



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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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	<p>The selection process for the public focus groups was designed to ensure that a representative sample of the public was consulted. A socio-demographic profile of the public focus group participants is shown at page 12 of Annex 2. This indicates that they were a broad cross section of residents from local areas.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Participation in the online survey was also by open invitation, so again, views expressed via this channel cannot be certified as being necessarily representative of</p>

	<p>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>
USE OF RESOURCES	<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>
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	<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 privatised, profit driven business model.</p>
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	<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. Detailed responses to the questions and issues raised by</p>
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	<p>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> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/7614/0292/6640/PublicSafet</p>
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	<p>yPlan.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>
APPENDICES	<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
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<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.

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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 relocate 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 ongoing 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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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

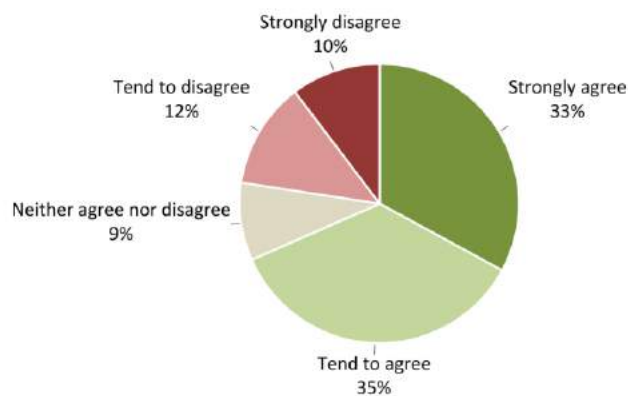
Findings

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:

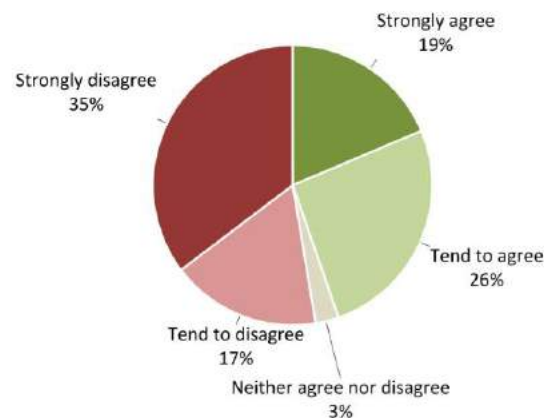
Business continuity is the responsibility of the business in question. The fire service shouldn't be moving into commercial ventures. It should be focusing on its core objectives as a service: community fire safety, fire safety and intervention. (Representation not specified).

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).

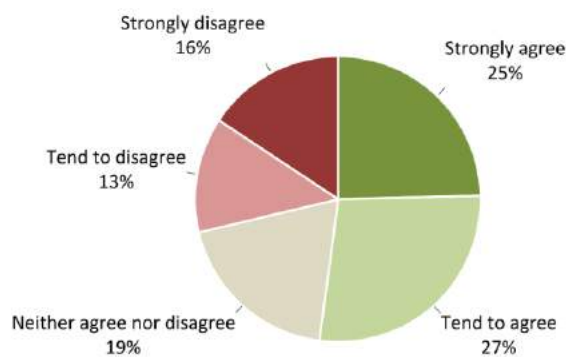
Collaboration ideally creates cost effective action. You cannot cover all potential eventualities all of the time - you need to be realistic as there is not a bottomless budget available. (Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School).

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.

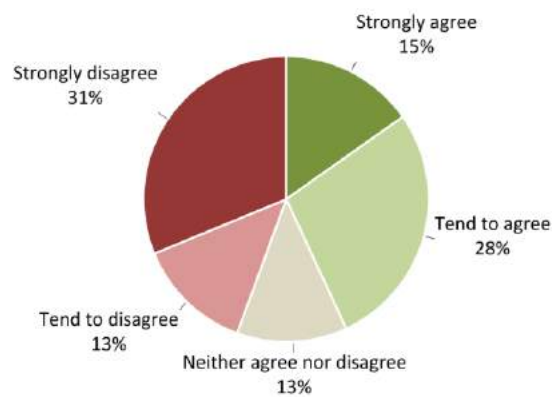
I believe that relocation is inevitable; however, any reduction in fire stations is a bad idea. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

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.).

- 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).

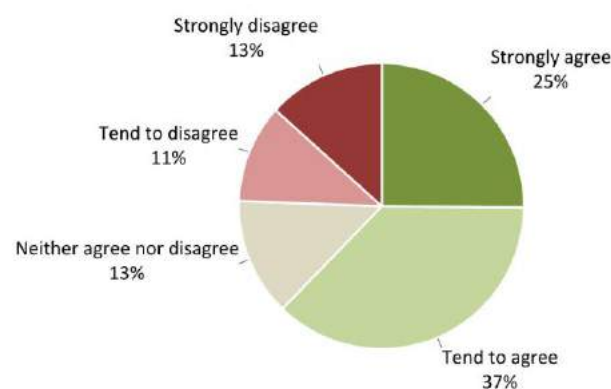
- ^{1.34} However, other respondents were of the opinion that this would make economic sense and that cost savings are needed.

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

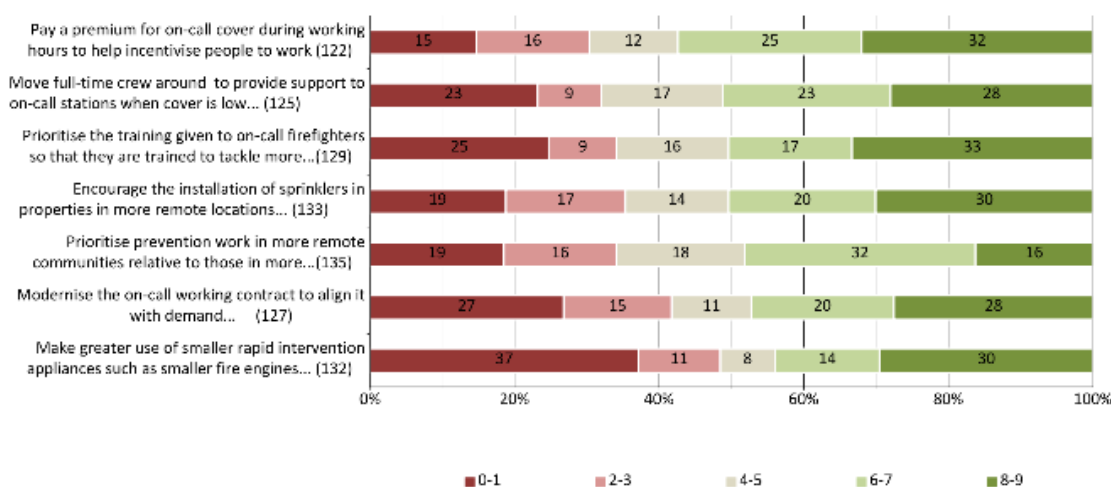
1.37 Respondents were asked to rate how effective various options would be in safeguarding communities. The chart below shows how respondents rated the various options. The option that respondents thought would be the most effective was paying a premium for on-call cover during working hours to help 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)

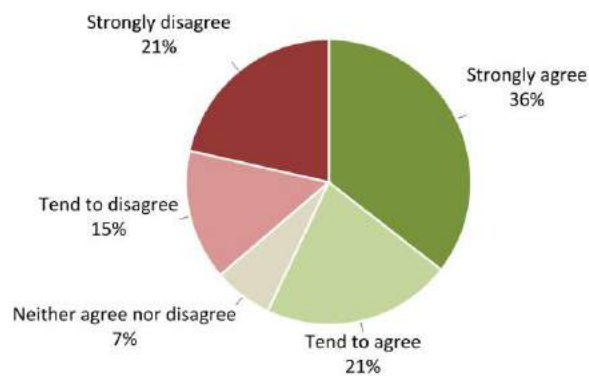
Using our resources in different ways

- ^{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.

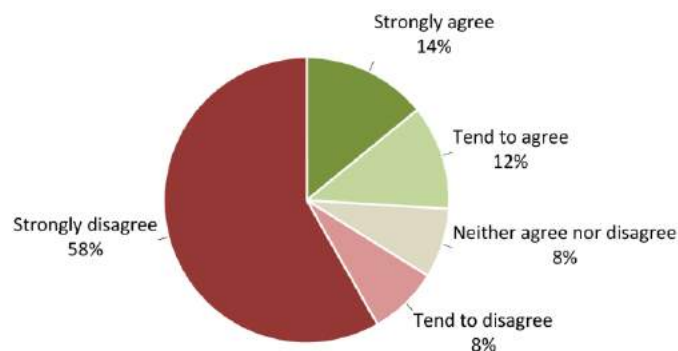
Figure 9: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree that the fire and rescue service should explore whether there are more ways of delivering some or all of our services that may be more viable in the future

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).

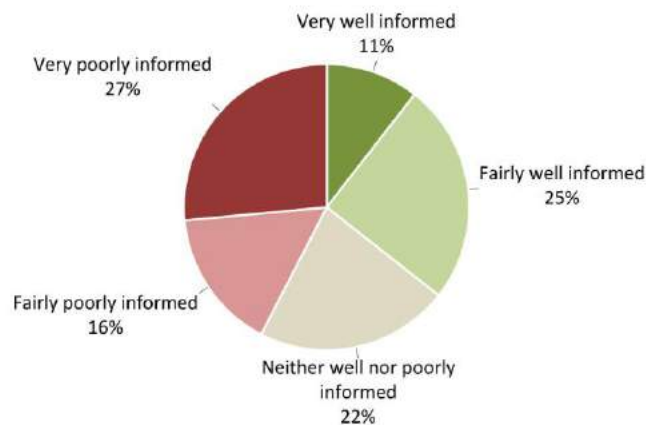
Outsourcing will always cost you more in the long run, you only get what you pay for in life. (A resident of Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes).

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).



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

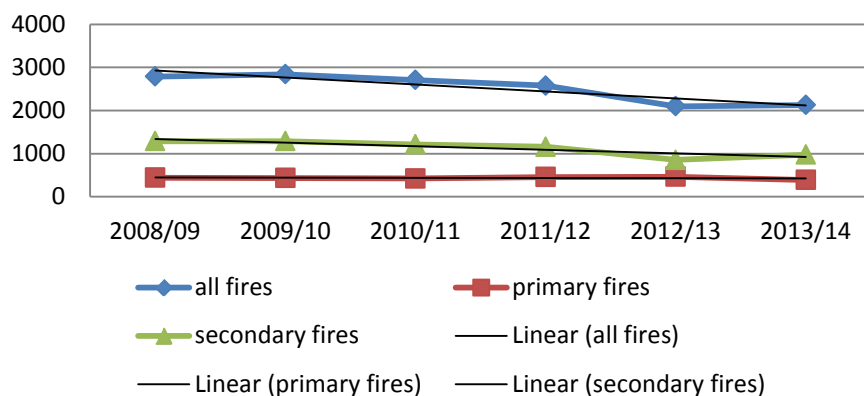
Page 9 of the PSP includes a graph showing a downward trend in the total number of incidents. Similar to the previous arguments, a better and more accurate representation of incident trends would be achieved if incidents types were categorised into appropriate groupings. This approach would better demonstrate compliance with the FRS National Framework which states that an IRMP **must:**

‘Identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks ...’

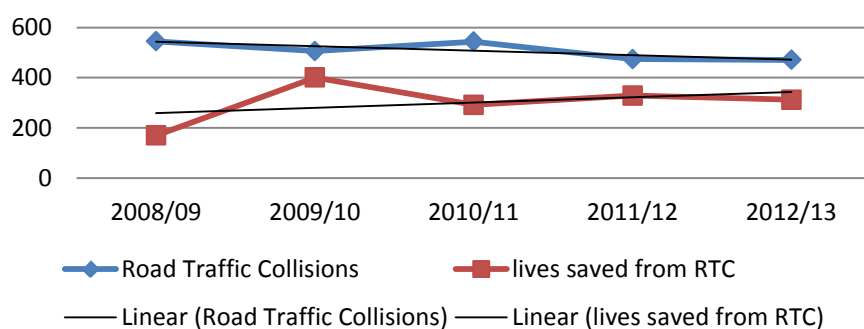
The below graph’s give an example of how information relating to incidents and risk could be better portrayed and give the public and key stakeholders a much clearer understanding of fire and rescue related risks.

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?

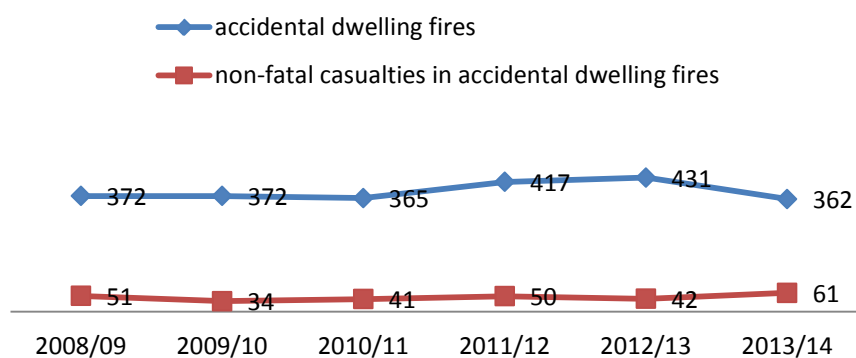
Fires 2008 to 2014



Road Traffic Collision data



accidental dwelling fires



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



Anthony Stansfeld
Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner
The Farmhouse
Thames Valley Police Headquarters
Oxford Road
Kidlington
Oxon
OX5 2NX

Our ref: MJE 134-14
Enquiries to: Elizabeth Andrews
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', with a stylized, cursive script.

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

**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 risk, and from a response perspective, the work that the BFRS⁴ is involved in?”</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.

⁴ BFRS = Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, a former abbreviation for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS)

3. Trends in Demand			
Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
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.	Fire Brigades Union	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.	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.

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/>)

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 last few years suggest that a more strategic review of the balance is timely.	

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>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 will continue to sustain our efforts to drive down numbers of all types of false alarm over</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>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>BCC ¹⁰ 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's ¹¹ and CS ¹² 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 business to install sprinkler systems.</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>

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			
Could we reconsider the weight of response and better call handling given that 99% of AFAs ¹³ turn out to be False Alarms?	Staff Focus Group	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.	We will continue to review our Automatic Fire Alarm Policy in line with changing demands for our resources.
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?	Staff Focus Group	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.	We will continue to review our Automatic Fire Alarm Policy in line with changing demands for our resources.

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 planning.</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
How could business continuity planning benefit our organisation?	Staff Focus Group	<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>	None.
The fire and rescue service offers relevant expertise and insight and business continuity planning is a good idea.	Online questionnaire <i>incl. Buckinghamshire New University</i>	We definitely offer some relevant expertise and insight and this is an area that we would like to explore.	Explore business continuity planning as a potential service offering.
<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>	Online questionnaire	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.	Explore business continuity planning as a potential service offering.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Primary Authority Scheme			
Could our organisational reputation be affected by who we partner with and how do we choose who we partner with?	Staff Focus Group	<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>	None.
Are there any benefits to our organisation through adopting this sort of scheme?	Staff Focus Group	<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>	None.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
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?	Staff Focus Group	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.	None.

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>	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.	Risk and cost/benefit assessments to be carried out for all proposals.
<i>“What would the funding implications of mutual aid be?”</i>	Public Focus Group	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.	None.
<i>“[Mutual aid] Surely you do this now already?”</i>	Public Focus Group	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.	None.
<i>“What drives keeping the wholetime¹⁶ firefighters around during the early hours when the risk is lower?”</i>	Public Focus Group	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 that demand does reduce during certain hours of the day and night, therefore our future response modelling will indeed take this factor into consideration.	None.

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	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.	Response Policy and Performance and Evaluation to work with the Information Team to improve data collection that will aid analysis and insight.
<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	This is exactly what we are trying to do – developing an evidence base upon which to best align our resources to risk and demand.	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	This is an interesting idea that would be good to explore.	Liaise with TA to see whether we can do joint recruitment drives
<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 of capacity?</p>	Staff Focus Group	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.	Liaise with neighbouring brigades to explore over-the-border resource modelling 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 capacity we don’t inadvertently reduce our effective capacity below a safe threshold.</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 BMKFRS)

¹⁷ RDS = Retained Duty System, former terminology for On-Call cover.

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 another [e.g. response]...[then how can you prioritise]”?</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 Release, DCLG, Aug 2013). This tells us that although response times must be a factor, it is not the limiting	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 times will remain the primary performance

<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>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>measure.</p> <p>Senior Management to continue driving research at a national level through CFA 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 winters"</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>

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 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.	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>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 more merging"</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>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 wholtime ¹⁸pump 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.</i></p> <p><i>Resident of Bucks or MK,</i></p> <p><i>North Marston Community Shop Association Ltd.,</i></p> <p><i>Member or Relative of BMKFRS</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 Wholtime = Full-time, provide 24/7 cover.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<p>Demand is unpredictable</p> <p>It is unreasonable to relocate every time trends change</p>	Online questionnaire	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.	Risk Reviews to be conducted for each proposal in the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan ahead of any major changes.
<p>Concerns about cuts to front-line services</p> <p>Concerns about availability of crews and appliances</p>	Online questionnaire	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.

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 it 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	<p>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.</p> <p>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;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Steam or cooking fumes. ▪ Electrical faults ▪ Items interfering with the operation of the alarm (dust, water, insects etc.) 	

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
		<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> <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>	<p>Public Focus Group</p> <p>Public Focus Group</p> <p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<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>

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 with. This is where the specially trained firefighters would be required.	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	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
<p><i>“Are the people actually there in the area to incentivise?”</i></p> <p><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></p> <p>Would we consider paying RDS ²²more in general and reduce the numbers overall and ask for better commitment instead of paying a premium during periods of peak demand?</p> <p>May have unforeseen consequences where more personnel book available and it could end up costing the service more</p>	<p>Public Focus Group</p> <p>Public Focus Group</p> <p>Staff Focus Group</p> <p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>None.</p>
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
<p>Recruit RDS firefighters in urban areas to <i>“cover for wholetime”</i> ²³<i>firefighters who could then be moved out to support the rural areas.</i></p> <p>Would the service consider having more officers who are currently based at headquarters working from desks in retained stations and providing extra cover when it is needed? <i>“we don’t all need to be</i></p>	<p>Public Focus Group</p> <p>Staff Focus Group</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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</p>

²² RDS = Retained Duty System, former terminology for On-Call cover.

²³ Wholetime = Full-time, provide 24/7 cover.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<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 wholetime ²⁴during 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>	Staff Focus Group		modelling.

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 RDS ²⁵ 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?"</i> <i>"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?"</i> <i>"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. It is not yet well-understood which activities provide the best outcome in terms of public safety, since these	We will continue to develop our corporate performance management system to that we can best monitor activities across the

		cause and effect relationships are very complex owing to the number of interacting variables.	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 getting the revenue”</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.

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
Would supporting other emergency services lead to a decrease in [quality of fire and rescue] service e.g. response times?	Online questionnaire	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.	None.
<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>	Online questionnaire	Our staff are being trained and assessed by SCAS. We are mobilised by SCAS and only to incidents we are qualified to attend.	None.

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" e.g. rope rescue or support functions e.g. fire engine maintenance.</i>	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 they wish to explore, namely to be free of government funding?"</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 government funding, and alternative means of raising revenue are being discussed and explored.	None.

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 organisation or business)	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 changes in service delivery, such as making profits, would affect our ability to deliver a quality service.	

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
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>	Online questionnaire (resident of Bucks or MK)	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.	

16. Other Issues and Comments

Issue	Source	Management Response	Recommendations
<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 PSP ²⁶ 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>	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.
<i>“How does the Authority expect the public to respond to a series of proposals which contain insufficient information to enable an informed response?”</i>	Fire Brigades Union	Given that we are only consulting on our broad approach to the issues and challenges facing the Authority in order to inform our strategic direction we believe that the 2015-20 Public Safety	None.

²⁶ PSP = 2015-20 Public Safety Plan.

		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 fire appliances?”</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 functions.	None.

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
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>	Staff Focus Group	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.	None.

²⁹ PSP = 2015-20 Public Safety Plan.