



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	10 February 2016
OFFICER	Paul Holland, Head of Projects & Transformation
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Catriona Morris
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Station Merger Consultation: Feedback and Recommendations
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This report summarises the response to the Authority on a public consultation into a proposal to merge Great Holm and Bletchley Fire Stations with Thames Valley Police into a purpose built 'blue light hub' located in West Ashland in Milton Keynes.</p> <p>The consultation ran for eight weeks between 14 September 2015 and 9 November 2015.</p> <p>The Public Safety Plan (PSP) 2015-20 set out the strategic approach the Fire Authority will be taking to deliver the fire and rescue service. This included a commitment to deliver five area reviews that would look at a range of things including:</p> <p>"the right number and location of fire stations which may involve moving, merging, closing or co-locating with other blue light services"</p> <p>This consultation was part of a continuing dialogue with the public, which began with the 'listening and engagement' research (November/December 2013) which we did with the public prior to embarking on the development of the 2015-20 PSP, followed by the full PSP consultation which ran for 12 weeks (22 July-13 October 2014) with findings reported to the 17 December 2014 CFA meeting.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present to the Authority the results of the public and staff consultations into this merger; - Make recommendations based on the responses we received from across the different methods of consulting.
ACTION	Decision.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that one of the following options be approved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The resources from Great Holm and Bletchley

	<p>are relocated and merged into the new 'blue light hub' facility with Thames Valley Police at West Ashland and the existing station premises vacated. The Service will continue to ensure that current response standards are met via its dynamic mobilising system, utilising the fire crews that are out in the community delivering vital life-saving community safety work, or when appropriate utilising standby points strategically located across Milton Keynes, ensuring our communities will always benefit from the quickest possible attendance in an emergency; or</p> <p>2. The existing station premises at Great Holm and Bletchley are maintained and continue to operate as per the current arrangement.</p>
RISK MANAGEMENT	<p>The proposed station merger does not change BMKFA's approach to risk, however it does change some management aspects. Risk and demand work has been carried out by our Knowledge and Information team. The net rationalisation of fire stations will not increase risk due to the relocation of all resources to the new facility and the use of technological developments such as automatic vehicle locating systems (AVLS) ensuring our mobilising system always sends the nearest resource.</p> <p>If option 2 were to be approved the Authority would be required to return the £2.8m transformation fund grant to DCLG as we will be unable to deliver the combined blue light facility required by the approved business case.</p> <p>This consultation only covered the merger of the two stations, any subsequent changes to fire appliance numbers or availability as part of the transformation of Milton Keynes will require further public consultation.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>The precise financial implications of this proposed merger are still to be determined, though original estimates obtained at the time of the bid (Jan 2014) indicated a capital programme of £4.4 million.</p> <p>If the merger proposition is successful, there may be a net expense on the cost of the land based on the cost of the proposed new site against the value of the current Bletchley and Great Holm sites. We have engaged three companies to provide valuation figures for both fire station sites to inform financial modelling for the build project. If the proposal to merge the two stations is approved a further paper will be brought to the authority detailing the build programme with costing scenarios.</p> <p>The Department for Communities and Local</p>

	<p>Government (DCLG) grant of £2.8million is based on the co-habitation of a new 'blue light hub' with TVP.</p> <p>The Head of Finance sits on the project board and oversees the capital programme associated with this build.</p> <p>This proposal will deliver circa £600k per annum revenue savings set out in the Transformation fund business case approved by DCLG. In addition we will have all the benefits of a modern environmentally sound and sustainable building that will provide financial savings and benefits to the local environment for the lifetime of the building.</p> <p>These are highly sustainable and are guaranteed as base budget savings for the future.</p>
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>This consultation was part of a continuing dialogue with the public following the publication of the PSP.</p> <p>The approach complies with National Framework requirements by ensuring that consultation is undertaken at appropriate points in the Integrated Risk Management Planning/Public Safety Plan (PSP) development process.</p> <p>The principles of fair and lawful consultation are set out in Appendix A – ORS Report (Executive Summary, paragraph 8)</p> <p>Before approving either of the officer recommendations, the Authority must take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the outcomes of the consultation (Appendices A-E);and b) the findings of the People Impact Assessment (Appendix F)
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION	<p>This proposal supports the MOU with Thames Valley Police to share facilities when it is mutually beneficial. BMKFA are still in dialogue with South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) to relocate their operations in Milton Keynes to this blue light hub facility.</p>
HEALTH AND SAFETY	<p>Any material changes to operational configuration will be subject to appropriate and proportionate risk assessments of the implications for public and staff safety.</p> <p>Furthermore, there is conclusive evidence that there is no correlation between population increase and the amount of incidents we attend.</p>
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	<p>Due consideration has been given by officers in the development of the proposals set out in this paper of the Authority's Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Equality Act</p>

	<p>2010.</p> <p>A People Impact Assessment has been completed for this proposal (see Appendix F). The PIA has identified that the new proposal is an improvement over the current facilities provided at the existing fire stations for our staff and for members of the public. There is an impact on on-call firefighters who would be required to travel further to attend the new facility. This issue has been factored into a review of this duty system across Milton Keynes. Employees affected by the proposal outlined in this paper have been engaged with through a staff engagement group established in July 2015.</p> <p>The selection process for the Public Forums was designed to ensure that a representative sample of the public was consulted. A socio-demographic profile of the public forums is shown on page 16 of appendix A. This indicates there was a broad cross section of residents from local areas.</p> <p>The staff engagement group was selected by staff from Milton Keynes stations as well as a Fire Brigades Union local official and therefore cannot be certified as necessarily representative of staff views as a whole. However, the group engaged constructively with the process providing valuable input and insights.</p> <p>Participation in the online survey was by open invitation so the views expressed via this channel cannot be certified as being necessarily representative of the views of the general public or staff as a whole.</p> <p>However, all staff and a wide range of organisations were encouraged to take part in the feedback process which yielded a diverse range of views and opinions.</p>
<p>USE OF RESOURCES</p>	<p><i>Communication with Stakeholders</i></p> <p>BMKFRS staff, representative bodies and a wide range of partner and community organisations and representatives were invited to participate in the consultation process.</p> <p>CFA members have been engaged via a series of workshops as well as in formal Authority meetings.</p> <p>The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) were invited to sit on the staff engagement group and interacted with our consultation throughout.</p> <p>A monthly project board meeting has been conducted with representatives from TVP and contact has been made with representatives from SCAS in order to keep both parties up to date with progress.</p> <p><i>System of Internal Control</i></p> <p>The governance of this project was clearly laid out at the beginning of the project and conforms entirely to</p>

	<p>the governance procedures laid out at previous BMKFA meetings.</p> <p><i>Medium Term Financial Planning</i></p> <p>This project has been considered in all appropriate financial modelling and planning documents.</p> <p><i>The Balance Between Spending and Resource</i></p> <p>The intention of this project is to merge the resources across two fire stations in West Milton Keynes into a single facility in a location that has the minimum impact on current response times.</p> <p><i>The Management of the Asset Base</i></p> <p>This will be determined by the decisions made within this BMKFA meeting.</p> <p><i>Environmental</i></p> <p>An aim of this project is to reduce the environmental impacts of BMKFRS in the Milton Keynes area in the long term by ensuring the potential new build achieves the highest environmental standard.</p>
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>The consultation sought to obtain the views of a representative cross section of the public and engage a wide range of other stakeholders including staff, representative bodies, and community and partner organisations in the consideration of the merger proposal.</p> <p><i>Consultation Programme</i></p> <p>There were a number of elements within our consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A series of three Public Forums took place, with the attendants being from Bletchley, Great Holm and then Milton Keynes as a whole. - A staff engagement group was formed in order to gain opinions and input from operational staff based in Milton Keynes, both full-time and retained. - An online questionnaire, hosted by ORS and accessible via the Authority's website. This was open to all staff, members of the public and representatives of partner and community organisations. <p>Awareness of the consultation was created through various press releases and features within local Milton Keynes media and social media, as well as direct communications being sent to appropriate stakeholders such as representatives of partner organisations. All MP's, Councillors and Parish Councils in Milton Keynes and the surrounding area were also directly contacted.</p>

	<p>Response</p> <p>In total, this was the most responded to consultation BMKFA has ever conducted, with a total of 873 responses. This total includes 782 responses to the online questionnaire, 45 direct responses through letter or email and 46 people took part in the Public Forums. We were extremely pleased with the levels of response and it shows that it was publicised appropriately.</p> <p>A total of 46 diverse members of the public participated in the Public Forums.</p> <p>A total of 12 members of staff participate in the MK staff engagement group.</p> <p>Additionally, 15 respondents to the online questionnaire declared themselves to be Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS) staff members or relatives although the actual level of response may have been higher with some preferring to identify as residents or not to say.</p> <p>A range of organisations also responded to the consultation via the questionnaire or by email or letter. A list of the organisations that responded to the online consultation is shown at pages 21-22 of appendix A.</p> <p>There were a total of 782 responses to the online questionnaire. A full profile of online respondents is shown at Tables 1–5 on pages 20-21 of appendix A.</p> <p>Overview of Findings</p> <p>Public Forums</p> <p>Whilst participants had mixed feelings about the proposal at the beginning of the forums, the majority supported it by the end of these meetings. This can mainly be attributed to the comprehensive nature of the information ORS provided them with, as well as the question and answer sessions that took place with BMKFA fire officers at each of the three Public Forums. The Public Forums were summarised by ORS and this has been fed into our responses and recommendations. A summary of the feedback received from these Public Forums can be found from page 35 of appendix A.</p> <p>Staff Engagement Meetings</p> <p>Staff engaged particularly well with this consultation and their views were extremely valuable in the progression of the project. Their input included ideas for the design of the potential new facility and their positivity towards the project was clear. Each member of this group represented their station, they were made clear of their role from the outset, to ensure</p>
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	<p>that information was passed onto the staff at each of the Milton Keynes stations and to gather feedback and bring it to the staff engagement meetings.</p> <p>Online Questionnaire</p> <p>A summary of the main findings from the online questionnaire is shown from page 23 of appendix A. As well as a quantitative analysis of the findings, the report also includes analysis of qualitative feedback received in the form of written comments. These have been analysed to show how often a particular theme or issue was raised. In general the issues raised mirror those arising in the other consultation channels.</p> <p>The numbers that responded to the online questionnaire were beyond our expectations and whilst the majority of the feedback was not positive, the questionnaire was extremely useful in highlighting the concerns of the public regarding this proposal.</p> <p>The online questionnaire delivered some interesting responses, for example, 43% of participants stated they did not want community facilities in a fire station. Similarly, we received multiple responses stating that the reputation of the fire service would be negatively affected by sharing a facility with TVP.</p> <p>FBU Response</p> <p>The FBU submitted a written response during the consultation period and this has been carefully considered. A follow up meeting took place between the project lead and an FBU representative and no further feedback was received. The views of the FBU have been fed into the responses and recommendations outlined in appendix B. A copy of the FBU feedback can be found in appendix D.</p> <p>Other Responses</p> <p>All other responses received through email or letter were collated with BMKFRS and analysed alongside the feedback obtained through ORS. The themes from this feedback are included in the table in appendix B.</p> <p>Overall, it was found that response times were the area of most concern for respondents to the consultation, whether they engaged through the questionnaire, Public Forums or through direct feedback. Nearly sixty per cent of both questionnaire feedback and direct feedback raised this as an issue, significantly more than any other concern raised.</p> <p><i>Management Response to Consultation Feedback</i></p> <p>A full summary of all responses to this consultation can be found in appendix B, along with recommendations.</p> <p>In general the feedback was found to be constructive and useful in terms of informing the development of</p>
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	the options and recommendations outlined earlier in this paper.
APPENDICES	<p>Appendix A - ORS Report</p> <p>Appendix B - Management Responses and Recommendations</p> <p>Appendix C - Supporting Data Pack</p> <p>Appendix D – FBU Feedback</p> <p>Appendix E – Examples of other responses (letter/email)</p> <p>Appendix F – People Impact Assessment</p>
TIME REQUIRED	30 Minutes.
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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

A Merger of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations?

Report of Consultation Outcomes

Opinion Research Services
November 2015





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

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

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Acknowledgements

Opinion Research Services (ORS) is pleased to have worked with Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority (B&MKFA) and Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) on the consultation reported here.

We are grateful to all of those who completed the questionnaire and to the members of the public who took part in the forums. The latter were patient in listening to background information before entering positively into the spirit of open discussions. They engaged with the service, with the issues under consideration and with each other in discussing their ideas readily.

We thank B&MKFRS for commissioning the project as part of its ongoing programme of consultation. We particularly thank the senior officers who attended the forums 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 as objectively as possible was recognised and respected. We are grateful for the trust, and we hope this report will contribute usefully to thinking about B&MKFRS's future service planning. We hope also that ORS has been instrumental in strengthening B&MKFRS's public engagement and consultation through the forum participants.

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Executive Summary

The Commission

1. On the basis of its previous experience, ORS was commissioned by Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) to undertake a consultation on the proposed merger of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations into a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub. The consultation programme consisted of:
 - Designing, implementing, analysing and reporting an open online questionnaire (which was also available on paper on request); and
 - Recruiting, facilitating and reporting three deliberative forums in Milton Keynes (one for residents within the Bletchley Fire Station area, one for residents within the Great Holm Fire Station area and one for residents across Milton Keynes).
2. As well as giving general advice, ORS's primary role was to design, implement/facilitate, analyse and report both the open questionnaire and the deliberative forums between September and November 2015. We worked in collaboration with B&MKFRS to design the questionnaire and prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

Open Questionnaire

3. The open questionnaire (with the accompanying Consultation Document) was available online between 14th September and 9th November 2015. 782 questionnaires were completed; 675 were complete and 107 incomplete. Though none were submitted by post, paper copies of the questionnaire were available on request.
4. Although the open questionnaire is an important and accessible consultation route that is, by its very nature, open to all, it was not distributed systematically. As such, and because the respondent profile is an imperfect reflection of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes population, its results must be interpreted carefully. Crucially though, 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 (and in many cases concerns) about the proposed changes.

Deliberative Forums

5. In total, there were 46 diverse participants at the forums - 12 at Bletchley, 19 at Great Holm, and 15 at that for Milton Keynes-wide residents. The meeting agenda covered all of the following topics:

Staff and financial resources

Distribution of emergency cover resources

Incident profile and numbers

Reality of reducing risk and the role of prevention, protection and response

B&MKFRS's proposal to merge of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations into a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub, especially in relation to:

The desirability of collaboration between 'blue light' services in principle;

The desirability of a new Hub station to co-locate Fire and Police services on a single site - both in principle and to replace Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations;

The suitability of the proposed location at West Ashland; and

The feasibility of including community facilities and resources at the proposed new Hub station.

6. Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, forums cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from across Milton Keynes the opportunity to participate. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meetings (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions.

Consultation Programme Proportional and Fair

7. B&MKFRS's consultation programme was conscientious, in the sense of being open, accessible and fair to members of the public and stakeholders across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes: the consultation was proportional to the importance of the issues and conforms with good practice - both in its scale and the balance of elements included, and also in the way in which it built upon earlier engagement and consultation exercises undertaken by the Service.
8. The key good practice requirements for proper consultation programmes are that they 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 enough 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.

Taken together, these four elements do much to ensure the 'accountability' of public authorities, particularly the fourth; but this does not mean that consultations are referenda.

9. **Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully.** This does not mean that the majority views expressed in consultations should automatically decide public policy, for consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the right or best decision in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are very important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions.
10. For the public bodies considering the outcomes of consultation, the key question is not *Which proposal has most support?* but, *Are the reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of the proposals cogent?* In this context, both B&MKFRS and ORS were clear that this important consultation programme should include both quantitative and deliberative elements in order to both: provide many people with the opportunity to take part via the open questionnaire routes; and promote informed engagement via the deliberative forums with members of the public.
11. Given people's general unawareness of how their fire and rescue services operate and manage their resources and costs, consultation with informed audiences - who have the opportunity to question and test the evidence for particular proposals - is especially valuable. All consultation elements are important and none should be disregarded, but the deliberative forums are particularly worthy of consideration because they explore the arguments and the reasons for people's opinions. There is no doubt that B&MKFRS's consultation programme conforms to good practice by including both quantitative and qualitative methods through which people could participate and as a means for the Authority to understand the reasons for people's opinions.
12. As well as providing the public and stakeholders with sufficient information to consider the proposals intelligently, B&MKFRS has also conducted its consultation in a timely manner and is taking account of the outcomes before making a decision. Both the scale and nature of the programme compare well with similar consultations undertaken by other fire and rescue services and public bodies.

Executive Summary

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

Main Findings

Blue Light Collaboration in Principle

Open Questionnaire

14. Similar proportions of respondents agreed (41%) and disagreed (43%) that collaboration with other 'blue light' (i.e. emergency) services is a good idea in principle.

Deliberative Forums

15. Most forum participants were very positive about the principle of collaboration between the three emergency services: they felt this would yield improved, more effective working relationships as a result of easier communication and sharing of knowledge and best practice.

A 'Blue Light Emergency Services Hub'?

Open Questionnaire

16. More than two thirds (68%) of respondents disagreed that a new Hub station to co-locate Fire and Police services on a single site is a good idea in principle. Less than a quarter (22%) of respondents agreed.
17. Almost 9 in 10 respondents (89%) disagreed with the proposal to replace the fire stations at Bletchley and Great Holm with a new Hub station; only 8% agreed. The main reasons given for opposing the suggested change were that: the proposed new location at West Ashland will mean reduced fire cover (in the form of longer response times) for the West and North of Milton Keynes; the proposed location is problematic for traffic access given its close proximity to Stadium MK and a busy shopping area; and that the area's increasing population warrants at least the retention of the status quo.
18. Some alternative proposals were suggested, namely: retaining the status quo; the introduction of a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub plus the retention of the Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations; the retention of Great Holm Station (while Bletchley Fire Station is relocated to the proposed Hub); the retention of Great Holm as an on-call 'satellite' fire station if the Hub Station is introduced; and the relocation of (or reduction of fire cover at) Newport Pagnell Fire Station.

Deliberative Forums

19. In contrast to the open questionnaire respondents, the idea of a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub was generally welcomed in principle - and indeed in practice when considering the proposal to develop such a facility to replace Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations.
20. Indeed, it was clear that informed opinion (expressed after the presentation and the question and answer session) inclined significantly in favour of the proposal on the grounds that it would enable the aforementioned collaboration between emergency services and that: a joint, modern facility would ensure reduced overheads and increased efficiencies; it is based on sound risk analysis and will improve response times overall; it is forward-thinking and logical from a financial perspective (and any savings will be re-invested into the Service); there would be no firefighter redundancies;

it would prove safer from a road user perspective; and it would ultimately 'safeguard the future of the fire service in Milton Keynes'.

21. This is not to say there were no concerns about the proposed change - for example, some participants at Great Holm were initially concerned that a station merger could be used as a means to justify further reductions to emergency service budgets, and several others approved the proposal only on the proviso that any savings are re-invested into the Fire and Rescue Service.
22. A few people highlighted other concerns and disadvantages, including that: co-locating vital services on one site could leave them all vulnerable in the event of power cuts or other service disruptions; the working practices of the different organisations may not be entirely compatible; and that co-location could result in the sometimes negative perception members of the public have of the Police detrimentally impacting upon the well-regarded Fire and Ambulance Services.
23. Importantly also, even after discussion and clarification, there were lingering concerns at Great Holm around response times to the West of Milton Keynes and at Bletchley around the perception of 'reducing' services at a time of population increases.
24. Furthermore, some participants at the Milton Keynes Wide Forum, while accepting the reasoning behind the proposal themselves, acknowledged that there may be 'another side of the story'; that is, that the views of firefighters may be somewhat different. This was not necessarily an issue, more an expression of interest in what the 'boots on the ground' feel about the possible changes.

Location

Open Questionnaire

25. More than three quarters (78%) of respondents disagreed that the proposed location at West Ashland is a suitable location for the proposed new Hub station; only 9% agreed. As aforementioned, the primary reason for such opposition was that locating the station here would not allow B&MKFRS to sufficiently cover areas in the North and West of Milton Keynes (particularly Stony Stratford and Wolverton).

Deliberative Forums

26. Opinions on the proposed location for the Blue Light Hub were mixed in the forums. A majority of participants were in favour - and some highly positive - about the West Ashland site, primarily given its proximity to local road networks and the accessibility this would afford. Furthermore, explanations of B&MKFRS's Automatic Vehicle Location System (which is now used to identify the nearest fire engine to an incident for the quickest response) was reassuring for many, who understood that fire station locations are no longer as important as they once were - especially given the frequency with which firefighters are out in the community undertaking prevention and education work.
27. However, many participants expressed concern about the proposed location - particularly those from Great Holm, who felt siting the Hub in West Ashland might adversely affect coverage for the

(expanding) North and especially West of Milton Keynes. Indeed, even participants in the other two forums questioned whether the town's forthcoming westward expansion has been fully considered by the Fire and Rescue Service in developing a future-proofed proposal.

28. The fact the proposed location is near to Stadium MK and a busy shopping area was also thought to be potentially problematic owing to congestion during rush hour and on match days (which has apparently been exacerbated by nearby housing developments). In order to mitigate against these issues, one participant questioned: *could there be an alternative emergency services exit onto the A5 roundabout or maybe put traffic lights to stop traffic when an emergency vehicle needs to leave?* (Great Holm)

Community Facilities

Open Questionnaire

29. Just under half (49%) of respondents disagreed with including community facilities and resources at the proposed new Hub station; only 21% agreed with this. It is also worth noting that 3 in 10 respondents (30%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this.
30. For the 21% of respondents who agreed with including community facilities and resources at the proposed new Hub station, the most sought after facility at the new Hub station was a community meeting room(s), with residents, members of B&MKFRS and other organisations stating that is something they would like to see provided.

Deliberative Forums

31. A majority of forum participants was in favour of including community facilities on the Hub site, primarily as this would assist in: increasing the provision of educational prevention programmes offered; widening the availability of community meeting space across Milton Keynes; and improving relations between the emergency services and the public.
32. Despite the general positivity though, a few participants at the Milton Keynes Wide Forum were concerned about increasing traffic congestion by encouraging high public access to the site; and that the Hub could prove to be competition for existing community facilities.
33. A few participants said that the location of the proposed Hub is some distance from Milton Keynes's main communities and, thereby, relatively inconvenient for community use. Others, though, disagreed and felt West Ashland is accessible enough to enable people from across the town to use the facility.
34. Finally, some others questioned whether co-locating police stations and community facilities could present a security risk for members of the public insofar as: *I'm not sure how this would work with the security aspect of the Police part of the station if it was in the same building.* (Milton Keynes Wide)

Getting the Message Across?

35. Several participants said that the information presented during the forums had been reassuring in allaying the concerns and dispelling the preconceptions they had about the proposal prior to coming along.
36. However, they acknowledged that only relatively small groups of people have had the benefit of receiving these detailed explanations of the proposal and its reasoning, and that it will be somewhat more difficult to reassure those amongst the general public with similar concerns and preconceptions. In order to have the best chance of doing this, participants suggested the following ways and avenues of disseminating information within communities: using local media, social media, newspapers and billboards around Milton Keynes; direct mailing; fire station open days and exhibitions; information and exhibitions at locations such as libraries, shopping centres, train stations and Middleton Hall; visiting Resident's Associations; and visiting schools to give talks (or asking them to distribute newsletters that young people can either digest themselves or take home for their parents).

Overall Conclusions

37. Overall, the views expressed through the open consultation questionnaire differ considerably from those expressed in the deliberative forums with randomly selected members of the public: the former were largely opposed to the proposed merger of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations into a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub, whereas the latter were broadly supportive. The reasons for the respective support and opposition have been documented earlier in this report, and so are not repeated in detail here; but it is interesting that many of the concerns noted by questionnaire respondents (longer response times to the West and North of Milton Keynes, traffic and congestion issues at the proposed West Ashland location, and new housing and population increases) were reviewed in the deliberative forums - but, there, people's concerns were allayed through questioning and discussion. For example, participants were reassured that:

Areas with potentially lengthier response times would be prioritised by B&MKFRS for prevention activity;

Appliances would be stationed away from the Hub on match days (much in the same way as the Ambulance Service operates currently); and

New housing represents very little additional risk insofar as it is built to a very safe standard.

As a result, following full discussion, some participants - particularly at the Great Holm session - said that although they had initially been opposed to the proposal (on the basis of what they had seen and heard prior to coming to the meeting) they had revised their views considerably.

38. More generally also, questionnaire responses differ from those in deliberative forums partly because:

Questions in questionnaires necessarily have to be simplified

It is impossible to offer the same level of information and explanation in consultation documents as in lengthy, thoughtful meetings

Compared with surveys of randomly selected people, open consultation questionnaires typically provide less representative results because they tend to be completed by more motivated respondents and are not distributed evenly across the whole population. For example, analysis of the 613 postcodes provided by respondents (a further 169 people declined to give this information) shows that almost a third of these responses (202) were received from the MK8 area around Great Holm Fire Station, which is likely to explain the strong support for retaining it. To put this into context, the next largest number of responses from a particular postcode area - MK4 - was 55.

39. Of course, none of the above points means that the findings of the open consultation questionnaire should be disregarded - for they show the opinions of important groups of people who were motivated to participate. But it must be borne in mind that the results are not necessarily representative of the whole population.
40. In any case, influencing public policy through consultation is not simply a 'numbers game' or 'popularity contest' in which the loudest voices or the greatest numbers automatically win the argument. Instead, consultation is to inform authorities of issues, arguments, implications they might have overlooked; to contribute to the re-evaluation of matters already known; or to reassess priorities and principles critically. However popular proposals might be, that does not itself mean they are feasible, safe, sustainable, reasonable and value-for-money; and unpopularity does not mean the reverse.
41. All of this means that interpreting the overall meaning of the consultation outcomes is neither straightforward nor just 'numerical', for the different consultation methods have not only to be respected and recognised, but also evaluated or assessed: they cannot be simply summated. In this context, ORS attaches particular weight to findings that are deliberative (based upon thoughtful reflective discussion in non-emotive forums for example); but, of course, as aforementioned the open questionnaire is also very important and should be recognised and taken into account as a reflection of strength of feeling in certain areas against this particular proposal.
42. While ORS makes the above assessments, there is no single 'right interpretation' of the consultation elements, for professional and political judgement is needed. Ultimately, an overall interpretation of the consultation will depend upon the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority: they will consider all elements and determine which seem the most telling - above all, by considering the relative merits of the various opinions as the basis for the future of their Fire and Rescue Service.

Project Overview

Opinion Research Services

43. Opinion Research Services (ORS) is a generic social research company that works mainly for the public sector to conduct important applied research in health, housing, local government, police and fire and rescue services across the UK. The company was established in 1988 and has worked extensively with fire and rescue services (FRSs) across the UK since 1998. In 2004 it was appointed by the Fire Services Consultation Association (FSCA) as the sole approved provider of research and consultation services, under the terms of a National Framework Agreement. The same framework contract was retendered in 2009 and ORS was reappointed once more as the sole approved provider.
44. While working with FRSs across the UK, ORS has specialised in designing, implementing and reporting employee, stakeholder and public consultation programmes for a wide range of integrated risk management plans (IRMPs) - in many cases covering controversial and sensitive issues. In addition, ORS has extensive experience of statutory consultations about education, health and housing, and many other issues, including budgetary consultations.

The Commission

45. On the basis of its experience of numerous IRMP consultations, ORS was commissioned by Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (B&MKFRS) to undertake a consultation on the proposed merger of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations into a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub. The consultation programme consisted of:
- Designing, implementing, analysing and reporting an open online questionnaire (which was also available on paper on request); and
 - Recruiting, facilitating and reporting three forums in Milton Keynes (one for residents within the Bletchley Fire Station area, one for residents within the Great Holm Fire Station area and one for residents across Milton Keynes).
46. As well as giving general advice, ORS's primary role was to design, implement/facilitate, analyse and report both the open questionnaire and the various deliberative forums held in September 2015. We worked in collaboration with B&MKFRS to design the questionnaire and prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

B&MKFRS Consultation: Listening & Engagement

47. In 2013 and 2014, B&MKFRS and ORS undertook a 'pre-consultation' or 'listening and engagement' process to understand people's opinions and also 'test' some general principles before bringing forward this draft proposal for formal statutory consultation.
48. This staged approach to consultation conforms to the Gunning Principles (1985), which require that meaningful consultation should be at a 'formative stage', before authorities make decisions. The same principles also require that people should be given sufficient information and time to consider the issues in an informed manner, and also that their views should be taken conscientiously into account by the authority - in this case even before draft proposals are formulated for formal consultation.

Consultation Methods

Open Questionnaire

49. The open questionnaire (with the accompanying Consultation Document) was available online between 14th September and 9th November 2015. 782 questionnaires were completed; 675 were complete and 107 incomplete. Though none were submitted by post, paper copies of the questionnaire were available on request. Please see Pages 19 and 20 in the following chapter for a full respondent profile.

Deliberative Forums

The Forums

50. The consultation forums - each of which lasted for 2.5 hours - took place in September 2015 and were intended to provide insights into public views about the aforementioned proposal to merge Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations into a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub. The point of these deliberative sessions was to allow B&MKFRS to engage with, and listen to, members of the public about some very important issues - so that the participants would become more informed about the fire and rescue service and be able to reflect in depth about its plans; but also so that discussions around people's views could inform the Service's future planning.
51. ORS's role was to recruit, design, facilitate and report the forums. We worked in collaboration with B&MKFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

Attendance and Representativeness

52. In total, there were 46 diverse participants at the forums. The dates of the meetings and attendance levels by members of the public were as follows:

AREA	TIME AND DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Bletchley	6:30pm – 9:00pm Tuesday 15 th September 2015	12
Great Holm	6:30pm – 9:00pm Wednesday 16 th September 2015	19
Milton Keynes Wide	6:30pm – 9:00pm Thursday 17 th September 2014	15

53. The attendance target for the forums was to achieve at least 12 participants, so the recruitment programme was successful. Participants were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS' Social Research Call Centre. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent and broadly representative of the wider community. Overall (as shown in the table below), participants were a broad cross-section of residents from the local areas and, as standard good practice, were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part.

CRITERIA	FORUMS
Gender	Male: 24 Female: 22
Age	16-34: 9 35-54: 16 55+: 21
Social Grade	AB: 11 C1: 19 C2: 7 DE: 9
Ethnicity	4 BME
Limiting Long-term Illness	6

54. ORS typically over-recruits for forums to compensate for last minute 'no shows': on this occasion 20 people were recruited to achieve upwards of 12 participants. While the overall drop-out rate was low, eight of the 14 'no-shows' were in the 16-34 age bracket which explains the lower overall numbers of younger people at the sessions. Furthermore, it should be noted that while only 12 of 20 recruits attended at Bletchley, the weather conditions on that evening were particularly poor, which may have deterred at least some of them.
55. In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors, and the venues at which the forums met were

readily accessible. People's special needs were taken into account in the recruitment and venue selection.

56. Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, forums cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from Milton Keynes the opportunity to participate. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meeting (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions. In summary then, the outcomes reported here are reliable as examples of diverse informed people reacting to B&MKFRS's proposal to merge of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations into a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub.

Discussion Agenda

57. ORS worked in collaboration with B&MKFRS to agree a suitable agenda and informative stimulus material for the meeting, which covered all of the following topics:

- Staff and financial resources

- Distribution of emergency cover resources

- Incident profile and numbers

- Reality of reducing risk and the role of prevention, protection and response

- B&MKFRS's proposal to merge of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations into a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub , especially in relation to:

 - The desirability of collaboration between 'blue light' services in principle;

 - The desirability of a new Hub station to co-locate Fire and Police services on a single site - both in principle and to replace Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations;

 - The suitability of the proposed location at West Ashland; and

 - The feasibility of including community facilities and resources at the proposed new Hub station.

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

Consultation Programme Proportional and Fair

59. B&MKFRS's consultation programme was conscientious, in the sense of being open, accessible and fair to members of the public and stakeholders across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes: the consultation was proportional to the importance of the issues and conforms with good practice - both in its scale and the balance of elements included, and also in the way in which it built upon earlier engagement and consultation exercises undertaken by the Service.

60. The key good practice requirements for proper consultation programmes are that they 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 intelligently to consider the issues and any proposals intelligently and critically; and

Be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken.

Taken together, these four elements do much to ensure the 'accountability' of public authorities, particularly the fourth; but this does not mean that consultations are referenda.

61. **Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully.** This does not mean that the majority views expressed in consultations should automatically decide public policy, for consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the right or best decision in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are very important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions.

62. For the public bodies considering the outcomes of consultation, the key question is not *Which proposal has most support?* but, *Are the reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of the proposals cogent?* In this context, both B&MKFRS and ORS were clear that this important consultation programme should include both quantitative and deliberative elements in order to both:

Provide many people with the opportunity to take part via the open questionnaire routes; and

Promote informed engagement via the deliberative forums with members of the public.

63. Given people's general unawareness of how their fire and rescue services operate and manage their resources and costs, consultation with informed audiences - who have the opportunity to question and test the evidence for particular proposals - is especially valuable. All consultation elements are important and none should be disregarded, but the deliberative forums are particularly worthy of consideration because they explore the arguments and the reasons for people's opinions. There is no doubt that B&MKFRS's consultation programme conforms to good practice by including both quantitative and qualitative methods through which people could participate and as a means for the Authority to understand the reasons for people's opinions.

64. As well as providing the public and stakeholders with sufficient information to consider the proposals intelligently, B&MKFRS has also conducted its consultation in a timely manner and is

taking account of the outcomes before making a decision. Both the scale and nature of the programme compare well with similar consultations undertaken by other fire and rescue services and public bodies.

The Report

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

Consultation Findings: Open Questionnaire

Introduction

66. The open questionnaire (with the accompanying Consultation Document) was available online between 14th September and 9th November 2015. 782 questionnaires were completed; 675 were complete and 107 incomplete. Though none were submitted by post, paper copies of the questionnaire were available on request.

Need for Interpretation

67. Although the open questionnaire is an important and accessible consultation route that is, by its very nature, open to all, it was not distributed systematically. As such, and because the respondent profile is an imperfect reflection of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes population, the following results have to be interpreted carefully.
68. Crucially, 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 (and in many cases concerns) about the proposed changes.

Respondent Profiles

69. The tables below and overleaf show the profile characteristics of respondents to the survey.

Table 1: Are you completing this form as...?

Are you completing this form as...?	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
A resident of Milton Keynes	578	85
A resident of Buckinghamshire	46	7
A resident from outside of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes	13	2
A member of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Service	15	2
A member of a partner organisation	2	*
A representative of a business	5	1
A representative of a public sector organisation	7	1
A representative of a community or voluntary organisation	6	1
Other	12	2
Not Known	98	-
Total	782	100

Table 2: Gender

Gender	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
Male	295	44
Female	378	56
Not Known	109	-
Total	782	100

Table 3: Age

Age	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
16-34	161	24
35-44	221	33
45-54	127	19
55 or over	157	24
Not Known	116	-
Total	782	100

Table 4: Health Problem/Disability

Health Problem/Disability	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
Yes	80	12
No	572	88
Not Known	130	-
Total	782	100

Table 5: Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)
White - British	591	97
Not White - British	18	3
Not Known	173	-
Total	782	100

Responses from organisations

70. Of the 684 responses to the 'Are you completing this form as...?' question, a total of 32 respondents said they were representing the views of organisations (though some of these organisations were repeated and some were actually local councillors) or 'other'. Figures 1 and 2 below detail those organisations.

Figure 1: Summary of organisations responding to the questionnaire (who gave their details) – 17 responses

Big Local Conniburrow.
 Dim 2 Dazzling window cleaning services.
 Gilbey's restaurant.
 Milton Keynes Councillor, responsible for Shenley Lodge, Shenley Brook End, Furzton and Emerson Valley.
 Milton Keynes Councillor.
 Leon Residents' Association and COBRA (Consortium of Bletchley Residents' Associations).
 Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council.
 Milton Keynes Council and Stony Stratford Town Council.
 Milton Keynes Pest Control.

New Bradwell Parish Council.
OC Cleaning Services.
Shenley Brook End and Tattenhoe Parish Council.
SVC Creative Ltd.
Thames Valley Police (2 responses).
Ward Councillor for Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes Council.
Ward Councillor for Milton Keynes Bletchley East.

Figure 2: Summary of ‘other’ respondents responding to the questionnaire (who gave their details) – 10 responses

A concerned neighbouring resident.
A previous member of Buckinghamshire FRS.
A resident who lived in Bletchley for many years but has just moved to an adjoining village.
As someone who has family in Milton Keynes.
Daughter of a retired station officer.
Firefighter in neighbouring county.
Former fireman.
Former resident of Milton Keynes.
Someone who works in Milton Keynes.
Very concerned citizen.

Interpretation of the Data

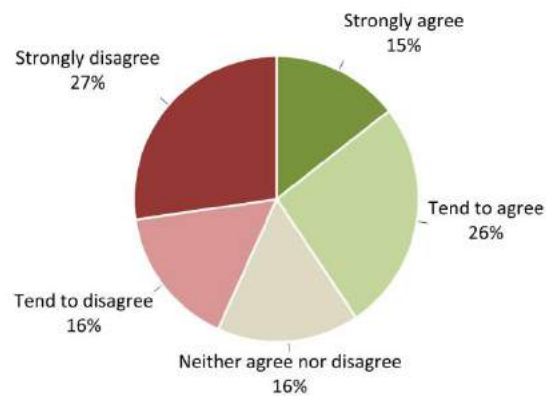
71. Where differences between demographic groups have been highlighted as significant there is a 95% probability that the difference is significant and not due to chance. Differences that are not said to be ‘significant’ or ‘statistically significant’ are indicative only. When comparing results between demographic sub-groups, on the whole, only results which are significantly different are highlighted in the text.
72. 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 residents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a ‘traffic light’ system in which:
 - Green shades represent positive responses;
 - Beige and purple/blue shades represent neither positive nor negative responses;
 - Red shades represent negative responses; and
 - The bolder shades are used to highlight responses at the ‘extremes’, for example, very satisfied or very dissatisfied.
73. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers.

Views on the Proposal

Do you agree or disagree that collaboration with other 'blue light' (i.e. emergency) services is a good idea in principle?

74. Similar proportions of respondents agreed (41%) and disagreed (43%) that collaboration with other 'blue light' (i.e. emergency) services is a good idea in principle.

Figure 3: Do you agree or disagree that collaboration with other 'blue light' (i.e. emergency) services is a good idea in principle?
Base: All Respondents (779)

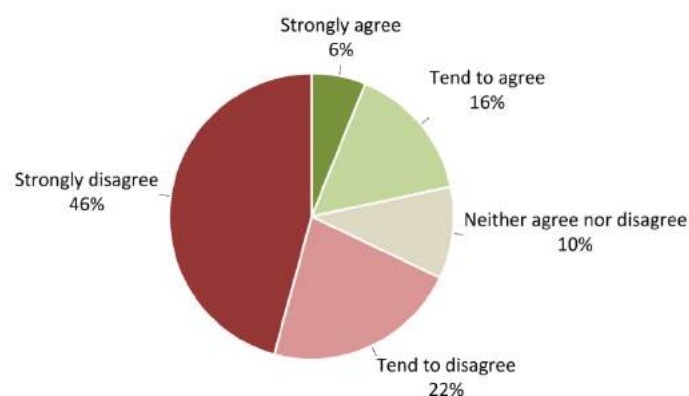


Do you agree or disagree that a new Hub station to co-locate Fire and Police services on a single site is a good idea in principle?

75. More than two thirds (68%) of respondents disagreed that a new Hub station to co-locate Fire and Police services on a single site is a good idea in principle. Less than a quarter (22%) of respondents agreed.

Figure 4: Do you agree or disagree that a new hub station to co-locate Fire and Police services on a single site is a good idea in principle?

Base: All Respondents (760)

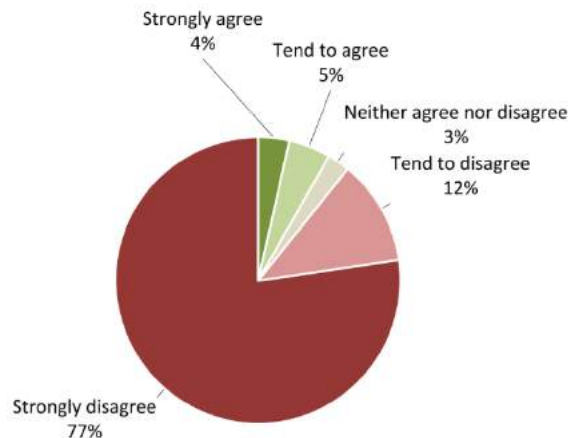


Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace the fire stations at Bletchley and Great Holm with a new Hub station?

76. Almost 9 in 10 respondents (89%) disagreed with the proposal to replace the fire stations at Bletchley and Great Holm with a new Hub station; only 8% agreed with this.

Figure 5: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace the fire stations at Bletchley and Great Holm with a new Hub station?

Base: All Respondents (757)

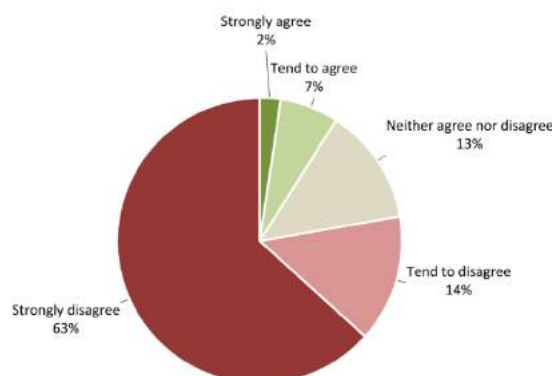


Do you agree or disagree that the proposed location at West Ashland is a suitable location for the proposed new Hub station?

77. More than three quarters (78%) of respondents disagreed that the proposed location at West Ashland is a suitable location for the proposed new Hub station; only 9% agreed with this.

Figure 6: Do you agree or disagree that the proposed location at West Ashland is a suitable location for the proposed new Hub station?

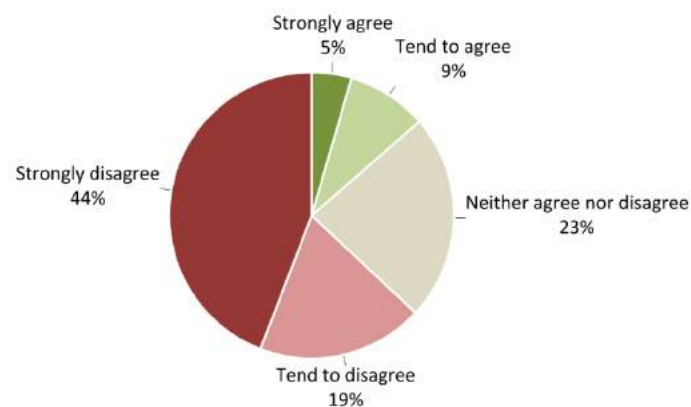
Base: All Respondents (750)



Do you agree or disagree that the proposal would help support redevelopment opportunities in the Bletchley/Sherwood Drive area by relocating the existing fire and police stations?

78. Just over three fifths (63%) of respondents disagreed that the proposal would help support redevelopment opportunities in the Bletchley/Sherwood Drive area by relocating the existing fire and police stations; only 14% agreed with this. Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

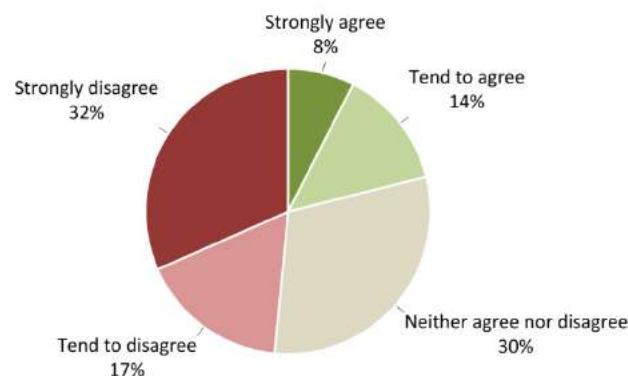
Figure 7: Do you agree or disagree that the proposal would help support redevelopment opportunities in the Bletchley/Sherwood Drive area by relocating the existing fire and police stations?
Base: All Respondents (747)



Do you agree or disagree with including community facilities and resources at the proposed new Hub station?

79. Just under half (49%) of respondents disagreed with including community facilities and resources at the proposed new Hub station; only 21% agreed with this. It is also worth noting that 3 in 10 respondents (30%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this.

Figure 8: Do you agree or disagree with including community facilities and resources at the proposed new Hub station?
Base: All Respondents (740)



If you agree, what types of public facilities should be included at the proposed Hub station?

80. The 21% of respondents who agreed with including community facilities and resources at the proposed new Hub station were asked what they would specifically want to have included at the site.
81. The most sought after facility at the new hub station was a community meeting room(s), with residents, members of B&MKFRS and other organisations stating that is something they would like to see provided. The provision of the following amenities were also of interest to respondents: information points such as Citizens Advice, drop-ins, an education centre and general fire safety advice; facilities for children such as a play area, crèche and learning centre; first aid training; library services; a café; and sports facilities.

Do the proposals have any positive or negative impacts on people with protected characteristics? If so, are you able to provide any evidence and suggest any ways in which B&MKA could reduce or remove potential negative impact and increase any positive impact?

82. Respondents who felt the proposals would impact people with “protected characteristics” were asked to explain which aspects may have a particular positive or negative impact and how they thought any negative impacts could be reduced and positive impacts enhanced.

Negative Impacts

83. Many respondents felt the changes would remove (or at least decrease) vital services such as fire cover and police and firefighter presence for people living in deprived areas - and also those who are vulnerable due to old age and/or disability. This, it was said, would place them at an even greater disadvantage. The comments made were as follows:

Absence of visible policing in a deprived area like Bletchley is asking for trouble. I use a wheelchair and was threatened by a middle-school aged child who demanded money with menace. Modernise the Bletchley facilities and don't reduce police there (Resident)

Great Holm fire station and especially Bletchley fire station are located close to some deprived areas in my opinion; where the stations currently are allows the firefighters to be seen by people in these areas and can be seen as positive role models (Resident)

There are many vulnerable people living in Great Holm who will be further from help if this merger goes ahead, especially MacIntyre residents and some sheltered or adapted housing residents (Resident)

Relocating the Bletchley Fire Station will have an adverse effect on the disabled and those on low incomes, due to the fact that the Bletchley station currently has excellent public transport links and keeps the fire station within access to these people. Moving it to West Ashland increases the distances required to travel from public transport links and therefore

disadvantages these groups from accessing the station. The Great Holm station is currently located on the edge of a housing estate. This gives easy access to people on this estate to the fire station. Relocating it to West Ashland, once again will disadvantage those with disabilities, the young and those on low incomes as they will no longer be able to travel the short distance to the station and would have to find other travel arrangement (Resident)

The fire service will not be able to provide a quick response to the north of Milton Keynes if the station at Great Holm is closed. This will have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of those with disabilities and those who live in care homes, for example, the extra care village. It is of vital importance that, for the safety of the elderly and those with disabilities that response times are not extended by closing Great Holm and relocation further out towards the already overcrowded roads near the football stadium (Councillor for Shenley Lodge, Shenley Brook End, Furzton and Emerson Valley)

In theory, a person with a disability would take longer to rescue than an able bodied person; moving the station from the north to southern Milton Keynes is going to already potentially slow rescue times for those in the north, this will be exacerbated for those with disabilities in the north (Representative of New Bradwell Parish Council)

Longer response times to deal with old or disabled people in house fires is not acceptable, as appliances will need to travel further to the west of the city such as Stony Stratford & Wolverton. (Resident)

It will take longer for emergency services to get to some parts of the city, which will impact on everyone including people who have disabilities. It will affect how quickly appliances will be able to get to some care homes, which are all over the city, not just in one geographical location, so people in those care homes would be disadvantaged. I'm thinking in particular of those in the north, which would currently be served by Great Holm, it will take longer to reach the north of the city from Ashland than it currently does from Great Holm, putting people in the north at a disadvantage, and I would assume the same could be said of people currently served by the Bletchley station, that it will take longer to reach them from Ashland. (Resident)

Positive Impacts

84. Although most of the comments related to the perceived negative impacts of the proposals on people with protected characteristics, there were a handful of positive observations:

The purpose-built facility will be accessible to all groups (Resident)

Presumably a more modern site would be more accessible for visitors with mobility difficulties (Resident)

Purpose built access to all sections of the community for community areas. (Unspecified)

Are there any other comments you would like to make about the changes we are considering?

85. 429 respondents submitted additional comments in relation to the proposed changes. The table and commentary below thematically summarise these comments.

Table 6: Are there any other comments you would like to make about the changes we are considering?

Theme	Count
Proposed changes will result in longer response times due to the proposed location at West Ashland and the additional distance from many areas	124
Keep the two stations where they are	114
Do not close Great Holm station as it covers a large population and is in a good location	105
Growing population and housing development means provisions should be increased in these areas	95
Proposed changes will mean the lives of people in the area will be at risk	81
Alternative proposal provided	55
Need to retain and upgrade current facilities i.e. invest in existing stations	48
General disagreement with proposals	41
Disagree with location of proposed new station due to perceived traffic problems	37
Proposals are financially motivated	25
Do not close Bletchley station as it covers a large population and is in a good location	24
Agree with collaboration with other 'blue light' services but not at the expense of the two stations	17
Proposed changes leave the North and West of Milton Keynes vulnerable	16
General agreement with proposals	8
Other	141

Opposition to the Proposal

Proposed Location at West Ashland

86. The largest proportion of respondents who made further comments were opposed to the proposal because of the suggested 'southern' location of the Hub at West Ashland. They were of the view that locating the station here would not allow B&MKFRS to sufficiently cover areas in the North and West of Milton Keynes (particularly Stony Stratford, Wolverton and Deanshanger); and that any additional distance will lead to a significant increase in response times and compromised public safety in these areas:

The closing of Great Holm Station will put the people of Stony Stratford and Wolverton at a great risk (Member of B&MKFRS)

I feel that this leaves the North West of Milton Keynes including Stony Stratford and Wolverton very vulnerable, as West Ashland is too far south to cover the area previously covered by Great Holm. Although you state that appliances will be out and about and called by the nearest GPS this wouldn't follow at night (Representative of Shenley Brook End and Tattenhoe Parish Council)

Consolidating the services reduces the cover of major areas of Milton Keynes currently protected, which reduces response times to these areas. The services need to be spread more evenly to provide adequate cover for all areas (Resident)

A fire engine needs to be available for the people of Stony Stratford. All your proposed resources will be miles away. What will happen if Ashlands are on another call and Newport and Broughton are on the M1? Disgusting proposal. People including children will die if you let this happen. Years ago my family (who are blind!) were led out of a house fire by firefighters from Great Holm with seconds to spare. If this was to happen in the future I dread to think the outcome! (Resident)

I live in Deanshanger, which is currently covered by the Great Holm station, and comfortably within the 10 minute response target. With the location of the new station, my home is on the border of the 10 minute response boundary, and much of the village of Deanshanger is outside the 10 minute response boundary. My fellow citizens who live in Wicken are even worse off under the proposals; they are currently also within the 10 minute boundary, but are well outside the 10 minute boundary from the proposed location. I am disappointed to see that the residents to the North and West, and in particular the outlying villages, appear to have been overlooked, as there is no mention at all of any mitigation, nor do these locations appear to have been taken into account when proposing to move the Great Holm station four miles towards the South East. (Resident)

87. Another apparent issue with locating a new Hub at West Ashland is the impact of traffic congestion around the area due to its close proximity to Stadium MK and a busy shopping area. This again raised major concerns about response times and public safety:

I don't feel the proposal takes account of the heavy traffic that can be found around West Ashland and the A5 roundabout when there are events on at Milton Keynes Stadium. I've visited a popular event at the stadium before and been caught at the roundabout alone for 30+ minutes. Although emergency vehicles will likely be able to make better progress than a private car, it is still inevitable that such heavy gridlocked traffic will cause serious problems for emergency vehicles trying to get onto the A5 or into Bletchley. For this reason alone, I don't think the proposed site at West Ashland is suitable for an emergency response base (Resident)

Response times will be slower, especially on match days at the stadium... (Resident)

Do you think it's safe and practical to try and get fire units through Ashlands roundabout in rush hour? These are our homes and our families at risk and shouldn't be a penny pinching exercise, aren't our lives worth more? (Resident)

Locating near a busy shopping and sports facility will increase response times further. (Resident)

Housing Expansion and Population Increases

88. The increasing number of housing developments throughout Milton Keynes, especially in the West, is also a key factor in respondents' opposition to the proposed Hub station. Many suggested that increasing demand from continuing population increases coupled with relocating the two stations would have a negative impact on fire cover, response times and safety:

I am wholly opposed to the closure of Great Holm Fire Station. As a resident in and councillor for Stony Stratford, I believe this will place our community at greater risk. It also ignores the growth in the west of the city (Representative of Milton Keynes Council and Stony Stratford Town Council)

It seems crazy to move the Great Holm Fire Station away just as a major expansion just up the road (the west flank) is about to start. Whatever the reassurances offered the response times for residents in the immediate area are bound to increase (Representative of Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council)

I cannot support the proposals as the proposal to close Great Holm and merge into the Ashland site doesn't stack up. The consultation is not clear if and how it has considered the western expansion area, which has outlined planning permission for 6,000 homes and is (finally) being developed. This is in terms not just of coverage of properties but also the impact that it will have on the surrounding road network. Modelling response times on current traffic levels and patterns is not appropriate for a long-term strategy (Ward Councillor for Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes Council)

As Milton Keynes is expanding these emergency services are even more vital than ever, we should be improving the services, not reducing them! (Resident)

Backward and short-sighted move when Milton Keynes has been rapidly expanding for years, and the Milton Keynes plan identifies tens of thousands of new houses. These could be placed in rural areas such as Hanslope, Stony Stratford, Olney and South of Bletchley (Resident)

Milton Keynes is getting bigger and bigger and a new estate is being built between Stony and Crown Hill; closing Great Holm is just plain dangerous! Risking the lives of everyone this side of Milton Keynes (Resident)

There is no mention of the large growth in population in the area to the south-west of Watling Street between Danstead Way and Ridgeway. This area will increase demand and be further from a fire station. (Resident)

Other Options and Suggestions

Retain the Status Quo

89. Many respondents (including members of B&MKFRS) urged B&MKFA to retain the status quo, suggesting that the proposal is simply a cost-cutting exercise that will put people's lives at risk. In fact, some people suggested that the existing stations should be upgraded and invested in instead:

Keep existing sites and invest in them. Make them more energy efficient and more accessible to the public. Bletchley is a big site, invest in training facilities there. Bletchley had a refurb not so many years ago, making it more energy efficient, new heating new windows etc. So why is it now not energy efficient? It has a massive flat roof so why not fit solar panels? Great Holm has a newish training facility, just spent £50k on a new ceiling in bays to make it more energy efficient, invested in new windows, heating etc. There is lots of wasted space. Adapt the site to suit the needs of a growing Milton Keynes (Member of B&MKFRS)

Leave the fire stations where they are and put money into them for refurbishment. That way, morale within the watches would be improved and less disruption to services provided for the area of Milton Keynes. It will cost people their homes and lives if the merger happens. I work in Buckingham and the cover there for both fire and police is low at the moment, with an understanding that it will decrease again for fire if changes are made. Money should be put into the existing stations like Great holm, Bletchley and Buckingham alike (Member of BMKFRS)

You need to admit that you're more interested in Bletchley Station's land value than public safety! My house is in the race courses, our turn out time will be increased by vital precious minutes which is unacceptable. If the result of this merger is that one of my family members was to suffer just for financial reasons then the proposal is poor. You need to be honest with yourselves. It's easy to see Milton Keynes is expanding and a central cheap station isn't the answer. Great Holm has had investment with meeting rooms, offices, smoke chamber, new heating system, etc.! (Resident)

90. It should be noted that there was a great deal of support for Great Holm Fire Station, with many citing its good location and coverage as reasons for maintaining services there. This was also the case for Bletchley (although support was on a smaller scale than that shown for Great Holm):

Great Holm Fire Station is strategically placed for quick access to northern Milton Keynes and the very large development taking place on the western flank of Milton Keynes (Resident)

The Great Holm Fire Station is ideally located to serve the new western flank, Stony Stratford, Colverton & The Centre:MK shopping building offices & railway station (Resident)

I agree Bletchley Station is outdated and needs changing but location-wise it's ideal and I don't see how you can argue this point. It's central to vulnerable areas such as the Lakes Estate, close to West Bletchley, ideal for the new stadium and surrounding network and close enough to Newton Leys and the accident prone bypass. (Resident)

Introduce a 'Blue-Light Hub' and Maintain Current Services at Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations

91. Some respondents felt that while collaboration with other 'blue light' (i.e. emergency) services in the form of a new Hub station is a good idea, it should be provided in addition to the two existing fire stations at Bletchley and Great Holm. This, it was said, would ensure the provision of sufficient coverage across Milton Keynes (which is increasing in size):

As a rapidly growing city, would it not make more sense to keep Great Holm open and also build a new station at the proposed site, creating more jobs and more importantly, a safer city as response times would be even better (Resident)

If you want to combine blue light services, do so with the existing fire stations. Do not make my call out time longer than it already is should I require the fire services. I believe the police are now stationed at Broughton fire station... And they do not communicate between the two services; they just exist alongside each other. So it has not benefitted the services in anyway by now being 'next to each other'. (Resident)

Retain Great Holm Fire Station (perhaps on a smaller scale) but relocate Bletchley Fire Station

92. Other responses alternatively suggested that Great Holm Fire Station should be retained at its current location, with only Bletchley being relocated to a Blue Light Hub in West Ashland:

The closing of Great Holm Station will put the people of Stony Stratford and Wolverton at a great risk. Keep Great Holm station where it is and find a better place to relocate Bletchley (Member of B&MKFRS)

A new blue light hub is a good idea but a single fire station for west Milton Keynes would undoubtedly increase travel times for fire appliances. Maybe the blue light hub should be built in Bletchley leaving Great Holm where it is (Member of B&MKFRS)

Close Bletchley which will be well served by Ashland. Keep Great Holm to ensure response times of much of Milton Keynes western flank remain under 5 minutes. This will balance use of Broughton for Milton Keynes eastern flank. (Resident)

93. Furthermore, some B&MKFRS staff members suggested that, if a new Hub Station is to be established at West Ashland, Great Holm Fire Station should be retained as a 'satellite' on-call station to provide coverage to areas in the North and West of Milton Keynes:

If closing Great Holm we should have a small station for a retained pump to be parked at so the retain crew who live in that area can give a rapid response. As having to respond to Ashlands from the Great Holm area and back towards great holm is an unnecessary journey (Member of B&MKFRS)

Keep Great Holm station as an on-call station to give better support and sense of safety to the surrounding residents (Member of B&MKFRS)

Maintain a much smaller site in the vicinity of Great Holm fire station, preferably on a commercial estate, as a joint on-call/satellite station for Great Holm's on-call to respond to. No need for drill yard/tower, just basic facilities for responding to incidents. (Member of B&MKFRS)

Re-locate Newport Pagnell Fire Station

94. A few respondents commented that it would be more sensible to re-locate or reduce services at Newport Pagnell Fire Station due to its low level of call outs and the provision of additional cover from Onley and Broughton:

After looking at the amount of call outs on the week commencing 25 October 2015 it appears that Newport Pagnell Fire Station does the least amount of work; they has 4 actual incident callouts and 4 false alarms. I believe that this area should be seriously looked at and Newport closed rather than Great Holm (Resident)

With the greatest expansion in Milton Keynes why isn't Newport Pagnell reduced to day crewing as Olney and Broughton are still close by? (Resident)

Other Alternative Suggestions

95. Additional alternative suggestions put forward by residents, councillors and B&MKFRS staff members are outlined below:

Retain Great Holm and Bletchley and make Great Holm your proposed 'blue hub'. There is absolutely no need to build a new station at Ashlands (Councillor for Shenley Lodge, Shenley Brook End, Furzton and Emerson Valley)

A better location (for the hub site) might be the land off Portway roundabout bounded by the A5, Portway, the West Coast main line and the redway between Loughton and the train station (Resident)

Redevelop Sherwood Drive and combine the savings between Thames Valley Police and SCAS (South Central Ambulance NHS Trust) into one blue light hub and leave Great Holm alone (Resident)

Make Bletchley and Great Holm blue light hubs at existing locations. (A representative of a public sector organisation)

Support for the Proposal

96. Though minimal, there was some support for at least some elements of the proposed changes, as the following comments demonstrate:

I understand updating Bletchley. God knows it needs it. Moving the police station is a good idea too. I have no problem with that. The way Milton Keynes is growing we need updating over that side of the city. (Representative of Big Local Conniburrow)

As long as a blue light turns up quickly when I need it, when my neighbour needs it and his neighbour etc. then I have to presume that you're doing the right thing. I realise that house fire emergencies seem to be dropping, whilst RTCs are probably increasing, but response times with the correct equipment and personnel, are vital. (Resident)

97. Furthermore, while one respondent was very much in favour of blue light collaboration, they felt that involving the Police may be detrimental in the sense that negative public perceptions of this organisation may impact on the Fire and Rescue Service's ability to engage with certain sectors of the community:

Combining facilities for blue light services sounds great and would certainly work with the ambulance service, providing better training facilities in each other's roles. Including the

police, which will have limited training advantages, would detract from the independence from the legal system that allows the fire service access to people that are sometimes the most vulnerable in our society (Resident)

Other Comments

98. Some 'other' comments referred to: security issues in relation to including community facilities within a Hub station; the lack of evidence underpinning the proposal; the logistics of how Bletchley and Great Holm on-call staff will be able to respond to a new station in West Ashland in the required timeframe; whether the demands of cross-border support (to Northamptonshire for example) has been considered; the possibility of appliance reductions in future; plans for the existing sites; and a lack of evidence that the proposed change represents a significant improvement over the current situation:

As a member of Thames Valley Police, having community facilities at the blue-light hub would pose a huge security issue especially in the current climate... (Member of Partner Organisation)

It is suggested that there is to be a blue light centre but there is no information as to whether either the police or ambulance service support this, and how it would affect their provision of services and their locations. A joined up service is a good idea but this proposal has no evidence to support it and has been added merely to add weight (Resident)

I would like to know how your on call staff at both stations will be able to respond from home within a set time limit without affecting attendance times? (Member of B&MKFRS)

No mention is made of the increased times appliances will be unavailable when assisting Northamptonshire Fire Service in the areas in the south of that county due to greater distances. No mention is made of the loss of on-call firefighters that live near Great Holm or Bletchley Fire Station and will not be able to respond to a new location (Resident)

As firefighters' community fire safety activities continue to reduce the numbers of fires and as government cuts to local authority budgets increase, there will come a time when some people ask why are there five fire appliances at west Ashland (presuming the three at great holm and the two at Bletchley all transfer to the new station). There may be pressure on the FRS to reduce the number of appliances and firefighters (Resident)

For the Great Holm site there doesn't appear to be an 'exit strategy'. A lot of further work would need to be done if it is decided to vacate the site to identify what is to be done next with the site. I urge you to work with the local community on this ward (Councillor for Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes Council)

It is not clear that the proposal represents a good use of valuable public money and will provide a significant advantage over the current situation. The plan also suggests that the new fire station could accommodate fewer engines than the pictures of Bletchley and Great Holm suggests. Whilst there are maps showing the 5 and 10 minute journey areas, there is no indication of the extent of the area currently covered by the services. (Resident)

Consultation Findings: Public Forums

Introduction

99. Overall, the three public forums considered a range of important issues associated with the proposed merger of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations 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 three meetings have been merged to give an overall report of findings, rather than three separate and potentially repetitive mini-reports – but significant differences in views have been drawn out where appropriate.
100. During the presentations of the proposals and throughout the three sessions, participants asked a number of detailed questions for clarification and these were in the main addressed by the fire officers attending. The findings below focus not on these questions but the opinions directly relating to the specific proposal. At the end of each session, participants were asked to present their overall opinion in order to gain an impression of the level of support or opposition to the proposed merger in each area.

Views on the Proposal

Blue Light Collaboration in Principle

101. Most participants were very positive about the principle of collaboration between the three emergency services: they felt this would yield improved, more effective working relationships as a result of easier communication and sharing of knowledge and best practice. Some typical comments were:

(A benefit would be) *sharing best practice* (Bletchley)

It will be easier for them to work together and will enable a more effective and co-ordinated approach. It will also allow the sharing of knowledge and building of relationships (Great Holm)

The experience of the staff from the different organisations will bring about the cross-fertilisation of ideas (Great Holm)

It will be much easier to develop shared learning and knowledge (Great Holm)

We agree with the principle because it will mean better interaction between all the services and a more 'complete' service for the community. (Milton Keynes Wide)

It would consolidate all resources and develop better communication between services.
(Milton Keynes Wide)

A 'Blue Light Hub'?

102. The idea of a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub was generally welcomed in principle - and indeed in practice when considering the proposal to develop such a facility to replace Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations. Indeed, it was clear that informed opinion (expressed after the presentation and the question and answer session) inclined significantly in favour of the proposal on the grounds that it would enable the aforementioned collaboration between emergency services; and that:

A joint, modern facility would ensure reduced overheads and increased efficiencies

It would cost less and be more efficient...it's got to be cheaper running one station than two
(Bletchley)

We think it's a good idea because it's cost-effective to provide services from a new building... (Great Holm)

It's a good idea ... there will be cost reductions in terms of overheads and efficiency in terms of shared resources (Great Holm)

There will be the cost-effectiveness of one building for multiple services and more efficient running costs (Milton Keynes Wide)

There would be more shared cost savings with two or more services. (Milton Keynes Wide)

It is based on sound risk analysis and will improve response times overall

I think it's a great idea; I think your response times will be better (Bletchley)

It sounds like the analysis has been very thoroughly done (Bletchley)

It is forward-thinking and logical from a financial perspective (and any savings will be re-invested into the Service)

Strategically it does sound like a financially sensible option...they say they're going to reinvest so I can't see any major negatives at all (Bletchley)

You've got to move forward. the two stations are getting old; they've got to be replaced sometime, so why not now? (Bletchley)

There will be no firefighter redundancies

I'm positive. I think my biggest preconception coming here was that it was a merger of two sites which meant job losses but as this is actually keeping the same levels of staff... And you're actually saving money that's being reinvested again...for the general population I think it's a great idea. (Bletchley)

It will prove safer from a road user perspective

It's got to be safer for fire engine and car drivers and pedestrians if you're in an industrial area that's close to a main trunk road and dual carriageway (Milton Keynes Wide)

It will ultimately 'safeguard the future of the fire service in Milton Keynes'

I think it's a once in a lifetime opportunity to get a plot of that size and location that's not going to cost anything; and it's going to safeguard the future of the fire service of Milton Keynes. (Bletchley)

103. Nevertheless, this is not to say there were no concerns about the proposed change - for example, some participants at Great Holm were initially concerned that a station merger could be used as a means to justify further reductions to emergency service budgets, and several others approved the proposal only on the proviso that any savings are re-invested into the Fire and Rescue Service:

Will it be used as an excuse to reduce budgets because it's on one site rather than multiple sites? (Great Holm)

We are concerned about budgets being further reduced due to co-location (Great Holm)

We agree there should be a Hub station as long as the investment is put towards future fire services for the town (Milton Keynes Wide)

As long as you're reinvesting back into the service and into this area instead of it going back to central Government (Bletchley)

I don't have any problem with what you're planning but if those sites are sold off can we have guarantees that that money will be re-invested in the level of service and the increase in service to cover the new builds? (Milton Keynes Wide)

104. A few people highlighted other concerns and disadvantages, including that: co-locating vital services on one site could leave them all vulnerable in the event of power cuts or other service disruptions; the working practices of the different organisations may not be entirely compatible; and that co-location could result in the sometimes negative perception members of the public have of the Police detrimentally impacting upon the generally well-regarded Fire and Ambulance Services:

If you have all of your eggs in one basket, the risk of service interruption increases (Great Holm)

If something went wrong like power loss etc. it would affect everyone (Milton Keynes Wide)

Individual working procedure differences between organisations may cause barriers. (Milton Keynes Wide)

The perceptions of a joint service may be altered for people who have poor feelings towards the Police. (Milton Keynes Wide)

105. Importantly also, even after discussion and clarification, there were lingering concerns at Great Holm around response times to the West of Milton Keynes (discussed in more detail in paragraph

109 overleaf) and at Bletchley around the perception of ‘reducing’ services at a time of population increases:

I think on an objective basis it's fair to say yes we can see the logic but there are some subjective feelings and some quite strong held ones as well that the North West side of Milton Keynes is being if not abandoned then put into second place (Great Holm)

I'm 50/50. I can understand the financial side of it but I can't understand with the population that's still growing why we're combining the fire stations. (Bletchley)

106. Furthermore, some participants at the Milton Keynes Wide Forum, while accepting the reasoning behind the proposal themselves, acknowledged that there may be ‘another side of the story’; that is, that the views of firefighters may be somewhat different:

We're in agreement because the reasons given made sense. Our only caveat would be that other people might have very different ideas. We're only working on what we've been told... (Milton Keynes Wide)

Are the firefighters on board with the proposals? (Milton Keynes Wide)

This was not necessarily an issue, more an expression of interest in what the ‘boots on the ground’ feel about the possible changes.

Location

107. Opinions on the proposed location for the Blue Light Hub were mixed. A majority of participants (and especially those at Bletchley and in the Milton Keynes Wide Forum) were in favour - and some highly positive - about the West Ashland site, primarily given its proximity to local road networks and the accessibility this would afford:

I think it's better situated for access (Bletchley)

I can't see any objections. I think the response time will be even better... (Bletchley)

I like the way it's near the exits on to the A421 and the A5 - the two main roads through Milton Keynes - and I'm sure the response times will quicken in some respects (Bletchley)

It seems to be a good place to site the station. It has good access to the dual carriageways and less local traffic for the fire engines when on a call (Milton Keynes Wide)

My first reaction is that's brilliant. I think the A5 is an ideal site for access to town and response times. (Milton Keynes Wide)

108. Furthermore, explanations of B&MKFRS's Automatic Vehicle Location System (which is now used to identify the nearest fire engine to an incident for the quickest response) was reassuring for many, who understood that fire station locations are no longer as important as they once were - especially given the frequency with which firefighters are out in the community undertaking prevention and education work:

I am extremely positive about it. This is great and I'm reassured because I thought they were all sitting at the same station but they're not; they're out and about. (Bletchley)

We see a fire station and that is a great part of what the Fire Service is about...but your point quite rightly from your risk modelling is that location is a secondary consideration. It's the technology and having people out on the road all the time... (Great Holm)

However, it was said that this particular point would not be well-understood by the general public, which presents a particular challenge in terms of information dissemination and reassurance.

109. Despite the positivity reported above, many participants expressed concern about the proposed location - particularly those from Great Holm who felt that siting the Hub in West Ashland might adversely affect coverage for the (expanding) North and West of Milton Keynes:

Great Holm was built to service the North of Milton Keynes. This proposal seems to contradict the initial purpose of Great Holm Fire Station (Great Holm)

What about the impact on Beanhill residents? (Great Holm)

It's Bletchley-centric. What about Stony Stratford and the western expansion? (Great Holm)

We are a bit concerned about response times to the West and North West of Milton Keynes, especially with the western expansion (Great Holm)

There is a thirty or fifty year master plan for Milton Keynes. Has that been built into the model? (Great Holm)

Indeed, even participants in the other two forums questioned whether the town's forthcoming westward expansion has been fully considered by the Fire and Rescue Service in developing a future-proofed proposal:

It's an expanding city. You've got Newton Leys; you've got Stony Stratford ... (Bletchley)

There's a lot of development going on in the West and a lot along the A5 going up from Crown Hill...five, six thousand new homes going up. I see at least two fire engines daily and I'm just a little bit concerned with that area of Milton Keynes being expanded how that's going to impact on your moving (Bletchley)

They're building hundreds of houses north of Great Holm station; they're making complete new estates and it's spreading out West so they're going to be taking longer to cover. It seems to me that you're taking it more to the commercial district; away from the home owners who are more likely to have problems (Milton Keynes Wide)

Does this option provide a future-proofed plan in relation to the changing logistics and plans for Milton Keynes. Does the Council work with the Fire Service? (Milton Keynes Wide)

110. The fact the proposed location is near to Stadium MK and a busy shopping area was also thought to be potentially problematic owing to congestion during rush hour and on match days. In addition, this traffic congestion has been exacerbated, according to some participants, by nearby new housing developments (though the layout of the A5 roundabout has apparently improved the situation somewhat):

We're worried about access during match days and the area is surrounded by busy shops, restaurants and a cinema area. It's a very busy area for traffic. Is there a better location? (Great Holm)

It's an ideal location close to town and response times...the only thing we thought was around shift systems and the football stadium (Milton Keynes Wide)

There is a question over the location of the new site due to congestion and proximity to the stadium...shift changes would be at the time of congestion on match days (Great Holm)

A concern of mine is the Standing Way; at around half past five in the evening it is horrendous. (Bletchley)

111. In order to mitigate against these issues, one participant questioned: *could there be an alternative emergency services exit onto the A5 roundabout or maybe put traffic lights to stop traffic when an emergency vehicle needs to leave?* (Great Holm)

Community Facilities

112. A majority of participants was in favour of including community facilities on the Hub site, primarily as this would assist in: increasing the provision of educational prevention programmes offered; widening the availability of community meeting space across Milton Keynes; and improving relations between the emergency services and the public:

The more education the better. The use of facilities by communities will promote better relationships with younger generations (Great Holm)

As a teacher, we run a public services course at our school. I assume we would be able to come in and I feel that would be a very positive side of things (Bletchley)

It's not that easy to find meeting rooms for occasional use (Milton Keynes Wide)

Community facilities will improve prevention activity and build relationships with the local community (Great Holm)

This would improve community links, especially with the Police. (Milton Keynes Wide)

Indeed, one person at Great Holm said that: *'you should make more of this because I think it's quite a good argument for the proposal'*. (Great Holm)

113. Several people offered suggestions about particular groups that might be interested or on how to manage the site for community use as below:

Any local groups could use it...sports, brownies, guides. St John's Ambulance and first aid courses could be held there as well as Duke of Edinburgh (Great Holm)

It's a great idea...it could be used for scouts, brownies, ATC, cubs, first aid, educational trips for schools (Great Holm)

Education facility, public awareness facility, a hot training facility, an upgrade to the safety centre at Hill Farm (Milton Keynes Wide)

It could be an educational facility, have public awareness facilities and some fitness provision (Milton Keynes Wide)

The car park could be laid out for road safety education for cyclists and learner drivers (Milton Keynes Wide)

You could use the space to potentially raise income through business opportunities. (Bletchley)

114. Despite the general positivity though, a few participants at the Milton Keynes Wide Forum were concerned about: increasing traffic congestion by encouraging high public access to the site; and that the Hub could prove to be competition for existing community facilities. Indeed, in relation to the latter point, one person suggested that savings could be made from not building community provision on-site at all given the already adequate provision across the town (though this was clearly a minority view):

You're going to have to get people to come out to you to use community facilities; you're creating more traffic around an area (Milton Keynes)

Would this add more traffic into the area? (Milton Keynes Wide)

Milton Keynes's development is all based around its communities so would you be creating a facility that's in competition with the infrastructure in communities (e.g. church halls) which people have spent the time and effort to build up? (Milton Keynes Wide)

If they could show a saving by not building community facilities that would be good as facilities are currently adequate. (Milton Keynes Wide)

115. Furthermore, a few participants said that the location of the proposed hub is some distance from Milton Keynes's main communities and, thereby, relatively inconvenient for community use

There aren't any homes. You're going on an industrial area which is not the easiest to get to. (Bletchley)

Others, though, disagreed and felt West Ashland is accessible enough to enable people from across the town to use the facility.

116. Finally, some others questioned whether co-locating police stations and community facilities could present a security risk for members of the public:

Could it be a problem having prisoners in a fire station? (Great Holm)

I'm not sure how this would work with the security aspect of the police part of the station if it was in the same building. (Milton Keynes Wide)

Getting the Message Across

117. Several participants said that the information presented during the forums had been reassuring in allaying the concerns and dispelling the preconceptions they had about the proposal prior to coming along:

There was a couple of us that came along here with some negativity but after listening we think it's a good idea... (Great Holm)

I had mixed thoughts before I came here but now it's been explained I'm totally supportive of it (Bletchley)

I thought it would be a money saving exercise and I'm sure that in certain areas it will be, there's nothing wrong with that, but my view has changed...we're losing Great Holm fire station but looking at this overall it's going to be a better picture. (Great Holm)

However, they acknowledged that only relatively small groups of people have had the benefit of receiving these detailed explanations of the proposal and its reasoning, and that it will be somewhat more difficult to reassure those amongst the general public with such concerns and preconceptions. In order to have the best chance of doing this, participants suggested the following ways and avenues of disseminating information within communities:

Using local media, social media, newspapers and billboards around Milton Keynes;

Direct mailing;

Fire station open days and exhibitions;

Information and exhibitions at locations such as libraries, shopping centre, train stations and Middleton Hall;

Visiting Resident's Associations; and

Visiting schools to give talks (or asking them to distribute newsletters that young people can either digest themselves or take home for their parents).

Overall Considerations

Towards a Conclusion

118. Overall, the views expressed through the open consultation questionnaire differ considerably from those expressed in the deliberative forums with randomly selected members of the public: the former were largely opposed to the proposed merger of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations into a Blue Light Emergency Services Hub, whereas the latter were broadly supportive. The reasons for the respective support and opposition have been documented earlier in this report, and so are not repeated in detail here; but it is interesting that many of the concerns noted by questionnaire respondents (longer response times to the West and North of Milton Keynes, traffic and congestion issues at the proposed West Ashland location, and new housing and population increases) were reviewed in the deliberative forums - but, there, people's concerns were allayed through questioning and discussion. For example, participants were reassured that:

Areas with potentially lengthier response times would be prioritised by B&MKFRS for prevention activity;

Appliances would be stationed away from the Hub on match days (much in the same way as the Ambulance Service operates currently); and

New housing represents very little additional risk insofar as it is built to a very safe standard.

As a result, following full discussion, some participants - particularly at the Great Holm session - said that although they had initially been opposed to the proposal (on the basis of what they had seen and heard prior to coming to the meeting) they had revised their views considerably.

119. More generally also, questionnaire responses differ from those in deliberative forums partly because:

Questions in questionnaires necessarily have to be simplified

It is impossible to offer the same level of information and explanation in consultation documents as in lengthy, thoughtful meetings

Compared with surveys of randomly selected people, open consultation questionnaires typically provide less representative results because they tend to be completed by more motivated respondents and are not distributed evenly across the whole population. For example, analysis of the 613 postcodes provided by respondents (a further 169 people declined to give this information) shows that almost a third of these responses (202) were received from the MK8 area around Great Holm Fire Station, which is likely to explain the strong support for retaining it. To put this into context, the next largest number of responses from a particular postcode area - MK4 - was 55.

120. Of course, none of the above points means that the findings of the open consultation questionnaire should be disregarded - for they show the opinions of important groups of people who were motivated to participate. But it must be borne in mind that the results are not necessarily representative of the whole population.
121. In any case, influencing public policy through consultation is not simply a 'numbers game' or 'popularity contest' in which the loudest voices or the greatest numbers automatically win the argument. Instead, consultation is to inform authorities of issues, arguments, implications they might have overlooked; to contribute to the re-evaluation of matters already known; or to reassess priorities and principles critically. However popular proposals might be, that does not itself mean they are feasible, safe, sustainable, reasonable and value-for-money; and unpopularity does not mean the reverse.
122. All of this means that interpreting the overall meaning of the consultation outcomes is neither straightforward nor just 'numerical', for the different consultation methods have not only to be respected and recognised, but also evaluated or assessed: they cannot be simply summated. In this context, ORS attaches particular weight to findings that are deliberative (based upon thoughtful reflective discussion in non-emotive forums for example); but, of course, as aforementioned the open questionnaire is also very important and should be recognised and taken into account as a reflection of strength of feeling in certain areas against this particular proposal.
123. While ORS makes the above assessments, there is no single 'right interpretation' of the consultation elements, for professional and political judgement is needed. Ultimately, an overall interpretation of the consultation will depend upon the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority: they will consider all elements and determine which seem the most telling - above all, by considering the relative merits of the various opinions as the basis for the future of their Fire and Rescue Service.



This project was carried out in compliance with ISO 20252:2012.

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

<u>Overview of Issues Raised throughout the Consultation</u>				
<i>Response Times</i> – “Proposed changes will result in longer response times due to the proposed location at West Ashland and the additional distance from many areas” “Proposed changes will mean the lives of people in the area will be at risk” “Do not close Bletchley station as it covers large population and is in a good location” “Proposed changes leave the North and West of Milton Keynes vulnerable”				
Number	Issue	Source	Management Responses	Recommendations
1	Further information required regarding the impact on people with increase in response times.	Letter from Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council Letter from Stony Stratford Town Council FBU Emailed Response	We have analysed the relevant road networks and speeds of travel to assess the most suitable site for the hub station. For a realistic analysis of journey times, different speeds were applied to different types of road, based upon the mobilising system operated by the Thames Valley Fire Control Service. The West Ashland site is next to the A5, so the improved access to the north and south of Milton Keynes, combined with the grid road network, means that fire engines can travel more quickly to emergency incidents. The Blue light drive analysis from West Ashland identified an average increase to attendance times for Wolverton of 1 minute and to Stony Stratford of 2 minutes. This is based upon fire appliances being located at the West Ashland facility and responding from this location.	Officers to identify a range of options to provide fire appliance cover within the North West of Milton Keynes. The Service will continue to ensure that current response standards are met via its dynamic mobilising system, utilising the fire crews that are out in the community delivering vital life-saving community safety work, or when appropriate utilising standby points strategically located across Milton Keynes, ensuring our communities will always benefit from the quickest possible attendance in an emergency.
2	Difference between areas covered by the two stations within 5 and 10 minutes compared to the area covered by the new site.	Emailed Member of the Public Feedback	Our analysis shows that cover remains relatively consistent. This is based upon our fire engines being at the stations, we know that they are currently out in the community for 22% of the calls they currently receive across MK. This will increase as we engage in more work in the community with Health, social care and other partner agencies.	Noted

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

3	Is the service worsening its response times thus service?	Email from Kents Hill and Monkston Parish Council	See feedback for Issue 1. Firefighters are out and about undertaking community safety work more than ever. We also have a mobilising system which uses automated vehicle location technology to select the nearest fire engine, regardless of whether it's in a fire station. This ensures that our communities will always benefit from the quickest possible attendance in an emergency. It also means the location of fire stations becomes less important when crews are not necessarily in them at the time the 999 call comes in.	Noted
4	Response times to Deanshanger and surrounding area.	Emailed Member of the Public Feedback	This is in Northamptonshire and therefore subject to their risk management planning. However we have shown it in our mapping as it represents a minimal impact on attendance times.	Noted
5	De-valuation of property/increase in insurance due to increase in response times.	Emailed Member of the Public Feedback	Attendance times by the fire and rescue Service are not known to affect property prices or insurance premiums.	Noted
6	Growth of MK, especially in the North West. Impact of fewer appliances and stations in a growing city.	Email from Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council	The data pack provided with this summary document clearly shows that as Milton Keynes population has grown incident numbers have decreased, in line with national trends. However, we continually assess the impact of new developments to inform our future service planning.	Noted
7	The removal of Wolverton Fire Station in the past was based upon the resources moving to Great Holm.	Letter from Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council	See feedback for issue 6 and recommendation in issue 1.	Noted
8	Are things like the location and size of	Emailed Member of the Public	We measure risk and this is based upon socio demographic data, national trends, intelligence shared with us by partner	Noted

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

	schools taken into account when considering response times?	Feedback	agencies and previous incidents attended. This information is factored into our integrated risk management planning process which informs how we Implement the right balance between Prevention, Protection and Response across the service area.	
	<u>No Need to Move</u> – “Keep the two stations where they are” “Do not close Great Holm station as it covers a large population and is in a good location”			
	Issue	Source	Management Responses	Recommendations
9	Why move fire stations when less money can be spent to improve the current facilities?	ORS Questionnaire – Member of BMKFRS	The existing fire and police stations in Bletchley are located within the area designated by Milton Keynes Council for regeneration. Implementation of the Development Plan depends on the existing Fire and Police Stations being re-located. We analysed a number of sites for relocation with a requirement to limit any impact on the time it would take to respond to 999 calls. The site that came out of this analysis as the best location is at West Ashland, just off the A5 near Redmoor Roundabout. Given the proposed site’s proximity to Great Holm, we can also relocate the resources currently based at the fire station to the new site without adversely affecting our services to the community.	Noted
10	Great Holm and Bletchley are strategically placed to access their respective areas of the city.	ORS Questionnaire - Resident	The location of these two fire stations was based on standards of fire cover created in 1947. In 2004 the FRS nationally move to local integrated risk management planning. As part of this process it was identified that with incident numbers decreasing we should look at merging our resources to reduce our costs. This has been done in a risk assessed way that ensures that there is a minimum impact on attendance times.	Noted
11	Bletchley is placed in	ORS Questionnaire	See feedback for issue 10.	Noted

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

	order to serve vulnerable and deprived areas of the city.	- Resident		
	<u>Future Proofing</u> – “Growing population and housing development means provisions should be increased in these areas”			
	Issue	Source	Management Responses	Recommendations
12	Growth of MK, especially in the North West. MK will continue to grow in the future, not just current planned expansion. Is the risk modelling based on the continual growth of Milton Keynes as stated in the thirty year plan?	Letter from Milton Keynes Council ORS Public Forum – Great Holm FBU Emailed Response	See feedback for issue 6.	Noted
	<u>Congestion</u> – “Disagree with location of proposed new station due to perceived traffic problems”			
	Issue	Source	Management Responses	Recommendations
13	Congestion resulting from match days/shopping centre at peak times.	Emailed Member of the Public Feedback	We take into account congestion created by public events in our planning. We ensure that we manage our resources to minimise any impact created by traffic congestion.	Noted
14	No evidence of blue light runs during	Emailed Member of the Public	The blue light runs were completed on weekdays at three different times of the day, 0800, 1300 and 1700hrs. The	Noted

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

	congested times i.e. rush hour.	Feedback	average of the three drive times was used to identify the likely impact on attendance times following any move to the West Ashland site.	
	<i>Use of Government Funds – “Proposals are financially motivated”</i>			
	Issue	Source	Management Responses	Recommendations
15	Money could be better spent elsewhere.	Email from Great Holm and Loughton Parish Council FBU Emailed Response	We have been very successful in a number of bids to the Government, most recently securing a grant of £2.8million to build a new fire station. There will be no additional cost to the local community through extra council tax.	Noted
16	Public funds being spent on something public do not want.	Emailed Member of the Public Feedback	The feedback from the Public Forums who had the opportunity to directly challenge and ask questions of BFRS officers was contrary to this view. Page 36 of Appendix A – the ORS report sets out the response in more detail.	Noted
17	With expansion more schools and doctors surgeries are needed.	Emailed Member of the Public Feedback	As a fire authority we do not have any say in investment in education or health property strategies, however, the consultation included recommendations for wider community use and we are actively engaging with local authority partners to identify opportunities for co-location which will enable them to review their delivery models for other services.	Noted

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

	<u>Use of Sites</u> – “Agree with collaboration with other ‘blue light’ services but not at the expense of the two stations”			
	Issue	Source	Management Responses	Recommendations
18	<p>Lack of information about use of sites.</p> <p>Impact on local residents.</p> <p>De-valuation of property.</p> <p>Site could be used for anything.</p>	<p>Email from Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council</p> <p>Emailed Member of the Public Feedback</p>	<p>The consultation document set out the impact on attendance times across West Milton Keynes, however the specific use of the sites should this proposal be approved and the land sold for re-development would be part of a planning application consultation.</p>	Noted
19	<p>Is the redevelopment in Bletchley more important than adequate fire cover?</p>	<p>Emailed Member of the Public Feedback</p>	<p>The proposal sees a new blue light hub facility being built in a location that provides minimal impact on attendance times across the Western MK area currently served by Great Holm and Bletchley fire stations. In addition we have set out in the consultation how we will be managing risk in a more dynamic way using technology to ensure that our mobile fleet of fire appliances are utilised to ensure that the public receive the quickest response regardless of where the fire appliance home station is located.</p>	Noted
	<u>Other Issues</u> – A selection of other issues raised within the feedback.			

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

	Issue	Source	Management Responses	Recommendations
20	Limitations of mapping provided in consultation document.	Email from Newton Longville Parish Council	The mapping clearly set out the travel times from each of the existing fire stations and the proposed site at west Ashland. The times of 5 and 10 minutes were chosen to demonstrate the impact – our publicly approved attendance times are “the first appliance in 10 minutes and subsequent pre-determined attendance in 20 minutes”. This was all supported by an explanation of the methodology used to calculate these times including how they were evaluated against existing data from incidents we have attended in the last 5 years.	Noted
21	<p>‘Low key’ nature of consultation.</p> <p>Quality and comprehensive nature of consultation document.</p> <p>Lack of data in consultation document.</p> <p>Short time period of consultation period.</p>	<p>Emailed Member of the Public Feedback</p> <p>Email from Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council</p> <p>FBU Emailed Response</p>	The consultation has followed national best practice, as part of a continuing dialogue with the public, rather than a ‘one-off’ event, which began with the ‘listening and engagement’ research which we did with the public prior to embarking on the development of the 2015-20 PSP (this was carried out in November / December 2013 and the findings presented to the CFA at their February 2014 meeting) followed by the full PSP consultation which ran for 12 weeks (22 July – 13 October 2014) with findings reported to the 17 December 2014 CFA meeting. We wrote to MPs, local councillors, parish councils, town councils and the local press in advance of the consultation starting. We could have spent more public money on advertising however best practice guidance for public consultations (including the FBUs) endorses the use of qualitative methods such as Public Forums as the best way to obtain ‘meaningful opinions’ from a consultation.	Noted, the decision paper to the Fire Authority includes the additional data that was used in the Public Forums.

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

22	Concerns that merger will result in redundancies. Concern over budget cuts due to less fire stations.	Email from Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council ORS Public Forum – Great Holm	The Service has a medium term financial plan for the period 2015-20, this sets out the financial modelling that BFRS have completed to ensure it can continue to deliver the highest possible service across Bucks and MK. The Area Reviews set out in the PSP 2015-20 will deliver the remodelled service. We are required to consult again if we propose any changes to the number of fire stations or fire appliances or the times that a fire appliance will be available. If any staff reductions are required they will be managed through the Authority's workforce planning. Managing it in this way enables us to remodel the workforce without the need to make staff redundant.	Noted
23	Lack of FBU support for proposal.	Email from Loughton and Great Holm Parish Council	The Fire Brigades Union have been consulted throughout this consultation, through the staff engagement group, quarterly joint consultation forum meetings and through individual meetings with BFRS officers. Their concerns have been picked up through this feedback document and responded to.	Noted
24	No mention of consultation with staff over proposal.	Emailed Member of the Public Feedback	A staff engagement group was established in July 2015, it has representatives from each of the MK stations and the FBU, who all feed back to the personnel at their respective stations and bring forward their comments to monthly meetings of this group.	Noted
25	Concerns that merger will result in fewer resources/appliances.	Letter from Stony Stratford Town Council	Under the proposal, all existing fire engines and specialist appliances at Bletchley and Great Holm fire stations would be relocated to the new hub station. The fire stations at Broughton, Newport Pagnell and Olney would continue as now, unaffected by this proposal.	Noted

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

26	<p>Is the current collaborative training level inadequate if a new facility is required?</p> <p>Why is geographical proximity necessary for collaborative training?</p>	Emailed Member of the Public Feedback	<p>The new facility would have training buildings and facilities designed to support joint blue light training and exercising. This will complement the training and exercising that currently takes place. In addition to this it is anticipated that the co-location of blue light staff into fully integrated and shared facilities will enable informal conversation which (as has been seen in other parts of the country) stimulates new ideas from front line staff and these can lead to new more effective ways of working.</p> <p>Collaboration is a key part of the Fire Authority's strategic plan. Every paper that is received by them includes a section on whether collaboration has been considered and if not why not. We encourage all our staff regardless of level or role to actively consider and engage on consultation.</p>	Noted
27	No Police presence in Bletchley.	Letter from Milton Keynes Council	Not for the Fire Authority to comment on.	Noted.
28	Maintaining the Fire Services image of being separate from Law Enforcement.	Letter from Milton Keynes Council	<p>The fire service and Thames Valley Police already work closely on prevention and data sharing initiatives to improve our services to the public. There is no evidence that this has impacted on either organisations image. The Fire authority already has an enforcement role as part of the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005. We have prosecuted businesses for breaches of this order over the last 10 years and this has not impacted upon the public's perception of our role.</p>	Noted, BFRS Officers will continue to monitor this through the regular public satisfaction questionnaires completed by members of the public.

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

Recommendations – Alternative proposal provided/need to retain and upgrade current facilities i.e. invest in existing stations.				
	Issue	Source	Management Responses	Recommendations
29	<p>Retention of an 'unconventional' fire station at Great Holm.</p> <p>Why can't Great Holm be upgraded for accessibility?</p> <p>Create 'blue light hub' but retain both Great Holm and Bletchley.</p> <p>Retain Great Holm fully and create 'blue light hub'.</p> <p>Relocate Newport Pagnell as the new 'blue light hub'.</p> <p>Make Great Holm into 'blue light hub'.</p>	<p>Emailed Feedback from Local Councillor</p> <p>Direct Public Feedback ORS Questionnaire –</p>	<p>The Fire Authority has been successful in securing a grant of £2.8m from DCLG transformation fund. This successful bid requires the co-location of Fire and TVP from Bletchley. The new location at West Ashland brings into question the location of Great Holm fire station, the travel time analysis combined with the use of technology set out earlier in this summary demonstrates that we do not operate purely from fire stations anymore. We are a flexible and mobile resource that addresses risk dynamically.</p> <p>Relocation of the Blue Light Hub to Great Holm would not work due to TVP needing to maintain a presence in Bletchley and also the scale of the redevelopment required to enable the facilities proposed at the new site, it is generally more expensive to extend and adapt an existing building than build one from scratch. In addition we will have all the benefits of a modern environmentally sound and sustainable building that will provide financial savings and benefits to the local environment for the lifetime of the building. The move to an industrial estate with businesses that already operate 24/7 will enable training that is currently limited in residential areas (especially at Great Holm due to the close proximity of neighbouring houses who have complained in the past about noise) to be done at any-time of the day or night.</p>	Noted

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

	<u>Support</u> – General agreement with proposals.			
	Issue	Source	Management Responses	Recommendations
31	Support for further collaboration between emergency services in general and in the form of a 'blue light hub'.	ORS Public Forum – Great Holm	Noted	Noted
32	Financial and working efficiencies can be created.	ORS Public Forum – Bletchley	Noted	Noted

Appendix B – Summary of Feedback with Management Responses and Recommendations

33	Forward thinking service being proactive regarding decreasing demand.	ORS Public Forum – Bletchley	Noted	Noted
34	The location chosen is sensible due to accessibility to main roads and grid system.	ORS Public Forum – Bletchley	Noted	Noted
35	Support for the inclusion of community facilities within the proposed 'blue light hub'. (Recommendations made)	ORS Public Forum – All	Noted	Noted
36	Both stations need updating.	ORS Questionnaire – Member of the Public.	Noted	Noted
37	Trust in the Fire Service to do what is right as they are the experts.	ORS Questionnaire – Member of the Public	Noted	Noted
38	Increase in training facilities and collaboration can only be a good thing.	ORS Questionnaire – Member of the Public	Noted	Noted

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue - Core Statistics

Fire Authority Paper – Stats Appendix Overview

Back to the Future – Figure 1

- 2013/14 has the lowest incidents attended since 1988/89.
- In the ten years between 2003/04 and 2013/14, incidents attended fell by approximately 5,000 (45%).
- In the 30 years since 1983/84, incidents attended has risen by approximately 800 (15%).

Activity past Fifteen Years by Station, District and Authority Areas – Figure 2

- Total number of 999 calls in the Authority area has fallen from 17,107 in 2000/01 to 14,634 in 2014/15 (15%).
- Activity in the Authority has fallen from 10,340 incidents in 2000/01 to 6,266 incidents in 2014/15 (40%).
- Activity in Milton Keynes has fallen from 3,799 incidents in 2000/01 to 2,381 incidents in 2014/15 (38%).
- Activity in Buckinghamshire has fallen from 6,541 incidents in 2000/01 to 3,885 incidents in 2014/15 (40%).
- Activity at Great Holm Fire Station has fallen from 1,313 incidents in 2000/01 to 776 incidents in 2014/15 (41%).
- Activity at Bletchley Fire Station has fallen from 1,106 incidents in 2000/01 to 657 incidents in 2014/15 (41%).
- Activity at Great Holm and Bletchley Fire Stations combined has fallen from 2,419 incidents in 2000/01 to 1,433 incidents in 2014/15 (41%).

Fifteen Year Trend – Figure 3

- Total number of calls fell from 2000/01 to 2014/15, approximately dropping from 17,000 to 14,500 (15%).
- Total number of incidents fell from 2000/01 to 2014/15 also, approximately dropping from 10,500 to 6,000 (43%).
- 2014/15 has the lowest amount of calls since 2002/03.
- 2014/15 incidents were the lowest since before 2000/01.

Fifteen Year Trend by Authority Area – Figure 4

- Incidents attended in Buckinghamshire in 2014/15 were 4,000 down from the 6,500 in 2000/01 (<39%).
- Incidents attended in Milton Keynes in 2014/15 were 2,400 down from the 3,800 in 2000/01 (<36%).

Those Incidents that Exceeded 10 Minutes – Figure 5

- Data provided from the year 2013/14.

The Number of Incidents over the Past 15 Years – per 10,000 Population – Figure 6

- The total incidents in Buckinghamshire per 10,000 population fell from 137 in 2000/01 to 74 in 2014/15 (46%).
- The total incidents in Milton Keynes per 10,000 population fell from 181 in 2000/01 to 92 in 2014/15 (49%)
 - o The total incidents in Great Holm per 10,000 population fell from 63 in 2000/01 to 30 in 2014/15 (53%).
 - o The total incidents in Bletchley per 10,000 population fell from 53 in 2000/01 to 25 in 2014/15 (53%)

Demand – Percentage Difference – District/LA Level – Figure 7

- The percentage change in Demand in Milton Keynes between April 1998 and March 2014 was <30%.

Demand – Percentage Difference – Station Level – Figure 8

- The percentage change in Demand at Great Holm between April 1998 and March 2014 was approximately <35%
- The percentage change in Demand at Bletchley between April 1998 and March 2014 was approximately <40%

MK Demand Profile 2003 – 2015 - Figure 9

- From 2000 to 2015, there has been an increase in population of;
 - 9 per-cent in Buckinghamshire, and
 - 24 per-cent in Milton Keynes

The Milton Keynes snapshot¹ below highlights a 54 per-cent reduction in demand per population across Milton Keynes (201 to 92 incidents per 10,000 population) despite the higher than average increase in population.

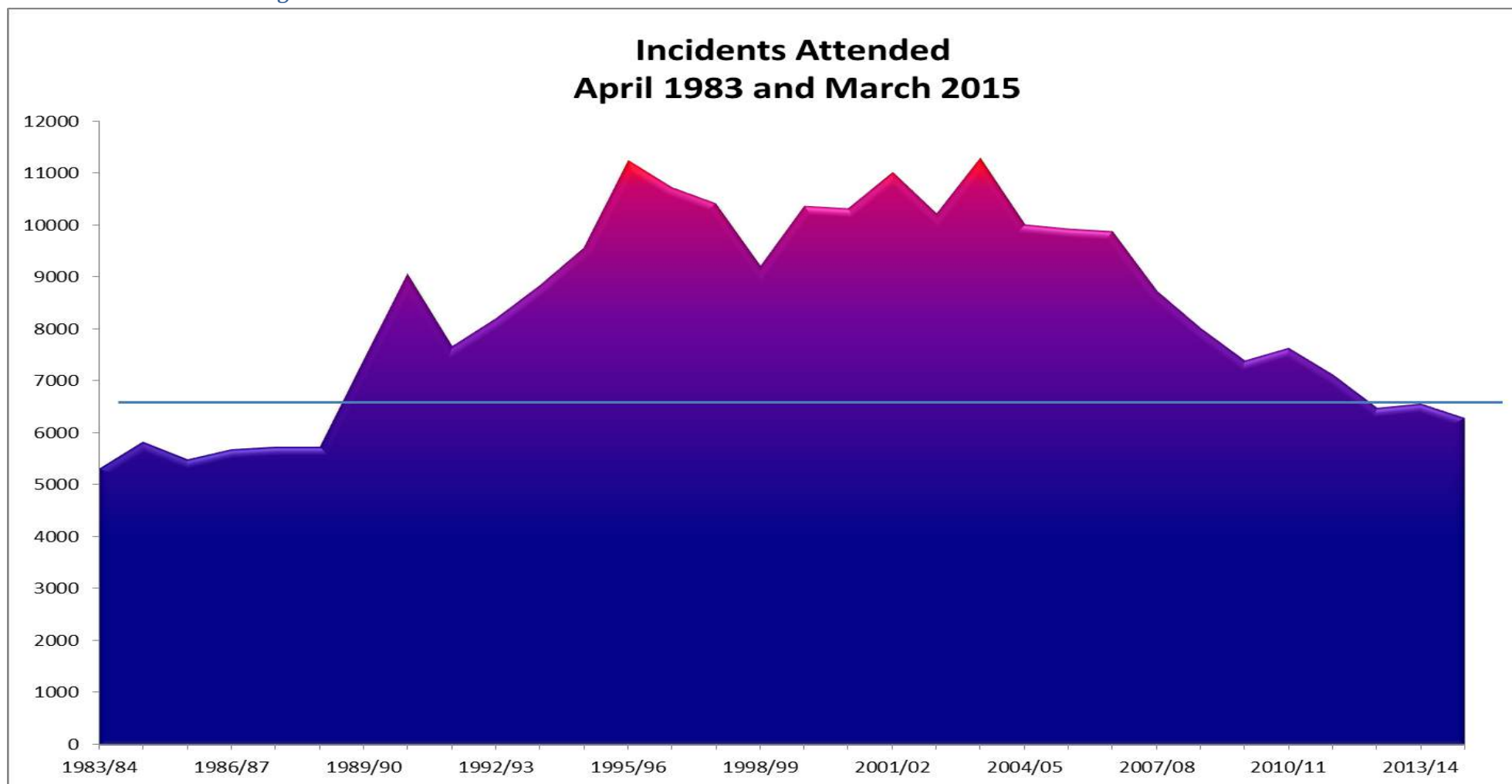
Percentage of Incidents Attended by 1, 2, 3 and 4+ Appliances – Figure 10

- Between 1999/00 and 2014/15, the incidents attended by 1 fire engine remained consistent at around 55% to 60%.
- Between 1999/00 and 2014/15, the incidents attended by 2 fire engines fell significantly, from roughly 35% in 1999/00 to roughly 15% in 2014/15.
- Between 1990/00 and 2014/15, the incidents attended by 3 or 4 fire engines remained consistently at between 0% and 5%.

Average Response Times (Assigned to First Attendance) – 2000 to 2015 (with Average Attendance for MK April 2012 – March 2015) – Figure 11

- The average response times are the point at which the fire engine is alerted by fire control to the point at which it arrives at the incident.
- The three whole time stations that cover Milton Keynes demonstrate that over a 15 year period the average response times vary between 7 and 9 minutes.
- The day crewed station at Newport Pagnell, over a 15 year period, saw an average response time between 8 and 10 minutes.
- The on-call station at Olney, over a 15 year period, saw an average response time of between 8 and 14 minutes.

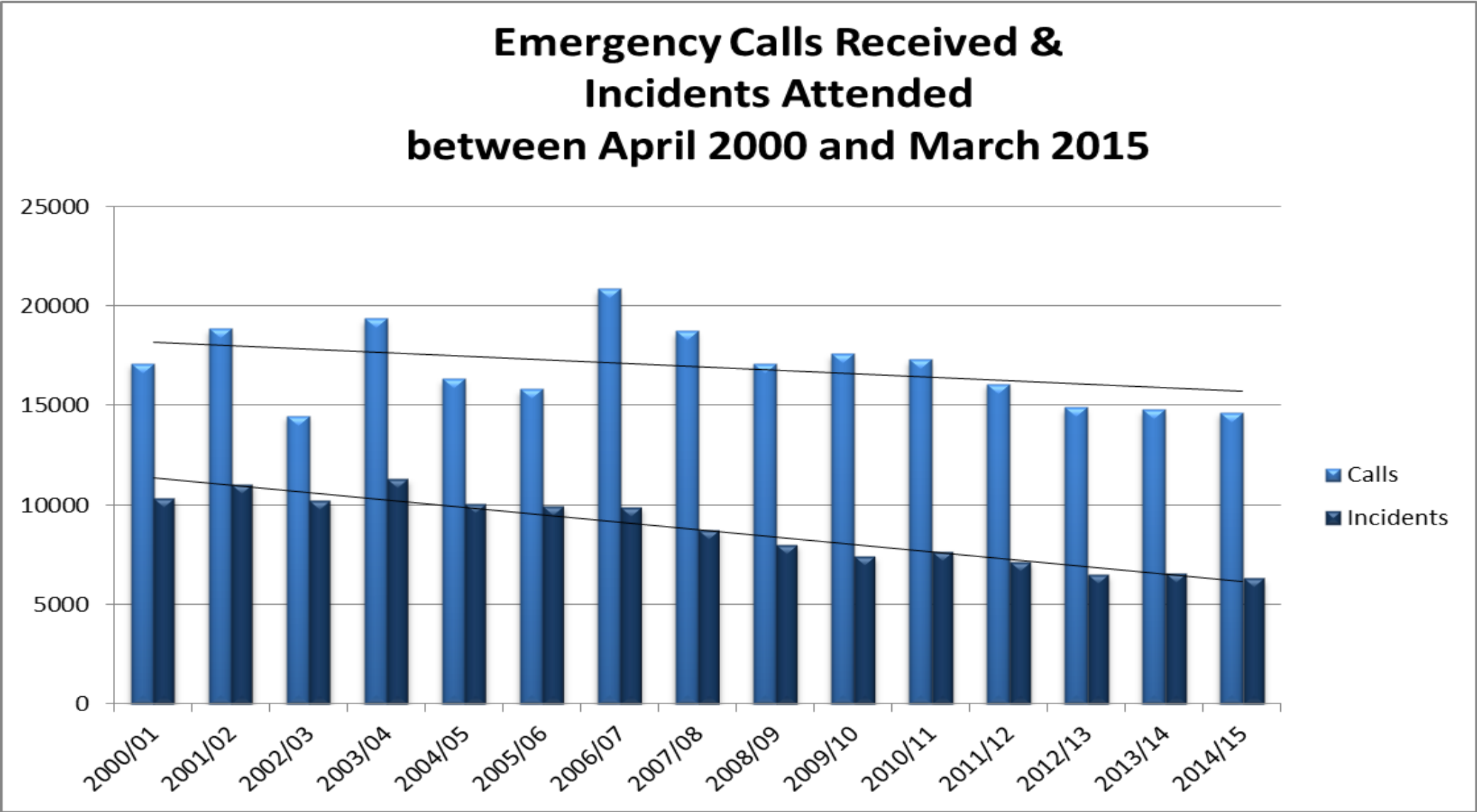
Back to the Future – Figure 1



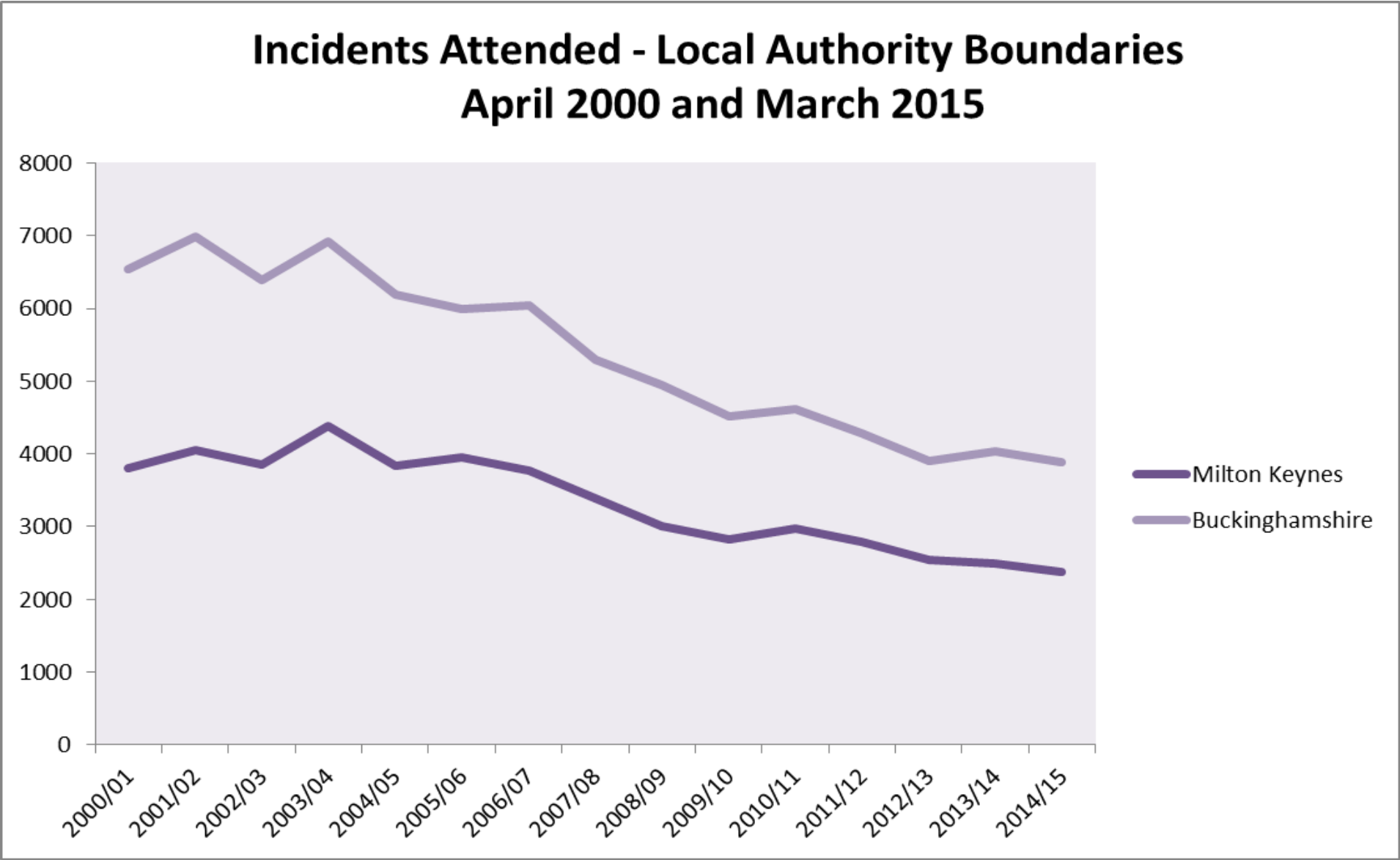
Activity past Fifteen Years by Station, District and Authority Areas – Figure 2

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
TOTAL NO. OF 999 CALLS	17107	18856	14475	19357	16342	15810	20856	18738	17117	17598	17310	16068	14906	14796	14634
TOTAL NO. INCIDENTS	10340	11035	10243	11310	10028	9942	9888	8747	8017	7410	7652	7130	6490	6572	6307
Bucks & MK FRS	10340	11035	10243	11310	10028	9942	9823	8686	7957	7344	7600	7073	6435	6514	6266
Milton Keynes	3799	4050	3851	4382	3843	3946	3774	3387	3009	2821	2979	2796	2540	2485	2381
Bletchley	1106	1138	1188	1467	1207	1115	1105	908	878	807	905	831	697	683	657
Broughton	982	1085	912	1032	947	971	920	906	697	658	713	698	618	590	577
Great Holm	1313	1456	1347	1405	1303	1438	1342	1222	1125	936	901	845	810	808	776
Newport Pagnell	330	312	342	416	324	349	342	290	249	354	408	365	360	346	330
Olney	68	59	62	62	62	73	65	61	60	66	52	57	55	58	41
Buckinghamshire	6541	6985	6392	6928	6185	5996	6049	5299	4948	4523	4621	4277	3895	4029	3885
Aylesbury Vale	1932	2128	1972	2189	1992	1937	1890	1618	1557	1424	1302	1282	1177	1218	1180
Chiltern	861	801	762	874	880	815	755	608	601	629	717	591	574	515	506
South Bucks	1553	1694	1485	1649	1400	1421	1518	1435	1327	1089	1145	1032	868	1016	896
Wycombe	2195	2362	2173	2216	1913	1823	1886	1638	1463	1381	1457	1372	1276	1280	1303
Aylesbury	1434	1699	1495	1661	1390	1402	1342	1113	1050	979	861	791	756	812	782
High Wycombe	1705	1885	1688	1724	1497	1371	1394	1221	1047	1020	988	972	892	840	900
Buckingham	224	174	183	215	193	217	253	262	240	191	197	204	192	197	194
Beaconsfield	749	868	739	851	710	692	768	759	632	503	555	491	421	451	419
Gerrards Cross	804	826	746	798	690	729	750	676	695	586	590	541	447	565	477
Amersham	383	378	297	364	386	376	311	264	245	298	319	245	239	230	218
Marlow	233	255	283	238	200	241	243	222	207	171	205	191	179	203	167
Brill	59	53	53	55	48	25	49	36	49	15	36	35	22	13	12
Chesham	329	295	301	364	344	285	315	228	221	194	214	209	208	172	164
Great Missenden	149	128	164	146	150	154	129	116	135	137	184	137	127	113	124
Haddenham	77	61	72	85	98	99	76	61	64	75	60	81	55	53	47
Princes Risborough	153	147	125	156	132	123	144	103	121	108	155	128	131	159	146
Stokenchurch	104	75	77	98	84	88	105	92	88	82	109	81	74	78	90
Waddesdon	60	46	80	73	187	112	79	61	65	87	79	93	96	72	57
Winslow	78	95	89	100	76	82	91	85	89	77	69	78	56	71	88

Fifteen year trend – Figure 3



Fifteen Year Trend by Authority Area – *Figure 4*



Those incidents that exceeded 10 minutes – *Figure 5*

Olney, 26 incidents

9 from Olney, Ave Mobilisation 6:58, Ave Travel Time 6:40
17 from Other stations, Ave Mobilisation 3:19 Ave Travel Time 10:26

Grendon Underwood, 20 incidents

14 from Waddesdon, Ave Mobilisation 5:24 Ave Travel Time 10:30
6 from Other stations, Ave Mobilisation 4:03 Ave Travel Time 14:32

Wendover, 50 incidents

20 from Aylesbury, Ave Mobilisation 1:22 Ave Travel Time 10:31
30 from Other stations, Ave Mobilisation 1:12 Ave Travel Time 10:56

Chesham, 24 incidents

15 from Chesham, Ave Mobilisation 6:28 Ave Travel Time 6:51
9 from Other stations, Ave Mobilisation 5:45 Ave Travel Time 9:34

Stokenchurch, 21 incidents

11 from Stokenchurch, Ave Mobilisation 2:17 Ave Travel Time 11:31
10 from Other stations, Ave Mobilisation 1:12 Ave Travel Time 13:47

Marlow, 41 incidents

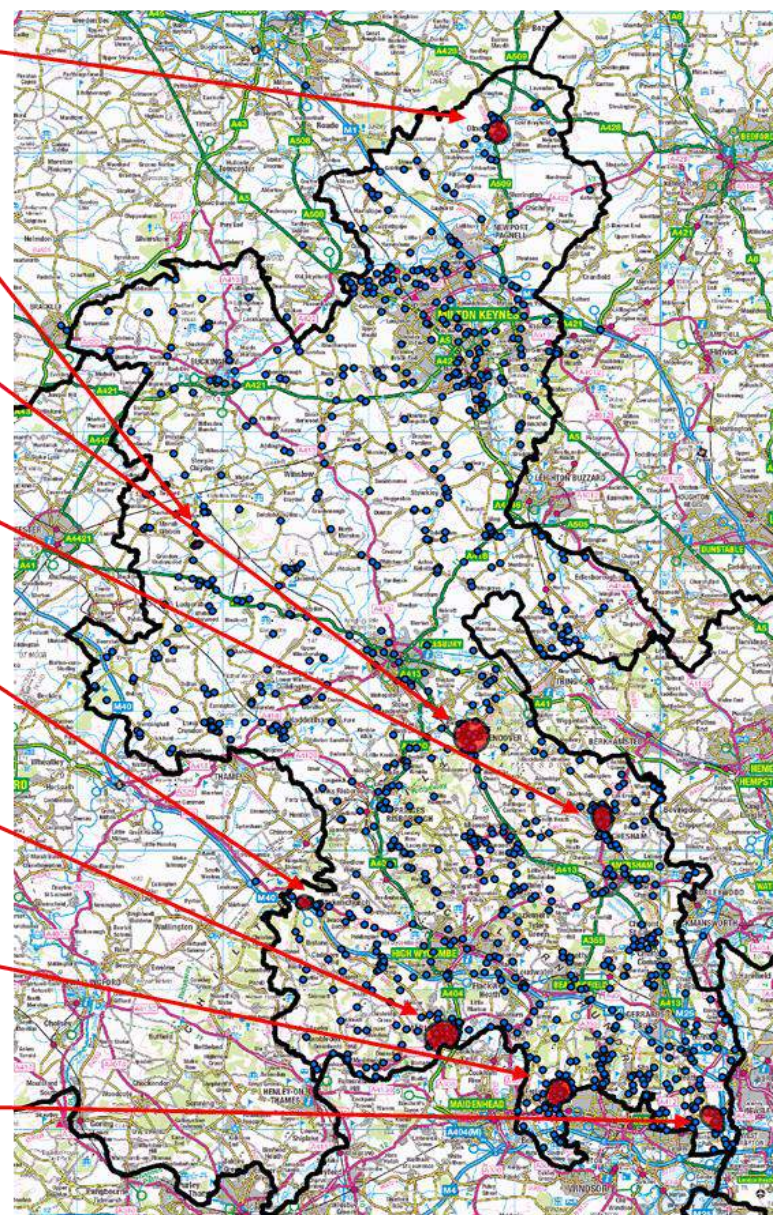
29 from Marlow, Ave Mobilisation 6:43 Ave Travel Time 5:43
12 from Other stations, Ave Mobilisation 1:22 Ave Travel Time 10:22

Burnham, 24 incidents

16 from Beaconsfield, Ave Mobilisation 1:03 Ave Travel Time 10:36
8 from Other stations, Ave Mobilisation 3:38 Ave Travel Time 11:42

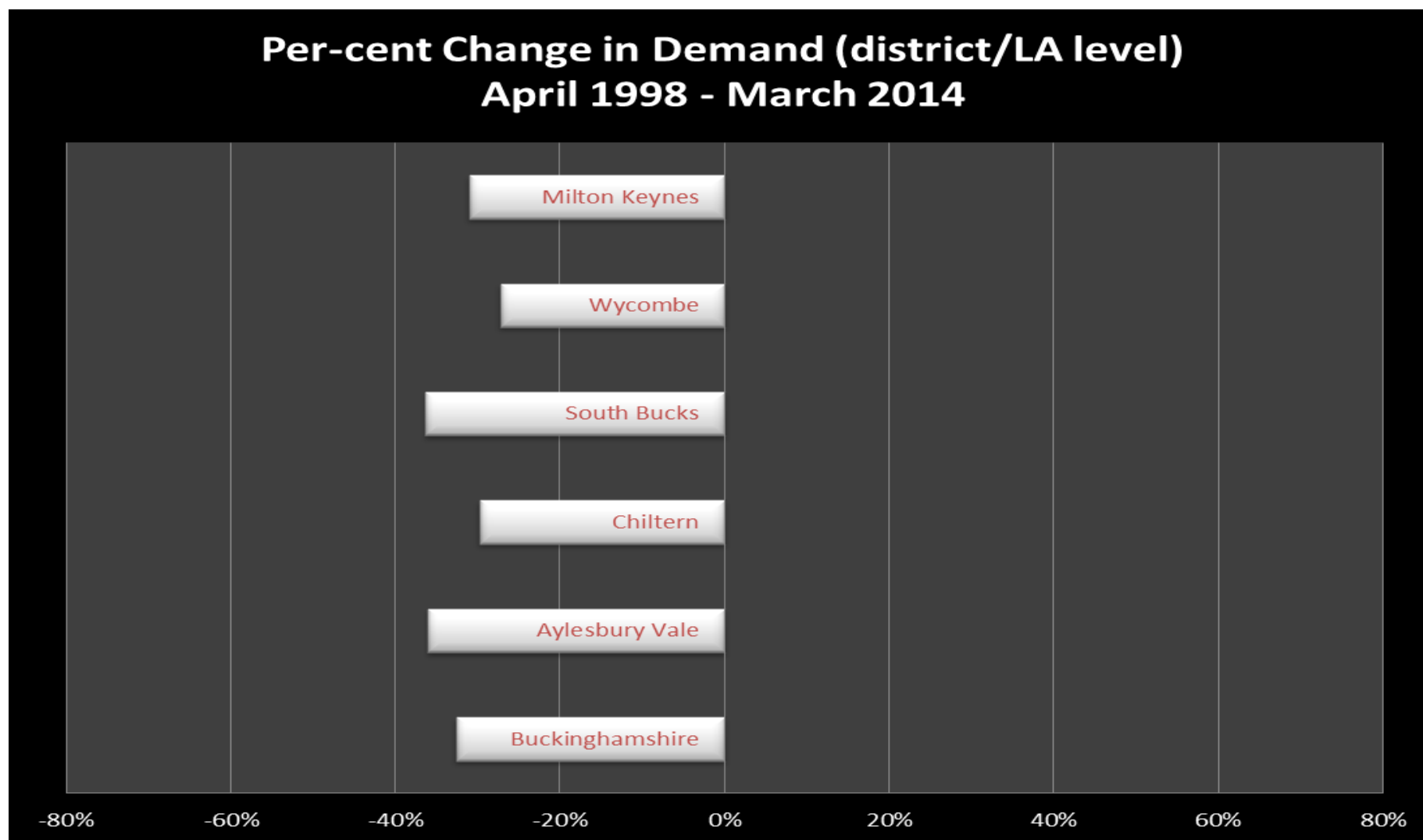
Iver, 25 incidents

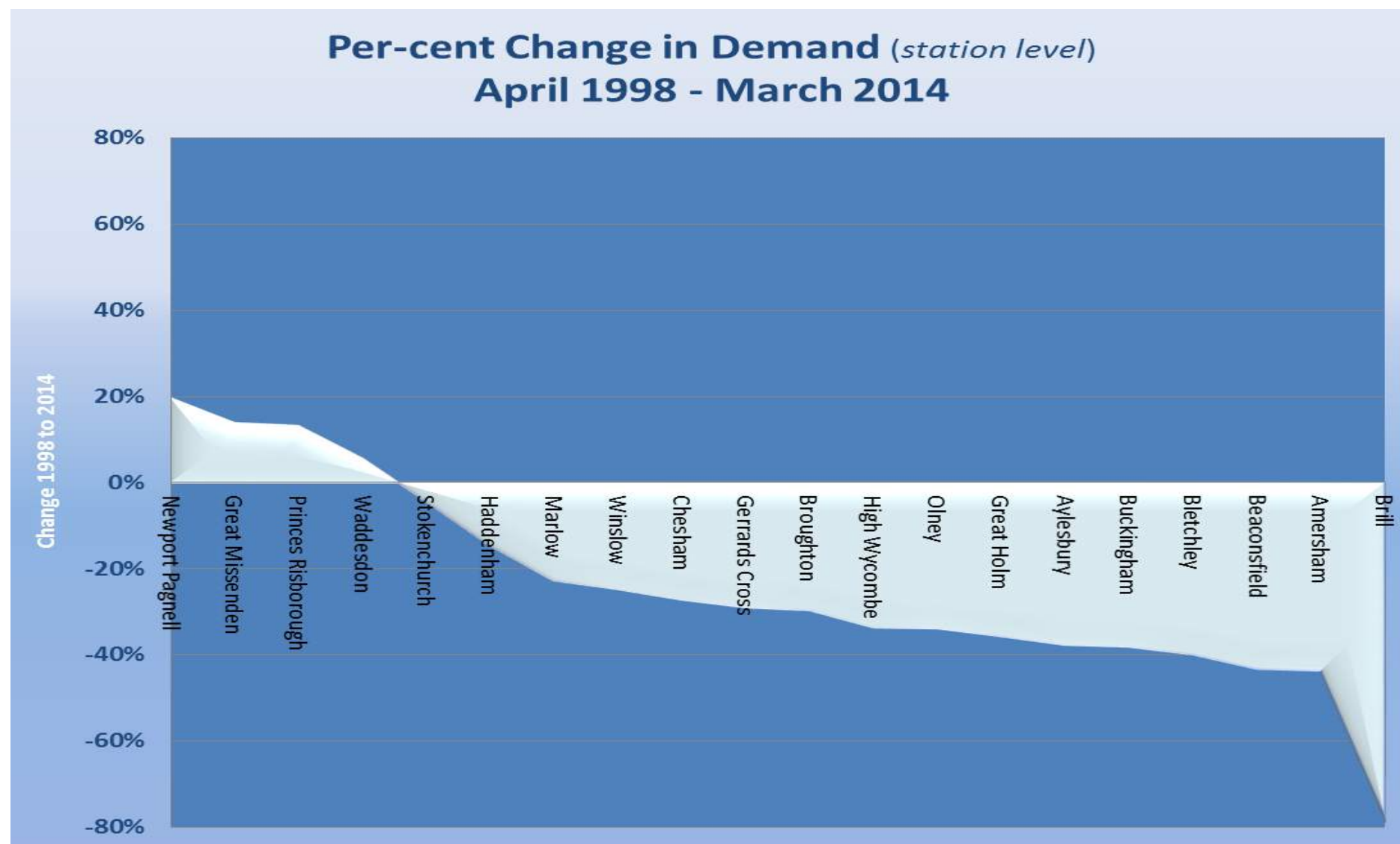
20 from Gerrards Cross, Ave Mobilisation 1:43 Ave Travel Time 10:45
5 from Other stations, Ave Mobilisation 2:48 Ave Travel Time 9:32



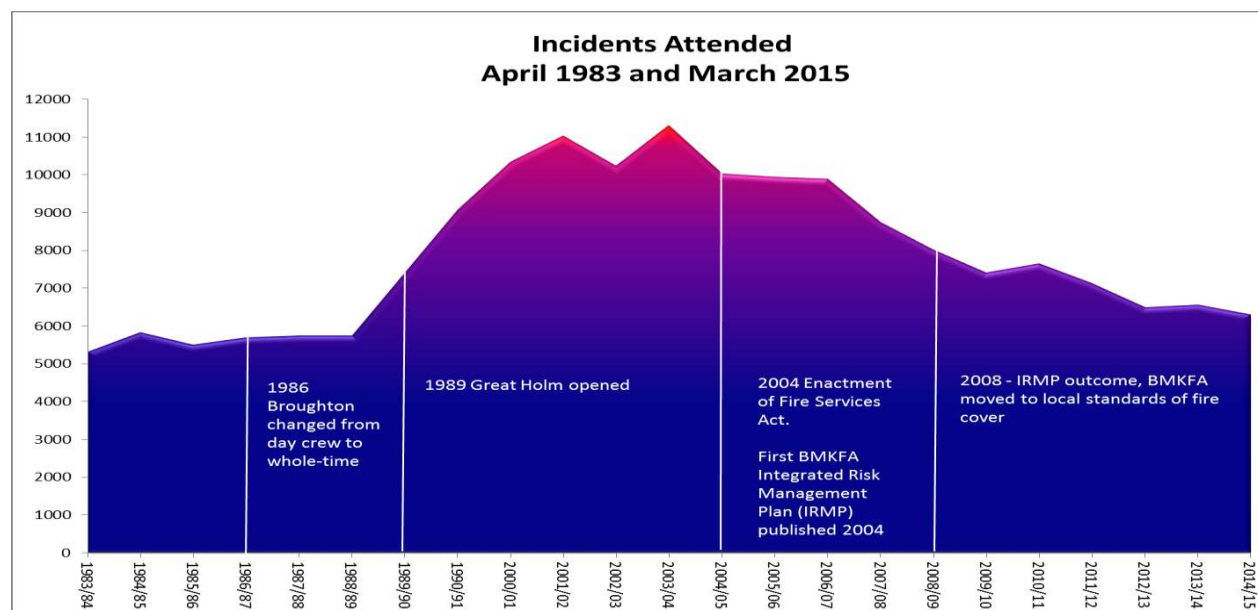
The number of incidents over the past 15 years - per 10,000 population - *Figure 6*

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Buckinghamshire	137	146	134	146	128	124	124	107	100	91	92	84	76	78	74
Milton Keynes	181	190	179	201	175	177	166	147	128	117	121	112	101	97	92
Bletchley	53	54	55	67	55	50	49	39	37	34	37	33	28	27	25
Broughton	47	51	42	47	43	43	40	39	30	27	29	28	24	23	22
Great Holm	63	68	63	65	59	64	59	53	48	39	37	34	32	32	30
Newport Pagnell	16	15	16	19	15	16	15	13	11	15	17	15	14	14	13
Olney	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Aylesbury	30	35	31	35	29	29	27	23	21	20	17	16	15	16	15
High Wycombe	36	39	35	36	31	28	28	25	21	20	20	19	17	16	17
Buckingham	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Beaconsfield	16	18	15	18	15	14	16	15	13	10	11	10	8	9	8
Gerrards Cross	17	17	16	17	14	15	15	14	14	12	12	11	9	11	9
Amersham	8	8	6	8	8	8	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	4	4
Marlow	5	5	6	5	4	5	5	5	4	3	4	4	3	4	3
Brill	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Chesham	7	6	6	8	7	6	6	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
Great Missenden	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	2	2	2
Haddenham	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1
Princes Risborough	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
Stokenchurch	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Waddesdon	1	1	2	2	4	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1
Winslow	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2

DEMAND – Per-cent difference – District/LA Level – *Figure 7*

DEMAND – Per-cent difference – Station Level – *Figure 8*

Demand – MK Demand Profile 2003 – 2015 – Figure 9



The charts here provide a clear visual of the reduction in demand across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

From 2000 to 2015, there has been an increase in population of;

- 9 per-cent in Buckinghamshire, and
- 24 per-cent in Milton Keynes

The Milton Keynes snapshot¹ below highlights a 54 per-cent reduction in demand per population across Milton Keynes (201 to 92 incidents per 10,000 population) despite the higher than average increase in population.

A similar reduction in demand of 49 per-cent has been experienced in Buckinghamshire (146 to 74 per 10,000 population).

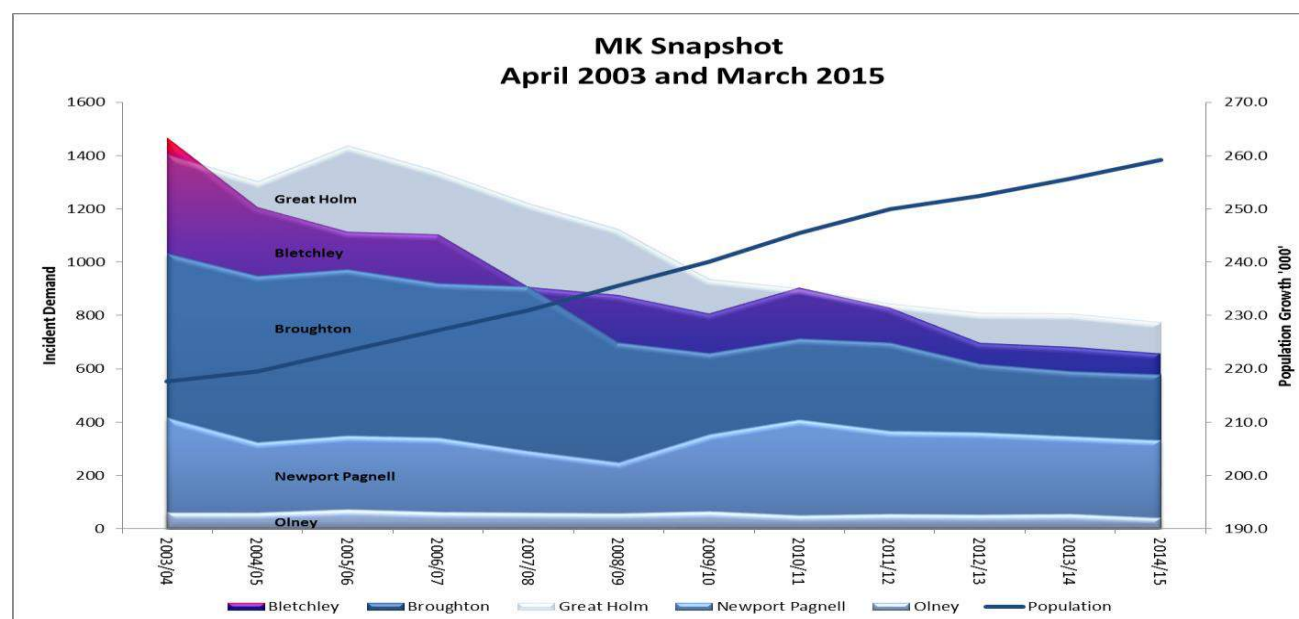
Number of incidents per 10,000 population

	2003/04	2014/15	% Difference
Buckinghamshire	146	74	↓ 49%
Milton Keynes	201	92	↓ 54%
Bletchley	67	25	↓ 62%
Broughton ₂	47	22	↓ 53%
Great Holm ₃	65	30	↓ 54%
Newport Pagnell	19	13	↓ 32%
Olney	3	2	↓ 33%

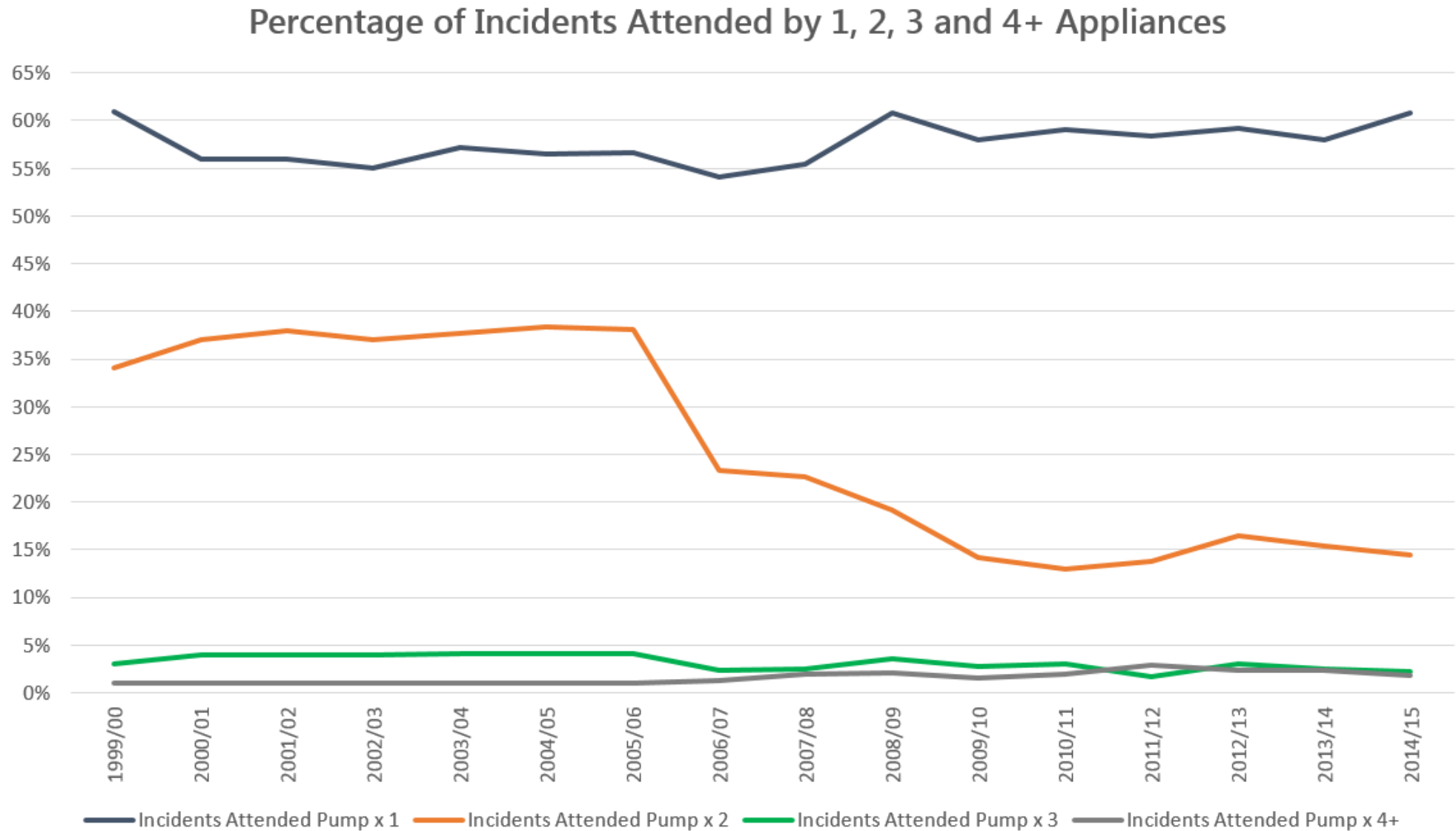
¹ MK Snapshot coincides with the enactment of the Fire Services Act 2004

² 1986 Broughton changed from day crew to whole time

³ 1989 Great Holm opened



Percentage of Incidents Attended by 1, 2, 3 and 4+ Appliances – Figure 10



Average Response Times (Assigned to First Attendance) – 2000 to 2015 (with Average Attendance for MK April 2012 – March 2015) – Figure 11

Average Response Times (assigned to first attendance) - 2000 to 2015

	Bletchley	Broughton	Buckingham	Great Holm	Newport Pagnell	Olney	Winslow
2000	00:07:33	00:07:09	00:08:37	00:08:00	00:08:30	00:08:27	00:12:08
2001	00:06:51	00:07:02	00:09:19	00:07:15	00:08:15	00:10:22	00:10:46
2002	00:08:12	00:07:29	00:09:01	00:07:17	00:08:39	00:10:56	00:13:02
2003	00:08:06	00:07:21	00:11:07	00:07:40	00:08:03	00:08:33	00:11:49
2004	00:07:11	00:08:14	00:10:30	00:07:15	00:08:57	00:10:32	00:11:11
2005	00:07:42	00:07:31	00:09:28	00:07:58	00:09:36	00:10:07	00:10:32
2006	00:07:56	00:07:40	00:10:30	00:08:02	00:10:17	00:11:21	00:12:50
2007	00:07:18	00:07:34	00:11:17	00:08:23	00:09:11	00:11:11	00:12:41
2008	00:08:03	00:08:02	00:10:53	00:09:13	00:09:52	00:11:25	00:12:24
2009	00:07:34	00:09:38	00:11:14	00:09:09	00:08:45	00:00:00	00:12:38
2010	00:07:04	00:07:40	00:10:59	00:06:57	00:08:40	00:12:46	00:11:15
2011	00:07:25	00:07:25	00:09:43	00:06:43	00:08:33	00:13:43	00:11:12
2012	00:07:19	00:07:36	00:11:09	00:06:49	00:08:47	00:12:07	00:12:07
2013	00:07:40	00:07:55	00:10:09	00:07:22	00:08:20	00:13:20	00:11:39
2014	00:07:53	00:07:44	00:10:53	00:07:39	00:09:17	00:13:26	00:11:34
2015	00:08:50	00:08:57	00:10:05	00:08:42	00:09:35	00:13:07	00:13:47
15 Year Average	00:07:40	00:07:49	00:10:18	00:07:46	00:08:57	00:10:43	00:11:58

Appendix D

'A Fire Brigades Union first impressions overview of the proposed closure of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations to support the creation of a single 'blue-light hub' facility in West Ashland'

Overview:

On the 14th September Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) published a consultation document outlining its proposal to close both Bletchley fire station and Great Holm fire station and create one 'blue light hub' facility located in West Ashland. The consultation closes on the 9th November.

Over a series of meetings Fire Brigades Union (FBU) representatives conducted a preliminary consultation exercise with its members in order to collate initial views, concerns and suggestions regarding the proposed merger. The following paragraphs contain an overview of the feedback received by firefighters.

It is also very important to note that many of these firefighters, along with their family and friends, live in Milton Keynes and are residents in those areas that will be most affected by this proposed merger.

Over the course of the next two weeks, after further consultation with firefighters, the FBU will submit a more detailed submission. However, given the potential impact on both public and firefighter safety and the many serious concerns raised by BFRS firefighters it was decided to publish a brief and early summary of those views in order to try and influence the decision making process at the earliest possible stage.

Introduction:

A fire and rescue service must above all else make decisions which prioritise the safety of the public it serves.

On first viewing, this proposal does not appear to comply with this fundamental principle nor does it uphold the stated 'vision' of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes fire authority to ensure:

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

The Fire Brigades Union has very serious concerns about the detrimental impact on public safety this proposal will invariably have for a large number of citizens living, working and travelling in Milton Keynes.

In particular, the proposed re-location of Great Holm Fire Station from its current site in Great Holm to the proposed new site in West Ashland will without question significantly increase the time it takes for a fire fighters to respond to emergencies in areas of Western and Northern Milton Keynes.

In the following paragraphs the FBU will briefly outline some initial views and concerns regarding this proposal.

1. Increased risk to public safety:

Any change, or proposal to change, by a fire and rescue service must ensure that it provides communities the best possible fire service provision with the available resources.

The focus of service provision is the front line. It is the fire stations, fire engines, the professional and highly trained firefighters and their many pieces of life saving equipment that are called upon to provide a prompt response to any given emergency in order to carry out a potentially lifesaving intervention.

Any proposal, such as this one, that jeopardises or compromises the effectiveness and efficiency of the front line emergency response the public demand, fund, and rightfully expect, must be robustly challenged.

If enacted this proposal will result in many citizens living, working and travelling in Milton Keynes having to wait significantly longer for a fire fighters to arrive at an emergency.

It is factually incorrect and misleading for the fire service to state, as they do, within the consultation document that there will be no adverse impact on public safety and fire service provision.

It may seem to some as a bit of a cliché to say that ‘every second counts’ but in the context of an emergency, the time it takes for firefighters to get to an emergency and carry out a rescue is critical. An emergency can and does include a wide variety of incidents such as a fire, vehicle accidents, water rescue, and many more.

Speed and weight of a front line response matter so much that in the most extreme circumstances it can be the difference between life and death. It could also mean confining a fire to a single room of origin such as a kitchen or losing the entire property. For a business it could be the difference between a couple weeks with closed doors or a few months with closed doors.

Fire stations are situated in locations best placed to minimise as much as possible risk by ensuring an effective and necessary speed and weight (amount of resources required) of response.

The current location of Great Holm supports the existing risk profile of Milton Keynes. It is also well situated given the plans for the Western Expansion of Milton Keynes with approximately 6,500 dwellings being built on land close to Great Holm along the V2 (Watling street). The proposed Western Expansion will be comparable in size to Buckingham.

FBU members strongly believe that this particular aspect of the proposal, the re-location of Great Holm fire station, is unnecessary, misguided and should immediately be removed.

2. Firefighter safety:

Firefighter safety and public safety are inextricably linked.

As previously mentioned, any delay in getting to an emergency such as a house fire is likely to have serious consequences for any persons that may be trapped in the property. Conversely, a delay in the time it takes for a fire engine to respond to the same incident will result in firefighters having to deal with an incident which is much more protracted, and with more extreme and developed fires posing a greater risk to their safety.

The workplace of firefighters will become more dangerous if this proposal is implemented in full particularly in northern and western areas of Milton Keynes.

In higher risk areas such as Wolverton, Stony Stratford and surrounding communities where there have been numerous significant fires in the last few years, the attendance times will be doubled which will increase risk to public and firefighter safety.

3. A financial necessity?

As previously discussed, any change to fire service front line provision must make sure that it does not have a detrimental impact to front line lifesaving provisions unless there is absolutely no alternative, a last resort, due to matters outside of a fire service's control such as budgetary pressures which are unable to be resolved by any other means.

BFRS has over the past 5 years saved on average over two million pounds each year. That is two million pounds every year that is being directed away from fire stations and front line resources.

These considerable savings have in the best part been achieved through reductions in the number of front line firefighters. BFRS have already implemented the biggest cuts in the history of the Service with a reduction of over 100 full time firefighter posts in the last 5 years.

There is no evidence to suggest that this merger is a necessary because of an absolute financial imperative, and there being no other alternative options available.

In fact, it will cost the fire service millions of pounds to enact. Any long term cost savings from the proposed merger would be achieved by a further reduction in the number of front line firefighters.

4. Insufficient information to support a meaningful consultation:

There is a considerable lack of statistical data, evidence and analysis for members of the public to fully understand what impact this change will have for them particularly in relation to safety and risk levels.

There are no accompanying risk and impact assessments to best quantify the impact this proposed merger will have on public safety and fire service provision.

The maps in the document support the argument that this proposal will invariably have a detrimental impact on public safety due to an increase in response times. But there is little in the way of real data and evidence for the public to importantly understand, and be able to measure, exactly how this increase in response times will directly affect their safety.

BFRS must as a matter of urgency provide this fundamental information.

There is insufficient information to support a meaningful consultation process, and one which actively encourages widespread participation with informed and constructive feedback.

5. Unclear as to what the actual benefits of the merger are for MK communities:

The consultation document is vague and does not clearly identify the absolute need to merge these two Milton Keynes stations and consequently increase risk to public safety.

It fails to provide clear and detailed information as to what the benefits actually are for closing two stations and relocating them to one site. Especially as this decision will result in many Milton Keynes residents receiving a worse fire service provision.

It is not obvious, as the document is incredibly vague, but it would seem that the main benefit resulting from this proposal is that a new blue light hub facility would provide facilities for community groups such as meeting rooms and also make it easier for firefighters to train with other blue light services.

I'm sure the public would rather the focus of the fire service be on ensuring the best possible front line response to minimise risk and promote safety.

A community resource facility and greater collaboration with other blue light services is a positive approach but it should not be prioritised over public and firefighter safety.

Furthermore, both of these aspirations can be achieved without closing and merging the existing stations.

There is space at both Bletchley and Great Holm fire stations to support greater community engagement. Also, In order to train and work closely with other emergency services does not necessarily require that you share a premises with them.

6. Have important decisions already been taken regarding this merger that will limit the ability of the public, stakeholders and other groups to influence the decision making process?

The fact that BFRS have already been successful in their bid for government grant money (£2.8 million) specifically to build this site does bring into question the 'genuineness' of this consultation exercise and whether decisions that have already been made will undermine the ability of the public to truly influence the outcome of this process.

It is very important that in the interest of transparency and fairness that BFRS release all documents relating to the awarding by the government of grant money to build this facility. The consultation document refers to BFRS being awarded the money to build this new site based on a 'speculative' bid. Was the speculative nature of this bid made clear to the government?

7. Reduction in incident numbers = reduction in risk?

It is true to state that over the past 10 years there has been a considerable reduction in the number of incidents/emergencies that BFRS respond to.

However, although there are fewer incidents overall there has in recent years been little or no reduction in the numbers of emergencies where there is a higher risk to person and property such as accidental dwelling fires and road traffic collisions.

The last five years has seen an upward trend in numbers of people being rescued from fire, road traffic collisions, and flooding.

In fact, last year BFRS reported the highest number of fatal casualties for over 10 years. The numbers of non-fatal casualties for the last two years were also the highest they have been for over 10 years.

The majority of the reduction in incidents is due to having fewer types of incidents which pose much less risk to life and property such as car fires, hoax calls, secondary fires and false alarms.

As previously discussed, the consultation document as it currently stands contains no statistical information or analysis to support the argument that this proposal is safe or will not adversely impact on service provision.

7. Impact on the retained duty system (on-call firefighters):

‘On-call’ firefighters are very important constituent part of any fire and rescue service.

These firefighters are available to respond to an emergency from their homes or places of work. They are notified of an emergency via a pager and promptly respond to their designated fire station.

Because of the importance of a quick response to any emergency these firefighters are required to live and work within a five minute radius of their designated fire station.

Both Bletchley and Great Holm fire stations currently benefit from two retained fire engines and a compliment of professional ‘on-call’ firefighters living and working in the communities close to the current fire stations.

The consultation document makes no mention of the impact the proposed merger will have on the retained duty system. The new site in West Ashland is a considerable distance away from Great Holm and also to an extent Bletchley.

This will greatly increase the time it takes for these firefighters to respond to the new site and provide essential cover and response when necessary.

It is surprising that the significant and detrimental impact this proposal will have on the retained duty system receives no mention at all in the consultation document.

BFRS must provide the necessary information to explain and evaluate what impact this merger will have on the retained duty system.

8. Longer consultation period

An 8 week consultation is not long enough to support a full and meaningful consultation on such a significant proposal which has significant a far reaching impact on many citizens living, working and travelling in Milton Keynes.

A 12 – 16 week period would ensure a more thorough and involved consultation process.

Conclusion: based on the initial views at this early stage of the consultation

- If introducing change, for whatever reason, a fire and rescue service is obligated to prioritise public safety and make sure that any change maintains the best possible front line fire service provision. Any unnecessary increase in risk is a failing in the duty of a fire service, is not acceptable and must be challenged.
- The re-location of Great Holm fire station will increase risk levels for members of the public living, working and travelling in Milton Keynes.
- Firefighter's safety will also be jeopardised under this proposal. The increase in response times will mean that firefighters will be attending fires which have had an extra 5-10 mins to develop and increase in intensity.
- There is no evidence to support that this change is necessary because of financial constraints. On the contrary, the large scale cuts BFRS has made of the past 5 years has produced savings in excess of 11 million pounds. By reducing the front line (mainly firefighter numbers) the fire service has saved far more than the amount by which the overall budget has been reduced.
- The consultation document is seriously lacking in fundamental information to support a meaningful consultation process. The public must have a better understanding of the direct impact this proposal will have on their service provision and safety.
- The document does not explain in any detail what the substantive benefits of this proposal are and why it can only be achieved by closing two fire stations to the detriment of public safety.
- It is true to say that overall incident numbers are declining. However, those incidents which pose the greatest risk to life are not reducing in number and in some instances, such as fire deaths and fire related injuries, are in fact increasing.
- The FBU in principle supports increased collaboration and co-location between emergency services but not when it compromises fire service provision and consequently public safety.

- There is no mention of the impact this proposal will have on the retained duty system and what BFRS are proposing to do to address this very important point.
- 8 weeks is not a sufficient period of time to support a meaningful consultation exercise on such a significant proposal which impacts on front line service provision for many MK residents.

Initial recommendations:

- Remove the proposal to re-locate Great Holm in the interests of public and firefighter safety.
- Continue to examine the feasibility of re-location of Bletchley fire station. However, it is vital that this aspect of the proposal is properly substantiated with information (data, statistics, risk and impact assessments) to support a meaningful and informed consultation exercise.
- Ensure that the public are able to put forward an informed contribution by providing comprehensive statistical analysis about the potential impact this proposal will have on public safety. Including, risk assessments, impact assessments, incident data and all other relevant statistical data and evidence.
- Provide information to accurately evaluate the impact for the retained duty system.
- Extend the consultation time frame to 12 – 16 weeks.
- To support a wider consultation exercise a number of open meetings should be arranged within those communities most affected by this proposal including, but not exclusive, to Stony Stratford and Wolverton.
- To support the principles of openness and transparency, publish all documentation relating to the ‘speculative’ application for, and the subsequent awarding of, government funding for this blue-light hub facility.

If you have any questions regarding the above consultation submission, or wish to meet and discuss any of the content please contact either of the FBU officials below.

Greg O’Neill

FBU Brigade Secretary

James Wolfenden

FBU Regional Secretary



Mr Jason Thellwell
 Chief Fire Officer
 Public Safety Plan
 Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Headquarters
 Stocklake
 Aylesbury
 HP20 1BD

Carole Mills
Chief Executive

3 November 2015

Our Ref: CM/BL

Your Ref:

Reply To: Carole Mills

Direct Line: (01908) 252200

E-mail: carole.mills@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Dear Jason

NEW WEST ASHLAND FIRE SERVICE AND POLICE STATION FACILITY

In response to the Fire Authority's consultation on the above matter, the Council, at its meeting on 21 October 2015 resolved to oppose the closure of Great Holm Fire Station. The Council's specific concerns relate to:

- (a) the significant impact it will have on fire cover in the North, West and CMK areas of Milton Keynes;
- (b) the impact it will have on Milton Keynes as it grows, in particular the Western Expansion Area where several thousand new households are planned, and whether the proposals take into account the future growth of Milton Keynes;
- (c) the impact on the area of Stony Stratford, particularly the historic timber framed buildings in the town; and
- (d) Fire Service response times from a facility in West Ashland to the areas of Wolverton, Stony Stratford, Two Mile Ash and Loughton, noting the reliance on the A5 to reach those areas quickly.

The Council also has some more general concerns relating to the overall proposal and these were:

- (a) the future use of the land currently occupied by the three facilities (Bletchley Police and Fire Stations and Great Holm Fire Station) if they close, in particular Great Holm;
- (b) that the proposal to close Bletchley Police Station would leave the area of Bletchley with no visible police facility;
- (c) that little or no public consultation had been evident on the closure of Bletchley Police Station; and



- (d) that a joint location for the police and fire services would impact on the ability of the Fire Service to maintain its highly regarded status with the public as independent of law enforcement, and would therefore have possible implications for the Fire Service's ability to carry out its duties.

The Council also asks the Fire Authority to advise the Council of its future plans for the land currently occupied by Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations if the proposal was to go ahead.

I trust that the Council's comments will be taken into account by the Authority when making its decision on the new West Ashland Fire Service and Police Station facility and I look forward to your response in due course.

A copy of the Council's full resolution is attached.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carole Mills', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carole Mills
Chief Executive

New West Ashland Fire Service and Police Station Facility

1. That the Council notes the proposal to build a new co-located police and fire service facility in West Ashland currently under consultation and that the proposal will merge the current fire station located in Bletchley, the current fire station located at Great Holm and the police facility located in Bletchley into one single facility.
2. That the Council notes the benefits a new facility would have, in particular upgrading the current Bletchley Fire Station, and the cost savings that a new single facility would bring. This Council also notes that due to excellent preventative work and better regulation, call-out demand on the Fire Service has reduced considerably over recent years, and that increasing joint working between public services has the potential to greatly improve service delivery and reduce cost in the future, if done correctly.
3. That the Council, however, notes a number of concerns about the current proposal including:
 - (a) that the closure of Great Holm Fire Station will have a significant impact on fire cover in the North, West and CMK areas of Milton Keynes;
 - (b) the impact of the closure of Great Holm Fire Station on Milton Keynes as it grows, in particular the Western Expansion Area with several thousand new households planned, and concerns the proposals do not take into account the future growth of Milton Keynes;
 - (c) the impact of the closure of Great Holm Fire Station on the area of Stony Stratford and in particular the historic timber framed buildings in the town;
 - (d) Fire Service response times from a facility in West Ashland to the areas of Wolverton, Stony Stratford, Two Mile Ash and Loughton, noting the reliance on the A5 of such a facility to reach those areas quickly;
 - (e) the future use of the land currently occupied by all three facilities if they close, in particular Great Holm;
 - (f) that the proposal to close Bletchley Police Station would leave the area of Bletchley with no visible police facility;
 - (g) that little or no public consultation has been evident on the closure of Bletchley Police Station; and
 - (h) that concerns have been raised that a joint location for the police and fire services will impact the ability of the fire service to maintain its

highly regarded status with the public as independent of law enforcement, and would therefore have possible implications for the Fire Service's ability to carry out their duties.

4. That the Council therefore resolves to:

- W(a) oppose the closure of Great Holm Fire Station;
- (b) call on all Milton Keynes Council representatives on the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority to oppose any proposed closure of Great Holm Fire Station;
- (c) ask the Chief Executive to make representations to the current ongoing consultation on behalf of Milton Keynes Council noting the opposition of the Council to the possible closure of Great Holm Fire Station and highlighting other concerns noted within this motion;
- (d) ask the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley to advise Milton Keynes Council of their future plans for the land currently occupied by their services if the proposals were to go ahead;
- (e) to work with Thames Valley Police to establish a community facility in Central Bletchley, highlighting possible links with the Community and Cultural Services Review; and
- (f) advise all Parish and Town Councils of this motion and ask them to make representations to the consultation supporting the Council's agreed position.

From: Gifford, Liz
Sent: 26/10/2015 15:16
To: Gowanlock, Stuart
Subject: Great Holm Fire Station

I have completed the on-line questionnaire and am now taking advantage of the offer to send a message as well. While I can see the advantages of the blue light services sharing premises the Ashland location is a bit out of the way and would need to be supplemented by other localities for the following reasons: access for the public; access for volunteer fire fighters; community profile. These need not all be conventional police stations or fire stations.

In terms of being able to respond to emergencies in an ever more crowded urban setting, many in the communities on the west flank do not see Ashland as a suitable alternative to Great Holm. A great deal more explaining about how the fire service is deployed day to day and overnight and how many routes from Ashland have been tested under what conditions might help but it remains the case that a settlement the size of Newport Pagnell is being added to the existing west flank. If there is a case that the distribution is equitable and will work that case is not yet made, a huge area of MK senses that it will be deprived of an essential, life saving service.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Best Wishes

Liz Gifford
Labour and Co-operative Councillor for the Stony Stratford ward.



Campbell
Park
Parish
Council
Caring within
the community

Campbell Park Parish Council

1 Pencarrow Place

Fishermead

Milton Keynes

MK6 2AS

Tel 01908 608559

www.campbell-park.gov.uk

Dominic.warner@campbell-park.gov.uk

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

4th November 2015

Dear Sirs

The Parish Council having considered the proposals as outlined in your consultation document, resolved to support the proposal to the merger of two fire stations in Milton Keynes (Great Holm and Bletchley) into a new blue light hub facility at a new location in West Ashland.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Webb'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elaine Webb
Clerk to Committee



Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council

c/o 17, Mossdale, Heelands, Milton Keynes, MK13 7NE

Telephone: 07779261364 Email: parish.clerk@loughtonandgreatholm-pc.gov.uk

Tuesday 20th October 2015

Jason Thelwell
Chief Fire Officer
Public Safety Plan,
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service HQ
Stocklake
Aylesbury
HP20 1BD

Dear Mr Thelwell

Re: Public Consultation on the proposal to merge Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations and to create a blue-light hub at West Ashland

Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council is writing in response to the Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service public consultation, on the proposal to merge Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations in Milton Keynes and create a blue-light hub station at West Ashland.

Great Holm Fire Station

Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council believes that the Fire Station is not only an excellent asset to residents of our Parish but also to adjacent areas and the expanding Western Flank and therefore should remain fully operational on the present site.

This site is well placed:

- 1) On the rapidly expanding western side of the city.
- 2) Very close to the A5 for quick access to many other areas of Milton Keynes.
- 3) Conveniently placed for attending to any house fires in Loughton Stony Stratford and Wolverton, which are more vulnerable to fires due to the age and methods of construction of many of the properties there.
- 4) Close to Central Milton Keynes in case of a major incident there.

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Response times to incidents

The Parish Council is concerned that by merging the Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations to a blue light station in West Ashland, this would seriously affect the response times to incidents that may occur in the parish, and would be very noticeable to the local residents.

The Western Expansion Area (WEA) site nearby to Great Holm will also put pressure on response times, with the significant amount of properties planned to be constructed.

Often the A5 is very busy with traffic queues at peak times, which would make it very difficult for fire appliances to attend to incidents in the parish in a reasonable amount of time, especially if events are taking place at the National Bowl.

Taking into account if the blue light hub station was to be situated in West Ashland, conversely response times to incidents in the Bletchley area, could be affected by traffic when events are taking place at the Stadium MK.

Staffing & Fire Crews & Appliances

The Parish Council also seeks assurances from the Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, that the proposal to merge Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations and to create a blue-light station at West Ashland, will not affect the current staffing levels and the number of Fire Crews and appliances.

The Parish Council would like to know if consideration has been given to staff on call, and the additional time it will take for those living on Loughton and Great Holm, to reach West Ashland, especially during times of bad weather, or when events are on at the National Bowl and the Stadium MK, trying to get through the increased amounts of traffic.

Proposal to create a blue-light station at West Ashland

The Parish Council believes that the proposal to create a blue light station at West Ashland, will not be of any benefit to the residents of the Parish, and with the potential loss of the Great Holm Fire Station, is not sustainable when there is a substantial amount of dwellings planned to be constructed in the nearby Western Expansion Area (WEA). If Great Holm Fire Station is closed there will be no fire stations in the western side of Milton Keynes at all. Response times to this substantial area **must** suffer.

The Parish Council seeks assurances that it will be fully kept informed of future consultations on this matter by the Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service.

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Conclusions

- Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council are against the potential loss of the Great Holm Fire Station to the local community.
- Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council are not convinced that there would be any cost efficiencies and savings from this proposal.
- Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council are concerned about the effect of response times to incidents if the proposal was to go ahead.
- Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council seeks assurances that the proposal will not affect the current level of staffing and the number of Fire Crews and appliances.
- Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council seeks assurances that if the Great Holm Fire station were to close, that the site would be kept for community use and that the Parish Council would be fully consulted.

Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council requests that the Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service takes on board the comments and areas of concern, concerning the proposal to merge Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations and to create a blue-light station at West Ashland.

Yours Sincerely



Brian Barton
Parish Clerk

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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

THE PEOPLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

1) Name and description:

Milton Keynes Area Review: A proposal to merge Great Holm and Bletchley Fire Stations with Thames Valley Police into a purpose built 'blue light hub' located in West Ashland in Milton Keynes.

2) Responsible directorate/service area/ designated officers:

Head of Transformation & Projects

3) Who is completing this PIA form and why?

The Head of Projects & Transformation as the lead officer for the Milton Keynes area review

4) What is the main purpose (or the main purpose of the changes you want to make)?

- To merge the resources from Bletchley and Great Holm fire stations into a new purpose built blue light hub facility with Thames Valley Police at West Ashland in Milton Keynes.
- To create shared facilities at the new site that can be used by partners and community groups.

5) What are the main activities involved?

- Staff and public engagement as part of a consultation exercise into this proposal.
- Creating an outline plan of the proposed new facility to enable engagement with staff and any other affected parties on what should be included within it.
- If the proposal is approved moving the current staff and resources from the existing two fire stations to the new site.

6) Who have you engaged with and how and why?

- Affected staff, all recognised trade unions, informally since July 2015 through staff engagement meetings, local management meetings, 1:1's.
- Analysis of the affected staff groups protected characteristics has been completed using anonymised data provided by Human Resources. The findings identified that the new site would improve facilities available for all identified groups. The move to the new site wasn't considered to be an issue due to its close proximity to the current fire stations.

- Members of Parliament for Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes Councillors, Town Councillors, Parish Councillors, local press were all sent advanced copies of a public consultation document that explained the rationale and supporting documentation for the merger proposal.
- Public Forums were organised and facilitated by an external research company. The selection process for the Public Forums targeted people from Bletchley, West MK and across MK, respectively, over three separate evening events. This was designed to ensure that a representative sample of the public was consulted. A socio-demographic profile of the public forums is available through the report produced by the external research company. It indicates there was a broad cross section of residents from local areas.
- The staff engagement group was selected by staff from Milton Keynes stations as well as a Fire Brigades Union local official.
- An online questionnaire hosted by an external research company was publicly available throughout the eight week consultation period. 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 or staff as a whole. However, all staff and a wide range of organisations were encouraged to take part in the feedback process which yielded a diverse range of views and opinions. A socio-demographic profile of the public forums is available through the report produced by the external research company. It indicates there was a broad cross section of residents from local areas.

7) Who is intended to benefit and what are the POSITIVE IMPACTS that can be identified, and how?

Race: No identified or obvious impact
Reason (if applicable):

Disability: New site will be designed and built to the latest building regulations and standards ensuring it will be compatible for use by disabled persons (public and staff).
Reason (if applicable):

Gender: The new premises will be designed to ensure that where required there are individual facilities for males and females to ensure standards of privacy and encourage a diverse workforce. Reason (if applicable):

Religion/Belief: The new facility will make provision for a multi faith room and other opportunities will be identified at a later stage in the project should permission to progress the building of the new blue light hub is achieved from the Fire Authority. The current fire stations do not have these facilities.
Reason (if applicable): To ensure that the facility is designed for individuals to practice their faith (public and staff).

Sexuality: No identified or obvious impact at this stage.
Reason (if applicable):

Age: No identified or obvious impact at this stage.

Reason (if applicable):

Gender Reassignment: No identified or obvious impact at this stage.

Reason (if applicable):

Pregnancy and maternity: Suitable facilities will be designed into the new premises for nursing or expectant mothers. The current fire stations do not have these facilities.

Reason (if applicable):

Marriage and civil partnerships: Considered at a later stage of the project as it will impact on individual members of staff, however at this point no issues identified.

Reason (if applicable):

Strengthen Community Cohesion and Promoting Social Inclusion: The consultation with the public has provided details of what community use facilities they would like to be available at the blue light hub facility.

Discussions are taking place with local businesses to explore opportunities for investment in the site to fund the construction of the community facilities. We have also discussed the potential of a volunteer scheme to operate these facilities supported and encouraged by local businesses and members of the community.

The site is located next to the red way cycling route, there is also a bus stop located on the entrance to Thornbury, which is the main route into the site, therefore the site is easily accessible to the public. Parking has been allocated on the site for members of the public visiting or using the site.

The meeting rooms on the site will be available for community meetings and groups to use during the day or in the evening. Public access to this new facility will be made available and advertised to a diverse community cross section.

Environmental:

The Authority is designing a facility to achieve BREEAM (Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method). BREEAM is one of the environmental assessments tools used in the energy industry. It is now considered as a standard that most councils use for new buildings and significant refurbishments.

Other (eg. RDS, cleaners/cooks):

The on-call staff at the two stations concerned are part of a separate change programme which is looking at how the on-call across Milton Keynes are operated. The impact of the move to the new facility will be factored into this separate change programme.

The cleaners within the Milton Keynes stations are already a mobile team that service all the stations in this area, therefore the impact upon them due to the change in location will be minimal.

Reason (if applicable):

8) Are there or will there be any potential NEGATIVE IMPACTS on any section of the staff or community in any of the following areas?

Race: No identified or obvious impact

Reason (if applicable):

Disability: No identified or obvious impact

Reason (if applicable):

Gender: No identified or obvious impact

Reason (if applicable):

Religion/Belief: No identified or obvious impact

Reason (if applicable):

Sexuality: No identified or obvious impact

Reason (if applicable):

Age: No identified or obvious impact

Reason (if applicable):

Gender reassignment: No identified or obvious impact

Reason (if applicable):

Pregnancy and maternity: No identified or obvious impact

Reason (if applicable):

Marriage and civil partnerships: No identified or obvious impact

Reason (if applicable):

Other (eg. On-call, cleaners/cooks):

Reason (if applicable):

A move to the new facility would increase the distance that on-call employees would need to travel for their training evenings and for fire calls.

There is a cook at each existing fire station. One cook is currently on fixed term contract and the other has agreed to move onto a fixed term contract. Both are up for review in early 2017, these staff will receive regular 1-1s with the local station commander throughout the period of the change programme.

SOME *there may be some NEGATIVE/POSITIVE IMPACT on one or many groups/communities and it will be necessary to continue with the remainder of*

the People Impact Assessment (PIA). Using the information above, proceed through the rest of the form.

NONE NEUTRAL IMPACT on any particular group/community so will require the reasons for not proceeding.

Reasons:

Some NEGATIVE/POSITIVE IMPACT – further action (continue)

NEUTRAL IMPACT – no further action (sign the form)

9) Using information from the engagement in Q.6) and the positive and negative impacts from Qs. 7) and 8) are there any specifics we should consider for an action plan to address individual or group requirements?

- 1:1's and or group briefing sessions being offered to affected staff
- Project delivery timeline is established subject to Fire Authority permission to progress this proposal.
- Staff engagement group established in July 2015, which will continue to meet regularly throughout the project to ensure staff representatives are well briefed on progress.

10) Do we need any further data or research to remove NEGATIVE impacts or make use of POSITIVE impacts?

- Identify what will be factored into the design for the building as part of complying with building regulations.
- The PIA will be reviewed regularly during the design and detailed specification phase of the project.

11) Can the POSITIVE impact be identified as good practice OR can the NEGATIVE impact be minimized or removed? Include in the action plan (below): Not at this stage

12) Are there other adaptations that could further promote equality, equal opportunities or improved relations? Explain how and include in action plan (below): Not at this stage

Signed:	Date:
Completed by: Head of Projects & Transformation	4 January 2016
Line manager (if appropriate): N/A	

Human Resources: Employee Relations Manager	7 January 2016
Scrutiny (if appropriate): Head of Human Resources	28 January 2016



People Impact Assessment: Summary Report

**The results of equality impact assessments must be published.
Please complete this summary, which will be used to publish the results
of your impact assessment on the authority's web site**

Date of Assessment: 4 January 2016
Completing Officer's Title/Position: Area Commander, Head of Projects & Transformation
Service, Policy, Procedure, or Practice that was Impact Assessed:
<p>Summary of Recommendations and Key Points of Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify exactly what will be included in the building design as part of complying with building regulations that will address protected characteristic requirements outlined above. ➤ Review PIA and fill out the action plan below following the decision of the Fire Authority on whether to progress the station merger proposal.

People Impact Assessment Action Plan

The table below should be completed using the information from the People Impact Assessment to produce an action plan for the implementation of proposals to:

Please ensure that you update your service/business plan with the equality objectives/targets and actions identified below:

Area of impact	Changes proposed	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resource implication	Comments

Sign off (Head of Service):

Department People & Organisational Development (E&D)
Author :
Approval :
Issue number: 3.0
Issue date :
Review date :