



25<sup>th</sup> July 2014

CFO John Redmond  
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Dear CFO Redmond

### **Response to IRMP Consultation - Shaping your Service**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on your proposed changes for 2015 – 2020.

You will be aware that our draft CRMP 2014-2020 is still before our FRA Members, and additional work on the proposals in the plan is being undertaken prior to their further consideration at their meeting in October this year. Similar to yourselves, we are proposing to change the levels of fire cover across parts of the two counties in line with the changing levels of risk in those areas and in the light of the need to make substantial financial savings.

I note that you have an online questionnaire covering the range of proposals, but I have confined my response to two areas of interest that will directly impact on Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service:

- 1) The merge of your Fire Control with at least one other organisation
- 2) The new draft Integrated Risk Management Plan – Determining Resource Requirements

#### The merge of your Fire Control

It is understandable that the potential merge may raise concerns about a possible loss of local knowledge within the Control room, which may then have an impact on response times. However, we are confident that the introduction of significant advances in technology will help to ensure that the system is able to propose the right resources to the correct areas based on the incident information available at the time of call.

A modern call centre will have the capacity to handle any increase in call volume, and staffing levels/crewing models would also need to reflect any increase.

We understand that the public and some staff may also have concerns regarding a dependence on IT. Once up and running, the benefits of the new technology should help to alleviate many of these concerns. However robust resilience arrangements will need to be considered and in place prior to any merge.

We are supportive of this proposal though we do recognise the significant impact on the current phase two Fire Control project and the anticipated impact on staff morale for your Service.



## The New Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan

It is clear that risk profiles are changing across all areas, and that Fire Services are adapting their services accordingly to ensure that their response continues to be flexible, resilient and appropriate to the risk.

Your draft IRMP raises two points of interest: firstly, the Response Standards for Life Risk Fires and Public Value Response Standards, and secondly, your intention not to reduce the number of fire appliances in the light of the financial challenges. With regard to Response Standards, we agree that using fires in buildings and road traffic collisions as benchmarks is important, as these are the two main types of life risk incident that you are likely to attend. While it is no surprise that most house fires occur where most people live and that road traffic collisions tend to happen on the faster 'A' roads, there are some areas and some people that tend to have a greater risk of having a house fire or a road traffic collision than others. It may be useful to use databases such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation and lifestyle characteristics such as Experian's Mosaic Public Sector datasets alongside historic incident statistics to help to identify such areas and communities so that they can be targeted for community safety and fire prevention activities. This may help to enhance robustness when reviewing response standards.

Regarding fire appliances, we understand that your Service is not currently planning to make any reductions to the number of appliances in order to meet the potential financial challenges faced. Instead, we understand that you are exploring the possibility of modifying the current work patterns. The alternative shift patterns likely to be looked at further include Annualised Hours, Day Crew Plus and Peak Activity Crewing (PAC). It is unlikely that any of these changes to work patterns would affect those fire stations bordering Herefordshire or Worcestershire (Clun, Craven Arms, Ludlow and Cleobury Mortimer), so this proposal would have little or no impact for Hereford & Worcester FRS.

Other than these areas, we have no specific comments on the consultation and I wish you well in tackling the challenges we all face.

Yours sincerely



**Jean Cole**  
**Head of Corporate Services**