



**HAMPSHIRE  
FIRE AND  
RESCUE  
SERVICE**

***Planning For a  
Safer Hampshire***

**Consultation Programme:  
Full Report (with  
Executive Summary  
and Conclusions)**

**Opinion Research Services**  
Spin-out company of Swansea University



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# Acknowledgements

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We thank HFRA and HFRS for commissioning the project and we particularly thank the officers with whom we have worked with for their collaboration - and for attending the forums and meetings to answer many questions by the stakeholders and public. Such meetings benefit considerably from such readiness to answer participants' questions fully and frankly, as in this case.

At all stages of the project, ORS's status as an independent organisation facilitating the consultation as fairly as possible was recognised and respected; this is an independent report and has not been influenced or shaped by HFRS or any other party. We are grateful for the trust, and we hope this report will contribute usefully to thinking about HFRS's development in difficult times.

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# Executive Summary and Conclusions

## The Commission

1. Hampshire Fire Authority (HFA) is considering strategic options for the future of its Fire and Rescue Services in the context of steadily reducing risk (when measured in terms of the number of incidents) and financial constraints. In this context, on the basis of our experience of the fire and rescue service and many statutory consultations, ORS was commissioned by HFA to offer independent advice on the design and conduct of the consultation programme, undertake a programme of key consultation activities, and provide an interpretative report of the findings.

## Extensive Consultation

2. HFA's consultation period ran from 14<sup>th</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015, and included elements conducted by ORS as an independent organisation – for example, advising on the nature and scope of the consultation; drafting the Consultation Document; designing presentation material suitable for use with a wide range of audiences; recruiting, facilitating and reporting 27 deliberative forums; chairing five public meetings; designing and analysing responses to an on-line and paper version of an Open Consultation Questionnaire; analysing written submissions; and writing interim and final reports and presentations.
3. In addition, HFA's own activities included printing and distributing 10,000 Consultation Documents and questionnaires; distributing posters for display at libraries, public buildings and fire stations; providing details of its proposals and supporting evidence on its website; holding numerous briefing and consultation meetings with town, parish, district and county councillors, and other sector stakeholders; publicising its proposals via the media and social media; and providing a Consultation Helpline.

## Consultation Proportionate and Fair

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

5. In this case, the formal consultation for HFA followed an earlier “listening and engagement” phase, and both the earlier and current stages were conducted at a **formative stage** insofar as the Authority had made no decisions.
6. The 12-week formal consultation period gave the public and stakeholders **sufficient time** to participate, and through its consultation documents, website information and detailed presentations the Fire Authority sought to provide **sufficient information** for staff, stakeholders and residents to understand the proposals and to make informed judgements about them and the supporting evidence. During the consultation, the major programme of public meetings and deliberative forums, in particular, provided detailed information in order to ensure proper exploration of the issues in each meeting.
7. The final Gunning principle listed above is that consultation outcomes should be **properly taken into consideration** before authorities take their decisions. In this case, regular formal and informal briefings allowed the progressive reporting of people’s opinions. Apart from informal briefings, ORS submitted an Interim Report in late October 2015 and a detailed Presentation-style Report in mid-January 2016. Fire Authority members reviewed these reports at a seminar on January 15; they received individual chapters in the week commencing January 18; and they were provided with the written Final Report on January 25.
8. Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public and stakeholder views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully. Consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what are the right or best decisions in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine authorities’ decisions.
9. The key question is not, *Does the proposal have majority support?* but, *Are the reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of the proposals cogent?* Consultation is to inform authorities of issues and/or arguments and/or implications they might have overlooked; or to contribute to the re-evaluation of matters already known; or to reassess priorities and principles critically. However popular proposals might be, that does not itself mean they are feasible, safe, sustainable, reasonable and value-for-money; and unpopularity does not mean the reverse.

## Open Questionnaire

### Introduction

10. The open questionnaire was available for completion on-line or as a paper copy during the consultation period, from 14<sup>th</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015. In total, there were 1,467 completions, with 1,331 on-line and 136 by paper copy.

11. Open questionnaires are important and accessible consultation routes, but they are not ‘surveys’ of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically or adventitiously and are more likely to be completed by motivated people while also being also subject to influence by local campaigns. In this case, the respondent profile is not representative of the Hampshire population, for 61% of the respondents were men; two-thirds were aged 45 and over; and 7% work for HFRS. Nonetheless, the questionnaire findings demonstrate the views of those residents and staff who were motivated to put forward their concerns.
12. Respondents were asked if they agreed with “all or “most” of the proposals or whether they “disagree with the proposals for this area”. In other words, people were classified as disagreeing with the proposals unless they identified themselves as agreeing with most of them (albeit with some “specific concerns” – which were identified in multiple open-ended text questions).

### The Proposals

13. There was support for the principles on which HFA’s proposals are based, but disagreement about the effectiveness of the proposals. For example, very large majorities agreed that HFRS should: reduce response times; reduce costs by efficiencies; and use different vehicles for different types of incidents – but opinion was divided on risk-based crewing (that is, differential crewing for different fire stations and allocating varying numbers of firefighters based on risk/demand levels).
14. Most respondents disagreed that HFA’s proposals would reduce risk by improving response times and reduce costs by improving efficiency.
15. On the basis outlined in paragraph 12 above, respondents supported “all” or “most” of the proposals in four areas – namely, Basingstoke and Deane (57% support), New Forest (54% support), Southampton (53% support) and Test Valley and Eastleigh (51%); and opinion was more or less divided in Portsmouth (49.5% support) and exactly so in Rushmoor and Hart (50% support). These are positive results.
16. There was a balance of opposition in only three areas – namely, Winchester (45% support), Fareham and Gosport (45% support) and Havant and East Hampshire (40% support). Significantly, though, these were all areas where two options were under consideration – including one which would change night-time cover from wholetime to retained. In other words, given the relatively positive opinions in the other HFRS areas, it seems plausible that the more negative views in these three areas were influenced by the nature of the two options.

### Options 1 and 2

17. In the questionnaire, there was overwhelming support for Option 2 in Andover (76% support), Gosport, Havant and Winchester (with over 80% support in each case).

18. In Gosport, Havant and Winchester, Option 1 was for retained cover at night, while Option 2 was for a core-crew of two wholetime firefighters to be on the three stations overnight. In this context, it is unsurprising that the questionnaire found overwhelming support for Option 2.
19. However, in Andover Option 1 was for a combination of seven wholetime and 13 on-call firefighters to be on duty overnight, while Option 2 was for only two wholetime crew to be on duty with 13 on-call at night. Because (in this context) the 76% support for Option 2 is counter-intuitive, we conclude that respondents misunderstood the Andover options and (wrongly) assumed they matched the Gosport, Havant and Winchester options. This is borne out by the findings from the public and stakeholder forums, where the options were carefully explained – leading people to support Option 1 for Andover.
20. There is no reason to suppose that respondents misunderstood the questionnaire generally: the Andover result is a single anomaly.

### Council Tax

21. In the questionnaire, 40% of the respondents supported a HFA precept increase of more than 1.99% while 38% supported an increase of 1.99%; and less than one-in-five supported a smaller or no increase.

### Comparisons with Other Consultation Elements

22. Overall, the questionnaire respondents were *less critical* of the proposals than the public meetings and staff forums; but also much *less positive* about them than the public and stakeholder forums.
23. The questionnaire respondents were much more supportive of a HFA council tax increase than the public, stakeholder and staff forums.
24. On all the issues, questionnaire respondents wrote many comments to amplify their responses. The textual comments made broadly matched those which are to be reported in the public meetings and forums, so they need not be separately reported here; but readers are encouraged to consult the detailed questionnaire results and other relevant chapters of the full report.

## Public Meetings

### Introduction

25. A total of 419 people attended one or more of five public meetings that were chaired by ORS and held between October 14 and November 18 2015, in Winchester (29 attended), Basingstoke (37) attended, Southampton (60 attended), Portsmouth (113 attended) and Gosport (180 attended). The early meetings were criticised by participants for poor advertising and attendance levels.

26. All the meetings (particularly the earlier ones) were influenced by firefighters and union representatives who spoke knowledgeably and persuasively, though the chair endeavoured to give priority to local residents where possible. There was no evidence that residents disagreed with the firefighter spokespeople.

### Vociferous Criticism

27. There were general criticisms of HFRS's Risk Review for being a "public relations exercise" in making over-optimistic assessments of risk and in failing to provide sufficient technical detail about the proposed first response vehicles (FRVs), intermediate response vehicles (IRVs) and their associated equipment and technologies. More specifically, both the firefighters and members of the public in all the meetings were extremely critical of all the following issues:

FRVs – for being unspecified, unproven, untested and unsafe

Crews of two – for being unsafe for the public and firefighters

The apparent reliance on high-pressure lances for fighting property fires without sufficient back-up and to the endangerment of casualties who might be trapped in fire compartments

The reduction in wholetime posts and increasing reliance on on-call firefighters

Inconsistencies in the risk assessments for several stations – leading to anomalous allocations of resources

Both Options 1 and 2 for Gosport, Havant and Winchester – because both on-call cover and crews of two wholetime firefighters are both unsatisfactory proposals.

28. In more detail, the criticism of the proposals focused on claims that HFRS is:

Presenting its proposals as enhancing public safety when its real purpose is to save money

Eroding the established "safety first culture" of the Service

Assessing risk in terms of probability rather than potential severity

Making over-optimistic risk assessments without taking sufficient account of population/housing increases and other local risks

Prioritising speed of response from FRVs and IRVs rather than fully effective response from fire engines

Prioritising putting fires out over traditional rescue capacities

Reducing wholetime firefighters – in general and at night

Increasing the use of on-call firefighters and so slowing some response times

Reducing full emergency vehicles – in general and at night

Jeopardising inter-station back-up, especially at night

Reducing public and firefighter safety, particularly at night

Jeopardising the effective and timely crewing of ALPs and other special vehicles by reducing firefighters

Introducing untried FRVs without full specifications and safe working protocols

Planning to use crews of only two, though they cannot deal properly with emergencies and are unable to staff routine incidents appropriately

Relying on high pressure lance technology – a tool on properly equipped fire engines, but not a primary firefighting means on FRVs and IRVs.

### Some Support

29. There were some comments broadly in support of the proposals, but they were few and far between in the public meetings. Some typical examples were that:

Crews of two rather than four or five can be faster and more efficient in responding to calls – particularly at on-call fire stations during weekdays

Dorset FRS has used small vehicles for a long time – so the Hampshire proposals are not really new

There would be more support for the crewing proposals if people were confident that their implementation would be monitored and flexible if risk patterns change.

### Council Tax

30. Council tax issues were not much discussed in the public meetings, mainly because attention focused so much on the emergency cover proposals. Overall, there was support for HFRS increasing its precept by at least 1.99%.

### Petitions

#### Introduction

31. Petitions are an important form of democratic expression and deserve to be noted carefully. In assessing what weight to give them in the overall interpretation, the Fire Authority could consider whether:

The points of view expressed reflect general public opinion?

Those signing were reasonably well-informed about the issues?

The petition statements were fair and factual or emotive and exaggerated?

The signatures were spontaneous and self-motivated or the result of active and persuasive campaigns?

32. None of these criteria should be used to disqualify a petition from consideration; but they indicate how relative weight might be assigned to petitions as against other forms of consultation. In this case, there were three petitions:

From the Aldershot Branch of the Labour Party protesting at the proposed changes at Rushmoor Fire Station – with 1,072 signatures

From Portsmouth Liberal Democrats protesting at the proposed changes in Portsmouth (and particularly Southsea Fire Station) – with 725 signatures

From Cllr Peter Chegwyn protesting at cuts to the Fire, Police and Ambulance Services and at the proposed reduction of wholetime firefighters in Gosport – with 257 signatures.

## Forums with Staff

### Introduction

33. On a random basis HFRS invited numerous wholetime and on-call firefighters and other staff to attend one or other of four confidential forums facilitated by ORS in the New Forest, Basingstoke and Deane, Southampton, and Portsmouth. Unfortunately, despite the wide-ranging invitations, a total of only 32 members of staff attended (ten in the New Forest, ten in Basingstoke and Deane, four in Southampton and eight in Portsmouth). Wholetime firefighters were represented in three meetings; on-call/retained firefighters were represented in two; and one support member of staff and one control room staff member attended.
34. Due to this level and pattern of attendance, the findings reported below should be interpreted with caution, for it is difficult to extrapolate with confidence from these meetings to the views of HFRS staff generally.

### Rejection of Most of the Proposals

35. The staff forums very much reflected the public meetings in terms of the criticisms expressed, partly because firefighters and members of the public were generally in agreement in the public meetings. The consultation document and process were criticised for misleading the public who cannot judge the complex and important issues because:

They are not told that the real reason for the proposals is not to improve safety, but to save money

They are unaware of how the FRS operates

They have too little information about the proposed vehicles and equipment

Management's risk assessments are over-optimistic and unreliable for using incident (rather than mobilisation/cross border/support) data

Incidents have reduced mainly due to policy changes in responding to AFAs rather than due to genuine reductions in risk

Most deaths and serious incidents occur at night

The savings to be achieved via the proposals are exaggerated

Firefighters have been prevented from communicating effectively with the public

The Fire Authority's decision is fait accompli.

36. While making all the above criticisms, it is notable that the staff forums accepted the IRVs as appropriate, safe and effective vehicles – always providing they are crewed with at least four firefighters.
37. While rejecting both Options 1 and 2 for Gosport, Havant and Winchester, the firefighters reluctantly preferred Option 2 “if a choice has to be made”. For Andover, they preferred Option 1.
38. Unfortunately, the firefighters' distrust the data used in the Risk Review led many of them to express a general distrust of senior management for bringing forward the proposals. In this context, there were some telling declarations:

*Incidents have reduced [mainly] because false alarms have been more controlled especially by the university...There is still the potential for major incidents...and they occur mainly at night*

*A lot of the data is untrustworthy... Are medical co-responding calls included in the statistics? – NO! – but they should be!... Has the year 2013-14 been chosen deliberately to suit their case, whereas 2014-15 would have been less “convenient”?*

*Fire deaths are not counted properly – they don't include people who might die after a fire in hospital!*

39. In fact, the third quotation above is false, but its prevalence indicates the degree of distrust that firefighters show towards routine data used in the Risk Review.
40. It was in this context that the firefighters criticised the proposals in similar terms to the public meetings – in particular
- FRVs – for being unspecified, unproven, untested and unsafe
- Crews of two – for being unsafe for the public and firefighters

The apparent reliance on high-pressure lances for fighting property fires without sufficient back-up and to the endangerment of casualties who might be trapped in fire compartments

The reduction in wholetime posts and increasing reliance on on-call firefighters

Inconsistencies in the risk assessments for several stations – leading to anomalous allocations of resources.

41. Listing points of criticism is not necessarily the best way to understand the firefighters' concerns – for their essential point of view might be described as rejecting managements' "risk management" in favour of (wherever possible) "risk elimination". In this context, some typical sentiments about risk expressed in the lengthy discussions are revealing. The ORS facilitator was told that:

Risk is not really reducing

Even if risk is reducing, that does not justify reducing resources

Money is not important – only lives count (not actual lost lives but hypothetical lives that could be lost in "What If?" scenarios)

Risk is not the probability of incidents, but their severity

The FRS should be prepared for all eventualities – it should not reduce wholetime firefighter posts and/or increase on-call posts

Faster response times are illusionary, for under the proposals "proper" fire engines will take just as long to get to house fires

Proposed savings and faster responses depend on lesser vehicles, crews and equipment – which are unacceptable because they will be ineffective, dangerous, and put firefighters at "moral risk"

High pressure lances are "unknowns" and cannot be relied upon

Crews of two are "last resort" (only for rural areas with no other options) – and standard crewing for emergency incidents should always be four or five.

### Alternative Proposals

42. As a result of their concern with risk and criticisms of the HFRS proposals, some firefighters suggested alternative approaches for HFA to consider, namely:

Adopting a two- rather than three-vehicle strategy (with ERVs and IRVs but no FRVs)

Crewing fire engines with three firefighters (as an economising compromise on four and five)

Widening on-call retained recruitment catchment areas and/or lengthening turn-in times (to improve recruitment)

- Using FRVs with crews of two but then always sending a full fire engine too
- Using FRVs with crews of no less than four
- Keeping Havant as a 24/7 station, but closing three on-call retained stations nearby
- Making savings by introducing a three-shift system with different duty rotas.

## Written Submissions

### Introduction

43. In total 55 written submissions were received, with many being both lengthy and detailed – so these considered documents are worthy of careful consideration for the issues and counter-proposals they contain. To make them readily accessible, the written submissions are reviewed in the relevant chapter, and they are also available in full on an accessible website (where organisations and public figures making submissions are identified, but the identities of private individuals are redacted). Meanwhile, the following summary indicates the kinds of issues raised.

### Some Key Points

44. Some of the submissions support the HFRS proposals, but many expressed concern about a number of issues, including:
- The reduced capacity of FRVs
  - Longer response times for full back-up support to arrive
  - The risk that small firefighter crews will be under ‘moral pressure’ to commit to dangerous incidents without sufficient resources or back-up
  - High pressure lances are tools, not substitutes for fully equipped fire engines
  - Reductions in firefighters and full response vehicles will reduce resilience across Hampshire
  - Excessive and/or inconsistent reductions in resources for some fire stations and areas
  - Cover available for border areas of West Sussex.

### Options 1 and 2

45. For Gosport, Havant and Winchester both the critical and favourable submissions clearly supported Option 2. For Andover, the submissions supported Option 1.

## Support and Opposition

46. The relative support and opposition is indicated in the following summary:

Three submissions (from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, and an ex-HFRS-Chief Fire Officer) **generally endorsed** HFRS's proposals

Five submissions (from the Fire Brigades Union, the Retained Firefighters Union, two Hampshire residents, and one West Sussex resident) were **generally opposed** to HFRS's proposals and the consultation process; and the Fire Officers' Association also said it could not support the proposals in their current form

Eight submissions (from Aldershot Branch Labour Party, Blackwater and Hawley Town Council, Church Crookham Parish Council, Elvetham Heath Parish Council, Fleet Town Council, Hart District Council, and two Hampshire residents) were concerned about the proposals for **Rushmoor and Hart** – and particularly those for **Fleet, Rushmoor and Yateley** Fire Stations

Seven submissions (Alan Mack MP, Councillor Beryl Francis, Emsworth Residents Association, Grayshott Parish Council, and three Hampshire residents) were concerned about the proposals for **Havant and East Hampshire** – and particularly those for **Bordon, Emsworth, Grayshott and Havant** Fire Stations

Six submissions (from Councillor Peter Chegwyn, FBU Gosport, Defence Munitions Gosport, Caroline Dinenge MP, Gosport Borough Council, and a Hampshire resident) commented on (and expressed some concerns about) the proposals for **Gosport** Fire Station – particularly Option 1

Five submissions (from Brockenhurst Parish Council, Fordingbridge District Council, Hyde Parish Council, Lord Montagu of the Beaulieu Estate, and the New Forest Verderers) were concerned about the proposals for the **New Forest** – and particularly those for **Brockenhurst, Fordingbridge, Ringwood and Beaulieu** Fire Stations

Three submissions (from Councillor David Airey, Southampton Airport, and Southampton City Council) discussed the proposals for **Hamble and Hightown** Fire Stations in **Southampton** – and a further two (from Penny Mordant MP and a Hampshire resident) about those for **Portsmouth**

Two submissions (from member of HFRS staff and Winchester Cathedral) were concerned about the proposals for **Winchester and Sutton Scotney** Fire Stations – and another (from Kingsclere Parish Council) about those for **Kingsclere**

Five West Sussex Town and Parish Councils (Chidham & Hambrook; Compton; Harting; Midhurst; and Southbourne) were worried about the implications of HFRS's proposals for fire cover in **West Sussex**

Significant alternative proposals were submitted by Gosport, Havant, Hightown, **Kingsclere, Rushmoor, and Winchester Fire Stations**, all of which are summarised below; and further alternatives were suggested by other respondents

One submission said that: "this response should not be edited or altered and should be presented to Fire and Rescue Authority Members as submitted". These instructions have been followed.

### Concerns and Issues

47. In terms of the more general concerns and issues raised, these were chiefly around:
- A reduced service from a FRV and longer response times for back-up support to bigger incidents
  - Public and firefighter safety (a particular issue was the moral pressure for two firefighters in act in a potentially unsafe manner at a critical incident prior to the arrival of back-up resources)
  - The COBRA high pressure lance system, which should be a 'tool' for firefighters, not a substitute for full fire engines with breathing apparatus
  - The lack of specification for the proposed new vehicles and new equipment
  - The need to trial the proposed new vehicles and new equipment prior to full implementation
  - Reduced crewing at night at ABC2 and ABC3 stations (people were particularly worried about the implications of a wholly on-call service overnight)
  - The need to maintain public safety and not make service reductions purely on financial grounds
  - How future-proof HFRS's proposals are in the context of future population increases
  - Reduced resilience across HFRS as a result of fewer firefighters.
48. Furthermore, the consultation process and Planning for a Safer Hampshire were considered misleading insofar as the Risk Review was driven by the need for financial savings rather than to enhance safety across the county. Other comments were about the "loaded questionnaire"; "misleading" data within the Consultation Document; and the lack of publicity for the consultation generally, and for the public meetings in particular (they were considered too few in number and to have been held in inadequate locations).

## Alternative Proposals

49. The specific alternative proposals and suggestions were at once wide-ranging and detailed, but we have sought to summarise the main ones here.

### Havant Fire Station

HFRS's proposal is that:

The station's two fire engines should be replaced by one enhanced and one first response vehicle

The station's crewing should become ABC Level 3: seven wholetime firefighters and 14 on-call firefighters by day; and either two wholetime firefighters (with RDS backup) or wholly RDS by night.

The Station's proposal is that Havant should:

Have one enhanced and one first response vehicle (with a light 4x4 tender) to allow more flexibility for WDS and RDS crewing

Have 24/7 ABC Level 1 crewing on the 2-2-4 system, with RDS backup

Undertake a medical response trial; and also that:

HFRS should extend the consultation period by 18 months to allow for the collection of more data.

### Hightown Fire Station

Currently, Hightown Fire Station has two fire engines crewed 24/7 by 12 firefighters per shift. HFRS's proposals for consultation are that:

The station's two fire engines should be replaced by one enhanced and one intermediate vehicle

The station's 24/7 crewing by 12 firefighters per shift should be replaced by ABC2 level crewing - with 14 firefighters during the day and seven at night.

The Station's submission accepts that the appropriate resources for Hightown are one enhanced and one first response vehicle, but it argues that the:

Wholetime cover should not reduce at night (that is, the station should be classified as ABC level 1)

Current crewing of 12 firefighters per shift should be reduced to 10 (taking account of the use of a first response vehicle).

### Kingsclere Fire Station

Kingsclere is a retained fire station with a traditional fire engine and an establishment of 12 on-call firefighters for day and night-time cover. HFRS's proposals, subject to consultation, are that the station's:

Crewing should be ABC level 4

Current fire engine should be replaced by a first response vehicle

'Pool' of 12 on-call firefighters should be reduced to eight.

The Station's submission accepts the ABC level 4 classification, but proposes that:

The current fire engine should be kept at the station until it reaches the end of its normal life cycle in 2019 (or longer)

The station should then have an intermediate response vehicle (rather than a first response vehicle as currently proposed).

### Other Station Alternatives

Within the twelve week consultation period, the Risk Review Team also received alternative crewing proposals (dealing with the shift system and duty rotas) from **Gosport, Rushmoor** and **Winchester Fire Stations**. Due to their complex and technical nature, these are not summarised here; but they are being considered in consultation with station-based teams and they will inform HFRS's final proposals to be presented to the Fire Authority.

### Other Alternatives

#### Fire Brigades Union (FBU)

The FBU argues that all wholetime appliances (and RDS appliances with full availability) should be crewed with a minimum of five persons and be able to provide immediate BA response. It also says that crews with a minimum of four should attend all non-fire incidents, apart from those responded to by current small fires vehicles.

#### Fire Officers' Association (FOA)

The FOA supports a two-vehicle strategy (rather than a three-vehicle model).

#### Resident

If a 'rural' station has only one vehicle, it should be an enhanced capability.

#### Resident

Mothball the fire engines removed from front-line service to establish a reserve capability for periods of high demand (crewed by off duty Immediate Response firefighters and/or specially recruited on-call personnel).

#### Gosport

The station should have seven wholetime firefighters during day and minimum of four at night (Cllr Peter Chegwyn and a Resident).

**Emsworth**

Retain an Enhanced Response Vehicle (ERV) (Cllr Beryl Francis).

Remove two firefighter posts but provide an intermediate rather than first response vehicle (from Emsworth Fire Station, Emsworth Residents' Association, and a resident).

**Rushmoor (Aldershot Branch Labour Party)**

Provide full night-time fire cover at Rushmoor (instead of seven wholetime and 14 on-call).

**Sutton Scotney (HFRS Staff Member)**

Provide an IRV with a FTE of nine rather than 10 rather than an FRV and ABC4 crewing with eight firefighters.

**Winchester (Winchester Cathedral)**

Provide enhanced 24-hour cover.

**Brockenhurst (Brockenhurst Parish Council)**

Establish an Immediate Response station in Brockenhurst (plus slightly higher personnel numbers and a better distribution of larger response vehicles across the New Forest).

**Fleet (Elvetham Heath Parish Council)**

Provide an ERV (rather than a FRV) as it is the largest settlement in Hart.

**Hamble (Councillor David Airey)**

Maintain at least the present standard of fire cover.

50. Overall, many of the written submissions were concerned with protecting or even enhancing the emergency cover provided by their local fire stations; while others were dedicated to protecting traditional patterns of emergency cover from compromise and change.

**Forums with Members of the Public****Introduction**

51. Hampshire Fire Authority commissioned a major programme of 16 deliberative forums with members of the public – an unusually large and conscientious exercise that covered rural, urban and suburban areas of the country in order to involve a diverse and broadly representative cross-section of residents.
52. Whereas the staff forums engaged with only 32 people, the 16 forums with members of the public involved a total of 242 people, more than seven times as many. The smallest forums with the public had ten participants and the largest had 22, with the average attendance being about 15 residents. Participants were recruited by ORS through random digit

telephone dialling, with quota controls to ensure the relatively proportional representation of different demographic and socio-economic groups. Care was taken to ensure that no groups were disadvantaged in the recruitment process and participants were recompensed for their time and expenses in attending.

53. The Fire Authority commissioned the forums programme in order fairly to 'test' the acceptability or otherwise of its proposals in thoughtful, considered and deliberative or 'jury-style' meetings. The meetings began with detailed presentations by ORS outlining the principles of HFRS's proposals and the implications of the changes for the fire stations in the relevant areas. There were lengthy question and answer periods, followed by the residents' detailed discussions of the issues. ORS captured people's views with real-time interactive on-screen reporting in PowerPoint so that people could be confident that their ideas had been understood and recorded correctly.
54. The meetings were very different in tone and outcome to the public meetings and staff forums, for the participants were able to accept the principles and proposals with equanimity and even with enthusiasm in many respects.

### **Support for Three Types of Emergency Vehicles**

55. Very much in contrast to the public meetings which reflected firefighter objections, the 16 forums were almost unanimous in supporting the introduction of different types or levels of response vehicle. Their key reasons for supporting this innovation were that:

The proposals match different resources to varying risk and demand levels

It is wasteful and impractical to send full fire engines to the many less serious incidents – they should be kept for more serious events

Smaller vehicles are more suitable in many instances – they are more manoeuvrable in rural areas and on narrow streets within towns and cities

Using different vehicles, particularly on retained or on-call stations allows for quicker response times and greater flexibility in crewing levels – because smaller vehicles and their equipment can attend with fewer firefighters

In an emergency, people would find it reassuring to have a rapid initial response (even if it is less comprehensive) – particularly if a full fire engine might be 'off the run' due to marginal crew unavailability

The new vehicles would use new technology to increase their capacity for dealing with property fires

The proposals contribute to the required savings – and no one doubted that the HFA has to reduce and control its budget carefully over the next five years or so

They trusted the HFRS and the HFA to manage public safety reliably and responsibly.

56. The public also wondered, “Why has this not been done before?” – in the sense that such changes were long overdue.
57. Before supporting so strongly the changes to vehicles, the forums discussed many issues in some detail, including, for example, how the introduction of FRVs will impact upon the:
- Safety of two-person crews and the public
  - Length of response times
  - Availability of back-up and support from other stations or vehicles, in the context of potential moral pressure on firefighters
  - Need for firefighters to be sufficiently trained in the new technology
  - HFRS’s future equipment needs
  - Control Room operatives in making proper risk assessments
  - HFRS’s resilience and capacity to cope with large-scale residential and/or industrial development across the county
  - HFRS’s budget in terms of the costs of purchasing new vehicles.

### **Support for Activity-based Crewing**

58. Again in contrast to the public meetings and firefighter forums, the 16 forums with the public were very supportive of more flexible crewing models for different times of the day and in different places. Their key reasons for supporting this innovation were that they:
- Felt that resources should be appropriately varied to match different levels of risk
  - Wanted to avoid waste and unnecessary expense in order to close the projected deficit in the coming years
  - Did not doubt the HFRS risk data on which the assessments of appropriate resources have been based.
59. Before supporting the changes to vehicles and crewing models though, the forum members discussed many issues in detail, including, for example, how the changes will impact upon:
- Public and firefighter safety
  - Overall cover and resilience – especially during night-time
  - Wholetime firefighters’ workloads and career security
  - The recruitment, availability and motivation of on-call firefighters
  - HFRS’s resilience in dealing with population and household growth and other risks.

## Andover – Options 1 and 2

60. The forums relevant to the Andover area very much preferred Option 1 – mainly because the station covers a large, isolated and diverse area, so there are difficulties in relying on back-up cover from elsewhere. It was argued that the station should have a slightly more diverse range of vehicles (one of each) to cover the area’s varied urban and rural areas.

## Gosport, Havant and Winchester – Options 1 and 2

61. The public forums overwhelming supported Option 2, mainly because they considered it to be safer than Option 1, with whole-time and faster night-time response times, while still making significant savings.

## Why So Positive?

62. It is interesting to reflect why the 242 randomly selected members of the public were so supportive of HFRS’s proposals, in such contrast to the public meetings and firefighters’ views. The key issue seems to be that, when informed about the balance of risk levels, resources and costs, ‘ordinary people’ take a very different perspective – particularly on risk – than the firefighters or those influenced strongly by firefighter opinions.
63. The members of the public in the forums were a broadly representative cross-section of residents who were open-minded about the issues and evidence. Of course, they started by being poorly informed about the fire and rescue service, but they quickly understood the key issues (such as the problems of getting consistent weekday on-call cover) and were prepared to deliberate thoughtfully while asking many questions. More specifically, compared with the firefighters they:

Trusted the fire service senior management’s ability to make fair risk assessments based on valid data, to innovate creatively and safely, and to manage the introduction of new methods and technology carefully

Accepted that risk assessment should take account of the probability of incidents – not just the hypothetical severity of “What If?” scenarios

Were optimistic about new technology’s capacity to change traditional fire-fighting methods and assumptions

Accepted that ‘money counts’ in the sense that costs have to be controlled – ‘value for money’ was not their only or dominant consideration, but they thought it is important

Prioritised flexibility, certainty, and speed of response

Believed quicker, even less comprehensive, responses are preferable to ‘comprehensive non-response’ (if an on-call crew is ‘off the run’)

(Some of them) could countenance more radical options – such as the closure of some very quiet fire stations.

64. Finally, although all the forums were informed of the opposition to the proposals by firefighters their discussions were not constrained or much influenced by that factor. It may be that their recent experience of industrial action within the Service has changed public perceptions of risk and the weight to be attached to firefighters' opinions.

### **Council Tax**

65. There was no consensus on the level of any council tax increase – opinions varied – but more people supported at least some increase than did not.

## **Stakeholder Forums**

### **Introduction**

66. HFRS invited many private, statutory and voluntary sector organisations to attend one or other of seven forums facilitated by ORS and there were a total of 67 participants – six in Basingstoke and Deane, 13 in Fareham and Gosport, eight in Havant, 11 in the New Forest, 13 in Portsmouth, four in Southampton, and 12 in Winchester. While not enough to constitute a statistically representative sample of the three sectors, the 67 attendees were diverse stakeholders, and generally well informed about public policy issues, so their views of HFRS's proposals carry some weight. The attendees included former firefighters, safety officers, and executives from the private, public and voluntary sectors; and more than twice as many people attended these seven forums as attended the four HFRS staff forums.
67. As with the public forums, the Fire Authority commissioned the seven stakeholder forums in order fairly to 'test' the acceptability or otherwise of its proposals in deliberative 'jury-style' meetings. Again, ORS outlined the proposals in general and for the fire stations in the relevant areas. There were lengthy question and answer periods and detailed discussions from which ORS captured people's views with real-time interactive reporting in PowerPoint so people could be confident their ideas had been recorded correctly.
68. Like the forums with residents, these meetings were very different in tone and outcome to the public meetings and staff forums, for the stakeholders were able to accept the principles and proposals readily. Like the residents, they were informed of the firefighters' opposition to the proposals, but generally this had little impact on their conclusions.

## Support for the Proposals

69. The 67 stakeholders were very positive about the proposals – mainly because they:
- Trusted the HFRS management
  - Accepted that fire engines are inappropriate for 70% of incidents – with some citing their personal experiences of excessive resources for minor incidents
  - Were impressed by both the FRVs and IRVs – and were readily prepared to accept their use in their own areas
  - Understood the problems of on-call/retained availability during weekdays – and agreed that smaller vehicles would alleviate the issues while allowing a faster and more certain response
  - Believed it is “better to have something quickly than nothing slowly!”
70. As in the forums with 242 members of the public, the stakeholders were almost unanimous in their support for the introduction of three kinds of response vehicles and most of them also supported ABC crewing. In discussions, they stressed that HFRS should ensure that:
- Wholetime and on-call firefighters, and control staff, should get sufficient training for changes to their roles
  - Fire prevention work in communities should continue
  - The public should be kept informed about the introduction of the changes.

## Options 1 and 2

71. For Gosport, Havant and Winchester, Option 2 was strongly favoured – mainly because they prioritised the faster response time of wholetime firefighters over the reduction in savings possible with Option 1.
72. For Andover, Option 1 was very clearly preferred, with participants understanding that confusion that had arisen in the questionnaire responses (which misleadingly showed 76% support for Option 2, based on the misunderstanding that Option 2 for Andover matched Option 2 for the other three stations).

## Council Tax

73. There was no consensus about raising the council tax precept: there were wide-ranging divisions of opinion about whether an increase would be justified and, if so, by how much.

## Conclusions

### Introduction

74. The Fire Authority will draw its own conclusions from the consultation elements reported here and from the other evidence available for its consideration. So the following remarks

are not intended to advise the Authority on its final decision, but only to identify where there was general agreement in the consultation process, while also indicating the relative weight that might be attached to the different methods that in many cases produced radically different outcomes.

### Issues with a Relative Consensus

75. The consultation clearly showed that all the staff, public and stakeholders readily accepted that the **intermediate response vehicles (IRVs)** excellent in themselves and also appropriate for deployment in Hampshire. Any disagreement concerned the levels of crewing that should be required and whether their equipment has yet been specified with sufficient clarity.
76. With the exception of the questionnaire responses for Andover (which in the forums were generally agreed to have been misleading) there was a clear consensus that *if changes were to go ahead, then Option 2* would be the best outcome for Gosport, Havant and Winchester, while **Option 1** would be best for Andover. (Of course, though, the firefighters and public meetings objected to both options in principle.)
77. There was no consensus about the level of any **council tax increase**, but many more people favoured at least some increase than none.

### Interpreting Areas of Disagreement

#### Range of Opinions

78. The sections above have demonstrated a stark contrast between the public meetings, petitions, staff forums and many submissions that were generally strongly opposed to most of HFRS's proposals (on the one hand) and (on the other hand) the public and stakeholder forums, and some submissions, that emphatically supported the proposals. In this rather stark polarity, the questionnaire findings were 'in the middle' – less critical of the proposals than the public meetings, staff forums and petitions, but less supportive than the public and stakeholder forums.
79. Not only did the different 'constituencies' of people and interest groups differ radically in their opinions of the proposals, but the different consultation methods also delivered very different outcomes in terms of approval or opposition. In this context, the Fire Authority has to consider whether any consultation methods and/or opinions carry more weight than others – while also taking into account all the other evidence for or against the proposals.

#### Meaning of Consultation

80. When interpreting the findings reported here, a key principle is that consultation is not a referendum: it is not a 'numbers game' and the loudest or majority opinions should not automatically prevail. The key issue is not whether most people agree or disagree with the proposals, but, *Are the reasons for their popularity or unpopularity cogent?* However

popular or unpopular proposals might be, the Fire Authority will want to consider if they are evidence-based, feasible, safe, sustainable, reasonable and value-for-money.

### **Different Views of the Data**

81. Our review of the evidence has shown that whereas the forums with 242 randomly selected members of the public and 67 diverse stakeholders readily trusted the risk and incident data relied upon by HFRS in its Risk Review, the public meetings and firefighters rejected it as at best unreliable and at worst deliberately manipulated. So if the Fire Authority believes the firefighters and public meetings, it will reach very different conclusions about the proposals than if it accepts the evidence of its senior managers and the risk review team (evidence that was readily accepted in the public and stakeholder forums). Ultimately, the firefighters and public meeting attendees are asking the Fire Authority to reject the advice and evidence of its senior officers and the risk review team. The Authority will wish to consider on what basis it should do that.

### **Different Views of the Proposed Response Vehicles**

82. Similarly, if the Fire Authority believes the firefighters and public meeting attendees about the problems allegedly associated with the new response vehicles, its conclusions will not be the same as if it accepts management evidence in the same way that the public and stakeholder forums did. For, once more, the former challenge the Fire Authority to reject the advice and evidence of its management and risk review team. So the evidence and issues should be carefully considered.

### **Different Views of Risk**

83. The firefighters and public meetings argued strongly that (contrary to what management says) fire risk is not reducing – and, even if risk is reducing, that still does not justify reducing resources. Arguing that risk is primarily about the possible severity of hypothetical (“What if?”) incidents rather than their probability, they urged that, in the context of saving lives, money (expenditure) is unimportant.
84. The public and stakeholder forums had a very different perspective, though. They not only trusted senior management’s ability to make fair risk assessments based on valid data, but they also accepted that risk assessments should take account of the probability of incidents, not just their possible severity. Not only were they optimistic about new technology’s capacity to change traditional fire-fighting methods, they also accepted that “money counts” in the sense that costs have to be controlled. ‘Value for money’ was not their only consideration, but they thought it important.
85. The Fire Authority will want to compare these very different perspectives on risk to decide which it thinks is the more reasonable overall.

## Interpreting the Consultation Methods

### Criteria

86. The consultation methods yielded different results, as we have seen – so what weight should the Fire Authority attach to each of them? While not pretending to be exhaustive, ORS suggests that in making its assessments the Authority should have regard to: whether views expressed reflected general public opinion; whether respondents were relatively well or poorly informed about the evidence; whether opinions were ‘thoughtful’ (based on personal deliberation) or the result of organised campaigns marshalling collective sentiments; whether the views expressed were cogent and evidence-based; and how many people were supportive or opposed (though we suggest that normally this will be the least important consideration).

### Questionnaire

87. Nearly 1,500 people completed the questionnaire, but it was not a representative survey of public opinion and the respondent profile did not match the Hampshire population at all closely.
88. In the questionnaire responses, there was support for the principles on which HFA’s proposals are based, but disagreement about the effectiveness of the proposals. Nonetheless, most respondents supported “all” or “most” of the proposals in Basingstoke and Deane (57% support), New Forest (54% support), Southampton (53% support) and Test Valley and Eastleigh (51%); and opinion was divided in Portsmouth (50% support) and Rushmoor and Hart (50% support).
89. There was a balance of opposition in only Winchester (45% support), Fareham and Gosport (45% support) and Havant and East Hampshire (40% support). Significantly, though, these were all areas where two options were under consideration – including one which would change night-time cover from wholetime to retained. It seems likely that the more negative views in these three areas were influenced by the nature of the two options.
90. Overall, then, the questionnaire outcomes were neither wholly against nor wholly for the proposals.

### Public Meetings

91. Over 400 people attended the public meetings and many were influenced by critical firefighters and union representatives who spoke knowledgeably and persuasively. Most of the attendees seemed to have attended in order to articulate or support set positions; and though they listened to detailed presentations by HFRS the content had little influence on their views, because they supported the firefighters’ position.

### Petitions

92. There were three petitions submitted opposing the proposals (with a total of over 2,000 signatures) which should be noted carefully; but the Fire Authority will want to consider

whether they reflect general public opinion, whether the petition statements gave fair summaries of the proposals, and whether signatories were self-motivated and based on informed judgements.

### **Staff Forums**

93. Unfortunately, only 32 members of staff attended one of four staff forums, with only one support member of staff attending. Due to this level and pattern of attendance, their opposition to the proposals should be interpreted with caution, for it is difficult to be confident that the meetings reflect the views of HFRS staff generally.

### **Submissions**

94. Many of the 55 written submissions received were lengthy and very considered documents worthy of careful consideration by the Fire Authority for the issues and counter-proposals they contain. The Fire Authority will want to consider their evidence and whether they set out feasible alternative futures for HFRS.

### **Forums with the Public and Stakeholders**

95. Because it wanted to 'test' the acceptability or otherwise of its proposals on randomly selected members of the public and important stakeholders in deliberative 'jury-like' settings, the Fire Authority commissioned a total of 23 forums in which 242 members of the public and 67 well-informed stakeholders took part. In this programme, over 300 people engaged in lengthy, deliberative and thoughtful meetings in which they were able to examine the proposals in forensic detail.
96. The public forums were broadly representative of Hampshire residents; they were open-minded about the evidence; they quickly understood the key issues; and they deliberated thoughtfully while asking many questions. These forums were very different in tone and outcome to the public meetings and staff forums, for the participants were able to accept all the proposals readily.
97. While not representative of the general population, the stakeholder forum included diverse well-informed people who are used to policy and risk reviews. Like the forums with residents, these meetings were very different to the public meetings and staff forums, for the stakeholders were able to accept the proposals readily.
98. As in the forums with 242 members of the public, the 67 stakeholders were almost unanimous in their support for the introduction of three kinds of response vehicles and most of them also supported the ABC crewing.

### **ORS and Fire Authority Roles**

99. Interpreting the overall 'meaning' of the consultation outcomes is neither straightforward nor just 'numerical' – for the different methods, groups and outcomes have to be not only respected, but also 'evaluated' in terms of the relative weight to be attached to each. They cannot be simply 'summed' into an unambiguous consensus.

100. In this context, it is not the role of ORS to make policy recommendations or to go beyond the fact-based interpretation above. In the light of our general guidance, the Fire Authority will consider all the consultation outcomes, alongside all the other evidence, in order to make its decisions. Ultimately, an overall interpretation of the consultation will depend upon the Fire Authority itself: its members will consider all elements and determine which seem the most telling, by considering the relative merits of the various opinions as the basis for public policy.
101. The challenge for the Fire Authority is to maintain public and professional confidence in the safety and resilience of its services while also demonstrating that it can successfully deliver appropriate changes to balance its budget. We trust that this report will make at least some contribution to that endeavour.

# Project Overview

## Opinion Research Services

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

## The Commission

104. Hampshire Fire Authority (HFA) is considering strategic options for the future of its Fire and Rescue Services in the context of steadily reducing risk (when measured in terms of the number of incidents) and financial constraints. In this context, on the basis of our experience of the fire and rescue service and many statutory consultations, ORS was commissioned by HFA to offer independent advice on the design and conduct of the consultation programme, undertake a programme of key consultation activities, and provide an interpretative report of findings.
105. HFA's consultation period ran from 14<sup>th</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015 and the full programme included all the following elements:

### Independent research by ORS

Providing advice on the nature and scope of the consultation

Contributing to the authorship of the Consultation Document

Designing informative and interactive presentation material suitable for use with a wide range of audiences

Designing, implementing and analysing responses to an on-line and paper version of an Open Consultation Questionnaire

Recruiting, facilitating and reporting 27 deliberative forums – including 16 with randomly selected members of the public, seven with business, voluntary and statutory sector stakeholders, and four with HFRS staff

Chairing four public meetings

Analysing and summarising written submissions and petitions received by HFRS during the consultation period

Producing an interim and final overall report of all consultation findings and guidance on the interpretation of the material.

#### HFA's consultation activities

Printing and distributing over 10,000 Consultation Documents and questionnaires

Printing and distributing posters for libraries, public buildings and fire stations

Providing details of its proposals and supporting evidence on its website

Distributing copies of the relevant documents to key emergency service and other partners

Undertaking 14 briefings and consultation meetings with town, parish, district and county councillors

Holding a stakeholder event in September (100+ key stakeholders attended) - and distributing copies of the relevant documents to attendees

Providing specific documentation to and holding meetings with all neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services

Publicising the consultation in the local media (broadcast and print) via press releases, social media, Twitter and Facebook

Designing, printing and distributing 15,000 leaflets across the county advertising the consultation and the last three Public Meetings

Deploying the Service's Community Contact Point throughout the county to encourage members of the public to take part in the consultation

Providing a Consultation Helpline

Inviting responses via email, telephone and in writing.

## Consultation Methods

### Open Questionnaire

106. The open questionnaire (with an accompanying Consultation Document) was available online and as a hard copy between 14<sup>th</sup> September and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015. 1,467 questionnaires were completed; 1,331 were submitted online and 136 by post. Please see pages 42 and 43 in the following chapter for a full respondent profile.

### Deliberative Forums

#### The Forums

107. The meetings reported here used a 'deliberative' approach to encourage operational staff, stakeholders and members of the public to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing their ideas in detail. All the meetings lasted for between two-and-a-half and three hours and in total there were 32 staff, 67 stakeholder and 242 public participants (60 of the latter attended sessions to discuss the risk review 'principles', and a further 182 to discuss their implications for their local fire stations). The programme of forum meetings is shown below.

#### Public Forums (242 participants)

<b>'GENERAL PRINCIPLES' FORUM LOCATIONS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ATTENDEES</b>
Portsmouth	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2015	10
Southampton	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2015	12
Basingstoke	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	16
Winchester	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	22
<b>'PROPOSALS' FORUM LOCATIONS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ATTENDEES</b>
Winchester	8 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	17
Bishop's Waltham/Wickham	12 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	19
Andover	13 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	17
Basingstoke	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	18
Alton	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	15
Havant	22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2015	15
Rushmoor	22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2015	11

<b>Fareham/Gosport</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>New Milton</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Totton</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Southampton</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Portsmouth</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>15</b>

#### Stakeholder Forums (67 participants)

<b>FORUM LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ATTENDEES</b>
<b>Winchester</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> October 2015</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Basingstoke</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> October 2015</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Havant</b>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Fareham &amp; Gosport</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Portsmouth</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Southampton</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>4</b>

#### Staff Forums (32 participants)

<b>FORUM LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ATTENDEES</b>
<b>New Forest</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> October 2015</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Basingstoke</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> October 2015</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Southampton</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Portsmouth</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> November 2015</b>	<b>8</b>

<sup>108</sup>. Staff and stakeholders were invited to participate by HFRS, whereas members of the public were recruited by ORS. Participants were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS's Social Research Call Centre. Having been initially contacted by phone, all participants were then written to - to confirm the invitation and the arrangements; and those who agreed to come then received telephone or written reminders shortly before each meeting. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent and broadly representative of the wider community.

109. Overall (as shown in the table below), the public participants were a broad cross-section of residents from the local areas and, as standard good practice, were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part. In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors, and the venues at which the forums met were readily accessible. People's special needs were taken into account in the recruitment and at the venues. The random telephone recruitment process was monitored to ensure social diversity in terms of a wide range of criteria – including, for example: gender; age; ethnicity; social grade; and disability/limiting long-term illness (LLTI).

CRITERIA	FORUMS
Gender	Male: 137 Female: 105
Age	16-34: 55 35-54: 74 55+: 113
Social Grade	AB: 76 C1: 72 C2: 29 DE: 65
Ethnicity	10 non-White British
Long-term Limiting Illness	31

110. Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, deliberative forums cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave the relevant staff, stakeholders and diverse members of the public the opportunity to participate actively. Because the meetings were inclusive, the outcomes (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions.

### Background Information

111. The forums began, for the sake of context, with a concise review of HFRS's resources, incident levels (both overall and by station ground), strategic roles and finances, before the Risk Review principles and proposals were considered in some detail, particularly with respect to:

The proposed three vehicle strategy

Activity based crewing

How HFRS's proposals will affect existing fire stations (in terms of vehicles, crewing levels, savings, on-call availability and average first response times)

Overall savings.

Participants were also asked to comment on HFRA's council tax precept - and particularly the extent to which they would be prepared to sanction a rise for 2016-17. Prior to doing so they were informed about exactly what different percentage rises would mean in practice, both for them in terms of additional expenditure, and the Service in terms of income.

112. Discussion was stimulated via a presentation devised by ORS and HFRS to inform and stimulate discussion of the issues - and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they wished throughout the discussions.

### Public Meetings

113. The Fire Authority held three public meetings, which were publicised by media and using posters in the local areas. The meetings were held in the evenings and attended by a total of 419 people, as follows:

MEETING LOCATION	DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Winchester	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	29
Basingstoke	19 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	37
Southampton	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	60
Portsmouth	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	113
Gosport	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	180

114. Each meeting lasted over two hours and included rigorous discussions of the Fire Authority's proposals. Participants received (and listened attentively and with interest to) a detailed presentation by senior officers of HFRS, which covered all of the topics and issues outlined above in paragraph 111.
115. In addition to members of the public, each of the meetings was attended by current and retired firefighters (and in some cases their families and friends), as well as union representatives. For example, at the Basingstoke and Winchester meetings, about half of the attendees seemed to have a current or previous connection with the HFRS. At each venue the firefighters and union representatives spoke influentially, in some cases reflecting and in other cases shaping the opinions of the residents present.

### Written Submissions

116. During the formal consultation process, 55 written submissions were received from professional, political, interest, voluntary and community groups as well as from individual Hampshire (and West Sussex) residents. The table below shows the breakdown of contributors by type.

Type of Correspondent	Number of respondents/signatories
Councils (City/Borough or District/Town/Parish)	18
Residents	11
Local Organisations	7
MPs/Councillors	6
HFRS Staff (including Fire Stations and ex-Chief Fire Officer)	8
Representative Bodies	4
Neighbouring FRS	1

117. ORS has read all the written submissions and summarised them in the full report.

## Petitions

118. 1,072 people signed an online petition (organised by the Aldershot Branch of the Labour Party) entitled 'Keep full night-time cover at Rushmoor Fire Station' – and a further 725 people signed an online petition against the proposed changes for Southsea Fire Station. The latter was organised by the Portsmouth Liberal Democrats.

## Consultation Programme Proportional and Fair

119. HFRS's consultation programme was very conscientious, in the sense of being open, accessible and fair to members of the public, stakeholders and staff across Hampshire: the consultation was proportional to the importance of the issues and conforms with good practice - both in its scale and the balance of elements included, and also in the way in which it built upon earlier engagement and consultation exercises undertaken by the Service.
120. The key good practice requirements for proper consultation programmes are that they should:
- Be conducted at a formative stage, before decisions are taken;
  - Allow sufficient time for people to participate and respond;
  - Provide the public and stakeholders with enough background information to allow them to consider the issues and any proposals intelligently and critically;
  - and
  - Be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken.

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

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

## The Report

125. This report reviews the sentiments and judgements of respondents and participants about the aforementioned proposals. Verbatim quotations are used, in indented italics, not because we agree or disagree with them - but for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of view. ORS does not endorse the opinions in question, but seeks only to portray

them accurately and clearly. The report is an interpretative summary of the issues raised by participants.

# Open Consultation Questionnaire

## Introduction

126. The open consultation questionnaire (with an accompanying Consultation Document) was available online and as a hard copy between 14<sup>th</sup> September and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015. 1,467 questionnaires were completed; 1,331 were submitted online and 136 by post.
127. HFRS printed and distributed over 10,000 consultation documents (with questionnaires, freepost envelopes and posters) to all libraries, public buildings, fire stations, businesses, voluntary groups, partners and all emergency services. Copies were also available on request and an online version was available on the HFRS website.

## Interpretation of the Data

128. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers.
129. Graphics are used in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts show the proportions (percentages) of residents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a ‘traffic light’ system in which:
- Green shades represent positive responses
  - Beige and purple/blue shades represent neither positive nor negative responses
  - Red shades represent negative responses
  - The bolder shades are used to highlight responses at the ‘extremes’, for example, very satisfied or very dissatisfied.

## Need for Interpretation

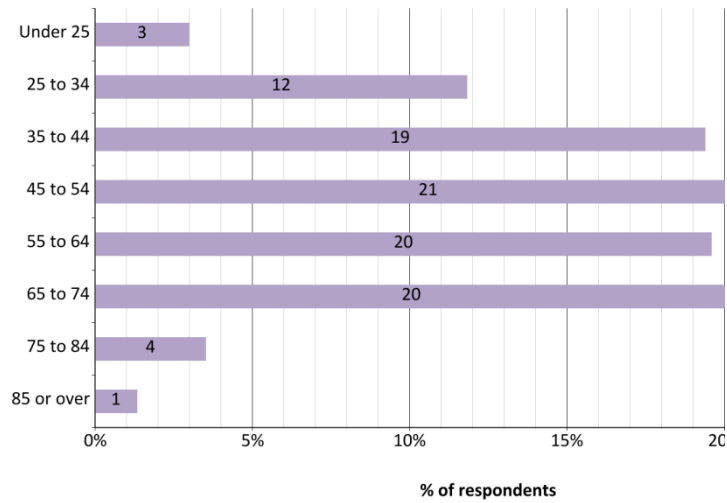
130. Open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, but they are not ‘surveys’ of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically or adventitiously and are more likely to be completed by motivated people while also being also subject to influence by local campaigns. As such, because the respondent profile is an imperfect reflection of the Hampshire population, its results must be interpreted carefully.
131. Crucially though, this does not mean that the open questionnaire findings should be discounted: they are analysed in detail in this report and must be taken into account as a demonstration of the strength of feeling of residents who were motivated to put forward their views (and in many cases concerns) about the proposed changes.

## Respondent Profiles

132. The charts below outline the profile characteristics of respondents to the survey. They show that two-thirds of respondents were over the age of 44, over six in 10 (61%) were male) and the overwhelming majority (96%) were White British. Only 7% said they work for Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service - though the actual figure may be higher, as some employees may have preferred to identify themselves as Hampshire residents.

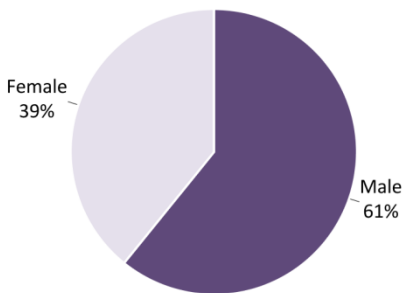
### Age on last birthday

Base: All Respondents (964)



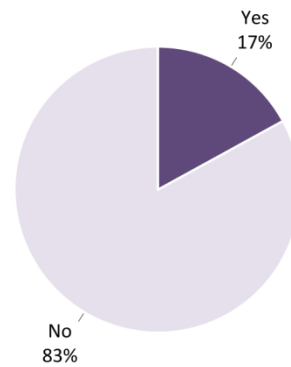
### Gender

Base: All Respondents (936)



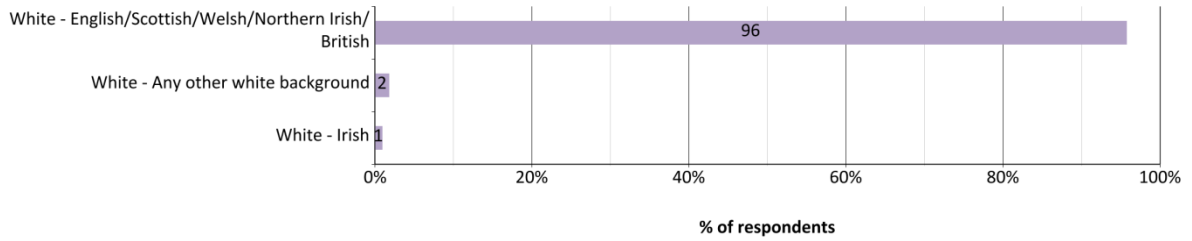
### Physical or mental health conditions lasting or expected to last 12 months or more

Base: All Respondents (849)



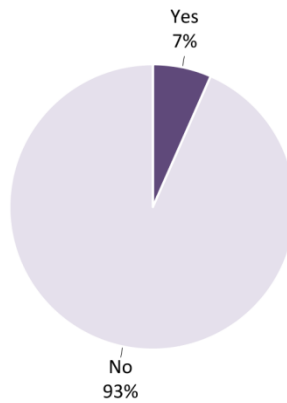
**Ethnic group**

**Base: All Respondents (861)**



**Work for Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service**

**Base: All Respondents (921)**



**Main Findings**

**Planning for a Safer Hampshire**

*We believe that fire and rescue services in Hampshire can be provided in a more effective way that will reduce risk, with faster average response times for critical incidents; increase efficiency; and reduce costs. This requires a change to the way services are currently provided.*

***Do you agree or disagree that it is right to make changes that reduce risk by improving average response times for critical incidents?***

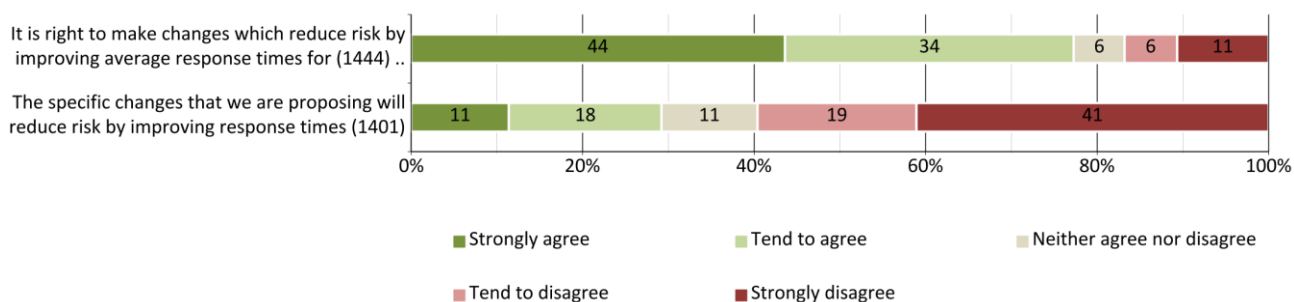
***Do you agree or disagree that the specific changes HFRS is proposing will reduce risk by improving response times?***

**Reducing Risk**

133. More than three quarters (77%) of respondents agreed that it is right to make changes that reduce risk by improving average response times for critical incidents: 44% strongly agreed. Less than a fifth (17%) disagreed.

134. However, six in ten respondents disagreed that the specific changes that HFRS is proposing will reduce risk by improving response times. Just under three in ten (29%) agreed.

**Base: All Respondents (number of respondents shown in brackets)**



135. Those who disagreed were asked to illustrate their reasons why and the main themes that emerged, with some illustrative comments, are outlined below. It should be noted that many of these were not directly related to this specific question, but were concerned with the overall proposals and consultation process (and were repeatedly stressed by respondents within each section of the questionnaire).

Main Theme	Total responses	% of respondents (Base: 743)
Reducing the number or large appliances across Hampshire will not reduce risk (and will put safety (and lives) at risk as inappropriate appliances/crew numbers could be sent to incidents)	479	64
Reducing crew levels - especially at night - will not reduce risk (or improve response times)	366	49
Proposals will negatively affect specific areas (most commonly Gosport, Emsworth and Fleet)	175	24
Reducing response times will not reduce risk (time taken to resolve incidents is more important)	86	12
Generally disagree with the proposals/cuts	44	6
Not enough information given on proposals	32	4
The proposals are driven by a need to make savings	31	4
The consultation is biased/flawed/ loaded/misleading	19	3
The proposals do not take sufficient account of future population growth	18	2
The information given and data/statistics used are inaccurate and unreliable	9	1
Other	114	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,373</b>	

**Disagreement with the proposals and ‘cuts’ in general**

*These changes to the Hants Fire and Rescue Service will put lives at risk. I think it's out of order taking a fire engine away from a fire station and putting in a land rover that is of no use*

*Reducing the capacity of fire appliances is not going to improve safety. We need a properly funded service not the cuts proposed here*

*I disagree with any reduction. All areas should be manned by full-time crews with fully-functioning fire engines...*

*At the end of the day saving lives is the number one priority and logic says that if you have an excellent statistic with the current set up don't try changing it as part of a cost-cutting exercise. Celebrate its success and leave well alone*

*Response times may be achieved with these changes and politicians and councillors will love the new 'numbers', but at what cost? Greater strain on firefighters? Decreased cover for areas when major incidents occur? Reduced time to effect rescue? Greater risks for the public? In these ever changing and uncertain times, the last thing we as a nation need is front-line services being reduced, especially the fire service...*

*Cuts have consequences. If these cuts happen, people will die as a result!*

*After 23 years in the fire service, I've yet to see where reductions in service by alternate, risk based, activity crewing, reduction in size shape or form of appliances, station closures and amalgamations have resulted in improved attendance times...*

*Bearing in mind the populations involved and the fact that these are tax paying members of society it is fundamentally wrong to even consider such poor, third world levels of cover...*

The proposed changes will not, in themselves, reduce risk

*The risk does not go down just because less people get there and stop the clock. The risk will always remain the same and the people that deal with it will not reduce that*

*The figures for actual incidents are misleading as they do not show incidents where units are called across county borders. Reducing crews and vehicles available at night will not reduce the risk to me but it will increase the risk. Nor will it reduce the risk during the day*

*The risk will not change if you improve response times. The risk will always be there*

*Risk is always going to be present at certain incidents... I totally agree that we need the fastest response to deal with these critical incidents, however that response needs to have the correct amount of personnel to be able to deal with those incidents. I do not agree though that having the fastest response will lower the risk. Risk is always going to be there.*

The proposed changes will put safety (and lives) at risk as inappropriate appliances and crew numbers could be sent to incidents – that is, although first attendance times may improve, that initial response may be inadequate and ineffective

*After reading your proposals it is clear that having less equipment (on the initial response) and less personnel at a critical incident, will probably put more lives at risk including firefighters...*

*Having fewer firefighters will undoubtedly affect the response the public receive. Replacing proper fire engines with land rovers or smaller vehicles will mean it'll take longer to put fires out. Lives will be lost if a service is provided on the cheap*

*A response is an effective response that can deal with an incident on arrival. It is not, I repeat not, just getting somebody to turn up and meet statistics*

*Sending a two-man vehicle to improve response times is of no use when a second vehicle with four+ will be needed along with it for any serious job - why not send the existing five-man crew/one pump?*

*Times will only reduce by seconds and if on arrival a larger tender is required more time is lost. I agree with the smaller vehicles being used for RTAs but large building used for accommodation and public places need large tenders.*

Reducing night-time crewing will not reduce risk (and will, in many cases, mean slower response times)

*The night cover proposed at many retained stations, when more serious incidents (persons reported house fires and serious RTCs) are more likely is putting people's lives at risk*

*According to your data the response time at night will go from five minutes to nearly ten minutes; this is not acceptable*

*As I understand it, my local fire station will no longer have 24/7 cover at the station, leaving all night time callouts to be covered by retained firefighters. That extra response time at night concerns me as I feel that every second counts with emergency responses and I don't think that saving money justifies risking lives*

*By reducing night cover at full time stations it will make response times much slower. It's better to have crews on station ready to respond rather than relying on retained crews.*

Reducing first response times should not be the only indicator of the success of the proposed changes - and average response times can be misleading

*Average response times are only part of the story, ensuring a well-equipped vehicle and sufficient crew is the other half. Please just ensure the fire crew are able to tackle possible emergencies with these proposed smaller vehicles*

*Can understand reducing costs by increasing efficiency but 'average' response times can be dangerous when it puts some communities, in rural areas especially, at greater risk. Rural areas contain more vulnerable buildings, especially thatched, and more remote locations can sometimes be more difficult to reach.*

The proposals are driven by a need to make financial savings as opposed to a desire to improve public safety

*The changes are based on saving money and not based on reducing risks and/or improving response times. The need to save money is obviously very important and not to be ignored, but these changes will, in my opinion, not effectively improve response times or reduce risks*

*I am in agreement with improving response times but I do not agree that this will be accomplished by downgrading stations and removing normal engines and replacing them with what in effect will be vans with two crew nor with the removal of appliances at night. This doesn't seem to me to be anything to do with operational efficiency but rather more to do with saving money. If these proposals go through it will in my opinion cost lives*

*The proposals you have made are solely a cost saving driven exercise with no regard for the risks to the residents and firefighters...*

Insufficient information has been provided on the proposals and their implications to make a proper judgement

*You give no understandable information about how you will improve the risk - you seem to say that you'll get there quicker with less staff. So yes, you'll tick the time box but will you be able to help my family? The information you have provided and the information I've found on the internet/Facebook suggest not...*

*To make an informed decision, the public need all the facts and figures. How many incidents in total, at what times of day and what the response times were for each incident? It also isn't clear whether any delayed responses have resulted in loss of life during this period*

*Clear and published risk and capability assessments are required to make proper judgements on risk v capability v location of assets*

*It is a great report but it is missing a key bit of information, this is the definition of day and night and the number of calls, minor, major and false received during those times...*

The proposals do not take sufficient account of future population growth - as well as an increased ageing and diverse population

*The proposals based on historical statistics do not take into account the future growth of an aging population...they will be more prone to accidents resulting in fire and will be slow to respond and less able to seek assistance, or to evacuate the premises unaided. There has been an increasing number of such incidents reported in the press during the last year...*

*Your risk assessment is flawed and should account for the changing population. Immigrants are coming to our country who are not as well educated or understand fire safety like we do today*

*In the areas specified the government have ordered more houses to be built therefore an increase in population. I think these proposals are based on past statistics and not what the future will be...*

The consultation is biased, flawed, loaded and misleading

*These are loaded questions and do not reflect opinions. How can the reduction of a local fire brigade reduce average response times? It is impossible to reduce response time if the nearest fully manned station is further away in terms of distance and time*

*This appears to be yet another example of a consultation questionnaire that is designed in such a way as to not allow the public to voice its true concerns... This questionnaire is a charade and is yet another tick box exercise.*

*This is a misleading question with answers offered providing no option for a complete response. Yes it is right to review the services approach, however the real eventuality is that there will be no decrease in the initial attendance time and most certainly an additional delay in an attendance from an adequately resourced response*

*Your consultation document is lightweight and biased in favour of the proposals you are hoping to implement.*

The information given and data/statistics used are inaccurate, unreliable and limited

*There is no evidence that the predicted response times will improve. The FBU are contesting them as well. There is no evidence of trials, so there can be no reliable data available*

*I attended a meeting, where we were told the new plan is based on incident statistics and not turn outs. So Eastleigh had 195 critical incidents they attended, but the actual turn outs might be say 250, so based on your report you have reduced them down. However, in reality they are needed to support other stations to give a safe service to Hampshire. So the information you are using is not reflecting what is really happening*

*I am shocked by the way the statistics for each station have been presented. After speaking to my local station and seeing how many calls they attend I feel that I have been lied too...*

*The statistics used to provide information on number of incidents is flawed as it does not include incidents on other fire grounds. This does not reflect how busy stations are and the number of incident or time of incident for ABC*

*Your proposals as stated in this survey are based upon incident data from 2013-2014. This appears to be a rather limited sample to be basing the future of a multi-million*

*pound organisation on... Surely you should be using a wider data field from historical data and also producing a future data field to include the new mobilising arrangements, future commercial & domestic housing developments and the impact of the changes other neighbouring fire services are no doubt planning*

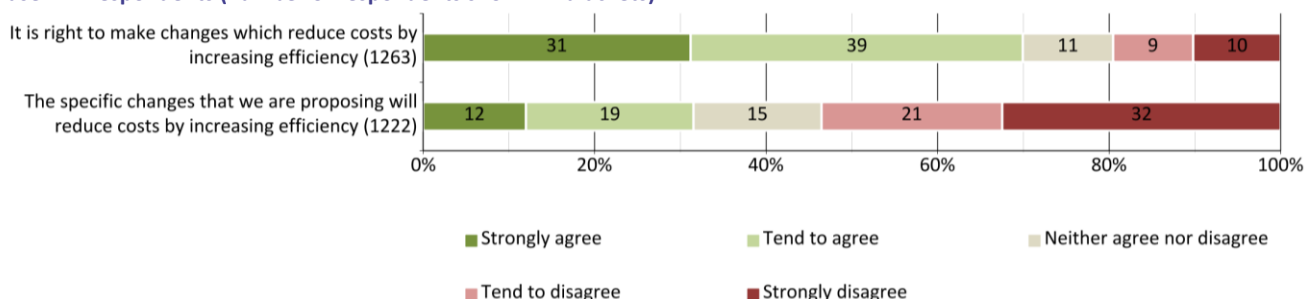
### Increasing Efficiency

*Do you agree or disagree that it is right to make changes that reduce costs by increasing efficiency?*

*Do you agree or disagree that the specific changes HFRS is proposing will reduce costs by increasing efficiency?*

- 136. 7 in 10 (70%) respondents agreed that it is right to make changes that reduce costs by increasing efficiency. One fifth (20%) disagreed.
- 137. However, more than half (54%) of respondents disagreed that the specific changes HFRS is proposing will reduce costs by increasing efficiency. Just less than a third (32%) agreed.

Base: All Respondents (number of respondents shown in brackets)



- 138. Those who disagreed were asked to illustrate their reasons why. The main themes that emerged, with some illustrative comments, are outlined below and overleaf (please note that many comments were reiterations of those reported above and have not been repeated here).

Comment	Total responses	% of respondents (Base: 629)
The proposals may improve response times, but will not increase efficiency (i.e. inadequate resources at scene/multiple vehicles will need to attend the same incident)	253	40
The proposals will risk lives and property and will lead to a less safe service	195	31
The proposals may reduce cost but will not increase efficiency	74	12
The proposals are driven by a need to make savings	70	11
The proposals are unworkable, will 'worsen' the Service and will not lead to increased efficiency	68	11
Generally disagree with the proposals/cuts	44	7

Comment	Total responses	% of respondents (Base: 629)
The proposals to reduce night-time cover will increase response times and decrease safety levels and efficiency	43	7
No evidence that the proposals will make financial savings	41	7
The consultation is biased/flawed/ loaded/misleading	32	5
The proposals will cost money to implement and thus will not increase efficiency	35	5
Savings/income should be found elsewhere (i.e. more government funding, managerial reductions, increased council tax precept)	29	5
The proposals will negatively affect Gosport	20	4
Expect a reduction in council tax if the proposals are ratified	10	2
Other comments – specific stations	50	7
Other	78	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,042</b>	

The proposals are unworkable, will 'worsen' the Service and will not lead to increased efficiency

*You're a fire and rescue service not a bank. It's not about 'efficiency' it's about your ability to protect the people you serve...*

*Large scale pumps being removed, wholetime firefighter numbers being cut and towns and cities being left without immediate cover at night is not safe. An efficient service has pumps to deal with anything (anytime) and wholetime firefighters that are able to respond in a minute (in a proper pump) in towns and cities, not five minutes or more if a van is called out first...*

The drive to increase efficiency (and reduce costs) will increase risk to public and firefighter safety - and money should not be an issue when considering fire and rescue services

*Running lean at low demand times may increase efficiency but if under-called once then the fire service could endanger life. I worry that this risk is being under-called to save money*

*How are you going to increase efficiency if there are less resources and personnel? Surely this will be putting public at more risk as firefighters will be further stretched*

*The fire service is not a business, it is an insurance policy. Lives will be put at risk under these proposals...these cuts are effectively placing a price on each human life.*

The proposals may reduce costs, but will not increase efficiency

*Although costs will be reduced through savings in wages from lost firefighter posts, efficiency will certainly not be improved. A prompt attendance may be seen as 'efficient' but if the number of staff and resources are less than this is definitely NOT more efficient*

*Once again the financial experts have mistakenly only considered the costs. They may be able to initially reduce the costs but the consequences will financially exceed the saving...*

*The changes will reduce cost but will not provide an effective fire service. When considering efficiency, effectiveness must be taken into account.*

The proposals may improve response times, but will not increase efficiency

*You'll claim response times have improved as the first vehicle to arrive will be a small, fast two-man FRV. But this vehicle will have to then wait for support from a real water tender (coming from further away as there'll be less of them) before being able to carry out a rescue, so increasing the time taken before a BA crew can be committed...*

*Efficiency in engineering is about the rate in which useful work is achieved. Your information seems to be about getting there as quickly as possible rather than actually doing something useful - this isn't efficient, it's called stopping the clock...*

*If the initial response you are sending is not sufficient to resolve the incident or does not meet the appropriate assets for the incident type, you may be sending more resources than the current arrangements. For example if an initial response is in a first response vehicle with a crew of two but the assets required dictate you need a minimum of four you may be mobilising the next nearest appliance with four giving a total of six where under current arrangements those four or possibly six would have been sent on the initial response. How can this be more efficient particularly when much of the county is covered by on-call staff who you pay on an as required basis?*

The proposals will cost money to implement and thus will not increase efficiency

*There is a fine line between being at the cutting edge of technology or trusting tried and tested equipment. Investing heavily in new appliances and tech seems to be counterintuitive to making savings*

*The replacement of larger engines will cost substantial sums of money and this by default is not efficiency in order to save money*

*It must be noted that where first or intermediate responses develop, and an incident is scaled up this could increase some overall operating cost compared to the response by a traditional engine which may have handled the incident on its own. So here the cost of two (or more) appliances has to be factored in.*

## A new model for Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service

*Working with our staff, we have reviewed how we provide services. The specific areas that we have identified for improvement include:*

- » *Reviewing the emergency response vehicles that we use in Hampshire*
- » *Implementing an Activity Based Crewing (ABC) model, based on the risk profile of each fire station*
- » *Creating a flexible crewing system to make sure we always have the right number of firefighters on duty*

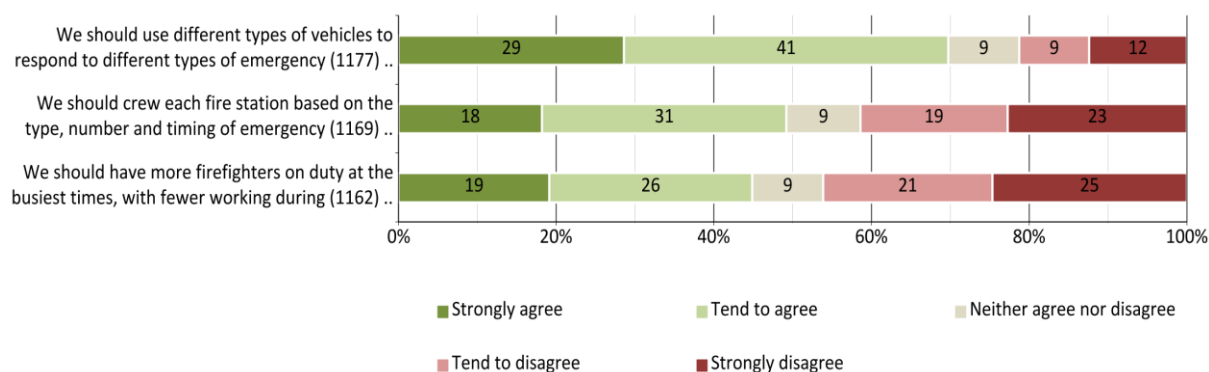
***Do you agree or disagree that HFRS should use different types of vehicles to respond to different types of emergency incidents?***

***Do you agree or disagree that HFRS should crew each fire station based on the type, number and timing of emergency incidents in each area?***

***Do you agree or disagree that HFRS should have more firefighters on duty at the busiest times, with fewer working during less busy periods?***

- 139. 7 in 10 respondents (70%) agreed that HFRS should use different types of vehicles to respond to different types of emergency incidents; around a fifth (21%) disagreed.
- 140. Almost half of respondents (49%) agreed that HFRS should crew each fire station based on the type, number and timing of emergency incidents in each area, with around two fifths (41%) disagreeing.
- 141. Similar proportions of respondents agreed (45%) and disagreed (46%) that HFRS should have more firefighters on duty at the busiest times, with fewer working during less busy periods.

**Base: All Respondents (number of respondents shown in brackets)**



- 142. Those who disagreed were asked to illustrate their reasons why. The main themes that emerged, with some illustrative comments, are outlined overleaf (please note that many comments were reiterations of those reported above and have not been repeated here).

Comment	Total responses	% of respondents (Base: 642)
Fire cover should not be reduced overnight because incidents are unpredictable and can happen at any time (and those that occur at night-time tend to be 'more serious')	494	77
Disagree with crewing reductions (adequate crew levels are needed at all times)	227	36
The information given and data/statistics used are inaccurate and unreliable - and predictions should not be made on the basis of past statistics	130	20
The proposed smaller vehicles will not carry enough or appropriate equipment/staff (especially if expected to attend incidents or standbys within station grounds with different risk profiles)	54	8
The proposals will increase response times	48	7
Disagree with using different types of vehicles	41	6
The proposals do not take sufficient account of future population growth	17	3
The consultation is biased/flawed/ loaded/misleading	12	2
The proposals are driven by a need to make savings	10	2
Not enough information given on proposals	6	1
Proposals will negatively affect Gosport	5	1
Other comments – specific stations	64	10
Other	228	36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,336</b>	

Fire cover should not be reduced overnight because incidents are unpredictable and can happen at any time (and those that occur at night-time tend to be 'more serious')

*No amount of prediction or modelling can fully predict risk, risk is an unpredictable factor and no matter how much we may look back and think we can draw a co-efficiency between past information and future trends, it cannot predict when accidents will happen. If we have less staff at certain times and there is an incident then life will be lost*

*Fire does not choose when to have a 'busy' or 'quiet' period. A computer generated model may well show an average 'quiet' period, based on statistics. However, the real thing does not take notice of computers or statistics*

*For any FRS to imply that data suggests a decrease in incidents at certain times is foolhardy and misleading as people still die in fires in the early hours of the morning than any other time*

*Fire deaths and injuries are highest at night. With less crews and longer response times, more people will die. Your plan will leave you responsible for these deaths. How is this a safer Hampshire?*

The proposed smaller vehicles will not carry sufficient or appropriate equipment and staff (especially if expected to attend incidents or standbys within station grounds with different risk profiles)

*Having limited capability on a vehicle greatly hampers the crew to how effective they can work. No incident is textbook, no piece of equipment on a standard appliance is unused*

*Fire engines are able to deal with a multitude of incidents and so changing vehicle types may mean response times are increased as an appropriate vehicle maybe further away*

*Appliances don't just respond to incidents on their own ground but regularly assist neighbouring stations. The neighbouring station may have very different risk profiles meaning that the second or third appliance on scene doesn't have the equipment to be effective.*

Mobilising different types of appliances successfully is dependent on accurate information being provided by control room staff

*Mobilising different appliances is all well and good if the information collated by control can be guaranteed at an accuracy of 100%. We all know this is an impossibility. Until crews arrive on scene there will be no definitive picture and it is incredibly naive to make claims about sending appropriate vehicles to the right jobs. Mistakes will be made and lives will be lost.*

The proposed changes have not sufficiently considered future population increases - and reduce HFRS's overall resilience.

*Reducing crew numbers is wholly unacceptable at a time when populations are growing*

*Again your assessment must consider the changing population (increasing and more immigrants)*

*You need to guarantee resilience and reducing fire crew numbers will not build in resilience. You do not have a crystal ball and therefore cannot predict what will happen, patterns are historical and no weight should be placed on them...*

- <sup>143.</sup> Furthermore, the following comment cautioned against over-relying on (and over-burdening) the on-call system:

*In the review, it appears that an assumption has been made that RDS will simply work the way that the review team want with clearly no understanding of how an RDS team works. The new levels assume that RDS employees will be available when required by the FRS and not when it is convenient to the employee. It is often forgotten that although important it is a second job...and this can drastically affect crewing. On top of that, removing so many resources and personnel from RDS teams*

*will mean that when there would have been a resource and personnel to provide, for example, relief crews...that will no longer exist and the crews will refuse to turn out. Personnel it appears have been seen as numbers rather than human beings...*

144. It should be noted that, although only those who disagreed with HFRS's proposals were asked to elaborate on their reasons why, some of those who agreed also chose to do so at this stage as follows:

*This is a well thought through consultation document with useful information and data. You should fast track the introduction of these proposals as quickly as possible*

*The proposals are very sensible and meet provide sufficient cover across the county to meet the assessed risk. I believe that if implemented they will leave us with a modern more responsive fire and rescue service*

*The presentation made to us clearly illustrated the need for changes, not only because of finance but also because of the studies of incidents in each area and the changing understanding of fire and rescue...*

*Seems a reasonable approach to match service availability with risk*

*I am a former fireman [and feel that] just because an appliance may be smaller than a large pump unit they can still do a good job at certain incidents, especially with the new CAF type units that can have the same extinguisher power as a full size pump. It is not logical to use a full size pump to put out a rubbish bin or similar fire.*

*It is right that resources are targeted according to the risk profile. Traditional fire vehicles mean traditional crewing arrangements and equipment. This is neither efficient nor cost effective*

*The current model is too expensive and too bloated, so a radical overhaul is required, including looking at the minimum response requirements and the need to have large numbers of staff doing very little*

*Basing the risk review on risk is how it should be, however flexibility should be given should the risk to areas change or the population/demographics. You're never going to please everyone. However, if you can deliver on the proposed it is apparent that you have thoroughly looked at all options*

*It is right that resources are targeted according to the risk profile. Traditional fire vehicles mean traditional crewing arrangements and equipment. This is not efficient or cost effective*

*I would strongly agree that small incidents do not require the turn-out of a full crew and tender. An immediate response vehicle equipped for small incidents will be more cost effective*

*The proposals for a range of vehicles based at Gosport make sense. Smaller vehicles can more easily access narrow streets with large numbers of parked vehicles*

*I do not disagree in principle as this is the model in use in France, Belgium and other European regions...*

*Changes to vehicles a good idea particularly in areas where access by conventional engines struggle*

*We welcome the proposal to deploy smaller vehicles in those areas where access can be limited to larger ERVS.*

145. There were also a couple of comments referring to 'scaremongering' by the unions and the media, which is causing a degree of 'panic' about the changes among the general public. Ensuring people are informed as soon as possible about the capability of the new vehicles would, it was felt, alleviate this to a degree:

*Most members of public want chief officers to adapt to the new, safer world. The unions don't speak for Hampshire residents. Too much scaremongering by unions.*

*I think you need to make the general public much more aware of exactly what the changes will mean and what the capability of the new vehicles will be... There's a lot of scare mongering about fire engines being replaced at every station by vans with two firefighters on board unable to do anything at a fire. People are making judgements on things they don't understand by listening to scare stories whipped up by the media.*

## Proposals for each fire station

*We have a total of 51 fire stations serving a population of 1.8 million people. The document sets out our plans for each fire station, showing:*

» *The population served and the number and type of incidents that the station responded to in 2013-14*

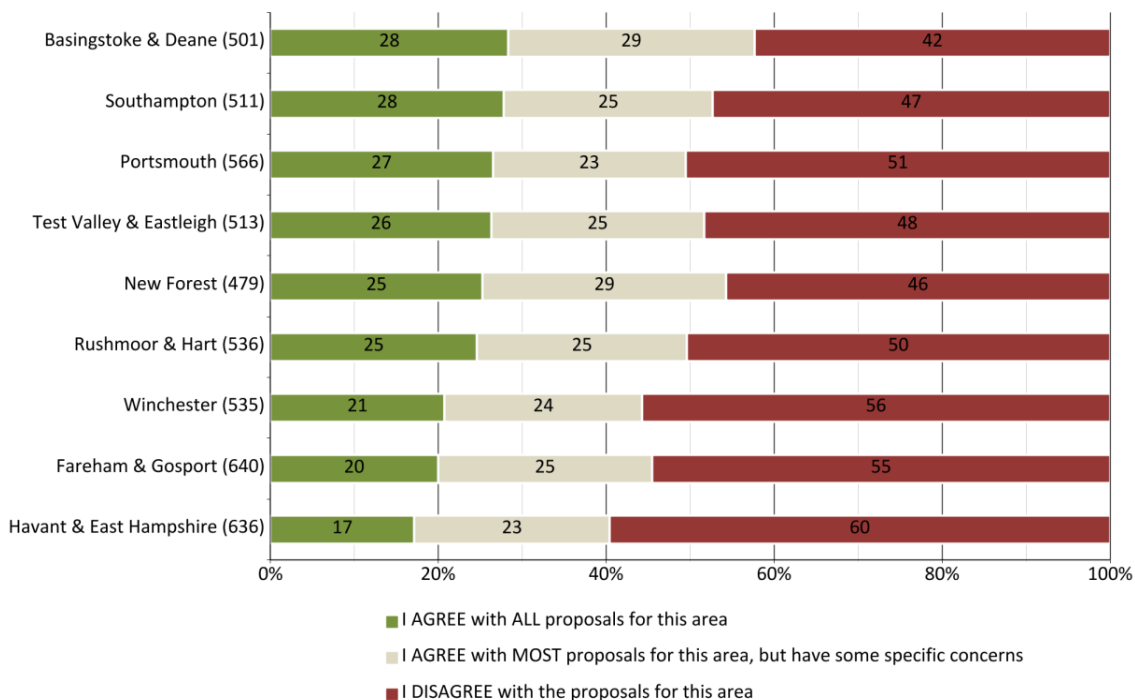
» *The current number of vehicles, firefighters, crewing system and response times*

» *The proposed number of vehicles of each type, firefighters, crewing system and response times*

***What are your views about the proposals for the fire stations in each of the areas we serve?***

146. When asked about the proposals for the fire stations in each of the areas HFRS serves, an absolute majority (more than half of respondents) agreed with all or most for four of the nine areas listed below. The highest level of support was shown for the proposed station changes in Basingstoke & Deane, with almost three fifths (57%) supporting all or most.
147. However, an absolute majority disagreed with the proposals for another four of the areas – and opinion was equally split in the remaining case. The largest opposition was to the Havant & East Hampshire proposals: three fifths (60%) of respondents disagreed with these.

Base: All Respondents (number of respondents shown in brackets)



### Options for Four Stations

We are considering two options for four of our 51 fire stations: **Havant, Gosport, Winchester and Andover**.

**Daytime cover** at each of the four fire stations would be the same under both options, provided by immediate response firefighters supported by on-call firefighters.

**Night-time cover** at each of the four fire stations would differ under option 1 and option 2:

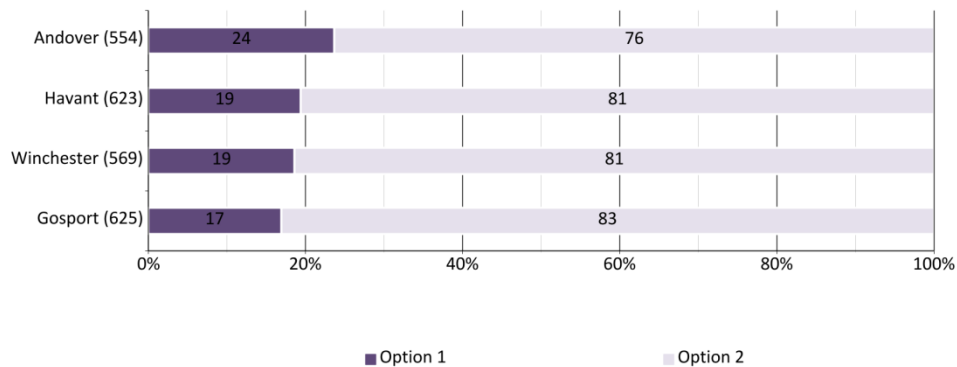
» **Option 1:** Night-time cover at Havant, Gosport and Winchester would be provided by on-call firefighters with **NO** immediate response firefighters. Night-time cover at Andover would be the same as during the day with on-call support.

» **Option 2:** Night-time cover at all four fire stations will be provided by on-call firefighters with **TWO** immediate response firefighters.

**For each of these fire stations, would you prefer option 1 or option 2?**

148. As the chart below shows, there was overwhelming support for Option 2 in Andover (76% support), Gosport, Havant and Winchester (with over 80% support in each case).

Base: All Respondents (number of respondents shown in brackets)



149. In Gosport, Havant and Winchester, Option 1 was for retained cover at night, while Option 2 was for a core-crew of two wholetime firefighters to be on the three stations overnight. In this context, it is unsurprising that the questionnaire found overwhelming support for Option 2.
150. However, in **Andover**, Option 1 is for a combination of seven wholetime and 13 on-call firefighters to be on duty overnight, while Option 2 is for only two wholetime crew to be on duty with 13 on-call at night. Because (in this context) the 76% support for Option 2 is counter-intuitive, we conclude that respondents misunderstood the Andover options and (wrongly) assumed they matched the Gosport, Havant and Winchester options. This is borne out by the findings from the public and stakeholder forums, where the options were carefully explained – leading people to support Option 1 in Andover. The first quotation below also appears to support this conclusion - as do the many comments around the need for ‘full-time cover 24-hours a day’ in recognition of Andover’s large geographical coverage, isolated location, largely on-call back-up and increasing number of night-time calls:

*Andover, Gosport, Havant and Winchester...I think it is important they have basic immediate cover at night rather than simply on-call staff, hence my choice for Option 2 in all cases.*

*It is on the very edge of the county so should be maintaining full-time cover 24 hours a day as the next potential appliance will be a significant distance away*

*Andover is isolated and surrounded by on-call support; there is little immediate response in that part of the county*

*Stations around us cannot crew and this includes over the border*

*It is the largest fire ground in Hampshire and therefore has slow response times currently due to the distance. It is surrounded on all sides by retained stations which cannot guarantee their cover. The population is constantly growing...*

*Andover Fire Station has the largest fire ground in Hampshire. Although it is a rural area, Andover itself is growing quickly and is surrounded by Retained Fire stations many of which struggle to crew... The nearest guaranteed fire engine is over 20 miles away in Basingstoke....*

*Calls are increasing; we attend just as many critical incidents at night as we do in core hours.*

151. As for the other three stations, **Gosport Fire Station** was mentioned particularly frequently in the context of the two night-time cover options, with many respondents demanding the provision of at least four full-time firefighters at night there:

*For Gosport I do not approve of Options 1 or 2. There must be a minimum of four firefighters on immediate duty at all times...*

*I strongly support the alternative Option 3 put forward by serving Gosport fire officers at the Gosport Public Meeting, namely, that a minimum of four full-time firemen should be on duty at Gosport 24/7 capable of responding to all incidents including house fires without any increase in response times*

*Gosport needs a 24-hour manned fire service with it being a peninsula with poor road access in/out of it and the increase of people living in Gosport...*

*Nothing less than four immediate response firefighters will adequately cover the Gosport area at night.*

Participants' main justifications for having a higher level of night-time cover for Gosport were that: the area is vulnerable area due to its population density and deprivation; there is poor access on and off the peninsula due to the difficult road system; and many significant hazards exist there. Some of the many typical comments were:

*Gosport is being treated like a backwater although it is a fast growing town*

*I would reiterate my point about ensuring that communities most disadvantaged should be properly and effectively provided for i.e. don't pull resources from Havant and Gosport*

*Statistics alone are not sufficient to make a decision on changes. Physical location and idiosyncrasies of an area are also important i.e. road congestion, access to the town, sites of concern such as ammunition depots, many MOD sites which are at high threat of terrorist attack. Has this been factored into the statistics of likely risk?*

*We in Gosport pay for and expect 24-hour cover. We are the most densely populated borough on the south coast and have the oil fuel depot and armament depot to contend with. Any vehicle, even under blue lights, tend to get held up on the A32 so creating a bigger response time for any call outs*

*During the public consultation Gosport was deemed as worthy of a rural response. How? Ammunition depot, Fleetlands, industrial estates, HMS Sultan, Daedalus site, oil fuel depot and jetty, increasing housing, some of the worst roads in Hampshire...*

*Gosport has a number of very high risk MOD establishments and aircraft related organisations. Any incident in these establishments has to be responded to in a time factored manner with the correct level of resources...*

*Gosport is a unique situation. High risk fuel and explosive facilities making it a possible target for terrorism. One bomb planted between Fareham and Gosport would block support crews and vehicles entering the peninsula...while others would target the facilities*

*Gosport doesn't have a good clear road into it/out of it and very, very often has long tail backs making it very difficult to get in or out. Roads are in poor condition and aren't often passable. Gosport needs its own fire service due to it being peninsula...*

*In Gosport we have vulnerable areas and people, an elderly population, deprived areas and military bases*

*As a resident of Gosport, I believe that the minimum requirement for night cover is an appliance with four firefighters. The size of the town, the density of housing in the borough, the existence of MOD, armaments and fuel depots...*

*Due to the geographical location, the specific risks, the high level of deprivation and the fact that RDS cover is not guaranteed, I believe Gosport fire station warrants a 24-hour WDS first response of at least a crew of four to enable entry to a property to save life.*

152. Furthermore, both **Havant** and **Winchester Fire Stations** were thought to require similar levels of night-time cover as those proposed above for Gosport. The former's station ground was described as 'disparate', 'deprived' and 'disadvantaged', and it was said that future development and population growth will increase demand there. Further, Havant's emergency calls have apparently increased since the introduction of Automatic Vehicle Location Systems (AVLS), and there was a sense that the proposals to reduce night-time cover do not consider the important immediate response back up the station provides to neighbouring on-call stations:

*Why would provision be taken away from Havant and Gosport, two of our most disadvantaged areas...with all the associated issues?*

*Leave Havant as it is to support a deprived area that won't fill in a survey to say you are wrong*

*Havant fire station covers a very disparate area which includes high rise flats, industrial units, rural areas and it supports West Sussex...*

*No reduction in firefighters or equipment available should be considered, especially considering the enormous housing targets in Havant borough over the next few years...*

*Havant's call rate has increased by over 50% because of AVLS...this means they are attending more incidents not only in Havant but also further afield, which in turn is taking them away from the Havant area...*

*Havant is next nearest the Hampshire border along with RDS Emsworth. Wholetime cover day and night is very much a concern due to the area covered by both of these stations, Emsworth works over-the-border up to Bosham with Havant as a back up to them...losing Havant's night crewing leaves Emsworth waiting for another team to arrive with the correct equipment from Cosham if available...*

153. As for Winchester, the retention of full night-time cover was considered necessary on the grounds of the area's many risks (including heritage risks) and large population – and that on-call availability there is poor:

*The population, the history, the prison, cathedral, M3...*

*We cannot leave Winchester with a delayed response. I agree that the call volume is low, but the historic risk there is huge and requires an immediate response. We need to look at a crewing model that supports 24/7 crewing and meets the savings required...*

*How can you possibly say there is no risk in a city with a national heritage cathedral, prison, hospital and university?*

*This is a station that, apart from serving a densely-built and fire-prone historic city; must surely be a key location for dealing with RTAs on the M3 and A34.*

*I live in a village near Winchester and am well aware of the number of thatched houses in the area, as well as the main roads running through this area - the A34 & the M3. I do not see how the reduced number of firefighters and the smaller vehicles can cope with complex road accidents and rapidly burning thatched properties...*

*Winchester has a lot of very old buildings of heritage value. I am concerned the proposal does not take account of this additional risk of fire spread due to the construction methods in the city and surrounding areas*

*Winchester has 120,000 residents and you will not give it immediate response. Criminal*

*Winchester has a retained system that is broken and won't be fixed for a long time....if at all!! There will be no cover during the evening hours, so appliances will travel from Eastleigh, Alresford or Sutton Scotney.*

154. It should be noted here that many respondents felt unable to choose either option for this question (and considered it unfair that they were 'forced' by the questionnaire to do so) due to their preference for full 24/7 cover at their local fire station, as illustrated by the many following comments:

*The question does not give the option to disagree with Option 1 or Option 2; this is not a fair survey*

*Some questions in the survey are designed to get a certain response which can be presented in a way to support the proposals. In particular the question which asks would you prefer Option 1 or 2 or don't know. It doesn't give the option to answer 'neither'*

*For most of the county the proposals seem okay. However the proposals for Havant, Winchester, Andover and especially Gosport...are potentially fatally flawed. It reduces critical cover at night where there is a need for it*

*I have had to put "don't know" because unfairly you have not given an option to keep as is - so you are leading me to give an answer of which I disagree with what you are doing...*

*All stations mentioned should have full cover 24 hours a day with the ability to immediately crew an enhanced vehicle. Part-time cover is unreliable and slower. Crewing a station with two at night will not allow them to make entry into a building on fire and increases the risk to public and crews*

*I believe that both options are dangerous and put the lives of the public at risk. Surely the risks at night are as bad, if not worse? However, the cover at these stations will be a lot less. I think these proposals are potentially dangerous*

*Asking to choose the lesser of two evils can't under any circumstances be considered to be 'choice' and is not consultation. Movement between Fareham and Gosport, Cosham and Southsea and Winchester and Andover is problematic at the best of times and can very easily escalate from simply damage into a life and death issue. To try and cover one location from the other is asking for trouble.*

155. Those who had specific concerns about other fire stations were also asked to illustrate these – and the main themes that emerged are outlined below and overleaf. Please note that while the fire stations are reported in alphabetical order, the most frequently mentioned (in addition to Andover, Gosport, Havant and Winchester) were Emsworth and Fleet – and the views reported below were most often used as justification to request at least the 'status quo' locally in terms of appliances and crew numbers:

**Alton** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider Alton Fire Station's large geographical coverage and future population growth

*Alton fire service covers one hundred square miles*

*With the ever increasing population of Alton and the proposed building of further houses I do not think the proposal to cut the fire service in this area a responsible action.*

**Beaulieu** – could be closed

*I think the Beaulieu station should be closed. It is very lightly loaded and is only there to satisfy, historically, the political demand of Beaulieu Manor. The work can be covered by the station at Hardley.*

**Bordon** - the proposals do not sufficiently consider future development and population growth in the area

*There are plans to massively increase the housing in the area - has this been taken into account in the plans?*

*I am concerned that your proposals do not seem to take into consideration the increase in population as a result of developments in Bordon...*

**Botley** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider future development and population growth in the area

*We are very grateful for the services provided by the Botley station. Has the fact that there is to be a considerable amount of development in southern Hampshire been taken into account? Large housing estates...4,000 new homes*

*The Parish Council wishes to see a level of service retained at Botley Fire Station which is comparable with the level proposed for Wickham Fire Station which is serving a much smaller community. Namely a vehicle with Intermediate response capability manned by a crewing model of ABC Level 4*

*There is a large population in this area and it is growing all the time! Another 1600 houses being built just down the road and hundreds more in Borley Green!*

*The consultation appears to take no account of the level of housing development proposed in and around Botley during the next five to eight years which will increase traffic congestion during peak times.*

**Emsworth** - increased 'effective' response times

*Emsworth fire station will see a reduced service. Although it will be able to respond to emergencies, it will not be able to provide a full emergency response meaning that it will require back up from a larger appliance which will cause a delay*

*If a vehicle has to come from Havant to Emsworth the response time could be longer*

*We are concerned to learn that the vehicle proposed for Emsworth fire station will be smaller than that currently retained and that there will be routinely be insufficient firefighters to enable a person in a burning building to be rescued*

*If Emsworth does not have a fully stocked fire engine we would have to wait for one to come from another station and that would cost lives. Seeing a small green van arrive would not inspire confidence*

*The loss of a fully functional fire engine in the Emsworth area cannot be safer when it is replaced with a lesser capable appliance*

**Emsworth** – the proposals will jeopardise (profitable) fire cover for West Sussex

*Emsworth fire station serves the west part of West Sussex, all the way to Fishbourne. As we have lost the Bosham fire station you are leaving a large area with not enough personnel and no fire engine. Borders should not be a reason for inadequate safety. Please do not reduce the Emsworth fire station staffing or equipment*

*I am a resident in Emsworth on the boundary of West Sussex and I am concerned that the cuts to the fire service in Emsworth will significantly reduce the service that is provided in my area. It is well documented that Emsworth fire service responds to incidents in West Sussex and this has not been thought about in the reductions that are being proposed*

*It appears that since the closure of Bosham Fire Station, the service currently provided by West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service relies on cross-purchase from Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service and its fire station in Emsworth. The Parish Council is concerned that if cross-purchase continues to exist with Hampshire, the Parish of Westbourne may receive an inferior response in terms of the appropriate vehicle attending an incident within the appropriate time frame*

*The reduction to a first response vehicle in Emsworth is totally inappropriate. The rural area it covers in Hampshire and West Sussex means any major incident would have to wait for a response from Chichester or Cosham. Havant is also being reduced therefore a massive gap is left for which we in the Emsworth area will suffer. We will not get the service we want or deserve*

*Emsworth fire station is proposed to be cut although not only does it provide cover for Hampshire but also important cover for the West Sussex region... This is an important fire station to keep in working order as it provides help and safety to a lot more than just the 26,000 population than stated in the sheet. And it recovers £13,000 a year from assisting in West Sussex meaning you must only need to save £15,000 a year to cover the same cost.*

**Fleet** - increased 'effective' response times

*I live in Fleet. To claim to improve response times by downgrading the emergency vehicle and only dispatching two firefighters is playing loose with words. The overall quality of service will reduce and the risk in any incident will increase as two firefighters cannot safely cope with high risk incidents*

*A rapid response requires enough men and equipment to effectively immediately deal with an incident. To find you need a larger appliance is not an increased response time with reduced risk. The idea to reduce the Fleet service is ridiculous...*

*Response times are important but only if there are enough crew and suitable equipment to tackle the particular incident...*

*While for the Hart area the proposed changes may result in an improved response time, if the equipment in Fleet in particular is of a reduced capability than present, these changes will result in a decreased capability to deal with critical incidents... Fleet has a large number of non-critical incidents and so does need a fast response vehicle but this is unlikely to have sufficient manpower to deal with critical incidents for which there would be dependence on vehicles with greater capability from adjoining areas. For this reason, Fleet should have, at the very least, an intermediate vehicle which would enable a faster response time with sufficient staff and equipment to permit action to be taken once the vehicle reaches the scene...*

**Fleet** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider future development, population growth and the area's ageing population (which is increasingly being housed in high-rise accommodation)

*Fleet, with a large and growing population, with retired accommodation premises and new developments underway with buildings being three stories high and higher...I am given to understand that the reduced vehicle capability will only be able to cope with fires on the first floor...*

*You appear to have entirely overlooked the population of 41,960 in Fleet and the number of critical and non-critical incidents in the past which anywhere else would justify a second appliance*

*I strongly disagree with the proposals for Fleet fire station. I do not believe that a first response vehicle is adequate to cover the main settlement in Hart district, Fleet and Church Crookham, with a population of almost 42,000....*

*Fleet has a growing population of elderly and many live in high rise retirement homes. Without an immediate response vehicle with a ladder you may well be putting lives at risk.*

**Fleet** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider local risks

*Church Crookham is beneath the flight path of Farnborough [and] there is an oil pipeline running through Church Crookham. There are two new schools...because of the large amount of development currently taking place in Fleet, Church Crookham, Crookham Village and the potential for another 900 plus dwellings for Crookham Village alone*

*There is no mention of Fleet and Church Crookham being the main settlement area for the district, surrounded to the north and east by European designated special protection area (SPA) heathland and woodland and other protected ecological sites...*

*Fleet has several estates with two and three storey congested housing. It also has heathland, a nearby motorway, a fuel pipe in the Church Crookham area, it is under the Farnborough airport flight path and close to the RAF Odiham helicopter radar approach lanes. It therefore doesn't make sense to reduce the level of fire cover*

*The area has the Basingstoke Canal running through it and some dwellings are beneath its banks. Church Crookham is also under the flight path of Farnborough Airport and Odiham RAF Base out of which fly chinooks often carrying very heavy loads suspended beneath. No mention has been made of the pipeline which runs beneath parts of Church Crookham...*

**Fleet** – other areas, with fewer critical incidents and lower population numbers, have higher specification vehicles

*Your statistical basis for allocation of equipment is illogical as far as Fleet is concerned. The proposed first response vehicle is not sufficient and, considering the number of districts with significantly fewer critical incidents, is a nonsensical placement...*

*I live in Fleet and cannot understand why with its population and local environment why it reduces from a full fire engine to only an immediate response vehicle whereas in smaller population areas with less critical fires intermediate vehicles are being recommended. The relationship between population, critical fire history and type of vehicle appears to defy logic...*

*I am concerned that Fleet, population 42,000, will reduce to a first response vehicle while Hartley Wintney, population 7,700, and Odiham, population 19,000, will have higher class vehicles*

*Fleet is my local station and the numbers don't make sense. More calls, false alarms and mainly more critical calls than all surrounding stations, and yet they've been allocated the lowest tier of vehicle?*

**Grayshott** - RDS recruitment issues

*The fire service at Grayshott has been adversely affected by the failure to recruit to the numbers of staff required to deliver the intended level of service. The proposed level of service, whilst based on a lower number of personnel, is likely to suffer the same recruitment problems...thus the viability of the proposals for Grayshott is vulnerable to this difficulty...*

**Grayshott** – could be closed

*I think that Grayshott station should be closed. Its very light workload can be satisfied by Liphook and Haslemere stations.*

**Hamble** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider Hamble's difficult location and future population growth

*The Hamble station is on a peninsula with an already overcrowded B-road as the only way in or out. There are already active...plans to build substantial numbers of houses along this road boundary. That alone will increase the potential risk and reduce the opportunities for bringing in larger appliances.*

**Hamble** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider local risks

*Hamble Fire Station may look like it can be reduced, however it is next to the BP oil terminal, and needs to maintain the ability to cope with a major incident*

*Hamble is a highly industrial area, with BP next door to them and one of the busiest B roads in the country.*

**Hightown** - the proposals do not sufficiently consider local risks (including the number of high-rise buildings and deprived communities in the area) and the station's large geographical coverage

*There are a large amount of high rises and socio economic groups with higher risk profiles in this area*

*The borough has many high risk sites (BP Hamble, the airport, two motorways, rail industry and terrace housing where fire can spread quickly)*

*Surrounded by high rise, covers Hamble and BP, direct access to M27, covers large station ground etc.*

**Hightown** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider the important immediate response back up Hightown Fire Station provides to neighbouring on-call stations

*Potential cuts could see places like Warsash and Hamble without cover.*

*It backs up surrounding stations, including part-time stations...*

**Kingsclere** - the proposals do not sufficiently consider local risks and cross-border assistance

*It states in the proposal that Kingsclere deal with a lot of thatch and agricultural fires yet there will be only the smallest of vehicles there and very little crew. That will not be sufficient to cope with a thatch fire!*

*My concern is that the proposal for Kingsclere Station seems to ignore the frequent RTCs which occur in the area and the fact that there are many requests to assist Royal Berkshire F&RS.*

**Kingsclere** – other areas, with fewer incidents, smaller fire grounds and lower population numbers, have higher specification vehicles

*Why is Kingsclere being reduced to the smallest vehicle? It...has a larger area of responsibility, has nearly treble the population of Overton, double the amount of fire calls, has busier roads which have had an increase of RTC's in recent years, has a national as well as international importance in the form of Highclere Castle...*

**New Alresford** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider New Alresford Fire Station's large geographical coverage

*I don't agree with cutting services in New Alresford. It is a central resource to surrounding villages and Alresford town itself. If there was a RTA on the A31 between Alton and Winchester, or a serious fire in a rural location such as Gundleton, the Candovers or Bishops Sutton, a fire service in New Alresford would be vital*

*A fire station in New Alresford provides for a considerable hinterland surrounding it...*

**Portchester** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider future development and population growth in the area

*Not to have a full blown fire engine is absurd. Also, reducing the personnel there is unthinkable with extra housing being built all around Portchester.*

**Romsey** – the proposals do not consider local risks, future development and population growth

*Romsey station covers a historic event town, the abbey, Mottisfont and many other significant buildings as well as the second most dangerous road in England, the A36*

*There are a lot of thatched properties, a tyre dump, a fireworks factory and many heritage sites and three waste recycling centres*

*Over the next ten years Romsey will grow by 25%...*

*Reduction in cover for Romsey at a time the town is growing does not make sense.*

**Rushmoor** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider Rushmoor Fire Station’s largely on-call back-up (and the important immediate response back up it provides to neighbouring on-call stations)

*They are surrounded by retained stations such as Odiham, Hartley Witney, Yateley and Fleet which struggle to stay on the run*

*You cannot seriously be considering reducing full-time staffing at Rushmoor. I am in the Yateley area; an excellent retained crew who need the back-up of the full-time crew Rushmoor as the next nearest stations (Hartley Wintney, Crowthorne etc.) are also retained.*

**Rushmoor** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider the area’s growing population and local risks (including the large non-English speaking community)

*We believe there has been insufficient consideration to the increase in population of Aldershot...*

*I am far from convinced that HFRS has taken into account the significant increase (10,000+) in the number of elderly immigrants from Asia whose English is limited and with very little education with respect to fire prevention*

*Incidents at the specific risk locations covered by the station (Farnborough Airfield and Aldershot Army Garrison) could occur at any time...and given the nature of the hazardous materials at these sites may require more than one enhanced vehicle to attend*

*The borough of Rushmoor is expanding with the redevelopment of the former Army barracks into a mini town and then there are the expansions of commercial parks on the Rushmoor and Hart boundaries and an increase in traffic on both the M3 and the associated road networks. Have these been taken into consideration?*

**Southsea** – reductions are disproportionate to risk, population and incident levels

*Southsea is Hampshire's busiest station. You want to reduce appliances to less than Basingstoke and the same as one of the options at Gosport which only has a fraction of the number of incidents. You want to make the biggest cuts at Southsea & leave the area with totally inadequate cover...*

*I feel that the Southsea station is being hit with a larger reduction in man and equipment power despite the figures showing they respond to a greater number of calls than any of the other stations. Granted Cosham station is not too far away, however with a gridlocked city as tends to happen this may not be enough*

*It is ridiculous to make the largest cuts, in percentage terms against population, incidents and risk, to the Southsea cover. This is the area with the highest risk, highest population and greatest access difficulties for assistance sent from other areas, yet it is taking a disproportionate reduction in cover.*

**Southsea** – the Portsmouth area is vulnerable due to its population density, the prevalence of high-rise buildings and local hazards such as old housing stock, the naval dockyard and the city's 'island status'

*I live in the most crowded city in the UK, making any cuts to manpower and equipment in this city could lead to disaster. You should be adding staff and equipment, not cutting it*

*At present there are five full-size engines in Portsmouth and about double that number in the surrounding area. The proposals reduce that number to two in Portsmouth and four in the surrounding area. This is totally inadequate to deal with a major incident in a densely populated city with many tower*

*My concern is solely with Portsmouth and the ability to rescue people from multi-occupation buildings that are greater than five floors of which there are a large number. Portsmouth, I believe, has the most population per square metre than anywhere else in the Hampshire Fire & Rescue area and most of these occupy multi-storey buildings*

*The population density, much in high-rise accommodation, and island status of Portsmouth combined with special risks associated with a port appear not to be adequately addressed in the proposals*

*Portsmouth/Southsea covers the naval dockyard, reducing their cover will significantly increase risk to the whole area. If a ship goes up, it's likely to take the whole area with it...*

*With a reduced capacity to deal with major incidents in Southsea, increased reliance on cover from Cosham and outside, the City will be more susceptible to the frequent problems with traffic on and off of the island*

*Portsmouth has by far the highest risk, and oldest, housing stock in the county.*

**Sutton Scotney** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider local risks or the large geographical area covered by the fire station

*There is heritage risk and traffic risk in the area*

*The station is a rural station, on a large station ground, with a higher than average number of RTC incidents. It should not have a First Response Vehicle*

**Totton** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider local risks or the area’s large population

*With a population now exceeding 30,000, Totton and Eling is the largest town in the New Forest district and something like the twelfth largest in Hampshire. In addition to the resident population there is Totton's busy commercial heart, numerous educational establishments and residential care homes, and a number of thriving industrial estates. To this list should be added the risks presented by our local transport infrastructure such as the busy railway line between Weymouth and the capital, several A-class highways and of course the nearby M27 motorway, which, together with the waterside railway line, accommodates a constant stream of hazardous goods in transit... Totton is a crossroads for all sorts of risks which require prompt intervention from our local fire station when emergencies arise. I am hopeful that these factors, together with availability statistics of enhanced response appliances based at Redbridge Hill and Lyndhurst fire stations, will be very carefully analysed before reducing the capability of the fire appliance currently based at Totton.*

**Yateley** – the proposals do not sufficiently consider local risks (such as heathland areas, which require a larger appliance)

*Large areas covered by Yateley fire station are heathland...and when alight heath requires a longer period of damping down...the larger vehicle available at present means more water can be carried and, despite this, help has been required from neighbouring services due to the wide area fires can cover...*

*My concern for the proposal to reduce the size of the machine based in the town and the crew sizes is that we have had some sizeable fires in this area in recent times, including extensive fires on the common close to housing. If our small appliance can't cope it can take 15 - 20 minutes for crews from Rushmoor or Basingstoke to reach us...*

## Alternative Suggestions

156. In addition to the alternative proposals outlined above in relation to Andover, Gosport, Havant and Winchester Fire Stations and the many comments made by respondents wishing to maintain current fire and rescue resources across Hampshire, the following specific suggestions were made by questionnaire respondents:

### General Suggestions

*I think having smaller appliances to operate in congested towns and cities is a good step forward. I do however feel that **any vehicle deployed should have a minimum of four personnel on board** to deal with potential incidents otherwise you negate any advantages of introducing them*

*All **single pump stations** should have **at least an intermediate vehicle**, not the smaller first response vehicle*

*In the case of the **smaller towns and villages**, where there is only one appliance to respond to all incidents, then this vehicle should be a **fire engine carrying all types of equipment for all types of incidents***

***Some fire stations** appear to deal with one incident a month or less. **Should they be closed** to provide an adequate service where it is really needed?*

*There doesn't appear to be any mention of the **outdated shift system in operation**. Why is this not being targeted as a way to improve cost effectiveness?*

*The proposed shift system of 12 hour days would be horrendous... **Other day crew models should be considered**, such as the old Waterlooville model, or the old day crewed model. These are much more family friendly and would actually cost less than the current proposal... Why not find a family friendly solution and talk to the staff about it?*

*Consider **closing some stations** where a response can be obtained from a full time station just as quick. **Use full-time staff more effectively to standby instead of calling in on-call staff** and therefore saving money, even if it would take a little longer to get to the station*

*You should be looking to **amalgamate fire stations that are close together** and be **using the fully manned stations more efficiently** i.e. sending them to neighbouring stations for non-critical calls. This, in my opinion, would be more cost effective*

*Why not **centralise or base all three emergency services on one site**, as in USA/Canada/Australia. Rural areas like Fordingbridge and Ringwood would benefit from this*

*Why can't we **merge the emergency services** as the French have done very successfully over many years?*

***Amalgamation of the rescue services such as fire, ambulance, coast guard**. This would reduce overall costs and free up some properties for sale to plough back into the combined services*

***Combine with another service***

***Merge with surrounding counties** and reduce central core charges*

***Integrate control rooms** with other fire service or combine with police/ambulance*

*Operating on a regional basis just leads to too many organisational layers. You should consider having a **combined emergency call centre for fire, police & ambulance...** We need a **national fire service** and far less empire building!*

*If you were **centrally organised**, you could make significant cost cuts and probably improve efficiency. I genuinely believe that you are not really short of funds. You just need to take a far more radical approach*

*A **review of the number and types of crews and vehicles deployed to incidents** should be carried out. There are frequently occasions when HFRS unnecessarily over-resources calls. There is a cost implication for crews and vehicles being turned out and not required which should also be addressed. As 70% of HFRS costs are staff related, an investigation is required to ascertain where unnecessary or over-staffing is prevalent; for example, **do HFRS require several staff and supervisors in the control room, particularly overnight when there is such low call volume?** Does HFRS actually need its own control room? Could a **shared control with the police** be a better use of limited funding?*

*How much money could be saved by **reducing the top level of management?***

*In terms of efficiencies, **senior management can be cut** and the general public would not notice a bit of difference!*

*The fire service needs to change. Hampshire is very top heavy and I feel that we should be looking to make more cuts in the officer section of the service. If we look at other fire and rescue services our officer structure is huge. Maybe if we **cut down on the number of station managers and group managers** we would have more money to spend on front line services*

*I think the better way to deal with the savings required would be to tell each group manager what their current spend is and then break that down for each station. Then tell them the savings that they need to make to cover the deficit, then **leave it to the station personnel to work out where the savings can be made, pitch the proposal to the group manager and back into the risk review.** If stations have ownership of the plan, they will ensure that it works; all will buy in to it and feel valued*

*Could there be **fewer areas and does every station need its own leader?***

*Have you considered reducing staff numbers further, especially at night, by having a number of **emergency on-call staff**. These staff would not be paid on call wages and would only be used in an emergency/overload situation and when used could be paid a supplement. In this way contracted staff could be reduced for most of the time and supplemented when contracted staff are overloaded or real emergency situations arise. Whilst emergency response*

*times may be longer the extra staff could be called upon from a wider geographic area*

*How about having a **first responder programme**? Volunteers could respond to smaller incidents and assist or give some indications of the seriousness. It may mean no response at all if it turns out to be a waste paper basket on fire that is easily extinguished*

*Has any thought been given to provide two proposals which can go to the politicians for final approval. One option where the **total savings may not be made but there will still be enough resilience** in the service to deal with a wide range of incidents. The second option would be to present a plan where **all the savings are made, but there may not be as much resilience** in the system than what there was before...*

#### Basingstoke Fire Station

*I do not agree with the three-way crewing system at Basingstoke with the RSV, ALP and small fires vehicle. Each of those appliances have specialist resources that are needed in different situations... I would like you to **reconsider reducing the personnel at Basingstoke so they are able to crew all their appliances each with a dedicated crew...***

#### Botley Fire Station

*[We wish] to see a level of service retained at Botley Fire Station which is comparable with the level proposed for Wickham Fire Station which is serving a much smaller community. Namely a vehicle with **intermediate response capability** manned by a crewing model of ABC Level 4.*

#### Cosham Fire Station

*Have **two enhanced vehicles rather than one enhanced and one intermediate**. This will ensure that when the special appliance responds from that station with one of the enhanced appliances, there is still an enhanced appliance capability...*

#### Eastleigh Fire Station

*Why are you still wasting millions of pounds building large fire stations when all they are effectively are garages? You could use **industrial buildings which are cheap and easy to convert**. Why are you keeping the **Eastleigh** fire station site? The **accommodation could be moved to your headquarters site and the land sold...***

### Emsworth Fire Station

*I live in Emsworth and looking at the population size, number of incidents and proximity to the A27, it seems that an **intermediate response vehicle would be more appropriate** (many similar comments were made).*

### Fleet Fire Station

*My understanding is that the local fire-crew in Fleet are asking for an **intermediate vehicle**... I do hope that request will be taken very seriously .*

### Havant Fire Station

*I believe the proposal for Havant should be put on hold and a **full review of 12 months' worth of stats from AVLS** taken into account*

*Keep a **full complement of WDS personnel at night but have one WDS vehicle at Cosham overnight** - this will result in improved response times for the same money...*

*Havant could **provide an immediate response to a wider area**. The savings, though not so great could come from a **reduction across the service in on call firefighters**. This would also have the potential to reduce the impact of possibly losing over 100 full time firefighters.*

### Hayling Island Fire Station

*Hayling Island...has to be self-sufficient. It needs more than the 2,000 litres of water that one engine has. We need to **keep two larger appliances and get one new smaller one. We also need a larger pool of retained firemen**. You would not be able to handle two fires on the island on a day when traffic is blocked on the access road.*

### Kingsclere Fire Station

*Would prefer to see **at least an intermediate capability** vehicle at Kingsclere, an important station for West Berkshire fire and rescue cover*

*Kingsclere...would be best suited to have an **intermediate capability** allowing the vehicle to work independently over-the-border. It would best suit Overton to have the FRC as they will be surrounded by other Hampshire appliances within close proximity. Also they have the smallest station area. Although Kingsclere is further away from Basingstoke than Overton, it is far quicker to arrive at standby as the A339 is quicker than the B3500...*

### New Forest Fire Stations

***Beaulieu: change to Intermediate Vehicle** would be reasonable.  
**Brockenhurst:** given the central location in a rural area with rural roads (with livestock roaming freely), **no reduction to vehicle type or on-call personnel***

**should be made. Fordingbridge:** given large rural area covered on county boundary, **no reduction in on-call personnel should be made. New Milton: one enhanced vehicle should be retained**, one may be reduced to an intermediate. **Ringwood: in addition to the retention of a single enhanced vehicle, an intermediate vehicle should be located at this station – and the proposed reduction to on-call personnel should be reviewed based on the need for the additional vehicle. Totton: existing enhanced vehicle should be retained.**

#### Portsmouth Fire Stations

*I fear not enough large fire engines to cater for the large population in Portsmouth and the specific risks from the dockyard and high rise flats in the area. **How about one large fire station for the whole of the city?***

*I would like to see **on-call/retained fire fighters at Southsea fire station**. I believe this could provide greater flexibility and have an increased pool of personnel should a major incident occur*

*There should be an **increase in the establishment figure at Southsea to 17** to enable all appliances to be crewed...*

#### Rushmoor Fire Station

*You could save more money by **losing two more posts and keeping 24-hour crews on two appliances**. This would create approx. £80,000 of further saving to the service and provide a much better immediate response to Rushmoor and neighbouring towns.*

#### Southampton Fire Stations

*The Southampton model is disjointed and doesn't make sense. I agree that St Mary's retained should go. However, **why not move the small fires vehicle and ALP to Redbridge**...losing three firefighters at St Mary's but only increasing Redbridge by two? At Redbridge there would be four firefighters to crew the ALP, small fires vehicle and rescue support vehicle. This would greatly increase resilience and availability of the specials, as, if one goes out, there will still be a crew to keep the others on the run. The small fires vehicle's 15 minute patch would be much bigger, covering St Mary's, Redbridge, Totton, Romsey and Eastleigh. In addition to this, **put a 24-hour enhanced and a 24-hour FRV at Hightown**...between this and the SFV at Redbridge, the whole city would be covered for small fires, and both vehicles would be able to use the 15 minute response area to cover many retained patches...*

## Winchester Fire Station

*Looking at **Winchester** there are more critical incidents, more non-critical incidents and more AFAs than **Eastleigh**. It seems peculiar that you are proposing to have more resources in the future at Eastleigh than you are at Winchester. **Perhaps the resourcing levels at these two stations should be changed around so you still save the money you need to but the cover more accurately reflects the demand***

*The crewing model does not appear to take into account the true availability of the RDS staff; it's lower than implied. It makes more sense to have **one WDS vehicle at Basingstoke and 1 WDS vehicle [at Winchester] both crewed by four or five people at all times including night***

*Winchester could **provide an immediate response to a wider area**. The savings, though not so great could come from a **reduction across the service in on call firefighters**. This would also have the potential to reduce the impact of possibly losing over 100 full time firefighters.*

157. On respondent also made the following very specific changes to the proposed vehicle make-up at the stations mentioned:

**Basingstoke** - two ERC engines and two IRC vehicles, 12 on call day and night

**Cosham** - two ERC engines

**Eastleigh** - two ERC engines, 15 on call day and night

**Fareham** - two ERC engines

**Gosport** - 2 ERC engines, seven immediate response day and night.

**Havant** - two ERC engines, seven immediate response day and night

**Hightown** - nine immediate response at night

**Hythe** - one ERC engine

**Portchester** - one ERC engine, four immediate response at night

**Rushmoor** - two ERC engines and one IRC vehicle, nine immediate response at night

**Southsea** - two ERC engines, one IRC vehicle, 18 immediate response day and night

**St Mary's** - two ERC engines, one IRC vehicle, 10 on call day and night

**Totton** - one ERC engine

**Waterlooville** - two ERC engines, four immediate response day and night

**Winchester** - two ERC engines, seven immediate response day and night.

## Council Tax Proposals for 2016-17

*Given the financial challenges, we believe that a council tax increase will be necessary next year (2016-17) to help us deliver fire and rescue services in Hampshire:*

*» An increase of 1.99% would raise £740,000 and would cost an extra £1.22 per year for Band D*

*» An increase of 1% would raise us £370,000 and would cost an extra 61 pence per year for Band D properties*

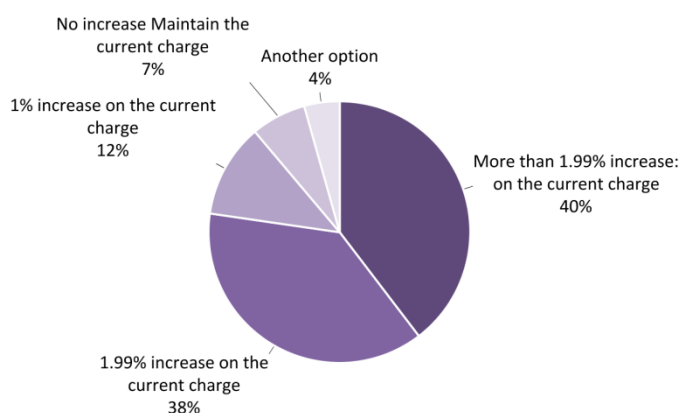
*» Any increase over 1.99% would require us to undertake and win a public referendum*

*» No council tax increase could mean future reductions to front-line services to make the required savings*

***If your council tax were to be increased so that Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service can meet its £16 million funding gap, which increase would you opt for?***

- 158. Similar proportions of respondents said they would opt for a more than 1.99% increase (40%) or a 1.99% increase (38%) on the current charge.
- 159. Around 1 in 10 respondents (12%) reported that they would opt for a 1% increase on the current charge. Only a small proportion (7%) said that they would opt for no increase at all.

**Base: All Respondents (1,121)**



- 160. Many people used the comments section of the questionnaire to explicitly state their willingness to pay more council tax, some in the context of a belief that this would negate HFRS’s proposed changes:

*I would not object to a relatively small increase in council tax to pay for a service that I could need at any time*

*As a tax payer I demand the best most effective response at all times and I am prepared to pay for that via higher council tax*

*An increase of £2 on everyone’s annual council tax bill is the least we can do to protect our community*

*I would pay more on my council tax to keep the stations as they are with possible on call staff rather than full time in the 'off peak' period...*

Similarly, a number of respondents felt that their council tax precept should, in fact, be reduced if the proposals are ratified:

*You're not reducing costs; my council tax isn't going down so who is saving money? All I see is a reduced service with no cost benefit to me*

*...You're not reducing the cost in the council tax. In fact you're saying you're going to put the council tax up and reduce the front line staff, appliances and cover...*

*Your proposals do not mean you will improve the quality of service. A transit van will not do the same job as a fire engine. Neither will two or three firefighters. I pay my council tax and I want to know when I call for a fire engine I will get one with enough people on it to actually do something and help me.*

161. 4% of respondents endorsed 'another option' – for example:

Various increases within the 1.99% 'limit' (for example 0.75% and 1.5%)

A staircase model: a 0.5% increase for the next few years (and *reassessing on things like the fuel bills each year* given current deflation or 'no-flation')

More (or rebalanced) Fire and Rescue Service funding from Central Government:

*The tax payer should not bear the brunt of all the increased costs out of their already highly taxed pay packet. The proposed changes should be halted and there should be a review of current government funding along with a review of the percentage of the council tax HFRS receives*

*Fire and rescue services need to tell the government that to provide a safe and efficient service to the public it can't be done with the sort of reduction in funding that is being mentioned. The money should come from central government and maybe a small increase in council tax*

*Re-schedule council tax spending overall so that funds from lower priority services such as arts, recreation, decoration and any other non-essential services [are redistributed]. Fire and rescue is an essential service which supports the fundamental needs of the community...*

More private funding or commercial work within the private sector:

*Seek private funding. See Humberside Fire Brigade as a model*

*Provide greater fire safety services in the private sector to subsidise public services.*

Station closures, mergers with other FRSs or other emergency services, central organisation, integrated control rooms and senior management reductions, all of which have been reported in the 'Alternative Suggestions' section above.

162. Some respondents referred to increases above the limit at which a referendum would be required. In this context, most endorsed rises between 2% and 4%:

*A higher increase such as 2.5%, with small annual increases thereafter to allow some flexibility within the proposed changes*

*Mine and my family safety is premier in my concerns. If 2.5% to 3% was cost effective we would be happy to go to this level*

*Implement a county referendum to increase the charge to 4% per annum.*

Indeed, one respondent argued that Central Government should now relax its constraint on rises above 1.99%, and allow FRSs (and indeed other public bodies) to implement increases that allow them to provide the standard of service required by residents:

*It is important that the authorities are given the opportunity to increase council tax in order to pay for the standard of services that the residents demand. The government suppression of council tax levels has gone far enough, most people are probably prepared to pay more than the 1.99% limit before a costly referendum is deemed necessary. The cost of a referendum is far too costly to justify the amount that is likely to be called for. Slow steady council tax increases are acceptable to most people provided services are of good standard. These foolish government imposed constraints are hindering the ability to improve services such as the Fire and Rescue Service in a way that would best serve the public...*

## Equalities Impact

163. Finally, open questionnaire respondents were of the view that the following groups of people are most likely to be negatively impacted by HFRS's proposals:

The elderly, disabled and vulnerable:

*With persons with disabilities both physical and mental, the implications of a restricted first response with two firefighters could be considerable. Huge pressures will be placed on the first appliance to arrive at an incident to carry out some form of quick rescue for these unfortunates trapped by virtue of their disabilities...*

*Increasing risk to those living in high-rise buildings and HMOs, such as in Portsmouth disproportionately affects the elderly, disabled and those on low incomes, who are overrepresented in this form of accommodation*

*The proposals for Fleet will impact the elderly and disabled - there is an issue with our elderly population and growing number of care homes, and the problems of evacuation with only two firefighters...*

## Rural residents

*Rural areas, including towns like Alresford, tend to have an older population which may perhaps cause higher risks in these areas...the negative impact of reducing rural cover should be reconsidered*

*People in rural areas appear to be to be disadvantaged due to longer response times, and the new proposals mean longer and less effective response. Are we not all equal, so should we not expect the same service?*

## HFRS Firefighters

*Changing a large number of people's working pattern has to be carefully considered as this can affect their home life and have a significant effect on child care issues. This can have a serious effect on morale*

*The ABC2 system doesn't seem like it would be very family-friendly on those made to work 12-hour shifts that you as a service don't even know will work yet. You don't know what they will look like or how they will work aside another shift pattern...*

*I believe these proposed changes will burden firefighters with a moral dilemma to place themselves in harm's way should they find themselves waiting for back up having arrived promptly on the scene, knowing that time is critical to affecting a rescue*

*The service relies mostly on volunteer part-time people. If they are not being used or less of them are being used this may result in disinterest and difficulty in recruitment. How do these firefighters keep up their skills and gain experience if fewer are attending emergencies?*

## Public Forum Findings

### Four Forums to Discuss Risk Review ‘Principles’

#### Introduction

164. Four 2.5 hour forums were held with 60 members of the public to discuss the main principles underpinning HFRS’s ‘Planning for a Safer Hampshire’ Risk Review - namely: the use of different types of vehicles for different types of emergency incidents; crewing fire stations based on the type, number and times of incidents they attend (activity-based crewing); and a possible increase to HFRS’s council tax precept. The schedule of meetings was as follows.

FORUM LOCATION	DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Portsmouth	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2015	10
Southampton	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2015	12
Basingstoke	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	16
Winchester	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	22
<b>TOTAL ATTENDEES</b>		<b>60</b>

165. The forums considered the evidence included in the Service’s Consultation Document, while having a more detailed review of the fire and rescue service and its resources and roles. The meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening to and responding openly to a wide range of evidence and issues.

#### Main Findings

##### Emergency Response Vehicles

166. After discussion and clarification, large majorities in all four groups felt it is reasonable to use different types of vehicles for different types and levels of incidents. Most did not revise their judgement when considering the practical reality of whether it is reasonable to replace traditional fire engines with different types of vehicle on some stations - though the results changed slightly at Southampton (where a small minority of those who agreed with the principle disagreed with its application in practice). The main reasons why the proposal was so favourable amongst participants included:

Introducing first response vehicles aligns resources with incident type

*If the vast majority of your calls are to smaller incidents then having smaller vehicles is a great idea (Basingstoke)*

Smaller vehicles are more practical for many incidents

*Say there's a hedge on fire and you call the fire brigade and you get a bloody big engine; it doesn't really make sense (Southampton)*

*If it was a primary incident I would expect a fire engine but if it was a secondary incident then I would expect something smaller (Basingstoke)*

It offers flexibility in terms of response

*If you had an RTC, would you envisage the first response capability taking over from paramedics in terms of medical intervention? Being able to help in that way has to be an advantage of this vehicle (Southampton)*

*To my mind the flexibility makes a lot of sense! The skills of the firefighters is the important thing, not just the size of the vehicle (Winchester)*

Smaller vehicles are more manoeuvrable and thus more suited to rural areas and narrow streets within towns and cities

*The first response capability might be the best type of response anyway for some incidents...a fire engine isn't always easy to manoeuvre or needed (Portsmouth)*

HFRS must 'move with the times' in considering more modern capabilities

*A fire engine looks quite antiquated today when there's so much technology and equipment available. (Portsmouth)*

<sup>167</sup> There were, however, some important concerns and questions around:

The potentially increased length of time for back-up resources to arrive should a first response vehicle attend an incident that is larger and more serious than anticipated

*A scenario...it's the centre of Portsmouth, it's 3am and there's a house fire. Who decides what type of appliance is sent? And if it's the first type how long does it take for back-up to get there? (Portsmouth)*

*How long would it take for the bigger vehicles to get to an incident if the first response capability could not deal with it? (Winchester)*

A lack of service-wide resilience for large-scale, 'what if?' or simultaneous events:

*If appliance numbers are reduced, if you have a major fire then not only will Portsmouth be at risk but other surrounding areas will be too because their fire engines will be drawn to assist (Portsmouth)*

*Have you considered the possibility of two major incidents occurring simultaneously? (Winchester)*

The cost of the new capabilities:

*To stock out the whole of Hampshire with all these vehicles, how much will it cost? And how long will it be until you get a return on that that investment? (Portsmouth)*

Relying on control room operatives to gather very accurate information in order for the correct vehicle to be deployed

The potential for less important community prevention and protection work if there are fewer firefighters to undertake it.

168. The importance of educating and informing the public about the vehicles was also raised as an important factor in reassuring people about their safety concerns:

*Mr and Mrs General Public will think this is just a Land Rover. Some money may well be needed on educating the public on exactly what these vehicles can do because I'm sure they think it's going to be a tin pot shed on wheels or something! (Portsmouth)*

#### **Activity-based Crewing**

169. Again, most participants in all four groups (though slightly fewer at Winchester than at the others) agreed that it is reasonable to introduce activity-based crewing for different stations and different risk periods:

*It does seem that if there are places where there are hardly any calls at night, it makes sense to vary the crewing levels (Basingstoke)*

*If they think they can provide the same service with fewer people then it's a no brainer. (Basingstoke)*

170. However, there were some important concerns around:

Resilience in terms of overall fire cover, and cover for illness and leave within watches:

*The one thing I'm concerned about is the difficulty of calling out fire engines from other areas if Southsea needs assistance. Portsea Island can be isolated and even calling from somewhere like Cosham can be difficult at certain times and with less staff to assist would be a concern (Portsmouth)*

Working practices (specifically whether firefighters would be expected to work longer hours)

*Does all this change improve working practices or will your guys have to work longer hours etc.? Will they be under more pressure? (Portsmouth)*

## The opinion of the Fire Brigades Union.

### Council Tax

171. Almost all Basingstoke participants were in favour of a 1.99% increase, providing *'the increase is needed and is justified'*. There was, however some concern about precedent insofar as *'everyone else will say 'well if they can do it, why can't we?' The Council and Police will see it as a licence to do it too'*. A couple of participants favoured no increase, or at least no increase until all organisational efficiencies have been identified and implemented:

*I wouldn't like to see an increase at all. I think you can squeeze a lot more out of the cost saving across the organisation (Basingstoke)*

*I'm a bit on the fence. I think you need to squeeze as much as you can out of it and then once you've done that you can look at what you need through Council Tax. Then I'd be happy to pay what is basically the cost of a cup of coffee. (Basingstoke)*

172. Exactly half of the ten Portsmouth participants favoured a 2016-17 Council Tax increase of 1.99%. Of the remaining five, three preferred a 1% increase and two suggested HFRS gamble on a referendum for a rise of significantly more than 1.99%.
173. Four of the 12 Southampton participants favoured a 2016-17 Council Tax increase of 1.99% and a further four favoured a 1% rise. Of the remaining four, three suggested HFRS try for a rise of significantly more than 1.99% and one opted for no increase *'not because they don't deserve it but the money should be coming from central funding'*.
174. 16 of the 22 Winchester participants favoured a 2016-17 Council Tax increase of 1.99%. Of the remaining six, four did not consider any increase to be appropriate, one suggested HFRS try for a rise of significantly more than 1.99% and there was one *'don't know'*.
175. In all groups there was some concern about precedent insofar as: *'this is just the Fire Service - if all the services decided to ask for that kind of rise that would be a big increase to Council Tax overall'*. (Portsmouth)

## 12 Forums to Discuss Risk Review 'Proposals'

### Introduction

176. A total of 182 randomly selected members of the public from across Hampshire attended twelve 2.5 hour forums to discuss HFRS's 'Planning for a Safer Hampshire' Risk Review proposals for their areas. The schedule of meetings is shown in the table overleaf.

FORUM LOCATION	DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Winchester	8 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	17
Bishop's Waltham/Wickham	12 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	19
Andover	13 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	17
Basingstoke	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	18
Alton	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	15
Havant	22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2015	15
Rushmoor	22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2015	11
Fareham/Gosport	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2015	10
New Milton	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2015	16
Totton	4 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	11
Southampton	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	18
Portsmouth	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	15
<b>TOTAL ATTENDEES</b>		<b>182</b>

177. Again, the forums considered all the evidence included in the Service's Consultation Document, while having a more detailed review of the fire and rescue service and its resources and roles. The meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening and responding openly to a wide range of evidence and issues - and were very different in tone to the public meetings reported below. This is mainly because public meetings understandably tend to be attended primarily by opponents of the proposals being discussed (including fire and rescue service staff and union representatives), whereas forum participants were initially neutral and had attended primarily due to their interest in the Fire and Rescue Service and hearing more about the proposals.

## Main Findings

### Emergency Response Vehicles

178. After discussion and clarification, almost all participants across the 12 groups considered it reasonable to replace traditional fire engines with different types of vehicles on some stations - with the important caveat that the latter should incorporate the latest available technology to allow fires to be fought safely and efficiently:

*We were initially concerned about two firefighters having to attend an incident but were reassured to hear about the new technology that can target the seat of the fire and will enable them to do a lot of preparatory work (Andover)*

*A lot rests on the new technology on the vehicles... (Alton)*

*Things move on, technology has moved on and FRS should embrace this and use it (Havant)*

*We need new technology; the best technology that can be supplied for the most appropriate vehicle and that's very important. (Winchester)*

179. The main reasons given for supporting the introduction of different response vehicles were as follows:

Resources will be better aligned to demand and used more efficiently

*This is a better use of resources and time (Basingstoke)*

*We are generally in agreement with the proposals since different kinds of risks can be dealt with effectively by the overall resources in each area and the cities in particular... (Southampton)*

The proposed new technology (such as the cold cut system) is impressive and will reduce risk to firefighters

*The lances could be a major enhancement (Southampton)*

*We are impressed with the new technology that is available and the enthusiasm of the fire officers about the use of this new equipment (Winchester)*

*The one thing I'm taking from today is that they are proposing to use smarter vehicles with better technology on them. I'd rather see smaller vehicles that can get places quicker and that can cope with the environment they find themselves in. My husband is a farmer and there's always the prospect of a combine harvester going on fire and I know that smaller vehicle could get to it quickly (Wickham)*

*The scenario of just two firefighters going out to an incident can be mitigated against with the use of the new technology available as they would no longer have to go into the building. They can make a start on a fire while back-up is on its way. (Wickham)*

It is uneconomical and often impractical to send a large fire engine to many smaller, less serious incidents

*Smaller vehicles seem to be more appropriate for non-critical and traffic incidents (Rushmoor)*

*We believe that it is time for the vehicles to be revised. From personal experience, we have witnessed the unnecessary use of large resources to visit minor incidents. The proposals will hopefully reduce with wastage, and therefore we wholeheartedly agree with them. (Totton)*

The smaller vehicles will ensure at least an initial 'reassuring' response in areas where fire engines are frequently 'off the run'

*If my house was on fire I'd rather someone with expertise was there quickly rather than not at all if the engine is off the run...not necessarily with all the bells and whistles but who could do something. And if this new system allows this then great because they can start work as soon as they get there (Wickham)*

*The idea of having trained people on site quicker is a good one as they can make an informed assessment of the situation and other resources can then be brought in (Wickham)*

*Areas struggling to cover on-call staff would benefit, as they can go out to incidents with less people. (Alton)*

It will improve first attendance times and offer flexibility in terms of response:

*The smaller vehicle will get to the incident quicker, and may therefore provide a better response (New Milton)*

*They will be quicker at the scene to evaluate the situation (Portsmouth)*

*The flexibility of having three different sized vehicles at Rushmoor Fire Station appears to be sensible, especially as all three could be used simultaneously. (Rushmoor)*

Smaller vehicles are more manoeuvrable and thus more suited to rural areas and narrow streets within towns and cities

*It's not only on rural roads the smaller vehicles would benefit but on new estates...they tend to be built with very narrow roads these days (Andover)*

*The smaller vehicle at Kingsclere Fire Station will get through traffic to an RTC much quicker and more easily (Basingstoke)*

*The small vehicle at Burley Fire Station will be useful for forested properties (New Milton)*

*I think we'll be getting better vehicles for some urban areas where congestion is a problem in small streets (Southampton)*

*Smaller vehicles would be a big advantage in Southsea and Portsmouth due to the narrow congested streets (Portsmouth)*

*Smaller engines are sometimes more appropriate in this area (Portsmouth)*

*The smaller vehicles would be more suitable for our rural roads...and even in urban areas the smaller vehicles would be able to get through traffic a lot easier. (Wickham)*

Smaller vehicles are already used successfully and safely on the Continent

*I've seen these vehicles in France and I think it works really well (New Milton)*

*France has a system like this already; they use small vehicles initially for incidents and then supply further back-up support as necessary... (Portsmouth)*

Using smaller vehicles in the first instance is in line with Ambulance Service policy, which works well

*It's a good idea to break it down and provide different vehicles, similar to that of the Ambulance Service. (Alton)*

The proposal will make a significant contribution towards HFRS's required cost savings

*It seems sensible to look at new technology and costs savings on fuel and equipment usage – the small gains will add up. (Totton)*

<sup>180.</sup> Despite the overall positivity reported above, there were also some important concerns raised in relation to the proposed emergency response vehicle changes across all of the forums, chiefly around the following issues:

The ability of a two-person crew to deal with serious incidents safely, and whether sufficient training will be provided to assist with this

*What if you've got your first two responders who disappear on the smallest vehicles without the sufficient technology needed for the incident and try to do something they shouldn't? Will there be training for them? (Alton)*

*Although a two-person crew has its benefits, we wonder whether it should be 'the norm' due to concerns we have about entry to a house and breathing apparatus etc. (Basingstoke)*

*On the rare occasion that a massive fire would occur, say in the Hamble area, and the vehicles in Southampton were busy, would the first response capability be able to effectively deal with the situation? (Southampton)*

*The minimum crew of four applies on fire engines for very good reasons; because you need that number to deal safely with the incidents that occur (Portsmouth)*

*Can the smaller vehicles with only a two-person crew deal with an RTC? What level of first aid training will be given? (Rushmoor)*

*Our main concern is whether we are going to be compromised during a house fire with a two-man vehicle coming out of Wickham as opposed to a big one in terms of both life and property damage (Wickham)*

*If you only have two firefighters, might they find themselves in a serious fire without proper back-up? The most dangerous fires are the larger ones and by cutting down the size of appliances and the number of crew on them, you may not have the back-up fully available to tackle them - or at least not for a longer time. (Winchester)*

#### The effectiveness of the new smaller vehicles and equipment

*Is the small engine as effective as the others in terms of loss of life? (New Milton)*

*Smaller engines will not be able to carry as much water as larger engines. What happens in this situation? (Portsmouth)*

*What facilities will the smaller vehicles have? (Totton)*

*Can the intermediate vehicle do as much/the same as the enhanced one? (Totton)*

#### The availability of back-up resources - and possible delays in the arrival of these back-up resources (leading to moral pressure on firefighters to act in an unsafe way)

*There may not be enough enhanced vehicles available at one time without having to request help from other areas (Southampton)*

*The only worry from my point of view is if you have a quick response from a smaller vehicle and it's discovered that a secondary appliance is needed because the incident is larger than expected...it's the time it takes for that other one to get to you if it's coming from Winchester, Fareham, Southampton etc. (Wickham)*

*There could be pressure on the firefighters by householders. (Basingstoke)*

#### Overall service resilience and the need for cross-border co-operation

*Do you take into account your capacity to respond to other Fire Authorities? (Southampton)*

*What if these changes happened and there was a big incident like Shoreham? Is there a plan in place across the wider area to cope with something like that? (Wickham)*

#### Firefighter stress levels

*There may be additional stress put on first responders who turn up to an incident without the adequate equipment (Alton)*

*One other concern would be the stress levels for the firefighters if there are only two of them at an incident and they have to make difficult decisions...will the changes increase work-related stress and therefore sickness and crew availability? (Wickham)*

*What if a massive fire developed and only the FRV and IRV were locally available; how would you deal with that? (Southampton)*

The pressure on control room operatives to gather very accurate information about incidents

*We agree to the different vehicle sizes but one concern is that the initial information gathered by the call handler would have to be extremely accurate to ensure the right size vehicles are sent to an incident (Andover)*

*Control room will change; they can't just send a vehicle, they need to know which one to send (Alton)*

*It is entirely logical that you change your equipment to match your risk levels but the decision as to which engine and level of crewing to send has to be made which places great responsibility on the diagnostic ability of control room staff. (Wickham)*

The potential for increased risk as a result of population growth from large-scale residential and industrial development - and whether or not any changes will be monitored and amended as needed

*There are a lot of new houses and plans for buildings in the Aldershot area, with around 4,000 at Wellesley and a redevelopment of Aldershot town centre – has this been taken into account? (Rushmoor)*

*We think that the changes to vehicles is more flexible, but have concerns over general levels of service deteriorating; will future risks increase, for example, from more HMOs? (Portsmouth)*

*By 2020 there will be 10 million more people in the country so the risk will go up. (New Milton)*

The cost of purchasing the new capabilities

*A lot rests on the expense and cost-effectiveness of the technology on the new vehicles (Alton)*

*How much will the new vehicles cost? How will bringing new vehicles in bring the overall expenditure down? (Fareham & Gosport)*

*How expensive is the new kit? If these changes save money will this allow the FRS to invest in this? (Totton)*

*How will the purchase of any new vehicles be financed? They are cheaper than existing fire engines but the existing fire engines are already there.*  
(Winchester)

181. Importantly also, the issue of training was raised at Totton, with participants questioning whether all firefighters would be trained in the use of all new vehicles and equipment to allow for their attendance at larger incidents where they might be expected to use them:

*Will firefighters still being given overall training to be able to use all appliances, regardless of what vehicle they have at their station? What if they are called out to another area?* (Totton)

182. Furthermore, some Portsmouth participants were generally very sceptical about the competence and skill level of on-call staff (specifically in comparison to wholetime crews), and were thus concerned about their ability to operate newer, more sophisticated technology in future:

*If the new vehicles have much higher technology than now, will the RDS crews be competent to crew them? It seems doubtful...* (Portsmouth)

183. Finally, although most people commented on the proposed introduction of different response capabilities in a more general sense, some specific comments - both positive and negative - were made about particular stations. Some examples were:

**Bordon Fire Station:** some at the Alton group felt HFRS has underestimated the amount of housing development and industry in the area. It was argued that, if Grayshott and Liphook Fire Stations are to be used to support Bordon (with its first response vehicle), *'at least one of the stations will need to have an intermediate response vehicle rather than a first response'*

**Cosham Fire Station:** some Portsmouth participants agreed that the proposals for Cosham *'make sense'* insofar as *'they will have two engines still and it seems primary fires are only a small percentage of the call outs'*. A few others, though, questioned the need to change one of these vehicles to an intermediate response vehicle given it yields no savings

**Emsworth Fire Station:** although some Havant participants agreed with the proposals for this fire station (mainly due to the *'quicker response times'*), others were concerned that demand for its services from West Sussex has not been sufficiently taken into consideration

**Fleet Fire Station:** one Rushmoor participant stated that *'replacing the enhanced vehicle with a first response capability does not seem right considering the recent church fire; an intermediate vehicle seems more appropriate'*. Furthermore, anomalies between the proposals for Fleet and Overton were noted - specifically that the former (where a first response vehicle is proposed) has a considerably

higher population and experiences many more incidents than the latter (where an intermediate response vehicle is proposed). Others, though, felt that *'a first response vehicle seems to be appropriate'*.

**Hamble Fire Station:** though there were some reservations about the proposal for Hamble Fire Station, most agreed it is a sensible change insofar as a first response vehicle *'deals with the need even though it is downsized'* and *'a smaller vehicle would be better suited to the small roads of Hamble'*.

**Kingsclere Fire Station:** it was said that *'the smaller vehicle can get through traffic to an RTC much quicker and more easily and there will be dramatic improvements to response times and staffing availability'*.

**Rushmoor Fire Station:** the flexibility of having three different sized vehicles was considered *'sensible, especially as all three vehicles could be used simultaneously'*.

**Southsea Fire Station:** although smaller vehicles were typically considered beneficial to negotiate the city's narrow streets, a few Portsmouth participants questioned the proposals for Southsea in terms of possible population increases and other future risk: *'what about future risk like increase in dockyard capacity, more halls of residence and terrorist risk'*. (Portsmouth)

**Yateley Fire Station:** it was generally accepted at the Rushmoor forum that *'the current levels of critical and non-critical incidents are consistent with the intermediate vehicle at Yateley Fire station'*, but one participant asked whether *'the large population of the area (over 25,000) warrants an enhanced vehicle instead?'* (Rushmoor)

### Activity-based Crewing

184. Most participants across the 12 forums were in favour of introducing activity-based crewing at different stations and for different risk periods insofar as this better matches resource to risk and improves service efficiency while also making savings:

*As long as the cover matches the risk it seems sensible* (Basingstoke)

*Due to the reduction in incidents, there is room to reduce or change the crewing schedule* (Havant)

*We think that the proposals for Kingsclere Fire Station will make dramatic improvements to staffing availability* (Basingstoke)

*There is no point having firefighters sat in stations at proven quiet times* (Totton)

*The proposed crewing plans make staffing more efficient, whilst meeting cost-cutting requirements.* (Totton)

185. A minority, though, opposed the proposed crewing changes on safety grounds (based on a perception that night-time incidents are typically 'more serious' than those that occur

during the day) - and there was significant concern that reduced firefighter numbers (and especially the loss of older, more experienced staff) could detrimentally impact on: the wellbeing of remaining firefighters; HFRS's overall operational resilience; the experience and competencies of crews; and future recruitment to the on-call service:

*I dislike the idea of different crewing levels at different risk periods...the night-time versus the daytime. A serious fire is a serious fire whether it's in the day or the night (Winchester)*

*You could have three incidents overnight but they might be more serious (Wickham)*

*Although there has been a reduction in incidents there still needs to be good coverage (Totton)*

*If you take net staffing and the number of incidents, is this too thin a line? We're concerned about what level of response is available for major incidents (Portsmouth)*

*Make sure that staff are not spread too thinly... (Havant)*

*I can see the justification with a 50% reduction in incidents and no change in the number of firefighters. But we don't want firefighters to be too stretched. Tired firefighters will not be safer! (Havant)*

*What is the effect on training and competence as you lose older firefighters and their knowledge and there is replacement by much younger staff?' (Portsmouth)*

*We can see that it will be difficult for firefighters to lose the amount of colleagues as back up in a dangerous job; will this cause problems such as putting people off signing up to the retained service? (Totton)*

### Specific Options for Four Stations

#### Andover Fire Station

186. All Andover participants opted for Option 1 (or indeed a mixture of Options 1 and 2) when considering crewing levels at their local fire station. They reasoned that Andover Fire Station is somewhat isolated within a large, diverse area and should thus not be expected to rely on supporting cover from elsewhere - particularly if this (predominantly on-call) cover is to be reduced in terms of vehicle and crew size:

*Where would the other vehicles come from to cover the Andover area when needed? Andover is quite isolated within Hampshire really and it would take a long time from, say, Kingsclere. And if the vehicles are reducing in size at the other stations we would be even more isolated (Andover)*

*Having to rely on Basingstoke and Winchester would not be acceptable...they are too far (Andover)*

*We are concerned about the time it would take to get here from Stockbridge or Romsey and if they have reduced resources as well... (Andover)*

*We need a combination of Option 1 and 2...we're quite thrilled with the options in general but don't feel like they quite gel with the area and it's extra housing and what's being cut all around us. The principles are great but they need tweaking to be more relevant to Andover (Andover)*

*We like Option 1 but with a greater selection of vehicles...a mixture of the two options because if you look at Andover and the Test Valley the area Andover Fire Station is covering is quite large and it is quite isolated. One of each would be the best scenario to cover what is a diverse urban and rural area. (Andover)*

### **Gosport Fire Station**

187. Most participants at the Fareham & Gosport forum opted for Option 2 when considering crewing levels at their local station, mainly due to concerns over the safety of Option 1 and the difficult geography of the area:

*The local population would not be happy with Option 1; yes there are big savings but the safety element is questionable (Fareham & Gosport)*

*The number of incidents in the night time need to be looked at as well as the location of Gosport itself; there is only one road in and out (Fareham & Gosport)*

*Local people will not accept the increased night-time response times. (Fareham & Gosport)*

188. However, one participant stated that they would support Option 1 because of the significant savings it offers, and another suggested: *"implement Option 2 and then maybe move to Option 1 if there are not many night time call-outs"*. (Fareham & Gosport)

### **Havant Fire Station**

189. Most Havant forum participants also opted for Option 2 when considering crewing levels at their local station, chiefly because of concerns about relying on an on-call night-time response:

*Option 2 is strongly preferred due to the permanent night time cover (Havant)*

190. In fact, even Option 2 was a worry for some in terms of availability of cover for neighbouring areas in both Hampshire (Hayling Island in particular) and West Sussex:

*I prefer Option 2 but what back up is available for adjoining counties and Hayling Island? (Havant)*

*In the summer time the population increases massively in Hayling Island; there are lots of caravan sites, holidaymakers etc. Has this been taken into account? (Havant)*

191. Furthermore, it was said that: *'I strongly feel that if the changes to Emsworth Fire Station go ahead, Option 2 should be implemented for Havant Fire Station, due to the demand from West Sussex'*. (Havant)
192. Only one participant opted for Option 1 in light of *'the lack of night-time call outs'*.

### Winchester Fire Station

193. All participants at the Wickham and Winchester Forums opted for Option 2 when considering crewing levels at Winchester Fire Station insofar as it offers better night-time cover and still significant savings:

*I know Option 2 isn't saving as much but it's still saving £300k and for overall safety...*  
(Winchester)

*We prefer Option 2 regardless of the reduced savings* (Winchester)

*Although the response time saving of five minutes might not make much difference to mortality in a fire, it might have a significant difference to the outcome of a RTA*  
(Winchester)

*Option 1 is too drastic as the night-time response time would increase dramatically, especially for the hospital, prison and cathedral. Although the savings are less under Option 2, with a population the size of Winchester there needs to be 24-hour support*  
(Winchester)

*The response times are better and cost to property as well as life needs consideration.* (Winchester)

### Council Tax

194. Most participants across the 12 groups favoured a 2016-17 HFA council tax precept increase of 1.99% because: it is not a large enough rise to have a negative impact on people's finances; the increase would be worthwhile for such a highly regarded and important service; and it would help HFRS meet its funding gap without having to make deeper reductions to frontline services:

*It's not a lot of money when you think about how much the Service does to save lives*  
(Alton)

*You can't get something for nothing; it hasn't gone up in five years and we can't have the service for free* (Totton)

*What's £1.22 a year for a service we trust, love and are happy with? It's not as if we are talking about an increase of £100 per year* (Totton)

*If you go for the 1.99% then you won't need to find as much of the rest of the £16m through changes to the Service.* (Winchester)

195. However, most participants at the New Milton forum did not sanction any increase at all and asked that alternative means of making savings - even the possible closure of some stations - be found instead:

*The Service needs to identify other efficiencies and make savings elsewhere. The hierarchy and civil staff need to be looked at. Also, they can't skirt around that and just say that they don't want to close any stations. (New Milton)*

196. Other reasons given by the minority of participants that did not wish to see any change to the council tax precept included that: a rise would set a precedent for other services to increase their charges; many people cannot afford even a small increase; a council tax increase is too much to ask for in addition to the other proposed changes; and that the precept should be reviewed only once all possible service efficiencies have been identified:

*It could set a dangerous precedent for other authorities to also increase their precepts! (Basingstoke)*

*Problem is other services may increase their part of council tax as well (Havant)*

*If my salary was going up I would happily give a proportion of it to the Fire Service, but it's not. I think the Service deserves a 1.99% increase but I cannot afford to pay it (or any increase) (Havant)*

*Why would we pay more for getting less? (Totton)*

*It should be looked at in terms of efficiency, value for money and need...then you look at the increases. The best service could be 50% of what we have now but that's where you have to start from. Get the Service down to where it needs to be then look at increases for the future (Wickham)*

*They're doing a damn good job already so why do you need it? (Winchester)*

197. No one across any of the forums opted to gamble on a referendum for a rise of significantly more than 1.99%; one participant from Wickham said: 'I don't think it's worth going to a referendum because it's going to cost a lot and it's unlikely to be won'. (Wickham)

198. A few participants found it difficult to make a decision on Council Tax, questioning: what exactly the additional revenue generated would be used for; and whether a 1.5% increase could be considered (particularly as opposed to 1.99%):

*I can't answer it because I don't know what the money is needed for...I need more information about how it will be used so I know it will be used efficiently (Winchester)*

*Why is there a big jump between 1% and then almost 2%? Could there be a 1.5% option in the middle? (Andover)*

## Overall Comments on HFRS Proposals

199. While a very small minority of participants considered themselves unable to make a properly informed judgement on the proposals within the time allocated for the forums, the vast majority of public participants understood that savings must be made and that demand and risk has changed: they were thus in agreement with HFRS's proposed changes, which were typically considered sensible and rational:

*Change is inevitable; cost saving demands and income restraints leave few options (Fareham & Gosport)*

*Given that savings have to be made we are quite positive about the proposals (Rushmoor)*

*If the reduction in incidents is an on-going trend then it does need a review (New Milton)*

*The vehicle modification seems appropriate, sensible and impressive (Alton)*

*We support the idea that changes need to be made and believe that a mix of vehicles is desirable (Andover)*

*We feel that the proposals are reasoned and are generally the right way to go (Havant)*

*They are good proposals that increase availability and reduce response times as well as making significant savings. (Wickham)*

Indeed, many participants across several forums questioned why such changes are only now being considered and suggested that the UK FRS as a whole is somewhat 'lagging behind' Europe in terms of making the best use of new vehicular and firefighting technology:

*If this was a profitable business changes would have been made ages ago (Totton)*

*Why haven't the smaller vehicles been being used for years already? We should be leading on this, and setting an example for Europe and the rest of the world. It blows my mind that the Service has been knowingly going out to small incidents in a massive fire engine, and then not having the appliance available for a big incident (Totton)*

*It strikes me that the review is long overdue if fire stations have been there for 50 years...demographics, technology, attitudes, building regulations have changed and this all needs to be looked at. (Wickham)*

200. Positively, the many comments highlighted below demonstrate public participants' trust in HFRS's Risk Review process and its outcomes - and the fact they consider it an appropriate evaluation for the Service to have undertaken in light of falling incidents, technological developments and demographic (and other) changes:

*It comes down to putting our trust in the Fire and Rescue Service profession to implement safe changes (Alton)*

*In view of the change in demographics, increased technology, improved building regulations and the reduction in emergency incidents, it is obvious that significant change and rationalisation is due. The proposals seem well thought out (Wickham)*

*The challenges have been looked at in a lot of detail such as response times (Totton)*

*The proposals seem well thought through and it's not one size fits all. They've researched it all and done the risk assessments so there's trust that it's been done properly (Wickham)*

*The proposals take into account the development in building technology, firefighting technology and public awareness (Alton)*

*We feel very positive in the way it seems to have been done; the demand and therefore where the resources need to be have been conducted well (Alton)*

*It's their own statistics, their own research and their own proposal. If they're happy with it then we have to trust that (Basingstoke)*

*The level of research as assessment is reassuring (Basingstoke)*

*We feel that the changes would be safe; we trust they have done their homework. (Fareham & Gosport)*

- <sup>201.</sup> Many comments were made in support of the fact the changes will be implemented through natural wastage, without station closures or redundancies. Indeed, as illustrated below, this appears to have 'softened the blow' of potentially sensitive service change for several participants:

*We came here feeling pretty pessimistic; we thought this meeting would be all about 'making cuts', for example, by closing rural fire stations and centralising emergency cover on Winchester which is the kind of thing that's been happening generally as authorities make savings by stopping doing things. But this is much better: the fire stations are being protected and there's no centralisation and loss of local resources; instead of closing stations, they are doing things differently - using more efficient vehicles and crewing systems to protect local cover while making savings effectively. It's a much more positive approach than we're seeing from authorities generally. It's working differently to deliver services rather than withdrawing them. So I think we all feel good about this; that's why so many agree with the proposals! The meeting was also very informative and everything's been explained very well (Winchester)*

*It's a real relief and reassurance to know they're not closing any fire stations. We live a bit more rurally here and the thought of having to wait for an appliance from elsewhere would be a worry. I did think we'd be coming to talk about closures and*

*that has probably influenced my view on the proposals a bit. Having said that though, I do think the proposals are good. (Wickham)*

*There's no reduction in coverage. There is the same amount of vehicles and there are stations close to and supported by other stations (Southampton)*

*It's the lesser of two evils; there has to be some way to make savings and at least these changes do not involve station closures/people losing their jobs (Totton)*

*Doing all of this through natural wastage will make it less painful. (Alton)*

202. It should, though, be noted that some people (especially at the New Milton forum) questioned the rationale behind the decision not to close any fire stations in the context of: the very small number of incidents in certain areas; the scale of the savings required; and the use of the Automatic Vehicle Location System (AVLS) which renders station location much less important nowadays:

*Have smaller retained stations been looked at...and if two stations which are close to each other could be combined? (Basingstoke)*

*It is crazy to say that money needs to be saved but no stations can be shut. Why should we have to pay to keep premises open which aren't really needed? (New Milton)*

*How can the Service justify keeping some stations open? If you had your own business and had a 40% reduction in work it would go bust if staff were not got rid of (New Milton)*

*I did question why you haven't considered closing some fire stations, especially with the use of AVLS. This did lead me to think about whether you need all those stations. (Wickham)*

203. Support for the Risk Review proposals was in many cases contingent on HFRS maintaining its prevention and educative agenda with communities and businesses:

*We generally agree with the proposals provided that the preventative measures and education are continued (Alton)*

*We ask that education in the community is emphasised, both with children and adults. More media is needed making people aware about what is going on (Havant)*

*Would you be able to do the same prevention work that you do currently if you had fewer crew members on station? (Portsmouth)*

*Make sure that staff and volunteers spread messages throughout the community. Keep up the education. (Havant)*

204. Furthermore, community education in the short-term must, it was felt, include raising awareness of the proposed changes given the level of concern about them in certain areas

(Gosport, Rushmoor and Emsworth for example) and the level of media ‘scaremongering’ about their potential implications:

*The proposals are satisfactory but care is needed in delivering the message locally (Fareham & Gosport)*

*You have carried out a lot of consultation and work into this, but communicating with the general public needs to improve; more PR is needed (Fareham & Gosport)*

*When you bring these changes in, you will have to educate the public on what these new vehicles do and that it has the sufficient equipment. The public need to be feel safe (Totton)*

*The press may put a negative spin on the proposals (Fareham & Gosport)*

*It’s very confusing that on the news it’s all doom and gloom, then we speak to the Fire Officers here and they fully support the proposals. The sensationalism of the press makes it very confusing. (Totton)*

205. Finally, the need for a careful (and phased) introduction of the proposed changes was stressed – as was the importance of constant monitoring to ensure they have no adverse effects on public and firefighter safety. Some typical comments were:

*The strategy overall is good but it does need testing and trying. And presumably that will happen because it will be a staged roll-out (Andover)*

*Our concern is that it hasn’t been tried and tested... Maybe a phased roll-out would be wise (Fareham & Gosport)*

*Considering the method hasn’t been tested yet, we agree with the changes if they are subject to rigorous evaluation processes (Portsmouth)*

*You should have a review cycle to confirm that the changes are monitored and tested in the context of new community risks with a view to identifying and dealing with any new risks or shortcomings in the current plans... (Southampton)*

*We agree with the proposals in principle, but they will need to be carefully monitored (Havant)*

*There needs to be a monitoring of the introduction of this scheme and also flexibility to respond to any problems that become apparent during implementation (Rushmoor)*

*What will happen if the attrition is not happening in the right areas i.e. all from one fire station? Will they recruit or redeploy? It has to be reviewed (Wickham)*

*Feedback is needed after the changes are implemented to measure the effect (Fareham & Gosport)*

*Is there a review date whereby we can check that it’s all working ok? (Andover)*

## Stakeholder Forum Findings

### Introduction

206. Hampshire Fire Authority (HFA) commissioned ORS to facilitate and report seven Stakeholder Forums between 9<sup>th</sup> October and 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) sent many invitations to a wide variety of statutory, business and voluntary sector organisations - and 67 participants, from a diverse range of organisations, attended the forums. The schedule of meetings was as follows:

FORUM LOCATION	DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Winchester	9 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	12
Basingstoke	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	6
Havant	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2015	8
Fareham & Gosport	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2015	13
New Forest	4 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	11
Portsmouth	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	13
Southampton	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	4
<b>TOTAL ATTENDEES</b>		<b>67</b>

207. Each meeting lasted two hours and included a presentation of the Fire Authority's proposals by ORS, followed by discussion of the issues arising. The meetings were again very different in tone to most of the public meetings reported below, mainly because the latter understandably tend to be attended primarily by opponents of the proposals being discussed (including fire and rescue service staff and union representatives). The stakeholder forum participants, though, were initially neutral and had attended primarily due to their interest in the Fire and Rescue Service.

### Main Findings

#### Emergency Response Vehicles

208. Most stakeholders across the seven forums accepted and supported the principle of HFRS replacing traditional fire engines with different types of vehicle on some stations (with the important caveat that the latter should incorporate the latest available technology to allow

fires to be fought safely and efficiently). Indeed, several questioned why it has taken so long to consider such a system:

*Why haven't we got these smaller vehicles out quicker? Seems like Hants and other brigades have been slow off the mark and seems to have taken a long time to get to this point (Fareham and Gosport)*

*We're lagging behind a lot in being slow to introduce FRVs compared to on the continent. (Southampton)*

209. The main reasons given for supporting the introduction of different response capabilities were as follows:

Resources will be better aligned to demand and used more efficiently

*It makes a far more efficient use of resources (Fareham & Gosport)*

*It is a big jump between having a large vehicle to a small one but I can understand how the current situation is hard to justify in terms of incidents and risk (New Forest)*

*The changes make sense in the overall context of the risk of the area (Basingstoke)*

*The dramatic drop in incidents...on that basis I can thoroughly buy in to this. (Winchester)*

*You will still be able to deal with the risks with these resources (Portsmouth)*

*It's about having resources appropriate to the task. If you have a first response capability then use it because now you are using resources that are way above what you need. (Havant)*

Smaller vehicles are more appropriate for smaller, less serious incidents

*We often call the Fire Brigade because someone has set fire to a bit of gorse on the holiday park. Straight away you think, 'why are you sending a 13 tonne truck to a bit of gorse?' To me this is a no-brainer (Havant)*

*The new type of vehicles seem like a positive way forward since you don't seem to need full fire engines for most of your incidents (Basingstoke)*

*When we had a special service call to enter a property with a sick person in it, the fire engine was totally unnecessary. A vehicle with just two people would have been fine. (Portsmouth)*

Smaller vehicles are more suitable for narrow roads and hard-to-reach areas

*Smaller vehicles are not just good for rural areas, but also for urban areas as well because there are a lot of small, tight roads (Fareham & Gosport)*

*My road is very difficult to access. A larger vehicle wouldn't get be able to get down there so a smaller vehicle would be useful (Fareham & Gosport)*

*There are many roads which are hard to get down, so I like the smaller vehicles getting there to do proper assessments (Portsmouth)*

*Smaller vehicles will be able to get through obstructions more quickly than traditional fire engines. (Southampton)*

Smaller, more flexible first response capabilities will ensure a faster first attendance, (especially important in areas where fire engines are frequently 'off the run') - and will be backed up with other resources locally

*In essence I think you'll get a faster response with financial benefits (New Forest)*

*I suspect people will say 'I'd rather have someone there' if appliances are off the run in a lot in certain areas (Winchester)*

*You will always have back up vehicles available. (Basingstoke)*

First Response Capabilities will offer more flexibility in terms of response options and resilience

*Can smaller vehicles mean that there are crew members available to attend other incidents? Two smaller vehicles could deal with two separate incidents, whereas one large vehicle with four people can only deal with one incident at a time. (Basingstoke)*

The proposed new technology (such as the cold cut system) is impressive and will reduce risk to firefighters

*The first response capability is better equipped than the current fire engines in some ways, especially in terms of the capacity of the lance (Southampton)*

*The lance seems like it will reduce risk for firefighters by letting them dampen fires without even entering a fire compartment (Portsmouth)*

*What is the actual firefighting capacity of the first response capability? Would they carry the new technology that's available now? I've seen a demonstration of it and its really good (Winchester)*

Using smaller vehicles in the first instance is in line with Ambulance Service policy, which works well

*I suppose it's much the same as the Ambulance Service who often send out a first response, and they carry a lot of equipment (Havant)*

*It's almost like the Ambulance Service; they get the paramedics there first to start treating the patient (New Forest)*

Financial savings will be significant

*You'll be making savings with fuel costs and heavy goods vehicle training; more people can use the same vehicle (Fareham & Gosport)*

Trust that HFRS has undertaken adequate safety reviews and risk assessments

*I'm sure there have been a number of years of risk assessment gone into this to make sure that it's safe to send a first response (Havant)*

*I look at your proposals and I would always trust that you have the public's best interest at heart. (Winchester)*

210. It is aforementioned that several stakeholders placed an important caveat on their acceptance of the proposal – namely that all appropriate technology should be placed on future appliances to safeguard public and firefighter safety. Other such caveats were that:

Firefighters are given sufficient training in the use of new technology

*I'm a little bit worried about the skill levels going forward in using this new technology, but as long as firefighters get the correct training then yes, go for it! (Havant)*

Control Room staff are able to effectively evaluate reported incidents and despatch the correct resources

*The Control Centre will have to assess the seriousness of each incident carefully (Southampton)*

Members of the public are fully informed about why and how the changes are going to be made

*To quell that public fear of a change to a little vehicle that's not going to be man enough for the job...you have to get the message out that your proposals are not going to compromise lives or the level of service available (Winchester)*

Businesses that handle emergency calls are offered training on any changes to procedure in light of implementation

*Will there be training for businesses in giving the information to the call handlers...will we need to be more detailed? (Havant)*

211. Despite the overall positivity reported above, there were also some important concerns raised in relation to the proposed emergency response vehicle changes across all of the forums, chiefly that:

Two firefighters in a first response vehicle may not be able to safely deal with, say, a house fire or other serious incident – and may suffer significant moral pressure to act in an unsafe way

*At Romsey, in our last financial year we did 65 stand-bys. During that time there is still one truck available for incidents in Romsey. In the new situation our main truck will be used more for stand-by because general resources are going to be reduced, which leaves us with a first response capability. This will be able to deal with most things but if it is a serious house fire or RTC it will leave our local community vulnerable. The right resources will be sent from elsewhere but it will take longer (Winchester)*

*Hamble Fire Station will be down-graded but we have had 19 life-threatening incidents, so how can a FRV deal with those kinds of situations with only two firefighters? (Southampton)*

*There could be moral pressure on two firefighters who might attend a house fire without sufficient numbers or ready back up...although I understand that the number of incidents where this might happen will be low (Basingstoke)*

The length of time for back-up resources to arrive should a first response vehicle attend an incident that is larger and more serious than anticipated could potentially increase

*There are a lot of jobs we do that the smaller vehicles are ideal for but there will be less water, less crew, less resources...everything is reducing and it will take longer for back-up to get there. 98% of the time I entirely agree with this plan and it's what we should be doing. But that 2% of the time when it's called in as an AFA which turns out to be a raging inferno, that's when lives will be lost because we will be waiting longer for back-up to arrive. It's a tiny percentage but it could happen someday (Winchester)*

*How far away would a big fire engine be if you are replacing bigger appliances with smaller ones? What if there isn't one close by if it's needed? How much longer will they have to wait? An extra two minutes could be critical (New Forest)*

*Would you be able to get back-up support along the Hamble Lane corridor, which is due to have a lot more housing development soon? It seems likely that we'll need more support along the lane if we only have a FRV. Hamble is at the end of a cul de sac with only one way in and the same way out (Southampton)*

Population increases - both residential and business - and changing demographic profiles in certain areas (such as Romsey) may not have been sufficiently considered

*Fire station changes are very sensitive to us and a big part of our community. Certainly in Romsey we have had four major care homes built and the ageing population is increasing, surely there will be an increase in risk? There are also*

*a lot of businesses opening in old converted houses. We need to know what this has been taken into account (New Forest)*

*In my area there will be a lot of new houses being built, and the population will increase. Every new house brings cars. Romsey responds to lots of different areas, and it seems that you are taking valuable resources from an area where it is needed (New Forest)*

Demand from cross-border areas may not have been taken into account

*What about giving assistance to other areas? Will the other areas contribute to the costs and equipment? (New Forest)*

*We are very close to Wiltshire so there is cross-county work? Has this been taken into account? (New Forest)*

Resources may be spread too thinly due to the geography of the area (coupled with a smaller pool of larger vehicles) – leading to a lack of service-wide resilience for large-scale, ‘what if?’ events

*There may be some resistance. Everything is so spread out and there will be battles about sharing resources...only having one large appliance and changing it to a smaller one (New Forest)*

*To look at things on a micro level is quite good for delivering a budget and overall team capability but not when considering that thing that happens once in 20 years. If you denude the cover on a station-by-station basis, when the big incident does happen...yes you can draw 30 or 40 fire engines in but that will leave no cover elsewhere. There’s a need to look at whether the strength in depth is there (Winchester)*

Co-responding initiatives may be adversely impacted by the changes

*I am concerned that if you reduce the number of vehicles and firefighters there is less of a pool to contract for the NHS work... (New Forest)*

212. Furthermore, several stakeholders, while endorsing the proposal in principle, had reservations about its application in practice, particularly in terms weight of attack:

*It makes financial sense but there are 40 properties within Winchester Cathedral (some of which a smaller vehicle might be better for in actual fact) and I worry about a ‘dumbed down’ response from Winchester. So while I think the principle is good I’m sort of on the fence in practice. (Winchester)*

213. It should also be noted that several participants had attended the session with initial concerns about the use of First Response Capabilities specifically, but said these had been alleviated by the information presented and reassurance that they are being successfully used elsewhere in the UK and on the continent.

*We had worries it was 'a man in a van' but now I am reassured (New Forest)*

*We had concerns but will still get three vehicles for residential risk in care homes where people are very vulnerable. (Portsmouth)*

### Activity-based Crewing

214. Almost all stakeholders supported the principle and application of activity-based crewing - though at Basingstoke this support was contingent on *proper station-by-station assessments and reviews after the induction of the system across Hampshire*.
215. One Fareham and Gosport stakeholder was concerned about potential over-reliance on on-call personnel, who they considered to be less trained (and by implication less competent) than their wholetime colleagues:

*The training is very different...The only time I have been involved in a big fire was in a rural area in a big factory. We only felt the fire was getting under control when the wholetime firefighters came. (Fareham & Gosport)*

216. In addition, a Southampton participant was concerned that personnel reductions might adversely affect HFRS's important prevention work with communities and businesses.

### Options for Andover Fire Station

217. Though Option 1 was generally endorsed where discussed, one Basingstoke stakeholder commented that publicity around the two options for Andover Fire Station has failed to recognise that Option 2 (ABC Level 3 with two immediate firefighters overnight) does offer wholetime night-time cover, and *has instead just focused on the loss of wholetime crewing at night*'. This, they felt, may be affecting the level of support for this option.

### Options for Gosport Fire Station

218. Fareham & Gosport stakeholders were almost unanimous in their support for implementing Option 2 at Gosport fire station (two wholetime firefighters overnight as opposed to a wholly on-call system), mainly due to the area's population density and demographic profile and significant concerns about a reliance on night-time on-call fire cover and associated response time increases:

*There are a lot of old people and social deprivation in the area, and it is also very condensed (Fareham & Gosport)*

*The average response time of nine minutes compared to five is a massive difference. Those nine minutes could even end up being 20 or 25. (Fareham & Gosport)*

*If you isolate Gosport, which is easy to do, and take into account the population increases, it's just too unsafe and risky at night for Option 1. (Fareham & Gosport)*

219. One participant, though, suggested that this four minute difference would not have a substantial impact on public safety in practice in light of the low number of incidents in the area and the fire prevention measures now in place at most businesses and other commercial premises:

*If you look at retirement homes, residents are supposed to stay in their flats and all the doors are fire doors. The difference between five and nine minutes doesn't seem like much. (Fareham & Gosport)*

### Options for Havant Fire Station

220. All of the Havant stakeholders preferred Option 2 (two wholetime firefighters overnight as opposed to a wholly on-call system) over Option 1, mainly due to the lack of immediate night-time cover and thus longer response times under the latter:

*Option 1 is a real concern for me because we have sleeping risk...we would only call the Fire Service out if there's a confirmed fire so we would be worried about waiting that long... (Havant)*

*When you're talking about the public, the Fire Service to a large extent is there for reassurance. Option 2 is a drop in the ocean for reassurance really. (Havant)*

221. Indeed, although there was an understandable general preference for full night-time cover at Havant Fire Station, most participants felt they could 'live with' Option 2 given the number of fire stations in close proximity in the area:

*You'd still have a lot of cover in this area because Hayling Island, Emsworth and Havant are quite close together. (Havant)*

### Options for Winchester Fire Station

222. All Winchester stakeholders preferred Option 2 for the City for the same reasons as expressed above.

### Overall Comments on HFRS Proposals

223. The vast majority of stakeholders understood that savings must be made and that demand and risk has changed: they were thus in agreement with HFRS's proposed changes, which were typically considered sensible and rational:

*Change is inevitable and resources need to be looked at (Southampton)*

*It's all about working smarter isn't it (Havant)*

*It all makes a far more efficient use of resources (Fareham & Gosport)*

*I agree because I know that 90% of our calls are false alarms... (Southampton)*

*We have to cut our cloth according to the financial situation in this country (Havant)*

224. Furthermore, the promise of no fire station closures or compulsory firefighter redundancies was generally welcomed (and seen as a reason why HFRS's proposals should be accepted by the representative bodies), as the following quotations demonstrate:

*There will be no compulsory redundancies so no one will lose their job. I understand there'll be a reduction in the establishment level but no one will be asked to leave. And regarding people moving around, people in all different types of work have to deal with that (Havant)*

*I would have thought the union would be on board because there will be no compulsory redundancies. I think it's brilliant that this won't be happening (Fareham & Gosport)*

*It is well thought out, and more acceptable as a plan because no stations will be closed (New Forest)*

However, it should be noted that some stakeholder questioned the rationale behind the decision not to consider the former as part of the Risk Review. For example, closing Hamble and Botley stations (and finding an alternative location to house their proposed First Response Capabilities) was suggested at Fareham & Gosport insofar as:

*Both stations are looking at having first response capabilities and on call cover, so there is no need for anyone to be there. Can you use this building to be reinvested in the service? It seems like a waste to have a mainly empty building. (Fareham & Gosport)*

225. There were, though, some overall concerns in addition to those outlined above in relation to the specific proposals, mainly around: whether the proposals are future-proofed in the context of new developments across the County; the challenges HFRS faces in gaining public acceptance for their implementation; and that the multifaceted nature of the proposals will make it very difficult to monitor and evaluate their success (or otherwise) until it is 'too late':

*The model is very good, but will it work for the future as well? Will the Fire Service be responsive? For example, there are a lot of new developments happening, so will you have to go through the whole process again in the future or does this model taken these changes into account? (Fareham & Gosport)*

*We have to recognise the potential for incident numbers to increase in the light of social changes and developments (Southampton)*

*There is a lot for the public to understand and accept due to the general level of changes across all public services (Southampton)*

*Are people baulking at these proposals because they represent more change, and there is a cultural response to them? (Southampton)*

*I'm worried that the model is so complex that there is no way of knowing how well (or not) it is working until there has been a disaster. (New Forest)*

### Council Tax

226. Most stakeholders across the seven forums favoured either a 1.99% increase or no increase at all to HFA's 2016-17 council tax precept (only very small minorities supported either a 1% increase or a more than 1.99% increase).
227. Everyone at the New Forest session favoured a 1.99%. Indeed, they suggested that HFA should henceforth commit to a small year-on-year increase, which would be preferable to *having no increase for four years and then having one big one.*
228. Most Winchester and Portsmouth stakeholders also supported this level of increase, as did half of those at Havant and Southampton. As one Havant participant said: *"you are cutting out waste through these proposals too so it's legitimate to ask for it".*
229. However, most stakeholders at the Basingstoke and Fareham and Gosport forums, as well as the remaining half of those at Havant and Southampton, did not want any increase at all on the grounds that:
- More efficiency savings can and should be identified
    - There could be other savings to make (Havant)*
  - Council tax as a whole should be redistributed to give HFRS a 'larger slice of the pie'
    - Redistribution of funds would be better, look at other ways to save money where it's not spent wisely... (Fareham & Gosport)*
  - People should not be expected pay more when receiving a 'lesser' service
  - Experience elsewhere demonstrates that an increase would not necessarily improve services
    - Surrey County Council has put up Council Tax every year, but the service has not improved at all! Money does not mean a better service. (Basingstoke)*
230. One Fareham & Gosport stakeholder commented that a blanket approach to council tax is inappropriate insofar as: *"why should we pay for Fareham? It should be on an area-by-area basis, not just the same throughout Hampshire."* However, the balance of opinion was that: *"if Gosport needs help Fareham will come. The Service is first class and needs to be paid for."*

## Staff Forums

### Introduction

231. HFRS was keen to involve its staff in the consultation process as thoroughly as possible - not just through their access to the questionnaire, attendance at public meetings and (in some cases) station submissions, but more importantly through four dedicated staff forums. Therefore, a wide range of staff from across Hampshire were randomly selected by HFRS and invited to participate in lengthy and in-depth meetings which were facilitated and reported by ORS. The schedule of meetings is shown in the table below.

FORUM LOCATION	DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
New Forest	15 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	10
Basingstoke	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	10
Southampton	4 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	4
Portsmouth	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	8
<b>TOTAL ATTENDEES</b>		<b>32</b>

232. Although HFRS sought to promote the staff meetings positively, overall the attendance (32) was lower than expected and hoped for. Wholetime firefighters were represented in three of the meetings (Basingstoke and Deane, Southampton and Portsmouth) while on-call or retained firefighters took part in two meetings (New Forest and Basingstoke and Deane). Four wholetime/on-call staff took part (Basingstoke and Deane), as well as one support staff member and one control room staff member (Portsmouth).

233. It should be noted that Portsmouth wholetime staff complained about the invitation process for the staff forums: they felt that invitation via email alone was ineffective/not inclusive, and that the locations of some of the forums were inconvenient.

234. Because the attendees were few, the findings reported here should be interpreted with **considerable caution**, since the overall number of staff was so low. Those who came generally had strong feelings (particularly the wholetime staff), but it would be rash to infer from these small meetings that all staff feel the same way.

235. Each meeting began with a short presentation by ORS outlining the main proposals and then the staff readily took part in lengthy and detailed discussions in each meeting. The meetings lasted about three hours.
236. The overall opinion of the proposals was negative, especially with regards to the reasons for the changes, the consultation process, FRVs, ABC crewing, and the specific proposals for stations. However, there was definite support in some of the groups for the IRVs and for using three different types of vehicles *in principle*.
237. It is inappropriate to report the views of on-call and wholetime firefighters separately because the numbers are so small, but this chapter highlights important differences between the two groups.

## Main Findings

### Consultation Process

238. The on-call firefighters felt that the consultation process could have been more effective in involving more people, and they felt that the public and staff had been given insufficient information about the proposed IRVs; but they did not dismiss the consultation process as radically unsatisfactory.
239. In contrast, the wholetime staff were extremely negative about the consultation – primarily on the grounds that, allegedly:

Meetings have been insufficiently advertised and not sufficiently local

The public do not understand the issues but are reassured by over-optimistic assurances from HFRS about safety

Staff have been prevented from speaking at public meetings – so they could not counteract what they saw as ‘management propaganda’

HFRS manipulates data in an unreliable and even untrustworthy manner

Management does not listen to what crews say

The outcome is a *fait accompli*

The Risk Review is driven by financial imperatives rather than considerations of public safety.

240. The Southampton group criticised the financial information provided in the consultation for not being detailed enough:

*We need a more detailed breakdown of how the staff costs are spent and whether they relate to essential jobs (Southampton)*

*We need to know the employment profile and balance of expenditure between support and frontline services; the figure of 70% does not tell us much at all really (Southampton).*

*What is the cost for Ops firefighters up to Watch Manager level – to compare those costs with those of senior manager and support staff (Southampton).*

241. In addition, both the New Forest and Basingstoke groups criticised the comparison between stations' risks:

*There's no formal scoring mechanism for the different components of risk – and the differences in incident numbers can be very marginal with big differences in the vehicles. There is nothing to say how the calculations/judgements have been made (New Forest)*

*The stations are interconnected, so it is divisive to give data for separate stations and to give us different resources on that basis; we need to know that all stations can give us the same back-up resources (Basingstoke).*

### **Distrust of Data**

242. In the New Forest forum, none of the on-call staff denied that risk, measured in terms of the number of incidents, has declined substantially – for example one widely accepted comment was:

*We have very few shouts now – we haven't had one in the last three weeks – so it's hard to maintain competencies.*

243. However, the wholetime staff stressed frequently that in their view “real risk” has not really decreased. For example, in Portsmouth there were repeated comments along these lines:

*Incidents have 'reduced' because false alarms have been more controlled, especially by the university*

*But there is still the potential for major incidents to break out – risk has not really reduced in terms of the potential for big incidents*

*Fire deaths are increasing in some areas and they tend to occur mainly at night when there is bigger risk*

*Havant's fire calls have gone up by 40% since the AVL system came in.*

244. There was also a distrust of even very basic data used in the risk review – which for most wholetime firefighters taking part extended to a wholesale distrust of the senior management team itself – for example:

*Fire deaths are not counted properly – they don't include people who might die after a fire in hospital*

*Are medical co-responding calls included in the statistics? – NO! – But they should be!*

*They are using historical data, but co-responding will now take pumps off the run – which should be acknowledged in the planning*

*Has the year 2013-14 been chosen deliberately to suit their case, whereas 2014-15 would have been less “convenient” for their case?*

*A lot of the data is untrustworthy*

*The staff responsible for the review and its data are not ideally suited to the task in terms of their main capabilities – so a lot of mistakes have been made.*

245. Although the first statement above (about counting fire deaths) is wholly untrue, it represents a belief (repeated more than once by firefighters in the meetings) that is at once a cause and a consequence of corrosive distrust of senior management.

246. The tendency for distrust of risk data to undermine any faith in the proposals for wholetime staff was manifest in the Basingstoke and Southampton groups, too. For example, in Basingstoke and Deane the firefighters insisted that:

*Management calculate RDS availability [only] on the basis of “when the fire engines are required” – but they should calculate on the basis of “general availability” per hour of the day and night!*

*The proposals are based on the fact that we have fewer calls nowadays, but this is not a reason to reduce our potential cover*

*The stations are interconnected, so it is divisive to give data for separate stations and to give us different resources on that basis*

*The most important asset is the staff and they don’t trust the managers in the context of the changes!*

247. As with the fire deaths case above, the account of how RDS availability is calculated (first quotation just above) is untrue, but it fuels disbelief in the proposals and senior management.

248. The Southampton group criticised the financial information provided in the consultation for not being detailed enough:

*We need a more detailed breakdown of how the staff costs are spent and whether they relate to essential jobs. We need to know the employment profile and balance of expenditure between support and frontline services; the figure of 70% does not tell us much at all really. What is the cost for Ops firefighters up to Watch Manager level – to compare those costs with those of senior management and support staff.*

## Perceptions of Risk

249. The firefighters were understandably very concerned about risk to the public. Apart from questioning data about risk levels reducing, they argue that planning should focus not on probability of incidents but on their potential severity – that is, fire and rescue service planning should be based upon what might happen rather than what will probably happen.

250. They also argue that the most serious incidents (and therefore most death) occur at night – so it is wrong to reduce fire cover at night (though activity-based crewing, for example).

*The proposals are based on the fact that we have fewer calls nowadays, but this is not a reason to remove our potential cover which is a kind of insurance against danger (Basingstoke)*

*The number of calls at night might be less, but many people who die in house fires die in their sleep, so we should protect them (Southampton)*

*Night-time calls are more likely to be serious and dangerous to people. It is not just the speed of attack, it is the weight of the attack that matters – how many resources we send (Southampton).*

251. Two important quotations illustrate the point that firefighters prioritise high levels of safety over other considerations – especially financial issues:

*You cannot compare savings with financial costs; almost any cost is justified if it saves just one life over a long period of time (Southampton)*

*You could almost justify having two pumps at night and one by day, because more serious incidents happen at night (Southampton).*

## Emergency Response Vehicles

252. Although there were concerns, many firefighters could accept the idea of three different types of emergency response vehicles in principle – without committing to all the particular proposals. All of the participants in Portsmouth, half of those in Southampton, and some of those in Basingstoke and Deane agreed in principle that it is reasonable to introduce different types of vehicles for different situations and stations.

253. There was a clear division of opinion in Basingstoke and Deane. One declared roundly that:

*Any sensible fleet would buy all the same vehicles, not different types; we should have standard composite appliances like all other fire and rescue services – we need to be fit for purpose for all incidents!*

254. On the other hand, agreeing with many in Portsmouth and Southampton, another firefighter in Basingstoke and Deane said:

*The [different types of] vehicles in themselves are OK [for different roles], but the real issue is the crewing...*

255. However, there were concerns about the lack of testing of the new vehicles and technology, especially as (it was said) changes will be impossible to reverse once implemented.

256. Concerns were also expressed about alleged anomalies in the allocation of different types of vehicles – for example, between Kingsclere and Overton Fire Stations and also Fleet and Hartley Wintney:

*There is disparity in their resources for similar tasks; the former gets a FRV compared with an IRV for the latter! (Basingstoke and Deane)*

*The relative resources for Fleet and Hartley Wintney are anomalous – because the former is much bigger and has more serious incidents – yet it gets only an FRV while Hartley gets a fire engine (Basingstoke and Deane).*

257. Staff were sceptical about the costs of changing vehicles (especially for stations such as Overton) where (it was said) projected savings of £14K would be cancelled out by the cost of the new vehicle.

258. More importantly, the firefighters thought that the new vehicles could reduce mutual emergency cover between stations:

*Two stations in the north-west will have much reduced back-up cover – Andover and Winchester’s back-up is in Basingstoke (Basingstoke and Deane).*

### **Intermediate Response Vehicles and Crewing**

259. The on-call staff in the New Forest had no criticism at all of the Intermediate Response (or Enhanced Response) Vehicles. Indeed, there was considerable enthusiasm and the participants felt that:

*This makes more sense because we already have vehicles like that. The specification on the website is encouraging – it’s basically a water tender with breathing apparatus (New Forest)*

*I’m pleased that we’re going to have one of those and not a FRV! (New Forest)*

260. However, both on-call and wholetime firefighters felt that, while the IRV was excellent, there were still important dangers in relation to potential crewing levels:

*But will the Intermediate vehicle go out with only two people? That could still be dangerous! (New Forest)*

*Really, this vehicle should be called the FRV when crewed with 2 and Intermediate when crewed with 4 or 5 (New Forest)*

*In order to leave the station quickly both the FRVs and the IRVs will go out with crews of two – which means they will be hampered and in danger when getting to more serious incidents! (Basingstoke and Deane)*

261. In Southampton there were concerns about the replacement of one of the two fire engines with an IRV – mainly because:

*Reducing the Hightown crew at night limits the kinds of support the station can give to other city stations. And the ALP needs a dedicated pump and it's unclear if the IRV would be able to run the ALP in terms of its pumping capacity (Southampton).*

### **First Response Vehicles and Crewing**

262. All the staff had several main criticisms of the proposal to use the FRVs widely for a broad range of incidents, including RTCs and property fires. The following list is probably not quite exhaustive, but it captures the main points that were insistently made in various ways:

The FRVs are poorly equipped compared to traditional fire engines or even IRVs

Their proposed high pressure lance technology is no substitute for a properly equipped fire engine with breathing apparatus, pumping capacity and a full crew

In order to maintain rapid response times, FRVs will be despatched to an increasing number of incidents with crews as small as two

With crews of only two they will be unable to deal effectively and safely with serious incidents, and will be unable to make routine incident grounds safe (by managing traffic and etc.)

Marginally faster response times to serious incidents will be meaningless since small crews will be unable to commit to entering, say, a property fire

Nonetheless, small crews will be subject to 'moral pressure' to commit prematurely to serious incidents without proper back-up and full equipment

FRVs should be considered as "small fires" vehicles that are sent only to minor incidents

In practice, apparently faster response times standards will be misleading since fire engines (or ERVs) will take just as long as now to get to serious fires

The use of FRVs with smaller crews will reduce the opportunities for on-call firefighters to attend operational incidents (because the FRVs will leave the stations earlier) – which will reduce their commitment to HFRS

The use of FRVs in parts of the county will reduce the resilience through readily available fire engine back-up between stations.

263. The participants insisted that crews of two are inadequate to deal with the practical aspects of running incidents – such as dealing with parking, access, traffic, water access, the logistics of one person having to remain with the vehicle and radio, and so on. They said managers underestimate all those practical issues of dealing with incidents.

264. Above all, the staff said such small crews are inherently unsafe and impractical:

*It is two people and a van – but they deny this misleadingly (Basingstoke)*

*In order to leave the station quickly both the FRVs and IRVs will go out with crews of two, which means they will be hampered and in danger when getting to a more serious incident (Basingstoke)*

*There should be a minimum crew of four on all vehicles – this number is needed for all cases of flames in buildings, as well as for small fires (such as a torched car). We would need two people with breathing apparatus – with personal discretion for a fire in a skip or hay fire (Portsmouth)*

*There may be moral pressure on firefighters attending building fires in too small numbers. We need full crews on all of the engines. Whole-time stations definitely need crews of four (Portsmouth)*

*An FRV needs the same crewing as a fire engine! (New Forest)*

*The small FRV crews will not be able to do anything about house fires – but they do get house fires (New Forest)*

*No other FRSs use crews of two, even at night (Portsmouth).*

265. Due to the safety concerns, firefighters thought that crews of two should only respond to certain, lower risk incidents.

266. The groups were also criticised specific proposals for some local stations – for example, at Hamble:

*Taking into account the area as a whole, at least an IRV is needed to guarantee a proper level of response in terms of personnel; the key thing is to achieve a proper level of crewing on the vehicle, both for the area itself and to offer proper support overall (Southampton).*

267. Participants (across all forums) were very concerned about the “What If? Scenarios” – in relation to rare but possible major incidents, including those that become more serious than anticipated. For example:

*There is the “What If scenario” of the FRV going to a small incident and then being ‘run on’ to another bigger incident which needs more people (New Forest)*

*And suppose you go to a bin fire and it turns out to be a building fire! (New Forest).*

268. We have said already that staff consider the FRVs will be poorly equipped compared with fire engines – and some typical comments were:

*None of us know what the lance and Cobra can do – but people cannot go into a building to affect a rescue (New Forest)*

*There will be lots of equipment that FRVs don't have – which means there'll be different kinds of training and different levels of firefighters – for example, we now all train with ladders, but FRVs crews won't be trained for them – but we should all be able to deal with all the core equipment with our core skills (New Forest).*

269. Following from their worries about FRVs and small crews, there were three interesting alternative proposals from some staff. The first was to ensure that to increase safety it would be better to reduce crewing on fire engines than to countenance crews of two on FRVs:

*It would be better to send out three people on a fire engine than to use FRV – because it is so much better equipped and has more capacity to deal with real emergencies (New Forest).*

270. The second was that a two-vehicle strategy might be preferable to a three-vehicle model - with ERVs and IVs only - providing they had suitable crew numbers.

271. The third suggestion was that HFRS should solve its on-call availability problems (and avoid the need for small vehicles and crews) by recruiting more on-call firefighters and by using them more effectively.

*The apparent headline of increasing the availability of the RDS hides the fact that the Service is not doing enough to recruit more RDS. We could also increase turn-in times by, say, two more minutes in some areas. Some RDS stations could be closed if we were prepared to increase the turn-in times for their on-call staff (Southampton).*

### Activity-based Crewing and the Effect on Stations

272. Most participants across the four forums raised strong concerns about the crewing proposals (especially night-time cover). Opposition was particularly strong in the Portsmouth and Southampton groups, with all participants stating that they disagree with the proposals to reduce the number of firefighters at their local stations. The main issues included concerns about proposals for specific stations and alleged inconsistencies in treatment of different stations, and the sustainability of co-responding to medical emergencies.

273. A particularly important point was that the Portsmouth group felt that **Southsea** station was being treated particularly harshly with being required to yield excessive savings compared with all other stations:

*Southsea is having disproportionate reductions! We're losing 16 [firefighters] now (and will have lost 28 firefighters since 2008) – so we're now accounting for 18% of all the savings proposed – nearly £580K! (Portsmouth)*

*The proposal showing 16 on shift at Southsea is misleading because it includes a ridership factor of four – and 12 are needed at a “persons reported” – which would leave none available to crew the ALP*

*Southsea's ALP is jump-crewed and there are over 40 high-rises over six floors – so the ALP should have primary crewing (Portsmouth).*

274. In Southampton staff criticised the proposal for **Hightown** to be an ABC Level 2 station because it has a growing population and the proposal would mean a big loss of capacity at night and reduce the support Hightown could give to other stations.
275. The provision of medical cover by HFRS was also a concern for participants, because this additional demand is already having a big impact on fire cover, which will only worsen with reduced crewing levels. For example:

*The medical responsibilities we have taken on willingly will increase our workload, but this needs to be recognised at Basingstoke where we might not be able to deal with our primary duties effectively (Basingstoke).*

### Options for Gosport Station

276. Both Options 1 and 2 were generally rejected when discussed in the Portsmouth forum. Option 1 was seen as weakening night-time cover and lengthening response times, while Option 2 was seen to carry all the dangers associated with crews of two.
277. However, on balance, it was (reluctantly) accepted that Option 2 would be the most preferable *if there had to be a choice*:

*Option 2 would still involve sending two people to house fires at night. [But] if the station cannot have 24/7 cover then night-time crews of two is second best (Portsmouth).*

278. More generally, the Portsmouth forum thought the Risk Review had underestimated the risks at Gosport. The “poor location” Gosport fire station for attracting RDS crews was discussed – and it was that the station should be moved to a wider catchment area.

### Options for Havant Station

279. In the Portsmouth forum Options 1 or 2 for Havant station were both rejected. Instead of accepting either of them, the firefighters preferred to keeping their current resources and to:

Close three RDS stations nearby; and/or

Creating a new watch/duty system based on three shifts.

### Other Suggestions

280. There were a number of suggestions about other ways to save money, such as closing some fire stations and reducing the numbers of managers – for example:

*Why not close fire stations if they are in the wrong place? That's just a political decision to avoid a fuss! (New Forest)*

*Why no station closures if they're in the wrong place and/or there is alternative cover available – for example, Beaulieu or Burley. Some of our stations are in the wrong places for historical or deference reasons – but we need to address these issues (New Forest)*

*We should reduce the numbers of managers; we could have regional CFOs and save a lot of money (Basingstoke and Deane)*

*We can also increase other revenue streams – with more gradual increases in Council Tax – we could charge the police commercial rents for the space they occupy (Basingstoke and Deane)*

*Non-operational watch managers do admin that could be done by support staff more cheaply; this is an unnecessary expense. Do we need the number of managers that we currently have? Is the structure relevant and necessary? (Southampton).*

### Other Comments

281. New Forest participants felt that the projected savings to be achieved by the proposals has been unrealistically exaggerated:

*The on-call FTE savings calculations are unrealistic since the stations do not have the notional FTE establishments with which they are credited – so the savings will be less (New Forest)*

*At Lyndhurst we have never met out maximum FTE capacity – and nor have the other stations – so the savings are imaginary! (New Forest)*

282. They also said that some on-call costs would actually increase with the introduction of the proposals:

*Due to the ways in which FTEs can be 'made up' from fractions and are then paid, the cost of part-cover fractions is more than single FTE units – so stations will achieve their FTEs by multiple fractions (to involve more people) and each one will get nearly as much as a single whole FTE person who offers full time cover – and it will be difficult then to manage the multiple units! (New Forest)*

283. There were strong concerns in the Basingstoke and Deane forum about how HFRS will cope with cross-border demands as a result of the proposed changes, as well as the provision of resources for stations which border onto Wiltshire:

*Andover has a population of 80,000, but its pumps are increasingly in Wiltshire dealing with fire calls. Also, Wiltshire are planning to close a station (Basingstoke)*

*All border stations should have an intermediate response vehicle as the minimum requirement (Basingstoke).*

284. The wholetime firefighter manifested a sometimes vivid lack of trust in their managers:

*We don't have confidence in the management at the top in the context of the direction they're taking the Service*

*The FRS's most important asset is the staff and they don't trust the managers in the context of all the changes and relocations of staff that are happening now; this has all worsened relations. The managers need to be told that their top-down approach does not work well with us*

*We have not heard any FRS managers speak out about the cuts in the way the Police Chiefs have, but I have heard some managers say privately that they dislike or are scared about some of the proposals – they should say this to the public*

*Many senior officers will certainly have reservations even if they don't express them.*

## Council Tax

285. The New Forest and Portsmouth meetings unanimously recommended a HFA precept increase of 1.99%, with the caveat that they “*would want to see something for the increase*” (Portsmouth). Some said it had been unwise not to increase levels over the last five years, whilst others felt that “*the additional cost is negligible per year and per week.*”
286. The response at the Basingstoke forum was divided, with about half favouring an increase of more than 1.99%:

*We should go for a referendum to avoid the other necessary savings (Basingstoke)*

*I would pay £100 a year in Council Tax for the Fire and Rescue Service to get a proper service with real capacity to deal with incidents (Basingstoke).*

287. The other Basingstoke participants preferred a 1% increase, with one person commenting:

*If you ask for too much money, it may encourage the idea of PCCs taking over the FRS.*

They also said the increased housing would yield more council tax.

288. Three out of the four Southampton participants wanted an increase larger than 1.99%. However, there was also concern that:

*A bigger than normal increase would set a precedent for all the other services to jump on the bandwagon!*

## Public Meetings

### Introduction

289. As part of its extensive consultation programme, the Fire Authority held five public meetings which were publicised by media and by posters and flyers in libraries and local areas. The schedule of meetings is shown in the table below.

MEETING LOCATION	DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Winchester	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	29
Basingstoke	19 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	37
Southampton	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	60
Portsmouth	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	113
Gosport	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	180
<b>TOTAL ATTENDEES</b>		<b>419</b>

290. Although HFRS sought to promote the public meetings, attendance was lower than hoped in the first two meetings. Therefore, there were complaints that few residents were aware of the meetings and criticisms of their advertising. Although the attendance at the Southampton meeting was somewhat better, some were still critical of the publicity:

*How was advertising/promoting this event done? (Winchester)*

*The promotion on the radio did not give details of where and when! (Winchester)*

*Why are these public meetings so poorly advertised? (Basingstoke)*

*There are 245,000 residents in Southampton, so why isn't there not more people at the meeting? Could you have advertised better? (Southampton)*

291. In total, the five lengthy meetings were attended by well over four hundred people, most of whom were residents, but the Basingstoke and Winchester meetings had a disproportionate number of present and past firefighters compared with residents and other stakeholders. In both places about half of the attendees seemed to have a current or previous connection with the HFRS, while about 20 of the Portsmouth attendees were current firefighters. However, there was no evidence that most of the rest of the attendees disagreed with the firefighters: indeed, most of the residents agreed with the opinions of the firefighters in generally opposing the proposals.

292. Each meeting began with a detailed presentation by HFRS, but the great majority of the time was devoted to comments from the attendees, and detailed questions and answer, on all aspects of the proposals. All the meetings lasted about three hours. Generally, the meetings demonstrated the strength of feeling of residents (and past and present HFRS staff) who clearly felt strongly about the proposals and in most cases had attended in order to express their dissatisfaction with the plans.
293. As well as complaining about the advertising of the meetings, some members of the public said they would have liked the Fire Brigades Union to have presented its case as an alternative to the one presented by HFRS.
294. Overall, there was considerable consistency across the five meetings – so they are not separately reported here, but combined to give an overall picture; but any important differences are highlighted.

## Main Findings

### Summary of Main Criticisms

295. Safety and risk were major concerns across all of the groups when discussing the proposals. Although participants said that “every second counts” in attendance times, they rejected the prospect of faster-response FRVs and ABC crewing resoundingly. All of the public meetings were strongly critical of the consultation document and its proposals for allegedly:
- Presenting the proposals as a means of enhancing public safety when its real purpose is to save money
  - Eroding the traditional “safety first culture” of the Service
  - Assessing risk primarily in terms of the probability of emergency incidents rather than their potential severity
  - Making over-optimistic risk assessments that fail to recognise population and housing increases sufficiently
  - Prioritising speed of response (from FRVs) rather than effective response from fire engines with full crews
  - Reducing wholetime firefighters – in general and at night
  - Increasing the use of on-call firefighters and so slowing some response times
  - Reducing the number of full emergency vehicles – in general and at night
  - Jeopardising inter-station back-up cover and support by reducing vehicles and crewing at night
  - Reducing public and firefighter safety, particularly at night

Jeopardising the effective crewing of ALPs and other special vehicles by reducing firefighter numbers

Introducing untried FRVs without full specifications and safe working protocols

Using smaller crews – particularly crews of two – who would be unable to deal with serious emergencies safely and unable to staff less serious or routine incidents properly

Being unduly reliant on high pressure lance technology – which should be a tool on properly equipped fire engines, not the primary fire-fighting means on FRVs and IRVs

Failing to recognise that in some situations high pressure lances endanger people in fire compartments – because the Service is prioritising the putting out of fires over traditional rescues.

### Review priorities

- <sup>296.</sup> A prominent and recurrent point of view in all the meetings (and particularly at Winchester) was that the proposals are simply ‘cuts’ to save money in the light of budget reductions, rather than measures to improve public or firefighter safety:

*Hampshire Fire Service would not be doing any of this if it were not for the cuts – so it’s untrue to say the changes are safer for anyone! (Winchester)*

*The proposals are for financial savings, not to increase safety in any way! (Winchester)*

*This isn’t a plan for making Hampshire safer, but for the deficit (Basingstoke)*

- <sup>297.</sup> The clear implication of these and many other similar comments was that HFRS is proposing to abandon its “safety first” approach to planning and incident control in favour of saving money by adopting untested and less reliable means of incident control. In this context, the senior fire officers who presented and answered questions were challenged to say whether they really believe the proposals would improve safety. Firefighters present declared that:

*The whole philosophy of the Service has changed, from saving life to just attacking the fire regardless (Winchester)*

### Risk Data

- <sup>298.</sup> In Winchester especially, but not only there, there were many challenges to the risk data used in HFRS’s planning – for example:

*Over the border calls aren’t included in the risk and activity figures! (Winchester)*

*You need to include all incidents to show what we do, not just incidents on station grounds! (Southampton)*

*You haven't shown all the mobilisations we do – and the back-up support outside our station areas (Basingstoke)*

*This is a misrepresentation of statistical information (Gosport)*

*The figures have been fudged. Consultation should be open and honest and not pull the wool over people's eyes! (Portsmouth).*

299. As well as arguing that the risk data should *include all incidents attended by each station* rather than counting incidents by station grounds, people also stressed that current population levels are expected to increase over the next few years, and that Basingstoke, Gosport, Portsmouth and Southampton have many areas of social deprivation, with higher relative risks as a consequence. In the Gosport meeting, it was said that the Fareham population figures included in the Consultation Document are inaccurate.

300. In relation to risk data, a particularly recurrent point was that HFRS has based its planning on data about trends in the *frequency* of incidents rather than on the potential *severity* of incidents. In other words, it was claimed that HFRS has over-simplified its approach to risk by concentrating on the numbers of incidents while neglecting their potential for doing terrible harm to those involved. Incident numbers may have reduced, but the potential for severe damage and life loss in any particular incident has not.

301. Repeatedly in the various meetings, statistical data about falling incident levels were rejected because:

*You have to crew for the What If scenarios!*

302. There were repeated allegations in the meetings that the proposals focus too much on speed of response to incidents (with allegedly inadequate FRVs) rather than on ensuring an adequate weight of attack delivering full crews by fire engines and IRVs.

303. In many varying ways, all of the meetings stressed that:

*Cuts cost lives! (Gosport)*

304. Southampton residents summed up the opinions of many in all the meetings by saying:

*The consultation is called "Planning for a Safer Hampshire" – but how can it be "safer" with less firefighters? (Southampton)*

*You don't have hard evidence about the effects of reducing resources – you just keep saying, "We believe", "we hope that..." – but there is a lack of firm information! (Southampton)*

305. Similarly, in Portsmouth, a resident declared:

*[To be safer] you should be recruiting firefighters!*

## Emergency Response Vehicles

### First Response Vehicles (FRVs) and Crewing Levels

306. Criticisms across all five meetings focused on the alleged weaknesses of the First Response Vehicles and their associated crewing, especially at the ABC3 level. The main concerns concentrated on:

The limited capacity of the FRVs

The potential use of two-person crews, especially for property fires and RTCs

Possible delays in support vehicles arriving to support the FRVs at serious incidents.

307. These three issues about the use of FRVs were said to worsen the safety of both the public and the firefighters – and in some meetings the issues were linked in the suggestion that in practice FRVs will amount to “two people and a van” attending serious (or potentially serious) incidents.

308. The key dilemma identified in various ways in all the meetings was that because FRVs will be unable to deal with incidents that turn out to be serious, their small crews will either be ineffectual while waiting for back-up support to arrive or feel pressured into taking unsafe and premature actions while unsupported by fully equipped vehicles and full crews.

309. Current and previous firefighters stressed that in their opinion there are no established protocols for such the deployment of small crews, and so their use would be unsafe for both the firefighters and public.

310. Residents were also hostile to the use of reduced crew numbers in urban or rural areas – and some typical comments were:

*Two-crew have limitations, so is it fair to give them so much responsibility?*  
(Winchester)

*What will the other firefighters do if they can't get in the small vehicle, get a taxi?*  
(Basingstoke)

*How will two firefighters deal with a fire on the first floor of a building?* (Basingstoke)

*Two people aren't enough to enter a burning building – the additional wait will be unacceptable* (Gosport)

*On an RTC incident in thick fog with a crew of five firefighters, I nearly got knocked down by a speeding car whilst sealing off the area. If there had only been two firefighters they would have been killed. Scene safety with a crew of two will not work!* (Portsmouth)

*There are more high rises are being built in Portsmouth and four firefighters are required to carry out the rescue. How are the new vehicles going to cope with a fire in*

*a high rise building if only two crew members are on the smaller vehicle?*  
(Portsmouth)

*There is no guarantee that the new proposals will work and they need to come with a safe work practice, especially if reducing from a crew of four to a crew of two.*  
(Portsmouth)

311. The meetings generally thought that the FRVs were proposed because HFRS is wrongly prioritising speed of response (from quicker vehicles) over effective response from fire engines with full crews. Those anxieties were compounded by worries about the time necessary for back-up support to arrive to relieve FRVs at serious incidents. For example, it was claimed that it would take up to 15 minutes for a support vehicle to arrive in the Fleet and Rushmoor areas.

312. The critics feared that, once accepted, two-person crewing might become frequent, even for potentially more serious incidents – a prospect that alarmed them. It was said that crews of two should be the last resort for rural areas where you cannot recruit on-call firefighters. But, for most attendees, worries about crews of two outweighed any possible benefits – for example, there were frequently expressed worries that crews of two:

Cannot deal with serious incidents

Will be faced with incidents that turn out to be more serious than Control Centre's and risk assessment suggested

Might be able to attend incidents quicker than a full fire engine, but will be unable to deal with situations – such as entering a burning building and making safe a wide range of incident grounds

Will be subject to "moral pressure" by householders to try to deal with emergency incidents prematurely and alone, rather than waiting for back-up from full fire engines

Will be endangered if the proposals are implemented.

313. Some typical comments were:

*Hightown is a high risk area but it would be losing important resources in crew numbers and vehicles* (Southampton)

*What happens if two crew respond to a minor incident and are then called immediately to another more serious one just by themselves?* (Winchester)

*4,500 houses are due to be built in Rushmoor. If the station is reliant on another crew to attend a huge fire then where would the back-up come from?* (Basingstoke)

*How can two firefighters and small vehicles cover the whole of Portsmouth?*  
(Portsmouth)

*How are people in the Control Centre able to access an emergency call? And what happens if it is wrongly assessed and the wrong vehicle has been sent out? Have Control Centre staff been properly trained to assess? (Basingstoke)*

*Cutting back the service with only a certain amount of vehicles means you will send out the wrong vehicles to a major incident which has been incorrectly judged by Control. (Portsmouth).*

314. Of course, as the last quotation above shows, worries about smaller crews were closely connected to concerns about the limitations of the FRVs' equipment. With many past and current firefighters present, the Basingstoke, Southampton and Winchester meetings in particular focussed on several issues about equipment, including the FRVs' uncertain or (compared with a fire engine) lesser:

Water carrying capacity

Hose and pumping capacity

Length of ladder

Cutting equipment

Other emergency and medical equipment.

315. Compared even with these, though, the most intense criticism concerned the so-called "new technology" to be used on the vehicles – specifically the Cobra Coldcut/High Pressure Lance equipment. There were repeated and insistent criticisms of the prospects of FRVS and IRVs (without full crews and without the resources of a full fire engine back-up) using such equipment for property fires. The objections included the following:

The proposed lance equipment and its capacities have not been specified clearly

The equipment is untried and untested

There are no established protocols and safe systems of work for such equipment

In reality, HFRA is consulting about a "concept" rather than a practical proposal

The current consultation is misleading in encouraging the public to see high pressure lances as a "total solution" to some emergency incidents when it is merely "one tool" (properly for use on fully equipped fire engines)

High pressure lances do not enable firefighters to enter buildings for rescues

The use of lances is positively dangerous if people are trapped inside fire compartments because injecting water in such situations can itself scald and kill people

The proper use of lances requires full fire engine crews with breathing apparatus and ventilation equipment to gain access to fire compartments where people may be trapped.

316. Some people said lances are “really useful kit” – but only when in the hands of full crews. Some indicative typical comments were:

*What are the expectations of the high pressure lances – they are not magic wands that can deal with everything! (Southampton)*

*How will cold cut help a person who is trapped in a fire? (Basingstoke)*

*Are we going to release any more information about the lance? (Winchester)*

*The first response with lances is not a real life-saving response – it will just put the fire out, not save or rescue those inside! (Winchester)*

317. The Gosport and Basingstoke residents doubted that FRVs and IRVs would have the equipment needed for high-rise buildings:

*The new vehicles won't have a ladder long enough for high-rise buildings? Why isn't there an aerial ladder platform in Gosport? (Gosport)*

318. Southampton residents criticised the Consultation Document for not providing sufficient information about the new technology, and for focusing mainly on fire incidents, with little mention of the FRVs' RTC equipment. One person asked:

*Why are we just talking about fires? What about RTCs? Do you still have any enough equipment on the smaller vehicles to cut people free? (Southampton)*

319. Also in the Southampton meeting residents questioned whether on-call firefighters will have the time and training to operate safely and effectively in smaller crews with the new technology.

320. The Basingstoke and Southampton discussions mentioned prominently the costs of the proposed new vehicles and the timetable proposed for their introduction:

*How much will each new vehicle cost and how long will they last? (Basingstoke)*

*When will the process of replacing current vehicles start and how long will this take? (Basingstoke)*

*How do we find out when the change is likely to happen and do we have to go to our local fire stations to find out? (Basingstoke)*

*How can you comment on the First Response vehicle when it is just a concept? (Southampton)*

*If it costs one million pounds to crew a fire engine in one year what are the savings on the new vehicle? (Southampton)*

321. In general, the public meetings doubted whether increases in population and housing had been taken into account – and whether all areas had been treated consistently in the

proposals. In some cases there were accusations that areas like Fleet are being treated differently to others:

*Why are you replacing an Enhanced Response with a First Response vehicle when the population in Fleet is so large; and yet in other counties/areas they have a smaller population and are getting an enhanced response? This doesn't make sense and it doesn't feel safe (Basingstoke)*

*There is a massive increase in housing and population so why are you cutting services when you should actually be increasing the services to cope with demand? (Basingstoke)*

322. While most of the comments were hostile to the proposed use of FRVs with smaller crews, there was some support. For example, in Portsmouth one person said:

*A crew of two instead of four will be faster and more efficient but neither the public nor the firefighters have been reassured by this yet.*

323. In Gosport, one resident said:

*Dorset FRS has had smaller engines for many years – so Hampshire is not inventing anything new!*

### **Intermediate (IRVs) and Enhanced Response Vehicles (ERVs)**

324. There was no criticism in any of the meetings about the proposed use and differentiation of Intermediate and Enhanced Response Vehicles. Indeed, the meetings seemed to accept that IRVs were satisfactory and more or less equivalent to current fire engines.
325. However, needless to say in the context of the discussions reported above, people's acceptance of the IRVs was based on the assumption that they would have full crews of four or five firefighters.

### **Activity-based Crewing**

326. Perceptions of risk very much influenced people's attitudes towards the activity-based crewing levels. For example, the reduction of firefighter positions made possible by activity-based crewing (albeit through natural wastage) was criticised for being a big loss of experience for the Service.
327. More specifically, the proposed reduction in evening/night-time crewing at some stations was criticised everywhere because:

*More serious fires take place in the evening – so don't reduce cover at night! (Gosport)*

328. In the context of risk, there were many concerns that HFRS has not taken account of likely increases through new housing in proposing to reduce the number of staff on shift at night-time:

*Why are you cutting back on staff at Fleet when it is a growing population? (Basingstoke)*

*Why is Rushmoor night cover being reduced when the population is constantly growing? Where is the back up going to come from? (Basingstoke)*

*Hightown is going from two to one pumps at night – it's a big reduction! And the station has many mobilisations to stand-by or attend incidents outside its own area (Southampton).*

329. The safety implications of reduced crewing were also discussed in the Southampton and other meetings – especially in relation to the resources available for large-scale incidents and some residents questioned the proposal to reduce crewing levels at Hightown Fire Station when taking the level of risk into account:

*If we have a serious incident in Southampton, how can you pull resources to cover the incident if there will be a reduction in staff? (Southampton)*

*With less firefighters how do we cope with high-rise fires and major incidents? (Southampton)*

*Cosham Fire Station is staying the same, so why is Hightown reducing personnel when the area is more at risk? (Southampton)*

330. In Portsmouth, some challenged HFRS:

*There are more students, more major stores, more buildings (including high rise); how can you cover the growing population and general expanse of Portsmouth with the cuts you are making? (Portsmouth)*

331. Overall, people tended to worry about local risk in the context of FRVs and ABC crewing models – for example:

*Bordon Fire Station has not been given enough flexibility for heath fires; if the firefighters are called somewhere else how can they be in two places at once? Where would the stand-by come from? (Basingstoke)*

*If Hightown's appliance is called to the city centre, the East of the city will be exposed; what will you do to ensure the safety of the residents in the area? (Southampton)*

332. Portsmouth residents were aggrieved that an allegedly disproportionate amount of money (nearly £579K) is proposed to be saved by the changes at Southsea Fire Station; and they were also worried about the resilience of future mutual cover between fire stations in the

Portsmouth area. They stressed the risk levels and relative social disadvantage of the area. Consequently, they were particularly concerned about the proposals for Southsea Fire Station, mainly due to the high-risk nature of the area and number of critical incidents:

*The risk for Southsea is far higher than anywhere else – how can you make these cuts? (Portsmouth)*

333. Gosport residents queried whether their local risks have been considered sufficiently – such as more people using open fires due to the increased cost of gas and electricity; new housing developments which are timber frame and make them more vulnerable to fire; and increases in response times due to congestion. They also stressed the number of high rise buildings, the naval base and the older housing stock.

334. At Gosport one person challenged:

*If there is an increase in risks and incidents in Gosport in the future, would the Fire Service increase the number of personnel?*

335. This last comment certainly implies that the introduction of any changes should be monitored and carefully assessed in the light of changes in circumstances; and it might also be said to imply that some could support the crewing plans more readily if the proposals were seen to be flexible in light of changing risks.

### Specific Options for Four Stations

336. The public meetings were mainly concerned with the important issues of IRVs and ABC crewing models – so they tended not to focus in detail on the specific consultation Options for four particular station areas. So the Options for Gosport, Havant and Winchester, of ABC Level 3 night-time cover by on-call firefighters or by two wholetime firefighters, were not discussed in deliberative detail; and nor were the very different ABC Level 1 and Level 3 Options for Andover.

337. The relevant versions of Options 1 and 2 were discussed at Gosport and Winchester, but the options for Havant did not feature in the questions and comments made in the Basingstoke meeting; and likewise the different Options 1 and 2 for Andover did not feature in the discussions at Portsmouth. There seem to be two main reasons why the options were not taken up in the meetings: first, people were much more concerned about FRVs and ABC crewing models in general; secondly, there were probably few people from Andover and Havant in the relevant meetings.

338. However, the implication of the public meetings overall was that night-time cover should not be reduced at any of the stations. At **Andover**, this would imply that Option 1 would be preferable to Option 2; but the implications are less clear for **Gosport**, **Havant** and **Winchester** – because both their Options 1 and 2 were generally deemed unsatisfactory in reducing night-time cover.

339. Discussions at **Gosport** were complicated by the fact that some residents had been told in a flyer that their fire station would be closed – which of course caused people to worry. Residents were very concerned about what they saw as high risks in Gosport, arising from fuel and armaments depots, MOD property, and possible terrorism. The residents were also concerned about the relative cover provided in Gosport and Rushmoor:

*Rushmoor is a comparable fire ground to Gosport so why does Rushmoor have more cover?*

340. Overall, the Gosport meeting felt strongly that the town needs more night-time personnel than is proposed in either Options 1 or 2 – leading some residents to urge that HFRS should consider a “third option”.

341. It was also unclear whether **Winchester** residents favoured Option 1 (full night-time on-call crew) or Option 2 (two wholetime firefighters overnight) for their local station – because they were more or less equally hostile to both two-person crews and reliance on on-call crews in Winchester. There was considerable emphasis on the difficulties of recruiting and retaining on-call crews who would be available within the Winchester area, but this did not lead the attendees to favour Option 2. A recurrent theme was that Winchester cannot recruit enough on-call firefighters who live near enough – so that the Winchester night-time on-call (back-up or support) crews are often off the run. The Winchester meeting felt that crews of two:

*Should be the last resort for rural areas where you cannot recruit on-call firefighters and would weaken current pre-determined attendance standards.*

342. The overall conclusion of the Winchester meeting was that the city should continue to have a full wholetime crew at night; and the rural residents present were hostile to the use of reduced crews in their areas.

### Other Comments on Fire Cover

343. Across the meetings, there were questions about the levels of involvement HFRS will have in co-responding to medical calls – and in particular what will be the implications of such involvement for fire cover:

*If there is an accident on the motorway, will you require more expensive technology and machinery to attend? (Basingstoke)*

*If we are attending medical calls who is going to be there to attend fire incidents? (Basingstoke)*

*How stations will be covered if some or all of their available crews go out on medical emergencies? Co-responding is detrimental to proper fire cover. (Winchester)*

344. Some firefighter participants argued that ‘jump crewing’ would not be feasible and safe with reduced firefighter numbers.

345. In relation to cost saving, a Basingstoke resident asked:

*How can you justify investing in a new building for a fire station in Basingstoke with all the cuts that are taking place?’*

346. Continuing and improving education for young people was also mentioned as an important factor in some meetings, especially for those who are new to the area. In reference to the spate of fire started by youths in the Fleet area, one resident asked:

*What about resources for education of youth and young adults who are new to the area who not only explore but challenge the area they live in?*

A Portsmouth resident asked:

*Where does education cover for children and students come into your budget and cuts?*

### Council Tax

347. Although the consultation included possible options for council tax increases, the issues received relatively little attention in the five public meetings – partly because most of the participants took it for granted that the HFRA precept should be increased (by at least 1.99%), but, more importantly still, they focused primarily on the fire cover proposals.

348. Where they commented, participants thought it had been unwise not to have increased the council tax precept over the last five years and generally (but not in all meetings) council tax increases of 1.99% were approved without opposition; but there were questions about:

What would a precept increase achieve in terms of avoiding the current proposals for savings?

Would more radical changes be required if the precept did not increase by 1.99%?

349. The Portsmouth meeting did not generally favour increasing the HFRA council tax precept, mainly because residents felt that they already pay enough; but some attendees said an increase was justified and would raise Band D costs by very little.

350. Basingstoke residents favoured increasing the HFRA precept by 1.99%, and also suggested that income could also be raised from sponsorship and advertising.

351. In Gosport no particular level of increase was favoured, but there was some interest in the prospect of a referendum for an increase beyond 1.99%:

*What is the appetite for a referendum? Has there been a survey? (Gosport)*

*Why can't we have a referendum and keep what we've got? (Gosport)*

352. Opinion at the Southampton meeting was mixed, with no clear consensus on whether there should be any changes to Council Tax or not.
353. At Winchester the public meeting approved a council tax increase of 1.99% for HFA without any opposition at all.

## Written Submissions

### Written Submissions

354. During the formal consultation process, 55 written submissions were received from professional, political, interest, voluntary and community groups as well as from individual Hampshire residents. The table below shows the breakdown of contributors by type.

Type of Correspondent	Number of respondents/signatories
Councils (City/Borough or District/Town/Parish)	18
Residents	11
Local Organisations	7
MPs/Councillors	6
HFRS Staff (including Fire Stations and ex-Chief Fire Officer)	8
Representative Bodies	4
Neighbouring FRS	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>

355. ORS has read all the written submissions and summarised them in this chapter; none have been disregarded even if they are not expressed in a 'formal' way. It is a painstaking but necessary process to identify the main issues raised by respondents.
356. Detailed written submissions do not lend themselves to easy summary and so readers are encouraged to consult ORS's full report below for a more detailed account of the views expressed. However, the following overview gives a sense of the types of issues raised.

Three submissions (from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, and an ex-HFRS-Chief Fire Officer) **generally endorsed** HFRS's proposals

Five submissions (from the Fire Brigades Union; the Retained Firefighters Union and two Hampshire residents and one West Sussex resident) were **generally opposed** to HFRS's proposals and the consultation process; and the Fire Officers' Association also said it could not support the proposals in their current form

Eight submissions (from Aldershot Branch Labour Party; Blackwater and Hawley Town Council; Church Crookham Parish Council; Elvetham Heath Parish Council; Fleet Town Council; Hart District Council; and two Hampshire residents) were concerned about the proposals for **Rushmoor and Hart** - and particularly those for **Fleet, Rushmoor and Yateley** Fire Stations

Seven submissions (Alan Mack MP; Councillor Beryl Francis; Emsworth Residents Association; Grayshott Parish Council; and three Hampshire residents) were concerned about the proposals for **Havant and East Hampshire** - and particularly those for **Bordon, Emsworth, Grayshott and Havant** Fire Stations

Six submissions (from Councillor Peter Chegwyn; FBU Gosport; Defence Munitions Gosport; Caroline Dinenage MP; Gosport Borough Council; and a Hampshire resident) commented on (and mainly expressed concerns about) the proposals for **Gosport** Fire Station

Five submissions (from Brockenhurst Parish Council; Fordingbridge District Council; Hyde Parish Council; Lord Montagu of the Beaulieu Estate; and the New Forest Verderers) were concerned about the proposals for the **New Forest** - and particularly those for **Brockenhurst, Fordingbridge, Ringwood and Beaulieu** Fire Stations

Three submissions (from Councillor David Airey; Southampton Airport, and Southampton City Council) discussed the proposals for **Hamble and Hightown** Fire Stations in **Southampton** - and a further two (from Penny Mourdant MP and a Hampshire resident) about those for **Portsmouth**

Two submissions (from member of HFRS staff and Winchester Cathedral) were concerned about the proposals for **Winchester and Sutton Scotney** Fire Stations - and a further one (from Kingsclere Parish Council) about those for **Kingsclere**

Five West Sussex Town and Parish Councils (Chidham & Hambrook; Compton; Harting; Midhurst; and Southbourne) were worried about the implications of HFRS's proposals for fire cover in **West Sussex**

Significant alternative proposals were submitted by **Gosport, Havant, Hightown, Kingsclere, Rushmoor and Winchester** Fire Stations, all of which are summarised in some detail below. Further alternatives were suggested by other respondents, which are highlighted in bold within following chapter

One further submission was received which stated at its outset that 'this response should not be edited or altered and should be presented to Fire and Rescue Authority Members as submitted'. These instructions have been followed.

357. In terms of the more general concerns and issues raised, these were chiefly around:

A perceived 'reduced' service from a first response vehicle initially - and longer response times for back-up at (and thus longer 'completion' times for) larger incidents

Public and firefighter safety (a particular issue was the moral pressure for two firefighters in act in a potentially unsafe manner at a critical incident prior to the arrival of back-up resources)

The COBRA high pressure lance system, which should be a 'tool' for firefighters, not a replacement

The lack of specification for the proposed new vehicles and new equipment

The need to trial the proposed new vehicles and new equipment prior to full implementation

Reduced crewing at night at ABC2 and ABC3 stations (people were particularly worried about the implications of a wholly on-call service during the overnight period)

The need to maintain public safety and not make service reductions purely on financial grounds

How future-proof HFRS's proposals are in the context of future population increases

Reduced resilience across HFRS as a result of fewer firefighters

The consultation process, the title of which (Planning for a Safer Hampshire) was considered misleading insofar as it the Risk Review was driven by the need for financial savings rather than to enhance safety across the county. Other comments were made about: the 'loaded' questionnaire; the 'misleading' data within the Consultation Document; a lack of publicity for the consultation generally and the public meetings in particular (which were also thought to have been too few in number and held in inadequate locations).

358. The submissions are summarised below. It is important to note that the following section is a report of the views expressed by submission contributors. In some cases, these views will not be supported by the available evidence - and while ORS has not sought to highlight or correct those that make incorrect statements or assumptions, this should be borne in mind when considering the submissions.

## Summaries of Written Submissions

### Support for Proposals/Process

#### Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

The Council thanks HFRS's officers for attending a meeting to present and discuss the Service's proposals: they provided strong reassurance that the proposed changes are not likely to have an adverse impact – and may, in fact, result in improved response potential.

With regard to the specific consultation questions, the Council agrees that:

It is right to reduce risk by improving average response times to critical incidents and the proposed changes appear to achieve this

It is right to reduce costs by increasing efficiency and the proposals appear to achieve this

There should be different types of vehicles for different emergency incidents

Fire station crews should be based on the type, number and timing of incidents in each area

Core firefighters should be on duty at the busiest times, with fewer working during less busy periods

An increase in Council Tax for the HFRS is justified and a 1.99% rise would be a reasonable rate of increase for 2016-17 based on achieving the goals and efficiencies presented by HFRS

There is no appetite for a higher Council Tax increase than the 1.99% indicated

The proposals for individual fire stations in the BDBC area are acceptable.

Furthermore, the Council recognises that major change programmes are unsettling for firefighters and welcomes HFRS's commitment to continue engagement with teams at local fire stations to ensure they are fully involved in shaping the new service. It also welcomes reassurances that the Service will work with staff to assess the effectiveness of new equipment and procedures once introduced.

Finally, the Council knows that local fire stations and personnel are highly valued, but also appreciates HFRS's financial pressures. It supports the innovative approach being taken to maintain residents' safety while achieving required efficiencies.

#### Ex-Chief Fire Officer

The ex-Chief Fire Officer (CFO) feels HFRS has taken a strong, intelligence-based approach to its proposals and is building on the experience it has gained over the last five years. They note the strong link between understanding and quantifying risk and then seeking to match more carefully the resources applied to those risks - and suggest that taking a 'component based' approach to response resources appears to be well thought through and clear in its

rationale. However, the respondent feels it might be helpful to understand how this approach will be evaluated and subsequently reported upon in the future, as it is a significantly new approach and ensuring learning is derived from the results will be vital.

The respondent has been particularly assured by the thoroughness of the research underpinning the proposals and commends HFRS on the clear and simple way its complex methodology has been explained.

The respondent wholeheartedly supports the strategy for seeing local investment in the service through an uplift in council tax.

### **West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service**

West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) supports the broad concept of change suggested within HFRS's consultation documentation, especially the principles of embracing new technologies and employing the latest operational tactics, alongside intelligent and flexible crewing arrangements.

WSFRS also fully supports the attempt to reduce attendance times to critical incidents, which is considered particularly appropriate in respect to optimising available 'on-call' resources; a real and pressing challenge that all FRSs with 'on-call' staff face.

In respect of potential implications for West Sussex resulting from the implementation of HFRS's consultation plans; WSFRS makes the following comments:

#### **Continued Partnership Working**

WSFRS anticipates continued close working and open dialogue with HFRS regarding the implementation of its plans; allowing a joined up approach in managing shared risks, issues and opportunities and to facilitate greater collaboration and partnership. It notes that the current secondment of a WSFRS Senior Officer into HFRS has proven extremely valuable in maintaining this close working relationship.

WSFRS does have reservations about potential reductions in attendance or increased response times, especially in areas along its border where a HFRS response forms part of a 'usual' pre-determined attendance. It also recognises, though, that fire cover in West Sussex is a matter for its own Authority.

#### **New Technologies and Operational Tactics**

Regarding the proposed use of new technologies and developing new operational tactics, policy and procedures; WSFRS highlights the importance of 'over the border' interoperability - particularly ensuring safe systems of work are maintained between operational crews and that respective supporting training programmes, policies and procedures are compatible. WSFRS would also be interested in working with HFRS in the development and use of such new technologies and tactics.

## **Community and stakeholder communications, confidence and reassurance**

WSFRS says that, as both Services support one another over the border, a continued joint approach to mutual stakeholder engagement and communications is desirable to ensure coherent and consistent information is conveyed by both Services to interested parties.

WSFRS notes that concerns within West Sussex are generally around: potential increases in response times; and changes in the number of firefighters and type of equipment that may be available to respond. The Service has encouraged all interested parties to raise their concerns by submitting their own response to the consultation.

## **General Support for Proposals (but with some concerns)**

### **Hampshire Branch of the Fire Officers' Association (FOA)**

#### **General Comments**

FOA appreciates HFRS's attempts to shape its proposals by genuinely engaging with its employees, and agrees that, for the Service to evolve and provide best value for money, it must consider introducing new technology and firefighting techniques (even without a funding shortfall). It is also generally supportive of the proposals being put to the community and the Fire Authority. However, it feels the Risk Review strap line - 'Planning for a Safer Hampshire' - is misleading to the public given the scale of cuts being proposed.

#### **HFRS's Proposals**

In general, FOA supports the introduction of a new vehicle strategy to reduce the budget deficit and as a means to maintain firefighting capability at stations where RDS availability is problematic. It does, though, have a number of issues it feels need to be considered.

#### **First Response Vehicle**

Since the concept of the First Response Vehicle (FRV) was first discussed, FOA has challenged the Service, and not received a satisfactory response, about the relationship between the identified savings and the implementation strategy. If the identified savings are based on the proposed level of FRV provision, HFRS should clarify its intentions for making up the funding deficit should the 'trial' fail to realise the expected benefits and the vehicle strategy be changed.

Mixed messages on crewing implications and potential savings have been provided through the Risk Review documentation and public consultations. The implications on watch and station establishments if the FRV is to be crewed with four personnel wherever possible have not been sufficiently explained.

It would appear that the disposition strategy is not based on risk, but aligned to meeting funding deficit requirements (for example, the Risk Review identifies significant heritage risks in Winchester, yet it is unclear what work has been done to significantly reduce the risk in this area to enable reductions in fire cover levels).

Whilst supporting the operation of the FRV with two personnel, FOA asserts that the crew must include at least one Level One commander, due to the range of incident and command decisions that will be required. It is not clear that HFRS have accounted for, or determined, the number of Level One commanders required to operate a safe system of work.

FOA is unclear on the expected benefits of the FRV over the intermediate appliance insofar as there appears to be only a small difference in vehicle size (and crewing levels). FOA suggests that further consideration be given to a **two-vehicle strategy**.

### **New Technology**

FOA fully supports the proposal to introduce an Ultra High Pressure (UHP) hose operating system and would endorse its inclusion on all frontline fire appliances – but it does not support any proposal that suggests these systems equate to a reduction in personnel, as they are simply another tool in the box of the response commander. FOA also seeks confirmation that the communications system to be utilised by a UHP operating crew is of the utmost quality and not another FRS cast off system.

### **Retained Duty System and Firefighter Safety**

FOA has concerns about the growing pressures being placed on RDS personnel and the sustainability of the RDS to underpin HFRS's proposals.

FOA also remains concerned that increased vehicle movements (due to the number of appliance movements required to meet the incident task analysis) represents an unacceptable increase in road risk to firefighters and the public. H&S statistics show there has been an increase in vehicle accidents in co-responding vehicles, and it is not clear what control measures are to be implemented to mitigate that risk.

### **Other Issues**

FOA also raises issues around HFRS's Business Fire Safety proposals, flexible duty system and health strategy. As these issues are not directly relevant to this consultation, they are not reproduced here - but the Fire Authority has received the submission in full so it can take account of them.

## **General Opposition to Proposals/Process**

### **Fire Brigades Union (FBU)**

The FBU believes the public has been misled about the true nature of HFA's proposals and the reasons for them, which are primarily financial. Rather than improving the service, the FBU says the proposals increase risk by reducing resilience substantially – and its primary reasons for these views are summarised below.

### **Austerity agenda**

Hampshire FBU criticises HFA for *embracing the austerity agenda* imposed by the government. Over the last four years, the FBU's advice to increase council tax has been

ignored by the Fire Authority - thus increasing the Service's projected deficit and potentially leading to lower emergency cover standards.

### **Consultation process**

The FBU feels the consultation process has been imperfect because:

The proposals have been mainly publicised online - so many people (especially vulnerable groups) have had difficulty in accessing information, particularly when links have not worked

Too few public meetings have been held - and their advertising has been inadequate and their locations unsuitable. For example, North Hampshire had a single meeting in Basingstoke, so the North West (Andover area) and North East (Rushmoor area) had little opportunity to take part, despite their fire stations facing big changes

The 'glossy' consultation document and its data is misleading in:

Describing the proposals as improvements and by not admitting to the public that budget cuts are the real driver for change and lower standards

Referring to a 52% reduction in the number of fire-related incidents, but not acknowledging the increases in other types of calls or the training and other requirements that do not vary with call rates

Not acknowledging that cuts of any sort would reduce the Service's capacity for community safety work (so the Fire Authority must maintain its priorities and funding for community safety)

Using station ground incident data without giving a true picture of fire engine mobilisations to other station areas for incidents with multiple appliance attendances;

Using historical data to argue for the low probability of incidents happening rather than focusing on their potential severity.

### **Risk levels**

The FBU says the consultation document is conceptual in nature and assumes an ideal world. In fact, though, the proposals would reduce fire cover by reducing the firefighter posts in order to save money - thus reducing resilience for spate conditions and multiple large incidents. But it says serious fires and the horrendous RTCs will always happen, in many cases at night (when fires in residential properties are far more dangerous) - so the consultation document is too optimistic in relying on projected low probabilities of incidents rather than on the realities of severe fires.

### **Emergency cover resources**

Although the consultation document argues that fire engines are inappropriate for 70% of incidents, the FBU says the nature of the incidents is often unknown at the time of call – so

it is always right to send full crews on fully equipped appliances to make meaningful interventions.

The FBU feels the proposed three-vehicle strategy is not sensible. The push for Fast Response Vehicles (FRVs) is only to maintain misleading response time standards and justify the proposals. HFRS should use better performance indicators – for it is not the first attendance time that matters most, but the times taken (a) to make meaningful interventions and (b) to resolve incidents.

The FBU feels that prioritising the time for smaller vehicles to turn out with fewer crew members misses the real issue, which is RDS availability. It says that recruitment and training should aim for a full RDS establishment of competent firefighters, and no RDS appliance should be mobilised without the capability to commit a Breathing Apparatus (BA) team. RDS managements should be enhanced with realistic contracts to reward availability and not just turnouts. It also feels that **all fire stations should provide for minimum crews of four capable of responding to incidents with immediate BA interventions where required.**

The FBU believes there is no evidence that the proposed ‘high pressure lance’ by itself could benefit anyone trapped in a fire compartment: such casualties can only be made safe by being removed by a BA rescue. So high pressure lances can only supplement, but not replace, BA rescues – it is folly to suppose that crews of two firefighters might tackle fires using only a lance. Moreover, there would be a huge moral pressure on the two firefighters to commit to BA rescues if they were required – which would be contrary to proper health and safety standards for firefighters.

In general, the FBU stresses that **full crews (minimum four) should attend all non-fire incidents, apart from those already responded to by the current small fires vehicles.** Whilst it may be possible to resolve some incidents with two crew members, it would always be safer to have crews of four. For example, a seemingly insignificant incident on the road can be dealt with by two crew members, but two more can better protect the safety of the incident from oncoming vehicles and maintain the security of the appliance.

The Union also says that any future moves to introduce a medical response role for crews must not impact on the provision of fire cover – and HFRS does not currently have the capacity to take on such roles without impacting upon its current capabilities.

#### **Council tax**

The FBU supports the maximum possible increase in council tax and believes that the headline that a 43% increase would be required to maintain the Service status quo is misleading and alarmist to the public in not explaining that only the FA precept would be increased by that amount.

### Andover

The Union feels that a risk analysis that provides for 24/7 immediate cover in Option 1 should not default to Option 2 by pretending that there is adequate cover from a crew of two in a FRV.

### Gosport/Havant/Winchester

The FBU considers it unacceptable for these stations to be left without immediate cover (Option 1) overnight. It feels the Service has tried to placate fears with Option 2, but this still fails to give proper immediate cover with a BA capability.

### Hightown/Rushmoor

The Union feels it is not justifiable to reduce cover at night and introduce a duty system requiring negotiation between employers and the FBU because Hightown has a high density of population with deprivation and high-rise risk, and Rushmoor attends multiple calls into Surrey.

### Key priorities

Regarding 'double' (or triple) jumping of specialist and aerial appliances: the FBU says **no firefighting appliance should crew with less than four**, and resources should be moved to the enhanced appliance to enable those to crew with five or six whilst a specialist appliance is utilised.

The Union says **all wholetime stations should have appliances capable of crewing with a minimum of five personnel and providing an immediate BA response on arrival at incidents** – and that **all wholetime appliances and those on RDS stations with a track record of full availability should be capable of crewing with a minimum of five personnel and able to provide an immediate BA response on arrival at an incident**.

High pressure lances should, the FBU says, be issued to appliances where there is a higher chance of BA deployment, in order to allow for a full review of the new technology without pressure to utilise it as a replacement for BA in the initial stages of an incident.

Finally, the HFA should ensure that it is properly recompensed for HFRS's operational commitment to neighbouring brigades, with transparent accounts available for scrutiny.

## Retained Firefighters Union (RFU)

### Introduction

The RFU is fully committed to embracing new ways of working and acknowledges that the fire service of yesterday is not necessarily what is needed for tomorrow - and that HFRS must now review how it delivers services to the public.

### Risk Review Proposals – Financial Savings

The RFU does not believe HFRS has a secret agenda and is certain that its consultation is genuine. Nonetheless, the union also believes that the Risk Review will reduce the standard

of protection HFRS can offer those living in or visiting Hampshire - but acknowledges that this is not the Service's 'fault' insofar as it now receives less money from Government and thus cannot supply the same level of service as previously.

The union highlights the 'great efforts' made in terms of efficiency savings (particularly within HFRS's 'support' functions) and sharing resources with other emergency services - but regrettably acknowledges that, ultimately, cuts have to be made to front-line firefighting resources and the suite of resources available for emergencies.

The RFU discusses the reasons given to support a budget cut - one of which is the reduction in calls. It argues that this does not add up as the FRS is expected to provide a level of cover 24/7 to its communities and that it is not supply and demand but placement and level of attack that is expected. The union argues that, while there are many cheaper ways to run a fire service, corners must not be cut financially when dealing with people's lives.

The RFU also challenges the figures offered to the public in that fire appliances not only attend calls within their own station grounds, but are also moved elsewhere in the county to provide support at incidents. The union argues that stations should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of a complex and resilient pattern of fire cover throughout Hampshire.

#### **Risk Review Proposals – New Technology**

The RFU acknowledges that technology will always advance in support of operational functions, and that the service has generally been very good at evaluating and adopting it. However, as the technology HFRS proposes to adopt is as yet untested, the RFU does not believe it is something the Service can claim is going to benefit firefighters and the public.

#### **Risk Review Proposals – RDS Availability**

The RFU notes that HFRS has (yet again) begun a project to improve RDS availability, but argues that there is no golden bullet or simple solution that can be applied - and that a deeper understanding of what it is like to be an on-call firefighter is required.

The union feels that reducing the number of available RDS firefighters at a station shows a scant regard for how they work and flies in the face of proven forecasts showing that they are finding it harder to maintain their availability. The reasons for this are that:

Employers are expecting more from their employees and so their flexibility to provide RDS cover is being chipped away

RDS firefighters now tend to work further from where they live and so cannot provide daytime cover locally

They are working harder (sometimes with multiple jobs) so 'being available' becomes harder and leisure time becomes more important

Fire stations are no longer seen as social centres with regular evening social events - and there is lessening pride in keeping pumps on the run

Constantly changing discussions on politics and corporate policies have worn many down.

Traditionally, the positive aspects of RDS firefighting have apparently outweighed the negative, but the RFU says this balance is changing and people are leaving because they are disillusioned. It is said that the effects of this should not be underestimated; and that the RDS is the only reason many cuts to the more expensive wholetime service can be made, because HFRS knows it has hidden resilience in the form of the on-call system.

This is described by the RFU as a 'potential powder keg' - and the union strongly argues that the more HFRS chips away at the fundamental facets that keep an RDS firefighter wanting to remain available, the more it affects the individuals desire to do so. Essentially, RDS resilience may not be guaranteed in future for the reasons outlined above.

### Resident

The resident makes the following claims and comments in relation to the Consultation Document:

Its title (Planning for a Safer Hampshire) is misleading as its proposals do not enhance the safety of Hampshire's people and property

It makes no reference to HFRA'S statutory duties under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 - and so members of the public cannot be satisfied that its proposals are adequate to fulfil those duties

The Risk Review proposals will result in reductions to HFRS's overall capacity, which will increase risk to persons and property - and the document does not address the Service's future capability to deal with a catastrophic incident, or its residual capacity to deal with day-to-day calls while responding to such an incident

It relies on incident statistics for one year only as the basis for assessing need, whereas the number of incidents must vary from year to year (and so a longer history of calls should have been used in justification of the proposals)

It quotes HFRS's annual budget and projected five-year deficit without giving any detail on how these figures are generated. It also quotes estimated savings from the proposals, but does not say whether those are annual or cumulative

It gives no account of the capital costs that would be involved in the reorganisation and re-equipping needed to implement HFRS's proposals

Its associated questionnaire is 'loaded'.

The resident also says that:

The proposals to reduce the technical capability of appliances and crewing levels pose enhanced risks, particularly in rural areas. As such, **where a 'rural' station is provided with only one vehicle, it should be an enhanced capability**

Reliance on 'the latest technologies' does nothing to reassure the public, as these have not been fully assessed in rural areas with older buildings of traditional construction (which could potentially be damaged by their use)

At Alresford, the proposed introduction of an intermediate response vehicle (which the respondent describes as a 'less well-equipped transit van') with a two man crew could lead to lengthier response times for back-up appliances to serious incidents, as the smaller crew would have to wait for another appliance from Winchester or Alton (where capacity is also to be reduced)

They would not object to a 1.99% increase in Council Tax (albeit that Government funding reductions are undermining HFRS's ability to fulfil its statutory duties).

## **Resident**

The resident questions how HFRS will be able to tackle very large fires if it loses 215 firefighters - and whether a first response vehicle with two firefighters on board will have all the necessary equipment to proceed safely at a house fire. They also say that while most serious fires are at night, HFRS's proposals will severely reduce the number of full-time firefighters on duty over the night-time period. Essentially, the resident is afraid that HFRS's proposals will reduce its efficiency and put the public at greater risk.

## **Resident (West Sussex)**

### **Introduction**

The respondent, a retired fire officer, is responding to the consultation not only in this capacity, but also as a resident of West Sussex potentially affected by the proposals.

### **Information in Consultation Document**

The respondent feels that information on the total number of turnouts for, and the special appliances based at each station should have been included in the consultation document to better illustrate the wider use of appliances and the potential impact of reduced crewing on their availability - and also to provide a much more accurate reflection of stations' workloads and highlight the strategic cover they provide.

With particular regard to special appliances, these are considered important operational assets for the FRS and it is said that, by reducing the number of firefighters at each station, the ability to crew these appliances will be reduced – with a wider service impact on operational capability. Southsea is used as an example: 'when the ALP is required to attend incidents off its own ground with a support appliance, only two firefighters will be available to crew the first response appliance. In the event of further incidents...this will place these firefighters and the public at a greater level of risk'.

### **General Comments on Proposals**

The proposal not to close any fire stations in Hampshire is welcomed.

The respondent feels that equipment such as the COBRA firefighting lance is a positive step that will improve operational capability. However, they do not feel this equipment can be a replacement for safe crewing levels or adequately equipped appliances.

While recognising that demand on the FRS has reduced, the respondent feels there is potential for this trend to reverse (with climate change, population increases and terrorist threats). As such, they argue that the ability to stand up extra resources and future proof the service must be maintained.

As such - and considering fire appliances are well maintained, have low mileage and low resale value - the respondent suggests **mothballing those removed from front line service to establish a reserve capability for periods of high demand (crewed by off duty immediate response firefighters and/or specially recruited on-call personnel).**

The proposed 27 first response vehicles represent 36% of HFRS's vehicle fleet – and while the respondent accepts the concept has positive value in some circumstances, they are concerned that limited trials of such vehicles in the first attendance role have taken place. They are also concerned that these appliances will not have the capability to deal with the wide variety of incidents that can be attended by a standard Water Tender Ladder on their own - particularly relevant during spate conditions and periods of high operational activity.

#### **Safety Concerns – Two-person Crews**

While appreciating the challenges of on-call firefighter availability and sympathising with the view that it is better to have two firefighters in attendance than a delayed fully-crewed appliance, the respondent suggests that sending only two firefighters to an incident could place them (and the public) at greater risk.

The respondent argues that first response vehicles do not have the flexibility of intermediate or enhanced appliances, which can deal with small fires but can also be immediately available to attend a house fire or other critical incident. Essentially, they say that, if the justification for introducing many first response vehicles is to improve attendance times by overcoming some of the challenges presented by difficult access (and not cost-cutting), safe systems of work coupled with safe crewing levels are needed.

#### **Loss of Immediate Cover at Night**

The respondent says that relying on an on-call response is unpredictable and builds in a time delay. It is therefore a particular concern that a full night-time immediate response crew will no longer be available at Havant, Gosport and Winchester Fire Stations under the proposed changes. Furthermore, they are concerned about the reduction in night-time immediate response crews at Hightown Fire Station, which would have a particular impact on attendance at high-rise incidents.

#### **Strategic Cover, Resilience and Over-the-Border Assistance**

While much has been made of the fact that, in future, the equipment carried on appliances will be focused on local risk, the respondent feels it is important to remember that fire

appliance are strategic resources that can be deployed anywhere. As such, they consider it important that appliances carry a full inventory of equipment to ensure they are flexible operational assets – which will not be possible on smaller, less equipped vehicles.

In light of this, the respondent argues that **stations (like Emsworth) would be better served by a more strategically flexible intermediate appliance than a first response vehicle.**

Further, it is said that stand-bys will be more difficult insofar as it would be unlikely that a first response vehicle would be sent to stand-by at, say, Chichester Fire Station. They feel that additional pressure will be placed on Fire Control in deciding what type of appliance to send where, particularly during spate conditions.

The respondent is disappointed about the lack of mention in the consultation document to any changes being made at adjoining Fire and Rescue Services, which will have an impact on the future support available to HFRS.

Finally, the respondent says that it is not sufficient to provide a level of fire cover that is adequate; it must be sufficiently resilient to deal with day-to-day business and the potential for extreme ‘black swan’ type events.

## **Basingstoke and Deane Fire Stations**

### **Kingsclere Parish Council**

Kingsclere Parish Council (KPC) understands that demands on HFRS have changed (and will continue to do so), but feels that its primary function must remain fire and rescue - and is not convinced that the changes to Kingsclere Fire Station will achieve this. The Council argues that the cuts for Kingsclere seem disproportionately high when compared with other stations (such as Overton) covering much smaller populations.

The Council is not averse to change, but is concerned that firefighters seem opposed to HFRS’s proposals: in fact, it claims that, during the presentation received before the council meeting in November 2015, it was clear that the leaders of the Service are not speaking to worried firefighters. KPC says that many of the reforms must be taken on trust (as the firefighters cannot see, use, examine or access the proposed equipment), which suggests poor communication and a failure of leadership and management.

KPC is also concerned about the number of firefighters being sent to incidents and the expectation that firefighters will attend medical emergencies without paramedic training. It also notes that the Kingsclere Fire Station ground consists of many hamlets accessible via small country lanes, rendering the claim that a Basingstoke appliance could reach it in well under fifteen minutes as ‘nonsense’.

Finally, KPC notes that HFRA is already a low Council Tax and Government grant authority, so although a raise in council tax would not raise much in the face of the scale of cuts required, this may be preferred to service reductions. It also questions whether HFRS would be recommending change if there was not a financial imperative.

## Gosport Fire Station

### Councillor Peter Chegwyn

Councillor Chegwyn welcomes HFRS's proposal for the provision of new, smaller vehicles which will be better able to negotiate narrow residential areas in Gosport. However, he strongly opposes the crewing proposals that would 'leave Gosport Fire Station without sufficient full-time firemen capable of responding quickly to all emergency calls...24 hours a day'.

Councillor Chegwyn believes that a town of 80,000 inhabitants located at the end of a peninsula with poor road access must retain fire cover at a sufficient level without any increase in response times. This, he feels, is especially important given the MoD bases (and a Fuel Depot) in Gosport, and the MoD's plans to reduce overnight cover on its bases.

Councillor Chegwyn suggests an 'Option 3' for Gosport: **retaining seven immediate response firefighters during the daytime and a minimum of four at night** (a proposal put forward by firefighters at the Gosport public meeting, which received a great deal of support).

Liberal Democrat Councillor Peter Chegwyn developed the response form below, which in addition to urging the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner neither to cut the number of Police and Police and Community Support Officers in Gosport nor to close Gosport Fire Station, also urges HFRS 'not to leave Gosport Fire Station without at least four full-time firemen overnight'. 257 of these forms were returned.

**ACTION** **Help save our Police, Fire and Ambulance Services** **ACTION**

I / We urge Hampshire's Police Commissioner **NOT** to cut the number of Police and Police Community Support Officers in Gosport

I / We urge Hampshire's Police Commissioner **NOT** to close Gosport Police Station

I / We urge Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service **NOT** to reduce the number of full-time firemen in Gosport

I / We urge Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service **NOT** to leave Gosport Fire Station without at least four full-time firemen overnight

Please tick all the boxes you agree with. Thank You

## FBU Gosport

### Gosport's Unique Risks

The FBU Chair for Gosport says the town is unique insofar as, while it appears on a map as a small one-pump station in the south of the county, the amount and different type of risk there defies the statistics. Some examples of this are:

Gosport has a population of around 82,000 people, yet is only 25km<sup>2</sup> – it is Hampshire's most densely populated Borough. It is also a peninsula that cannot grow to accommodate more people; it can only become more densely populated

The roads in and out of Gosport are often unable to cope with traffic volumes at peak times. These roads are those used by fire engines to get into Gosport when needed

It has an aging population: nearly 14,000 residents are over 65 and over 24,500 live on their own (the highest level in the county)

The number of households accepted as homeless and in priority need and the number of people living in temporary accommodation in Gosport are both above the national average – and 5,220 children are classed as living in poverty

Gosport also has one of the highest admission rates in the county for alcohol and substance misuse (it is the only town in Hampshire where the death rate from preventable liver disease is higher than the national average).

While acknowledging that all FRS call types have reduced, the FBU Chair says that the number of people killed or seriously injured on Hampshire's roads has risen for the last 3 years in a row, and that Gosport is now ranked as the 5<sup>th</sup> worst constituency in the whole country for RTCs.

The other two main risks within Gosport are the Oil Fuel Depot (which contains some 18 million litres of oil) and the Armaments Depot (which contains missiles, ammunition and weapons). The FBU Chair says that assurances were given during a previous Risk Review that fire cover would remain immediate in Gosport partly because of these two sites - and that they have not seen any risk reduction to warrant the proposed reduction in cover.

In light of the above, the FBU Chair feels that Gosport has to be looked at in its own right, because of all the peculiarities that set it apart from other areas of Hampshire.

### **HFRS's Proposals**

Though acknowledging that 70% of all incidents can be dealt with by two firefighters, the FBU Chair explains that the 30% that cannot includes the call type 'persons reported' (i.e. where people are trapped inside a building that is on fire). HFRS's current 'weight of attack' for a house fire is three fire engines carrying 12 firefighters - and while this will remain the same under the proposals, the Chair argues that 'speed of attack' will be severely compromised for 12 hours at night in Gosport (under Options 1 and 2).

Option 1 sees Gosport's first response time nearly double to almost 10 minutes, with back-up having to come from Fareham and Portchester. That first response time is two minutes outside HFRS's own eight minute standard, and means Gosport becomes the eighth slowest responding fire station in the county from its current position of second fastest.

Gosport's first response time remains the same under Option 2, but the number of firefighters reduces from four to two, which removes the ability to commit two firefighters inside the building on arrival. This, the FBU Chair says, will create an impossible dilemma for the first two firefighters - compounded by pressure from members of the public and the fact that there will be breathing apparatus on the vehicle they arrive in, but which cannot be used until a minimum of four firefighters are present.

The FBU Chair explains that Ultra High Pressure Lances were developed as a result of an unacceptable level of firefighter deaths in Sweden and are designed for firefighter safety only - and that they should be 'another tool in my fire engine shaped toolbox' rather than a replacement for crew members. It is argued that they are not the right tool to use in every situation (and especially not in isolation during rescues) - and that there is no data or research that suggests their use increases survivability for people trapped in a fire.

On the issue of RDS availability, the FBU Chair acknowledges that, in some of Hampshire's rural villages, it has been impossible to recruit enough on-call firefighters to mobilise a traditional fire engine - and that there have been times when as many as 20 fire engines at any one time have been 'off the run'. It is said that only in these circumstances should two firefighters be permitted as the first response to a serious house fire with persons reported - and that it is wholly inappropriate to use the same strategy across the county based loosely upon the number of incidents each fire station attends.

Overall, the FBU Chair says the proposals are a reduction in fire cover for Gosport residents and that they will expose firefighters to much greater risks than they are exposed to today.

### **Defence Munitions Gosport**

Defence Munitions (DM) Gosport says that, as a high hazard establishment, it does everything within its control to prevent incidents - but that it also has assurances from HFRS that it would attend any potential incident on this site with five Appliances (Enhanced Vehicles) within seven minutes. The organisation takes confidence from this and works it into its local procedures, and has constructed its local response procedures around this level of Pre-determined Attendance. In the event of a 'real' call to DM Gosport, this service has been consistently received.

DM Gosport requests further information on the engagement undertaken between HFRS and the Ministry of Defence on the former's proposals, as the impact of those for Gosport Fire Station has yet to be discussed with the DM Gosport safety team. Furthermore, the organisation would like an indication as to the potential impact of each of the stated proposals for its site compared to its current PDA assumption - particularly in regard to the FRS's capability to undertake firefighting in, and personnel rescue from, a (non-explosive) burning building should the site be work overtiming (for example over a weekend).

DM Gosport has apparently enjoyed a long and healthy relationship with Gosport and other surrounding fire stations and commends the professionalism of the crews. It looks forward to continued support from HFRS.

### **Caroline Dinenage MP**

Caroline Dinenage MP compliments HFRS on its 'new and very impressive system of firefighting', which she feels will 'go a long way to protecting your staff and greatly improve the chances of rescuing victims of fires'.

Regarding the 'Planning for a Safer Hampshire' proposals, Ms Dineage fully understands the attraction of Option 1 for Gosport, with its estimated saving of approximately £490,000. However, she strongly favours Option 2 which has reduced savings of £317,000 but also the attraction of an average first response time of 5 minutes and 17 seconds around the clock compared to 9 minutes and 45 seconds for a night-time response.

Ms Dineage has compared similar urban areas to Gosport (namely Cosham, Fareham, Redbridge, Rushmoor and St Mary's), all of which have an average first response time of between 5 minutes 21 seconds and 6 minutes 47 seconds through a 24-hour period. She considers an average night-time response of 3+ minutes slower than comparable urban areas to Gosport to be unacceptable, especially given the current response time is 5 minutes and 36 seconds.

### Gosport Borough Council

Gosport Borough Council congratulates HFRS on its review and on its response to the severe financial constraints it faces. It feels that the levels of efficiency savings identified is impressive.

The Council highlights that Gosport is the most urban borough in Hampshire – and notes that its congestion issues and closely packed housing areas (some pre-war with the associated vehicle parking in every street) are comparable to those found in inner cities. As such, it has severe concerns over Option 1 for Gosport - which nearly doubles the night-time response time – and prefers Option 2, which still shows a saving of £300,000 and retains a five minute response time for residents.

### Resident

While the resident appreciates that financial savings must be made, they require that Gosport needs a **four strong full-time crew at all times** because of:

Changes to local transport and highways: two vehicle households are becoming the norm; proposed new housing developments will bring more vehicles and road congestion; and the associated building work will bring large amounts of waste, rubble and building supplies - and a large workforce - onto (and off) the peninsula, further exacerbating congestion. This extra activity will lead to a rise in RTCs

Loss of other local services: Gosport has lost two layers of casualty care with the closure of HASLAR and the ambulance station – and to leave it with the proposed small team at the fire station on top of this is unacceptable

Areas of very high risk: the Oil Fuel Depot contains millions of litres of fuel; and the Armament Depot contains missiles, ammunition and weapons. As such, there is a possibility of a terrorist attack on the peninsula

Population increases: Gosport has a population of approximately 82,000, which is increasing. The town is on a peninsula and thus cannot expand outwards, meaning its density increases

Response times: Option 2 will reduce Gosport's response times down to the 8<sup>th</sup> slowest in the County, at present they are second fastest

Crewing Systems: Option 2 will leave Gosport with only two full-time firefighters available at night, which is when people are most at risk from house fires.

## Havant and East Hampshire Fire Stations

### Alan Mack MP

Alan Mack MP says that, following a meeting with Emsworth's firefighters, he agreed to draw attention to their written submission (which they said they would send to HFRS directly<sup>1</sup>) and urges the Service to recognise the importance of their views as front-line practitioners with strong knowledge of the community they serve.

Mr Mack also says that he and local residents are clear that Havant needs an effective and efficient fire service that meets local needs, whilst responding to changes in risk levels and the need for sound financial management. It is agreed that none of the fire stations in the constituency should be closed, and as far possible, there should be no compulsory firefighter redundancies.

### Councillor Beryl Francis

Councillor Francis does **not consider it acceptable to for Havant Fire Station** (which responds to incidents in other areas in addition to its own) **to be crewed by on-call firefighters at night, nor does she wish to see only two firefighters on duty there.**

Councillor Francis also feels that **Emsworth should retain its large fire engine** insofar as it is relied upon for emergencies by much of West Sussex as well as the immediate area.

Furthermore, the Councillor states that: a large, fully crewed fire engine should be available as swiftly as possible; four firefighters are required to attempt a rescue; rapid response vehicles would not be helpful in many cases; and that response time changes could result in larger fires and deaths. She also says that she, and most people she has spoken to, would happily pay more in local taxes to retain a proper service.

It should be noted that Councillor Francis's view that 'it is clearly unacceptable that Portsmouth is only to have one fire station...it is a large, crowded city and response times to the outer areas would be too great and the likelihood of more than one call at a time is considerable' seems based on a mistaken belief that one of the City's fire stations is to close.

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<sup>1</sup> This was not received, but the station has engaged with the Risk Review Team about its alternative proposal.

### Emsworth Residents Association

Emsworth Residents Association (ERA) says there are currently some 26,000 residents living in the Emsworth area and that this is set to grow as housing developments are on the increase. This, it feels, will increase the risk and likelihood of fires and a subsequent risk to life should the operational capability of Emsworth Fire Station be reduced.

The ERA understands that Emsworth Fire Station is one of only a few that generates income insofar as in 2014 it responded into West Sussex on 75 occasions, which yielded a 'surplus' of approximately £15,000 per year (cost recovery from Emsworth Fire Station calls into West Sussex). As such, the Association suggests that the proposed annual saving of £28,000 can be achieved by implementing Emsworth Fire Station's proposal (an **intermediate vehicle plus the removal of two firefighter posts, generating a £14,000 saving per year**) plus the annual cost recovery figure from West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and ongoing savings from the closure of Bosham Fire Station.

### Grayshott Parish Council

Grayshott Parish Council (GPC) comments that its local fire station has been adversely affected by on-call recruitment challenges - and is concerned that, if crewing levels are reduced there, it is still likely to suffer the same issues (especially for day shifts). The Council feels that the viability of the proposals for Grayshott - and indeed Bordon, Liphook, Alton and Petersfield - are vulnerable to this difficulty.

GPC is also concerned that decisions on crewing numbers have been made on the basis of incident numbers - and that these do not represent all call-outs. The Council seeks reassurance that staffing levels will be adequate to meet proposed on-call availability levels and that while local stations are being retained, they will be fully operational within the proposed service model.

GPC understands that new technology will increase efficiency - but feels that its successful application will not just depend on how good it is, but also on the training for those using it.

Finally, GPC notes some specific local concerns that there has been inadequate attention to training and to addressing appropriate levels of competence for a range of tasks at Grayshott Fire Station.

Grayshott Parish Council (GPC) supports a 1.99% council tax to allow HFRS to proceed with new arrangements for service provision.

### Resident

The resident feels that the proposed reductions for the whole area surrounding Bordon are dangerous and that **'at least one pump' should be retained** for the event of a serious incident and threat to life. They also feel that one of the fire stations in the group should be designated as a major station given that East/West travel can be a 'nightmare'.

### Resident (also comments on proposals for Portsmouth)

The resident is concerned about proposed service reductions at Havant, Emsworth and Portsmouth. They comment that:

Havant would rely on on-call firefighters at night, virtually doubling response times

Emsworth would be equipped with and Havant would increasingly rely on a first response vehicle whereby two firefighters would only be able to assess the situation, attempt minor firefighting and keep the public out of harm's way. They consider it essential that a full fire engine is available to tackle serious situations quickly

They are shocked by the proposed reduction of resources in Portsmouth where there are many medium and high rise buildings and older buildings 3+ floors

Firefighters trained in the use of breathing apparatus would not be available in sufficient numbers to tackle serious situations.

The resident would not object to paying more Council tax for 'such an essential service'.

### Resident

The resident protests against the proposal to reduce fire cover at Emsworth and Havant Fire Stations, which they feel would 'constitute a real threat to safety and lives'.

They also say that, during time spent in Emsworth Square handing out leaflets about the proposed changes, they were met by at least 90% opposition to the changes as well as real concern about their impact on public safety.

### New Forest Fire Stations

#### Brockenhurst Parish Council

Brockenhurst Parish Council (BCP) comments that there does not appear to be an immediate response station in the New Forest - and thus requests that a **centrally situated immediate response station is established there**, ideally at Brockenhurst.

BPC also says that while smaller engines and crews may arrive more quickly, they may be unable to resolve a situation until larger, fully-crewed engines arrive. The Council argues that response times alone will no longer reflect the time needed to get incidents under control, and may be an inappropriate measure if the resource despatched is inadequate.

With particular regard to Brockenhurst Fire Station, the Council feels that the level of vehicle proposed there is the 'lowest', which it **does not consider appropriate in such a rural area** – and overall it would like to see **slightly higher personnel numbers** (as staff costs do not appear to be a major issue at an on-call station) and a realistic spread of larger engines across the New Forest.

### **Fordingbridge District Council**

Fordingbridge District Council (FDC) expresses the following concerns about fire cover for Fordingbridge:

The town has a three story dementia home, two nursing homes, five retirement homes and a hospital ward. The Council seeks reassurance that these have been considered and that vulnerable people will be adequately protected in future

The New Forest covers a large area and the second fire engine response to Fordingbridge is too long: any further reduction in service is unacceptable

The withdrawal of the water carrier from Fordingbridge will be problematic insofar as such a vehicle is vital when over a mile from a hydrant (especially in the New Forest where fires can take days to put out). Water pressure is also a problem in the hillside villages in the hills around the valley, making it difficult for the firefighters to ensure enough water.

### **Hyde Parish Council**

Hyde Parish Council (HPC) expresses concern about the proposed reduction in service at Fordingbridge and Ringwood Fire Stations. It considers that the current level of service in its area is already below that provided elsewhere in the County, and that a further reduction would make prompt access to the rural New Forest extremely difficult.

Of particular note is that a water carrier has apparently been removed from Fordingbridge Fire Station without consultation. The Council says that access to water in the New Forest villages is difficult - and that many properties have thatched roofs with wood-burning stoves or open fires. It thus considers the provision of a water carrier to be essential for the protection of crew, residents and property.

### **Lord Montagu of the Beaulieu Estate**

Lord Montagu of Beaulieu understands and accepts that HFRS has to change in response to funding reductions, but is keen to ensure that Beaulieu Fire Station (which covers sites such as Palace House, the National Motor Museum, the Fawley Chemical site and, potentially, Marchwood Military Port) should remain well equipped to deal incidents in the immediate vicinity, albeit with the back-up of surrounding stations.

Lord Montagu finds it difficult to comment on the First Response Vehicle proposed for Beaulieu without knowing its capabilities. He suggests that, before finalising the size of appliance(s) for each station, each type should be evaluated based on real use over a period of months. Furthermore, he proposes that HFRS should wait until its larger appliances are ready for renewal before changing them for smaller models, which would allow the introduction of new appliances to be phased, and more time to apply any 'lessons learned'.

Lord Montagu is concerned about the ability of smaller vehicles and crews to deal with some situations and says that, if a second appliance is needed, the time taken to deal with some types of incidents could increase considerably. He also feels that on-call availability must be a relevant consideration when considering options for change and that Beaulieu's 99% attendance is as good as any in the New Forest. Furthermore, it is said that if fewer personnel are required for a smaller appliance, the Beaulieu firefighters would prefer to reduce their individual cover to 12 hour shifts, which should make it possible to achieve 100% availability.

Lord Montagu comments that the figures given in the consultation document on the number of incidents attended do not include mobilisations in supported of other stations, which suggests that Beaulieu attends fewer calls than is actually the case.

Finally, Lord Montagu does not find the consultation questionnaire helpful because some of its 'contrived' questions are designed to be answered in only one way, which will give oversimplistic results – and others cannot be answered properly without a much greater knowledge of how the fire service works, which the average respondent will not have. He thinks it would be wrong to use the results from these questions as evidence of support for HFRS's proposals.

### **New Forest Verderers**

The New Forest Verderers highlight that the New Forest is of international importance for its nature conservation interests and is thus designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and as a Special Protection Area for birds and a Special Area of Conservation for a number of habitats and species.

The Verderers note that wildfires can be very damaging within this important area and that they look to HFRS for its specialist help in extinguishing them. The loss of ground-nesting birds and reptiles, and hotter fires that burn into the peaty soils, can apparently seriously impact on the condition of the designated sites - and the Verderers trust that HFRS will continue to have regard to these important habitats.

### **Portsmouth Fire Stations**

#### **Penny Mourdant MP**

Penny Mourdant MP is pleased there will be faster response times from Cosham and Southsea - and that there will be no personnel reductions at Cosham. She would, though, like reassurance that there will not be an increase in response times to incidents that require multiple enhanced vehicles.

#### **Resident (also comments on other aspects of the consultation)**

The resident opposes the proposed vehicle and crewing reductions at Southsea Fire Station for the following reasons:

Southsea stands on the southernmost part of Portsea Island, on which the bulk of the City also stands. This causes choke points to the north of the town where the three routes on and off the island are focused, which is relevant as the back-up station at Cosham stands on the mainland to the north of the choke points

The town has an old stock of houses, many of which are in multiple occupation and can be five or six storeys high. The number of high-rise buildings is growing and the Council has a stated objective of a skyline

The Naval Dockyard has a historic quarter with world class ship exhibits and museums – and the Continental Ferry Port is expanding with the aim of becoming a cruise terminal

The Southsea firefighters are highly skilled and trained for ship fires, mud rescues and working with the RNLI

Portsmouth is low lying and flood risk is ever present - and it would fall to the Fire and Rescue Service, with others, to relieve such floods

Gunwharf could be disrupted (Kevlar protection has been issued to firefighters so the risk is reasonably high)

With old infrastructure, it is likely Southsea has some broken water hydrants

The statistics used to justify the proposal are flawed: critical incidents at Southsea are stated as 395, but they do not have call duration attached to them so the amount of work done to service each one is unknown; and they do not include 'cross border' calls.

The resident also asks several questions about some aspects of HFRS's proposals as follows:

Will crewing levels at Southsea be sufficient for a 'full shout' of the three appliances and the ALP? Are the numbers being cut beyond viability?

Are the headline crewing rates (16) fully available at any one time? Are there reasons (e.g. sickness, annual leave, training courses) that reduce this number?

The stated savings are £3.3m yet, when summed, the Option 1 savings are approximately £4.3m. If it is true that the savings planned outweigh the savings required, could this offer some 'wiggle room' for individual stations?

Some other issues raised by the resident were that:

It is a tough ask to say it will be a safer Hampshire when costs and staff are cut and two-thirds of the full capability fire engines are being phased out

Firefighters are not convinced by HFRS's proposals, yet it is essential that plans be put in place to bring them on board

Without knowing the specifications of the vehicles and their relative firefighting power, it is impossible to see whether the proposal can be delivered safely

In Portsmouth, a smaller vehicle is sensible for the narrow streets. However, tankage is likely to be restricted and if the lance cannot be used then its endurance will be limited. There is a balance to be struck and perhaps a 7.5 ton chassis would work

The COBRA lance technology should be adopted on all appliances whatever the outcome of the consultation, as it clearly makes firefighters' roles safer

The first responding vehicle should have the capability to enter a building and extract people. This means a Breathing Apparatus equipped vehicle, with four crew, as required for safe BA work

For any emergency service it is necessary to establish the peak capability of the service, and to compare this with the emergency needs of the population. This stress testing is not yet possible because of the lack of appliance specifications

Sensible redundancy packages are required, with between one and two years' pay subject to the length of service

If the changes are implemented, a phased approach is required and staff should not be released until the new approach is proven to work in each location. HFRS should start the roll-out at small sites and leave the industrial towns until last.

The resident also recommends that the council tax precept is raised by 1.99% as the absolute amount of money is small.

## **Rushmoor and Hart Fire Stations**

### **Aldershot Branch Labour Party**

#### **Rushmoor Fire Station Proposal**

The ABLP supports **retaining full night-time fire cover in Rushmoor** for the following reasons:

The statistics given in the Consultation Document for Rushmoor Fire Station are incomplete because they omit incidents outside its station ground. About another 50% needs to be added to arrive at a true picture of the station's activity

HFRS has not yet tested its proposed model and has not selected a suitable type of first-response vehicle, which in itself could not deal with the 30% of serious, life-threatening incidents. Furthermore, when a member of the public reports an incident, they have no idea of its potential seriousness - and small fires can quickly take hold and spread rapidly

The proposed reduction in the number of full-time firefighters at night would mean that only a first-response vehicle could be sent and, when arriving at a serious house fire with persons trapped, firefighters could feel morally obliged to endangering their own safety by entering the premises without back-up

The claim that on-call availability would be maintained is based on an assumption that the availability of a first-response vehicle (suitable for 70% of incidents only) is equivalent to the availability of a standard fire engine (suitable 100% of the time)

To claim that average first response times would improve when the nature of the first-response vehicle is undecided and untested is irresponsible. There would be no point shaving seconds or minutes off the average first-response time if, in 30% of cases, the first-response vehicle would not be appropriate

There is no indication in the consultation of the need for a high level of provision to attend incidents at Farnborough Airport and associated facilities

Over the next 15 years, the population of Aldershot is due to increase by about half - and the consultation does not mention the additional cover needed to cater for this

The MoD has designated Aldershot as a Super Garrison, and when troops return from Germany its population will increase. The density of the Garrison is also being increased to house national, regional and area headquarters, and many more people will be employed there during the day. The consultation makes no mention of the additional cover needed to meet the needs of this extra working population or the increased density of offices and workshops in Aldershot Garrison

In the past five years, the diversity of the population has changed for two main reasons: the arrival of several thousand ex-Gurkhas, their wives and children; and employment opportunities attracting European workers. The consultation makes no mention of the need to meet the needs of those whose main language is not English and who do not have familiarity with how to make an emergency call

As the M3 becomes busier, the risk of incidents increases - and so does the need for firefighter rescue operations (which only a standard fire engine can provide).

### **Council Tax**

The ABLP says the Government is changing the financial framework of local government (e.g. by stopping its revenue support grant and allowing councils to retain their business rates) and that no-one yet knows what the final outcome of these changes will be. It is possible that, as an expanding and relatively prosperous area, Rushmoor could collect more in business rates than currently available via Government grant and that, in that case, HFRS would be justified in maintaining full night-time cover at Rushmoor Fire Station.

### **Blackwater and Hawley Town Council**

Blackwater and Hawley Town Council (BHTC) strongly agrees that it is right to make changes that reduce risk by improving average response times for critical incidents, but strongly disagrees with HFRS's proposals for the Hart area which will 'result in worsened average response times for major incidents'.

The Council notes that the average response time for its local fire station (Yateley) is shown to improve by 22 seconds, which is welcome. However, it is concerned that the intermediate response capability proposed for Yateley will carry fewer firefighters and less water – which will result in less capacity to deal with major incidents until at least one more vehicle arrives, by definition from much further away. This, the Council says, means that for the most serious incidents, the effective response time will be significantly longer.

### Church Crookham Parish Council

Church Crookham Parish Council (CCPC) makes the following complaints about HFRS's Consultation Document:

Its statistics are basic and do not show how often Key Performance Indicators were met, how often Fleet's fire engine was engaged outside the area and how often cover was required from other areas (which would have helped the Council build a picture of how the various stations interact with and support each other

The detail on the proposed first response vehicles is very vague and does not outline their capabilities and the types of incidents they could cope with

The cost savings only relate to 'manpower' reductions and do not consider how much it will cost to provide the new vehicles or when these changes will take place.

The Council says that, while it appreciates HFRS's attempt to make the document user friendly, in doing so it may have reduced the level of response because people felt they did not have enough information to comment.

In terms of the proposals, though CCPC understands that HFRS must make financial reductions, it does not feel that the proposals for Fleet Fire Station are acceptable, nor does it feel HFRS has put forward convincing arguments, backed up by evidence, that the changes are warranted or feasible. Furthermore, its concerns are exacerbated by proposed reductions at Rushmoor, which is often called upon to help with incidents in Fleet. The challenges faced by Fleet and its surrounding areas are outlined by the Council as follows:

Fleet's population rose by 25% between 2001 and 2011 and continues to rise - and many new housing developments are planned

Land shortages mean that three storey town houses are becoming more popular, as are flats and loft conversions (meaning vehicles with ladders are required)

Aldershot is expanding, with planning permission granted for nearly 4,000 homes

Church Crookham is under Farnborough Airport's flight path (where air traffic could double to 50,000 flights by 2019). Furthermore, the airport is now catering for large jets and this area of its business has already grown by 10%

There is an aviation fuel line running under Church Crookham, and it is feared that in an emergency the area would fail to cope

Fleet and Rushmoor are very close to the Surrey border and Rushmoor in particular is often called on to assist Surrey colleagues

The work currently underway on the M3 will mean that it can handle more vehicles  
Fleet has a large elderly population – and health and social service cuts mean that more ageing residents may remain at home, with the safety risks that entails

The army is returning from Germany and training activity will increase locally. If a major situation were to arise that could put extra pressure on local resources

The escalation in international terrorism means that areas with military installations and personnel should be considered a special case.

The Council also asks the following questions about the proposals:

Using smaller vehicles will either reduce ‘on-the-job’ training opportunities for new firefighters, or lead to fewer experienced firefighters being available on each shout to accommodate this. How will this be addressed?

What is the rationale behind the decision that Fleet will also lose its Land Rover, which is much used and valued by the local crews?

If firefighters attended a fire in a first response vehicle and back-up is delayed, would this put them under unacceptable pressure to act?

Crews often save time by suiting and booting en route to calls, something that will not be possible with a smaller vehicle. Surely this will increase response times?

What is the rationale behind Hartley Wintney retaining its enhanced vehicle based on anticipated activity rather than actual activity?

Fleet is already acting below its manpower capacity: why are these changes needed and what impact will they have on recruitment and retention?

### Elvetham Heath Parish Council

Elvetham Heath Parish Council (EHPC) says that **Fleet, as the largest settlement in Hart District, should have an enhanced response capability**. It understands HFRS’s cost pressures, but believes local people would be prepared to pay for this through their council tax.

While accepting that smaller vehicles are often more effective as a first response (particularly in high density housing areas), EHPC’s main concern about their introduction is their lack of rescue provision. The Council says that, as they do not appear to be equipped with long ladders, the first response vehicles would be inadequate in an area (like Fleet) with a large number of three storey homes, apartment blocks, offices and care homes. Indeed, EHPC says it could accept the move to smaller vehicles in the Fleet area if the provision of rescue equipment is properly addressed.

### **Fleet Town Council**

Fleet Town Council is reassured that Fleet Fire Station does not stand alone and that cover would be provided from many surrounding areas depending on operational requirements. However, Members are concerned about any proposal that does not include the retention of a Land Rover at Fleet.

### **Hart District Council**

Hart District Council (HDC) unequivocally supports HFRS and recognises that, as the needs of an organisation change or reduce, services must continue to meet those changing needs.

However, HDC is uncomfortable that Fleet (as the largest settlement in Hart with a population of over 42,000) will have the smallest available vehicle - commenting that it is the only settlement in Hampshire of this size with only such a vehicle.

The Council also comments on the current lack of clarity on what equipment each level of response vehicle will contain - and thus considers it difficult to establish the true impact of the proposals on its communities and to make an effective response to help inform the decision-making process.

### **Resident**

The resident asks the following questions in relation to proposed changes at Rushmoor Fire Station:

With reduced crewing at Rushmoor, how will the station be able to support the on-call stations in the area - which is more likely if they too are being reduced?

Has HFRS considered the many extra homes currently being built in the area – as well as future developments (such as that on the NGTE site in Pyestock)?

They also raise the following more general questions and issues around HFRS's proposals and the consultation process:

HFRS must not rely solely on target response times, but must deliver the right tools, equipment and crews to deal with incidents, and request additional resources when needed

There is no need to send a full crew and appliance to a 'bin fire' as currently happens, although:

There is a need to inform residents about the capabilities of the new type of appliances – and what equipment they will hold

Using smaller appliances may lead to a need for more support at incidents, which will lead to increased call-outs from on-call stations and an associated cost increase

Small appliances would not be so clearly visible at RTCs – a health and safety issue for staff

Crews attending fires in remote areas have encountered issues with water availability, which could be exacerbated with the use of smaller appliances

With the proposed crewing reductions, will there be a suitable level of trained staff available to crew HFRS's special appliances - and will the Service have an appropriate number of staff to attend an incident requiring long-term attendance?

Has HFRS taken into account the reductions being made by neighbouring FRSs that support them (and vice versa)?

What hours apply to 'night cover' when we live and work in a 24-hour society?

Fires at night sometimes go unnoticed for a period of time, thus getting a real grip

Has a full management structure review been completed to establish savings as there seem to be a lot of white helmets at incidents?!

Savings could be made by requiring Farnborough Airfield to be more capable and self-contained to deal with possible incidents within the Airfield - thus reducing HFRS attendances to incidents there. Or the Airfield should be required to make additional contributions towards the Service (especially for false alarms and stand-bys)

With the Government now stating that local authorities can retain business rates, what difference will this make to HFRS's future income or budget?

The people of Hampshire should be asked whether they are willing to meet the future costs of fire cover at the current level as it is their service

There should have been a public meeting in each borough/council area.

## Resident

The resident is worried about reduced night cover in Aldershot - and expresses concern that, while local fire cover is paid for from residents' council tax, appliances from Rushmoor regularly attend incidents in Farnham, Surrey. Indeed, the resident notes that at least two of the recent incidents a Rushmoor appliance has attended in Farnham have been at night - and they are worried that night cover is frequently reduced in Rushmoor to cover situations in another county. They question: *'what happens if they are needed here in the area for which the services are being provided for?'* and *'is it the case that our community charge taxation is paying for this service so that we as a community can offer our charitable services to poor old Surrey?'*

## Southampton Fire Stations

### Councillor David Airey

Councillor Airey is concerned about the 'reduction in status' of Hamble Fire Station as it is located at the end of a frequently congested road (Hamble Lane). As such, the village - as well as Netley Abbey and parts of Bursledon - can be difficult for emergency services to access. Furthermore, Councillor Airey notes that the BP Hamble oil distribution depot means road tankers frequently use Hamble Lane - and that there is other, mainly yacht-based industry in the area. The Councillor thus considers that **at least the present standard of fire cover should be retained**.

Councillor Airey is also concerned at the proposed reduction of night cover at Hightown Fire Station as this is the main resource for the eastern side of Southampton (plus Netley Abbey, Hamble and Bursledon).

### Southampton Airport Fire Service

Southampton Airport understands that there will be no alterations to the current PDA (pre-determined attendance) to the airport upon activation of the full emergency crash line. If in the future the PDA - either manpower numbers or water carried - is likely to change then airport management would expect to be consulted.

### Southampton City Council

Southampton City Council (SCC) accepts that HFRS must anticipate Government grant reductions over the next five years, but hopes the settlement is not as harsh as expected and will allow the Service to revisit the proposal to reduce night-time fire cover at Hightown Fire Station from two crews to one (the potential impact of which - especially for residents of Eastern Southampton and the Southern parishes of Eastleigh - will be worsened by 'downgrading' neighbouring on-call stations in Batley and Hamble).

SCC also feels that the emerging Hampshire combined authority devolution deal and its proposal for the early localisation of business rates (which, it is said, will become a reality early in 2016 with potential for implementation in 2017/18) could replace HFRS's entire current Government grant and significantly reduce the need for cuts.

Overall, the Council urges HFRS to examine the **alternative proposals produced by the Hightown firefighters which would allow for two crews at night** - and to delay implementation of the proposals until the financial position is clearer.

## Winchester Fire Stations

### Member of HFRS Staff (also comments on First Response and Intermediate Capabilities)

The staff member makes the following comments in relation to the proposals for Sutton Scotney Fire Station (which, they feel, support the **provision of an Intermediate Response**

**Capability** there - the cost of which [£7,000] could be offset by running at FTE of nine instead of 10):

The station is strategically located at the junction of major trunk routes (A34/A303) and the M3 motorway and attends many RTCs on these roads. The proposed FRV will not offer as much protection as an intermediate vehicle at the scene of a RTC

It is ideally placed to support and offer resilience to Andover, Winchester and Basingstoke. Using an analogy of a BA emergency team that is equipped to the same level as committed teams, it could be the emergency team equipped with an intermediate vehicle as a compromise between enhanced and first response

It provides emergency cover to a number of surrounding villages and has significant life risk within its area (a large hotel, several nursing homes, rural and road risks and Popham Airfield). The area also has over 100 thatched properties where, if an incident occurs, early intervention is key to a successful outcome. The respondent questions whether the FRV ladder would be long enough to enable an effective firebreak at such incidents, and whether cold cut technology would be effective on a thatched roof.

More generally, the staff member comments that it is not yet clear what the first response and intermediate vehicles will look like, nor what equipment they will carry - and questions whether the equipment deemed suitable to address perceived station requirements will dictate the size of vehicle, or vice versa.

They also question how HFRS intends to 'future proof' the smaller vehicles insofar as more (and heavier) equipment is now carried on front-line appliances, and the non-LGV vehicle may not offer the capacity and flexibility required, especially for single vehicle stations.

The staff member sees little difference between the first response and intermediate vehicles, and so suggests a **two-vehicle strategy: enhanced and intermediate**. This, they feel, would offer greater resilience and simplify make-ups, standby and relief strategies (on the ground that First Response Vehicles (FRVs) would not be sent to standby or as a relief, nor would they carry sufficient resources to relieve larger vehicles at protracted incidents).

Other questions and observations were as follows:

Will the FRVs have enough on-board water capacity, hose and associated equipment if cold cut technology is not the best solution (as many on-call stations are in rural locations where hydrants are not as readily available as in urban locations)?

What effect will intelligent mobilising have on vehicles with only two or three crew?

Has any consideration been given to the potential negative impact of the proposals on RDS retention (given the likelihood of reduced call rates, reduced opportunities and increased administration)?

With the recent introduction of new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) across HFRS and partner Services, will the Breathing Apparatus RSOPs have any impact on the proposed crewing models for the new vehicles?

Many operational staff (mainly wholetime) are working non-operationally at HQ and elsewhere - but with 'hot desking' and remote working, could RDS availability and capability be improved by enabling them to work from on-call stations?

The anticipated improvement in retained availability is slightly misleading as it requires not just numbers but appropriate skills as well. How will the required skills establishment be maintained to ensure the increased level of retained availability?

The provision of eDraulic dedicated cutters and spreaders over combined tools would be better to allow concurrent activity

Will there be timely periodic reviews or evaluations to ensure the level and weight of response matches risk profiles and activity levels?

### Winchester Cathedral

Winchester Cathedral acknowledges HFRA's need to make financial savings and use its finite resources efficiently, but has very serious concerns about the proposed reduction of cover in Winchester.

The Cathedral is a major UK heritage site that is home to priceless artefacts - but with a roof of wood and lead it is particularly vulnerable to fire, especially in silent hours (the respondent notes that the catastrophic York Minster fire in 1984 occurred at night).

The Cathedral representative comments that Option 1 for Winchester (no immediate response firefighters overnight) is unacceptable and that Option 2 (two immediate response firefighters crewing a smaller vehicle overnight) represents a significant risk to the Cathedral. They understand that, under Option 2, the first response vehicle crew will use 'a high-pressure lance until further assistance arrives', which they do not consider remotely adequate as an initial response to a fire starting in its high rise structures.

The representative notes that HFRS's proposals for Andover include either more firefighters or additional vehicles (than those for Winchester) - and argues that while Andover has a similar population to Winchester, in 2013/2014 it had significantly fewer critical incidents (134 compared to 228). Furthermore, they argue that Andover does not have the same span of major residential and cultural institutions as Winchester. As such, the representative urges HFRS to consider alternative options that provide effective and immediate response during silent hours (and says that **Winchester firefighters have suggested a third option providing enhanced 24-hour cover at marginal extra cost, which merits consideration**).

## **Fire Cover for West Sussex**

### **Chidham & Hambrook Parish Council**

Chidham & Hambrook Parish Council is concerned about proposed funding cuts to HFRS. It feels these (in addition to West Sussex FRS's £1.6m cuts and the plans for Emsworth Fire Station) it feels will impact directly on the safety and security of residents living and working around borders of Hampshire and West Sussex – especially as 50% of Emsworth's emergency calls are to emergencies in West Sussex.

The Council is particularly concerned about the proposed reduction in firefighter numbers at Emsworth (from 12 to 8) – as well as the change from a fire engine to a smaller first response vehicle there. It suggests that the scaling back of resources could leave both the public and firefighters at risk.

The Council also comments that the service that can be provided by a 'less equipped' vehicle potentially crewed by just two firefighters is reduced – and could mean waiting for a better equipped appliance to be despatched from Chichester or Havant, compromising safety and response time.

### **Compton Parish Council**

Compton Parish Council has grave concerns about HFRS's proposed changes and the resultant cover to border parishes such as theirs.

The Council says that Fire and Rescue Service cover for such county border areas had been provided by Hampshire for many years and that, while changes are now proposed to crewing, vehicles and equipment at Hampshire stations, they (as an interested party) are being denied a voice in the consultation process and have received no support from West Sussex County Council in this regard.

The Council is anxious lest the changes result in the despatch of vehicles which may be able to satisfy or come close to arrival time statistics, but which are inappropriate for the task in hand. It is also concerned that the crewing reductions may place an unfair burden on fire crews in the context of a safe system of work and the reduction of effective work.

The Council realises that all emergency services are under pressure to save money, but says that its area is currently vulnerable and seeks reassurance that any changes under consideration will not increase that vulnerability.

### **Harting Parish Council**

Harting Parish Council (HPC) says that at present, as its Parish abuts the county border, it is typically served by appliances and fire crew from Petersfield and Midhurst. It is feared that downgrading existing facilities will jeopardise that arrangement and the ability to provide necessary fire and rescue cover.

In considering the proposals, the Council comments that they are based on statistical research, taken across the county and applied as a whole. This approach 'points to lower risks within the rural environment', but HPC feels this fails to take into account that certain rural centres may comprise elements that are especially vulnerable or pose a greater risk.

HPC also argues that the modelling ignores the effect on outlying villages of downgrading Petersfield, which in itself is growing and is a commercial centre located on the intersection of two major roads and railway hub. Any reductions, it is felt, may damage HFRS's ability to deal with a major emergency in the town, or simultaneous incidents within the Parish.

The Council suggests that, as the cost savings attributable to the restructure of the stations most likely to serve its Parish seem comparatively modest, this is perhaps not the primary justification for their reorganisation and downgrading.

Finally, HPC comments that, in the reorganisation of any public service, there are many avenues that might be explored as alternatives - and asks that due consideration and publicity is given to these, as the public has not been afforded any appreciation of differing solutions, but rather has been presented with a 'pre-selected alternative'.

### **Midhurst Town Council**

Midhurst Town Council (MTC) appreciates the need for HFRS to review and change in line with financial constraints and operational practices to reflect current and future trends in the scale and types of incident handled.

However, the Council has studied the plans for Petersfield, Liphook, Grayshott, and Bordon Fire Stations (those being the nearest to the borders with its communities and from where it assumes support to West Sussex would come) and is concerned that substantial crewing cuts and equipment downgrades are being proposed at each of these four stations. This reduction of resources and capabilities apparently follows similar cuts at Midhurst, Petworth and Billingshurst, leaving a large area north of the Downs with reduced resources for major incidents in the future. Furthermore, it is said that the region is a significant part of the South Downs National Park - and MTC questions whether the potential increase in traffic and visitor numbers expected to the Park has been considered.

MTC also notes that the comment '*whilst HFRS has made a commitment not to withdraw from its borders, the Risk Review project focuses on the need within Hampshire*' is made repeatedly in responses to station personnel in the stations closest to its border - and comments that the lack of communication and planning between West Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey FRSs could result in a cumulative deterioration of service in bordering areas.

MTC thus urges West Sussex and Hampshire to undertake a joint risk analysis of the effect of current and proposed changes on response to major incidents in the Alton to Pulborough area - and seeks assurance that any identified risks will be addressed and mitigated against.

## Southbourne Parish Council

Southbourne Parish Council notes that Emsworth and Southbourne are both growing in size, which will potentially increase demand for HFRS services in this area. It thus does not see the sense in reducing from a fully-crewed fire engine to a first response vehicle with two crew members at Emsworth Fire Station. The Council is also concerned that a smaller crew will not be able to provide the same level of service as a full crew, even if it arrives earlier.

The Council also considers it disappointing that the HFRA does not allow parishes bordering Hampshire to make comments directly through the HFRS website when it benefits from and contributes to reciprocal fire cover arrangements.

## Alternative Suggestions from Fire Stations

### Havant Fire Station

#### Alternative Proposal

HFRS's proposal is that:

The station's two fire engines should be replaced by one enhanced and one first response vehicle

The station's crewing should become ABC Level 3: seven wholetime firefighters and 14 on-call firefighters by day; and either two wholetime firefighters (with RDS backup) or wholly RDS by night.

The Station's proposal is as follows:

Havant should have one enhanced and one first response vehicle (with a light 4x4 tender) to allow more flexibility for WDS and RDS crewing

24/7 ABC Level 1 crewing should be implemented on the 2,2,4 system with RDS backup

Havant WDS should undertake a medical response trial

HFRS should extend the consultation period by 18 months to allow for the collection of more data.

The Station also goes into detail about where savings can be made at Havant:

Six personnel per watch on the wholetime duty system (a reduction of one per watch, four minimum) saving £144,684 (4 x £36,171)

8 FTE RDS firefighters (a loss of six from the proposal and four from the current establishment) saving £42,000 (4 x £7,000)

Furthermore, it is argued that future savings should be made by dual crewing the RSV/intermediate vehicles at Cosham (losing two per watch), saving £289,368 [8 X £36,171] – a combined total of £476,052.

It is also suggested that HFRS move Havant, Waterlooville and Horndean fire stations to Dunsbury Farm, which would give a greater area of resilience and yield significant potential savings.

### Arguments

Havant Fire Station justifies its proposal with the following arguments:

Leigh Park and Wecock Farm in Havant are two of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Hampshire and the Borough thus needs a 24/7 wholetime response to protect those in need. Some examples of how such deprivation manifests itself are:

Havant has one of the highest proportions of single person households (including many at-risk pensioner households) in Hampshire - as well as one of the highest rates of statutory homelessness and children living in poverty

Havant (Leigh Park and Wecock Farm) is one of Hampshire's areas of high unemployment, and the Fire Service and Poverty Manual says that: *children of parents who have never worked or are long-term unemployed are 13 times more likely to die from unintentional injury and 37 times more likely to die from exposure from fire*

Havant has one of the highest smoking rates in Hampshire (with [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) stating that *cigarettes are the single biggest killer in house fires*) - as well as one of the highest rates of admission for alcohol and substance misuse and sexually transmitted disease.

Fire deaths in Havant were zero between April 2011 and March 2014 because of 24/7 wholetime cover

Havant Borough has a number of specific risks, namely: Leigh Park (a very deprived area); deprived residential high-rise buildings; two hospitals (including a secure unit); schools; major road links (the A27 and A3M); the London and South Coast Rail Link; large industrial areas; lakes, rivers and coastal risks; and the area is within five miles of a military airfield with explosive storage

The AVLS bubble has increased fire calls in Havant since its inception by approximately 30% - and with the anticipation of future medical response calls in the area this figure is likely to rise significantly

Incident profile graphs show that Havant has a consistent level of incidents, with only a small drop between 03:00-06:00.

## Hightown Fire Station

### Alternative Proposal

Currently, Hightown Fire Station has two fire engines crewed 24/7 by 12 firefighters per shift. HFRS's proposals for consultation are that:

The station's two fire engines should be replaced by one enhanced and one intermediate vehicle

The station's 24/7 crewing by 12 firefighters per shift should be replaced by ABC2 level crewing - with 14 firefighters during the day and seven at night.

The Station's submission accepts that the appropriate resources for Hightown are one enhanced and one first response vehicle, but it argues that:

The level of wholtime cover should not reduce at night (that is, the station should be classified as ABC level 1)

The current crewing of 12 firefighters per shift should be reduced to 10 (taking account of the use of a first response vehicle).

### Argument

In the light of its projected £16 million funding gap over the next four years, HFRS proposes to adjust its services and resources to varying risk levels. However, Hightown Fire Station has come to different conclusions based on its own area-based risk and needs analysis that avoids focusing purely on responding to fire calls. Above all, the station wants a sufficient crewing level in order to:

Adopt innovations like tactical ventilation and high pressure lances with safe systems of work

Deliver important community safety work in collaboration with other partners

Achieve enhanced medical capability as part of the station's everyday business.

Hightown station says the specific advantages of its proposals are that they would provide:

Consistent crewing numbers for proper weight of attack during the day whilst utilising spare capacity at night for medical response or community safety

Effective early interventions at emergency incidents using tactical ventilation and safe systems of work at road traffic collisions

The capacity for Hightown to employ safe systems of work based on SAVE (Scan, Attack, Ventilate, and Enter)

A more resilient service by resourcing of two vehicles 24/7

Uninterrupted community safety by the enhanced appliance crew, leaving the first response crew to deal with the majority of minor incidents/medical calls

An additional 870 shifts

Savings of £289,368 on current arrangements

For Hightown station, the aim should be to resolve all incidents quickly with proper resources while protecting the safety and conditions of firefighters with appropriate resources. Adequate resources are also important because Southampton is a growing city with an increasingly diverse and elderly population, and Hightown fire station covers some areas of the highest multiple deprivation. More generally, people's health and life expectancy in Southampton is worse than the English average.

Hightown station says that HFRS rightly recognises that prescriptive procedures for operations involving tactical ventilation and positive pressure ventilation cannot be defined for all incidents and would negate operational flexibility. However, various analyses have shown that a minimum of seven or eight firefighters are required for safe systems of work involving, for example, tactical ventilation; and seven fire fighters are also required for the optimum resourcing of RTCs involving extrications of victims. Trials at Rushmoor have shown that seven personnel can reduce escalation and deal with more incidents more effectively.

Hightown accepts that the establishments for fire stations should be linked to the number and types of capabilities they require, but it says that the right establishment at Hightown 10 firefighters per watch – in order to crew its enhanced response vehicle with a crew of five and the first response vehicle with at least two (allowing for three extractions per shift).

Hightown's call profile shows no appreciable dips in incidents over 24-hour period and, although the station is well supported by the surrounding wholetime resources, its enhanced response vehicle should be supplemented by a first response vehicle over the full 24-hours.

Significantly, the Hightown firefighters argue that, whereas HFRS's current proposal for variable ABC2 crewing would save £217,000 per annum, the station's own proposal would save £289,400.

#### **Additional documents**

Hightown's submission includes a bibliography of relevant documents and other important evidential material relating to the risk review and station incident and activity profiles.

### **Kingsclere Fire Station**

#### **Introduction**

Kingsclere fire station's submission is a sophisticated PowerPoint presentation of 48 slides with considerable evidential material and illustrations. Such a format is not necessarily accessible to everyone, so we have summarised the main issues; but readers are encouraged also to consult the full presentation for more detail.

### Kingsclere Fire Station's Alternative Proposal

Kingsclere is a retained fire station with a traditional fire engine and an establishment of 12 on-call firefighters for day and night-time cover. HFRS's proposals, subject to consultation, are that the station's:

Crewing should be ABC level 4

Current fire engine should be replaced by a first response vehicle

'Pool' of 12 on-call firefighters should be reduced to eight.

The Station's submission accepts the ABC level 4 classification, but proposes that:

The current fire engine should be kept at the station until it reaches the end of its normal life cycle in 2019 (or longer)

The station should then have an intermediate response vehicle (rather than a first response vehicle as currently proposed).

The station believes that its alternative proposals will provide safe, effective and efficient emergency cover by ensuring:

Capacity and sufficient initial weight of attack for fires, RTCs and water rescues

That COBRA is one "tool in our toolkit" and not "the only fire-fighting media on the vehicle"

Sufficient capacity for 'standbys' in Berkshire (dependent upon policy).

Without these changes, the Kingsclere station crew find it difficult to support the current proposals by HFRS.

### Risk Management

The firefighters argue that HFRS has understated the station's operational activities – as shown in their summary slide as follows:

HFRS Risk Review Analysis using FY 2013/14 and comparison with 09 Kingclere's Incident log	
<p>HFRS Risk Review 2013 analysis of Kingsclere Fire Ground incidents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical: 20</li> <li>• Non critical: 22</li> <li>• False alarms: 13</li> </ul>	<p>09 Kingsclere's analysis of <b>incidents attended by 09P1 in 2013</b> (including Berkshire and wider Hampshire incidents):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical: 39 (12)</li> <li>• Non critical: 38 (12)</li> <li>• False alarms: 13</li> <li>• Standbys: 15 (12)</li> </ul> <p>(on Berkshire ground)  <small>Source: Analysis of 09 Kingsclere Fire Station Incident Log 2008 to 2013 using the criteria defined in HFRS Risk Review.</small></p>
<p><small>09 Kingsclere Risk Review 30th November 2013 Version 1.2</small></p>	

They argue that Kingsclere has a large population, area of responsibility and more incidents than Overton (which is proposed to have an intermediate response vehicle) and they also

add that the station is the only one in the Basingstoke and Deane group proposed to have a first response vehicle: all the others are scheduled to have intermediate response vehicles. But if Berkshire FRS's resources are discounted, then Kingsclere has one of the largest limited support fire grounds with a significant undefined and planned risks.

Moreover, the station argues, in recent years there has been a steady increase in Kingsclere's attendance at primary fires, road traffic collisions and stand-by situations; and the station has also off-set potential Berkshire cross-border charges by covering a significant number of incidents in that county. In this context, the station has provided an excellent service at some major incidents and there have been only a limited number of emergencies where COBRA ('cold cut/ultra high pressure technology') would have been more effective than high/low pressure jets and hoses. All Kingsclere's fires were addressed effectively using low/high pressure hoses and jets with 1,800 litre capacity.

The proposed first response vehicle would carry two to four firefighters, but most 'critical incidents' require minimum crews of nine to be effectively managed – so the vehicle would undertake only very limited procedures and weight of attack if it were the first appliance in attendance. Overall, the reduced crewing will restrict the simultaneous activities possible at incidents, thus restricting control measures to protect crews and the public.

The station crew also argue that there will be an impact on crew morale due to the limited opportunities to ride and retain competencies, and that reduced crewing numbers will make retention and recruitment more difficult while also increasing workloads.

The argument continues that HFRS is promoting first response vehicles without defining their equipment and capacities precisely enough for informed judgements to be made about them. For example, there is no confirmation that the multi-functionality provided by the water tender ladder will be continued; nor is there confirmation that Berkshire FRS will accept a first response vehicle in lieu of a water tender ladder for standbys in Newbury. Overall, there is no clarity about the proportions of 'critical', 'non-critical' and 'stand-by' incidents that can successfully be addressed by first response vehicles.

HFRS is promoting COBRA despite a limited number of fires and fire deaths in comparison to RTC incidents. Whilst COBRA has the potential to be a useful addition to our toolkit, it cannot replace the low/high pressure and water capacity (1,800 litres) required for property/structure fires. There is considerable concern that COBRA would become the only fire-fighting resource of first response vehicles. First and intermediate response vehicles equipped only with COBRA would be very limited in terms of response and control measures that could be undertaken to rescue saveable lives – such as Rapid Deployment, Stage 1 Breathing Apparatus procedures). COBRA has limited potential to provide safety and 'Long Pulse' branch techniques for firefighters safely to enter fire compartments. No evidence has been produced to show that COBRA has saved lives and can be more effective than high/low pressure hoses/jets in property and other fires.

As initial responders to life-risk property fires, Kingsclere crews will be restricted to limited action 'rapid deployment' procedures, without the current safety control measures, while waiting up to 20 minutes for additional resources. In fact, it can take 20 to 30 minutes on 'blue light run' to reach parts of Kingsclere's fire ground from other wholetime and retained fire stations – compared with the three to four minute average across the rest of Hampshire FRS. Overall, Kingsclere crews will be unable to achieve the present speed of rescue for critical incidents involving 'persons reported'; fires, road traffic collisions and water rescues. Indeed, initial 'weight of attack' crewing resources will be reduced by a third.

HFRS understates the impact of the proposals by not considering properly the number and types of incidents attended by the station. In particular, HFRS does not: allow for the 'weight of attack' required for critical incidents; address the 'what if' scenarios that concern Level 1 OICs in their decision-making; recognise the stand-by cover provided off the station; address need for 'surge capacity' during periods of significant risk; reflect the operational interdependency of Berkshire and Hampshire FRSs; and include all SSRIs. Kingsclere station believes that a first response vehicle with two to four riders would put its firefighters and the public at greater risk whilst waiting for follow on resources, especially if seemingly non-critical incidents are confirmed as critical upon attendance.

#### **Little Information and Staff Involvement**

Overall, the station says, there is too much uncertainty about the specification of the proposed vehicles and HFRS has not provided the public and other decision makers with accurate information about its proposals. The supposed 'technological solutions' (like COBRA) are under-researched, and the consultation does not adequately reflect of the level of uncertainty in new approaches proposed.

There has been a failure to inform crews on precise plans for the new technology to get firefighter buy-in across the service. The proposals ignore crews' concerns (expressed in internal consultation) – so firefighters feel disengaged from a public relations exercise in which HFRS is selling its ideas to the public and stakeholders. HFRS's failure to provide more information has limited crews' ability to contribute and comments by senior officers at public meetings that that firefighters are unwilling to change and are obsessed with large fire appliances has belittled crews' concerns.

#### **Crew Shortages**

Crew shortages at Kingsclere have been cited by HFRS as a key weakness and reason for downgrading the station. However, limited daytime on-call cover is not uncommon across HFRS and until recently, the crew say, there has been little management support to Kingsclere. Crew shortages should be addressed by HFRS, not used to justify weakening emergency cover. In face, HFRS's RDS Strategy Group has recommended that, to ensure better service-wide on-call availability, a moderate number of Grey Book staff could be located strategically at RDS stations across the county, to bring more stations 'on the run'. This would address Kingsclere's daytime crewing limitations and be cost effective.

## Conclusions

Kingsclere fire station's crew believes that the area's current and future risks will be covered most effectively and safely if HFRS amends its proposals to

Retain the current fire engine until the end of life cycle in 2019 (or longer)

Equip the station with an intermediate response vehicle thereafter.

## Other Station Alternatives

Within the twelve week consultation period, the Risk Review Team also received alternative crewing proposals from **Gosport, Rushmoor and Winchester Fire Stations**. Due to their internal and technical nature, they have not been summarised here - but they have been carefully considered and developed alongside the station-based teams and will inform any final proposals ultimately presented to the Hampshire Fire Authority on the 24th Feb 2016.

## One Additional Submission

One further submission was received which specifically stated at its outset that 'this response should not be edited or altered and should be presented to Fire and Rescue Authority Members as submitted'. As this chapter is intended to provide summaries of the various submissions, it has not been included - but, in accordance with the respondent's instructions, it has been presented to the Fire Authority in its entirety and without alteration.

# Petitions

## Overview of Petitions Objecting to the Proposals

359. Two petitions objecting to the proposals were organised during the consultation and this chapter reviews those of which ORS is aware. We apologise if there have been other petitions of which we have no knowledge, but we have cross-checked our records with those of HFRS and the ones reviewed in the following paragraphs are all those known about.
360. The total number of signatures across the two petitions is 1,797. These were important petitions about 'cuts' at Rushmoor Fire Station and the two Portsmouth fire stations.

## Summary of Petitions

### Rushmoor Fire Station

361. 1,072 people signed an online petition (organised by the Aldershot Branch of the Labour Party) entitled 'Keep full night-time cover at Rushmoor Fire Station'. The petition was worded exactly as follows:

***Keep full night-time cover at Rushmoor Fire Station!***

*Hampshire FRS is planning to cut funding for Rushmoor Fire Station by over £200,000 a year: greatly reducing the cover at night-time; reducing the number of standard fire engines from three to one; cutting the number of full-time firefighters; and lessening on-call availability.*

*We need the present full night-time cover because of the high-risk locations in Rushmoor: Farnborough Airfield, which is expanding and becoming more industrialised; Aldershot Garrison, the Home of the British Army; and M3 Motorway.*

*Also, the proposed cuts fail to take into account the rapid growth in the population of Aldershot in the next 15 years with 3850 new dwellings in the Wellesley development.*

*Now is not the time to be cutting this vital public service.*

362. The online petition also attracted 319 written responses, most of which were general statements objecting to FRS reductions and concerns about the potential increase in life risk should some or all of HFRS's proposals be ratified. Some of the many typical comments were:

*Most fires start when you are asleep e.g. electrical ones etc. I work with elderly people; we may need assistance at night*

*This is insane, surely night time cover is just as important, if not more than daytime!*

*Knowing how minutes count in emergencies - especially fires - removing night cover in a combined urban/rural area such as this can easily put lives at risk*

*My Dad works at Rushmoor Fire Station and I know how busy they can be at any point day or night!*

*Fires do not go to sleep like the rest of us*

*I work within the control room so we are the first point of contact for members of the public in an emergency, I do not want to have a delay in getting a fire engine to people which is what will happen! And having to then deal with that call and being on the line no matter what doesn't bear thinking about!*

*Two firefighters in a van will still not be able to carry out a rescue in a house fire regardless of what technology is used*

*By reducing firefighters and standard fire trucks the safety of the public is put in more danger if multiple accidents/fires/RTCs happen and people in trouble will have to wait longer which is dangerous. I would rather my family/friends and the community be 100% protected by the current resources that give more of a chance of saving lives than reduced standard fire trucks and on call availability; I think the cuts will be detrimental to the area*

*There has been no consideration for the growth of Farnborough Airfield or the 3800 dwellings being built in Aldershot Garrison*

*The fire service is really important and at present there is not enough cover with Farnborough and Aldershot population ever increasing and the M3 and the many accidents*

*I'm a firefighter in a neighbouring brigade and have seen the short sightedness of the cuts first hand. I am covered by Rushmoor Fire Station so rely on a full turnout at night should I need it. Shame on you!*

*A ridiculous decision. The Ash ranges, which are covered by the fire station, are constantly catching on fire during the summer, threatening flora, fauna and property*

*We need our fire service. How can a £200,000 a year cut back be placed on a life*

*I am signing this petition as I work with vulnerable young people in the Rushmoor area. Emergency response teams are vital to the safety of our community*

*The Fire & Rescue Service has been cut enough over the years. They provide an essential service to the general public and have done a very good job. Now is not the time to be cutting this service. If money is to be saved stop paying excessive salaries to overpaid council directors/managers*

*Cut something else that is not so vital. Like politicians' extraneous expenses for instance or 1% off their pension fund. We cannot manage without the fire services, but the politicians can manage with a few quid less....*

## Southsea Fire Station

363. 725 people signed an online petition against the proposed changes for Southsea Fire Station. The petition was organised by the Portsmouth Liberal Democrats and was worded as follows:



Hampshire Fire Service are proposing to cut the number of 'full-size' fire engines in Southsea from 3 to just 1!

Replacing fully equipped fire engines with smaller vehicles (including a 'van' with just two firefighters!) will put lives at risk. It will leave the crews in Southsea unable to tackle fires in high-rise buildings (over 6 floors) without waiting for fire engines to come from outside Portsmouth, and we all know the problems we have with traffic getting in and out of the city.

You can find out more at the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service site by [clicking here](#).

**We, the undersigned, oppose these cuts to the Fire Service in Portsmouth and ask our representatives on the Fire Authority to vote against these cuts.**

## Petitions: Need for Interpretation

364. The petitions summarised above are clearly important in indicating public anxiety about important aspects of HFRA's proposed changes – and the Authority will wish to treat them seriously. Nonetheless, it should also note that petitions can exaggerate general public sentiments if organised by motivated opponents using emotive language; and in this case there has been considerable local campaigning about changes to services.
365. For example, the petition that calls for the retention of full night-time fire cover at Rushmoor states that HFRS's proposals for the fire station would entail '*reducing the number of standard fire engines from three to one*', without explaining that the station would still have three appliances - one enhanced, one intermediate and one first response vehicle. Furthermore, the 'banner' headline of the second petition 'Save our Fire Service' is somewhat inflammatory because, of course, HFRS is not under threat - rather it is proposing to deliver its services differently.
366. So petitions should never be disregarded or discredited, for they show local feelings; but they should be interpreted in context.

# Overall Conclusions

## Introduction

367. The Fire Authority will draw its own conclusions from the consultation elements reported here and from the other evidence available for its consideration. So the following remarks are not intended to advise the Authority on its final decision, but only to identify where there was general agreement in the consultation process, while also indicating the relative weight that might be attached to the different methods that in many cases produced radically different outcomes.

## Issues with a Relative Consensus

368. The consultation clearly showed that all the staff, public and stakeholders readily accepted that the **intermediate response vehicles (IRVs)** excellent in themselves and also appropriate for deployment in Hampshire. Any disagreement concerned the levels of crewing that should be required and whether their equipment has yet been specified with sufficient clarity.

369. With the exception of the questionnaire responses for Andover (which in the forums were generally agreed to have been misleading) there was a clear consensus that *if changes were to go ahead, then Option 2* would be the best outcome for Gosport, Havant and Winchester, while **Option 1** would be best for Andover. (Of course, though, the firefighters and public meetings objected to both options in principle.)

370. There was no consensus about the level of any **council tax increase**, but many more people favoured at least some increase than none.

## Interpreting Areas of Disagreement

### Range of Opinions

371. The sections above have demonstrated a stark contrast between the public meetings, petitions, staff forums and many submissions that were generally strongly opposed to most of HFRS's proposals (on the one hand) and (on the other hand) the public and stakeholder forums, and some submissions, that emphatically supported the proposals. In this rather stark polarity, the questionnaire findings were 'in the middle' – less critical of the proposals than the public meetings, staff forums and petitions, but less supportive than the public and stakeholder forums.

372. Not only did the different 'constituencies' of people and interest groups differ radically in their opinions of the proposals, but the different consultation methods also delivered very different outcomes in terms of approval or opposition. In this context, the Fire Authority has

to consider whether any consultation methods and/or opinions carry more weight than others – while also taking into account all the other evidence for or against the proposals.

### Meaning of Consultation

373. When interpreting the findings reported here, a key principle is that consultation is not a referendum: it is not a ‘numbers game’ and the loudest or majority opinions should not automatically prevail. The key issue is not whether most people agree or disagree with the proposals, but, *Are the reasons for their popularity or unpopularity cogent?* However popular or unpopular proposals might be, the Fire Authority will want to consider if they are evidence-based, feasible, safe, sustainable, reasonable and value-for-money.

### Different Views of the Data

374. Our review of the evidence has shown that whereas the forums with 242 randomly selected members of the public and 67 diverse stakeholders readily trusted the risk and incident data relied upon by HFRS in its Risk Review, the public meetings and firefighters rejected it as at best unreliable and at worst deliberately manipulated. So if the Fire Authority believes the firefighters and public meetings, it will reach very different conclusions about the proposals than if it accepts the evidence of its senior managers and the risk review team (evidence that was readily accepted in the public and stakeholder forums). Ultimately, the firefighters and public meeting attendees are asking the Fire Authority to reject the advice and evidence of its senior officers and the risk review team. The Authority will wish to consider on what basis it should do that.

### Different Views of the Proposed Response Vehicles

375. Similarly, if the Fire Authority believes the firefighters and public meeting attendees about the problems allegedly associated with the new response vehicles, its conclusions will not be the same as if it accepts management evidence in the same way that the public and stakeholder forums did. For, once more, the former challenge the Fire Authority to reject the advice and evidence of its management and risk review team. So the evidence and issues should be carefully considered.

### Different Views of Risk

376. The firefighters and public meetings argued strongly that (contrary to what management says) fire risk is not reducing – and, even if risk is reducing, that still does not justify reducing resources. Arguing that risk is primarily about the possible severity of hypothetical (“What if?”) incidents rather than their probability, they urged that, in the context of saving lives, money (expenditure) is unimportant.
377. The public and stakeholder forums had a very different perspective, though. They not only trusted senior management’s ability to make fair risk assessments based on valid data, but they also accepted that risk assessments should take account of the probability of incidents, not just their possible severity. Not only were they optimistic about new technology’s capacity to change traditional fire-fighting methods, they also accepted that “money

counts” in the sense that costs have to be controlled. ‘Value for money’ was not their only consideration, but they thought it important.

378. The Fire Authority will want to compare these very different perspectives on risk to decide which it thinks is the more reasonable overall.

## Interpreting the Consultation Methods

### Criteria

379. The consultation methods yielded different results, as we have seen – so what weight should the Fire Authority attach to each of them? While not pretending to be exhaustive, ORS suggests that in making its assessments the Authority should have regard to: whether views expressed reflected general public opinion; whether respondents were relatively well or poorly informed about the evidence; whether opinions were ‘thoughtful’ (based on personal deliberation) or the result of organised campaigns marshalling collective sentiments; whether the views expressed were cogent and evidence-based; and how many people were supportive or opposed (though we suggest that normally this will be the least important consideration).

### Questionnaire

380. Nearly 1,500 people completed the questionnaire, but it was not a representative survey of public opinion and the respondent profile did not match the Hampshire population at all closely.
381. In the questionnaire responses, there was support for the principles on which HFA’s proposals are based, but disagreement about the effectiveness of the proposals. Nonetheless, most respondents supported “all” or “most” of the proposals in Basingstoke and Deane (57% support), New Forest (54% support), Southampton (53% support) and Test Valley and Eastleigh (51%); and opinion was divided in Portsmouth (50% support) and Rushmoor and Hart (50% support).
382. There was a balance of opposition in only Winchester (45% support), Fareham and Gosport (45% support) and Havant and East Hampshire (40% support). Significantly, though, these were all areas where two options were under consideration – including one which would change night-time cover from wholtime to retained. It seems likely that the more negative views in these three areas were influenced by the nature of the two options.
383. Overall, then, the questionnaire outcomes were neither wholly against nor wholly for the proposals.

### Public Meetings

384. Over 400 people attended the public meetings and many were influenced by critical firefighters and union representatives who spoke knowledgeably and persuasively. Most of the attendees seemed to have attended in order to articulate or support set positions; and

though they listened to detailed presentations by HFRS the content had little influence on their views, because they supported the firefighters' position.

### **Petitions**

385. There were three petitions submitted opposing the proposals (with a total of over 2,000 signatures) which should be noted carefully; but the Fire Authority will want to consider whether they reflect general public opinion, whether the petition statements gave fair summaries of the proposals, and whether signatories were self-motivated and based on informed judgements.

### **Staff Forums**

386. Unfortunately, only 32 members of staff attended one of four staff forums, with only one support member of staff attending. Due to this level and pattern of attendance, their opposition to the proposals should be interpreted with caution, for it is difficult to be confident that the meetings reflect the views of HFRS staff generally.

### **Submissions**

387. Many of the 55 written submissions received were lengthy and very considered documents worthy of careful consideration by the Fire Authority for the issues and counter-proposals they contain. The Fire Authority will want to consider their evidence and whether they set out feasible alternative futures for HFRS.

### **Forums with the Public and Stakeholders**

388. Because it wanted to 'test' the acceptability or otherwise of its proposals on randomly selected members of the public and important stakeholders in deliberative 'jury-like' settings, the Fire Authority commissioned a total of 23 forums in which 242 members of the public and 67 well-informed stakeholders took part. In this programme, over 300 people engaged in lengthy, deliberative and thoughtful meetings in which they were able to examine the proposals in forensic detail.
389. The public forums were broadly representative of Hampshire residents; they were open-minded about the evidence; they quickly understood the key issues; and they deliberated thoughtfully while asking many questions. These forums were very different in tone and outcome to the public meetings and staff forums, for the participants were able to accept all the proposals readily.
390. While not representative of the general population, the stakeholder forum included diverse well-informed people who are used to policy and risk reviews. Like the forums with residents, these meetings were very different to the public meetings and staff forums, for the stakeholders were able to accept the proposals readily.
391. As in the forums with 242 members of the public, the 67 stakeholders were almost unanimous in their support for the introduction of three kinds of response vehicles and most of them also supported the ABC crewing.

## ORS and Fire Authority Roles

- <sup>392.</sup> Interpreting the overall ‘meaning’ of the consultation outcomes is neither straightforward nor just ‘numerical’ – for the different methods, groups and outcomes have to be not only respected, but also ‘evaluated’ in terms of the relative weight to be attached to each. They cannot be simply ‘summed’ into an unambiguous consensus.
- <sup>393.</sup> In this context, it is not the role of ORS to make policy recommendations or to go beyond the fact-based interpretation above. In the light of our general guidance, the Fire Authority will consider all the consultation outcomes, alongside all the other evidence, in order to make its decisions. Ultimately, an overall interpretation of the consultation will depend upon the Fire Authority itself: its members will consider all elements and determine which seem the most telling, by considering the relative merits of the various opinions as the basis for public policy.
- <sup>394.</sup> The challenge for the Fire Authority is to maintain public and professional confidence in the safety and resilience of its services while also demonstrating that it can successfully deliver appropriate changes to balance its budget. We trust that this report will make at least some contribution to that endeavour.