p> <p>Insurers continue to be a source of frustration. While some insurers offer generous discounts for sprinklers in commercial buildings, their approach is not uniform.</p> <p>In residential premises there is no real avenue for reducing premiums in recognition of installing sprinklers. Most domestic policies, fire reflects usually less than 5% of the premium.</p>	<p>We will continue to apply pressure through lobbying and would welcome suggestions on how our influence could be improved.</p>

Review AFA Policy			
<p>Could we reconsider the weight of response and better call handling given that 99% of AFAs¹³ turn out to be False Alarms?</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) has an active policy of supporting business and part of this is through routine attendance at Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs). This does allow data gathering on specific properties which informs the interventions by our AFA Reduction Officer. This has led to a marked decrease in the demand on us but also improves business continuity for those we have advised and assisted in reducing their AFAs. We have adjusted our response in the past to be more efficient and proportionate. There are no immediate plans to change this as we feel the balance is right at this time. We do keep this policy under review.</p>	<p>We will continue to review our Automatic Fire Alarm Policy in line with changing demands for our resources.</p>
<p>Are there plans to continue or enhance the work done to reduce the number of false alarms, because it seems to be highly beneficial and should be continued?</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>We feel that the Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) policy and active interventions has had tremendous benefit for both commerce and us. We do have every intention of continuation of this policy and methodology. The management of AFAs is an ongoing and evolving process as there are always new and emerging challenges to maintaining the low volume of AFAs generated by business and the impact on our services.</p>	<p>We will continue to review our Automatic Fire Alarm Policy in line with changing demands for our resources.</p>

¹³ AFA = Automatic Fire Alarm

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Surely, even if one Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) turns out to be a fire, then it is worth providing an emergency response to all of them?	Staff Focus Group	We experience about 2000 (Automatic Fire Alarms) AFAs per year and nearly all of them (95%) turn out to be false alarms. Currently a False Alarm results in at least 1 fire engine being mobilised with 4 crew and typically takes 30 minutes to resolve. Considering this occurs nearly 2,000 times per year, we feel there may be other ways of responding, such as reconsidering the weight of response and using an officer in a car who could request back-up if needed as opposed to 4 crew on a fire engine. This could free up revenue that could be better invested elsewhere. At present there are no plans to change in this respect, however we will continue to monitor our performance and approach in this area.	None.
Business Continuity Planning			
Would there be any liability to the organisation if we offered this kind of service [business continuity planning]?	Staff Focus Group	If professional advice were to be given out negligently, there is potential liability, however this is an insurable risk and indemnities could be obtained.	None.
<p>How would we ensure that diversifying our function doesn't impact on what we are legislated to do, both in terms of setting up a new function (requiring enhanced back office capacity) and running it?</p> <p>Good idea as long as it doesn't impact on the front line.</p> <p>The front line is a more important factor in determining public safety than business continuity</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p> <p>Online questionnaire</p> <p>Online questionnaire</p>	<p>Work is well underway developing our corporate performance management system so that we can understand how the organisation is performing, including the work we are legislated to do so that we can monitor and detect when performance changes and act accordingly.</p> <p>It is not yet well-understood which activities provide the best outcome in terms of public safety, since these cause and effect relationships are very complex owing to the number of interacting variables.</p>	We will continue to develop our corporate performance management system to that we can best monitor activities across the organisation.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>planning.</p> <p>How could business continuity planning benefit our organisation?</p>	<p>e</p> <p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>It is important to remember that our core objectives are to serve the <i>community</i> by reducing <i>their</i> risk. Business continuity planning aims to safeguard a business's survivability after an incident, which not only benefits that particular business, but also helps safeguard the jobs of the people who work there, which in-turn ensures that they stay in the area and continue to contribute to the wider community.</p> <p>Furthermore, if we were to find ways of generating revenue through this type of initiative, it could give us the option to proportionately invest in areas such as prevention and protection to further drive down risk in communities.</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>The fire and rescue service offers relevant expertise and insight and business continuity planning is a good idea.</p>	<p>Online questionnaire</p> <p><i>incl. Buckinghamshire New University</i></p>	<p>We definitely offer some relevant expertise and insight and this is an area that we would like to explore.</p>	<p>Explore business continuity planning as a potential service offering.</p>
<p>This is outside the scope of the fire and rescue service or public sector and is not the fire and rescue service's responsibility</p> <p>Fire and Rescue Service doesn't currently have the skills or expertise to deliver this service</p>	<p>Online questionnaire</p>	<p>This does fall outside what we are legislated to do and skills and expertise would need to be developed further, however, we disagree that it is outside the scope of the fire and rescue service since it could help make our communities safer, which is definitely within scope.</p>	<p>Explore business continuity planning as a potential service offering.</p>

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Primary Authority Scheme			
<p>Could our organisational reputation be affected by who we partner with and how do we choose who we partner with?</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>There is potential risk in partnering with business, but these risks are ameliorated through developing a robust partnership agreement and careful choice of who we might partner with. This is still a relatively new opportunity for fire and rescue services but it has been in practice with local authority health and safety and trading standards enforcing bodies for several years. Either party can approach another with a view to partnering. Sometimes it is because an organisation has a headquarters in a particular fire and rescue service area but this doesn't necessarily have to be the case.</p> <p>There are potential significant benefits to business as it improves the consistency of enforcement and development of effective policy. This has obvious commercial and public safety benefits. The direct benefits for fire and rescue services can come in the form of resourcing but also the partner companies often get interested in supporting prevention campaigns. This has obvious wider societal benefits.</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>Are there any benefits to our organisation through adopting this sort of scheme?</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>There are potential significant benefits to business as it improves the consistency of enforcement and development of effective policy. This has obvious commercial and public safety benefits. The direct benefits for fire and rescue services can come in the form of resourcing but also the partner companies often get interested in supporting prevention campaigns. This has obvious wider societal benefits.</p>	<p>None.</p>

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Have we considered the risks of pursuing this kind of venture, for example, unhealthy competition between fire and rescue services focussing on the same desirable blue-chip companies?</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>This is an interesting point, however it does assume that competition amongst fire and rescue services would lead to negative outcomes. This is a point for debate as the outcome cannot be known in advance. This brings us back to our original function, which is to serve the community to reduce risk. Perhaps we should ask - does encouraging businesses to liaise with a single service remove barriers and better enable them to make their business premises safe? If so, will this benefit the community more than asking a business to liaise with several services locally.</p>	<p>None.</p>

11. Resourcing for low-level daily demand and infrequent high risk

- To what extent do you agree or disagree that Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service should consider more economical ways of dealing with infrequent large scale or numerous simultaneous emergency incidents – for example by increasing collaboration with and support from neighbouring fire and rescue services?

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p><i>“How will this work if all the surrounding counties are running down their resources?”</i></p> <p><i>“What of Royal Berkshire¹⁴ or whoever have an incident and they need their engines and we’re stuck with nothing...”</i></p> <p>We need to better understand what our neighbouring brigades are doing, if they are reducing their pumps as well, that could have implications for our reliance on them when scaling up for risk</p> <p>BMKFRS¹⁵ shouldn’t/can’t rely on neighbouring services and a reduction in our resources should be avoided</p>	<p>Public Focus Group</p> <p>Staff Focus Group</p> <p>Online questionnaire <i>incl. Member/Relative of BMKFRS, Resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes</i></p>	<p>We will liaise closely with neighbouring fire authorities as we develop specific proposals for changes to our risk management strategy and associated operational assets and resources to ensure that our collective capacity and capabilities remain sufficient to deal with the range of incidents and civil contingencies that we might reasonably expect to deal with.</p>	<p>Continue to liaise with neighbouring brigades about strategic changes we are proposing and ask them to proactively update us with changes they are considering.</p>

¹⁴ Royal Berkshire = Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

¹⁵ BMKFRS = Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p><i>“What’s the ‘community cost’ of bringing in resources from a wider area to assist in covering big incidents if that delays an effective response?”</i></p> <p>There isn’t enough information to provide an informed response</p>	<p>Public Focus Group</p> <p>Online questionnaire</p>	<p>All proposals for change will be subject to risk assessment and a cost / benefit analysis to ensure that they do not expose the community to intolerable levels of risk or financial disadvantage.</p>	<p>Risk and cost/benefit assessments to be carried out for all proposals.</p>
<p><i>“What would the funding implications of mutual aid be?”</i></p>	<p>Public Focus Group</p>	<p>Until we have specific proposals for change it is not possible to determine this but we would not increase reliance on mutual aid where this presented a financial disadvantage to tax payers.</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p><i>“[Mutual aid] Surely you do this now already?”</i></p>	<p>Public Focus Group</p>	<p>Yes we do. There are established statutory arrangements for mutual aid between fire authorities which we already draw upon from time to time as well as ourselves providing reciprocal support to neighbouring fire authorities.</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p><i>“What drives keeping the wholetime¹⁶ firefighters around during the early hours when the risk is lower?”</i></p>	<p>Public Focus Group</p>	<p>The historical rationale for fire cover focused almost exclusively on property type and risk, as such many fire and rescue services are still configured around property risk. It wasn’t until the 2004 Fire and Rescue Services Act and the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Planning that wider risks such as life risk were properly considered. As with any risk analysis, the two main aspects to be taken into account are the severity and likelihood of an event occurring. It is clear from analysis</p>	<p>None.</p>

¹⁶ Wholetime = Full-time, provide 24/7 cover.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>What scope is there to start modelling based on skills and equipment as opposed to appliances, and in turn base our planning assumptions on this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We would need to consider historic changes to numbers of crew riding a pump <i>“historic data will be showing pumps going out with 5-6 crew on, whereas now they are going out with 4 crew, so we may need more pumps to provide personnel”, “but you don’t necessarily need more fire engines to get them there”</i> 	Staff Focus Group	<p>that demand does reduce during certain hours of the day and night, therefore our future response modelling will indeed take this factor into consideration.</p> <p>Modelling risk based on more detailed resource usage such as equipment and skills as opposed to appliances requires more precise and reliable data. Response Policy and Performance and Evaluation are looking at ways to improve the data that is recorded so that the Information Team can model at this more detailed level.</p>	<p>Response Policy and Performance and Evaluation to work with the Information Team to improve data collection that will aid analysis and insight.</p>
<p>Do we have the appetite to challenge duty systems that are a result of politics rather than demand?</p> <p><i>“there are a number of stations that have the duty systems they do for political reasons, not risk based reasons”</i></p>	Staff Focus Group	<p>This is exactly what we are trying to do – developing an evidence base upon which to best align our resources to risk and demand.</p>	None.
<p>What scope is there to recruit in partnership with the Territorial Army, since we are looking for the same types of people?</p>	Staff Focus Group	<p>This is an interesting idea that would be good to explore.</p>	<p>Liaise with TA to see whether we can do joint recruitment drives</p>
<p>Would it be reasonable to rely on a tiered approach to scaling up from demand to risk: namely rely on neighbouring brigades for the immediate emergency scale-up response and then call back arrangements to help sustain that scale</p>	Staff Focus Group	<p>We currently have this facility in place for contingency arrangements i.e. mutual aid, rather than business as usual. A structured tiered approach is an interesting option to consider.</p>	<p>Liaise with neighbouring brigades to explore over-the-border resource modelling</p>

of capacity?			taking into account their future proposals.
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>How are RDS ¹⁷ being factored into future plans?</p> <p><i>“Every day is RDS recruitment day, yet we still have lots of RDS, we just use them really badly...if we planned and recruited according to risk and need, then it might be easier to retain...we might only want them a couple of evenings or a couple of days a week”</i></p> <p><i>“the reason we don’t have 31 pumps available is because the RDS model is out of date. If we are talking about remodelling the service around them, we are not going to get it”</i></p>	Staff Focus Group	We agree, the On-Call model needs updating for the modern day working environment and societal changes. We will be proposing and testing new ways of configuring On-Call more effectively for both the employer and the employee.	A number of options and models in respect of our On-Call stations and units are being developed and considered in our plans. This work may result in different pilot models being trialled in relation to our wider response risk and demand modelling.
<p>How many appliances do we realistically use and have available?</p> <p><i>“How many times do we have 30 pumps available, we are lucky if we have a dozen”, and how many of those most frequently used pumps are our own?</i></p> <p><i>“although we have put 12 pumps there, 12 of those pumps might not even be ours anyway”.</i></p> <p>We need to make sure that by reducing our overall</p>	Staff Focus Group	This is an interesting point and provides an alternative approach for investigating our current day-to-day and infrequent risk resourcing capability. It would be useful to understand what proportion of our incidents are covered by various appliances, including ‘Over The Border’ appliances.	Analysis to be conducted to identify what proportion of incidents are covered by appliances (over-the-border and

¹⁷ RDS = Retained Duty System, former terminology for On-Call cover.

capacity we don't inadvertently reduce our effective capacity below a safe threshold.			BMKFRS)
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Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Do we understand which of our pumps are routinely unavailable and why?	Staff Focus Group	This piece of work was considered in the past and we found that more complete data was required before it could be undertaken i.e. we would need to know why a pump was unavailable (defect, insufficient skills or personnel) when it was needed in a given location. Since the mobilising system mobilises the nearest available resource, we are not currently collecting data on reasons for unavailability when that resource was needed. In order to optimise the use of our resources, this is a valid piece of work and should be considered.	Performance and Evaluation and Response Policy to work with the Information team to develop analysis to look at which appliances were unavailable when needed and the reason why i.e. defects, insufficient skill sets or insufficient personnel.
<p>What are our performance measures going to be moving forward?</p> <p><i>“if you were to ask a member of the public what they would measure...it would be response times...obviously 1 minute is better than 2 minutes and so on”, “all they [the public] want to know is that when they pick up the phone when they need you, that you will be there as soon as possible”</i></p> <p><i>“even if you weren’t doing any [operational] good, but the public were reassured, are you not doing good in a different way?”</i></p> <p><i>“if you can’t quantify how many lives you have saved do one activity [e.g. prevention] versus</i></p>	Staff Focus Group	This is an extremely important point and the public were asked this question in the first public focus group series (January 2014). The first priority for the public was to save lives. The second priority was to save as much of their property as possible, and thirdly some said they could see the benefits of more pre-emptive work to help ensure they can get back to ‘normal’ as quickly as possible in the event of an incident. It is assumed that getting there quickly (faster response times) will help ensure the first two outcomes, however research has shown that life risk, for example, is reducing despite increasing response times, which is a counterintuitive result (Fire and Rescue Statistical	Information team to continue work in conjunction with other fire and rescue services, to define meaningful risk performance metrics that are based on outcomes in terms of life risk and property/environmental damage. In the meantime, Response

<p><i>another [e.g. response]...[then how can you prioritise]”?</i></p> <p>Concern regarding potential delays in attendance times or increased risk, <i>“sharing resources is cost effective, but this should not be implemented at the expense of delays in deploying resources and increase lead times in attending incidents</i></p> <p>How can we ensure that public safety is not unduly affected by altering our station footprint [potentially leading to longer response times]?</p>	<p>Online questionnaire <i>incl. Moulsoe Parish Council</i></p> <p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>Release, DCLG, Aug 2013). This tells us that although response times must be a factor, it is not the limiting factor. It therefore might not be appropriate to spend too much money trying to configure the service around faster response times, when it may not significantly affect the outcome of saving lives. There are a number of interacting variables such as lifestyle type, building materials, property type, weather, time to alert of fire etc. that we could be influencing to affect the outcome. Furthermore, the introduction of AVLS (automatic vehicle location service) will decrease the significance of station locations, because resources will be mobilised based on their actual position, not station locations. Having said this, it is an extremely complex cause and effect relationship that many fire and rescue services are trying to better understand. The Information team is currently working on defining more meaningful risk measures through research and analysis.</p>	<p>times will remain the primary performance measure.</p> <p>Senior Management to continue driving research at a national level through CFOA to invest more resourcing into research to understand the mechanism between cause and effect.</p>
<p>How can we ensure that our reputation for being a reliable service is not affected by altering how we deliver the service [potentially leading to longer response times]?</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>There are no plans to increase response times, however if this were the case, we would demonstrate that this would not result in a reduction in overall safety. This will be achieved through the Risk Review and public consultation process.</p>	<p>Continued research and analysis across the fire sector to better understand and quantify the impact of service delivery on reducing risk.</p>
<p>Are we making sure that we factor in the changing risk landscape and incident profile? Some consider that we are seeing more frequent ‘infrequent large scale incidents’ <i>“we are beginning to see more big incidents creep in, Swinley Forest in 2012, Floods in 2013/14 and then with climate change we can expect longer drier summers and wetter warmer</i></p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>Public risk will be assessed and consulted on via the Risk Reviews of catchment areas. This will include assessment of emergent risks.</p>	<p>Research/Analysis to investigate whether large infrequent risk events (in terms of resourcing demands) are increasing in frequency.</p>

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12. Reviewing the ‘geo-spatial’ distribution of our capacity

- To what extent should we consider re-locating / merging / co-locating stations to balance response capacity with demand?

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“What kind of response is the Authority expecting from this statement? Would the Authority not agree that until such time as a decision has been taken on what will be involved in terms of moving, merging, closing or co-location that there is too little information for the public to provide a considered response to this proposal?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	The Authority wished to explore how the public might react to changes of this kind, ‘in principle’ and without the constraint of worrying about any immediate changes to their local services. As the report on the outcomes of the focus groups held with members of the public shows, the participants, had no difficulty in considering and responding to these ‘in principle’ ideas.	None.
Concept of ‘geo-spatial distribution of capacity’ difficult to relate and respond to.	Fire Brigades Union	We accept that some of the concepts contained in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan are complex. We endeavour to explain things in non-technical terms as far as possible – though recognise that we do not always achieve this. This is why the use of focus groups to engage both the public and our own staff is at the heart of our consultation approach as this enables us to explain and engage participants in consideration of more complex issues.	None.
<i>“What is the evidence to support that there is a genuine need to change current levels of service and where is found; or is the genuine need based on the responsibility the Authority has to constantly review service delivery to ensure efficiency and effectiveness?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	The need to review current levels of service arises from the changes to risk and demand identified in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan and detailed at pages 7 (‘Strategic Context’), 9 (‘Trends in Demand’) and 12 (‘Future Risk Factors’). The Authority does indeed have a responsibility to constantly review service delivery to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. However we are also required, and find it beneficial, to publically consult on our strategic direction in relation to the	None.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Must be careful to ensure that reconfiguring station footprints isn't a purely financial decision as this may result in moving a station to a less optimal location e.g. Aylesbury fire station</p> <p>Growth of towns is not necessarily centralised</p> <p>Concerns that the merger is only to cut costs</p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p> <p>Online questionnaire</p> <p>Online questionnaire</p>	<p>discharge of this responsibility at appropriate junctures to ensure that our approach is informed by an understanding of the views of the public and other important stakeholders.</p> <p>It is not always possible to secure the 'optimal' location for a fire station, though we will always endeavour to get the best location we can. Public Safety is our number one priority and a number of conflicting variables have to be considered when delivering this outcome. The location of a fire station is not the only factor and sometimes finances are a necessary consideration also. As such, assessment of public risk will be assessed and consulted on via the Risk Reviews of catchment areas.</p>	<p>Risk Reviews to be conducted for each proposal in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan ahead of any major changes.</p>
<p><i>"DCLG statistics relating to fire incident response times, documents that Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has an average response time to fires and dwelling fires 2 mins slower than the National average. Does the Authority agree it would be detrimental to public safety if any changes resulted in a further increase in response times?"</i></p>	<p>Fire Brigades Union</p>	<p>The national average is not the best benchmark to use as it is heavily skewed by urban fire authorities who are predominantly full-time (available 24/7) with dense networks of fire stations and short travel times. The most relevant comparison is with other similar fire authority areas. Table 1c of the 'Appendices to Fire Incidents Response Times, England, 2013-14' places fire authorities into 'predominantly rural', 'significantly rural' and 'predominantly urban' categories. Buckinghamshire is classified as significantly rural. The average response time to all types of fire for this category in 2013/14 was 9.2 minutes. Buckinghamshire was 42 seconds slower at 9.9 minutes.</p>	<p>None.</p>

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“The review of catchment areas is likely to be controversial (Amersham). It will be important for BMKFS to consult directly on proposals at a later stage.”</i>	Safer Bucks Partnership (Buckinghamshire County Council)	We are conscious that significant changes to the disposition of fire stations can be the subject of public controversy. We will, of course, undertake appropriate public consultations before making any decisions that could involve closing, moving, merging or creating new stations.	None.
<i>“If you propose to do something with a particular station you are going to have to have rock solid evidence that says ‘you won’t be any less safe than you are’. Closing stations is going to be your hardest sell out of anything you do so by all means look at it – you have to – but it’s going to be a tough one to get approval for”.</i>	Public Focus Group	Assessment of public risk will be assessed and consulted on via the Risk Reviews of catchment areas.	Risk Reviews to be conducted for each proposal in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan ahead of any major changes.
<p><i>“In Milton Keynes it would make a lot of economic sense to merge Great Holm and Bletchley into one bigger station on one of the grid roads. It doesn’t seem to make sense having two manned stations so close to each other”.</i></p> <p><i>“merging could be positive for Milton Keynes, because of the retirement profile leading to shortages of staff on each station...we can’t maintain levels on our own...we struggle with maintaining our competencies, there are ways of managing it, but it is often very reactive and makes it difficult for us to plan...we could do with a lot</i></p>	<p>Public Focus Group</p> <p>Staff Focus Group</p>	As stated on p21 of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan we propose to start reviewing the large catchment area of Milton Keynes.	None.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p><i>more merging”</i></p> <p>The ability to merge stations is dependent on the layout of the urban and rural areas within those catchment areas and planning assumptions, we would need to be mindful that the solution may not be a ‘one-size fits all’</p> <p><i>“In Milton Keynes we could have the same number of pumps going out with fewer personnel, whereas it probably wouldn’t work in Aylesbury, given the shape of the station ground”</i></p>	Staff Focus Group	This is a valid point and we understand that a solution that works in one catchment area might not necessarily work in another, which is why we will be assessing and consulting via the Risk Reviews of each catchment area.	Risk Reviews to be conducted for each proposal in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan ahead of any major changes.
<p>There has always been a willingness to consider changes to the station footprint, but the political will hasn’t always been there. How is it different this time?</p> <p><i>“there is scope for one station at Amersham/Chesham or Beaconsfield/Gerrards Cross, but we have encountered opposition whenever we have gone outside the service, because people don’t want a fire station at that location, or although it would make a great location for a fire station, it would also make a great location for a motor way service station”</i></p>	Staff Focus Group	We are building a robust evidence base upon which to best align our resources to risk and demand, which will assist with building a rationale for change when set against factors such as political constraints.	None.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Why aren't we using our resources and assets more effectively?</p> <p><i>"Whenever you walk into headquarters there are tons of empty spaces, why aren't we using that space more effectively?"</i></p>	Staff Focus Group	We have been making changes to our workforce, which has led to a reduction in the number of personnel working here, which means that we do have some empty spaces. These are constantly under review and we are already hosting Thames Valley Police in Bletchley and the Met Office in Headquarters. We will continue to explore new opportunities make the best use of our available space.	BMKFRS departments to work together to optimise use of building space by aligning it with community risk as well as shared services with other agencies.
<p>Won't station ground footprints become a redundant concept as we move to dynamic mobilising?</p> <p>It might be more appropriate to consider holding points, "I know Oxfordshire have gone down that route, where a wholetime¹⁸ pump goes to a holding point and that has been successful for them"</p>	Staff Focus Group	This is a good point and definitely worth considering for the future. However, until we have AVLS (automatic vehicle location service) on all appliances it is difficult to model for planning purposes. As part of the Thames Valley Control Project, all of our appliances will be fitted with AVLS by the go live date in [Mar] 2015.	None.
<p>There should be no closures/reductions in services, there is an additional concern regarding an increase in response times</p> <p>Concerns regarding increased response times as a result of merging with nearby stations</p>	<p>Online questionnaire <i>incl. Resident of Bucks or MK, North Marston Community Shop Association Ltd., Member or Relative of</i></p>	Assessment of public risk will be assessed and consulted on via the Risk Reviews of catchment areas	Risk Reviews to be conducted for each proposal in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan ahead of any major changes.

¹⁸ Wholetime = Full-time, provide 24/7 cover.

	<i>BMKFRS</i>		
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Demand is unpredictable</p> <p>It is unreasonable to relocate every time trends change</p>	<p>Online questionnaire</p>	<p>Actually we disagree, demand is predictable. Risk is unpredictable in specific location and type, but is predictable in frequency. Because demand has decreased significantly relative to resources, it would be inappropriate not to review how we deliver the service.</p>	<p>Risk Reviews to be conducted for each proposal in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan ahead of any major changes.</p>
<p>Concerns about cuts to front-line services</p> <p>Concerns about availability of crews and appliances</p>	<p>Online questionnaire</p>	<p>Assessment of public risk will be assessed and consulted on via the Risk Reviews of catchment areas</p>	<p>Risk Reviews to be conducted for each proposal in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan ahead of any major changes.</p>

13. Modernising Our Approach To Resourcing For Emergencies (Crewing Models – General):

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“What are the current crewing models?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	These are outlined at page 13 of the Public Safety Plan in the section titled ‘Current Resourcing’.	None.
<i>“Are these models no longer appropriate and if so why are they not appropriate?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	It is widely accepted that the On-Call model is not as appropriate as it used to be because people nowadays are commuting over distances in excess of 5 minutes for work. As such we only have reliable On-Call availability in the evenings and weekends in many locations, and not during the day-time when demand is highest. Whilst we would like to utilise those who are willing to provide cover, this finding shows that an alternative solution to the current On-Call model is required during the day-time.	None.
<i>“Is there an option of staying the same?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	Given the very significant changes to patterns of risks and demand that have occurred over recent years together with the effect of reductions to our funding staying the same is not a viable option.	None.
<i>“What change has already been undertaken in terms of crewing models?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	Recent changes have been made in respect of how some specialist appliances are crewed and there has been a change to crewing patterns at the four day crewed stations. In addition, advancements have been in areas such as mixed crewing between whole time and On-Call personnel, along with the development of a ‘bank shift’ system for use in some circumstances.	None.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“Does the Authority agree that if proposing a review of numbers of FF’s/staff that the public should be given information as to what reductions or changes have already taken place?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	Yes - assessment of public risk will be assessed and consulted on via the Risk Reviews of catchment areas.	None.
<i>“Will the Authority guarantee that before making any further cuts to front line service provision that all possible savings will be achieved from back office functions? Will the Authority outsource back office functions such as Human Resources and Finance in order to protect front line service provision?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	We are looking to make significant reductions to the cost of our back office functions over the lifetime of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan. These will include consideration of options such as sharing services with other authorities if these can lead to economies without significantly reducing the effectiveness of essential support functions. Details of these will be included in our next Corporate Plan which will complement and support the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan.	None.
<i>Does the Authority acknowledge that the long term sustainability of any crewing model relies on resourcing that crewing model to agreed establishment levels?</i>	Fire Brigades Union	Yes to an extent. However the most important thing is to base our establishment levels in relation to current and anticipated levels of demand and risk rather than those that prevailed historically.	None.
<i>Does the Authority agree that a policy of not recruiting FF’s and therefore not committing to maintain agreed establishment levels is the primary reason why the day crew duty system in particular is becoming unsustainable?</i>	Fire Brigades Union	No, the Authority does not agree that the day crew duty system is unsustainable, there are many options being considered based upon the risk and demand throughout the entire service area. The Authority does have an active recruitment policy in respect of On-Call firefighters in many areas.	None.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>Is there an opportunity for no change following any review on duty systems or crewing models.</i>	Fire Brigades Union	All options for changes to crewing models will be compared against the current model to determine the risks, costs and benefits associated with any changes to enable selection of the most favourable options.	None.
<i>Will the Authority recruit to maintain current front line establishment levels?</i>	Fire Brigades Union	The Authority will review its establishment levels in light of any changes proposed to station configuration, crewing models etc. It will then set and aim to maintain an establishment sufficient to resource these.	None.
<i>Is it already a forgone conclusion that each review will return an outcome which proposes a reduction in front line service provision?</i>	Fire Brigades Union	No – though obviously we will aim to ensure that the nature and level of frontline services determined by risk and demand factors is provided in as efficient and economical manner as possible.	None.
The PSP ¹⁹ highlights how we struggle with finding an RDS ²⁰ solution, but we are undergoing yet another RDS review. How can we ensure that this is a good use of time and resources [how do we measure return on investment]?	Staff Focus Group	The whole purpose of the On-Call review is to address the issues with the 'On- Call' model to ensure that it is fit for the future.	None.

¹⁹ PSP = 2015-20 Public Safety Plan.

²⁰ RDS = Retained Duty System, former terminology for On-Call cover.

How effective would it be for the fire and rescue service to encourage the installation of sprinklers in properties in more remote locations?			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Idea of sprinkler systems supported in principle but issues with cost and practicality: <i>“Sprinklers are brilliant in terms of prevention but once the premises is built there’s a horrendous cost to the owner as well as the ongoing maintenance...”</i>	Public Focus Group	It is a myth that all sprinkler heads will be operated. In fact individual heads are heat actuated and therefore only the heads above the fire will operate.	None.
Sprinklers in remote locations is a good idea, but there could be cost implications of retrofitting them	Staff Focus Group	There are a number of case studies that show that the retrofitting of sprinkler systems can be cost-effective when compared to other, less effective Fire Safety measures. The Callow Mount retrofit project, where sprinklers were retrofitted to occupied high rise flats came out at approx. £1,150 per flat. Costs are lower when incorporated into the build, often accounting for well under 1% of the total build cost however the price of retro-fitting is reducing.	
<i>“What are the statistics on sprinklers going off accidentally? Don’t they go off all over the place and soak everything?”</i>	Public Focus Group		
What are the building regulations in terms of sprinkler fitting in new builds (re: Welsh Assembly)?	Staff Focus Group	A British Research Establishment study showed that the cost to install sprinklers in a 3 bed new build would be approx. £1500 - £1800 whereas to retrofit the costs would rise to £3000 - £5000. The cost of maintenance is low, with the same study giving average inspection & maintenance costs of £40 - £60. Sprinklers have incredibly low accidental activation stats. Because the sprinkler system is activated by heat rather than smoke the usual triggers are eliminated. The most common cause of accidental activation of smoke alarm systems is; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Steam or cooking fumes. ▪ Electrical faults 	

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Items interfering with the operation of the alarm (dust, water, insects etc.) <p>A sprinkler system can only be operated by heat, whereby at a pre-set temperature an element of the sprinkler head will fail allowing the passage of water, this temperature is usually in the region of 60°C – 70°C. There is no involvement of an electrical circuit. Upon activation it will only be the sprinkler head affected that allow water to flow, all other heads will remain intact. Approximately 98% of fires are extinguished with only one sprinkler head. The amount of water used by sprinkler systems to extinguish fires is consistently low when compared to the amount used by Fire & Rescue Services (approx. 90% less) due to their rapid intervention.</p>	

How effective would it be for the fire and rescue service to prioritise prevention work in more remote communities relative to those in more urban areas who are closer to full-time fire stations?			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p><i>“Education and prevention makes sense doesn’t it?”</i></p> <p><i>Buckingham is a close knit community and there are people who will volunteer to promote prevention work in the community”</i></p>	Public Focus Group	<p>Education has proven to be highly successful in reducing the number of incidents. National statistics show a clear reduction nationally in the number of fire calls received and this does seem to be in line with the increased prevention work undertaken by fire and rescue services in the last fifteen years. It is very difficult to identify a direct correlation as there are other societal and economic factors too. However, the service will look to maintain a focus on prevention work.</p> <p>Currently BMKFRS doesn’t use volunteers for community safety work. This option hasn’t been ruled out and we are looking at the experiences of other fire services who have started to use volunteers in delivering some services.</p>	<p>Further investigate and assess the benefits and risks of using volunteers to deliver certain activities.</p>
	Public Focus Group		
<p>In favour of prioritising prevention work in hard to reach areas e.g. rural, but should consider more resource efficient ways of delivering this: <i>“four crew in a truck in remote locations, I would question whether the cost can be justified”</i>. Should consider alternative outreach methods in remote locations, such as talking at Parish council meetings</p>	Staff Focus Group		

How effective would it be for the fire and rescue service to make greater use of smaller rapid intervention appliances such as smaller fire engines and vans that require reduced crew sizes, such as three personnel as opposed to four, to help counteract the difficulties faced with finding enough available firefighters particularly during working hours?			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“That would make sense for the rural areas where they are going up lanes rather than roads”</i>	Public Focus Group	Many options and technical solutions are being considered in this area as part of our wider reviews.	None.
<i>“Having a small vehicle that gets there quicker has got to be good... it may have the potential to control something until back-up comes so that it is less serious in the long term”.</i>	Public Focus Group		
It could increase emergency cover through requiring fewer personnel to make it available	Staff Focus Group		
How effective would it be for the fire and rescue service to prioritise the training given to on-call firefighters so that they are trained to tackle more routine incidents, thus leaving more specialist skills to full-time firefighters, who have more time available for training?			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“Is there a risk when you have a more complicated job and need them to provide extra resource then you have to contend with mixed skill levels rather than having the same across the board?”</i>	Public Focus Group	If the service does progress changing the levels of training or specialisation then the key to safe systems of work is how we recognise and mobilise the right skills to incidents. The range of skills that we would give firefighters would prepare them adequately for the vast majority of jobs they would attend. The issue is around the amount of time and complexity of training required for some of the highly technical jobs (such as hazardous materials, decontamination etc.) that we occasionally need to deal	None.
<i>“It’s fine saying they’re only going to do basic stuff but I’d worry about those incidents that look routine at the outset but turn out to be something a lot more complicated... especially if there is only a retained crew to deal with them... I’d just be concerned if they became under-trained and under-experienced, will they know enough to keep themselves safe?”</i>	Public Focus Group		

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Prioritised or tiered training would help with recruitment and retention and support supervisory managers ensure their crews are skill competent <i>“so that they could make sure those crews are good at the basics”</i>	Staff Focus Group	with. This is where the specially trained firefighters would be required. We see it working this way too, particularly if it makes new staff more effective in providing fire cover earlier in their careers.	None.
How effective would it be for the fire and rescue service to modernise the on-call working contract to align it with demand For example, to contract fewer hours per week at specific times of day we actually need?			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“You should definitely negotiate hours with the firefighters to make the job more attractive”.</i>	Public Focus Group	Developing new contracts and better ways of providing cover and remuneration are seen as key to the future deal or on-call Firefighters.	None.
Would the service consider amalgamating crews in areas such as Haddenham, Waddesdon, Brill (and Thame) to provide more robust, albeit delayed, cover? <i>“we could have two RDS²¹ at Waddesdon and two at Haddenham, coming to one station and yes it might take longer, but it is better than nothing”</i>	Staff Focus Group	We are developing ideas for amalgamated crews, a bank type system for the On-Call and rostered cover.	
Could we consider new ways of working such as the bank system and rostering for duty? Do we have a sense of how the entire workforce feels about this option [not just powerful minority views]?	Staff Focus Group	We believe that the proposals will be attractive and provide new opportunities for On-Call firefighters to commit more cover, with flexibilities and increase their earning potential.	

²¹ RDS = Retained Duty System, former terminology for On-Call cover.

How effective would it be for the fire and rescue service to pay a premium for on-call cover during working hours to help incentivise people to work during those hours?			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“Are the people actually there in the area to incentivise?”</i>	Public Focus Group	There is the risk of not getting the right people for the job. It is clear that the current model doesn't provide any financial incentive due to reducing numbers of fire calls. A model which pays people for they cover they can give around their family and working lives looks promising. There is evidence from other fire services that this can provide stability for individuals and stations. The planning of cover and recruitment for gaps does have to be carefully managed to avoid unnecessary expense. Some salary schemes in other fire services have fallen foul of this trap.	None.
<i>“The risk with incentivising is that you may not get the people who actually want to do it for the good of the job; they're just doing it for the money”</i>	Public Focus Group		
Would we consider paying RDS ²² more in general and reduce the numbers overall and ask for better commitment instead of paying a premium during periods of peak demand?	Staff Focus Group		
May have unforeseen consequences where more personnel book available and it could end up costing the service more	Staff Focus Group		
How effective would it be for the fire and rescue service to move full-time crew around to provide support to on-call stations when cover is low at those stations?			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Recruit RDS firefighters in urban areas to <i>“cover for wholetime”</i> ²³ firefighters who could then be moved out to support the rural areas.	Public Focus Group	These look like a good ideas and will be considered as part of the overall review of how fire cover is provided across the service.	A number of options and models in respect of our On-Call stations and units are being developed and considered in our plans. This work may result in different pilot models being trialled in relation to our
Would the service consider having more officers who are currently based at headquarters working	Staff Focus Group		

²² RDS = Retained Duty System, former terminology for On-Call cover.

²³ Wholetime = Full-time, provide 24/7 cover.

<p>from desks in retained stations and providing extra cover when it is needed? <i>“we don’t all need to be</i></p>			<p>wider response risk and demand</p>
<p>Issue</p>	<p>Source</p>	<p>Management Response</p>	<p>Recommendations</p>
<p><i>based at headquarters”, “if you look at stations, we have got sites across the county where staff could be working on them and provide on-call cover, when I look at headquarters there are a lot of people there that don’t need to be”. We should demonstrate that we use our current staff to maximum effect before attempting to recruit from other organisations, “e.g. making our own staff available to drive appliances, it isn’t the staff that are reluctant, but the line managers are...we should start by setting an example and practice what we preach”</i></p> <p>Historically we have tried to fit the RDS cover around the wholetime crewing model. Perhaps we should consider turning this on its head and fit the wholetime crewing model around the RDS availability. <i>“if you’ve got RDS at night and they aren’t available during the day when we are busiest, shouldn’t we look at what we’ve got and then adapt around it. More wholetime²⁴ during the day and more RDS at night, redistribute our wholetime during the day and use RDS at night, instead of struggling with something we have no control over”</i></p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>		<p>modelling.</p>

²⁴ Whole-time = Full-time, provide 24/7 cover.

Other suggestions			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>"You could lengthen the time and distance beyond five minutes to widen the catchment area"</i>	Public Focus Group	This is being actively progressed now and some stations have already had their response times increased. We have recognised that creation of too restrictive rules around mobilising times reduces the ability to recruit On-Call firefighters and therefore leads to more Off-the-Run time for appliances. A more pragmatic view is now being taken but a keen eye on performance outcomes of increased attendance times are being monitored. There needs to be a balance between increased mobilising times, greater appliance availability and outcomes for the public.	Continue a more pragmatic approach to station turn out times balanced against operational outcomes.
<i>"Offer to train some employees to gain different skills in return for RDS²⁵ availability from employers"</i>	Public Focus Group	This is something we are considering, however the challenge lies with trying to persuade employers to release their employees	Consider within the scope of the On-Call Improvement Project
<i>"More people work from home now; you should target them" / work part time and / or are self-employed.</i>	Public Focus Group	This is something we have already tried to exploit, however the extensive time commitment required under the current terms and conditions is putting potential candidates off	Consider more attractive terms and conditions to encourage people into the On-Call scheme
<i>"People retire early now so they could be targeted"</i>	Public Focus Group	We are not sure there is strong evidence of early retirement in society. ONS data shows that the average retirement age for men is 64.6 for men and 62.3 for women and is rising.	None.

²⁵ RDS = Retained Duty System, former terminology for On-Call cover.

14. Using our capacity and resources in different ways to save more lives and benefit the community:

- We currently use our skills and resources to support other emergency services such as the ambulance service to help save lives. For example the co-responder scheme. To what extent should we be using our resources in this way?

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>"If you have a simultaneous call – if a fire comes in when you're co-responding – what do you do?" "Is the fire engine taken out of action when you do co-responding?"</i>	Public Focus Group	Under the current scheme this is not an issue because we crew the co-responder cars separately from the fire appliances. Therefore a co-responder call doesn't take a fire appliance off the run	None.
<i>"...if you can't get on-call firefighters how will this work?" "In theory I think it is great but I worry that it's taking resources away from the Fire Service... I worry that one person not being available would stop a fire engine going out in those areas that are short staffed".</i>	Public Focus Group	Under the current scheme staff are paid to provide cover for co-responding outside of their contracts to provide fire cover. Therefore it doesn't take resources away from our primary functions.	None.
<i>"Is this a matter of last resort if there is nothing else available? I wouldn't want a firefighter to come to me for a heart attack unless it was a last resort"</i>	Public Focus Group	Our staff are being trained and assessed by SCAS. We are not replacing paramedics, we are bolstering emergency responders who are often volunteers in the community	None.
What measures are in place to ensure that any new activities do not have a detrimental impact on our core/legislated activities? It is worth considering using our resources and spare capacity in different ways as long as it doesn't affect what we are legislated to do	Staff Focus Group	Work is well underway developing our corporate performance management system so that we can understand how the organisation is performing, including the work we are legislated to do so that we can monitor and detect when performance changes and act accordingly.	We will continue to develop our corporate performance management system to that we can best

		It is not yet well-understood which activities provide the best outcome in terms of public safety, since these cause and effect relationships are very complex owing to the number of interacting variables.	monitor activities across the organisation.
Using resources differently could help make the fire and rescue service more essential and resilient, <i>“if we look at the history of New York in the 1970’s, they were closing 3-4 fire houses a year and the commissioner at the time saw the model in Los Angeles and said we’ll run that model and since took on the paramedic role, they haven’t closed a fire house since, firefighters have a combined role, the more they do, the harder it is to get rid of them”</i>	Staff Focus Group	In an environment where demand for core services is reducing undertaking additional roles that are of value to the public will be strengthen the case for continued support.	None.
It is better to use our assets rather than sell them on, which is not an ongoing saving	Staff Focus Group	The decision to sell or not will be taken on an asset by asset basis. The decision will consider a number of factors, including but not limited to, the potential capital receipt, cash flow projections, on-going costs, income generation potential and anticipated change in value over various time horizons.	None.
Should partner with other agencies we are required to work closely with to share the cost of overheads, knowledge and training, <i>“at certain times of the week we have a vast amount of empty office space across all of the brigade buildings, if we got into partnership with the right people such as the council, there is scope to spread the costs there...perhaps we should consider people we need to work closely with, for example other emergency planners...it is important to think about what other value we can get, what other benefits, like ambulance crews for joint training, it is not just</i>	Staff Focus Group	This is something we already do, for example with Thames Valley Police and the Met Office. However, it is something we could definitely expand on. The point about thinking beyond sharing overheads and identifying partners we benefit from working closely with is a particularly insightful one that we are keen to pursue.	Consider further opportunities to share office / building space with partner or other organisations.

<i>getting the revenue"</i>			
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Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Would supporting other emergency services lead to a decrease in [quality of fire and rescue] service e.g. response times?</p>	<p>Online questionnaire</p>	<p>Under the current co-responder scheme this is not an issue because we crew the co-responder cars separately from the fire appliances. Therefore a co-responder call doesn't take a fire appliance off the run. If we were to change the way this was delivered we would conduct resource modelling to safeguard against any detrimental impacts on our service.</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>The FRS have limited training compared to the ambulance service.</p> <p>Some medical emergencies are inappropriate for the fire and rescue service.</p> <p>There could be a risk to the public or possible loss of life.</p>	<p>Online questionnaire</p>	<p>Our staff are being trained and assessed by SCAS. We are mobilised by SCAS and only to incidents we are qualified to attend.</p>	<p>None.</p>

15. Consider alternative service delivery models for some or all of our services such as private sector or employee models of ownership:

- To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should consider such options?

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p><i>“There’s a mindset that goes with who you are accountable to. If it’s privately owned there is a mindset that’s about profit. When it is publically owned... the mindset is different as they are accountable to the public”.</i></p> <p><i>“I would prefer to see combining stations and measures like that...”</i></p> <p><i>“I think there are other things to consider first before we look at privatisation... value for money, efficiency and reform.”</i></p>	Public Focus Group	We agree that it is important that the Service remains accountable to the public and are also of the view that there is much that we can do to improve the efficiency of our existing operating model before anything as radical as the outright privatisation of our core services need be considered.	Consideration of wholesale privatisation not be considered a priority during the lifetime of the 2015 – 20 Public Safety Plan
<i>“I’m in favour for some specialist roles”</i> e.g. rope rescue or support functions e.g. fire engine maintenance.	Public Focus Group	We agree that there may be scope to consider alternative delivery models for some support or specialist services.	None.
<i>“Is there an incentive for some big business to have their name attached to the fire service? So some part of it would be public and some private... it would be overseen by a public body but part privatised to allow for some extra funding...”</i>	Public Focus Group	We are, and will continue to explore appropriate commercial partnerships and / or sponsorship opportunities.	None.
Does the Fire Authority want us to be free of government funding? <i>“Important to understand how the Fire Authority views us, is this something</i>	Staff Focus Group	We do not necessarily wish to be free of any government funding or grant support, however we do recognise the risk in relation to the future of central	None.

<i>they wish to explore, namely to be free of government funding?"</i>		government funding, and alternative means of raising revenue are being discussed and explored.	
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Should think beyond partnering with other fire and rescue services, because we need more innovation and scrutiny, which will be better achieved through opening ourselves up externally	Staff Focus Group	Good idea, this is something that has been happening and we are keen to explore further opportunities.	None.
The Medium Term Financial Plan is viewed by some as overly pessimistic. As such doesn't shrinking the service in line with a 'worst-case' scenario risk going further than is needed?	Staff Focus Group	The Medium Term Financial Plan isn't a worst-case scenario. It is the most likely scenario we anticipate based on independent advice, policy announcements and information provided by the billing authorities on council tax and non-domestic rates income. The historical evidence shows that forecasts in previous years have been highly accurate when compared to the actual funding received. Projecting future levels of funding accurately allows spending reductions to be planned and managed proactively, leading to better decision making and outcomes.	None.
Perhaps we could look at partnerships or shared services with other fire and rescue services?	Staff Focus Group	Already happening, examples of this include the Thames Valley Fire Control project along with our shared procurement service with RBFRS, further areas are being explored.	None.
Against privatisation, <i>"limited privatisation within the fire service has proved to be an abject failure and cost more in all occasions"</i>	Online questionnaire (resident of Bucks or MK)	We are unable to comment on this specifically as no detail or examples have been provided.	None.
Fire Service should not be for profit, <i>"emphasis will shift to profits, rather than quality of service"</i>	Online questionnaire (representative of unspecified)	Work is well underway developing our corporate performance management system so that we can understand how the organisation is performing. As such we will be able to monitor and understand how	

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Concerned that privatisation will lead to increased costs, <i>“outsourcing will always cost you more in the long run, you only get what you pay for in life”</i></p>	<p>organisation or business) Online questionnaire (resident of Bucks or MK)</p>	<p>changes in service delivery, such as making profits, would affect our ability to deliver a quality service.</p> <p>The goal of considering alternative service delivery models is to reduce reliance on government funding and enable the generation of revenue that can be invested elsewhere. Some initial costs may be incurred however these can be potentially offset by savings or increased revenue.</p>	

16. Other Issues and Comments			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p><i>“One of the more prominent theme’s that has emerged from Fire Brigades Union members during the consultation process is the failure of the document to incorporate any specific, defined proposal to change or amend current service provision. Instead there are vague and difficult to understand descriptions of what strategies are being proposed, in the form of broad review topics, which may result in a change to service provision dependent upon the outcome of the review(s)... rather than encourage engagement in the consultation process the lack of any clearly defined strategies or proposals actually impedes and deters the public from contributing to the consultation... Would it not be better to delay the publication of the PSP²⁶ until such time as the outcomes of the review process have been clearly identified including the impact that any defined proposal will have on service provision and risk levels?”</i></p>	Fire Brigades Union	The purpose of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan was to set out our strategic approach to making the Service fit for the future and to consult the public and other stakeholders on this before formulating specific proposals for change that may affect particular localities or stakeholder groups. It is part of an ongoing dialogue with the public and stakeholders in the Service and further consultations will be undertaken as and when specific changes are proposed.	None.
<p><i>“How does the Authority expect the public to respond to a series of proposals which contain insufficient information to enable an informed</i></p>	Fire Brigades Union	Given that we are only consulting on our broad approach to the issues and challenges facing the Authority in order	None.

²⁶ PSP = 2015-20 Public Safety Plan.

<i>response?”</i>		to inform our strategic direction we believe that the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan and our supporting consultation activities are sufficient to enable participants to offer an informed response as evidenced in the accompanying feedback reports on the outcomes of the various consultation exercises undertaken.	
<p><i>“Will the Authority confirm that consultation on the outcomes of the review process, including any specific proposals which change or amend current levels of service provision, will take place over a minimum of 3 months so as to mirror the length of consultation afforded on the PSP²⁷?”</i></p> <p><i>Who will be consulted?</i></p> <p><i>When will that consultation commence?”</i></p>	Fire Brigades Union	<p>The period of consultation will be proportionate to the nature of the issue / proposals being consulted upon.</p> <p>People potentially affected by any proposed changes.</p> <p>When specific proposals are approved for consultation by the Fire Authority.</p>	None.
<p>Aylesbury Fire Station / USAR integration carried out under the 2012-17 PSP:</p> <p><i>“Does the Authority now recognise that it was a mistake not to consult at the very least the communities of Aylesbury and the surrounding areas of a change to their Fire Service which could have a detrimental impact on the availability of front line</i></p>	Fire Brigades Union	Staff affected by the changes were consulted prior to them being implemented. The impact of the changes on the service delivered to local communities was considered to be negligible and the cost of conducting a public consultation not therefore warranted.	None.

²⁷ PSP = 2015-20 Public Safety Plan.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“Will the Authority guarantee that any outcome from proposed areas of review will be subject to meaningful consultation with the public and key stakeholders, including the provision of necessary information such as risk and impact assessments?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	Yes. Any significant changes that impact on the service received by the community will be subject to consultation with those likely to be affected in a way that is appropriate and proportionate to the nature of the changes being proposed.	None.
<i>“The plan could set out more information on back office costs and overheads and a methodology as to how these important elements are to be addressed and reduced”</i>	Newport Pagnell Town Council	These will be addressed in our Corporate plan which complements and supports the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan.	None.
<i>The B&MK area is part of Thames Valley Police area and the South Central Ambulance Service which is geographically TVP plus, as Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are included. TVP are increasingly co-operating with Hampshire Constabulary so it may be both financially prudent and innovative to consider mergers to create a South Central Emergency Service where opportunities would present themselves in respect of cost reductions in respect of back office, removal of duplication, capitalisation of assets, reduced senior management costs, sale of redundant assets and a greater number of shared sites.</i>	Newport Pagnell Town Council	There are currently no proposals to integrate regional blue light services on such a scale. However we continue to explore opportunities to cooperate with neighbouring fire authorities and other local emergency and local government authorities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations and support services.	None.
<i>“The plan is silent regarding project management of the proposals and the expected milestones.”</i>	Newport Pagnell Town Council	These will be detailed in our 2015-20 Corporate Plan which will set out the programme of work arising out of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan together with our plans for our support service	None.

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Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<i>“Could you please explain to me why senior members of the BMKFRS have had secret discussions with 2 members of the Princes Risborough town Councillors and agreed to trial a scheme between Princes Risborough, Haddenham and Thame whilst this consultation is taking place?”</i>	Local resident	There has not been a secret meeting with two members of Princes Risborough Town Council. At the request of councillors, an officer of this Fire Authority met two councillors to discuss the Public Safety Plan during the public consultation period. During the meeting the future of Princes Risborough Fire Station was discussed and assurances were given that there are no plans to close the local station. There was no agreement with councillors to agree a trial between Princes Risborough, Haddenham and Thame because there are no plans for such a trial, which would also have to be agreed between Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services.	None.
Some consider that there was insufficient publicity surrounding the PSP ²⁸ , while others recognised the limitations on return for investment, <i>“I don’t think we can call it a public safety plan, because we haven’t put it out to the public enough...I don’t think the normal run of the mill person is getting any input”</i> <i>“There is an element though, that you can throw a lot of money at it and not get anything in return”</i>	Staff Focus Group	Our experience and good practice guidance in relation to consultations indicates that a qualitative approach, using focus groups comprising representative cross sections of the public who have an opportunity deliberate and question often complex proposals, is a more cost effective and meaningful way of obtaining an informed and meaningful response from the public than attempting to generate mass participation from high profile advertising campaigns.	None.

²⁸ PSP = 2015 - 20 Public Safety Plan

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Our own staff aren't as engaged as they should be, <i>"to be honest, I don't think many firefighters have read it [PSP²⁹]"</i></p>	<p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>All staff were encouraged to participate in the consultation via participation on one of our focus groups or by responding to our online questionnaire or via their representative body. A total of 19 staff participated in the focus groups and 22 respondents to the online questionnaire identified themselves as an employee or relative. However actual participation is likely to have been higher with some identifying as other categories such as residents or preferring not to say. Also the FBU consulted its members prior to issuing its formal response to the consultation. However we will always look to improve our engagement with staff and involve them as fully as possible in discussions about our future direction.</p>	<p>None.</p>

²⁹ PSP = 2015-20 Public Safety Plan.

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	17 December 2014
OFFICER	Mark Jones, Chief Fire Officer
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor David Schofield
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Annual Health and Safety Report 2013/14
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS) Health and Safety performance report 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BFRS H&S achievements • Statistical overview
ACTION	Information.
RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that the annual Health and Safety Report 2013/14 be noted.
RISK MANAGEMENT	This report identifies how the service has progressed on its health and safety performance over the period stated.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	None arising from the recommendations.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	As mentioned in the Health and Safety section below.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	Demonstrates BMKFRS compliance with health and safety legislation.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	There are no people impacts arising from this report.
USE OF RESOURCES	No use of resources implications.
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	This is the health and safety report compiled each year to summarise performance and progress.
APPENDICES	Appendix A - Annual Health and Safety Report 2013/14
TIME REQUIRED	15 minutes.

REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Alison Chart achart@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744490
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**Buckinghamshire &
Milton Keynes Fire
Authority**



**Health and Safety Annual Report
2013/14**

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1 Forewords

The Service has a good focus on Health and Safety. There are appropriate processes that are being improved constantly. Staff are well qualified. A Health and Safety Strategic Review has recently been carried out.

**Local Government
Authority (LGA)
Operational Peer
Review team 2014**

2 Executive summary

2.1 A vital aspect of health and safety (H&S) performance in terms of monitoring and improvement is to periodically carry out a strategic review. This involves looking at the safety management system holistically from grass roots to the top level (SMB) to highlight the commitment both in actual and visible terms. The H&S Manager was tasked by the Head of Service Development to undertake such a review. Areas reviewed were the Operational Assurance Peer Review 2009 recommendation outcomes; Operational Assurance Peer Review 2014 requirements; Training Strategy identifying training requirements; strategic and departmental objectives; SMB Directors health check using the HSE guidance and a gap analysis of national guidance documents against current procedures.

2.2 BMKFERS has been innovative in providing solutions to training issues. One example is the cost prohibitive Display Screen Assessments historically carried out by the Occupational Health provider at £200 each, the H&S department selected and sourced training for a team of in-house assessors at a cost of £800 for 12 delegates. The benefits include cost savings and flexibility around appointments.

To eliminate duplication across stations and to eliminate the need for hard copies of Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (CoSHH) risk assessments, an electronic database has been set up where risk assessments are placed for all to view and use. The H&S department monitor this database and, when due for review, send the risk assessment to the "author" for action.

2.3 Collaborative working is very much alive within BMKFERS with the sharing of training with Oxfordshire for the DSE Assessor training; the Thames Valley Fire Control Service project with the creation of a collaborative safety event reporting form, exposure to hazardous substances at incidents form and streamlining and integration of procedures. The South East region H&S committee, which the H&S Manager sits on, is working with West Midlands region, Warwickshire and Hereford and Worcester Fire Services to create a fire service specific QSA audit.

2.4 Recently Occupational Health, whilst carrying out the three yearly medicals on operational personnel removed several members of staff from operational duties due to a potential hearing loss. Further hearing tests were required which took time to carry out. A series of Operational Functionality hearing tests were introduced and carried out. Cascade training was carried out across the Service and a procedure note written. This new process has many benefits such as reducing the amount of time personnel are not operational therefore maintaining the expected high levels of service to the

communities we serve, reducing time spent waiting for appointments, reducing associated costs etc.

2.5 In order to become aligned to other Services and in preparation for the release of the new Incident Command manual, the legacy process of the written Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) has been removed. The new procedure still requires the Incident Commander to carry out a DRA and inform Control of the tactical mode chosen and the rationale, i.e. "saveable property", in the first informative message. This is then recorded on the incident log created in Control so that a permanent record is made.

2.6 After attending a conference where several Services spoke of the improvements seen to their safety event statistics and reductions in their third party insurance claims for vehicle accidents following the installation of CCTV systems, the H&S Manager and Fleet Manager resurrected the CCTV project that had been trialled at a fire station in 2009. A capital bid has been submitted for funding for 360 degree CCTV on all fire appliances. Installation could be phased over a period of fiscal years to spread the cost. Benefits will be protection for the Authority against fraudulent third party claims reducing cost outlay and reputational damage. It will offer protection for the driver as it will provide a true factual account of the sequence of events; it will also help to refocus drivers' minds to follow procedure.

2.7 Following the long period of industrial action taken by Fire Brigade Union (FBU) members, it is very pleasing to note that over the 14 months and 46 periods of industrial action there has only been one safety event which was a vehicle accident of a minor nature. This is testament to the professionalism and commitment to safety of all personnel who worked during those periods. The aspiration is that this excellent record will continue if further periods of industrial action are announced in the future.

2.8 The statistical analysis for 2013/14 detailed in this year's report provides valuable comparisons with last year's DCLG returns and against those Services of a similar size and structure –our peer group. Readers of this report will be able to bench mark and compare our health and safety performance with the figures which demonstrate continuing improvements and highlights the achievements of the H&S) department in maintaining and raising safety standards, further embedding health and safety into core business activities, acting upon innovative initiatives and furthering the aim to be the "safest area in England in which to live, work and travel".

3 Summary

3.1 Health and Safety Strategic review

The Head of Service Development tasked the H&S Manager with conducting an organisational H&S strategic review and report on its findings to the Senior Management Board (SMB).

The purpose of this review was to highlight ways in which Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) can continue to improve upon its excellent H&S performance; ensuring it maintains a safe environment for its operational staff, support staff, Authority members, visitors and contractors and the communities it serves. This can be achieved through commitment to effective H&S throughout the organisation from SMB to the front line, including all other employees, by providing appropriate training commensurate with role; better communication using a variety of media directed to those who 'need to know' and improved inter -departmental working to achieve a synergetic holistic approach to H&S.

The **Operational Assessment Peer Review in 2009**, recognised that there was a strong H&S culture within the organisation and that training was provided for all operational managers; PPE, RPE and operational equipment was of a high standard; health and safety was linked in with operational debriefs and hazard reporting was evident. However, they also highlighted" areas for consideration" these were:

- Evaluate methods of communication to ensure staff receive H&S information
- Training for non-operational staff to be formalised
- IT based system to allow service overview, H&S trends etc.
- Performance information should be provided to the Senior Management Board (SMB).
- Corporate ownership of health and safety

Since the Operational Assessment Peer Review, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the above 'areas for consideration". For full details please see [Appendix 1](#)

BMKFA committed to an operational assurance peer review which took place in June of this year. This involved the gathering and substantiating of evidence in key assessment areas (KAAs). H&S was part of the peer review process with the key assessment area questions being:

- Does the FRA have clearly defined and effective arrangements to take account of its health, safety and welfare responsibilities?

- Do effective management structures and arrangements exist within the FRA to support development and implementation of health, safety and welfare activities?
- Does the FRA have a robust process for measuring, evaluating and improving performance of its health, safety and welfare activities?

A substantial amount of evidence was provided and a self -assessment took place to determine whether the service is “developing”, “established” or “advanced” in the three key assessment areas. In relation to H&S, BMKFA assessed itself as being mainly “established” with a couple of areas being “advanced” and some as “developing”. The “developing” areas were those that have been identified or brought in by the H&S team following the restructure so are/have taken time to implement and bed into the organisation.

The “areas for consideration” highlighted in the last peer review have all been actioned and implemented. Since February 2013 other improvements have been made such as the introduction of a ‘Death in the Workplace’ policy and procedure; Stress management procedure; improvements to the safety event reporting procedures including the electronic safety event recording database – iCASS and the establishment of an electronic COSHH risk assessment database.

The aim was to see an improvement in the H&S results of this peer review from the last, in 2009. Any “areas for consideration” identified in this peer review will be looked into and subsequent improvements made.

Whilst H&S was not chosen as a primary focus, it was looked at and both members of the department were interviewed. The comments of the LGA Operational Peer Review Team following this year’s Peer Review are as follows: **“The Service has a good focus on Health and Safety. There are appropriate processes that are being improved constantly. Staff are well qualified. A Health and Safety Strategic Review has recently been carried out.”**

There were no “areas for consideration” identified by the team and whilst this is reassuring, it does not mean that the Authority can become complacent. The H&S department will continue to look for new and innovative ways to improve H&S within the Authority, particularly in communications and encouraging the reporting of hazard and near miss events and reducing safety events across all areas.

At the beginning of the year the CFO set strategic objectives for the H&S Manager to achieve. These were:

- H&S department to produce a six monthly report to SMB providing feedback on safety events that have occurred at incidents and training events.

- Circulate to SMB, for awareness, a monthly summary of current H&S issues, updates and trends.
- H&S department to prepare and present to all watches and On-Call units, information on employees responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

The first two objectives have been implemented and are on-going and the "Employees responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work Act" training is under way.

3.2 Health and Safety (H&S) Training

The training strategy completed at the beginning of the year identified the requirement for H&S training for various groups of staff, commensurate to their role. This included **NEBOSH General Certificate** for newly promoted Station Managers, particularly those that manage stations, to provide the qualification to effectively manage H&S on their stations and enable them to carry out annual station H&S inspections and conduct safety event investigations. The Protection department also requested places for their staff as they must be qualified at General Certificate level before they can sit the NEBOSH Fire exam.

Accident Investigation training for Supervisory (Watch and Crew Managers) and Middle Managers (Station Managers) was approved by the Senior Management Board and a suitable provider sourced. Dates for these courses are being agreed for commencement as early into the New Year as possible.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (CoSHH) and associated risk assessment is an area where improvements to performance can be made. It has been sometime since any training has been carried out. The personnel requiring the training is the Fleet technicians, cleaners and catering staff who will be provided with the knowledge and skills to recognise the hazardous effects of the substances they work with, interpret the Safety Data Sheets and be able to create a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for the activities they use it for.

A change of Occupational Health provider for the Authority in late 2013 necessitated the need for an in-house Display Screen Assessor (DSE) team to be identified and trained to carry out assessments for staff and their workstations. The new Occupational Health provider can provide this service but at considerable cost.

One of the objectives set for the H&S Manager was the creation of a training package for all employees around their responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This training package has been created and sent to all Watch and Crew Managers of both Whole-time and On-call stations, along with a set of training notes to ensure a standard consistency of delivery.

The content covers Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Provision and Use of Work

Equipment Regulations (PUWER), Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER), Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, Stress in the Workplace, CoSHH, Driving for Work and The Working Time Regulations 1998.

Once completed the training must be recorded in Individual Training and Assessment Record (ITARs) and an email of confirmation, that each person has received the training, is to be sent to Health and Safety. A note will then be placed on the training section of SAP. In due course this training package will be placed on Learn Pool.

In addition the H&S department will be delivering this training to all Support staff on 3 separate dates. SMB will also be given this training as a refresher.

DSE assessments are a requirement under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 for all new staff, on a change of circumstances such as location or equipment, following medical intervention and annually. In order to ensure continued compliance the H&S department worked with Human Resources to devise a process for carrying out these assessments. A procedure note was created which clearly defines the stages of assessment:

First stage is the self-assessment of the workstation using the DSE checklist and is completed by every individual in the following circumstances:

- Commencement of employment
- When an individual changes their work location
- When any equipment, software or environment changes
- Following a long period of absence
- During pregnancy
- On an annual basis for all employees classed as a "user" under the regulation.

Second stage follows completion of the checklist. The results of the self-assessment are reviewed by the line manager; if the individual has highlighted any areas of concern they will be contacted by an Authority DSE Assessor who will visit the individual to carry out a further assessment and make recommendations which will be implemented by the line manager. All costs associated with remedial action will be the responsibility of the line manager.

Third stage follows medical intervention. The Authority appointed Occupational Health provider will carry out a "return to work" assessment including a DSE assessment to ensure the individual is fit to return to work and that their requirements under DSE are still being met.

A team of 12 people, of which 10 were non-operational personnel from BMKFRS Support departments, along with 2 from Oxfordshire, attended certificated training conducted by RoSPA. These assessors are utilised at stage 2 and have been used since their training in March. The cost of the one day training course

was £800 for 12 delegates; the cost of an assessment conducted by the Occupational Health provider is £200, therefore it will only take 4 assessments to recoup the initial outlay. The outcome will be a considerable cost saving over time.

3.3 Management of Risk

Following the publication of the Government document "Health, Safety and Welfare Framework for the Operational Environment", the H&S department conducted a gap analysis to identify areas for consideration which could be implemented. The outcome of this analysis identified several areas which have been or are being actioned, these include revision and amendment of health and safety policies to include the new HSG65 methodology of "Plan, Do, Check, Act"; review of the Breathing Apparatus (BA) policies and procedures; determine the best format for "safe person" individual responsibilities following the removal of the "Dynamic Management of Risk at Operational Incidents" guidance; the arrangements in place for communicating significant findings from ARA to personnel via the Incident Command System training and assessment process.

In January, the DCLG issued the "Operational Guidance: Breathing Apparatus" document which replaced Technical Bulletin (TB) 1/1997. A comparison of this against the procedures currently in place was made and differences highlighted. Currently, no Service has implemented this document. The South East Collaborative Partnership has been working to convert the guidance into a set of useable standard operating procedures and associated guidance. Please see attached presentation.

[BA Guidance project](#)

As part of their 3 yearly medicals operational personnel undergo a hearing test. In recent months, Occupational Health has identified some individuals with a potential hearing loss which resulted in them being removed from operational duties. In these times of minimum crewing this has the potential to create a risk to the Authority as fewer personnel are available until such time as their hearing ability is confirmed. In an effort to mitigate this risk Human Resources and the H&S department worked together, along with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, to create a suite of Operational Functionality Hearing tests, trial and implement them.

Oxfordshire, as part of collaborative working, were willing to share their existing hearing functionality testing and conducted an operational hearing test on a BMKFRS member of staff with HR and H&S personnel present to observe. The outcome of this test proved that the individual was able to fulfil their operational duties in a safe manner and therefore was placed back on operational duties immediately.

Following this test, cascade training for Station Commanders took place to enable further tests to be carried out on other personnel which have all seen positive outcomes. A procedure note has been written and is out for consultation.

This procedure and testing does not negate the need for Occupational Health to carry out hearing tests or subsequent tests if the potential hearing loss is at the highest level and/ or an individual fails the Operational Functionality Hearing tests.

In addition to this, the H&S department is investigating the potential for devising Occupational Functionality Eyesight testing for those operational personnel or On- Call applicants who have monocular vision. Progress on this initiative will be detailed in future SMB Health and Safety monthly summaries.

Following changes to the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012, Fire and Rescue Services have to apply for an exemption to work with asbestos where previously the exemption was automatic. This necessitated a formal application to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) confirming that the Authority will comply with the requirements of the joint method statement compiled by the HSE and Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA). Compliance involves a comparison with our current procedures against the method statement and the purchase of a Class H vacuum, with a HEPA filter, for dry decontamination purposes. The H&S department instructed all stakeholders within the Authority to check and amend procedures in order to comply including the Resource and Development department who are looking at a collaborative approach with Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire for procurement with a view to purchase as soon as practically possible.

Synergistic working with other departments is progressing well, particularly the involvement with HR to produce new policies, procedures and guidance. Evidence of this can be found in the "Stress in the Workplace" guidance documents, Working Time Directive procedure note (currently out for consultation) and the Operational Functionality Hearing tests procedure note. This work is excellent progress and will assist in improving compliance with legislation and further improving the excellent safety culture the Authority has.

Work has also been carried out with Training School for the review and amendment of the Manual Handling policy which will now be a procedure note. The department has also been actively involved with the People and Organisational Development team in the development of Learn Pool health and safety training packages.

Property, Fleet, Procurement and the Thames Valley Fire Control project are all other departments that H&S regularly work with on such matters as premises hazards and defects; insurance claims and the procurement of goods and services; ensuring the safety event and exposure to hazardous substances at

incidents reporting is captured in a way that is satisfactory to all three Thames Valley Services.

The aspiration to promote and modernise the Service's approach to risk assessment has been achieved with the creation and implementation of an electronic risk assessment database and a CoSHH risk assessment database which is accessible to all. The benefits of these databases are as follows:

- The risk assessments are controlled by the H&S department
- Viewers only see the most up to date version as the others are archived
- The need for hard copies is removed
- Duplication is removed i.e. a copy on the N-drive and copies on the stations and other departments
- H&S, as part of monitoring can send the 'author' of the risk assessment a reminder electronically that a review is required

A CoSHH procedure note has been drafted and will be released for consultation in due course.

After attending an ALARM conference the H&S Manager and Fleet Manager resurrected the project to fit CCTV cameras in the fire appliances. This had previously been trialled at Aylesbury Fire Station in 2009, however, there was resistance to it from the FBU and the crews and it was subsequently dropped.

360 degree CCTV on appliances will record footage of journeys and the location of the appliances. It will also record the following:

- Speed of the appliance
- Whether sirens and horns were in use
- Whether headlights and indicators were in use
- When the driver commenced braking
- When the driver changed gear
- Time stamp should the appliance be involved in a collision

CCTV will provide protection for the Authority against fraudulent third party claims therefore reducing cost outlay; reputational damage; assist in vehicle safety event investigation; focus the minds of crews to follow procedure including the use of "guides" for slow speed manoeuvres; provide true evidence as to the sequence of events and protect the driver.

Should the capital bid be approved there will need to be stringent procedures put in place in order to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. This will cover such concerns as access to the data and what it can be used for. Work on this will commence if the bid is approved.

An approach was made to both Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire for a collaborative approach to procuring CCTV, however, Royal Berkshire are doing it

through the Fire Risk Insurers Consortium (of which we are not members) and Oxfordshire are not financially able to do this for some time.

3.4 Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA)

With the new Incident Command Manual being released in December a decision was taken by the Head of Service Delivery to remove the process of the written DRA. Of 46 Fire Services, only this Authority and one other carried out this procedure which is considered to be a legacy process of minimum value and detracts from the Incident Commander being able to observe and identify all the significant hazards on the incident ground and create a DRA which informs their plan for dealing with the incident.

In accordance with the draft version of the new Incident Command Manual and in consultation with the Head of Incident Command, a guidance note was created informing and educating operational personnel of the withdrawal of the written DRA and instructing that a DRA is still to be carried out at all times by the Incident Commander and the tactical mode and rationale for this must be passed to Control for recording as part of the first informative message.

The written DRA was withdrawn on the 30th September and the new process is embedding into the Service well.

3.5 Working Time Directive

Work has been taking place on examining the Authority's compliance with the Working Time Regulations 1998 which require employers to record and monitor the number of hours employees work both for the Authority and other secondary or primary employment.

Under the Regulations, employees have the responsibility to notify the Authority of hours worked in any other employment, including voluntary, and ensure they record and aggregate the hours to enable them to monitor the total number of hours worked. The employer's responsibilities are to provide the appropriate recording mechanism for hours worked for the Authority, monitor them to ensure they are not exceeded and provide the required rest breaks.

The current hour recording mechanisms are not robust enough to do this accurately as it does not break the 'working day' down into hours, so a recording system is being devised as an interim measure until such time as Gartan accommodates all staff. The individual will record their hours, as current practice, the Line Manager will monitor them on a monthly basis and send a return to H&S who will audit them and conduct spot checks to ensure it is being carried out and in the specified manner.

In circumstances where the hours are regularly exceeded the Line Manager will discuss this with the individual concerned and agree an appropriate way forward.

Whilst the HSE are not able to enforce the Working Time Regulations as this is European legislation, they have indicated that, should a serious safety event occur and they are required to investigate, working hours will be a primary focus in the investigation.

3.6 Industrial Action

The on-going industrial action by FBU members has brought many challenges to the Authority including the H&S department. A generic industrial action risk assessment based around our ability to meet our statutory duty was created as the main document with many others deriving from it. These include risk assessments for our contingency crews and appliances when at alternative locations (holding points); driving appliances and riding below minimum crewing during periods of industrial action. These risk assessments are reviewed after each period of industrial action to ensure they remain suitable and sufficient.

Since the Industrial Action commenced in September 2013, it is very pleasing to note that there has only been one safety event. This was vehicle damage sustained to an appliance and an MOD vehicle at one of the holding points. The driver of the appliance was attempting a reversing manoeuvre in an unlit yard and despite the use of "guides" struck the tow bar of a military vehicle. Very little damage was sustained to either vehicle.

This one event in 46 periods of industrial action during a 14 month timeframe is testament to the professionalism and commitment to safety of all staff working during those periods.

Both the H&S Manager and Technician have been heavily involved in supporting the industrial action contingency arrangements by working in the Operations Support Room and the Control Room wherever possible.

3.7 Death due to Service Activities

Following an unfortunate event involving an Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service appliance and crew who were responding to an emergency incident, a member of the public was hit on the roadway and subsequently died, the H&S Manager was tasked with creating a procedure for dealing with incidents of this nature within this Authority.

Whilst a procedure is in place for dealing with death in the workplace it does not cover the circumstances detailed above.

A visit was arranged to London Fire Brigade to discuss their experiences of this nature and to look at their arrangements and procedures and as a result, this piece of work evolved into a larger project which included a review of our current procedure note. A decision was taken by the Head of Service Development to amalgamate both documents. A draft paper has been written for presentation to SMB in December.

Once in place, a table top exercise will be staged involving a “death” scenario for a selected group of participants from departments that would need to be involved, should it happen for real, such as operational personnel, HR, Finance, H&S, SMB, Communications, Members etc. Notification of the exercise will be promulgated in advance with the instruction for all staff to familiarise themselves with the procedure note which will ensure people are aware of its existence and contents. The group of participants will then be selected close to the date of the exercise and feedback from the event will be disseminated to all staff afterwards to inform learning.

3.8 Collaborative Working

Work continues on developing new and maintaining existing relationships with our neighbouring, regional and national FRS colleagues through a variety of means. This is essential to improve common working, inter-operability, best practice, bench- marking and value for money.

BMKFA is highly focussed on collaborative working evidenced through the following:

- Active engagement with CFOA; the H&S Manager attends the national H&S meetings and is a member of the CFOA H&S Practitioners Forum. She also attends the national conferences including one in October which centred on risk aversion within the Fire Service.
- Collaborative Partnership work including advising on national Risk Statements, Standard Operating Procedures, Additional Hazard Information Sheets and training packages.
- Thames Valley Fire Control Service – consultation between this Authority, Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire in the creation of a combined safety event reporting and exposure to hazardous substances form.
- West Midlands, Warwickshire and Hereford and Worcester in the design of a Fire Service specific QSA Audit. This involved a review of the Policy, Planning and Organising sections and aligning them with the new HSG65 “Plan, Do, Check, Act” and the “Health, Safety and Welfare Framework for the Operational Environment” document. A review of the Implementation, Monitoring, Review and Audit section set questions, to retain, amend, delete and add questions worded in simple, clear and concise terms.
- Procurement opportunity with both Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire for CCTV in fire appliances.
- Oxfordshire in the provision of DSE Assessor training initiated by BMKFRS and the provision of training and set questions for the Operational Functionality hearing tests by Oxfordshire; both at no cost.
- London for the guidance in dealing with major incidents such as death of either a member of staff or the public.

3.9 Health and Safety Department

The five appraisal objectives and the Behaviours and Values objective set for the H&S Manager by her line manager in order to achieve the strategic aims of the Corporate Plan for 2013/14 were achieved.

The H&S Technician achieved four of five but could not fully achieve the fifth due to external influences. However, she has achieved the NEBOSH General Certificate which is an objective set for completion in early 2015.

H&S department along with two other departments financed the procurement of Barbour –an environmental and health and safety internet based information system which provides a database of current and historical health and safety information. Since go live in December 2013, it has proved invaluable to the team in keeping abreast of legislation changes, British Standards and retrieving historical information such as old Technical Bulletins etc.

Strategic commitment to Health and Safety is still very integral to the Authority. This year has seen the introduction of monthly H&S summaries to SMB, providing information on the on-going work of the department, current issues facing the Authority and details of notable good practice. A six month “mini” report on the frequency and types of safety event occurring at operational incidents and training events was produced for SMB covering the period beginning of January to end of June with very pleasing results- from 3300 incidents there were 26 safety events which in percentage terms was less than 1%. Please see the full report here along with the latest H&S summary.

[Health and Safety Monthly Summary October 2014](#)

[Six monthly report - safety events at incidents and training events](#)

4 Forward Planning

4.1 Budgetary Impacts

This year has seen the introduction of regular reporting of the costs of vehicle safety events at the quarterly Health, Safety and Welfare Committee meetings, which is averaging out at £1300 a quarter. Whilst this is not excessive, a reduction in the number of vehicle and equipment safety events would reduce the costs of repair or replacement. Closer liaison with Travelers Insurers via Procurement allows the H&S department to monitor the number and amount of insurance claims including third party claims.

A further way of reducing vehicle safety events is the installation of CCTV in the fire appliances. A capital bid has been put forward for the purchase and

maintenance of a 360 degree system; whilst the initial outlay is considerable, guesstimated at £125,000, the fitting programme could be phased over a period of several fiscal years. If the capital bid is approved, the tendering process can begin which is why the cost is currently guesstimated.

The H&S budget is forecast to be in an underspend position at the end of this financial year. The current forecast is a potential underspend of £7500. This provides further evidence that the H&S department continues to offer value for money whilst maintaining efficiency and effectiveness particularly with the added distraction of industrial action.

4.2 Objectives for 2014/15

The Authority's vision is "that Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes is the safest place in England in which to live, work and travel". To support this vision the Corporate Plan 2012/15 sets out five strategic aims. Whilst health and safety runs through all of them it is clearly stated in 'Response, People and Resources' in priorities 1, 2 and 3; 1 and 2; and 1 and 2 respectively. The Corporate Plan can be accessed via the link below.

[Corporate Plan 2012-15](#)

Objectives set for 2014/15 for the H&S Manager are as follows:

4.2.1 Conduct a review of all "driving for work" to include operational employees' primary and secondary employment to ascertain if there is a risk to the Authority from non - compliance with EU Regulation (EC) 561/2006 Rules on drivers hours and tachographs and the Working Time Regulations. Produce a report with recommendations for SMB.

4.2.2 Work with HR and others on the creation of both a procedure and a robust process for recording and monitoring the hours worked.

4.2.3 To source and provide level 1, 2 and 3 accident investigation training for completion this financial year. Have a budget approved and provide monitoring and quality assurance for the next 12 months and report accordingly.

4.2.4 Achieve financial approval for the purchase of a behavioural safety culture survey; conduct the survey to establish and bench mark the Authority's current position; analyse and feedback results. In early 2015 benchmark, monitor and test for improvement in culture. Finally, carry out the survey for a second time in 2017 and analyse the results.

4.2.5 Behaviours and Values objective – Achieve greater cohesion between the H&S department and others to ensure all relevant stakeholders are involved through the setting up of a H&S focus group where ways to improve H&S performance can be suggested and discussed.

Objectives set for 2014/15 for the H&S Technician are as follows:

4.2.6 Achieve a training qualification in order to deliver in-house H&S training e.g. Level 3 Award in Education and Training.

4.2.7 Create league tables using existing methodology and establish robust, efficient, effective and user friendly systems for recording safety events, hazard and near miss statistics including the removal of the "risk gauges" replacing them with a positive outcome based system that differentiates between events and near misses and recognises different types of station and is able to pro rata events.

4.2.8 In conjunction with HR conduct a review of Whole-time and On-Call personnel's primary and secondary employment to enable H&S Manager to achieve objective 4.2.1.

4.2.9 Carry out a data trend analysis of safety events for as far back as possible, create a recording database and provide results.

4.2.10 Behaviour and Values objective – Understand the Authority's strategic aims and priorities and understand how they impact on the work of the H&S department and apply them across your role.

5 Audits and Inspections

5.1 Operational Assurance Peer review

Please see section 3 3.1 for further information.

5.2 Internal Audits and Inspections

The annual H&S station/site audit form was amended prior to this year's audit programme in order to make it more "user friendly" for the "auditor" and for the H&S department when collating the results.

Upon receipt of the completed reports H&S enter the results onto an excel spread sheet which provides a visual overview of both positive factors and issues at stations and sites throughout the Authority. Potential H&S issues identified are sent to the relevant department for resolution with a request for feedback on progress at regular intervals and confirmation that the actions have been completed.

The Health, Safety and Welfare committee are briefed of the findings at the December meeting and updated subsequently until all issues are closed.

5.3 RoSPA QSA Audit

The South East region audit programme for 2014 was due to see BMKFRS lead on an audit at West Sussex early in the year, following which, an audit of BMKFRS was due to take place in the last quarter of the year, however, due to continuing industrial action it was necessary to defer both audits. The programme will be resurrected as soon as a resolution is reached between the two parties.

6 Appendices

6.1 Detailed below are two appendices which provide information and data on the following:

- Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service safety event comparisons over a four year period from 2010- 2014
- Family peer group performance comparison table 2012/13 and 2013/14

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service safety event comparisons over a four year period from 2010- 2014 – see table below.

The statistics show that in 2010/11 Vehicle and Personal Injury safety events were at their highest level; 84 and 61 respectively. 2011/12 and 2012/13 saw a considerable decrease with Vehicle safety events at 52 and 38 respectively and Personal Injury at 48 and 43. However, 2013/14 saw an increase in the occurrence of safety events in all types with Vehicle at 60, Personal Injury at 45, Premises & equipment at 23.

Premises and equipment safety events rose in 2011/12; fell in 2012/13 and have risen considerably in 2013/14.

Near Miss reporting rose considerably in 2011/12, fell in 2012/13 and rose further still in 2013/14 which is very encouraging. Work will continue to raise awareness of the need to report hazards and near misses.

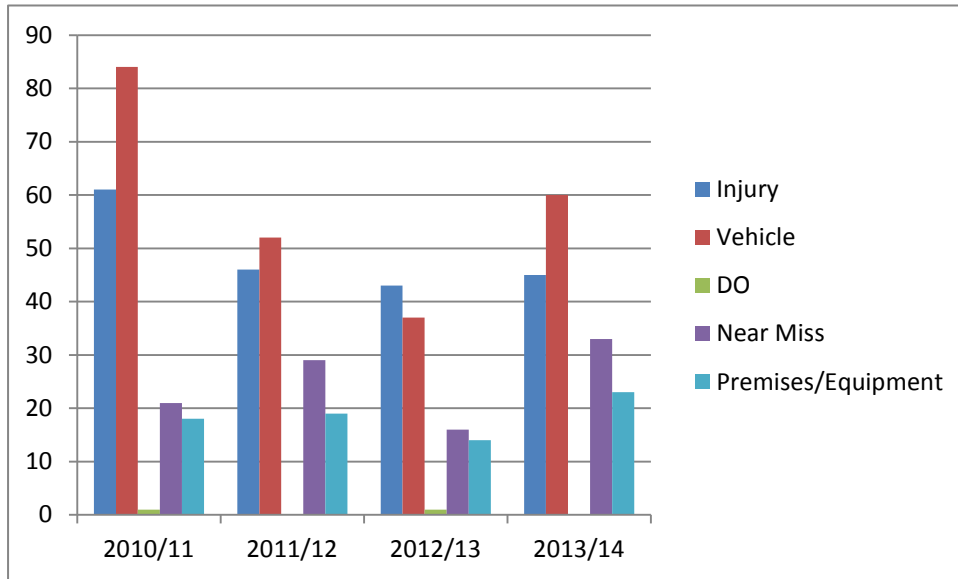
As there has been an increase in safety events during 2013/14 further analysis of these events is taking place to identify trends and causality. Once identification has been made, work will begin to find solutions to further reduce the possibility of reoccurrence.

Appendix 1

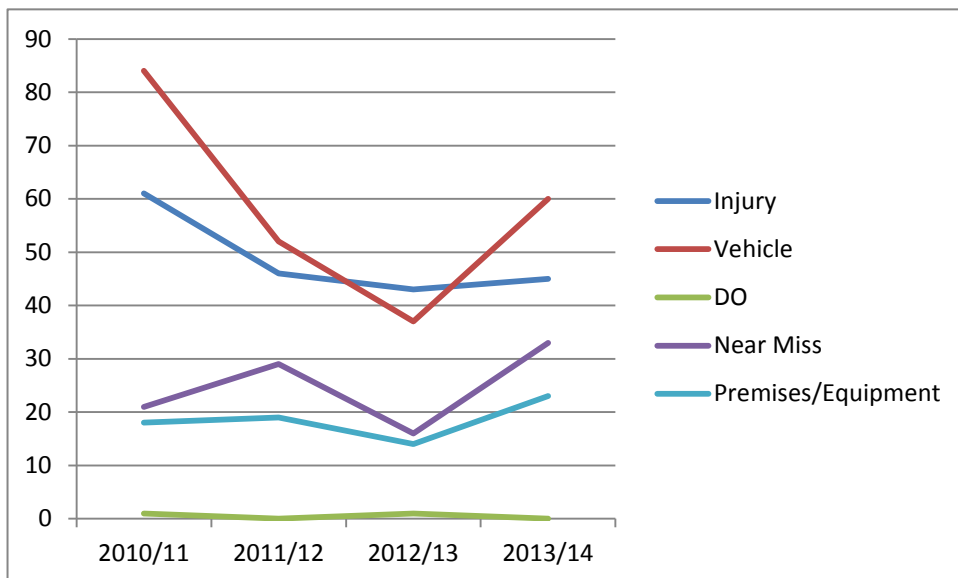
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service safety event comparisons over a four year period from 2010- 2014

Key - DO = Dangerous Occurrence

Bar Chart



Line Chart



Appendix 2

Family peer group performance comparison tables 2012/13 and 2013/14

The H&S department are required to report on BMKFRS end of year accident statistical returns to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 31st May 2014 for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

DCLG has requested returns for operational employee safety events only and therefore there will be a difference compared to the full report that will be presented in appendix 1, which will include all BMKFRS safety event figures.

Summary:

The Health and Safety Department provided returns for;

HS1- Injuries during operational incidents, split into Whole-time and On-Call categories and sub divided for accidents at fires, at Road Traffic Collisions and at other Special Service Calls.

HS2- Injuries during training and routine activities also split into Whole-time and On-Call categories and sub divided for accidents during operational training, fitness training and routine activities

VE1- Vehicle accidents displayed as a comparison against our peer group.

Findings:

HS1- personnel injured at operational incidents has seen an increase of two on last year. An 11% increase on last year's events.

Reason – It is difficult to clearly identify the reason. The events were of a minor nature of which one was caused by a third party. One possible reason could be behavioural safety as crews may not be actively focussing on their role due to efforts being concentrated on industrial action and the associated personal impacts.

HS2- Training and routine safety events have seen an increase of 2. These occurred in the routine activities category; an increase of 33%.

Reason: It is difficult to clearly identify the reason. The events were unavoidable with one being caused by a third party and the other was a manufacture defect on a piece of PPE.

In addition to the DCLG yearly statistical returns the health and safety report includes comparisons against the family peer group of 11 similar sized fire and rescue services for this year and those carried out in 2012/13.

Total Number of Persons Injured	2012/13	Total Number of Persons Injured	2013/14
Buckinghamshire	24	Buckinghamshire	26
West Sussex	42	Wiltshire	41
Wiltshire	44	West Sussex	49
Northamptonshire	45	Northamptonshire	53
Suffolk	56	Bedfordshire	55
Bedfordshire	63	Oxfordshire	61
Oxfordshire	64	Suffolk	62
Berkshire	67	Dorset	68
Norfolk	80	Berkshire	73
Dorset	83	Norfolk	102
Cambridgeshire	96	East Sussex	106
East Sussex	98	Cambridgeshire	134

Whilst remaining top with the least number of persons injured this year the number has increased by two compared to last year.

Total Number of injuries at fires	2012/13	Total Number of injuries at fires	2013/14
Buckinghamshire	4	Buckinghamshire	3
West Sussex	7	Wiltshire	5
Berkshire	11	West Sussex	9
Dorset	13	Dorset	11
Wiltshire	13	Bedfordshire	13
Northamptonshire	14	Northamptonshire	14
Suffolk	16	Berkshire	15
Bedfordshire	18	Suffolk	15
Norfolk	19	Norfolk	19
East Sussex	21	Oxfordshire	27
Oxfordshire	21	Cambridgeshire	29
Cambridgeshire	24	East Sussex	30

Again, BMKFRS hold first place in the total number of injuries at fires which has also seen a reduction by 1 compared to last year. This is very pleasing.

Total Number of injuries at Special Services	2012/13	Total Number of injuries at Special Services	2013/14
Buckinghamshire	2	Berkshire	2
Wiltshire	2	Cambridgeshire	2
Suffolk	3	West Sussex	3
Bedfordshire	4	Norfolk	4
Berkshire	4	East Sussex	4
Northamptonshire	4	Buckinghamshire	5
West Sussex	6	Dorset	8
Oxfordshire	8	Wiltshire	14
Norfolk	9	Northamptonshire	15
Cambridgeshire	13	Oxfordshire	15
Dorset	13	Bedfordshire	19
East Sussex	16	Suffolk	27

It is disappointing to note that BMKFRS has slipped from first to sixth place due to an increase of 3 events. The nature of these 3 events are a cut to a Firefighter's arm during an extrication at an RTC; a Co-responder was poked in the eye by a paramedic and whilst cutting a B post during an RTC a Firefighter was scratched on the lip and chin by a section of the post.

Total Number of injuries during routine activities	2012/13	Total Number of injuries during routine activities	2013/14
Oxfordshire	7	Dorset	5
Wiltshire	7	Suffolk	7
Buckinghamshire	8	Oxfordshire	8
Suffolk	13	Berkshire	10
Bedfordshire	14	Buckinghamshire	10
Northamptonshire	14	Wiltshire	10
Dorset	15	Northamptonshire	12
West Sussex	15	Bedfordshire	15
Norfolk	19	Norfolk	16
East Sussex	21	West Sussex	17
Cambridgeshire	23	East Sussex	19
Berkshire	27	Cambridgeshire	40

This year has seen an increase of 2 in the above category which have caused a slippage from third to fifth place. The nature of these 2 events are; whilst driving to a standby duty a Firefighter was hit by a third party causing injury to his wrist and another Firefighter, whilst wearing his fire fighting boots a manufacturer's nail came through the boot and punctured his right heel.

Total Number of injuries during Training	2012/13	Total Number of injuries during Training	2013/14
Buckinghamshire	10	Buckinghamshire	10
Northamptonshire	13	Northamptonshire	19
West Sussex	14	West Sussex	19
Wiltshire	22	Bedfordshire	22
Suffolk	24	Oxfordshire	24
Berkshire	25	Wiltshire	24
Bedfordshire	27	Dorset	33
Oxfordshire	28	Berkshire	34
Norfolk	33	Suffolk	36
Cambridgeshire	36	Norfolk	40
East Sussex	40	East Sussex	42
Dorset	42	Cambridgeshire	50

BMKFRS again hold first position with the same number of events as last year for the above category, a very pleasing result.

Total Number of Major injuries	2012/13	Total Number of Major injuries	2013/14
Buckinghamshire	0	Buckinghamshire	0
Suffolk	0	West Sussex	0
West Sussex	0	Bedfordshire	0
Wiltshire	0	Berkshire	0
Bedfordshire	1	Norfolk	0
Berkshire	1	Northamptonshire	1
East Sussex	1	Oxfordshire	1
Norfolk	1	Wiltshire	1
Northamptonshire	1	Cambridgeshire	1
Oxfordshire	1	Suffolk	2
Dorset	2	Dorset	3
Cambridgeshire	9	East Sussex	3

First position has been maintained this year in this category which is excellent news.

Total Number of over 7 day injuries	2012/13	Total Number of over 7 day injuries	2013/14
Cambridgeshire	0	Buckinghamshire	2
Suffolk	3	Dorset	7
West Sussex	5	East Sussex	7
Oxfordshire	6	Northamptonshire	7
Buckinghamshire	7	Bedfordshire	8
Wiltshire	7	Wiltshire	8
Bedfordshire	10	Berkshire	9
Dorset	11	West Sussex	9
Northamptonshire	11	Cambridgeshire	10
Berkshire	12	Suffolk	10
East Sussex	13	Oxfordshire	12
Norfolk	16	Norfolk	19

BMKFRS has improved in this category rising from fifth to first place for "RIDDOR reporting over 7 day injuries" with a reduction of 5 incidents, a very good result.

Vehicle Safety Events 2013/14	
Fire & Rescue Service	Total Number of safety events
Suffolk	15
Cambridgeshire	38
Bedfordshire	40
Berkshire	46
Buckinghamshire	46
Nottinghamshire	48
Northamptonshire	54
Wiltshire	55
West Sussex	61
Oxfordshire	63
East Sussex	83
Dorset	92
Norfolk	111

BMKFRS is joint fourth in this league table; work is to focus on reducing this type of event further to improve position in the next year.

Annual Incidence Rate			
Fire & Rescue Service	Total Number of employees	Total number of safety events	Incident Rate
Buckinghamshire	609	26	4269
Wiltshire	564	41	7296
West Sussex	671	49	7302
Northamptonshire	594	53	8922
Bedfordshire	587	55	9369
Dorset	721	68	9431
Suffolk	656	62	9451
Oxfordshire	600	61	10166
Berkshire	601	73	12146
Norfolk	832	102	12259
East Sussex	833	106	12725
Cambridgeshire	606	134	22112

The comparison tables show fire and rescue services of comparable size in numbers of employees to Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, however there are still variances of up to 100 employees. Again, BMKFRS lead with the least number of safety events, another excellent result.

To obtain a truer performance figure the Annual Incidence Rate is used and calculated by the number of reportable injuries in financial year divided by the average number employed during the year x 100,000, giving the number of injuries per 100,000 workers.