Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	5 February 2020
OFFICER	Calum Bell, Head of Service Development
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	**2020-2025 Public Safety Plan Consultation: Feedback & Recommendations**
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	The 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan (PSP) was approved for public consultation at the Authority's 18 September 2019 meeting. The consultation was open for an eight-week period from 23 September to 18 November 2019. The purpose of this report is to present to the Authority: • the feedback received from the consultation; • management responses to the feedback; and, • recommendations following the outcomes of the consultation. At the 18 September Fire Authority meeting, officers indicated that they would also review the draft PSP in light of findings of the HMICFRS inspection that was reported to the Authority at the Extraordinary meeting on 23 January 2020. Officers have done so, and consider that the recommendations relating to the 'causes of concern' have, or can, be addressed within the broad scope of the Public Safety Plan and its associated consultation programme. Areas identified for improvement by the HMICFRS will be considered and addressed in the 2020–2025 Corporate Plan, which underpins and programmes projects and key tasks arising from the proposals contained in the Public Safety Plan. The new Corporate Plan will be presented to the 25 March Executive Committee for recommendation for approval at the June Fire Authority meeting.
ACTION	Decision
RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended: that the Authority be recommend to approve that: 1. the 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan be adopted; 2. Officers be directed to proceed with the further development of the strategy proposals set out at Page 32 of the 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan

	(Annex 3) having regard to the consultation feedback as they are progressed and to undertake further consultations with stakeholders potentially affected by any specific changes arising from their implementation; and,
	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	Continued re-engineering of our service provision to reflect the changing nature of risk and demand in the community may present opportunities to further mitigate a number of our key corporate risks. However, as the HMICFRS found in their first inspection the "*…service is facing significant financial constraints*" and "*fundamentally …does not have enough people and money*" ([HMICFRS report](#) *at p.6).*
	Staff availability is also another significant area of risk identified within our Corporate Risk Register. Modernising and continually improving the flexibility of our employment propositions, as envisaged in the 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan, will also present opportunities to improve staff retention and recruitment thus enhancing staff availability and general resilience relative to this important area of risk.
	Regarding the public consultation process, a detailed risk assessment was carried out with Opinion Research Services at the project planning stage and a risk log established within the Project Initiation Document with appropriate measures identified to control the identified risks. The key risks arising out of the research process include:
	• that the range of views expressed are not representative of those of the public as a whole; and,
	• that the research is poorly executed and fails to meet the specified requirements.
	Both of these risks could impair the decision-making process in relation to the Public Safety Plan were they to crystalise. The first risk is controlled via the focus group recruitment process which is designed to ensure that a representative sample of the public is selected by using quotas for age, gender, ethnicity, disability and geographic factors. The second, via ORS' training and research methods which are fully accredited to relevant British, ISO and Interviewer Quality Control Scheme standards. Opinion Research Services are also a Market Research Society (MRS) Company Partner and are fully compliant with the MRS Code of Conduct.
FINANCIAL	The cost of Phase One of the consultation was £13,550

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

	delivery of its vision of making Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes the safest areas in England in which to live, work and travel.
	Communication with stakeholders;
	The development of the Plan was informed by an initial public consultation carried out in November / December 2018 to explore public expectations of the Service and awareness of the issues and challenges facing it together with some of the ways we might potentially respond to these. A summary of the outcomes of the consultation is contained in the Plan and was reported on in full to Members at the February 2019 Fire Authority meeting. Informal consultations have also taken place with Service Managers and the Representative Bodies during the development of the draft Public Safety Plan and formal 'gateway' reviews were undertaken by the Business Transformation Board on 1 August 2019 and Strategic Management Board on 13 August 2019.
	The system of internal control;
	The progress of the public consultation was overseen by the Business Transformation and Strategic Management Boards.
	The medium-term financial strategy;
	No direct implications arising from the consultation process. However, the medium-term financial strategy will be informed by the interdependencies between the Public Safety Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan. The balance between spending and resources. The immediate costs arising from the public consultation will be met from current financial year budgeted resources. Costs associated with the pursuit of the proposals contained in the draft Public Safety Plan will be factored in to future budget planning.
	The management of the asset base;
	The 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan may have implications for current property and fleet related assets. These will be considered in our Property and Fleet Management strategies. The arrangements to promote and ensure probity and propriety These are assured by compliance with National Framework requirements relating to the development of, and consultation for, Integrated Risk Management Plans.
	Environmental;
	The 2020–2025 Public Safety Plan commits the Authority to identifying and acting on opportunities to reduce its carbon footprint.
	Also, where appropriate, any changes arising from the outcomes of the reviews of service provision contained in the Plan will be subject to environmental impact

	assessments.
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	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. **Consultation programme** This comprised as follows: • A series of five focus groups with members of the public facilitated by Opinion Research Services (ORS), independent research specialists; and • An online questionnaire, hosted by ORS and accessible via the Authority's website, which was open to all staff, members of the public and representatives of partner and community organisations. Awareness of the consultation was raised by targeting a range of community and partner organisations by letter and email. The consultation was also publicised on the Authority's website and via social media channels with the following effects:

Media	Articles / Posts	Views
Website	2	1,200
FaceBook	7	11,600
Twitter	13	37,100

Response

A total of 55 diverse members of the public participated in the focus groups. There was a total of 58 responses to the online questionnaire. Seven of these were from respondents identifying as Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service staff, although the actual level of response may have been higher with some preferring to identify as residents or not to say. Eight organisations also responded to the consultation via the questionnaire. A full profile of online respondents is shown at Tables 1 – 5 on pages 11–12 of Annex 1. A further nine responses were received by email or letter (seven from individual respondents and two from organisations). Summary feedback from these is included at Annex 2.

Background Papers

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018):

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-

	and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2
	2015-2020 Public Safety Plan:
	https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/8114/2116/4524/2015_-_20_PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN_Updated_after_17_Dec_CFA.pdf
	2020 – 2025 Public Safety Plan – "Listening & Engagement" Research Report:
	https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/4915/4894/2682/ITEM_12_Outcomes_of_2020-2025_PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN_Focus_Groups_Report__Appendix.pdf
	Draft 2020-2025 PSP & Consultation Plan as approved at the 18 September 2019 Fire Authority meeting:
	https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/8915/6797/6225/ITEM_10_Draft_2020-25_PSP_18_September_CFA_Cover_Paper__Annexes-min.pdf
APPENDICES	**Annexures:** 1. ORS Report of Consultation Findings 2. Service management responses to consultation feedback. 3. Finalised 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan for decision.
TIME REQUIRED	30 Minutes
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Stuart Gowanlock, Corporate Planning Manager sgowanlock@bucksfire.gov.uk

Opinion Research Services

Excellent research for the public, voluntary and private sectors

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

Report of Consultation Findings

Opinion Research Services

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

Report of Consultation Findings

Report
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Acknowledgements

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

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

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

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

The ORS Project Team

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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

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

Summary of main findings

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

Infrastructure

1.3 Focus group participants were satisfied with BFRS' strategic proposals for responding to infrastructure challenges: they were described as '***sensible', 'flexible'* and '*responsive'**. It is not to say, though, that there were no concerns and reassurances sought - and just under half (46%) of questionnaire respondents reported that there are specific aspects and risks associated with infrastructure projects that they think BFRS should consider in its planning.

1.4 Feedback across both research strands around these specific concerns mainly related to **new housing developments**, which are reportedly causing **access issues** for emergency and other large vehicles due to narrow roads and many parked cars. It was also argued that **new buildings are not being constructed as safely as they could be,** and that developers and commissioning authorities should be held more accountable. Furthermore, focus group participants suggested that more **collaboration between BFRS, housing developers and local authorities** is needed so the Service has ample opportunity to ensure safety regulations are being met.

1.5 More generally, there were concerns about **high housing density**, **population growth** and the resulting increases in safety risks caused by **congestion** throughout the area.

1.6 Additional worries were around the alleged **number of collisions within roadwork stretches** (on the M1 for example), as well as whether there is sufficient resourcing to respond to challenges relating to **large-scale projects such as HS2.**

Population

Helping the most vulnerable

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

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

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

The automatic fire alarms (AFAs) attendance policy

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

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

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

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

Technology, information and systems

1.13 Focus group participants were **very positive about the proposals** for responding to technological advancements: they were especially keen to discuss the **use of drones** and whether **autonomous vehicles** could respond to specific incidents such as pumping flood water or minor RTCs.

1.14 Just under two fifths (38%) of questionnaire respondents and a reasonable proportion of focus group participants felt there were additional specific aspects, opportunities or risks associated with technological change that need to be considered. Specific safety concerns were raised in relation to: fire risks associated with the **rechargeable batteries used in electric vehicles**; the number of **accidents on 'smart' motorways**; **cyber-attacks** and **terrorism**; and whether firefighters will be adequately **trained to respond to advancing technological risks**. More generally, whether or not BFRS should be **investing more money into frontline services rather than technology** was discussed among focus group participants.

1.15 It was suggested that BFRS could mitigate these risks through being **more involved at the implementation stage** of new technology development to fully understand any impacts on the Service and society.

Civil emergencies

1.16 BFRS's plans for mitigating risks associated with civil emergencies were also **well received** among the focus groups. However, around four fifths (41%) of questionnaire respondents reportedly had additional concerns - mainly around tackling carbon emissions and climate change and **whether BFRS has the resources in place** to deliver the proposals. Specifically, there were doubts about how well **the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum** (TVLRF) is being utilised in practice, along with worries around the Service's overall **lack of funding**.

1.17 Suggestions as to how BFRS could do more to mitigate risk were around better **educating the public** on how to prepare for and what to do during a civil emergency; partnership work with **companies specialising in security**; and ensuring that the service has the **correct appliances** to respond to incidents that are more likely to affect Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, such as emergencies within **heavily forested areas.**

1.18 In terms of reducing its **carbon footprint**, it was acknowledged that this may be difficult for BFRS to do, especially with appliances travelling greater distances to cover areas that are struggling with resourcing. However, it was recommended that BFRS follows an official recycling regime.

Workforce

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

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

Funding

1.21 In response to being asked whether they would support an increase in the part of council tax that funds BFRS during 2020-21, the largest proportion of both focus group participants and questionnaire respondents (47%) said they would be **willing to pay a one-off £10 increase** to the current annual charge for a Band D property. Indeed, BFRS was considered a 'worthy cause' to pay more towards. Moreover, it was deemed sensible to increase funding so that rates are closer in line with the national average. Only 15% of questionnaire respondents indicated a preference for no increase at all.

1.22 However, there were concerns that this would be the **'thin edge of the wedge'** insofar as other services may also increase their portion of council tax rates. **Alternative suggestions** put forward across both research strands were **charging for false alarm call outs** as well as the provision of **safety advice and training**. Moreover, some queried whether BFRS would be able to generate more future funding as a result of the **large number of housing developments** being built across the county.

2. Project Overview

The commission

2.1   In 2019, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) launched its Public Safety Plan 2020-2025 (PSP), which sets out how it will provide a fire and rescue service in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes for the five-year period from 2020-2025. The plan builds on BFRS' Public Safety Plan 2015-20 and considers changes to risks and how it plans to change its services to keep residents, communities and businesses safe from fire and other emergencies.

2.2   In this context, on the basis of our experience of the fire and rescue service and many statutory consultations, Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by BFRS to offer independent advice on the design and conduct of the consultation programme, undertake a programme of key consultation activities, and provide an interpretative report of the findings.

Extensive consultation

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

Consultation proportionate and fair

2.4   The key legal and good practice requirements for proper consultation are based on the so-called Gunning Principles, which state that consultation should: be conducted at a formative stage, before decisions are taken; allow sufficient time for people to participate and respond; provide the public and stakeholders with sufficient background information to allow them to consider the issues and any proposals intelligently and critically; and be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken.

2.5   In this case, the formal consultation for BFRS' PSP followed an earlier engagement programme - also undertaken by ORS - which was carried out in 2018. It involved five focus groups across its service area (in Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham, High Wycombe and Milton Keynes), with BFRS's key priority being to understand public opinions and to 'test' some very general ideas and principles at a very early stage.

2.6   The eight-week formal consultation period gave the public and stakeholders sufficient time to participate, and through its consultation documents and website information the Fire Authority sought to provide sufficient information for staff, stakeholders and residents to understand the proposals and to make informed judgements about them and the supporting evidence.

2.7   The final Gunning principle listed above is that consultation outcomes should be properly taken into consideration before authorities take their decisions. In this case, regular formal and informal briefings allowed the progressive reporting of people's opinions.

2.8   Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and consider public and stakeholder views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully. Consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what are the right or best decisions in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions.

Summary of consultation strands

Open Questionnaire

2.9   The open consultation questionnaire (with an accompanying Consultation Document) was available online and as a hard copy between 23rd September to 18th November 2019. The survey was available to residents, representatives from business, public and voluntary organisations and BFRS employees.

2.10   In total, 58 questionnaires were completed, all of which were submitted online.

2.11   It should be noted that while open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, they are not 'surveys' of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically or adventitiously, and are more likely to be completed by motivated people while also being subject to influence by local campaigns. As such, because the respondent profile (as outlined in the full report) is an imperfect reflection of the Buckinghamshire population, its results must be interpreted carefully. This does not mean that the open questionnaire findings should be discounted: they are analysed in detail in this report and must be taken into account as a demonstration of the strength of feeling of residents who were motivated to put forward their views about the proposals.

Respondent Profiles

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

Table 1: Gender – All Respondents

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

Table 2: Age – All Respondents

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

Table 3: Disability – All Respondents

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

Table 4: Ethnicity – All Respondents

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

Table 5: Respondent Type – All Respondents

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

Responses from organisations

2.13 Most responses to the consultation questionnaire were personal responses (86%; 48 respondents), which included just under a fifth (18%; 7 respondents) who work for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service. More than one eighth (14%; 8 respondents) were from local organisations or business respondents.

2.14 Of the eight respondents who stated that they were responding on behalf of an organisation, seven gave the name of the organisation they were representing. These were:

- Broughton and Milton Keynes Parish Council

- Central Milton Keynes Town Council

- Camphill Milton Keynes Communities

- Hambledon Parish Council

- Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust Community – Learning Disability Team

- Padbury Parish Council

- Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

Duplicate and co-ordinated responses

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

Interpretation of the Data

2.16 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" categories, or multiple answers.

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

2.18 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with:

- Purple/blue shades to represent neutral responses (neither positive nor negative)

- Grey shades to represent 'other' responses

Focus groups with members of the public

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

Attendance and representativeness

2.20 The focus groups were designed to inform and 'engage' the participants both with the issues and with BFRS - by using a 'deliberative' approach to encourage members of the public to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing important issues and proposals in detail. The meetings lasted for two hours.

2.21 In total, there were 55 diverse participants at the focus groups. The dates of the meetings and attendance levels by members of the public can be found in Table 6.

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

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

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

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

Table 7: Focus groups criteria

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

2.24 In the recruitment process, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors, and the venues at which the focus groups met were readily accessible. People's needs were taken into account in the recruitment and venue selection.

2.25 Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes the opportunity to participate. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meeting (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline based on similar discussions. In summary, the outcomes reported here are reliable as examples of the needs and wants of diverse informed people reacting to the possible challenges facing BFRS.

Discussion Agenda

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

Background information in relation to:

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

Future challenges in relation to six key areas:

- Technological changes and advancements
- Civil emergencies

- Infrastructure projects

- Population changes

- Workforce and funding pressures

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

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

- Temporarily relocating appliances & other resources to reduce impact of infrastructure projects

- Reviewing current capacity, capabilities and approaches to meet emerging civil emergency risks

- Improving preventative engagement with vulnerable groups

- Possibly reviewing automated fire alarm (AFA) attendance policy

- Improving recruitment and retention via flexible employment opportunities and developing the roll on the on-call firefighter

- Increasing Council Tax by more than 3% in order to avoid reductions to service provision.

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

Reporting

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

3. Open Consultation Questionnaire

Introduction

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

Infrastructure projects

> The Public Safety Plan identifies a range of major infrastructure projects, along with plans for new housing development - particularly in the Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes - that have implications for future fire and rescue service provision.
>
> Some of these projects have the potential to cause, or have already, caused disruption to local transport networks. Consequently, they may have an impact on BFRS service provision, particularly emergency response times.
>
> Its nearest-appliance mobilisation system will help BFRS mitigate this risk. It will also consider temporarily relocating appliances and other resources to avoid excessive impacts on its ability to respond to emergencies or deliver other services during construction. In addition, BFRS will continually review risk, and identify any additional training, equipment and vehicle requirements needed.
>
> **Are there any other specific aspects or risks associated with these projects that you think BFRS should consider in its planning?**
>
> **If yes, what are these risks and how should BFRS mitigate them?**

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

Figure 1: Are there any other specific aspects or risks associated with these projects that you think BFRS should consider in its planning?
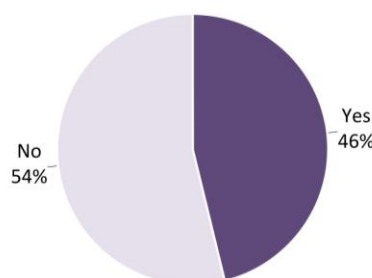
Base: All Respondents (52)

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

> *"New buildings are not being constructed as well as the architects who design them… compartmentation design means fires that should be contained can spread. BFRS need to try and talk to local authorities, to ensure inspections, to make sure the buildings have been constructed as specified, and corners haven't been cut by builders, who don't understand why they need to build in the specified way, and not the way they've always done it."*
>
> *"Pursuant to the Grenfell fire, the Parish Council felt that the fire service should lobby for developers and commissioning authorities to continue to be held accountable for their deployment of materials and building designs which are found to be intrinsically unsafe for both occupiers and emergency services."* (Broughton and Milton Keynes Parish Council)
>
> *"Ensure that the right plans are considered, especially [relating to] cladding"* (HPFT Community Learning Disability Team)

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

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

Population: helping the most vulnerable

> BFRS continually seeks to improve its ability to engage with people who are at higher risk from fire and other emergencies, such as the 80+ age group.
>
> It uses a number of data sources and works very closely with partner organisations to achieve this, for example carrying out visits to homes and participating in education programmes.
>
> Through its Fire and Wellness programme BFRS has broadened its home visits to look at other issues which are often linked to fire safety, while also assisting key partners in helping people to be safer and healthier in their homes.
>
> **BFRS welcomes feedback on how it can improve its engagement with those at higher risk from fire and other emergencies. In what ways, if any, do you think it could do this better?**

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

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

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

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

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

Technology, information and systems

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Figure 2: Are there any other specific aspects, opportunities or risks associated with technological change that you think BFRS should consider in its planning?
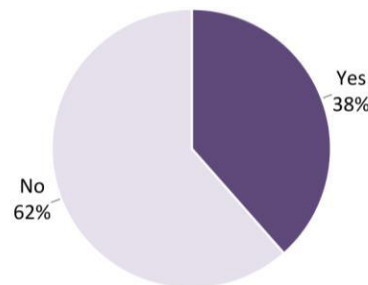
Base: All Respondents (39)

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

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

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

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

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

Civil emergencies

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yes 41%

No 59%
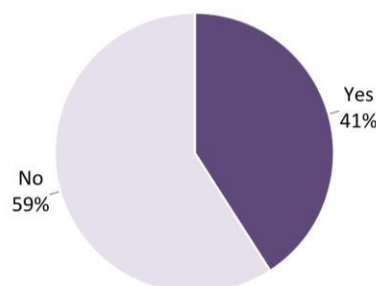
Base: All Respondents (44)

3.9 In Figure 3 shows that more than two fifths (41%) of respondents felt that there are other specific aspects or risks associated with civil emergencies that BFRS should consider in its planning, whilst almost three fifths (59%) did not.

3.10 Of the respondents who thought that BFRS should consider additional risks in relation to civil emergencies, most of the concerns were related to tackling carbon emissions and climate change.

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

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

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

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

> *"Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, as a neighbouring service, welcomes the ongoing collaborative activity in this area to combat security threats."* (Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service)
>
> *"[BFRS should] work with the security of companies like BT Security who are excellent at identifying security threats to its assets."*

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

> *"With the increase in wildfires both nationally and globally, and the fact that, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes sits within an area of outstanding natural beauty, with a heavily forested area, should you not consider whether you really have the correct type of fire appliances to deal with this type of incident. Looking at the current range of fire engines on your website, it would appear that you don't - only three 4x4 fire engines!"*
>
> *"Do you have the resources to support TVLRF in practice, i.e., in an event of an emergency, will there be sufficient staff to manage national issues, as well as remaining available for local response? Will this work include spread of viruses? Do you have the capability, knowledge, and resources, to manage the risks?"*

Workforce pressures

> There are a range of issues that affect the ability of BFRS to retain, recruit and develop its workforce - especially frontline operational firefighters. Particular challenges include:
>
> » An ageing workforce and retirement 'bulge' due to legacy recruitment patterns from the 1980s and 1990s.
>
> » Loss of staff to neighbouring fire and rescue services (for example London Fire Brigade which pays weighting allowances).
>
> » Changes in society and the way people live and work which have affected the ability of BFRS to recruit On-Call firefighters.

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

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

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

Figure 4: Which three factors do you think are most important when considering BFRS as an employer?
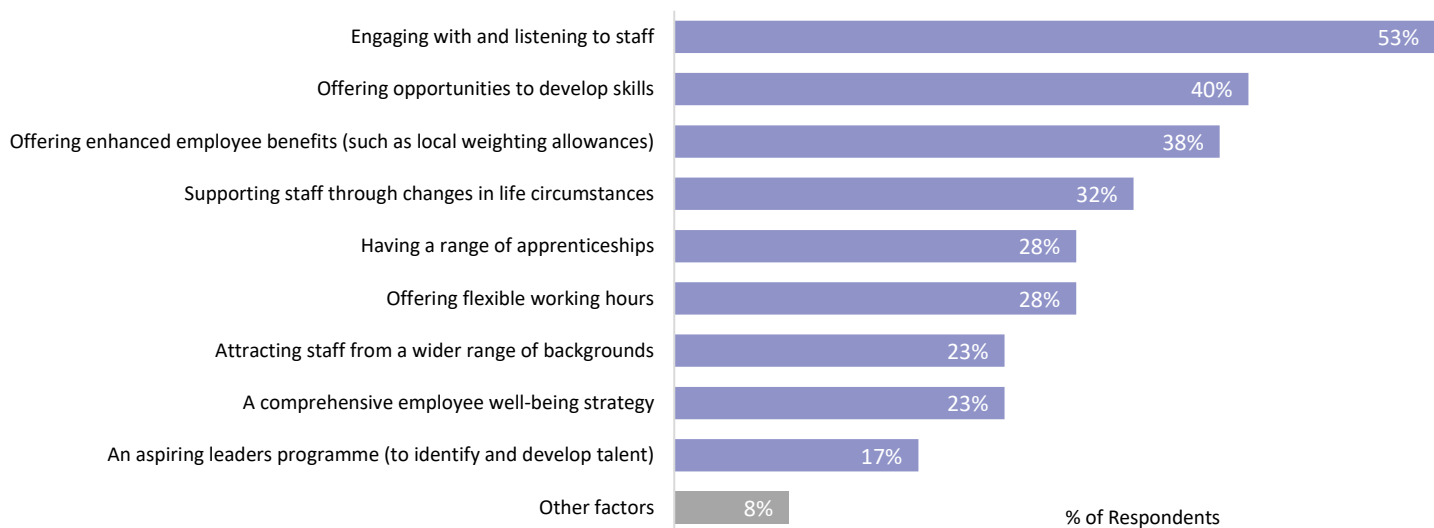
Base: All respondents (53)

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

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

Funding pressures

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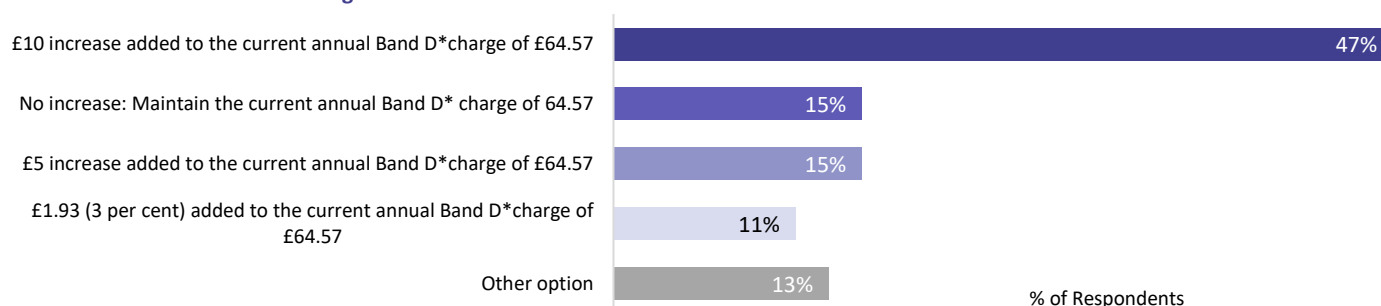
For example:

» Significant Government funding reductions for fire services since 2010.

» The lowest council tax rates of any Combined Fire Authority (CFA) in the country (fire authorities that currently charge a higher rate of council tax than BFRS, get a correspondingly larger increase in their funding).

» Any proposal to increase fire and rescue service council tax rates by more than three per cent currently requires approval from local residents by means of a referendum. A referendum on this in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes could cost BFRS up to £600,000 - potentially leaving it in a worse financial position if a proposed increase were rejected.

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

» **An increase of £10 per household** (for a Band D property*) would provide **£3 million** which would provide more money to invest in the Service.

» **An increase of £5 per household** (for a Band D property*) would provide **£1.5 million** which would cover the projected funding shortfall for 2020/21.

» **An increase of three per cent per household** in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (the most currently allowed by Government without a referendum) would provide **£600,000** and would cost an extra **£1.93 per year** for Band D property*. This would require BFRS to use its reserves to help cover the funding shortfall for 2020/21 and, depending on longer term funding settlements, could mean future reductions to frontline services.

» **No increase** in council tax would present a greater risk of BFRS having to make reductions to front-line services in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

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

Option	% of Respondents
£10 increase added to the current annual Band D*charge of £64.57	47%
No increase: Maintain the current annual Band D* charge of 64.57	15%
£5 increase added to the current annual Band D*charge of £64.57	15%
£1.93 (3 per cent) added to the current annual Band D*charge of £64.57	11%
Other option	13%

Base: All Respondents (55)

3.15 Figure 5 (on the previous page) shows that nearly half (47%) of respondents would prefer a £10 increase for part of their council tax to fund BFRS during 2020-21. More than one eighth (15%) of respondents would prefer no increase, with the same (15%) proportion preferring a £5 increase. Less than one eighth (11%) of respondents would prefer a £1.93 increase, with 13% of respondents preferring another option.

3.16 Other options put forward were around raising funds through charging for false alarms and safety advice and training.

> *"Charge for special service calls and false alarms. If not in good intent, people have insurance claims of their insurance."*
>
> *"Have you considered potential income generation activities, diversifying the fire service – e.g. charging companies for fire safety advice, or training when the fire officers are not dealing with incidents, charging for the use of fire attendance at events, charging for continuing fault alarms? All public sector bodies are now having to find ways to plug the gaps and maximise resources, how is BFRS responding to this?"*

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

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

Other areas of interest

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

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

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

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

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

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

> *"Yes, you have/are working with older people, but what about everyone else? What are you doing to break barriers and squash negative perceptions about the fire service being white male dominant?"*
>
> *"The service should be inclusive to all regardless of protected characteristics, inclusivity and valuing diversity are key."*

4. Focus Group Findings

Introduction

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

Infrastructure

Overview of proposals

> **BFRS WILL…**
>
> **Consider temporarily relocating appliances/other resources during construction**
>
> **Continue to work with local authorities to understand the potential impact of development plans**
>
> **Ensure resources are in the right place**
>
> **Keep the current number of immediately/rapidly available appliances to maintain attendance times and capacity to deal with simultaneous larger incidents**

There was strong support for and confidence in BFRS' proposals

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

> *"The four bullet points under infrastructure are a sensible approach to mitigating the risks."* (Chesham)
>
> *"Within financial constraints, the FRS appears to be working smart."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"The plan appears flexible and responsive."* (Buckingham)
>
> "*The proposals seem sensible.*" (High Wycombe)
>
> *"We agree with the infrastructure proposals."* (Chesham)
>
> *"*[The proposals] *seem to be mitigating the challenges well by using flexible locations and flexible resourcing for firefighters."* (Chesham)

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

> *"Having appliances in strategic locations and reviewing appropriateness would mitigate risks/challenges."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"Relocating appliances in peak times will provide a quicker response and be very useful, especially in places like Handy Cross, so we agree with that."* (High Wycombe)

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

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

> *"The roads are very narrow on the new developments - they're like a single track by the time people have parked their cars along the roads."* (Chesham)
>
> *"Narrow roads are a concern."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"Single track roads caused by parking."* (Chesham)

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

> *"Increased population, road congestion, access issues, the lack of ring roads."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"HMOs are increasing."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"I go on the M1 every day and about a year ago it was closed about once a week because they were putting in the smart motorways. To me it seemed that the way they were doing the work was badly designed because accidents were happening frequently and in the same place - around J13 - which I'm sure you would have been called out to. Are you guys involved when they do road changes? Do you check what's going to make sure what they are doing is not more dangerous?"* (Milton Keynes)

There were concerns around population growth

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

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

There were concerns around cost and resourcing

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

> *"Within the financial constraints they appear to be working quite smartly. But going forward, things like access issues, more HMOs, roadworks, congestion – then you can only see it getting harder for people to manage. I'm worried they don't have the resources to deal with it going forward."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"A lot of our discussions kept coming back to finance and the unfairness of BFRS being expected to fund their projects. Funding cuts would be a significant risk!"* (Buckingham)
>
> *"Concern that infrastructure is not going to keep up with the growth of population in the area. Therefore, response times will inevitably increase."* (High Wycombe)

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

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

> *"Engage with new housing developments about making streets more accessible in the early stages."* (Milton Keynes)
>
> *"Building regulations are changing all the time; it's about making sure you* [BFRS] *are part of that process."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"Working with the local authority…early communication with the fire brigade is essential to get our resources in the right place. Must all work together."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"More consultation with housing developers about building materials etc."* (High Wycombe)

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

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

Population

Overview of proposals

BFRS WILL…

Review station duty systems in high growth areas

Continue to improve its ability to target/engage with vulnerable groups

Possibly review its current response to automatic fire alarms (AFAs)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Running community workshops and seminars to **educate people with vulnerable relatives, carers and volunteer**s on how to undertake 'basic safety checks'

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

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

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

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

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

> *"It's probably increasingly harder to engage and access all these people when even more care homes and extra care housing are being built."* (Chesham)

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

4.12 Although possible changes to AFA attendance are not included in the current Public Safety Plan, it may be a policy that BFRS consults on in future, so views around it were explored in the focus groups.

4.13 Participants recognised and understood the benefits of BFRS attending all AFAs, but agreed that the Service should at least review its current policy in order to fully assess its advantages and disadvantages.

> *"BFRS should review its policy and look at other counties who don't attend AFAs. Have their response rates been any worse? Is it a luxury Bucks can afford?"* (Chesham)
>
> *"Review the AFA response strategy."* (Milton Keynes)
>
> *"BFRS should definitely review."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"We think it's great that you are reviewing the AFA strategy. Hopefully you will consider the size of the building and how that determines what your response should be. I do think the point about the benefits of going to the calls is also very important, but you would need to look at the cost-benefit ratio."* (Milton Keynes)
>
> *"There are social benefits of attending - advice, information etc. The cost/benefit impact needs to be thought about."* (Milton Keynes)

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

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

> *"There was general agreement in our group that we don't think they should be attending an automatic alarm."* (Buckingham)
>
> *"I don't think they should be attending an unconfirmed automatic alarm."* (Buckingham)
>
> *"After three times of being called out by a business, don't attend anymore. Give them a warning."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"BFRS must attend AFAs - there could be serious damage or loss of life. After multiple call outs they should be given a warning."* (High Wycombe)

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

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

> *"Agree with AFAs requiring a property owner becoming responsible to have a dedicated call-out personnel to verify alarm to assist."* (Buckingham)
>
> *"I think there should be a call for it to be backed up, otherwise I'm happy for the FRS to not attend."* (Aylesbury)

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

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

> *"Charge for the service (if false alarm)."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"Fine repeat offenders."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"Discipline users by removing the service."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"If they keep calling out you out and using your resources, fine them. It their* (businesses) *responsibility."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"It just sounds like there needs to be better alarm systems."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"Could you have better equipment in places like hospitals so that you don't have to be called out for things like a toaster? And also train staff to deal with it."* (Milton Keynes)

Technology and civil emergencies

Overview of proposals

> **Technology**
>
> **BFRS WILL…**
>
> **Continue to improve security and resilience of information/communication systems**
>
> **Identify and resolve gaps to keep pace with new/emerging risks**
>
> **Monitor new technologies/systems for opportunities e.g. 5G cellular network, artificial intelligence, robotics etc.**
>
> **Civil emergencies**
>
> **BFRS WILL…**
>
> **Review its current capacity/capability to meet emerging risks (with partners, including other FRSs)**
>
> **Review its approach to responding to terrorist attacks involving improvised weapons and/or firearms**
>
> **Continue to reduce its carbon footprint**
>
> **Utilise solar panels at HQ**
>
> **Ensure the new Blue Light Hub will be 'environmentally-efficient'**
>
> **Potentially introduce electric support vehicles**

There was widespread agreement with the proposals and discussions around opportunities

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

> *"You've got to embrace to new technologies like social media – use the more day-to-day type of things."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"I think the prevention stuff with tech is great, particularly as there's so much social media."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"It's essential to invest in mitigating against the risks. Hybrid cars are using 48 volts, which are extremely dangerous – especially when you put water in them."* (Milton Keynes)

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

> *"I've only had experience with the FRS once and that was during a flood. I thought that might be where autonomous vehicles come in useful. People could book like they do with those little robots we have in Milton Keynes, where you can order your own pumping. It might mean you can get the water pumped out quicker, but it would also be less expensive because it doesn't have to be manned."* (Milton Keynes)
>
> *"I'd be interested to know that, in the future, whether the FRS would go to a traffic accident if it were a driverless vehicle?"* (Aylesbury)

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

> *"Could use some sort of aerial platform to an* [observation] *of a fire incident, like a drone?"* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"Drones dropping defibrillators is popular in the Netherlands – is this something* [BFRS] *would consider?"* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"What about things like fire service drones with cameras? Do you have those?"* (Milton Keynes)
>
> *"I have a question around technology and communication network in a civil emergency. From an army and an air force perspective, soldiers on the ground are now able to talk to planes in the sky. Something like that would be useful – having some way of talking to each other."* (Milton Keynes)

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

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

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

> *"Investing in all these new technologies must be a challenge for BFRS because the introduction of new technology means you've got change transformation which is difficult to handle…"* (Milton Keynes)
>
> *"Sounds expensive replacing vehicles and equipment with electric stuff."* (Chesham)
>
> *"To me, solar panels feel like a 'nice to have' versus …do you need more fire engines? I'm just thinking of the balance between being green and saving lives."* (Chesham)
>
> *"I was also thinking in terms of your workforce and the impacts on that. Will all this new technology mean the skill sets required will need to be different? A generic fireman might not be able to be a generic fireman anymore? It's becoming more complicated."* (Milton Keynes)

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

> *"I've heard that as part of the smart motorways, the hard shoulder is being got rid of... It seems terribly unsafe... I've heard about people being killed on the 'smart' bit. Where are cars going to go if they have a problem?! And there is no room for emergency services."* (Chesham)
>
> *"Do the smart motorways understand when there is an emergency vehicle needing the hard shoulder?"* (Chesham)

Workforce and funding

Overview of proposals

> **Workforce**
>
> **BFRS WILL CONTINUE TO…**
>
> **Develop/roll-out more flexible and innovative employment and apprenticeship opportunities**
>
> **Use more innovative marketing to attract staff from wider range of backgrounds**
>
> **Continue to explore ways of supporting/enhancing health and wellbeing of staff as life circumstances change**
>
> **Further develop the role of the on-call firefighter**
>
> **Funding**
>
> **BFRS will continue to lobby for greater council tax setting flexibility**

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

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

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

4.24 Participants were given information about BFRS' current and future financial challenges, which mainly focused on (but was not limited to): the significant reductions in government funding; the fact BFRS has the lowest council tax rates of any Combined Fire Authority (CFA) in the country; and the government's current council tax rate cap of 3%. A summary of how BFRS has responded to these challenges thus far was also provided.

4.25 The groups were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed that BFRS should be able to increase council tax by more than 3% to maintain or improve its services. In response, the largest proportion said they would not only support this, but also that they would be willing to pay a one-off £10 increase to raise the council tax base. Moreover, a few said they agreed with paying enough to ensure BFRS' council tax rates are in line with the national average.

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

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

> *"Council Tax is too low in Bucks in general for such a wealthy county."* (Chesham)
>
> *"Because you've done so well to keep costs down, you're almost being penalised for it?! Really the one-time increase is just to get you to more of an even level/in line with others."* (Chesham)
>
> *"Yes, I agree! It is surprising and shocking how low it is."* (Buckingham)
>
> *"Happy to give £10 as a one-off." (*Chesham)
>
> *"We agree to a one off £10 increase."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"Agree with increase to national average."* (Buckingham)
>
> *"General consensus is a yes to paying £5 or £10 one-off payment to keep current services/improve funding."* (Milton Keynes)
>
> *"£10 one off payment – would gladly pay."* (Milton Keynes)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> *"We all have to live within our allocated budget – if we have to do it, BFRS should too."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"I don't agree on more than 3% - with rising population you have more people to contribute anyway. We think it should increase to the cap – no more."* (Aylesbury)
>
> *"This year you could be that service asking for an extra £10, but next year it could be the ambulance service, then the police …when does it stop. I think this is a bigger issue that needs to be taken higher up."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"A one-off payment may help for a couple of years but it won't solve the problems."* (High Wycombe)

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

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

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

> *"I will only pay if I see some clear accountability of where the money is going."* (High Wycombe)
>
> *"I would pay £10 but only if it went towards supporting vulnerable people, but not businesses (i.e. response to businesses in terms of false alarms)."* (Milton Keynes)
>
> *"This is the cart before the horse. We don't know what you'd spend this money on? Would it be staff or other things? It just feels meaningless when we don't know the facts."* (Aylesbury)

Additional and alternative suggestions were offered

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

> Seeking funding from HS2 contractors (Chesham)
>
> Cutting back on non-statutory services (Aylesbury)
>
> Attending fewer false alarm calls (Milton Keynes)
>
> Introducing increased charges for businesses (Milton Keynes)
>
> Charging for services that are over and above statutory provision (Buckingham)

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

Other comments

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

5. Table of Figures

Tables

Figures

Service management responses to feedback received during the

2020-2025 Public Safety Plan Consultation (23rd September – 18th November 2019)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. Technology, information and systems security

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. Workforce Pressures

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

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
6.2 Viability of on-call employment model. *"'Critical' is a much-used word nowadays, but I believe that we have reached that stage now with our On-Call staff. We clearly can, indeed have for some time, largely managed without most of them. I attach no blame to them; there are now so many pressures on people's time, and other opportunities to help your community, that committing to being available night and day is no longer an attractive option. This plan commits us to developing the role of the On-Call firefighter over the next 5 years, Our current On-Call recruitment strategy seems to be, at best, uncoordinated and half-hearted, as if we didn't really want to recruit more people but were just going through the motions. A more flexible On Call contract MAY attract more people but will cause significant issues around training and the maintenance of competence if new staff are only providing a few hours cover per week. What seems to me be 'critical' is the need to make a major decision - ASAP - about all our On Call and whether we need them at all..."*	Individual Response	We regularly review our workforce plans to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills at the right time. We review planned and unplanned leavers and retirements.

We have introduced innovative solutions for our staff to enable and maintain the requisite level of cover. We continue to explore opportunities for on-call staff, and now offer a range of flexible options to recruit and retain highly motivated and qualified staff. We continue to welcome new staff into this Service.

Our response model relies on Wholetime, Flexi- Firefighters, On-Call staff and bank shifts to ensure it can operate. We believe it is vital that we look at range of different contracts to ensure the diversity of the Service and our On-Call employees are part of this.

We constantly review the recruitment and retention of our On-Call employees to make sure that it is as efficient and effective as possible. |

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

7. Funding Pressures

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

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

Issues / Suggestions	Source	Management Response
7.3 Other revenue raising suggestions – • Seeking funding from HS2 contractors • Cutting back on non-statutory services • Attending fewer false alarm calls • Introducing increased charges for businesses • Charging for services that are over and above statutory provision • Restructuring BFRS and merging with others to create a 'Thames Valley Fire Service' *"Charge for special service calls and false alarms. If not in good intent, people have insurance claims of their insurance."* *"Have you considered potential income generation activities, diversifying the fire service – e.g. charging companies for fire safety advice, or training when the fire officers are not dealing with incidents, charging for the use of fire attendance at events, charging for continuing fault alarms? All public sector bodies are now having to find ways to plug the gaps and maximise resources, how is BFRS responding to this?"*	Focus Groups Individual Response Individual Response	The Service continues to explore many different options for raising revenue. We are currently exploring what funding may be available from the HS2 project. Cutting back on non-statutory services and attending fewer automatic fire alarms doesn't generate significant savings, as unless these incidents are attended by on-call staff the marginal cost of doing so is very low. We will review what services we charge for, the level of charge and whether we want to increase the level of charges and/or charge for a broader range of services. However, what we are legally able to charge for and the level of charges is restricted. We continue to work closely with the other Thames Valley fire and rescue services to reduce cost and improve services where practicable to do so. Also, as part of the Thames Valley Collaboration Framework, we continue to explore a range of opportunities to work in partnership with all Blue Light services.

8. Other Issues / Proposals

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

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

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

Buckinghamshire FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
we save lives

Public Safety Plan

2020-2025

IT ONLY TAKES ONE ACCIDENT TO START A FIRE.

ARE YOU SURE YOUR SMOKE ALARMS ARE WORKING?

TEST YOURS NOW.

FIRE KILLS
LET'S PREVENT IT

Table of contents

Your new Public Safety Plan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is a Public Safety Plan?
And why you should read it

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who we are

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who we are

Our vision

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

Our strategic objectives

- Prevent incidents that cause harm from happening

- Protect homes, public buildings and businesses from the effects of fire

- Provide a timely and proportionate response to incidents by allocating our assets and resources in relation to risk and demand

- Offer best value for money to our residents and businesses and ensure that the Service is compliant with regulatory requirements and recognised 'good practice' standards and can readily evidence this at all times

What we do

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

Incidents we attend
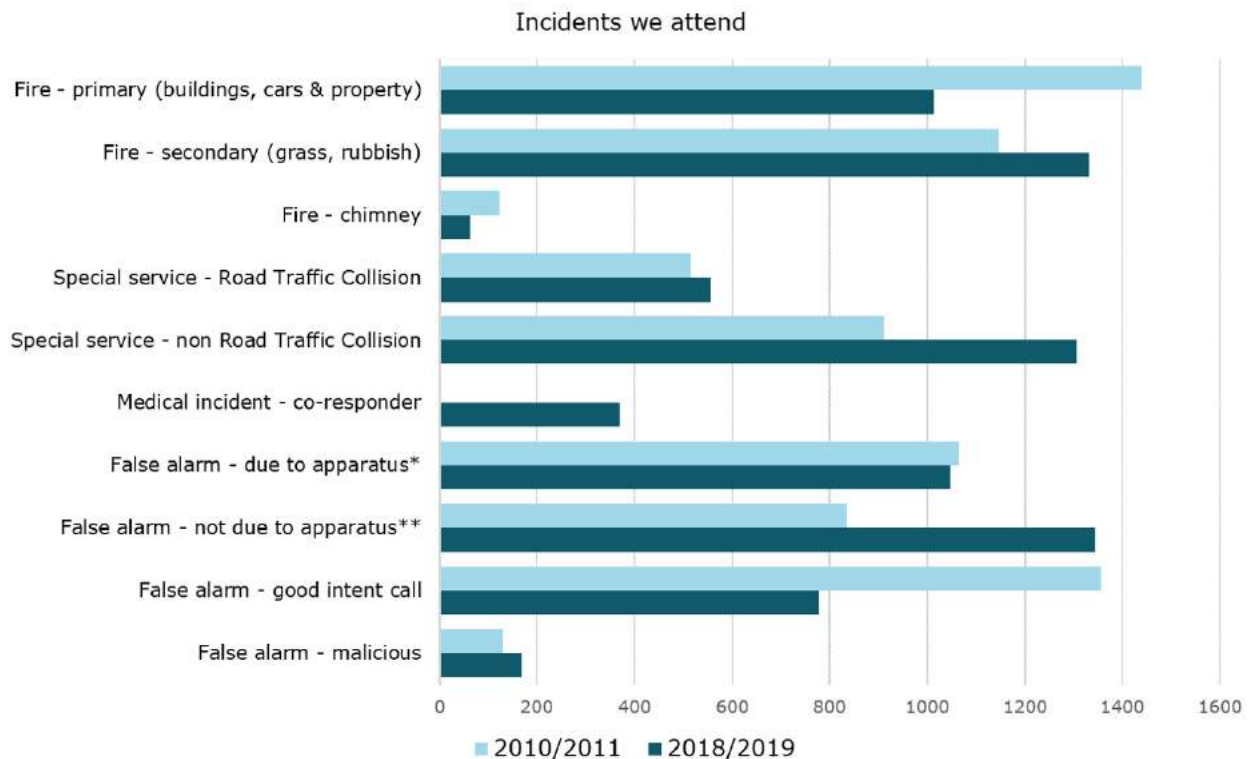
* False alarm - due to apparatus is where a detector/alarm has sounded, but no cause for the alarm sounding could be identified.
** False alarm - not due to apparatus covers incidents where the service has been called to an address due to an alarm/detector activating, and the cause of the alarm was due to external factors such as dust from builders, cooking fumes and unintentional activations such as break glass.

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

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

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

What we've done - the numbers
April 2015 - March 2019

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

31,408
Emergencies attended

16,687
Detectors fitted

13,237
Home safety visits

1,955
Businesses inspected

386
Schools we work with

2,192
Road Traffic Collisions attended

85
Apprenticeships

3,662
Co-responder incidents attended

815
People rescued from lifts

13,582,800
Impressions on Twitter

14,500
Water hydrants maintained every year

1,760
Messages in a bottle supplied*

15
Enforcement notices served

4,794
Post-visit feedback letters sent

*Message in a Bottle is where you keep essential personal and medication details in a small bottle in the fridge.
Paramedics, police, fire-fighters and social services know to look in the fridge when they see the Message in a Bottle stickers.

IT ONLY TAKES ONE ACCIDENT TO START A FIRE.

ARE YOU SURE YOUR SMOKE ALARMS ARE WORKING?

TEST YOURS NOW.

FIRE KILLS
LET'S PREVENT IT

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

What we delivered
Against our 2015-2020 Public Safety Plan

1. Modernising our approach to resourcing for emergencies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Consider alternative service delivery models

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

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

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

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

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

The 2015-2020 Public Safety Plan

How did we perform?

Headline performance figures - prevention, protection and response
The following figures reflect the difference between 2010-15 and 2015-19 (average per year) as at April 2019

Primary fires

20% ↓

Primary fires are generally more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property such as buildings, cars and crops. Primary fires are defined as fires that cause damage by fire, heat or smoke.

Deliberate primary fires include those where the motive for the fire was 'thought to be' or 'suspected to be' deliberate.

35% ↓

Deliberate primary fires

Accidental dwelling fires (ADF)

14% ↓

Dwelling fires occur in properties that are a place of residence, including places occupied by households such as houses and flats, but excluding hotels/hostels and residential buildings such as care homes. dwellings also include non-permanent structures used solely as a dwelling, such as houseboats and caravans.

Serious injuries are deemed to be where a person was taken to hospital and would need at least an overnight stay as an in-patient. Serious injuries from an Accidental Dewlling Fire (ADF) are those that would not have otherwise occured had there not been a fire.

30% ↓

Serious injuries from an ADF

Primary fires in non-domestic buildings

26% ↓

Non-domestic buildings are 'other residential' or non-residential buildings. Other residential buildings include properties such as hostels/hotels/B&Bs, nursing/care homes and student halls of residence. Non-residential buildings include properties such as offices, shops, factories, warehouses, restaurants, public buildings and religious buildings.

The attendance time is calculated from the time the first fire engine (also known as rescue pump) is assigned, to the time the first fire engine arrives at the incident.

↑ **15**seconds

Average attendance time to incidents

Road traffic collisions attended

↑ **9%**

We have an extensive road network in our service area and the volume of traffic is increasing. Usually we are only called to road traffic collisions where people may need, or are required, to be extricated from vehicles, or there is a fuel spillage.

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

THINK!
PUT YOUR PHONE
AWAY

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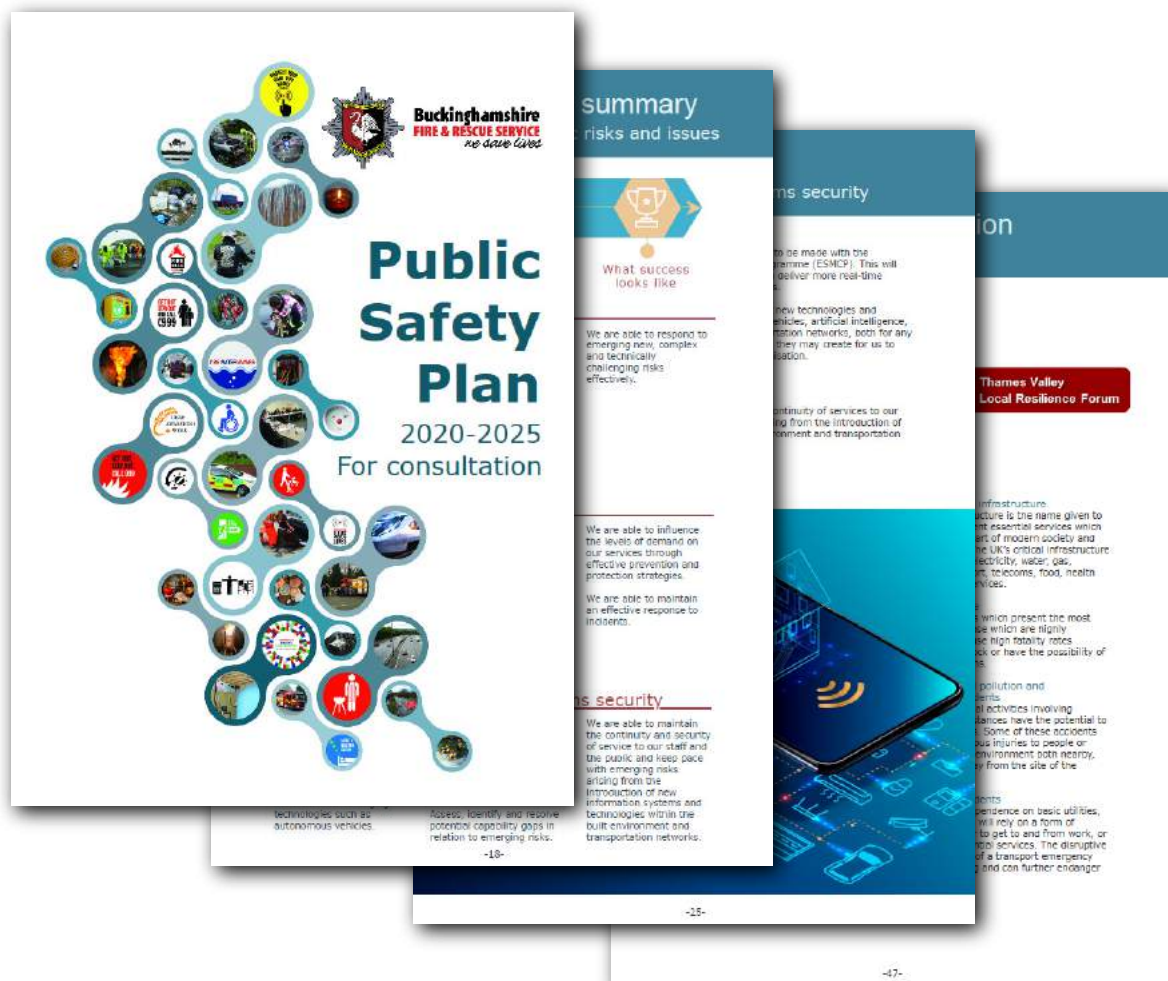
In this section we explore a number of future challenges that will have implications for the type, range or scale of services that we provide and/or our ability to deliver them. In relation to these, we set out the nature of the challenges, what we do now to address them and what more we will need to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

Views from the public

To help inform the development of this plan we carried out a consultation exercise with the public. The purpose of this was to explore the public's:
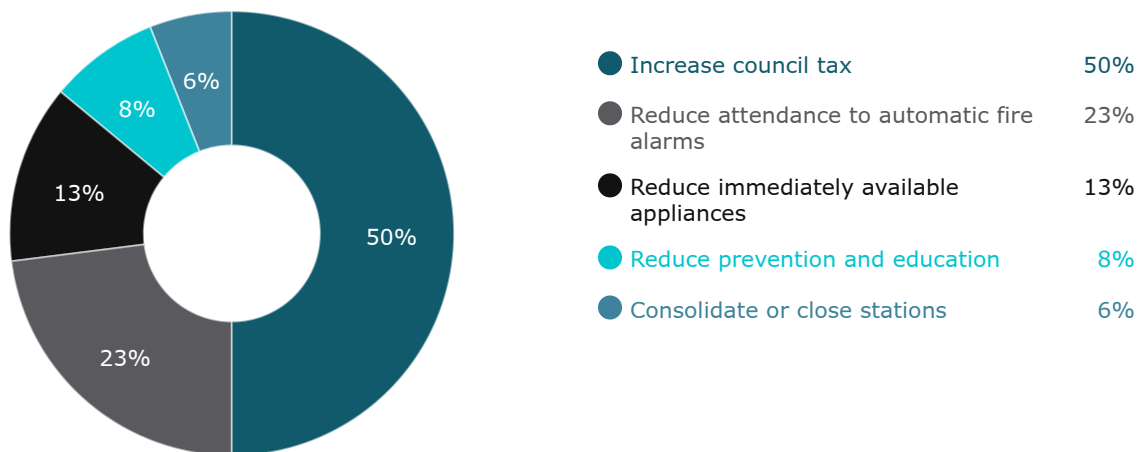
- Awareness of and attitudes towards risks.
- Perceptions of the fire and rescue service, our services and any expectations in relation to these.
- Awareness of the issues and challenges facing our service and general feelings about potential ways that we could respond to these.

A flavour of the range of views expressed by the participants about some of the issues explored in the consultation is shown on the next page. The full findings of the consultation which were held in November and December 2018 can be seen <u>here</u>.

Future options

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

Possible future strategies

(no extra money)

● Increase council tax	50%
● Reduce attendance to automatic fire alarms	23%
● Reduce immediately available appliances	13%
● Reduce prevention and education	8%
● Consolidate or close stations	6%

Participants were also asked to rank some other possible strategies in the event of us receiving more Government money or raising additional funds ourselves through increased council tax levels. The overall ranking across all five groups was as follows:

1. **Make on-call firefighting more attractive**
2. **Keep existing stations and assets**
3. **Recruit more firefighters**
4. **Enhance protection (to be fit for the post-Grenfell environment)**
5. **Upgrade crewing levels at stations**
6. **Deliver additional services such as co-responding**
7. **Ensure fairer urban versus rural service provision**

Views from the public

Fire

> I think one of the risks from a fire perspective is the cheap imports, like phone chargers. Really understanding that they can be a real risk.

> I think health and safety generally has improved incredibly because if you go out to a function in the community, it's a public place and you get your five minutes of 'these are the exits and fire safety'. Twenty years ago you didn't get that . . . and nobody was actually aware of this. The facilities of public places are now much better and regulated better as well, which means people are safer.

Road traffic collisions

> There must be more risks with car accidents and things like that rather than fire . . . as the population is growing is it a big element of resources? For me personally because I travel quite a lot that's quite a big thing.

> Roads are getting busier so there isn't the space for traffic to go. Accidents happen every day of the week somewhere. So the rescue aspect is as much of a consideration now as individual fire problems.

Finances and value for money

> Central government is a challenge facing the fire and rescue service . . . it seems bonkers that they can keep cutting and cutting and cutting and stick their heads in the sand and think it will be fine and do more with less; that doesn't work forever.

> There are so many other organisations that want this extra £10-£15 so where does it stop? £5 itself isn't a lot, but if you add everything else up . . .

> As an insurance policy [it] isn't bad at all.

Response times

> Given how rural and spread out Bucks is, I think the attendance time figures are very impressive; I think it's really good.

> It would be impractical to expect the same level of response in a rural as an urban area and it wouldn't be an appropriate use of funding to have a fire engine in a rural area all the time when it's not going to be used very much.

Tolerance of risk

> No death is acceptable is it, whether it's a fire or an accident. Obviously, we would all want them to be zero wouldn't we. But we don't live in a society where everyone drives around wearing a seat belt or doesn't use a phone while driving.

A changing world

> I think population growth is a key issue . . . How long do you continue to run a single pump before you hit a threshold? At some point that service will really be squeezed as the population expands. And that seems to be a theme across all emergency services. I think particularly with the fire and rescue service there will be a big threshold moment where they need new kit and stations.

Perception of BFRS

> I filled in a survey at an event I went to and they came and fitted a smoke alarm and they looked at access points . . . It was very useful and they're very approachable.

> I live near a dangerous road and there have been a couple of high-profile accidents. They are on site very rapidly; so a good impression.

The challenges ahead - summary
Draft proposals aligned to strategic risks and issues

Potential impacts

Future actions

What success looks like

Infrastructure projects

Road closures during construction leading to slower emergency response times.

On-site risks during construction such as working at heights or depths.

New technical risks following project completion such as tunnel rescues.

Consider temporary re-location of fire appliances to reduce impact.

Review range of potential risks and identify any additional training, equipment and vehicle requirements.

We are able to respond to emerging new, complex and technically challenging risks effectively.

Population

Potential for increases in all types of emergency response.

Potential increase in accidental dwelling fire injuries and fatalities particularly in vulnerable groups such as the 80+ age group.

Consider changing current response to automatic fire alarms policy potentially freeing up capacity to deal with an increase in higher risk incident types.

Review station duty systems in high growth areas.

Continue to improve our ability to target and engage with vulnerable groups.

We are able to influence the levels of demand on our services through effective prevention and protection strategies.

We are able to maintain an effective response to incidents.

Technology information and systems security

Disruption to our ability to deliver emergency response and other services due to cyber-attack.

New risks arising from the introduction of emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles.

Continue to improve resilience of information and communication systems via opportunities such as the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

Assess, identify and resolve potential capability gaps in relation to emerging risks.

We are able to maintain the continuity and security of service to our staff and the public and keep pace with emerging risks arising from the introduction of new information systems and technologies within the built environment and transportation networks.

The challenges ahead - summary
Draft proposals aligned to strategic risks and issues

Potential impacts

Future actions

What success looks like

Civil emergencies

Increase in frequency and/or severity of incidents.

Review current capacity and capabilities to meet emerging risks in collaboration with Local Resilience Forum partners.

Continue to identify and act to reduce our own carbon footprint by using electric vehicles, for example.

The Local Resilience Forum partnership approach provides a coordinated capability which responds to, and resolves, civil emergencies and returns affected communities to normal.

Workforce pressures

Maintenance of range or level of service to the public due to staff retention and recruitment challenges.

Continue to develop our approach to workforce planning to inform recruitment and staff development strategies.

Continue development and roll-out of more flexible and innovative employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

Align training strategy and priorities to meet future needs.

Continue to explore ways of supporting and enhancing the health and well-being of our staff as their life circumstances change.

A proud and happy workforce.

We are able to resource our appliances and all the functions that go to support our organisation with the right people.

Recruit and retain a more diverse workforce.

Funding pressures

Insufficient funding to maintain current range or level of service to the public.

Introduce zero base approach to budgeting to ensure that the right amount of money is being spent in the right areas.

Continue to pursue the case for relaxation of the Government's Council Tax referendum limits.

Consider withdrawing from some non-statutory services to reduce costs.

We are able to maintain a balanced budget, and sufficient level of reserves. We do not have to implement cuts to our services that would adversely affect the safety of the public we serve.

The challenges ahead
Infrastructure and population

The challenge

This document sets out our plans for the next five years. In formulating it, we have had regard to potential developments that are likely to affect the future provision of fire and rescue services over the 30-year period to 2050.

A number of major regional and national infrastructure projects are already underway, or have the potential to begin during the lifetime of this plan. These projects already, or have the potential to, cause disruption to local transport networks and consequently have an impact on our service provision, particularly emergency response times. Our nearest-appliance mobilisation system will help us mitigate this risk. We will also consider temporarily relocating appliances and other resources to avoid excessive impacts on our ability to respond to emergencies or deliver other services during construction.

These projects also have the potential to create new risks, both during the construction phase and following completion. For example, some involve mobile workforces sited in temporary residential accommodation during construction or involve the creation of tunnels and viaducts involving working at heights and depths with associated risks that will require specialist technical rescue capabilities in the event of an incident.

Looking further afield, the National Infrastructure Commission's plans for the region between Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford, up to 2050, envisage significant amounts of new housing and businesses that will also potentially affect areas that we serve - particularly Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale. We will monitor the development of these plans closely to determine the likely implications for long-term future service provision.

We have learnt in recent years that an increase in the number of homes does not necessarily correspond with a linear increase in fires. This is in part due to modern building materials and the safety features built into modern homes. With more people and busier roads, we expect to see further changes to the type of incidents we attend.
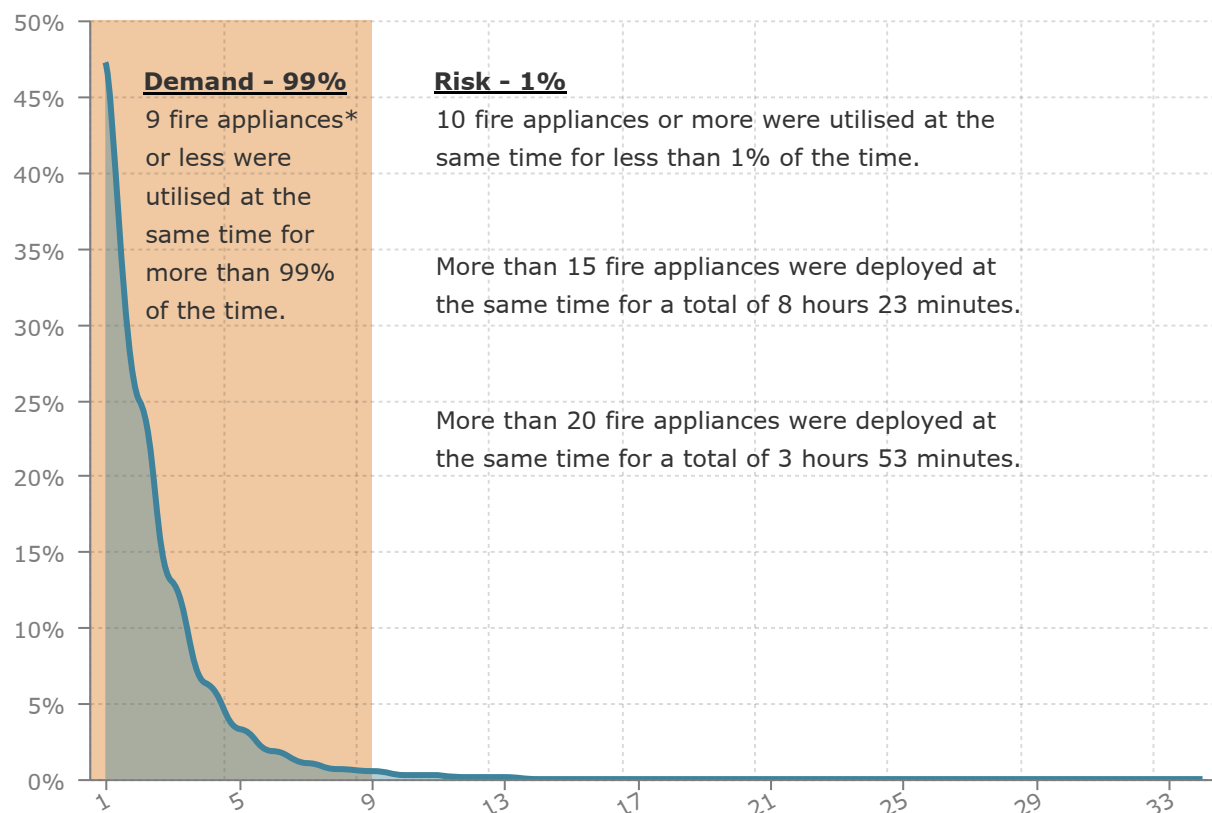
How we manage this risk now

Under our previous Public Safety Plan, we undertook a review of our approach to resourcing for emergency incidents to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency with which this is done. In particular, analysis of our appliance deployment patterns indicated that, for 99% of the time, demand on our emergency response capacity could be met by 12 or fewer fire appliances located in the right areas. This led us to move from an approach that sought to maintain our entire fleet in a high state of readiness, to one which ensured that sufficient appliances are immediately available to meet normal levels of day-to-day demand with the remainder held at graduated levels of availability to ensure that we can rapidly respond to occasional events which stretch us past our normal demand profile. To enable this approach to work, we developed a new resourcing model that introduced more flexible working arrangements for our staff, including:

- The introduction of a range of innovative employment contracts that are unique in UK fire and rescue services; and
- New communication systems that enable us to contact and roster On-Call and off-duty Wholetime staff rapidly if we need to crew extra appliances during very busy periods or respond to exceptional events.

As part of the preparation of this plan, we refreshed the analysis of our demand patterns (as shown in the graph). The updated analysis indicates that between April 2018 and March 2019 only nine appliances were needed at high states of readiness to meet our day-to-day demand. However, we propose to keep our current number of immediately and rapidly available appliances in order to maintain:

- Our emergency incident attendance times, as although our analysis indicates that nine appliances are sufficient to meet our typical level of day-to-day demand, a larger number, suitably located, is needed to ensure we can reach all parts of the geographical area that we serve in a timely manner.
- The standing capacity to deal with two medium sized incidents simultaneously as required by our operational planning assumptions.

Demand - 99%
9 fire appliances* or less were utilised at the same time for more than 99% of the time.

Risk - 1%
10 fire appliances or more were utilised at the same time for less than 1% of the time.

More than 15 fire appliances were deployed at the same time for a total of 8 hours 23 minutes.

More than 20 fire appliances were deployed at the same time for a total of 3 hours 53 minutes.

*Fire appliances include: fire engines (also known as pumps), turntable ladders, boats, command units, support vehicles and Urban Search and Resuce units.

We also use data to make sure we are targeting those most vulnerable to fires. We use a number of data sources and work very closely with our partners. Through this we carry out visits to homes and also participate in education programmes. We still fit free smoke detectors for those who need them. Through our Fire and Wellness programme, we have also broadened our home visits to look at other issues which are often linked to fire safety, but also assist our key partners in helping people to be safer and healthier in their homes. We also have a wide range of initiatives for helping people to be safer on the roads.

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes population by age
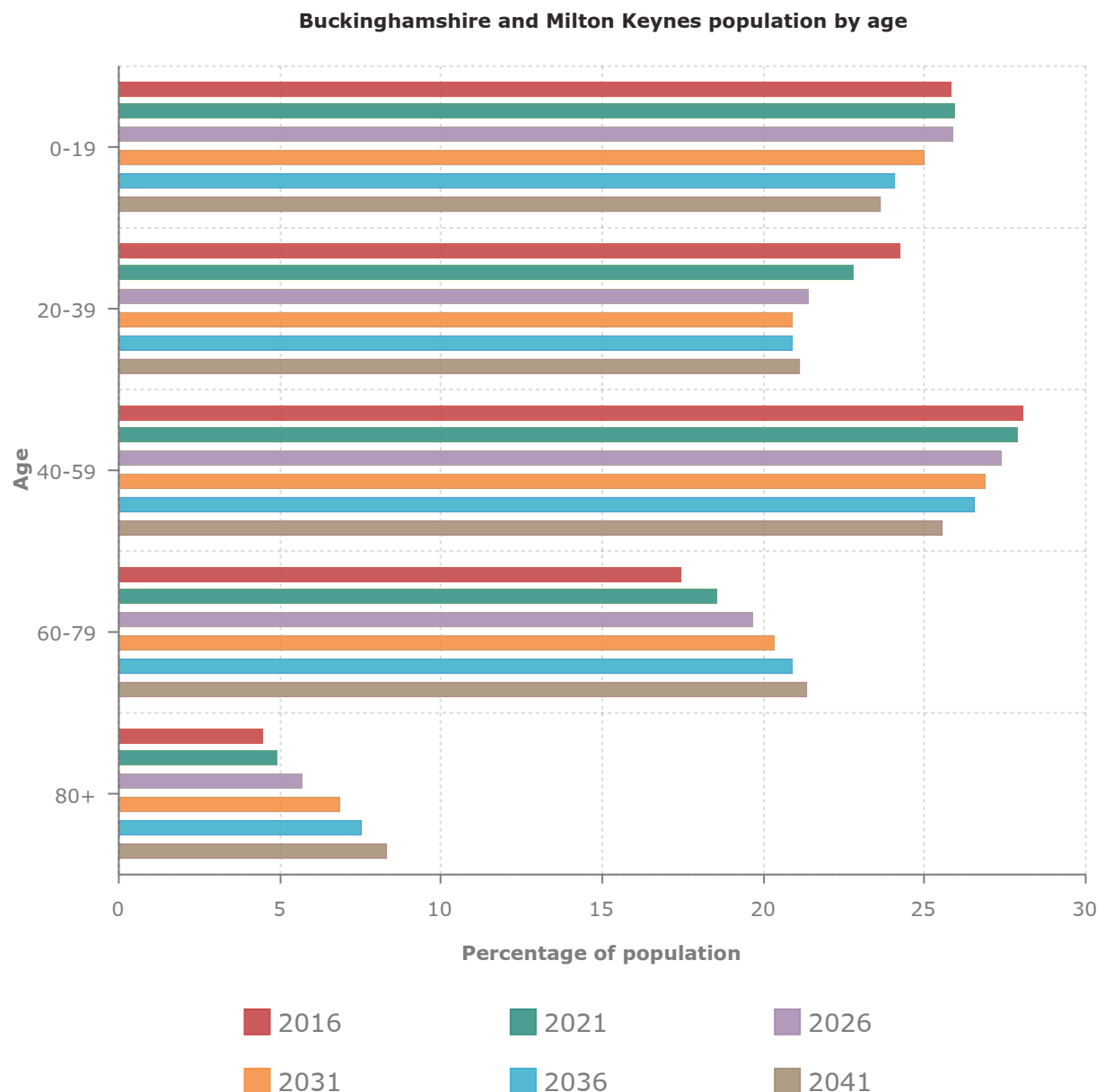
Our protection teams actively engage businesses to help them be safer and more resilient. We have legal powers to inspect and enforce fire safety regulations. We continue to focus our activities on those who are most at risk when at work, leisure or in provided care to ensure that they are kept safe by those who are responsible for such types of buildings.

The challenges ahead
Infrastructure and population

What more do we need to do?

The changing demographics such as the ageing and diversification of the population, coupled with the expansion of our towns and new infrastructure projects, means we constantly need to review the scale and balance of our resourcing between prevention, protection and response.

We will continue to work with our local authority partners to understand the potential impact of their development plans. Currently, the plans that have been shared with us by our partners indicate that generally our stations are well located with the right resources. However, we will continue to review our resource and demand data. If we decide that we need to make fundamental changes to our emergency response provision we will consult publicly on any proposals.

Across our prevention, protection and response functions we will continue to improve and be more effective at how we identify and manage risk information and risk modelling. We may change how we mobilise to incidents, the capabilities we use, and where we mobilise from. Specifically we will review our approach to attending reports of automatic fire alarm (AFA) systems operating. We are one of only two fire and rescue services that routinely attend such reports as they are predominantly false alarms. However, we do occasionally attend and discover that there is a fire. This happened on 53 occasions in 2018/2019. We use them as an opportunity to engage businesses and help them improve their business continuity. However, this does cost us resources and time in doing so, so we will review our current policy. If the outcome of the review recommends significant changes to our current policy, we will consult with affected stakeholders before making any decisions.

We will continue to evolve how we resource and staff our fire appliances. We are developing new resourcing and staffing models across a range of areas so that we get the right resources to the incident.

Should our financial position improve, we will look to enhance resourcing in other areas to improve our service. Such development would be based on the latest risk information and also planned developments such as town expansions and the effects of new transport infastructure.

Depending on the nature of the construction programmes in our area, significant investment in specialist firefighting, rescue and training capabilities will be required.

What does success look like?

We will know if we have been successful if we are able to influence the levels of demand on our services through effective prevention and protection strategies while maintaining an effective response to incidents. We will also have been successful if we are able to respond effectively to the emerging new, complex and technically challenging risks. If the outcome of the review recommends significant changes to our current policy, we will consult with affected stakeholders before making any decisions.

The challenge

The growth in both the number and complexity of direct and indirect cyber-attacks means that we must be constantly vigilant and work with partners and suppliers to mitigate these threats.

We are also aware of the way that new information technologies are being increasingly embedded into infrastructure, industrial plant, public buildings, homes, transportation networks and urban environments, a process that will only gather pace in future years. We are already beginning to see the effects of these changes in some of the areas that we serve, particularly in Milton Keynes where autonomous vehicles are already in use and with the introduction of 'Smart' technology across the local motorway network.

How are we managing this risk now

- We use a range of capabilities to mitigate the risk of cyber-attacks on our communication and information systems and continue to invest in technological solutions, security processes and employee education and training.
- We are diligent in our selection of partners and suppliers to ensure that systems are configured effectively and use expert testers to verify this.
- We have disaster recovery systems in place that enable us to restore our critical service operations rapidly.

The challenges ahead
Technology, information and systems security

What more do we need to do

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

We will monitor the evolution and implementation of a range of new technologies and systems such as 5G cellular network technology, autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence, robotics, the development of 'Smart Cities' and 'Smart' transportation networks, both for any new risks that they may present and also for opportunities that they may create for us to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and resilience of our organisation.

What does success look like?

We will know that we have been successful if we maintain the continuity of services to our staff and the public and keep pace with any emerging risks arising from the introduction of new information systems and technologies within the built environment and transportation networks.

The challenges ahead
Civil emergencies

The challenge

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

The Met Office predicts more summertime heatwaves, colder winters and more frequent heavy rainfall events. This suggests that we can expect to see more summertime outdoor fires and increased flooding events. Historically, the combination of school holidays and outdoor leisure spots (parks and woodland) sees increased incident demand with hot, dry conditions. We have some forested areas and can still be affected by numerous rural fires as we were in the summer of 2018 which culminated in a significant fire in Little Marlow which required us to invoke our resilience arrangements.

More stormy weather is likely to affect travel across the county as a result of debris from fallen and damaged trees. We can expect greater disruption to travel owing to extremely cold winter conditions (ice and snow).

How we manage this risk now

A key aspect of our preparedness for civil emergencies is our work with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). This is where the police, fire, ambulance, local authorities and other key agencies come together to plan, exercise and work to manage significant local emergencies.

We form part of an effective multi-agency response in line with Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP). Also we are aligned with National Occupational Guidance (NOG) to ensure we demonstrate best practice and work effectively within interoperable environments. We use and contribute to Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) and have reported on areas where we feel learning from local incidents can support national learning.

Some of our fire appliances have an off-highway capability, which enables us to provide an effective response to wildfires and also harsher winters, with potential greater snowfall as experienced in the winter of 2017/18.

Our water rescue capabilities are based at Beaconsfield and Newport Pagnell to respond to flooding in and around Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. We have also made these assets available for national deployment in cases of serious flooding elsewhere in the country.

We maintain a range of specialist capabilities to deal with other risks. Our Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team based in Aylesbury is available to be deployed to major regional or national emergencies as well as being integrated into local services.

Our National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers (NILOs) and Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) Officers operate within the organisation as well as at regional and national level and are routinely mobilised to local incidents across the Thames Valley.

The challenges ahead
Civil emergencies

What more do we need to do?

We will continue to keep pace with the impact on demand and risk of climate change on our resources. We will review our off-highway capability and also the provision of local specialist capabilities.

We are fully committed to working with our Local Resilience Forum partners in developing our understanding, intelligence and response to local, regional and national emergencies. During this Public Safety Plan we will review our approach to responding to terrorist attacks involving improvised weapons and/or firearms and what equipment and training our staff may need. We will explore whether any required capabilities can be achieved collaboratively with other fire and rescue services.

In addition to ensuring that we are properly prepared to deal the effects of climate change on our risk and demand profile, we are also committed to reducing the impact on the environment from our own operations and infrastructure. We already utilise solar panels to offset our power usage at our headquarters site. The new Blue-Light-Hub in Milton Keynes will be an environmentally efficient building. During the course of this Public Safety Plan we will review the opportunity to introduce electric vehicles and equipment into our fleet of support vehicles. While the early indications are that electric powered fire engines may not be practical for us now, we will monitor the technological developments and affordability as electric large goods vehicles start to be manufactured.

What does success look like?

We will be successful if the LRF partnership approach provides a coordinated capability which responds to, and resolves, civil emergencies and returns affected communities to normal.

The challenges ahead
Workforce pressures

The challenge

The size and composition of our workforce, especially the frontline operational firefighting component, has changed significantly. Societal changes have also impacted on our ability to attract and retain on-call firefighters. This is a national problem and does not just affect us. Our operational staff are now expected to work longer, and austerity has led to pay restraint, which is acutely felt in our area where the cost of living and housing is particularly high. Particular challenges include:

- An uneven retirement profile as a legacy of recruitment patterns during the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in highly experienced wholetime operational personnel retiring simultaneously.
- Loss of staff to neighbouring fire and rescue services, including London Fire Brigade who pay weighting allowances.
- Changes in society and the way people live and work have affected our ability to recruit our on-call firefighters (this issue is particularly acute for some of our more remote rural locations).
- Recruitment and retention of specialist support staff, particularly where we are in competition with private sector companies.
- As with the population as a whole our workforce is ageing which, in addition to the staff retention issues mentioned above, could, in future, potentially reduce the numbers of staff remaining fit enough to perform some key operational functions such as deploying to incidents requiring use of breathing apparatus.

How we manage this risk now

- We regularly engage with and listen to our staff in a variety of ways.
- We review and develop our employment propositions to include flexible contracts, employee benefits and opportunities to develop and earn more.
- We have a range of apprenticeships. For new entrants to the Service these include firefighter apprenticeships and apprenticeships in supporting roles. For existing staff we also offer a range of management apprenticeships.
- We have developed a comprehensive employee well-being strategy designed to meet the needs of staff at every stage in their career with us from when they join to the point they leave. It recognises the different stressors and pressures that people may face at different stages of their working lives. It embraces psychological and physical well-being, work life balance and flexible working opportunities for staff with caring responsibilities such as for children or elderly relatives. It also caters for the needs of an ageing workforce by supporting staff to remain fit and well in their roles throughout the entire length of their career and into retirement.
- We have developed an Aspiring Leaders Programme to help us identify and develop talent in our organisation.
- We have developed a sophisticated workforce planning model that enables us to predict numbers of staff likely to leave our Service due to retirement or to pursue other employment opportunities. This informs our recruitment strategy, training plans, staff development programmes and the design of our employment propositions.

What more do we need to do?

- We will continue to develop opportunities for our staff and also how we attract the best people for all the roles in our service.
- As part of our recruitment we will look to use more innovative marketing to attract staff from a wider range of backgrounds so we can improve our diversity and better represent the community we serve.
- We will continue to explore ways of supporting and enhancing the health and well-being of our staff as their life circumstances change throughout their career.
- In the next five years we will further develop the role of the on-call firefighter and how this will improve our resilience to deal with local, regional and national emergencies.
- We will monitor how the range of incidents we are attending is evolving. We will look to provide our firefighters with more skills, training and equipment to deal with this changing picture. We are developing our use of technology such as drones, telemetry, advances in firefighter clothing and breathing apparatus to enhance our effectiveness and safety in the future.

What does success look like?

We will know we have been successful if we:

- Appropriately resource our front-line services and the functions that support them with the right people – people who can work flexibly, are adaptable and have been provided with the right skills to perform their roles effectively and efficiently.
- Recruit and retain a more diverse workforce that better represents the make-up of the working population as a whole.
- Achieve low levels of sickness and ill-health retirements.
- Achieve high levels of satisfaction in feedback from staff surveys and other forms of engagement where we ask them what it is like to be part of this organisation.

The challenges ahead
Funding outlook

The challenge

Since 2010, as part of its efforts to reduce the size of the national budget deficit, the Government has made significant reductions to its funding for fire and rescue services. However our ability to offset reductions to Government funding has also been constrained by the imposition of council tax referendum limits. The effects of these pressures since 2010 amount to a real-terms reduction in overall funding of 25 per cent, including a real-terms reduction of 42 per cent in funding from central government. Prior to Spending Round 2019 (SR19) we were forecasting that real-terms central government funding would continue to fall over the period of this PSP. Since SR19 was announced we have updated our forecasts to show this now being flat in real-terms (as detailed below)

Forecast change in Government funding 2010-11 to 2024-25

(real terms, indexed 2010-11=100)

■ Pre SR19   ■ Post SR19
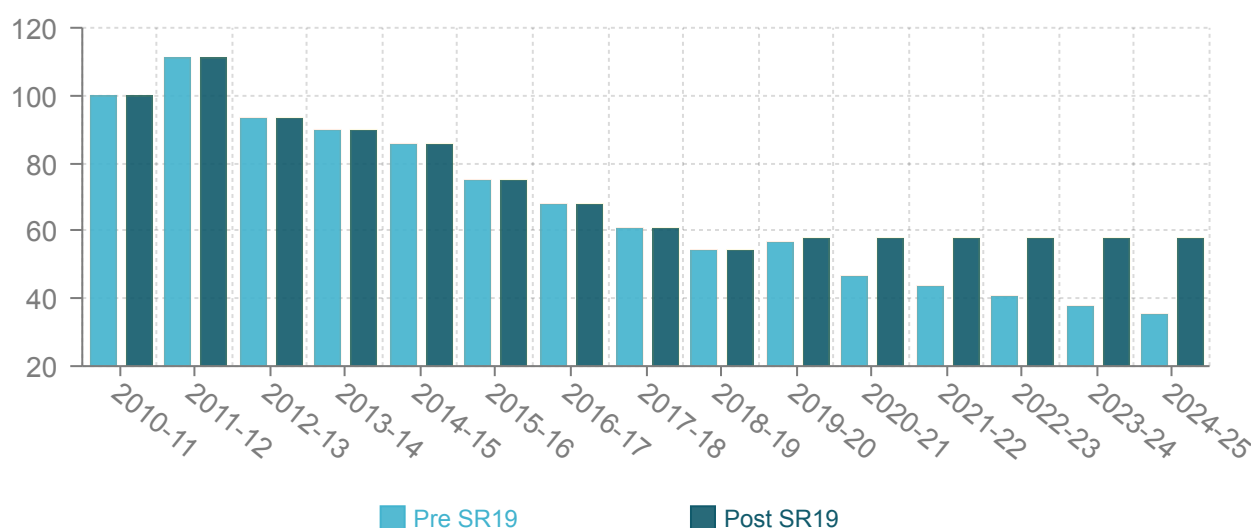
However, SR19 only covers a one-year time period, and future Comprehensive Spending Reviews may require these forecasts to be revisited. Also, despite the effect of efficiency measures already taken during the period 2015-2020, we continue to face other financial uncertainties that potentially require us to find additional funding and/or make further savings. These uncertainties arise from: increases in the amount that employers are required to contribute to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme due to changes made by the Government; uncertainty over long-term funding that we receive from Government to provide Urban Search and Rescue as part of national resilience arrangements to deal with major civil emergencies such as terrorist attacks; and changes to the allocation of business rate receipts to local authorities.

How we manage this risk now

We manage our financial risks through strong governance and budgetary control frameworks. We have received substantial assurance from independent auditors as to the robustness of these over the last six years.

We continue to meet our statutory requirement to deliver balanced budgets and are forecast to do so by our medium term financial planning. However, in order to continue to balance our budget over future years, we may need to reduce the contribution we make from our revenue budget to fund our capital programme. Were we to continue to do this for a prolonged period, our capital reserves would be close to exhausted before the end of the 2024-25 financial year. This means that, in that case, we would only be able to fund essential property work and replacement of vehicles and equipment, with no funding available for future investment (unless we chose to borrow in order to finance it, although further savings would need to be found to fund the revenue cost of any additional borrowing).

The challenges ahead
Funding outlook

In view of this, and in addition to an ongoing search for further efficiencies, we have been actively lobbying Government, with support from all our Members of Parliament, to review its policy on fire funding. In particular we are keen to see a relaxation of the council tax referendum limits which would enable us to mitigate the risk of our reserves being reduced below the level considered prudent for us to maintain, and avoid cuts to services that would have an adverse effect on the safety of the public should central government funding reduce again.

We already have the lowest council tax rates of any Combined Fire Authority* (CFA) in the country. As such, we are disadvantaged by the imposition of a single percentage limit (i.e. fire authorities that currently levy a higher rate of council tax than us than us get a correspondingly larger increase in their funding). The chart below shows our council tax charge relative to that of all other CFAs.

To view an illustration of what a potential rise in council tax could mean to you, please see page 48 'Future funding - your council tax'.

CFA band D council tax 2019-2020
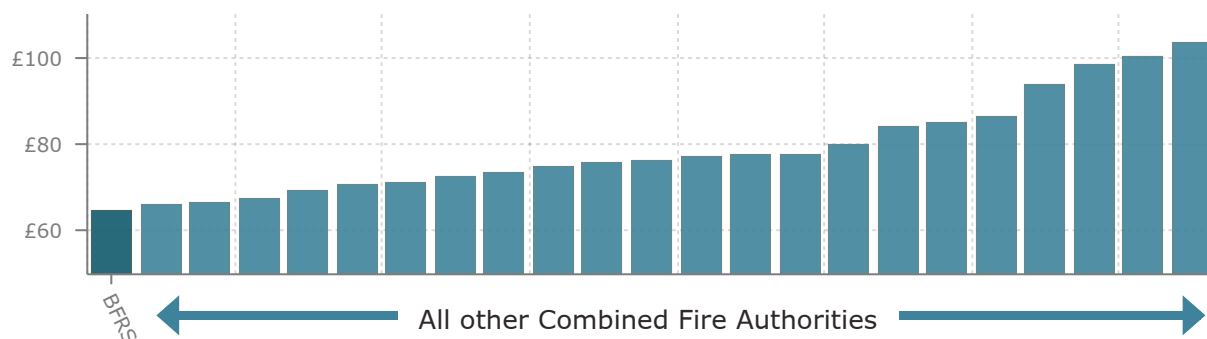
*A CFA (Combined Fire Authority) is one which covers more than one local authority area – in our case the areas served by both Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes Council.

What more do we need to do?
Alongside our efforts to find further savings from efficiencies and gain more flexibility to raise additional revenue from council taxes, we plan to move to a 'zero based budgeting' approach. In contrast to the incremental approach used in previous years, which looks at taking the prior year budget and adjusting up or down, this looks to review all costs to ensure that the right amount of money is being spent in the right areas. This will help to ensure that our spend is as closely aligned as possible to delivering our strategic objectives.

What does success look like?
We will know that we have succeeded if we are able to maintain a balanced budget and a sufficient level of reserves without having to implement cuts to our services that would adversely affect the safety of the public.

Risk management
Strategy proposals

What we plan to do to mitigate the risks

Below is a summary of what we plan to do to mitigate the emerging risks within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Infrastructure projects

Consider temporary re-location of fire appliances to reduce impact.

Review range of potential risks and identify any additional training, equipment and vehicle requirements.

Population

Consider changing current response to automatic fire alarms policy, potentially freeing up capacity to deal with an increase in higher risk incident types.

Review station duty systems in high growth areas.

Continue to improve our ability to target and engage with vulnerable groups.

Technology information and systems security

Continue to improve resilience of information and communication systems via opportunities such as the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

Assess, identify and resolve potential capability gaps in relation to emerging risks.

Civil emergencies

Review current capacity and capabilities to meet emerging risks in collaboration with Local Resilience Forum partners.

Continue to identify and act on opportunities to reduce our own carbon footprint by using electric vehicles, for example.

Workforce pressures

Continue to develop our approach to workforce planning to inform recruitment and staff development strategies.

Continue development and roll-out of more flexible and innovative employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

Align training strategy and priorities to meet future needs.

Continue to explore ways of supporting and enhancing the health and well-being of our staff as their life circumstances change.

Funding pressures

Introduce zero base approach to budgeting to ensure that the right amount of money is being spent in the right areas.

Continue to pursue the case for relaxation of the Government's Council Tax referendum limits

Consider withdrawing from some non-statutory services to reduce costs.

Consultation

This plan was approved by Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority on 12 February 2020 following the outcomes of a public consultation which took place between 23 September and 18 November 2019.

The consultation exercise included focus groups comprised of members of the general public resident in Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes, meetings with union representatives and, an online feedback facility which was open to the public as well our own staff.

Hundreds of partner and community organisations were also invited to participate in the consultation.

A full report of the outcomes of the public consultation can be viewed here.

Contact us

Although formal consultations on this stage of our public safety planning process have now ended, we always welcome feedback on our plans and ideas about how to improve our service. You can do this using the following methods:

Email:
irmp@bucksfire.gov.uk

Post:
Public Safety Plan
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
Brigade Headquarters
Stocklake
Aylesbury
HP20 1BD

Supplementary information

All fire and rescue services in England have to publish their plans for delivering fire and rescue services in their area. Plans have to be consulted on with the public they serve. In creating our Public Safety Plan we have used Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) principles.

IRMP is a statutory requirement placed on fire authorities by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. However, in formulating their plans and policies, local fire and rescue authorities are also required to have regard to guidance issued by central government in its National Framework document. This sets out the government's expectations and requirements for all fire and rescue authorities in England.

The current National Framework, which was published in May 2018, requires that fire and rescue authority integrated risk management plans must:-

- reflect up to date risk analyses including an assessment of all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the area of the authority;
- demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a way that makes best use of available resources;
- outline required service delivery outcomes including the allocation of resources for the mitigation of risks;
- set out its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators, and the Enforcement Concordat;
- cover at least a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as it is necessary to ensure that the authority is able to deliver the requirements set out in this Framework;
- reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies and partners; and
- be easily accessible and publicly available.

The National Framework document also requires fire and rescue authorities to:
- collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the services they provide;
- develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

Supplementary information
Sources of risk information

Here are a range of sources that we have used to inform the development of this plan and where you can find out more about some of the risks and issues that we have considered in formulating it:

Infrastructure and population
HS2:
www.hs2.org.uk/

East-West Rail:
www.networkrail.co.uk/our-railway-upgrade-plan/key-projects/east-west-rail/

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway:
https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway/

National Infrastructure Commission Growth Arc:
www.nic.org.uk/our-work/growth-arc/

Crossrail:
http://www.crossrail.co.uk/

Heathrow Expansion:
www.heathrowexpansion.com/the-expansion-plan/

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan:
https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/valp-proposed-submission

Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan:
https://www.chiltern.gov.uk/planning/localplan

Wycombe Local Plan:
https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/browse/Planning-and-building-control/New-local-plan/New-local-plan.aspx

Milton Keynes Development and Infrastructure Plans:
https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/growing-mk

Technology, information and systems security
Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2018:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/702074/Cyber_Security_Breaches_Survey_2018_-_Main_Report.pdf

Emergency Services Network / ESMCP Overview:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-emergency-services-mobile-communications-programme/emergency-services-network

Supplementary information
Sources of risk information

Civil emergencies
Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum Community Risk Register:
http://thamesvalleylrf.org.uk/_assets/risk%20register/tvlrf%20risk%20register%20oct%202016.pdf

National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies 2017:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-risk-register-of-civil-emergencies-2017-edition

World Economic Forum Global Risk Report 2019:
https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-risks-report-2019

Met Office Climate Change Guide:
https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate-guide

Workforce pressures
Our People Strategy:
https://people.bucksfire.gov.uk/

Funding outlook
Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Medium Term Financial Plan:
https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/9515/4841/6166/ITEM_8_Medium_Term_Financial_Plan_2019-20gb.pdf

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/7415/1756/5779/Revised_Appendix_1.pdf

Legislative and regulatory context
Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents

Civil Contingencies Act 2004:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/36/contents

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005:
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/1541/contents/made

Policing and Crime Act 2017:
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/3/contents/enacted

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2

Incident trends

The data below is presented in a form of trends. Viewed in this way it allows us to better understand our changing demand profile in more detail. It also allows us to understand how effective our prevention and protection activities are. This data is also benchmarked against similar fire and rescue services as well as nationally. This allows us to spot any trends that are unique to us which may require our own tailored interventions.

Primary fires

Primary fires are generally more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property. Primary fires are defined as fires that cause damage by fire/heat/smoke and meet at least one of the following conditions:
-any fire that occurred in a (non-derelict) building, vehicle or (some) outdoor structures
-any fire involving fatalities, casualties or rescues
-any fire attended by five or more pumping appliances.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Building	783	810	728	748	677	643	594	587	576
Road Vehicle	469	354	315	319	289	285	316	253	310
Outdoor	186	174	125	115	100	90	79	106	127
Other transport vehicle	2	3	2	1	1	5	3	1	1

Chimney fires

Chimney fires are fires in buildings where the fire was contained within the chimney structure and did not involve casualties, rescues or attendance by five or more pumping appliances. Chimneys in industrial buildings are not included.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Chimney Fires	123	109	108	123	82	75	89	70	64

Secondary fires

Secondary fires are generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property. These include refuse fires, grassland fires and fires in derelict buildings or vehicles, unless these fires involved casualties or rescues, or five or more pumping appliances attended, in which case they become primary other outdoor fires.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Deliberate - others property	308	298	152	160	133	147	154	193	230
Deliberate - unknown owner	196	181	122	136	114	174	164	201	188
Accidental	261	244	190	250	150	170	164	184	318
Not known	112	129	102	107	99	78	61	44	68
Grand Total	877	852	566	653	496	569	543	622	804

RTCs (Road Traffic Collisions)

RTCs represent the number of incidents that a fire and rescue service attended. These incidents can included duties ranging from making the road safe to extrication of casualties. Please note, some RTCs may be included in other incident figures should the incident have included other aspects i.e. a fire as a result of the RTC.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
RTCs	535	494	486	515	458	489	530	595	569

Special Service - Non RTC

The below data shows the breakdown of incidents attended that were not a fire or RTC.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Advice Only	23	17	23	50	43	29	17	16	10
Animal assistance incidents	69	64	59	74	58	46	55	75	42
Assist other agencies	38	44	44	50	56	65	60	74	108
Effecting entry/exit	165	152	170	202	164	214	216	330	381
Evacuation (no fire)	3	6	3	7	7	3	12	8	8
Flooding	186	172	144	241	136	138	230	251	222
Hazardous materials incident	21	25	21	17	32	51	51	67	61
Lift release	77	77	81	70	70	68	102	136	123
Making safe (not RTC)	29	28	32	62	37	34	37	32	37
Medical Incident	4	7	14	9	6	1492	1152	689	384
No action (not false alarm)	39	41	36	38	32	80	86	80	71
Other rescue/release of persons	73	86	64	76	57	26	29	41	37
Other Transport incident	10	16	13	12	8	22	15	28	7
Removal of objects from people	52	61	53	68	62	62	57	56	50
Removal of people from objects						29	28	20	35
Rescue or evacuation from water	7	10	24	10	10	8	6	19	13
Spills and leaks (not RTC)	75	73	57	68	55	27	30	35	28
Suicide/attempts	15	13	22	14	19	8	19	29	28
Other	28	20	20	16	8	17	19	22	23
Total	914	912	880	1084	860	2419	2221	2008	1668

False alarms

The table below shows the causes of false alarms attended.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Apparatus - Animal				2	1	1	4	1	
Apparatus - Contaminants	306	308	276	245	293	234	293	277	278
Apparatus - External factors	17	19	28	23	24	16	24	32	39
Apparatus - Human	512	435	426	505	474	697	834	857	1027
Apparatus - System	699	539	650	632	642	631	635	582	546
Apparatus - Unknown	366	370	318	308	318	382	430	440	502
Good Intent - Fire	1100	1121	1146	942	1023	709	719	743	667
Good Intent - Special Service	257	156	67	108	50	65	71	102	111
Malicious	129	105	122	126	104	93	114	110	170
Total	3386	3053	3033	2891	2929	2828	3124	3144	3340

Fatalities and serious injuries

The information below shows the number of fatalities and injuries recorded at incidents attended. These figures are broken down between RTCs and fire related casualties.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Fatalities - fire related	6	5	5	2	5	3	2	6	2
Serious Injuries - fire related	9	5	1	4	10	8	3	4	6
Slight Injuries - fire related	36	31	25	40	32	45	30	35	37
Fatalities - RTC	19	16	11	16	14	13	13	25	14
Serious Injuries - RTC	101	88	82	111	85	85	89	83	82
Slight injuries - RTC	255	238	231	284	245	245	234	324	280

Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF)

Dwelling fires are fires in properties that are a place of residence i.e. places occupied by households such as houses and flats, excluding hotels/hostels and residential facilities. Dwellings also include non-permanent structures used solely as a dwelling, such as houseboats and caravans.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Accidental Dwelling Fires	349	399	402	385	381	362	305	340	313

Fire related fatalities in ADFs

Fire-related fatalities are, in general, those that would not have otherwise occurred had there not been a fire. i.e. 'no fire = no death'. This includes any fatal casualty that is the direct or indirect result of injuries caused by a fire incident. Even if the fatal casualty dies subsequently, any fatality whose cause is attributed to a fire is included.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Fire related fatalities - ADFs	0	2	1	2	3	2	0	3	2

Key facts about fire related fatalities in ADFs within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes:

- 14 of the 15 fatalities were older than 55
- Over half of the incidents were smoking related
- The average attendance time to the ADFs where a fire related fatality was recorded was eight minutes and five seconds (8:05)
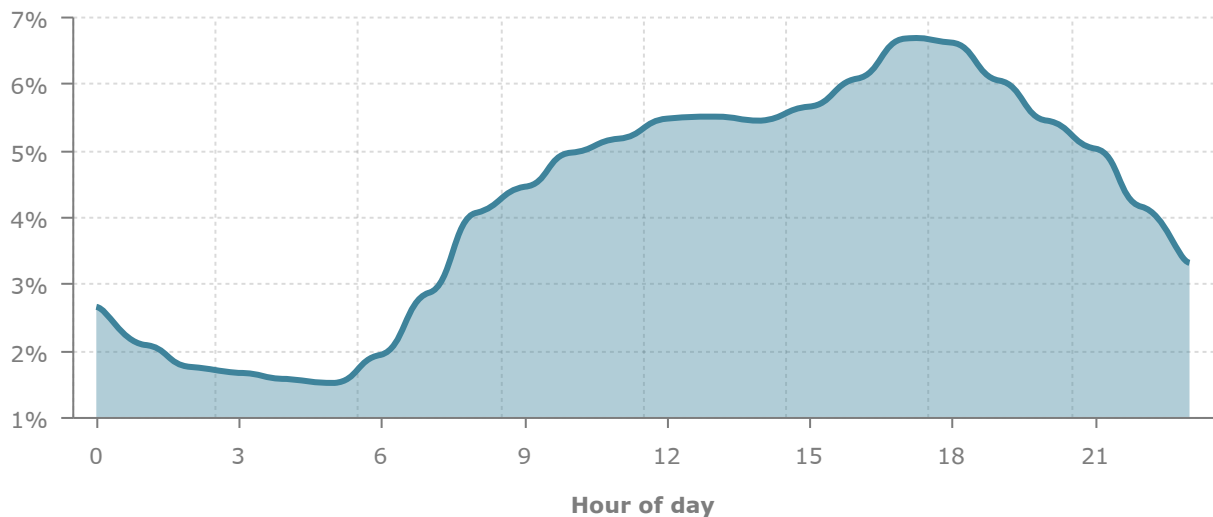- There were no obvious trends in relation to the time of day the incidents occured

Supplementary information
Demand patterns

Demand - hour of day

The graph below shows the time of day we are called to incidents.
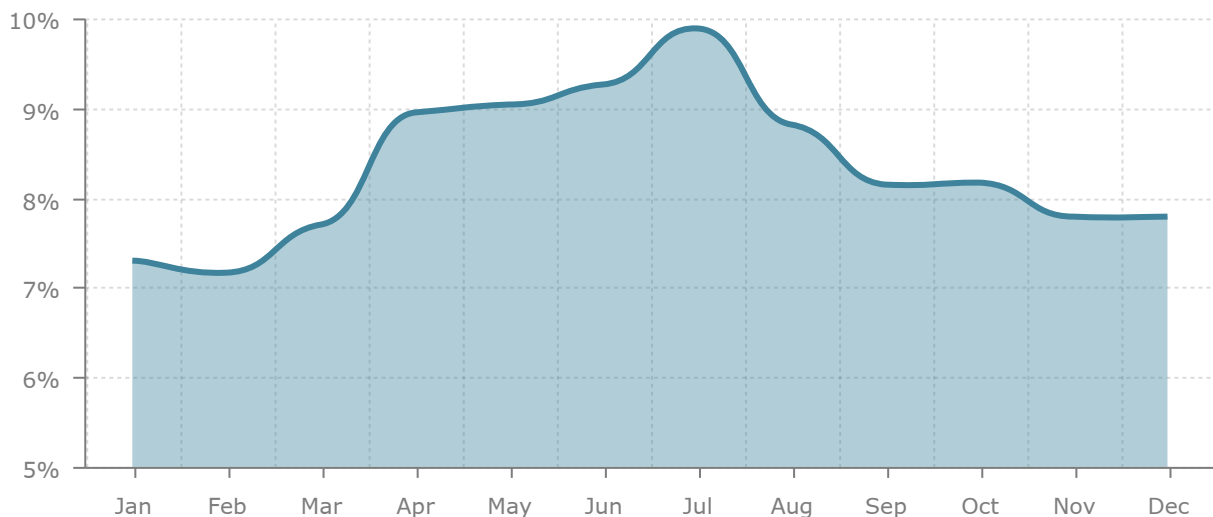This data is made up all incidents within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes over the last five years.

Demand - broken down by month

The graph below shows percentage of incidents we attend broken down by month.
This data is made up all incidents within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes over the last five years.

Supplementary information

Demand patterns - attendance times

Attendance times to incidents

Our strategic aim is to provide a timely and proportionate response to incidents by allocating our assets and resource in relation to demand and risk.

Why attendance times are important to us:

- Faster attendance times may result in a better outcome for persons and property
- Attendance times provide us with benchmarking data for resource and risk modelling
- Attendance times allow us to identify areas for improvement as well as change in the make up of the county
- Allow the public to have an informed exprectation

Why attendance times aren't the full picture:

- Attendance times do not include any delay prior to the call being made
- Attendance times do not identify if the resources sent were appropriate or proportionate
- Attendance times do not identify how performance of crews at an incident impacted the outcome

The chart below shows the average attendance time to incidents in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes over a five year period.
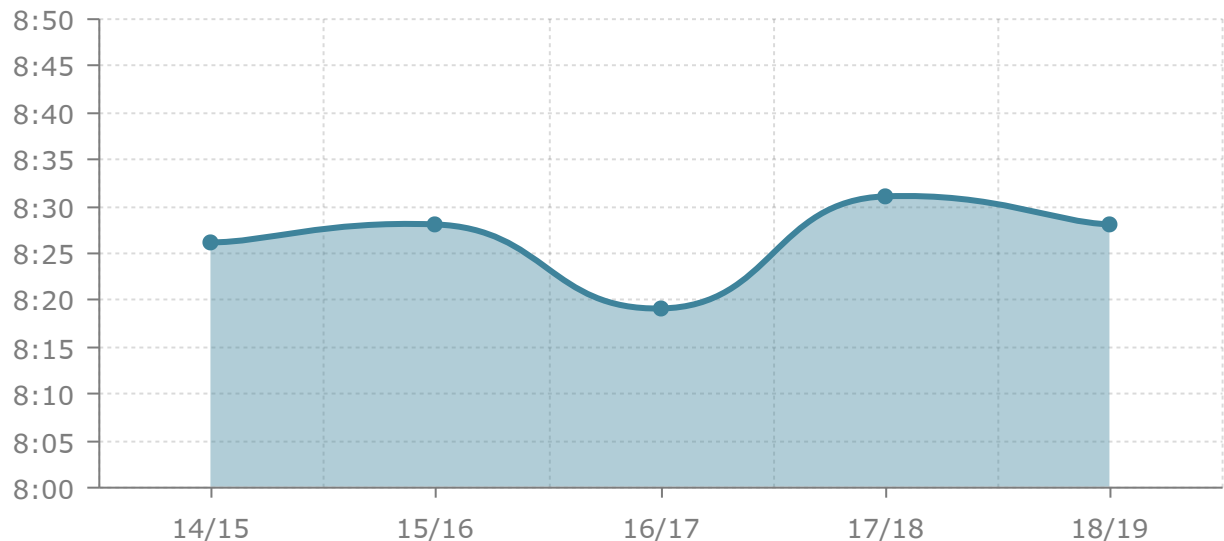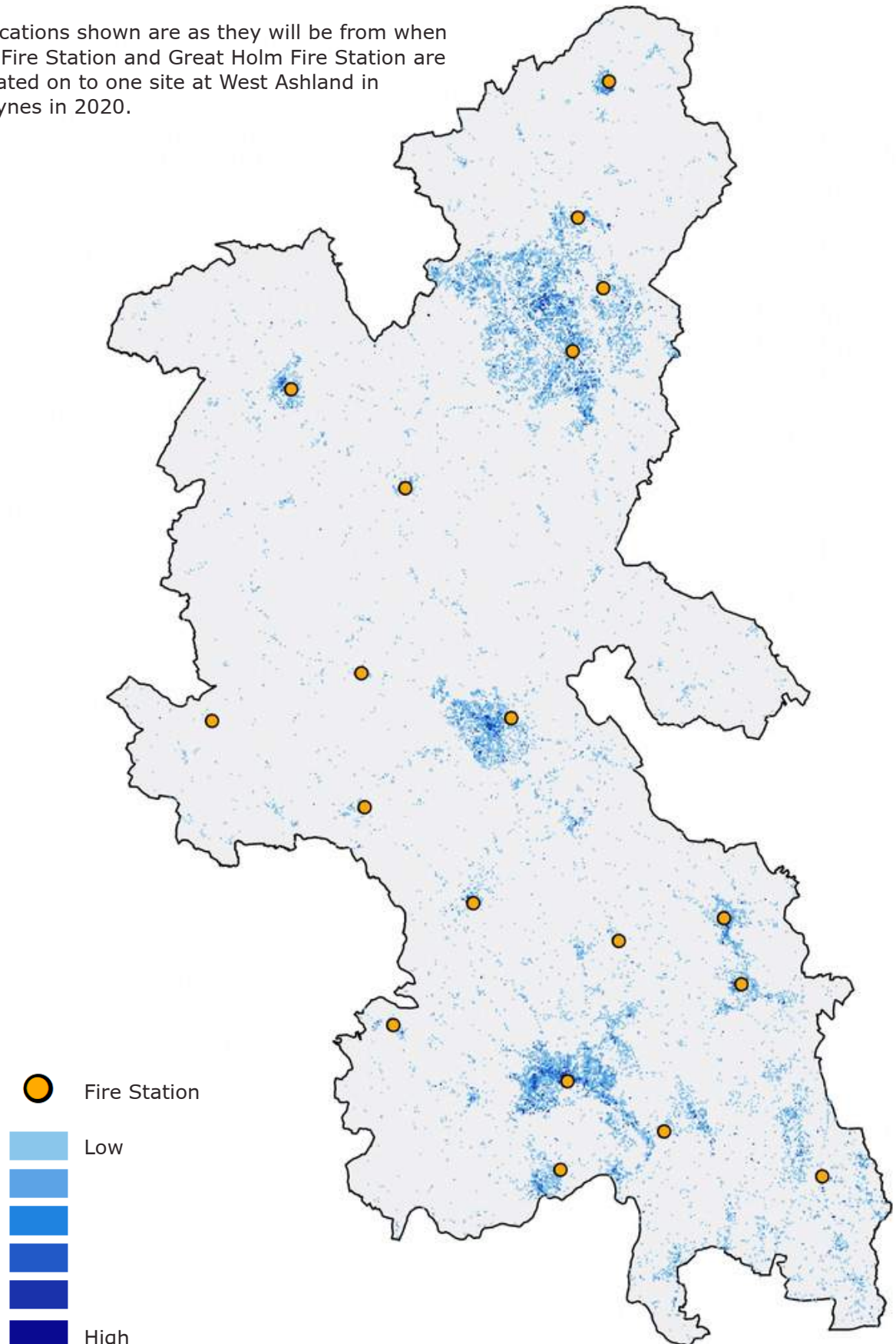
Incidents attended Apr 2014 - Mar 2019

The map below shows the the location and density of demand based on incident locations.

Station locations shown are as they will be from when Bletchley Fire Station and Great Holm Fire Station are amalgamated on to one site at West Ashland in Milton Keynes in 2020.

Fire Station

Low

High

Demand patterns - Residential properties

Residential property density 2019

The map below shows the location and density of residential properties within Buckinghamshire and Milton Kenynes.

Station locations shown are as they will be from when Bletchley Fire Station and Great Holm Fire Station are amalgamated on to one site at West Ashland in Milton Keynes in 2020.

Legend:
- Fire Station
- Low
- High

Non-residential property density 2019

The map below shows the location and density of non-residential properties within Buckinghamshire and Milton Kenynes.

Station locations shown are as they will be from when Bletchley Fire Station and Great Holm Fire Station are amalgamated on to one site at West Ashland in Milton Keynes in 2020.
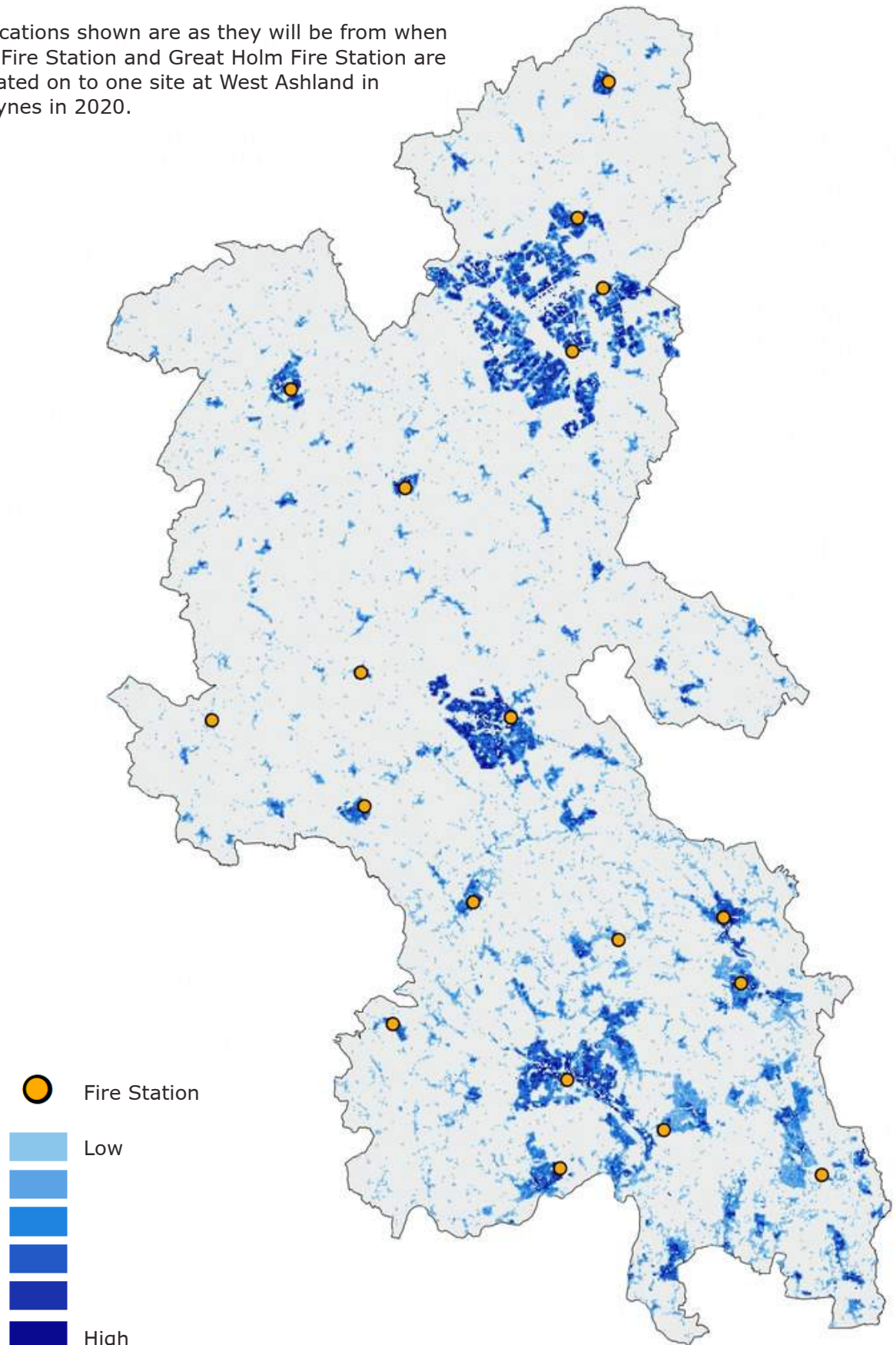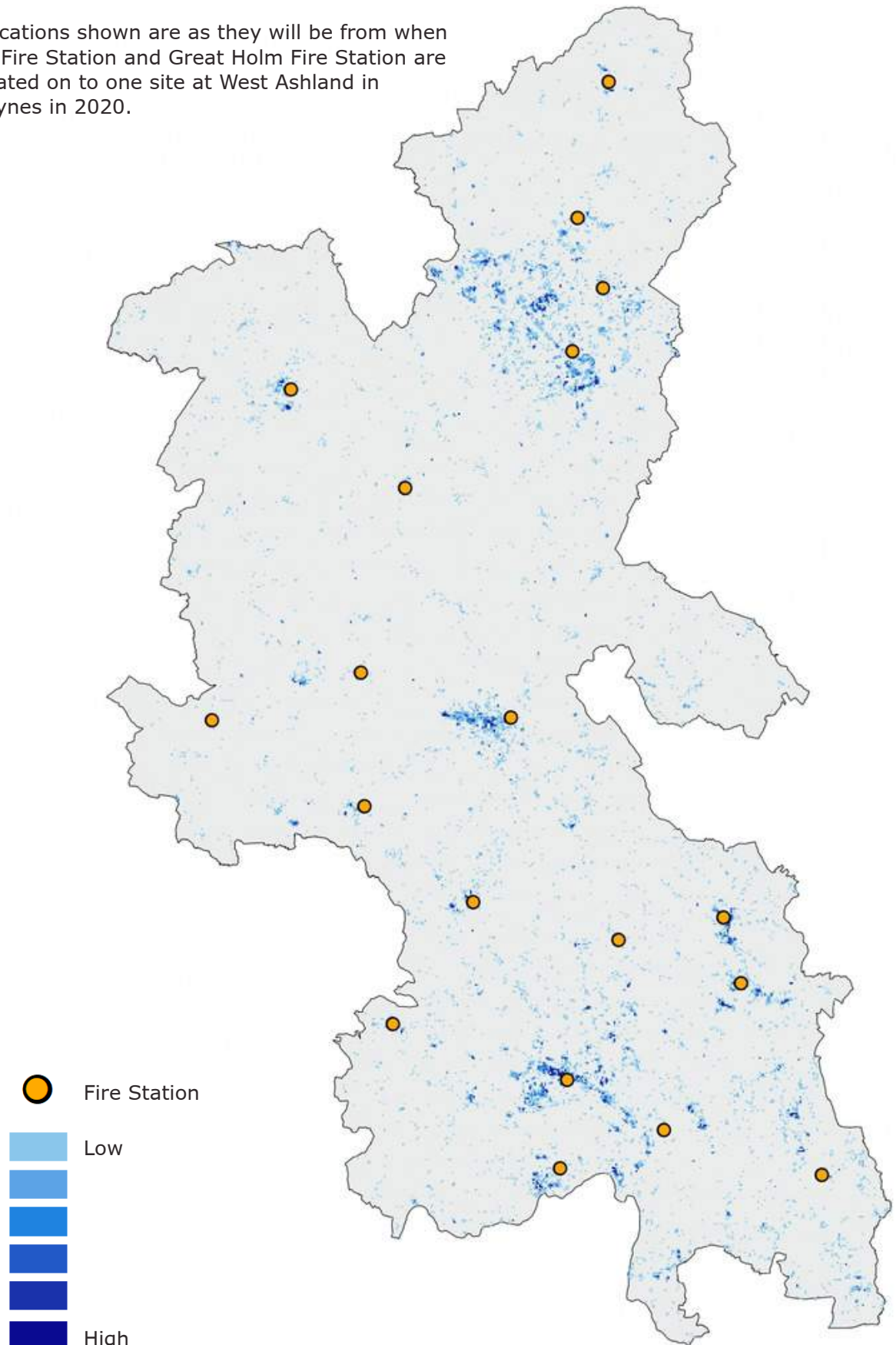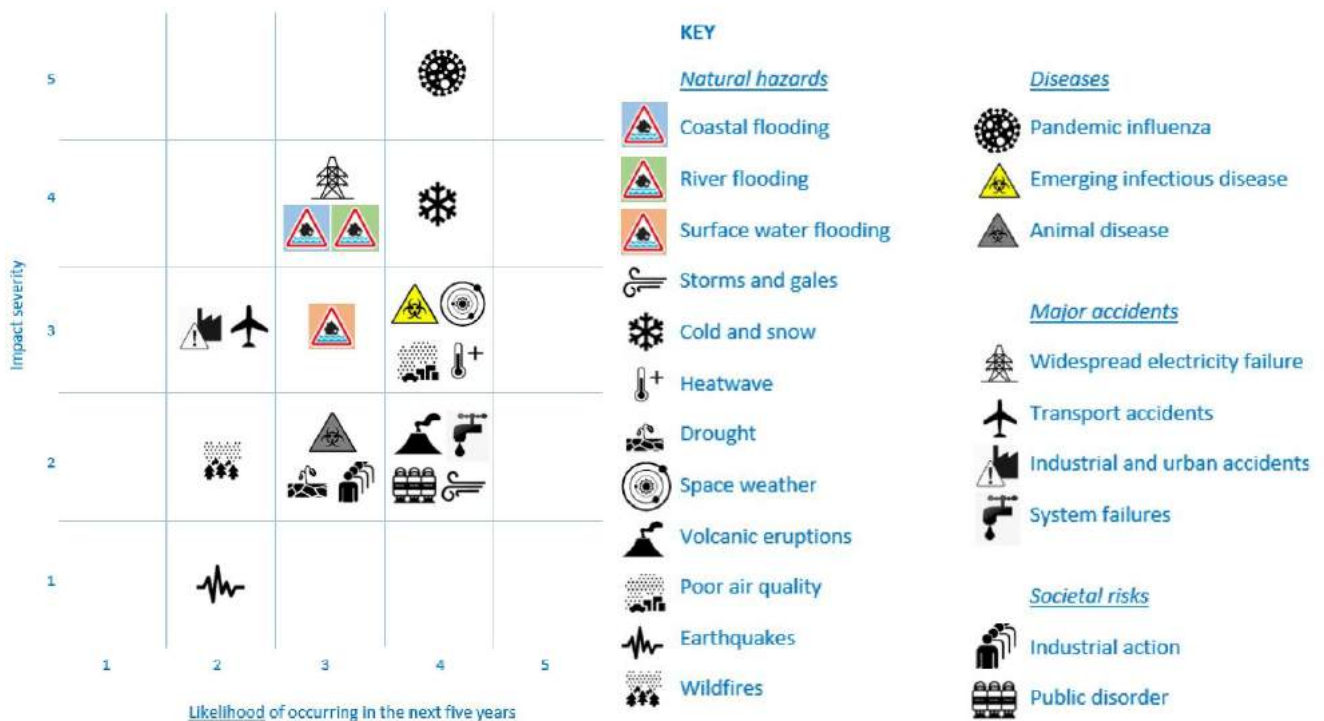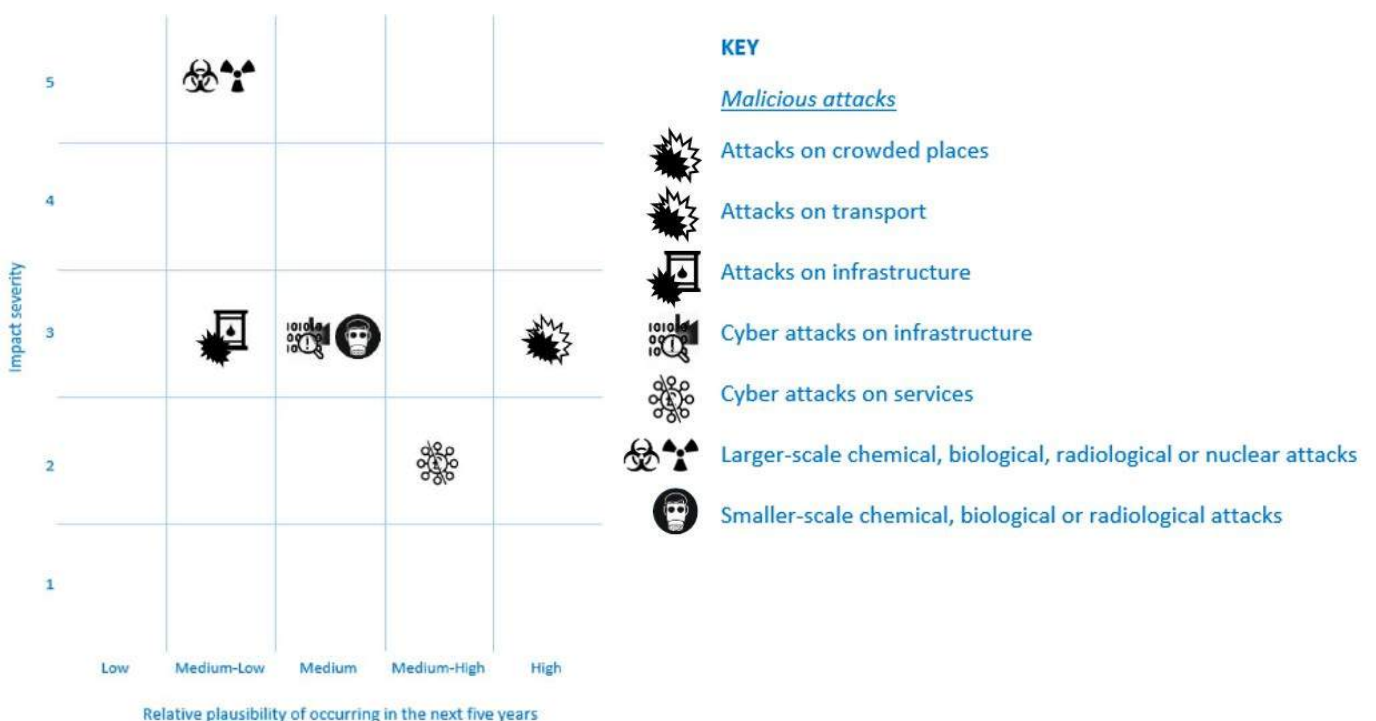

○ Fire Station

Low

High

National risk register

Government guidance indicates that fire and rescue authorities should consider national risks when preparing their plans. The charts below provide a summary of the Government's current national risk assessment published by the Cabinet Office. The full assessment can be seen in the National Risk Register

Hazards, diseases, accidents, and societal risks

KEY

Natural hazards
- Coastal flooding
- River flooding
- Surface water flooding
- Storms and gales
- Cold and snow
- Heatwave
- Drought
- Space weather
- Volcanic eruptions
- Poor air quality
- Earthquakes
- Wildfires

Diseases
- Pandemic influenza
- Emerging infectious disease
- Animal disease

Major accidents
- Widespread electricity failure
- Transport accidents
- Industrial and urban accidents
- System failures

Societal risks
- Industrial action
- Public disorder

Impact severity

Likelihood of occurring in the next five years

Malicious attack risks

KEY

Malicious attacks
- Attacks on crowded places
- Attacks on transport
- Attacks on infrastructure
- Cyber attacks on infrastructure
- Cyber attacks on services
- Larger-scale chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attacks
- Smaller-scale chemical, biological or radiological attacks

Impact severity

Low   Medium-Low   Medium   Medium-High   High

Relative plausibility of occurring in the next five years

Community risk register for the Thames Valley

The Thames Valley Community Risk Register (CRR) provides information on major emergencies that could happen in the Thames Valley, together with an assessment of how likely they are to happen and the impacts if they do. This includes the impacts to people, their homes, the environment and local businesses. These risks are regularly reviewed and have led to this updated CRR.

Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum

Top Risks

Influenza type diseases
An influenza (flu) pandemic is a worldwide event in which many people are infected with a flu virus in a short time.

Fluvial/River flooding
The events of the winters of 2012/13 and 2013/14, and the summer of 2007, showed that flooding can affect many different aspects of our daily lives.

Severe weather
The United Kingdom does experience severe weather due to its maritime temperate climate with occasional continental and Arctic influences. These can bring with them heavy rain or snow, strong winds and extreme temperatures. As experience has shown, severe weather can take a variety of forms and at times can cause significant problems and disruption to normal life.

Fuel shortages
All organisations rely to some extent on fuel, whether it is for getting staff to work, distributing products or providing services. The availability of fuel within the UK is generally very good, however there have been examples within recent years of brief disruptions to supply on both a regional and national basis.

Loss of critical infrastructure
Critical Infrastructure is the name given to all of the different essential services which we rely on as part of modern society and the economy. The UK's critical infrastructure is made up of electricity, water, gas, oil/fuel, transport, telecoms, food, health and financial services.

Animal disease
Animal diseases which present the most concern are those which are highly contagious, cause high fatality rates amongst livestock or have the possibility of infecting humans.

Environmental pollution and industrial accidents
Certain industrial activities involving dangerous substances have the potential to cause accidents. Some of these accidents may cause serious injuries to people or damage to the environment both nearby, and further away from the site of the accident.

Transport accidents
Just like our dependence on basic utilities, almost all of us will rely on a form of transport either to get to and from work, or to receive essential services. The disruptive consequences of a transport emergency are far-reaching and can further endanger life.

Supplementary information

Future funding - your Council Tax

What's the cost to you if we raise our Council Tax rate?

The table below indicates the 2019/2020 Council Tax charge for Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service. The subsequent columns indicate a direct comparison of the cost per household, per year, in pounds and pence, if the rates were increased by the amount shown.

Please note, these amounts are purely for illustrative purposes. Anything above three per cent would be subject to us receiving approval from central government or the outcome of a referendum.

Council Tax Band	2019/2020	3% increase	£5 Increase (Band D)	£10 Increase (Band D)	Increase to National Average
A	43.05	44.33	46.38	49.71	51.36
B	50.22	51.72	54.11	58.00	59.92
C	57.40	59.11	61.84	66.28	68.48
D	64.57	66.50	69.57	74.57	77.04
E	78.92	81.28	85.03	91.14	94.16
F	93.27	96.06	100.49	107.71	111.28
G	107.62	110.83	115.95	124.28	128.40
H	129.14	133.00	139.14	149.14	154.08