ON-CALL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME CONSULTATION: EVIDENCE PACK 2025

The evidence, analysis and community impact behind our proposals to modernise and strengthen On-Call provision.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this evidence pack

This document brings together the detailed evidence that underpins the proposals set out in our consultation. It shows how we have assessed risk, demand and resources across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, and demonstrates the rationale for change.

The evidence draws directly from our 2025 – 2030 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), incident data and wider community impact information. It provides transparency on how decisions have been shaped by data analysis, professional judgement and community impact, ensuring that our proposals are proportionate, risk-based and focused on keeping people and property safe.

How to use this document

- **Read alongside the Consultation Pack** – this Evidence Pack is not a stand-alone document. It provides the detailed data, analysis and community impact information that supports the proposals.
- **Transparency** – includes modelling, financial information and station-level data so you can see the evidence behind the decisions.
- **Level of detail** – while the Consultation Pack is written in plain language, this Evidence Pack contains additional data tables, graphs and analysis for those who want to explore in depth.
- **Cross-references** – it follows the same structure as the Consultation Pack so you can link proposals or statements with supporting evidence.
- **Community impact** – highlights operational, financial and social impact on communities, so that consultees can make informed contributions.
- **Decision-making** – together with the public consultation feedback, this evidence will inform the final decision of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

Strengthening On-Call and community safety through reinvestment

This programme of work is not designed to cut budgets, reduce firefighter numbers or divert resources from our frontline.

Streamlining the On-Call fleet, by reducing the number of fire engines that are difficult to crew and not essential based on our data, we could reinvest savings back into our operational On-Call response. It offers an opportunity to use our budget more effectively and invest where it will have the greatest impact on fire engine availability to support resilience and improvement of station facilities, vehicles and equipment.

It is important to note that these proposals will not cause any reduction to the public safety and protection work we carry out. Interventions relating to fire safety and fire prevention will continue to be undertaken based on risk and vulnerability.

OUR SERVICE

This section summarises the key risk and demand evidence underpinning the proposals. The full analysis is available in our 2025 – 2030 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Evidence Pack, which includes detailed data, modelling and methodology. Where relevant, this pack reproduces selected graphs and tables with references provided so readers can find the complete material.

The county of Buckinghamshire

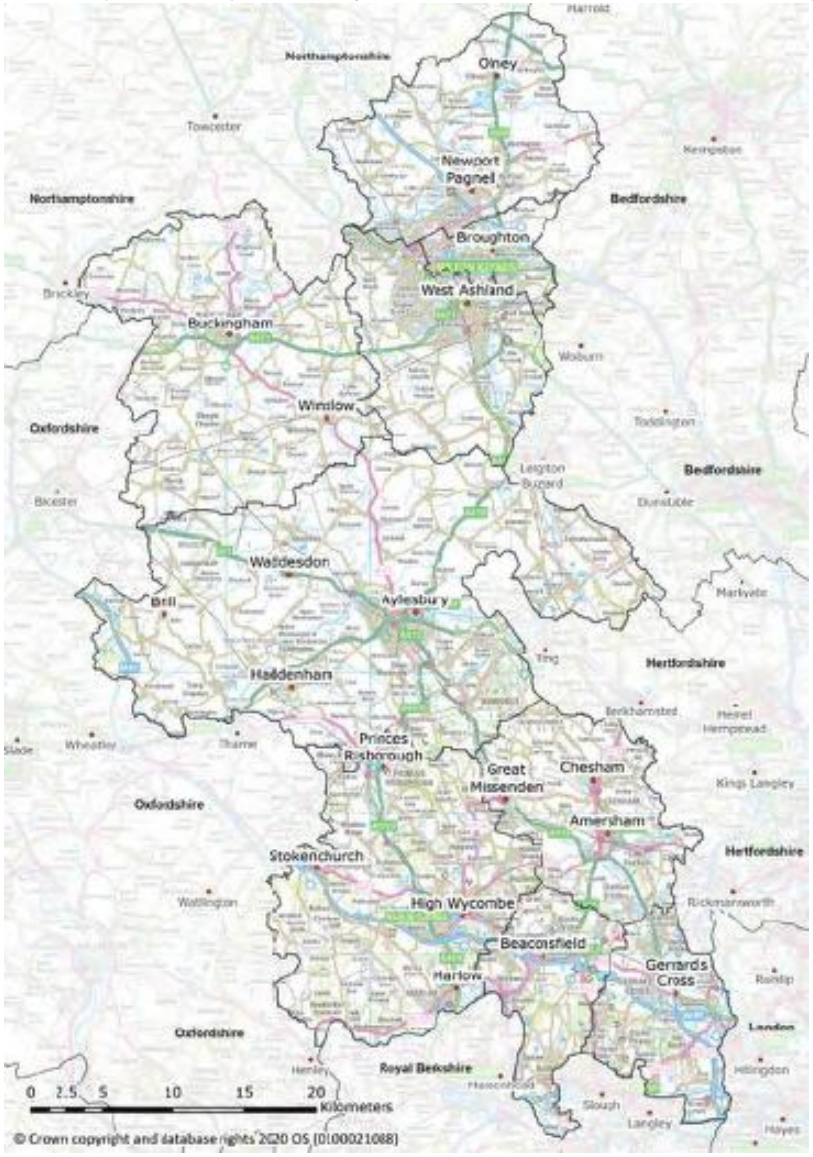
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) covers the county of Buckinghamshire spanning 723 square miles in the south east of England. In the 2021 census the county had a population of 840,200.

Buckinghamshire is a predominately rural county especially in north western areas. Just over half its population live in one of three main areas, Milton Keynes, High Wycombe and Aylesbury. Milton Keynes alone is home to roughly a third of the county's residents.

Our Fire Authority is made up of Councillors from the two unitary authorities, Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes City Council, which provide local government services across our area.

Buckinghamshire is bordered by six neighbouring fire services. To the east are Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. To the south east is London Fire Brigade and to the south is Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The western boundary is shared with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and to the north is Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Figure A, *Map of Our Response Area (Source: CRMP Evidence Pack, 2025 – 2030, p.149)*



Response capabilities and vehicles

Our response capability is the way we effectively manage emergencies, using the right people, vehicles and equipment, coordinated through well-practised plans. It's about ensuring we can respond quickly and successfully to protect people, property and the environment across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

We currently have 19 fire stations across our response area. These stations house 30 fire engines, alongside a range of specialist and support vehicles that help us meet daily demand and provide resilience during large-scale or multiple simultaneous incidents.

Vehicles:

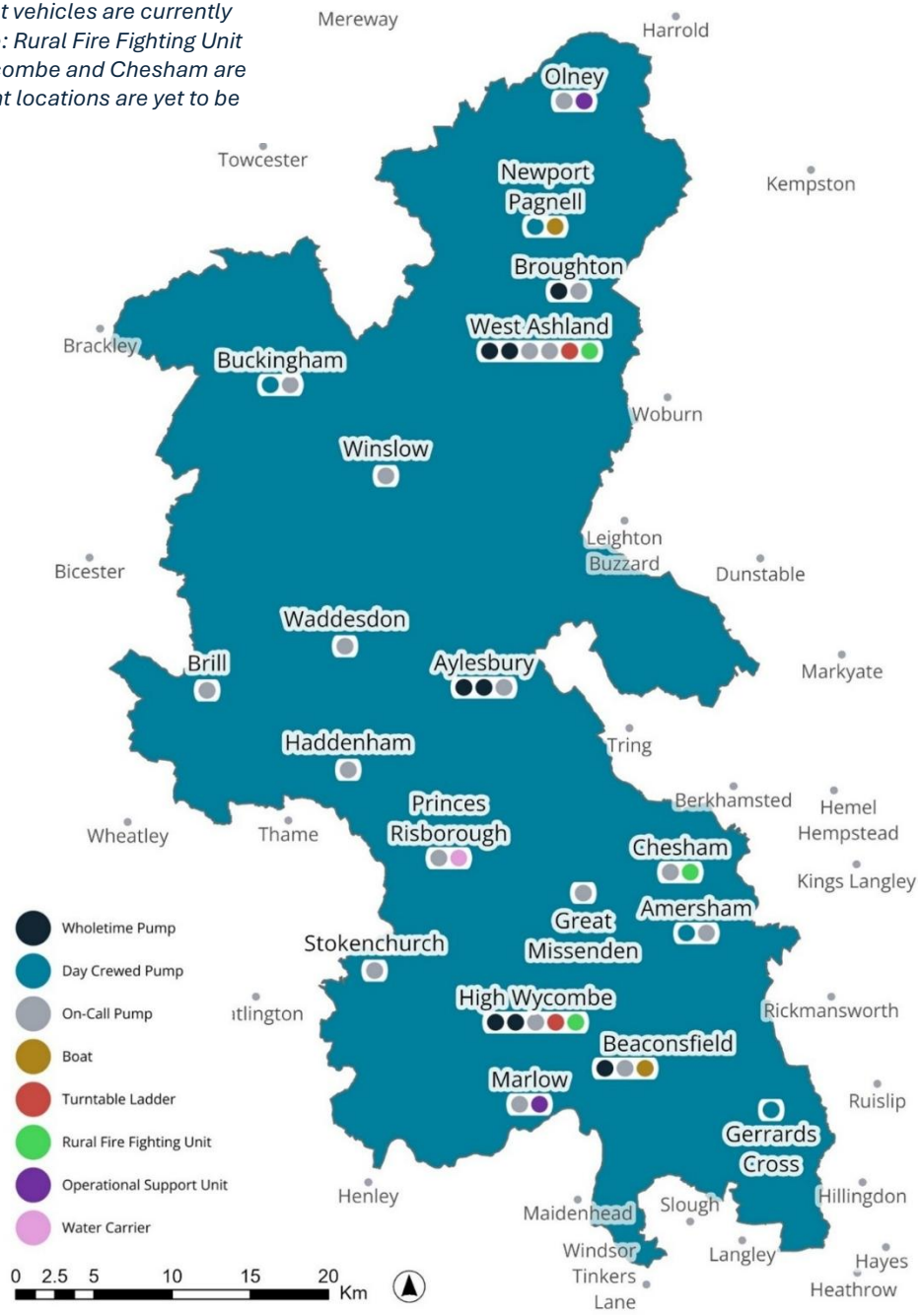
Fire engines:

We operate a fleet of 30 fire engines. These purpose-built vehicles transport firefighters to emergencies and carry the specialist kit needed to respond safely and effectively. Each fire engine is equipped with a large water tank and pumping system, enabling crews to deliver high volumes of water when tackling fires.

Specialist vehicles:

Not every emergency can be resolved with traditional fire engines alone. In some cases, specialist vehicles are better suited to meet the needs of an incident and can deal with specific risks more effectively.

***Figure B**, Map showing which stations our fire engines and specialist vehicles are currently based at. Please note: Rural Fire Fighting Unit locations at High Wycombe and Chesham are temporary, permanent locations are yet to be confirmed.*



They add enormous value to our response capability and provide us with the right tools to deal with a broader range of emergencies, without sending more people than are needed, or larger vehicles than are necessary. Our specialist vehicles are:

Rural Firefighting Vehicles (RFVs):

- Smaller, more agile vehicles designed for off-road use and requiring fewer crew. Ideal for reaching remote or rural areas quickly, especially during dry summer months when wildfires are more likely. These are example of how we are developing our fleet of emergency response vehicles to enable us to better match resource to risk in a more flexible way.

Water carriers:

- Tankers that deliver large volumes of water to incidents in areas with limited hydrant access, essential for rural fires or larger-scale fires where a greater supply of water is needed.

Boats and water rescue units:

- Used for water-related emergencies, particularly in flood-prone areas, enabling crews to respond where life risk comes from water rather than fire.

Turntable Ladder (TL):

- A high-reaching vehicle that provides access to tall buildings and delivers elevated water jets or rescue capability. Crucial for urban areas and for large commercial or residential incidents.

Operational Support Unit (OSU):

- A van with tail lift for transporting specialist equipment to major or complex incidents, supporting efficient and safe operations.

We are committed to modernising our fleet to better match today's risks.

To send a fire engine to an incident we must have a minimum crew of four, including:

- A qualified driver.
- A Crew Commander (or higher) to lead the response.
- At least two firefighters trained to wear breathing apparatus.

Our Firefighters

Our firefighters work in two ways:

- **Wholetime firefighters** are full-time and either work on a shift duty system (available 24/7 from station) or a day-crewed duty system (available at station during the day, responding from home at night).
- **On-Call firefighters** respond when available, providing additional support across our service.

What is On-Call provision?

On-Call firefighters are trained and equipped members of our community who respond to emergencies when available. When alerted they travel to their local fire station to join the crew and mobilise the fire engine to the incident.

Most On-Call staff live within ten minutes of their station and balance their firefighting role with other jobs, from landscape gardeners and company directors to full-time parents and semi-retired professionals. Their commitment is vital to our emergency response and resilience.

Some stations are crewed entirely by On-Call firefighters. These are our On-Call stations. Currently we have 10, they are in:

- Brill
- Chesham
- Great Missenden
- Haddenham (which also operates as our Training Centre)
- Marlow
- Olney
- Princes Risborough
- Stokenchurch
- Waddesdon
- Winslow

Other stations are primarily crewed by Wholetime firefighters, with On-Call crew providing support. This arrangement is in place at seven of our stations:

- Amersham
- Aylesbury
- Beaconsfield
- Broughton
- Buckingham
- High Wycombe
- West Ashland

Our two remaining stations, Gerrards Cross and Newport Pagnell, are crewed solely by Wholetime firefighters.

UNDERSTANDING RISK AND DEMAND

As a fire and rescue service we have a legal duty to protect people and property across a mix of urban and rural communities. To do this effectively we must understand the risks we face, and the demand placed on our resources, so we can match our capabilities to the emergencies we're most likely to encounter.

Risk

BFRS faces a wide range of risks, shaped by our communities, environment, and economy. These risks help determine how and where we place our people, fire engines, and specialist vehicles.

We carried out a full analysis of these risks in our **2025 – 2030 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)**, which can be viewed here. It sets out our overall approach for the next five years, showing how and where we match our resources to the risks we face. This consultation builds on that work and focuses on our On-Call fire stations and the way we use our specialist vehicles.

Community risk profile

This consultation uses the CRMP risk analysis and detailed evidence as its foundation to explain why changes are needed and how we can best match our resources to the risks we face.

We recognise our community has concerns around increasing local population. While **Figure C** indicates a downward trend in our overall incident numbers since 2010, we are aware of future plans for additional housing growth across our area and are working with our partners as they form these plans, supporting and providing comments during their consultations. However, we can't afford to stand still and wait for their plans to be finalised, we need to make changes now. We will continuously track and monitor our data, not just through the lifetime of this CRMP, but into the future. We will adapt and respond to changes, undertaking future resource reviews where necessary.

Infrastructure and population growth

> *We heard from the early engagement focus groups that people were concerned about a perceived reduction in fire cover at a time of increased population and infrastructure growth. Our data shows us that there is no direct correlation between the growth in population and infrastructure and incident numbers. In fact, while we have seen an increase in population and infrastructure we have seen a decrease in incidents.*

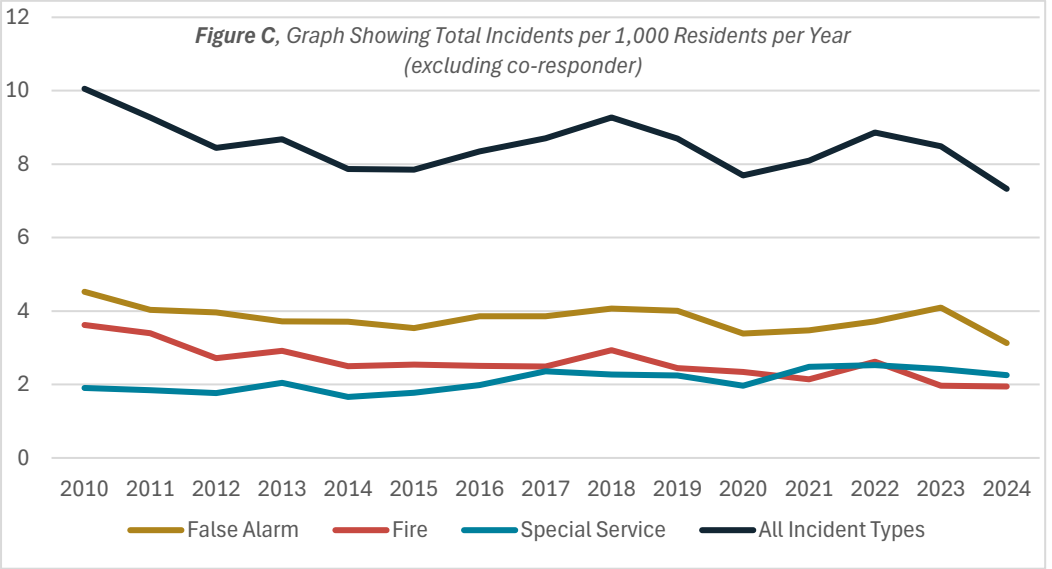
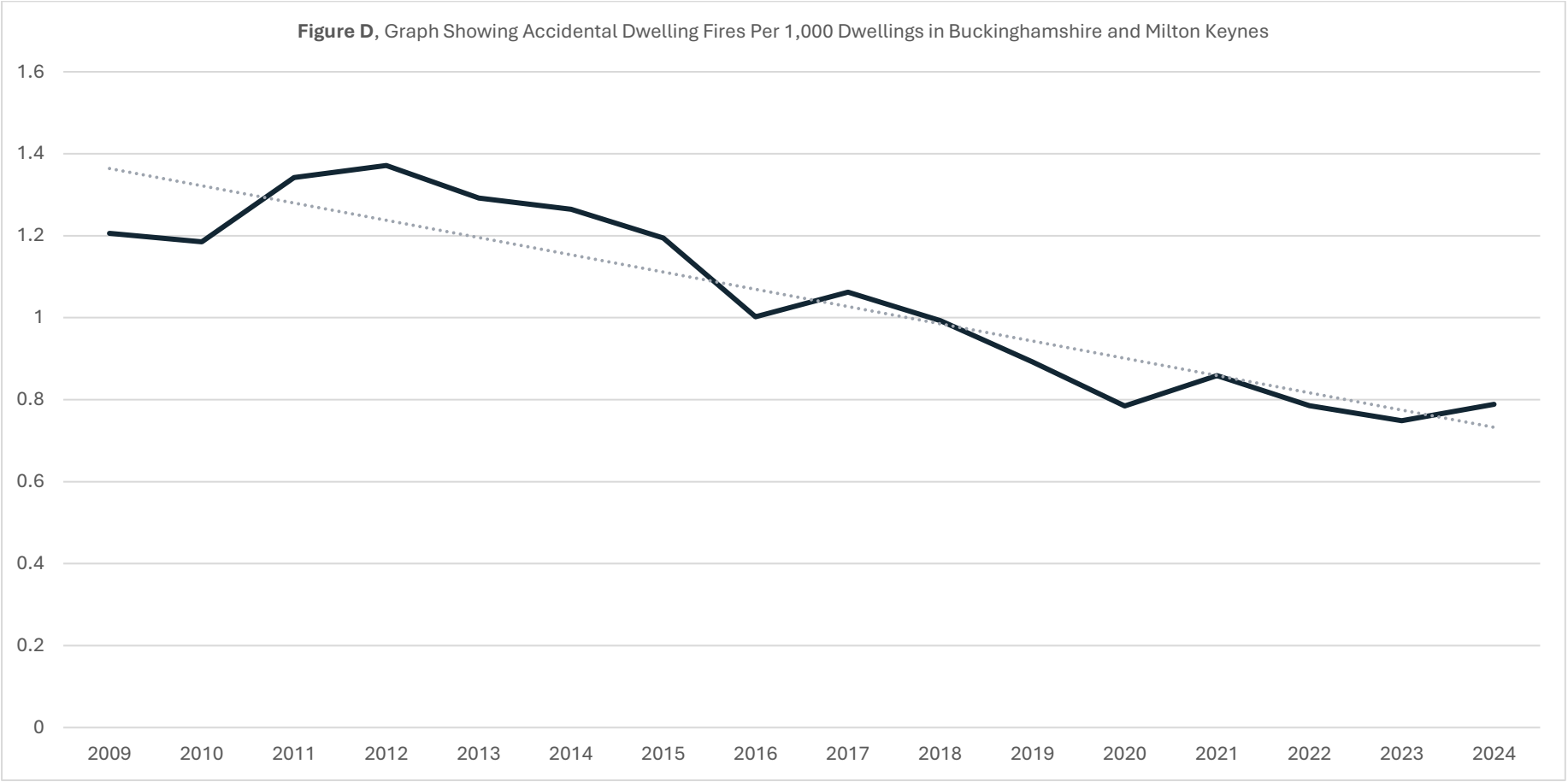


***Figure C**, Graph Showing Total Incidents per 1,000 Residents per Year (excluding co-responder)*

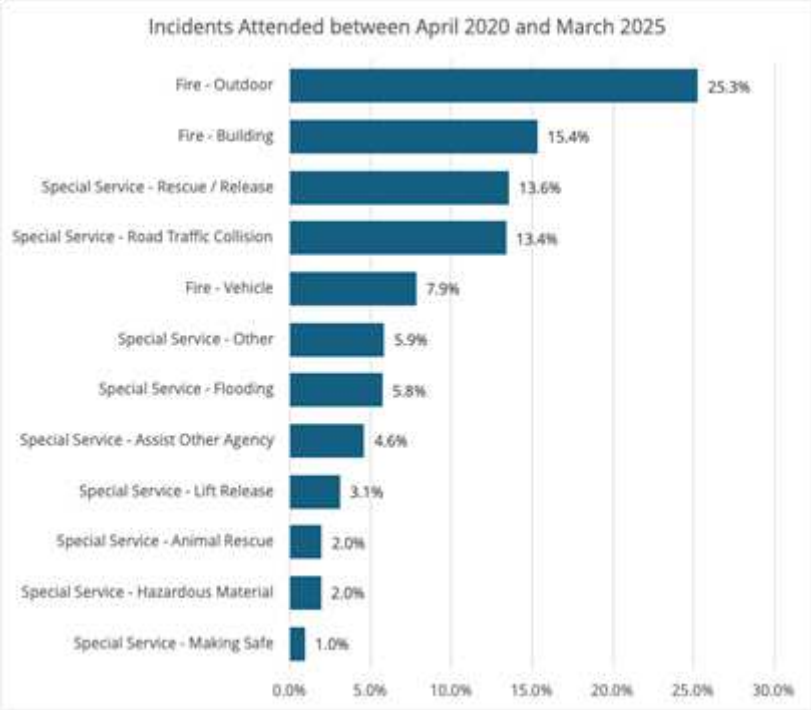
Figure D demonstrates that while population and residential dwellings have been increasing, the number of accidental dwelling fires has been decreasing.



Demand

Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service covers a diverse and complex area, including the River Thames, three major motorways, rail infrastructure, and a mix of urban and rural environments.

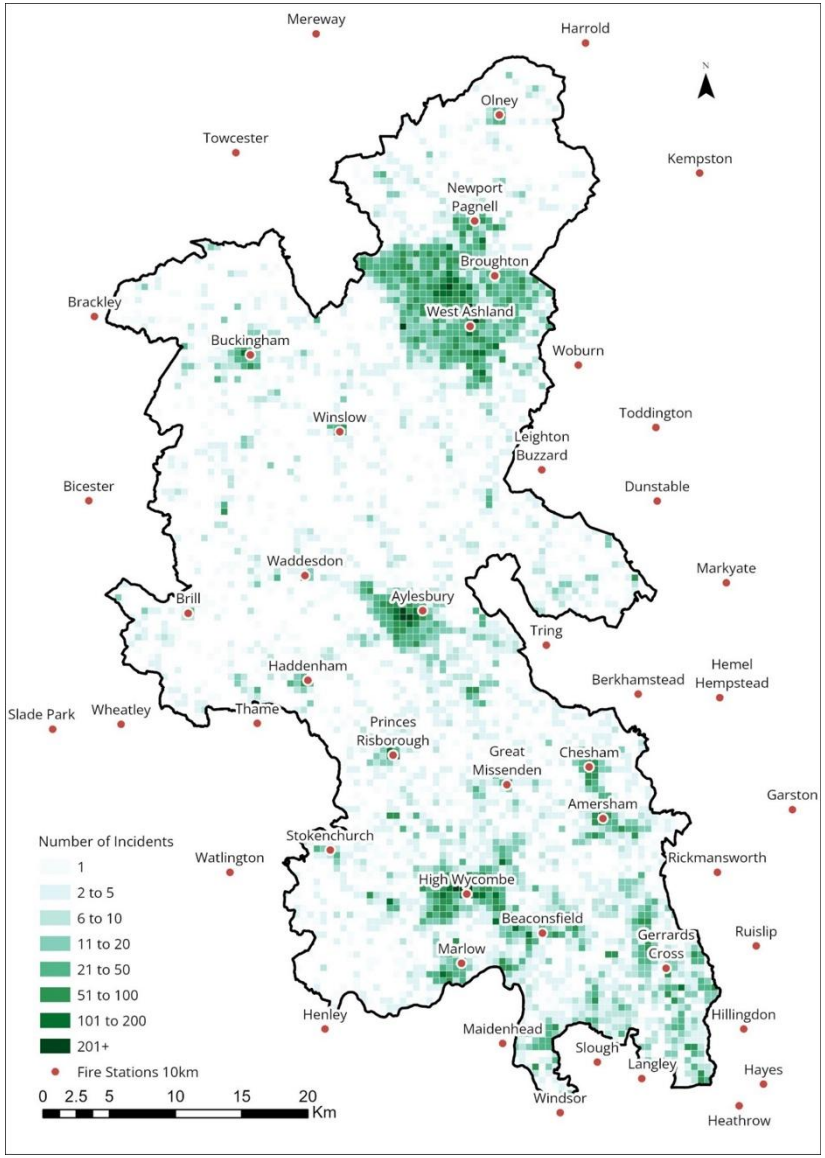
***Figure E**, as shared in the CRMP 2025 - 2030*



Incident density/location

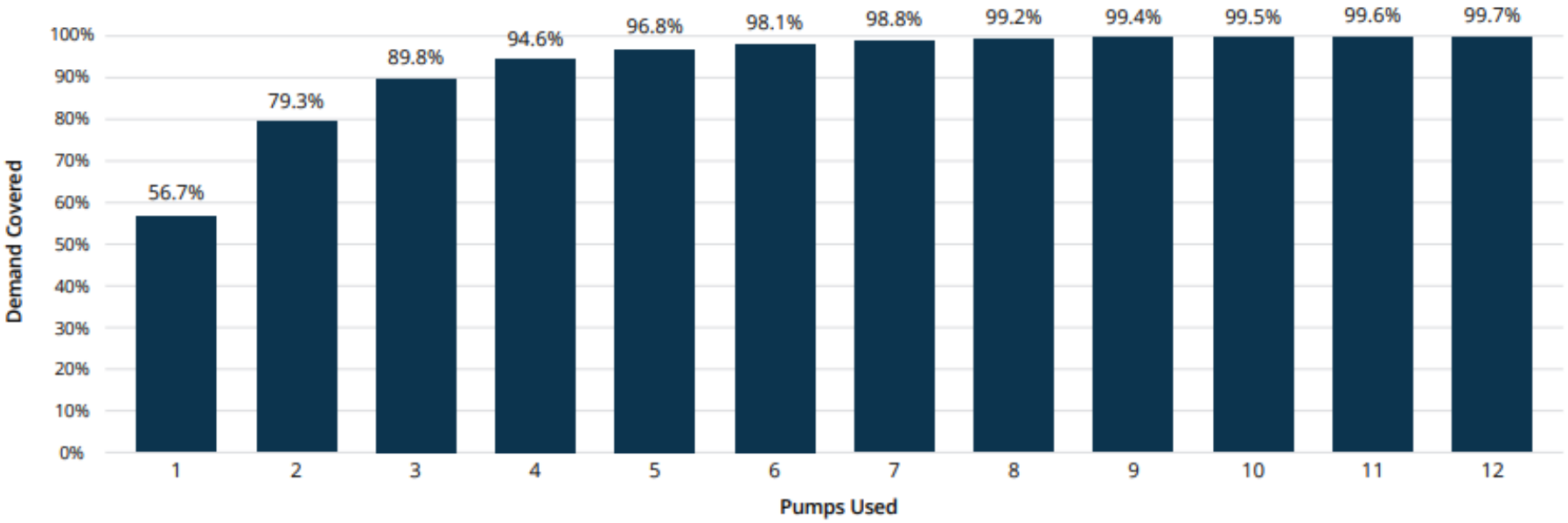
Figure F plots our incident locations and provides context on the density of incidents across our service area from April 2020 to March 2025.

***Figure F**, as shared in the CRMP 2025 - 2030*



Data gathered during development of our CRMP confirms that 12 immediately available fire engines is the right number to meet most of the demand. Over 99 per cent of incidents can be handled with nine fire engines or fewer. Maintaining 12 ensures we have a strong level of resilience for immediate response.

***Figure G**, Table Showing Use of Fire Engines April 2019 to March 2023*



Figures H and I show the use of our fire engines by hour of the day between April 2019 and March 2023. The charts show:

- The average number of fire engines used during each hour of the day.
- The average number of fire engines used during each hour of the day plus standard deviation (SD). Standard deviation is a measure of variability about the mean. The majority of observations are within one standard deviation of the mean.
- The maximum number used at each hour.
- The number of fire engines would cover over 99% of the demand within that hour.

During the summer of 2022 Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes experienced two heatwaves during which the demand on our fire engines was exceptionally high.

To demonstrate the impact of the heatwave, we have included **Figure H** which shows the use of fire engines excluding the data between April 2022 and March 2023.

In the last five years there have only been a total of 16 hours when we have used more than 20 fire engines at one time. Of these hours 10 were on 19 July 2022 (one of the two heatwaves).

***Figure H**, Fire engine utilisation April 2019 – March 2023*
(Source: CRMP Evidence Pack, 2025-2030, p. 155)

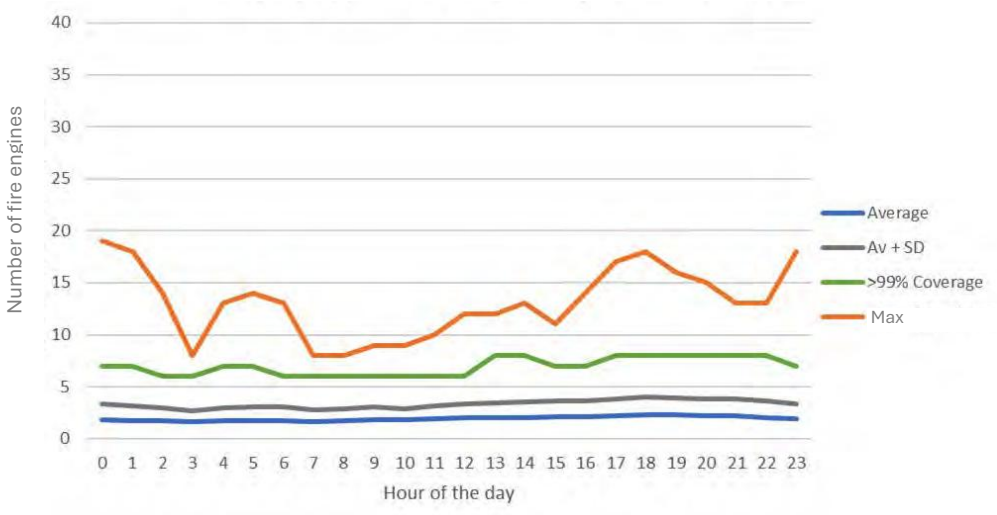
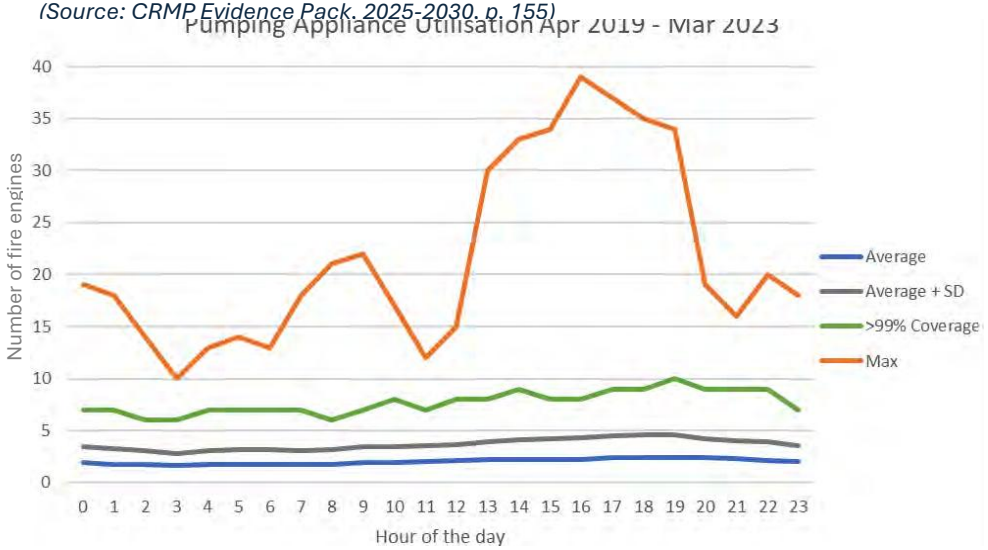


***Figure I**, Fire engine utilisation April 2019 – March 2022*
(Source: CRMP Evidence Pack, 2025-2030, p. 155)



Response

Response standards

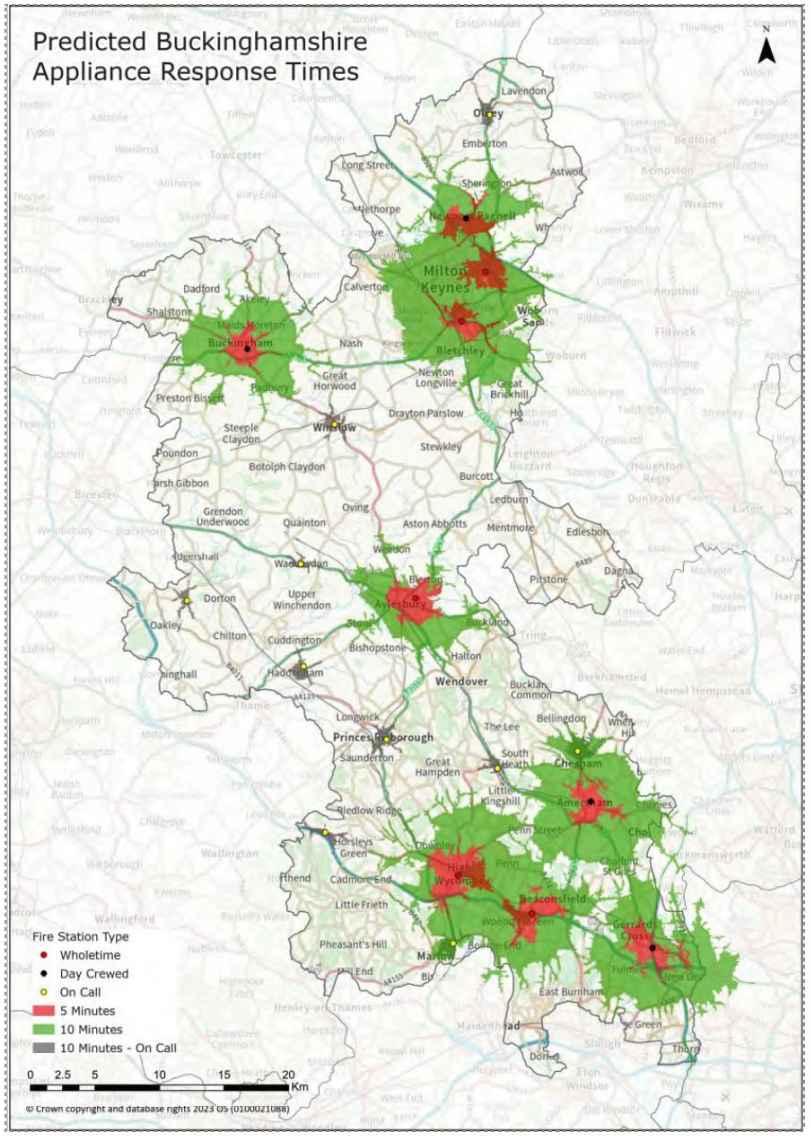
The data also shows that the number and location of our immediately available fire engines meets our response standard, an average of 10 minutes for the first fire engine to arrive at an incident. When a 999 call is made, our Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) identifies the location and dispatches the quickest available crew, regardless of which Thames Valley fire service they belong to.

To build our CRMP, we analysed how often our fire engines are used across the response area. This gives us a clear picture of demand. The consultation uses this information, we are not remodelling how or where we place our whole-time engines, but we are proposing changes to some On-Call engines and how specialist vehicles are used.

We've made significant investment in recent years to increase our Wholetime firefighter numbers and secure this level of assured response. This consultation does not propose any changes to that part of our service.

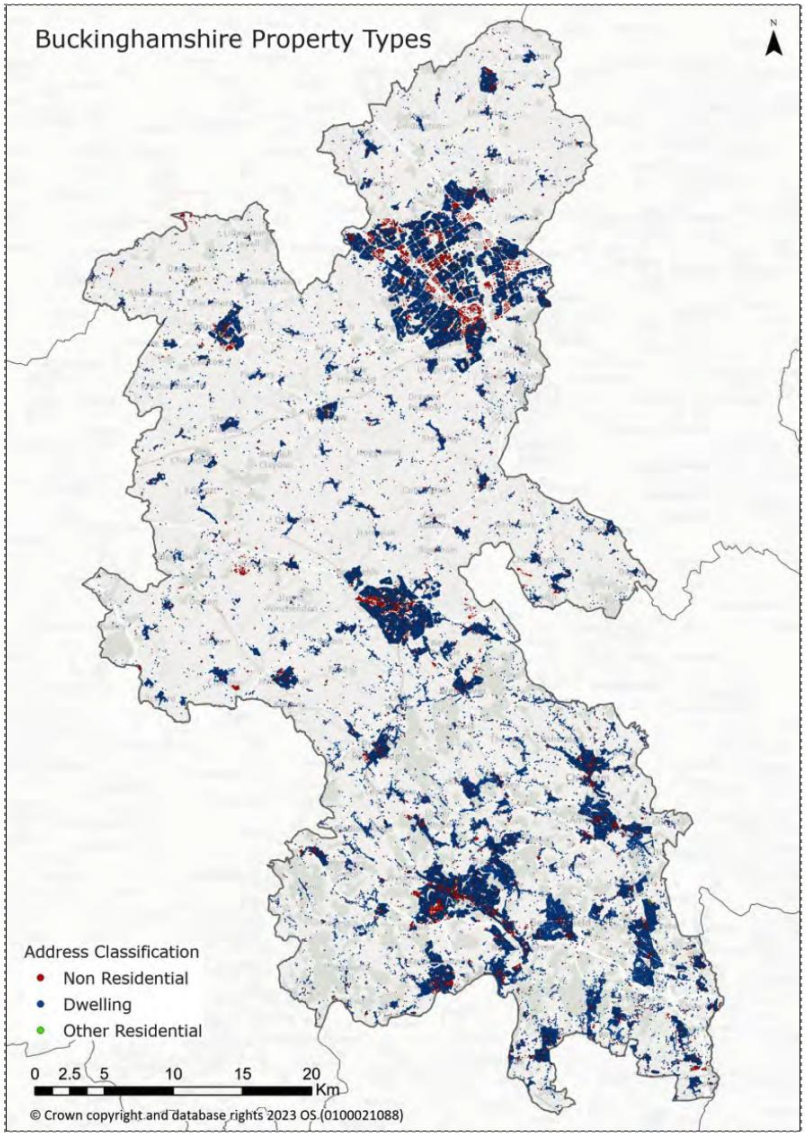
Figure J shows where fire engines could reach within five and ten minutes if the fire engines was situated at the station when called upon based on modelling from current station locations.

***Figure J**, (Source: CRMP Evidence Pack, 2025-2030, p. 153)*



The map K shows the density of buildings by type across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes

Figure K. *(Source: CRMP Evidence Pack, 2025-2030, p.153)*



How does On-Call provision support emergency response?

In addition to day-to-day emergencies, our Service must be ready to respond to peak demand, whether that's a single large-scale incident or multiple smaller incidents occurring at the same time. These peaks can be driven by seasonal factors such as flooding, storms, snowfall, or wildfires.

To meet this demand, we need to be able to scale up our resources quickly and effectively as seen on page 155 in our CRMP Evidence Pack.

Lines of availability:

We categorise the way our On-Call firefighters respond to alerts into four levels, known as lines of availability. These help us understand and plan how quickly additional support can be mobilised when needed.

- **First line availability:** Firefighters are immediately available, or able to reach their local fire station within 10 minutes of being alerted. This is our primary response expectation for On-Call staff.

In addition to their local station, On-Call firefighters can also provide agreed cover at alternative locations on a delayed response. This is particularly useful for supporting crews at prolonged incidents.

We offer three levels of delayed response:

- **Second line availability:**
  Able to reach their allocated station within 20 minutes of being notified.
- **Third line availability:**
  Able to reach their allocated station within 1 hour of being notified.
- **Fourth line availability:**
  Able to reach their allocated station within 3 hours of being notified.

Actual response times

The tables below show the **actual average attendance times over the last five years**. This measures the time taken from when the first fire engine is assigned to an incident to when it arrives on scene.

- **Table 1** (figure L) shows average attendance times for areas with immediately crewed fire engines.
- **Table 2** (figure M) shows average attendance times for areas covered only by On-Call fire engines.

As expected, response times are quicker in areas with immediately available fire engines. The areas covered by standalone On-Call stations are typically more rural, have fewer incidents, and are further from major roads and population centres. In these locations, On-Call crews are given 10 minutes to respond to an alert before mobilising, which means response times are usually longer.

It's important to note that the **quickest available fire engine is always mobilised**, regardless of whether it is a Wholetime or On-Call crew.

Finally, due to the long-term dormancy of **Great Missenden and Stokenchurch**, the proposals for these stations and fire engines would have **no impact on response times** for these communities.

This analysis reinforces the importance of immediately available fire engines as the backbone of our response model, with On-Call fire engines providing vital resilience rather than being relied upon as the first engine to an incident.

Figure L, *Table 1 showing average attendance times for areas with immediately crewed fire engines*

	Amersham	Aylesbury	Beaconsfield	Broughton	Buckingham	Gerrards Cross	High Wycombe	Newport Pagnell	West Ashland
2020/2021	0:07:59	0:07:54	0:07:54	0:06:57	0:10:08	0:09:31	0:06:27	0:08:50	0:08:00
2021/2022	0:08:15	0:07:53	0:07:35	0:07:03	0:09:38	0:09:02	0:06:35	0:08:42	0:09:13
2022/2023	0:08:35	0:08:29	0:08:12	0:07:15	0:10:03	0:10:13	0:06:51	0:09:02	0:08:54
2023/2024	0:09:33	0:08:20	0:07:51	0:07:05	0:11:16	0:09:47	0:06:48	0:08:51	0:08:32
2024/2025	0:08:56	0:08:20	0:07:26	0:07:13	0:10:08	0:09:45	0:06:57	0:09:03	0:08:18

Figure M, *Table 2 showing average attendance times for areas covered only by On-Call fire engines*

	Brill	Chesham	Great Missenden	Haddenham	Marlow	Olney	Princes Risborough	Stokenchurch	Waddesdon	Winslow
2020/2021	0:14:50	0:11:06	0:13:01	0:11:20	0:10:59	0:12:47	0:13:04	0:12:04	0:14:57	0:13:33
2021/2022	0:14:54	0:10:20	0:12:49	0:12:32	0:10:38	0:13:37	0:13:50	0:13:19	0:16:08	0:13:41
2022/2023	0:16:48	0:11:04	0:12:42	0:12:19	0:11:28	0:15:34	0:14:30	0:13:30	0:16:15	0:12:42
2023/2024	0:15:49	0:10:26	0:13:33	0:11:32	0:11:29	0:14:43	0:13:51	0:14:03	0:15:19	0:13:32
2024/2025	0:15:01	0:11:06	0:12:51	0:11:48	0:10:54	0:14:27	0:13:49	0:14:25	0:16:53	0:13:51

ON-CALL AVAILABILITY AND CHALLENGES

On-Call firefighter availability is a national challenge. The traditional On-Call system no longer reflects the way people live today. In many rural areas the pool of potential recruits is small, and across all communities people have less free time to commit. This makes it harder to recruit and retain On-Call firefighters, and to crew every On-Call fire engine.

We face the same challenge within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Several common factors are contributing to the decline in On-Call availability.

Changing work and lifestyle habits

The traditional On-Call model is becoming less compatible with modern life. Fewer people live and work close to their local station, and many now commute longer distances, work remotely, or have unpredictable schedules making it harder to respond within the 10-minute window required for first-line availability.

Station locations

Some On-Call stations now have a limited pool of potential recruits nearby. In areas with no current candidates, it could take years to build a crew with the right qualifications to respond to incidents.

This data shows how many people live within a 10-minute driving distance from each station and are aged between 18 and 55. We use this to provide an indication of the likely number of people it would be possible to recruit to work from each station. This helps us understand the long-term viability of a fire engine. We also understand that some areas have significantly higher than average house prices which can make it difficult for firefighters to leave in close enough proximity to a fire station to respond from it.

Figure N, *Data calculated from the 2022 mid-year population estimates (latest data available).*

Station	Estimated Population within 10-minute drive of station*
Amersham	29546
Aylesbury	48533
Beaconsfield	51020
Brill	2200
Broughton	84185
Buckingham	9035
Chesham	32566
Great Missenden	18378
Haddenham	11004
High Wycombe	77902
Marlow	75787
Olney	4218
Princes Risborough	9660
Stokenchurch	8110
Waddesdon	10362
West Ashland	125634
Winslow	4715

**Some locations fall within 10 minutes travel of multiple stations, so they are double counted in the figures, ie. someone may be within 10 minutes of both West Ashland and Broughton, they have been included in both stations' totals.*

Cost of living pressures

On-Call pay structures must compete with jobs that offer more certainty, higher pay, and less demand. The benefits offered for the level of commitment required can be difficult to justify for many.

We also understand that some areas have significantly higher than average house prices which can make it difficult for firefighters to live in close enough proximity to a fire station to respond from it.

Training and skills maintenance

Training requirements have rightly increased, but On-Call firefighters are only contracted for two hours a week on a "drill night." These sessions are also used for safety checks, briefings, and admin leaving limited time for development and skills maintenance.

These challenges have led to a steady decline in On-Call fire engine availability over the past decade. Even when we successfully recruit, maintaining reliable availability remains incredibly difficult.

The declining availability of our On-Call provision has been highlighted in recent inspections by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS):

- 2018/19 HMICFRS Inspection Report (Published December 2019):
  "Its 18 On-Call Fire Engines were only available 13.6 per cent of the time. This reflects the difficulty the service has in recruiting On-Call firefighters. This is experienced nationally."

- 2022/23 HMICFRS Inspection Report (Published October 2023):
  "We are not satisfied that the service has a plan to maintain the long-term viability of its additional 18 resilience fire engines. It is unclear why the service needs so many additional fire engines when its daily demand pattern is consistently met with 12 available fire engines. The service continues to see a reduction in its On-Call staff and has no plans to address this trend."

Figure O shows how the availability of our On-Call fire engines has fallen sharply over the past decade, from more than 50% in 2011/12 to under 15% in recent years. This means many On-Call fire engines are not crewed when needed.

Figure O, BFRS On-Call Availability from 2011-2025

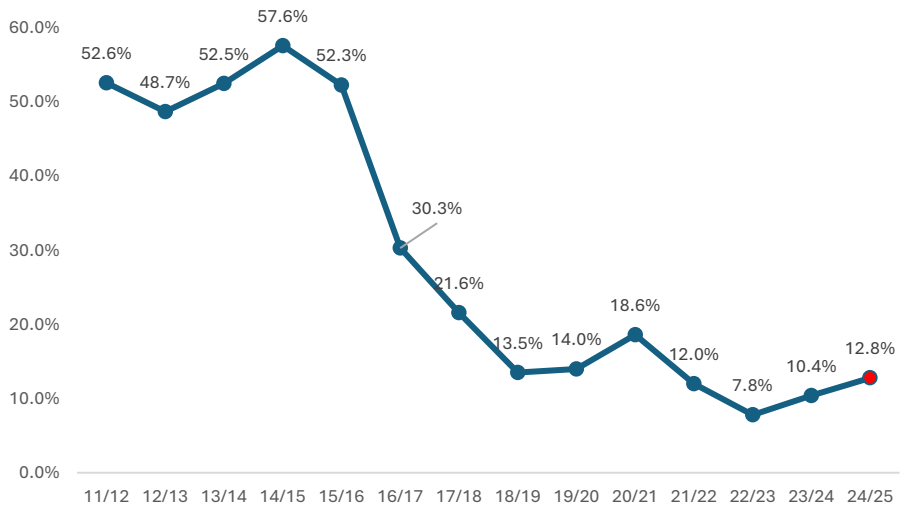


Figure P shows that our on-call fire engines are rarely ready to respond to an emergency within 10 minutes, and are much more likely to take longer than 20 minutes, or not be crewed at all.

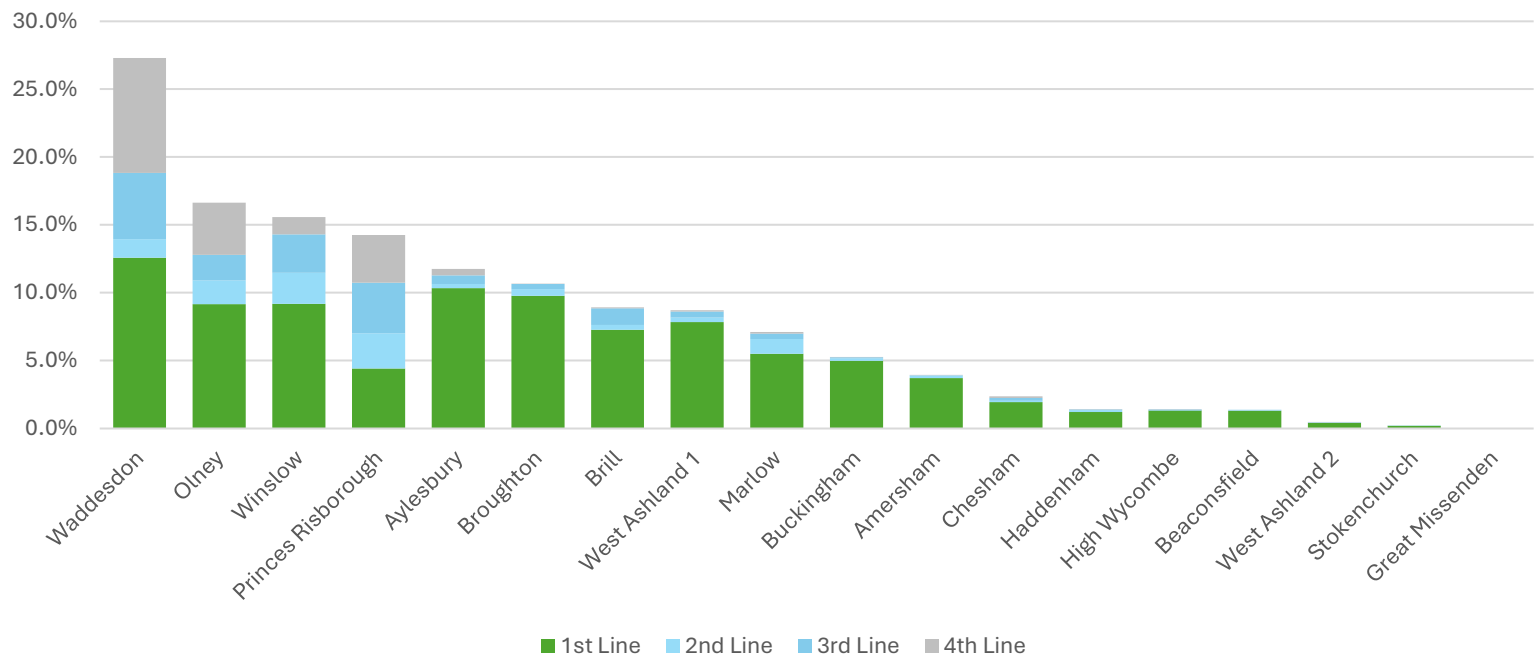
Figure P, On-Call Fire Engine Availability in Tax Year 2024/2025

Available in -	10 minutes	20 minutes	1 hour	3 hours
Broughton	7.5%	0.6%	1.1%	0.2%
Olney	21.9%	0.7%	5.3%	14.5%
West Ashland 1	18.4%	0.5%	1.3%	0.3%
West Ashland 2	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Aylesbury	10.2%	0.3%	0.9%	1.4%
Buckingham	14.9%	0.7%	0.1%	0.1%
Winslow	18.1%	3.6%	6.5%	4.3%
Brill	2.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
Waddesdon	12.0%	2.7%	10.1%	18.4%
Haddenham	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Amersham	0.7%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Chesham	3.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%
Great Missenden	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
High Wycombe	2.7%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%
Princes Risborough	7.9%	3.8%	7.3%	6.4%
Stokenchurch	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Marlow	8.5%	0.6%	0.4%	0.5%
Beaconsfield	1.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Average	7.2%	0.8%	1.9%	2.6%

Figure Q shows how often On-Call fire engines are available as 1st line (ready within 10 minutes), 2nd line (within 20 minutes), 3rd line (within 1 hour), or 4th line (up to 3 hours). Stokenchurch and Great Missenden show availability due to two occasions where the fire engines were used by wholetime staff for standby activities and training respectively.

What the data tells us: This highlights that while we have On-Call fire engines across the county, many of them are not available quickly enough to be the first fire engine at an emergency. Instead, a number are only available after longer periods, meaning they are less reliable for immediate response but still valuable for resilience at larger or extended incidents.

Figure Q, On-Call Fire Engine Availability 2020-2025



Actual On-Call incident response

Community Feedback has told us they expected the fire engine from their nearest station to always respond. The quickest fire engine is sent, which is often a wholetime crewed engine that can mobilise in under two minutes. On-Call crews take around 10 minutes to mobilise, so even if an On-Call station is geographically closest, another engine may arrive sooner.

Over the last five years, On-Call engines attended 1,318 incidents and were first on scene at 653 of them. This shows their value in providing resilience but also highlights that most first responses are made by wholetime crews.

Figure P shows actual incidents attended by each On-Call fire engine between April 2020 to March 2025 excluding standbys, and how many times they were first in attendance.

Figure R, *Actual Incident Response from April 2020 to March 2025*

Fire engine Location	Assigned to	Mobilised	Made it on-scene	First On-Scene
Broughton	206	187	137	60
Olney	99	95	75	49
West Ashland	132	114	98	47
West Ashland	22	22	21	10
Aylesbury	139	123	118	73
Buckingham	66	56	49	27
Winslow	151	143	114	55
Brill	68	64	53	42
Waddesdon	120	105	82	49
Haddenham	20	15	13	8
Amersham	97	88	81	51
Chesham	37	35	35	25
Great Missenden	0	0	0	0
High Wycombe	51	49	42	26
Princes Risborough	82	74	64	47
Stokenchurch	0	0	0	0
Marlow	112	107	93	59
Beaconsfield	48	41	36	25
TOTAL	1450	1318	1111	653

We heard during early engagement that people did not always understand the difference between immediately available fire engines and On-Call fire engines, or to what degree either was relied on for operational response.

Figure S shows in grey the proportion of incidents mobilised to by our 12 immediately available fire engines. In blue the 11 On-Call fire engines that would remain as part of our proposal and in orange those 7 fire engines we propose to remove.

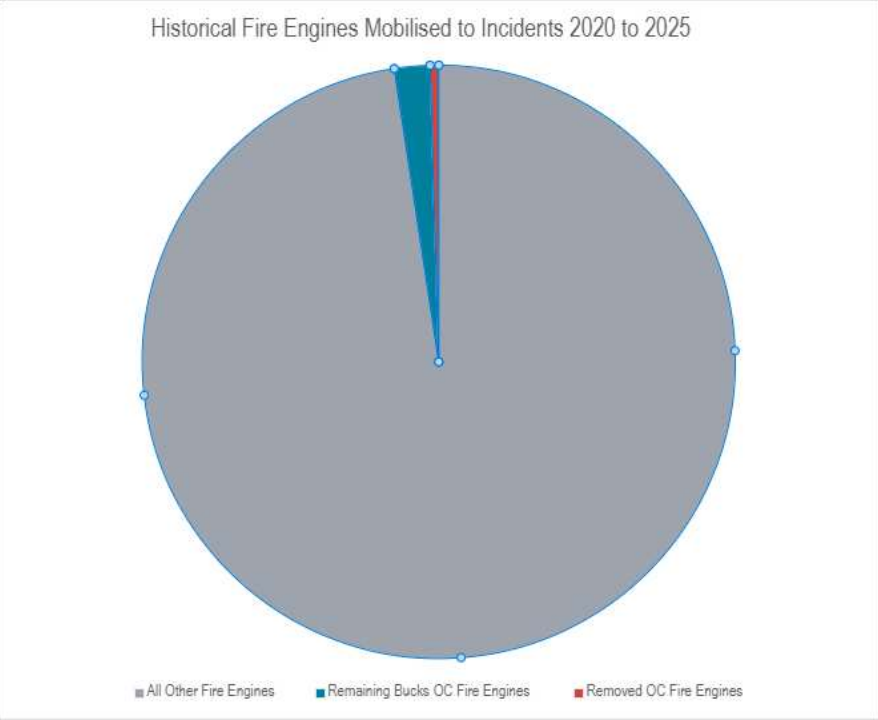


Figure T, *shows On-Call availability over 2024 by month*

		Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Day	2023/2024	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.3	1.2	0.6	2.7	2.0	1.3
	2024/2025	**0.9**	**0.9**	**0.8**	**0.9**	**0.6**	**0.8**	**0.5**	**1.5**	**1.2**	**2.9**	**2.1**	**2.2**
	Status	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	A	A	A
Night	2023/2024	1.1	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.4	0.5	0.7	1.0	0.6	2.3	2.2	1.8
	2024/2025	**1.1**	**1.2**	**0.9**	**1.6**	**1.6**	**1.5**	**1.3**	**2.5**	**2**	**4.3**	**3.5**	**3.6**
	Status	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	A	A	G	G	G

B	> 5
G	> 2.99
A	< 3
R	< 2

What is good
Higher is better

Number of On-Call Fire engines ready to respond

This data shows the average number of On-Call fire engines available out of 18 per day and per night. A day is 0900-1800 and night is 1800-0900. To be available a fire engine has to be available for 5 hours in a day and 8 hours in a night. This information is taken from our KPIs.

In 2024, on average, we had

- **One of 18 On-Call fire engines available** during the day.
- **Two of 18 On-Call fire engines available** during the night.

Full time equivalent of On-Call

To help us plan and maintain consistent fire cover, we measure On-Call availability using full time equivalent (FTE) hours. On-Call firefighters commit to being available between 40 and 120 hours per week, with 120 hours representing one FTE.

For example, three firefighters each contracted for 40 hours per week would collectively provide the same cover as one firefighter on a 120-hour contract. This helps us understand how many firefighters are needed to ensure reliable fire engine availability.

To maintain 100 per cent availability of a single fire engine, we require a minimum of 12 FTE On-Call firefighters. Across our fleet of 18 fire engines, this equates to a total requirement of 216 FTE.
Currently, the service holds contracts totalling 57.43 FTE.

At most stations, the number of On-Call firefighters is not currently sufficient to routinely crew a fire engine. This includes having the right mix of skills, such as qualified drivers, breathing apparatus wearers, and crew commanders, to meet mobilisation requirements.

Therefore, we have more On-Call fire engines than we can regularly crew, which means some vehicles are unavailable even though we still have firefighters in the system.

This is why in our current CRMP, we made a clear promise to be an excellent, modern, and agile service. We pledged to:

"Assess the required number of On-Call fire engines to align with our new response standard and address identified risks within the CRMP."

This commitment was shaped by feedback from both staff and public consultations, which emphasised the need to improve resilience and capacity across the Service.

Our proposals will give us the flexibility to adopt a more Service-wide approach to On-Call firefighter availability. For example, if we have two On-Call firefighters available at one station, and two at another who, when combined, have the full skill set required to crew a fire engine, we could allocate them to the same fire engine at the same fire station and increase the Service resilience by one On-call fire engine.

FINANCIAL PICTURE

We must make sure every pound is spent where it makes the most difference to public safety. When considering changes to our On-Call provision, we reviewed the financial impact as well as operational data.

Current position

- The current **On-Call budget is £1.2 million per year**.
- This covers the direct cost of employing On-Call firefighters but does not include all the wider costs such as training, equipment, vehicles, and maintaining stations.
- To **fully crew all 18 On-Call fire engines** so they were available 100% of the time would require **around £3.3 million per year** in staffing costs alone – a shortfall of over £2 million.

Fire engine costs

- Every fire engine brings ongoing costs. Each one typically costs:
- Around **£300,000 to purchase**.
- Around **£100,000 in specialist kit and equipment**.
- Around **£8,000 per year** for servicing and maintenance.

Station costs

Even dormant stations (such as Stokenchurch and Great Missenden, which have not been fully crewed for some time) still require annual spending on:

- Maintenance and servicing of equipment.
- Insurance, utilities, and business rates.
- Upgrades to meet modern safety and equality standards.

Each of these two dormant stations alone will require **around £150,000 investment** within the next two years to remain usable, despite providing no operational response.

What the proposal means

By removing fire engines that are rarely or never available and closing two long-term dormant stations, we can:

- Reduce ongoing costs for vehicles, equipment, and building upkeep.
- Reinvest savings into making the **remaining 11 On-Call fire engines more reliable and available**.
- Improve facilities at the stations we keep, making them more modern, safe, and inclusive.
- Support new specialist vehicles (like Rural Firefighting Vehicles and Water Carriers) that better match risks in our communities.

Why this matters

Put simply, the alternative would be to keep spending money on vehicles and stations that **cannot be reliably crewed** and do not provide the cover our communities need. By focusing resources where they will have the greatest impact, we can deliver better value for money and a stronger, more dependable service.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Before launching this formal consultation, we carried out some **early engagement** to help us shape ideas for our final proposal. To do this, we commissioned an independent research company to run focus groups with staff and members of the public.

This was not part of the formal consultation. Instead, it gave us useful insight into how the proposals could be seen by different groups and what concerns we may need to address as part of this consultation. The full report is included as an appendix, but some of the high-level findings are set out below.

Early engagement, high level results

- Recognition of the challenges and that changes were needed to allow the service to become more modern, agile while also managing risk and financial concerns.
- There was some support in all staff groups and among members of the public for the On-Call Improvement Programme's focus (i.e., using On-Call primarily for resilience and special appliance crewing).
- This support was, however, caveated with practical concerns around managing future risk from, say, population increases and infrastructure developments; resilience for larger and simultaneous incidents; an over-reliance on cross-border cover; the potential impacts of increased response times (however small) on public and firefighter safety; and the prospect of staffing reductions on remaining On-Call fire engines both within Buckinghamshire and in neighbouring fire and rescue services.
- Data being out of date (older data was brought forward so new data is from 24/25 financial year).
- In effect, there was concern that all stations have been treated equally within the process, while there are clear differences in added value and future viability.
- Concerns that having two options made the service look indecisive, and that the service was trusted to put forward the best option based on operational knowledge.
- Option one was overall more accepted as it seemed to deal with the issues more effectively.
- The consensus was that while in an ideal world the proposed changes would not be necessary, the ideas had been carefully considered and appeared to be rational and proportionate, and to represent a better and more efficient way to spend a limited budget.
- There was significant trust in BFRS to make sensible decisions, though the need to manage public concerns and perceptions carefully and sensitively within affected areas was stressed.

What this tells us

These early findings are not the outcome of formal consultation, but they helped us shape ideas for our final proposal. They show that while people recognise the challenges and understand the need for change, concerns remain about future risks and reassurance.

We have reflected these concerns throughout this evidence pack, for example, by considering the impact of population growth and infrastructure developments, the need for resilience at large or simultaneous incidents, and the reliability of On-Call fire engines.

Modelling our proposals

> *During our early engagement, the public told us they wanted to understand what any proposed changes would mean for them. To assess this, we carried out detailed data modelling.*

We have used different approaches to assess what our proposals could mean to the community. These approaches have to be based on some assumptions as they are predictions of what could happen in each situation.

We compared three situations:

1. **All On-Call fire engines crewed** – what would happen if every one of our 18 On-Call fire engines always had a full crew. This is not realistic because we don't have the people or budget to run them all. But it helps us see the "best possible" case.
2. **Our proposal** – this is the realistic possibility that we could fully crew 11 On-Call fire engines if we realign resources, using available firefighters with the relevant skills to crew each fire engine.
3. **No On-Call fire engines** – what would happen if none of the On-Call fire engines were available. This is closer to what often happens now, because On-Call availability is low (around **12.8%** overall).

We know people might wonder why we don't just look at actual response times. The problem is that **real response times already reflect low On-Call availability**. Many On-Call fire engines are not crewed and cannot respond, so the "real" data already looks more like the **"No On-Call"** scenario in our table.

To access response times for our proposal, we used historic incident data from April 2020 to March 2025 into modelling software. The software was then used to modify which fire engines are available to attend incidents.

We were able to vary how long each fire engine takes to mobilise (we used the times in our current mobilising system - these vary for each On-Call fire engine) and the availability of each fire engine.

To keep consistency across the models all fire engines were set to 100 per cent availability. Once these and other parameters were set the model ran through the historical incidents in chronological order assigning fire engines based on the model setup.

Once the model had been run, details of which fire engines attended which incidents within the model were summarised.

This is how the new times were calculated.

What the results show

The table shows the average time it would take for a fire engine to arrive in each area.

- Across the whole area, the difference between the "all engines crewed" case and our proposal is very small, just **8 seconds slower on average**.
- In some places, response times get slightly quicker under our proposal, because crews are more reliable.
- In other places, the change is a few seconds slower, but still very small overall. The very worst case, excluding dormant stations, is just **14 seconds slower (around a 2.7% change)**.
- The "no On-Call" case shows much worse times – proving how important it is that we keep some On-Call fire engines.

Two stations – **Great Missenden** and **Stokenchurch**, look like outliers in the table. Their figures show big changes, but this is only because they have had no crews for over 5 years. These are "dormant" stations that already do not respond to incidents. Our proposal is to formally remove them.

Downside risk and upside benefit

- **Downside Risk** means the difference between the proposal and the "all engines crewed" case. The average downside is just **8 seconds slower**, showing the impact is very small compared to the best-possible but unrealistic scenario.
- **Upside Benefit** means the difference between the proposal and the "no On-Call" case. The average upside is **34 seconds faster**, and in some areas several minutes quicker, showing the benefits of concentrating resources where they are most reliable.

What this means

- It is not realistic for us to crew all 18 On-Call fire engines, it would take many more staff than we can recruit and train. Even if we did, the benefit would be very small. ***The total number of mobilisations would only fall by –0.9%, and first attendances by just 12 incidents out of over 6,300 (–0.2%).***
- At the moment, many On-Call engines already cannot respond because there are not enough crew, availability is only about **12%**.
- By focusing on 11 stations instead, we can make sure these fire engines are more reliable and available when needed.
- Two dormant stations, **Great Missenden** and **Stokenchurch**, would be removed, as they already do not respond.
- Other areas, such as **Amersham** and **Buckingham**, would lose an engine, but staff would be redeployed to strengthen neighbouring stations.

In summary

The proposals do not reduce our ability to respond to emergencies. Instead, it makes the service stronger by concentrating On-Call resources where they are most effective, so fire engines are more likely to be crewed and ready when needed.

***Figure U**, Modelled Attendance Times*

Station Grounds	All On-Call Available – Avg Attendance Time	Proposal Avg Attendance Time	No On-Call – Avg Attendance Time	Downside Risk	Upside Benefit	None vs. All
Broughton	06:50	06:50	06:57	00:00	00:07	00:07
Newport Pagnell	08:04	08:05	08:15	00:01	00:10	00:11
Olney	09:07	09:07	14:52	00:00	05:45	05:45
West Ashland	08:21	08:23	08:31	00:02	00:08	00:10
Aylesbury	07:24	07:24	07:42	00:00	00:18	00:18
Buckingham	08:41	08:55	09:10	00:14	00:15	00:29
Winslow	09:54	09:56	15:41	00:02	05:45	05:47
Brill	12:37	12:37	17:11	00:00	04:34	04:34
Waddesdon	13:44	13:44	18:40	00:00	04:56	04:56
Haddenham	09:47	09:47	13:02	00:00	03:15	03:15
Amersham	06:37	06:43	06:54	00:06	00:11	00:17
Chesham	07:11	07:18	09:51	00:07	02:33	02:40
Great Missenden	09:40	12:36	12:58	02:56	00:22	03:18
High Wycombe	05:06	05:12	05:20	00:06	00:08	00:14
Princes Risborough	09:04	09:05	15:47	00:01	06:42	06:43
Stokenchurch	10:31	13:14	13:16	02:43	00:02	02:45
Marlow	08:53	08:57	10:22	00:04	01:25	01:29
Beaconsfield	06:26	06:30	06:33	00:04	00:03	00:07
Gerrards Cross	08:10	08:10	08:12	00:00	00:02	00:02
Service Wide Total/Average	**07:34**	**07:42**	**08:16**	**00:08**	**00:34**	

FIRE ENGINE APPRAISALS

This section provides an overview of each On-Call fire station, drawing together data on staffing, availability, and incident response. It allows us to look beyond county-wide averages and understand the contribution and challenges at individual stations.

We carried out these appraisals to help shape the proposals taken into early engagement. During that process, staff and members of the public told us it was important that decisions were seen to be **fair, transparent, and based on evidence rather than assumptions**. That is why we are publishing the appraisals in this evidence pack, so that people can see clearly how each station has been assessed.

For each On-Call station we present:

- **Current staffing levels** (including Officers-in-Charge and drivers)
- **Recruitment potential** (population within catchment area)
- **Incident activity** (incidents attended and first in attendance, 2024/25 and over a five-year period)
- **Availability performance** (actual fire engine availability 2024/25 and 2020–2025 average)
- **Modelled potential** (expected contribution if the fire engine were 100% available)
- **Impact of the proposal** (change in predicted response times)
- **Cross-border support** (number of incidents supported by neighbouring services)

To make comparisons clear, each area is given an **indicative score (★☆☆☆☆ to ★★★★★)** showing relative strengths and weaknesses. These scores are not absolute ratings but help to highlight where On-Call fire engines contribute most to community outcomes, where they face significant challenges with crew availability, and where alternative approaches, such as redeployment of staff or introducing specialist vehicles, may provide better resilience.

By presenting this station-level detail, we aim to provide **transparency** on how the proposals affect individual communities, and explain why certain fire engines are recommended for removal, retention, or transition to other roles.

Amersham fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile

Amersham is a semi-rural town in south Buckinghamshire, mainly residential with some commercial premises. It has good transport links (A413, Metropolitan line) and benefits from strong cover by nearby wholetime stations at High Wycombe and Beaconsfield. Key risks include residential and light commercial premises, transport routes, and some environmental risk such as wildfire during dry periods.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	8 / 2	★★☆☆☆
Officers In Charge	2	
Drivers	4	
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	29,546	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	3	★★☆☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	3	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	1	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	49	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	6	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	1.4%	★☆☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	3.9%	
Proposal response time	6:43	★★★☆☆
Predicted change in response time to community	00:11 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★☆☆☆ (limited, low numbers despite reasonable recruitment pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (low current incident numbers, but higher modelled potential if availability improved)
- **Current availability:** ★☆☆☆☆ (very poor, <5% average)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★☆☆ (slight improvement in response time predicted, with resilience gained from resource redeployment)

Summary

Amersham's On-Call fire engine has extremely low availability, averaging under 4% over five years and attending just 3 incidents in 2024/25. Under the proposal, the fire engine would be replaced with a Rural Firefighting Vehicle, which requires fewer crew and can be mobilised more reliably, offering a more practical and risk-appropriate response for the area.

Proposal: Remove On-Call fire engine, replace with RFV.

Aylesbury fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

Aylesbury is the county town of Buckinghamshire, a growing urban centre with significant housing and population growth. The area includes major transport routes, retail, education, and healthcare facilities, creating a broad risk profile. Cover is provided by two wholetime fire engines at Aylesbury station, ensuring strong resilience, with the On-Call crew providing additional support when available.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	12 / 5.33	★★☆☆☆
Officers In Charge	3	
Drivers	4	
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	48,533	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	16	★★☆☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	10	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	95	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	71	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	12	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	13.4%	★★☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	11.8%	
Proposal response time	07:24	★★★☆☆
Predicted change in response time to community	00:18 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★☆☆☆ (limited, low numbers despite reasonable recruitment pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (low current incident numbers, but higher modelled potential if availability improved)
- **Current availability:** ★★☆☆☆ (low and variable)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★☆☆ (slight improvement in response time predicted, with resilience gained from resource redeployment)

Summary

Although Aylesbury's On-Call availability is low, the fire engine is retained in the proposal. This is because Aylesbury is a high-risk and high-demand area, already supported by strong wholetime cover. Keeping the On-Call fire engine provides additional resilience and ensures that, when crewed, it can add value alongside the wholetime fire engines.

Proposal: No change

Beaconsfield fire engine appraisal

Beaconsfield is an urban/semi-rural town with strong transport links (M40, A355, Chiltern rail line) and a mix of residential, retail, and light commercial risk. Its strategic location close to High Wycombe, Gerrards Cross, and Slough means it is well covered by neighbouring wholetime stations. Beaconsfield houses one Wholetime Fire Engine, Boat and Water Rescue Unit.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	3 / 1.42	★☆☆☆☆
Officers In Charge	0	
Drivers	2	
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	51,020	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	3	★☆☆☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	1	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	224	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	60	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	8	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	1.4%	★☆☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	1.4%	
Proposal reponse times	06:30	★★★★☆
Predicted change in response time to community	00:03 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★☆☆☆☆ (low numbers despite large recruitment pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (low – very few incidents attended locally; heavy reliance on other stations).
- **Current availability:** ★☆☆☆☆ (very poor, <5% average)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (moderate improvement in response time predicted if available 100% of the time)

Summary

Beaconsfield's On-Call fire engine is effectively unavailable due to minimal staffing, with almost all demand covered by the wholetime crew. It is acknowledged that over the border mobilisations are high in this part of the county. That would not change with Beaconsfield's On-Call fire engine being readily available due to the geography of this area. Under the consultation proposals, the On-Call fire engine at Beaconsfield would be **removed** and replaced with a **Crew Welfare Unit**. This provides a more effective and sustainable use of resources.

Proposal: Remove one On-Call fire engine, replace with Crew Welfare Unit.

Brill fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.
Brill is a small rural village on the Buckinghamshire–Oxfordshire border, with a limited population catchment. Risks are largely residential and agricultural, with some wildfire and environmental risk in surrounding countryside. It is geographically remote compared to larger stations, but neighbouring stations (Aylesbury, Bicester) provide the bulk of first-line cover.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	7 / 3.08	★★☆☆☆
Officers In Charge	3	
Drivers	4	
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	2,200	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	3	★★☆☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	3	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	48	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	34	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	21	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	3.4%	★☆☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	8.9%	
Proposal response time	12:37	★★★★☆
Predicted change in response time to community	04:34 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★☆☆☆ (slightly better than other small villages, with more OICs and drivers, but still very limited crew and poor availability)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (low – few incidents attended, but theoretical demand is slightly higher than some other small stations)
- **Current availability:** ★☆☆☆☆ (very poor, <5% average)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (moderate improvement in response time predicted if available 100% of the time)

Summary

While Brill's On-Call crew faces significant challenges with low staff numbers and availability, its **geographical isolation makes retaining the fire engine essential**. Investment in recruitment and support will aim to improve availability, ensuring continued local resilience.
Proposal: No change

Broughton fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.
Broughton serves the eastern side of Milton Keynes, a rapidly growing urban area with a very large catchment population. Risks include dense residential housing, schools, retail and commercial premises, as well as the nearby M1 motorway which generates significant transport-related demand. Broughton houses one Wholetime Fire Engine.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	10 / 5.08	★★★☆☆
Officers In Charge	3	
Drivers	4	
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	84,185	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	18	★★★☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	9	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	18	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	82	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	13	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	9.7%	★★☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	10.7%	
Proposal response time	06:50	★★☆☆☆
Predicted change in response time to community	00:07 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★★☆☆ (reasonable crew base and strong recruitment pool, but low availability)
- **Community demand:** ★★★☆☆ (low demand but in a high-growth area with potential for much more if availability improves)
- **Current availability:** ★★☆☆☆ (low availability with opportunity for improvement from reinvestment)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★☆☆☆ (slight improvement in response time predicted)

Summary

Broughton serves a large population and attends a notable number of incidents, including being first in attendance at nearly half. Despite current low availability, the large recruitment pool offers potential to improve crewing with focused investment. Retaining this fire engine ensures cover in a high-demand area with fast road links and growing community risk.

Proposal: No change

Buckingham fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

Buckingham is a small historic market town in north Buckinghamshire, surrounded by rural villages and farmland. Local risks include domestic fires, heritage buildings, agricultural incidents, and road traffic collisions on the busy A421 and connecting routes. The town is geographically remote from larger urban centres, relying on support from Broughton, Newport Pagnell, and Winslow. This makes the right type of local cover important.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	13 / 5.08	★★★☆☆
Officers In Charge	5	
Drivers	5	
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	9,035	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	15	★★☆☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	10	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	41	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	56	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	15	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	16.2%	★★☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	5.3%	
Proposal response time	08:55	★★★★☆
Predicted change in response time to community	00:15 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★★☆☆ (reasonable crew base, but limited by small pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (moderate, partly covered by others)
- **Current availability:** ★★☆☆☆ (low and variable)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (strong positive – RFV and pooling benefits)

Summary

Buckingham will continue to house a wholetime fire engine however the On-Call fire engine has struggled with availability, averaging only 5.3% over the past 5 years, despite recent improvement to 16.2%. Steady local demand. The proposal strengthens response by introducing a Rural Firefighting Vehicle and improving cross-cover with Winslow, ensuring better alignment with risks and more dependable cover.

Proposal: Remove On-Call fire engine, replace with RFV.

Chesham fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.
Chesham is a semi-rural town in the Chiltern Hills, with a mixture of residential and light commercial risk. Its location on the edge of the county means it often relies on cross-border support from Hertfordshire. Road access is constrained by rural routes, which can add to travel times.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	7 / 3.33	★★☆☆☆
Officers In Charge	4	
Drivers	4	
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	32,566	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	5	★★☆☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	5	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	19	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	177	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	150	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	5.2%	★★☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	2.4%	
Proposal response time	07:18	★★★★☆
Predicted change in response time to community	02:33 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★☆☆☆ (limited, low numbers despite reasonable recruitment pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (moderate, partly covered by others)
- **Current availability:** ★★☆☆☆ (very poor, <5% average)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (positive, resilience not reduced, demand already covered)

Summary

Chesham's On-Call fire engine will be retained, but its effectiveness will be strengthened through integration with Amersham. Pooling staff and introducing a shared RFV provides greater flexibility, improves resilience, and ensures both stations can better match resources to the local risk profile.
Proposal: No change

Great Missenden Fire Engine Appraisal

Location, Geography and Risk Profile.

Great Missenden is a rural community with relatively low incident demand. It is supported by nearby On-Call and Wholetime stations in Amersham, Chesham, and High Wycombe.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	0	
Officers In Charge	0	
Drivers	0	☆☆☆☆☆
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	18,375	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	0	
First in attendance (2024/25)	0	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	0	★☆☆☆☆
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	106	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	81	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	0%	
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	0%	☆☆☆☆☆
Proposal Response Time	12:36	
Predicted change in response time to community	00:22 (Quicker)	★★★★☆

Indicative Score

- **Staffing capacity:** ☆☆☆☆☆ (no staff for last 5 years)
- **Community demand:** ★☆☆☆☆ (theoretical only – covered by surrounding stations)
- **Current availability:** ☆☆☆☆☆ (very poor, unavailable)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (positive, removal allows resources to be reinvested and improves response resilience)

Summary

Great Missenden has been dormant for over five years, with no On-Call crew and no realistic prospect of sustaining operations. While modelling suggests theoretical demand, in practice these incidents are already covered by neighbouring stations. Closing the site avoids significant investment costs required to modernise facilities (welfare, contamination, EDI compliance) and allows resources to be better directed elsewhere. Importantly, modelling shows that **response times for the local community will improve slightly (22 seconds)** under the proposal.

Proposal: Close station

Haddenham fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

Haddenham is a rural village in the south of Buckinghamshire, close to the Oxfordshire border. The area is largely residential, with transport risk from road and rail links. Proximity to neighbouring fire services means cross-border cover is common.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	1 / 0.33	☆☆☆☆☆
Officers In Charge	1	
Drivers	1	
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	11,004	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	1	★★☆☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	1	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	69	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	81	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	55	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	0.2%	☆☆☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	1.4%	
Proposal response time	09:47	★★★★☆
Predicted change in response time to community	03:15 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ☆☆☆☆☆ (extremely limited – requires urgent focus)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (low direct incidents, but 69 supported by cross-border fire engines shows reliance on neighbours)
- **Current availability:** ☆☆☆☆☆ (virtually unavailable – 0.2%)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (positive, retention provides resilience and opportunity to rebuild capacity)

Summary

Haddenham's On-Call fire engine has had extremely low availability, attending only **1 incident in 2024/25**. However, wider engagement and community feedback demonstrated strong concerns about resilience if it were removed, particularly given similar challenges at other local FRS On-Call stations. Retaining the fire engine provides strategic resilience in the south of the county and reduces over-reliance on neighbouring services. This will require targeted recruitment and investment to rebuild staffing levels and make the fire engine viable.

Proposal: No change

High Wycombe fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

High Wycombe is a large market town in south Buckinghamshire, situated in the Chiltern Hills with strong transport links via the M40 and A404. It is a mixed urban area with significant residential, commercial, and industrial zones. Key risks include urban flooding from the River Wye, traffic incidents on major commuter routes, and demand for support across the wider Wycombe district.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	3 / 1.50	★☆☆☆☆
Officers In Charge	0	
Drivers	2	
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	77,902	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	15	★★☆☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	9	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	51	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	77	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	12	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	2.9%	★☆☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	1.4%	
Proposal response time	05:12	★★★☆☆
Predicted change in response time to community	00:08 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★☆☆☆☆ (limited, low numbers despite sizable recruitment pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (low current incident numbers, but higher modelled potential if availability improved)
- **Current availability:** ★☆☆☆☆ (very poor, <5% average)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★☆☆ (strong crewing opportunities and pooling benefits)

Summary

High Wycombe houses 2 Wholetime fire engines and specialist appliances. While High Wycombe's On-Call fire engine has struggled with availability, averaging only 1.4% over the past 5 years, despite recent improvement to 1.4% the local demand does not require an additional On-Call fire engine. The proposal strengthens response by consolidating staff to support other neighbouring stations and wholetime vehicles at High Wycombe.

Proposal: Remove On-Call Fire Engine, staff to wholetime vehicles and bolster availability at other On-Call stations.

Marlow fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

Marlow is a riverside town in south Buckinghamshire, with major road links via the A404 and proximity to the M40. The area is predominantly residential with some light industry, retail and tourism activity. Key risks include flooding from the River Thames, road traffic collisions on busy commuter routes, and the need to provide resilience to neighbouring stations in the south of the county.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	10 / 3.50	
Officers In Charge	1	
Drivers	4	★★☆☆☆
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	75,787	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	27	
First in attendance (2024/25)	18	★★★☆☆
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	16	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	173	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	137	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	10.7%	
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	7.1%	★★☆☆☆
Proposal response time	08:57	
Predicted change in response time to community	01:25 (Quicker)	★★★★☆

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★☆☆☆ (reasonable crew base, some stability and good recruitment pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★★☆☆ (steady demand, high theoretical opportunity)
- **Current availability:** ★★☆☆☆ (Higher than most On-Call engines but still low)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (keeping fire engine, continued local cover)

Summary

Marlow's On-Call fire engine provides important coverage in a busy community, with demand that justifies retention. Availability is low but improving, and the large recruitment pool offers opportunities for growth. Under the proposal, Marlow retains its On-Call fire engine, with efforts to strengthen availability through reinvestment and cross-cover arrangements.

Proposal: No change.

Olney fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

Olney is a small market town in the northeast of Milton Keynes, serving a rural catchment with smaller villages nearby. Risks are mainly residential, with some heritage buildings and limited light commercial activity. Its location on the A509 provides road-related risk, while its rural character creates potential for delayed response if availability drops.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff/ FTE	11 / 6.33	
Officers In Charge	3	
Drivers	5	★★★☆☆
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	4,218	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	27	
First in attendance (2024/25)	19	★★★☆☆
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	8	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	55	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	45	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	42.7%	
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	16.6%	★★★☆☆
Proposal response time	09:07	
Predicted change in response time to community	05:45 (Quicker)	★★★★☆

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★★☆☆ (reasonable crew base, some stability despite low recruitment pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★★☆☆ (steady demand, high theoretical opportunity)
- **Current availability:** ★★★☆☆ (good availability, significantly improved recently, but still below 50%)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (keeping fire engine, continued local cover)

Summary

Olney has shown a strong improvement in availability, rising to 42.7% this year compared with a 16.6% five-year average. Demand is modest but consistent, with limited reliance on neighbouring services. The proposal does not remove or change Olney's On-Call fire engine, recognising its improved resilience and the value it provides to a rural community.

Proposal: No change.

Princes Risborough fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

Princes Risborough is a small town in the Chiltern Hills, surrounded by rural villages and farmland. Key risks include residential properties, small industrial sites, and rural fire risks such as wildfires. Its location along the A4010 and rail line adds transport-related incidents. The nearest wholetime cover is High Wycombe and Aylesbury, with Marlow providing further resilience

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	6 / 3.17	
Officers In Charge	2	
Drivers	4	★★☆☆☆
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	9,660	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	17	
First in attendance (2024/25)	15	★★★☆☆
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	29	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	135	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	113	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	25.6%	
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	14.2%	★★☆☆☆
Proposal response time	09:05	
Predicted change in response time to community	06:42 (Quicker)	★★★★☆

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★☆☆☆ (reasonable crew base, some stability despite low recruitment pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★★☆☆ (steady demand, high theoretical opportunity)
- **Current availability:** ★★☆☆☆ (one of our higher availability engines however still below 50% average)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (keeping fire engine, continued local cover)

Summary

Princes Risborough has modest but consistent demand and delivers strong first attendance when available. Availability is improving, though staffing levels remain low. The proposal does not remove or change the On-Call fire engine, instead aiming to strengthen resilience in this rural area where cross-cover options are limited.

Proposal: No change.

Stokenchurch fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.
Stokenchurch sits on the edge of the Chilterns, near the M40 corridor. While the area has some road-related risks, it is within reach of other stations such as High Wycombe and Princes Risborough, which provide effective cover.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	1 / 1	
Officers In Charge	1	
Drivers	0	★☆☆☆☆
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	8,110	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	0	
First in attendance (2024/25)	0	★★☆☆☆
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	15	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	65	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	53	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	0%	
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	0.2%	★☆☆☆☆
Proposal response time	13:14	
Predicted change in response time to community	00:02 (Quicker)	★★★☆☆

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★☆☆☆☆ (no crew, just one firefighter)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (steady demand, high theoretical opportunity)
- **Current availability:** ★☆☆☆☆ (station dormant for years)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★☆☆ (positive, removal allows resources to be reinvested and improves response resilience)

Summary

Stokenchurch has not had a crew for many years, with 0% On-Call availability. Although modelling shows potential demand, in practice this cannot be met. Closing the site avoids significant investment costs required to modernise facilities (welfare, contamination, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion compliance) and allows resources to be better directed elsewhere. Importantly, modelling shows that **response times for the local community will improve slightly (14 seconds)**
Proposal: Close station.

Waddesden fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

Waddesdon is a rural village in central Buckinghamshire, surrounded by small settlements and agricultural land. The area is primarily residential with some commercial premises and heritage risks (including Waddesdon Manor, a National Trust site attracting significant visitors). Transport risk exists from the A41, with potential for RTCs. The station provides resilience across a wide rural catchment, where travel times from neighbouring stations can be extended.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	7 / 4.33	
Officers In Charge	2	
Drivers	4	★★★☆☆
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	10,362	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	17	
First in attendance (2024/25)	8	★★★☆☆
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	27	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	83	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	54	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	43.3%	
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	27.3%	★★☆☆☆
Proposal response time	13:44	
Predicted change in response time to community	04:56 (Quicker)	★★★★☆

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★★☆☆ (moderate, scope for recruitment growth)
- **Current availability:** ★★★☆☆ (improving trend with strong recent year performance)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (steady use with reliance from neighbouring areas)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (keeping fire engine, continued local cover. Improved response times under proposal)

Summary

Waddesdon's On-Call fire engine shows steady community demand and improving availability**,** rising significantly in 2024/25 compared to its 5-year average. While the recruitment pool is limited, performance suggests effective use of resources and value in maintaining the fire engine. The proposal makes no changes to Waddesdon, recognising its importance in covering a geographically rural area where neighbouring response times are extended.

Proposal: No change.

West Ashland fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

West Ashland is a key part of the Milton Keynes fire cover, sitting in a high-population urban environment with major transport infrastructure including the M1, A5 and rail links. Risks include high residential demand, commercial/retail hubs, and major road incidents. The station also provides resilience to neighbouring towns, making it a strategically important site. West Ashland houses two fire engines and a Turntable Ladder with Wholetime cover.

On-Call fire engine one:

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	11 / 5.08	
Officers In Charge	3	
Drivers	5	★★★☆☆
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	125,634	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	31	
First in attendance (2024/25)	14	★★★★☆
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	26	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	124	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	33	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	20.8%	
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	8.7%	★★☆☆☆
Proposal response time	08:23	
Predicted change in response time to community	00:08 (Quicker)	★★★★☆

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★★☆☆ (moderate coverage, with good recruitment pool)
- **Community demand:** ★★★★☆ (one of our busier On-Call engines but still on 31 incidents attended in a year, theoretical opportunity)
- **Current availability:** ★★☆☆☆ (improving trend, rising year performance)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (positive, removal allows resources to be reinvested and improves response resilience)

Summary for On-Call fire engine one

Fire Engine1 is the stronger of the two On-Call fire engines, showing rising availability and clear demand within the city. Retaining this Fire Engine, alongside the new Water Carrier, ensures West Ashland continues to provide urban resilience and flexibility.

Proposal: No change

On-Call fire engine two

Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	2	★☆☆☆☆
First in attendance (2024/25)	0	
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	26	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	32	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	7	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	0.6%	★☆☆☆☆
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	0.5%	
Proposal response time	08:23	★★★★☆
Predicted change in response time to community	00:08 (Quicker)	

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★☆☆☆☆ (crew go to On-Call fire engine 1, not enough for 2 On-Call fire engines)
- **Community demand:** ★☆☆☆☆ (low demand only 2 incidents attended in the year, theoretical opportunity low at 32 incidents)
- **Current availability:** ★☆☆☆☆ (almost no availability 0.5%)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (Removal allows resources to be concentrated on Fire engine 1 and the Water Carrier)

Summary for On-call fire engine two

Fire Engine 2 has not been viable for several years, with negligible attendance and very low availability. Removing this fire engine is sensible, enabling resources to be focused on strengthening Fire Engine 1 and introducing the Water Carrier to meet operational risks.

Proposal: Remove One On-Call Fire Engine, replace with new Water Carrier.

Winslow fire engine appraisal

Location, geography and risk profile.

Winslow is a smaller market town in northern Buckinghamshire with a modest recruitment pool but growing development pressures, including new housing expansion and East–West rail. Its semi-rural setting creates risk from road traffic collisions on surrounding A-roads, alongside domestic fire risk and agricultural incidents. Proximity to other On-Call stations provides resilience, but Winslow plays a valuable role in local cover.

		Score
Number of On-Call staff / FTE	11 / 5.08	
Officers In Charge	1	
Drivers	5	★★★☆☆
Recruitment pool (population within catchment)	4,715	
Incidents attended (Actual 2024/25)	33	
First in attendance (2024/25)	14	★★☆☆☆
Over-the-border fire engines attending incidents (Actual 2024/25)	1	
Incidents if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	116	
First in attendance if 100% available (theoretical comparison)	81	
Actual availability (reality comparison 2024/25)	32.8%	
5-year average availability (reality comparison 2020–2025)	15.6%	★★★☆☆
Proposal response time	09:56	
Predicted change in response time to community	05:45 (Quicker)	★★★★☆

Indicative score

- **Staffing capacity:** ★★★☆☆ (moderate, workable but officer resilience limited)
- **Community demand:** ★★☆☆☆ (minimal reliance on over-the-border fire engines)
- **Current availability:** ★★★☆☆ (improving trend with strong recent year performance)
- **Impact of proposal:** ★★★★☆ (good improvement on response times, keeping engine ensures stability and resilience for the area)

Summary

Winslow demonstrates stronger and improving availability than some other standalone On-Call stations, with a notable increase from its 5-year average. Additionally, they do not have Wholetime cover like other fire engines with low availability. Despite its smaller recruitment pool, the fire engine consistently attends incidents and is first in attendance for a significant proportion, showing good operational impact. The decision to retain Winslow reflects both its improving trend and its geographical importance, providing resilience in the north of the county where alternative cover is limited.

Proposal: No change.

Operational Independence

In our response to the Government's Fire Reform White Paper (see CRMP Evidence Pack, p.157), we supported proposals to give Chief Fire Officers greater operational independence. This reflects national recommendations from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), which emphasise the importance of clearer accountability and empowered leadership. For more detail, the full Government White Paper can be found www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-our-fire-and-rescue-service/outcome/response-to-the-fire-reform-white-paper-accessible-version and our full response is published in the CRMP Evidence Pack.

In its State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2023, HMICFRS highlighted the need for clearer accountability and empowered leadership. It recommended that CFOs be given the authority to make strategic operational decisions to improve public safety and adapt to changing demands.
At the same time, strong governance remains essential. Under our proposal, the Fire Authority would continue to:

- Set strategic priorities.
- Approve budgets and response standards.
- Hold the CFO to account for performance.

The CFO would be responsible for day-to-day operational decisions, working closely with the Authority to deliver the best possible service.

Task	Responsible
Setting Service priorities	Fire Authority
Budget setting	Fire Authority
Setting Council Tax precept	Fire Authority
Setting response standards	Fire Authority
Opening and closing fire stations	Fire Authority
Appointment/dismissal of the CFO	Fire Authority
Appointment/dismissal of other fire service staff	Chief Fire Officer
Allocation of staff to meet priorities	Chief Fire Officer
Configuration and organisation of resources	Chief Fire Officer
Deployment of resources	Chief Fire Officer
Balancing operational needs	Chief Fire Officer
Expenditure (within delegated limits)	Chief Fire Officer