

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



AGENDA SUPPLEMENT (EXTRAORDINARY MEETING)

Date: Wednesday 12 November 2025

Time: 11.30 am

Venue: The Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF

Agenda Item

5. Questions

To receive questions in accordance with Standing Order SOA7.

QUESTIONS

Question 1

Question from Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member to Councillor Llew Monger, Chairman, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

At no point between her appointment and up until June 2025 did the Chief Fire Officer discuss with the previous Chairman of the Authority, its Executive Committee or the Fire Authority a desire to undertake public consultation on widened operational independence.

The first it came into the public domain was via a letter to Members of Parliament and it is now included in the paper related to on-call service cuts. Whilst you have previously set out you do not consider this disrespectful to Members, that is not a view shared by other Members of the Authority.

Please set out:

- a) the date at which the Chief Fire Officer first discussed it with you as Chairman;
- b) what other members of the Fire Authority were consulted on it, if so on what date; and
- c) whether the Fire Brigades Union has ever been consulted on it, if so on what date.

Response from Councillor Llew Monger, Chairman, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority to Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member

- a) 30 July 2025.
- b) None.
- c) No formal consultation has taken place with the FBU to date. It was scheduled for discussion with officers at an internal meeting held on 31/07/25, this was a project meeting that the FBU were invited to but did not attend. It was also discussed during three staff focus groups facilitated by ORS during September and October 2025.

Question 2

Question from Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member to Councillor Llew Monger, Chairman, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Please confirm the public consultation on on-call service cuts will include an explicit "yes or no" to whether the public agrees with the proposals to reduce on call appliances.

Response from Councillor Llew Monger, Chairman, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority to Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member

The questions will be finalised with ORS, following approval to proceed if given by the Authority.

The consultation questions will enable people to express unequivocal support for the status quo.

Question 3

Question from Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member to Councillor Niknam Hussain, Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Information Security, IT, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

You have previously confirmed that a covenant exists on Great Missenden fire station which means it must always be a fire station. Please confirm:

- a) the public will explicitly be told of this covenant in the public consultation on on-call service reduction; and
- b) the basis on which the Fire Authority intends to comply with this covenant if it proceeds with closure of Great Missenden station

Response from Councillor Niknam Hussain, Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Information Security, IT, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority to Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member

In all responses I do not accept the premise in the questions about on-call service reduction.

The covenant states that “no erections or buildings of any kind other than a fire station to be erected built or placed upon the said land” it does not state that the site must always be a fire station.

a) No. Service delivery is a separate issue from the covenant. However, the details of the restrictive covenant are accessible to the public at HM Land Registry, registered against Title Number BM280960. Restrictive covenants are only enforceable by the owner(s) at the relevant time of land which has the benefit of the covenant. If enforceable they can be released or varied by agreement. Failing that, or if indemnity insurance is not obtainable, an application can be made to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) to have the restriction discharged or modified under section 84 of the Law of Property Act 1925.

b) In the event of a closure of the station, disposal by lease or freehold would be a matter for the Executive Committee.

The Authority’s Standing Orders Relating to Contracts (emphasis added) state:

20.5 Land and buildings owned by the Authority shall not be disposed by lease or freehold without the prior approval of a Committee of the Authority.

20.6 Prior to approval being sought the following information must be provided:

(a) a complete description of all the land and/or property to be included in the disposal;

(b) confirmation that the title of the land and/or property is owned by the Authority;

(c) the reason for the sale and any restrictions which this may impose;

(d) a report on any information which is held by the Authority in the previous use of the land which may affect its value (e.g. if the site were contaminated);

(e) the estimated value of the land and/or property together with evidence of comparable properties in the location or by reference to other recent, similar Authority transactions;

(f) in cases where land and/or property is being sold as potential housing development, evidence that planning applications will be obtained prior to the completion of the disposal in order to obtain the best possible price for the land;

(g) recommendations on the following:

(i) issues that need to be resolved before marketing the land and/or property can commence;

(ii) the preferred method of disposal (private treaty/public auction/formal tender);

(iii) the title to be transferred; and

(iv) the minimum price that the Authority is prepared to receive together with an asking price.

Question 4

Question from Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member to Councillor Niknam Hussain, Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Information Security, IT, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

You previously failed to confirm that you had undertaken assessment of the business case assumptions in the on-call service cut proposals with officers. Now that these proposals are proceeding to public consultation, please set out:

- a) the date on which you reviewed the outline and full business case assumptions;
- b) your personal assessment of the validity of the assumptions; and
- c) details of any further work on the financial business case assumptions that you asked officers undertake between the now infamous closed July 12th workshop and the paper in front of the Fire Authority on 12th November

Response from Councillor Niknam Hussain, Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Information Security, IT, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority to Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member

In all responses I do not accept the premise in the questions about on-call service cuts. It has yet to be decided by the Authority that proposals will be proceeding to consultation, however:

- a) The financial figures in the consultation proposal provide information on the typical cost of on-call crews, fire engines and stations. I discussed on-call costs (amongst other topics) when I met with the Director of Finance and Assets and the Head of Finance & Assets (Deputy Director) on 18 August 2025.
- b) The figures in the consultation proposal document are based either on actual costs or budgets, an extrapolation of those based on headcount, or in the case of station costs an assessment by specialist consultants. As such, I am content that any assumptions used are valid.
- c) I did not request any further work other than as noted in my response to 4(a) and 4(b).

Question 5

Question from Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member to Councillor Robin Stuchbury, Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

The Fire Brigades Union has made clear it believes the proposed on-call service cuts will endanger the public and firefighters. Please confirm that you will therefore now oppose the proposals proceeding to public consultation.

Response from Councillor Robin Stuchbury, Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority to Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member

I do not agree with the proposal being described as on-call service cuts.

I agree with the FBU that under years of conservative authority, the on-call availability in this county has declined to a point where something significant needs to be done.

I believe officers have put forward bold and ambitious proposals that could address both day to day demand and also offer a layer of resilience to address risk, enhancing public and firefighter safety. I very much welcome the opportunity for the public and staff to share their views on those proposals.

We will have to consider the views of the trade unions as part of this consultation. The proposals officers have put forward are trying to improve the on-call service across the whole service area, and from a health and safety perspective I think having a wider range of equipment and people available should be explored. I think that the public should be allowed the opportunity to have a view on this now.

Question 6

Question from Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member to Councillor Llew Monger, Chairman, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Please confirm:

- a) That the Authority agreed to invest in 2 additional rural firefighting vehicles following the 2022 wildfires review and confirm the specific dates the Authority decision, investment allocation and purchase commenced; and
- b) That at no point did the Fire Authority make the decision to approve the purchase of the rural firefighting vehicles on the basis that they would serve as a replacement for fire engines or to justify future reduction.

Response from Councillor Llew Monger, Chairman, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority to Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member

- a) To assist building the capital programme for 2024/25 a members' workshop was held on 3 January 2024. The papers for this meeting noted that at that time "The two wildfire units are lease vehicles" and that "these two vehicles will need to be replaced as a priority".

The capital programme (including the replacement wildfire vehicles, now known as rural firefighting vehicles) was approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 14 February 2024. The total investment allocation for both vehicles is £0.285m. The purchase order for the vehicle chassis was placed in December 2024 and the order for the conversion work was placed in May 2025.

- b) Correct. The purchase was approved on the basis the new rural firefighting vehicles would replace the leased wildfire vehicles.

Question 7

Question from Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member to Councillor Llew Monger, Chairman, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Please outline how you personally have satisfied yourself that the proposed public consultation on on-call service reduction meet the Gunning Principles.

Response from Councillor Llew Monger, Chairman, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority to Councillor Simon Rouse – Fire Authority Member

At a meeting of the Authority on October 8th, you asked me if I agreed with you that “we are blessed with an exceptional cadre of senior leaders, who are skilled and capable”...the answer I provided then is the one I maintain today. Unlike yourself, who has been working in opposition to this exceptional leadership team, I have been working closely with officers to support the development of proposals to take out to the public and staff for opinion.

As such, officers have assured me that the proposed consultation fully meets the Gunning Principles.

It would be launched while proposals are still at a formative stage, with no decisions taken. The consultation materials set out the evidence and rationale clearly so the public can give informed and meaningful feedback.

One preferred proposal is presented, reflecting earlier engagement where staff and the public asked for a single clear, professional option. The consultation would still enable people to express support for the status quo or alternative views.

The consultation would run for ten weeks and will be independently managed by ORS, ensuring that all feedback is objectively evaluated and conscientiously considered before any final decision is made by the Authority.