



Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-2025 Consultation

Report of Consultation Findings



Opinion Research Services

November 2020

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

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1. Summary of Findings

Background and commission

- 1.1 Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is required to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to describe how it will keep its residents, and those who work or travel through its area, safe over the coming years. The plan describes the main risks to Shropshire's communities and how SFRS plans to use its resources efficiently to reduce those risks.
- 1.2 In order to understand views on the issues included in the IRMP, a 12-week formal consultation was undertaken by the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority between 6th July and 30th September 2020. SFRS commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open consultation questionnaire and three focus groups with members of the public. In total, 90 questionnaire responses were received; and 30 residents attended three focus groups.

Key findings¹

- 1.3 The following sections summarise the main consultation findings. However, readers are referred to the chapters that follow for a full account of people's views.

The consultation document

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked for their views on whether the consultation document was clear and easy to understand and gave them valuable information about how SFRS works. They were also asked whether they were interested in the future plans of SFRS, and whether the Service had correctly identified the main risks facing the community.

Clarity and ease of understanding

- 1.4 Over three quarters (78%) of respondents agreed that the consultation document was easy to understand, whilst around 1 in 6 (16%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1 in 20 (5%) respondents disagreed.

Information about how SFRS works

- 1.5 Over four fifths (84%) of respondents agreed that the consultation document gave them 'valuable information about how SFRS works', whilst around 1 in 8 (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and less than 1 in 20 (3%) respondents disagreed.

¹ Please note that the following feedback is based on the findings from the open questionnaire and focus groups with members of the public. SFRS received written submissions from the Canal & River Trust and the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Dementia Action Alliance but these have not been included here as they make very detailed and specific points, so readers are recommended to read the summaries on pages 35-36.

Interest in the future plans of SFRS

- 1.6 More than 4 in 5 (83%) respondents agreed that they are interested in the future plans of SFRS, whilst just over 1 in 10 (11%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and less than 1 in 10 (7%) disagreed.

Identifying the main risks facing the community

- 1.7 More than 4 in 5 (84%) respondents agreed that SFRS has correctly identified the main risks facing the community, whilst around 1 in 7 (15%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 1% disagreed.

Response time standards

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told that SFRS wants to show more clearly how its response standard will affect each community, and asked to comment on the following proposed aspects of it:

The arrival of the first fire engine in Urban areas within 10 minutes;

The arrival of the first fire engine in Town & Fringe areas within 15 minutes;

The arrival of the first fire engine in Rural areas within 20 minutes; and

To achieve this standard on 85% of occasions or more.

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.8 More than 3 in 4 (78%) respondents agreed that a 10-minute response-standard for Urban areas is appropriate, whilst less than 1 in 10 (7%) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and around 1 in 7 (15%) disagreed.
- 1.9 Two thirds (67%) of respondents agreed that a 15-minute response-standard for Town Fringe areas is appropriate, whilst around one in ten (11%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and over a fifth (22%) disagreed.
- 1.10 Less than three fifths (58%) of respondents agreed that a 20-minute response-standard in rural areas is appropriate, whilst 1 in 10 (10%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and nearly a third (32%) disagreed.
- 1.11 Around three fifths (61%) of respondents agreed that achieving these three response times on at least 85% of occasions for all incidents is appropriate, whilst less than 1 in 10 (7%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and nearly a third (32%) of respondents disagreed.

Public focus groups

- 1.12 There was general approval for the responsiveness of SFRS, and for the response time targets particularly; and in all the groups there was an evident sense of 'realism' about what is possible in rural areas where of necessity the fire and rescue service is on-call rather than wholetime.
- 1.13 As a result of sympathy with SFRS, there were some worries expressed that explicit and public response targets can be counter-productive for the fire and rescue service. However, while this 'anti-target' view predominated in the first focus group (urban) by a four-to-one majority, it certainly did not prevail in the other two groups (and overall) because people generally valued the information, were impressed by the

response standards, and could see that such standard can function as ‘protection’ for emergency cover resources which otherwise might be reduced (in the absence of explicit targets).

- 1.14 Overall, then, both the principle and specific times of SFRS’s response standards were endorsed clearly. While one group had reservations about whether explicit time standards are necessary or desirable, all the groups readily endorsed the following important points:

The current response performance is good (opinion widely held across three groups);

The standards as now defined are reasonable and acceptable (unanimous opinion);

It is important to provide clarity by differentiating rural and urban response times (unanimous opinion [if there are to be standards at all]);

Overall ‘average times’ are relatively uninformative to the public; and

The 85% achievement target is satisfactory given that there will be exceptions in different circumstances.

Undertaking a review of the deployment of emergency resources

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told that SFRS wants to review how to allocate resources like vehicles and crews more flexibly to cope with variable risks and demand and ensure the right resources are in the right place, at the right time. It does not propose to reduce its emergency services.

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.15 Over four fifths (85%) of respondents agreed that such a review should be undertaken, whilst less than 1 in 10 (7%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and fewer than 1 in 10 (8%) respondents disagreed.

Public focus groups

- 1.16 Overall, the focus groups were almost unanimous in thinking that the flexible use of resources is obviously important and rational.

Prevention and protection plan

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told that:
Prevention teams work with the public, using educational campaigns and Safe and Well Visits to prevent emergencies happening in people’s homes, particularly those who are vulnerable or elderly. SFRS proposes that people in rural areas will have greater opportunity to access Safe and Well visits by SFRS and obtain more safety information
Protection teams work with businesses to conduct safety audits, give advice, and reduce the risk of deaths and injuries from fires. They also provide guidance and enforcement of safety legislation. SFRS proposes to increase the Protection team from 9 to 12 members of staff.

Prevention proposals

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.17 More than 9 in 10 (91%) of respondents agreed with the plan to ensure people in rural areas have an opportunity to access Safe and Well visits by SFRS, and to get more safety information. Less than 1 in 10 (8%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and whilst only 1% disagreed.

Public focus groups

- 1.18 The responses about targeting rural areas were very positive, with some suggestions of how the targeting might be done, for example: Zoom calls with carers; and using Neighbourhood Watch, parish councils and on-call firefighters to distribute information locally. Some people, though, were concerned about wasting money in prosperous areas, for example by providing smoke alarms to people who can afford to buy their own.
- 1.19 While everyone endorsed the importance of prevention and targeting rural areas, a few people expressed concerns about the potentially wide scope of Safe and Well Visits - which struck some as possibly intrusive and a form of 'safeguarding' or 'paternalism'.
- 1.20 Despite a few people having such reservations, however, the three groups overwhelmingly supported the prevention proposals – to target Safe and Well Visits, particularly focusing on identifying and targeting advice and information toward vulnerable people and rural areas. In effect, support for the general proposal was unanimous.

Protection proposals

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.21 Over 4 in 5 (82%) respondents agreed with SFRS' plan to increase its Protection staff from 9 to 12 people, whilst around 1 in 10 (11%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and less than 1 in 10 (7%) disagreed.

Public focus groups

- 1.22 Focus group participants were asked whether SFRS should: continue to expect staff and the public to report premises with higher risks; increasingly target higher risk places for inspections (e.g. waste sites, commercial premises, care and children's homes and other locations with 'sleep risk'); and increase its specialist Protection personnel from nine to 12 to assist the implementation of post-Grenfell recommendations.
- 1.23 These proposals were just as popular as the prevention ones, perhaps even more so in that they seemed 'obviously good ideas' to the participants.

2. Consultation Overview

Background and commission

- 2.1 Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is required to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to describe how it will keep its residents, and those who work or travel through its area, safe over the coming years. The plan describes the main risks to Shropshire's communities and how SFRS plans to use its resources efficiently to reduce those risks.
- 2.2 In order to understand views on the issues included in the IRMP, a 12-week formal consultation was undertaken by the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority. SFRS commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open consultation questionnaire and three focus groups with members of the public.

The Consultation Process

Methodology

- 2.3 The consultation period ran from 6th July to 30th September 2020. Key elements of the consultation were undertaken by ORS as an independent organisation - for example, designing the consultation questionnaire and presentation material for the focus groups (in conjunction with SFRS); recruiting and facilitating three focus groups with members of the public; and analysing and reporting the consultation findings.
- 2.4 Across the two strands, respondents were asked about:
 - The appropriateness of SFRS' response standard;
 - Whether SFRS should review how to allocate resources like vehicles and crews more flexibly to cope with variable risks and demand;
 - Whether people in rural areas should have greater opportunity to access SFRS's Safe and Well visits and obtain more safety information;
 - Whether SFRS should increase its Protection team from 9 to 12 members of staff; and
 - Any other issues they wished to raise (for example around SFRS's Vision and Aims, any other not yet identified risks, ways in which the Service could help businesses more, safety in high-risk buildings, the use of technology, and the potential for partnerships to enhance rural prevention activities).
- 2.5 The 12-week formal consultation period gave residents, staff, and other stakeholders sufficient time to participate, and through its consultation document, SFRS sought to provide people with sufficient information to understand the issues under consideration and to make informed judgements about them.

Open consultation questionnaire

- 2.6 A consultation document outlining the issues under consideration was produced by SFRS. Using this as a basis, ORS and SFRS designed a questionnaire including a series of core questions, as well as sections inviting respondents to make further comments and demographic profiling questions.

- 2.7 The questionnaire was available online and in paper format between 6th July and 30th September 2020. In total, 90 questionnaires were completed, of which 82 were submitted online and 8 on paper (through the post). 75 valid responses were from individuals, and 15 valid responses were received on behalf of organisations.
- 2.8 It should be noted that while open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, 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 subject to influence by local campaigns. As such, because the respondent profile (as outlined in the full report) is an imperfect reflection of the Shropshire and populations, its results must be interpreted carefully. 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 views of residents who were motivated to put forward their views.

Public focus groups

- 2.9 A programme of three deliberative face-to-face focus groups was undertaken with a diverse and broadly representative cross-section of residents across Shropshire. ORS worked in collaboration with SFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the groups before facilitating the discussions and preparing an independent report of findings.

Attendance and Representation

- 2.10 The focus groups were designed to inform and ‘engage’ participants with the issues set out in the IRMP. This was done by using a ‘deliberative’ approach that encouraged people to question and reflect on the issues in detail. The meetings lasted for two hours and were attended as below in Table 1.

Table 1: Focus groups (area, time and date and number of attendees)

Area	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
Shrewsbury	Tuesday 4 th August 2020 6:30pm - 8:30pm	10
Rural Shropshire	Wednesday 5 th August 2020 6:30pm - 8:30pm	10
Telford	Thursday 6 th August 2020 6:30pm - 8:30pm	10
TOTAL		30

- 2.11 The attendance target for the focus groups was eight to ten people, which was achieved in all cases.
- 2.12 Participants were recruited by Acumen Field, a specialist recruitment agency, who initially sent out a screening questionnaire as an online survey to a database of contacts and, more widely, on social media platforms. They then collated the responses to establish a pool of potential recruits, which was ‘sifted’ to establish a contact list. People were then contacted by telephone, asked to complete a more detailed screening questionnaire and either recruited or not to match the required quotas. Those recruited were sent all the necessary details in a confirmation email, and telephoned a day or two before the events to confirm their attendance. Overall, the 30 participants who took part represented a broad cross-section of residents from the local areas.

- 2.13 Once initially recruited, 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. As standard good practice, people were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part.
- 2.14 Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from the three areas the opportunity to participate. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meeting (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline based on similar discussions.

Written submissions

- 2.15 During the formal consultation process, written submissions were received from the Canal & River Trust and the Shropshire, Telford, and Wrekin Dementia Action Alliance. ORS has read both submissions and summarised them in this report.

The report

- 2.16 This report summarises the feedback on the issues included in SFRS's IRMP 2021-2025. In order to differentiate verbatim quotations from other information, they are in indented italics within text boxes.
- 2.17 ORS does not endorse any opinions but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly; its role is to analyse and explain the opinions and arguments of the different interests participating in the consultation, but not to 'make a case' for any particular point of view. In this report, we seek to profile the opinions, views, and arguments of those who have responded, but not to make any recommendations as to how the reported results should be used. Whilst this report brings together a range of data to be considered, decisions must be taken based on all the evidence available.

A note on Covid-19

- 2.18 SFRS recognises that undertaking a consultation during the Covid-19 pandemic may have felt challenging for some. However, this was fully considered in taking the decision to do so – and particularly in deciding to undertake the focus groups face-to-face.
- 2.19 All three venues were formally risk assessed in advance of the sessions, and the following guidance adhered to:
- All attendees (including facilitators and support staff) were spaced at least 1m apart – and there was enough space for those leaving and entering the room to do so safely;
 - Anything with which attendees came into contact (chairs, tables, door handles etc.) were thoroughly cleaned in advance of the session and afterwards;
 - Signage was displayed so everyone walked in in one direction and out in another;
 - Posters were visible setting out personal behaviour and hygiene requirements;
 - Washroom facilities with hot water, soap, sanitising gel and disposable towels were available;
 - Procedures for toilet use were followed (for example, the number of toilet users was controlled to ensure Covid-19 safety was maintained);

- The government's 'working safely in restaurants offering takeaway and delivery' guidance was adhered to when making refreshments;
- The envelopes containing incentive payments were sealed, cleaned, and quarantined before being carefully transferred to participants; and
- Adequate parking was available to ensure as many people as possible could avoid public transport.

^{2.20} ORS was also mindful that the recruitment identified and screened out anyone who had recently tested positive with or had symptoms of Covid-19 - or been in close contact with anyone who had. Moreover, participants were asked to provide their details for the NHS Test and Trace service and given contact details to use in the event they become infected with Covid-19 after the session.

3. Open Consultation Questionnaire

Introduction

- 3.1 The open consultation questionnaire (with an accompanying Consultation Document) was available online between 6th July and 30th September 2020, and as a hard copy that was available on request.
- 3.2 90 questionnaires were completed; 82 were submitted online and 8 on paper.
- 3.3 75 questionnaires were completed by personal respondents whilst 15 were completed by organisations.

Duplicate and Co-ordinated Responses

- 3.4 It is important that engagement questionnaires are open and accessible to all, whilst being alert to the possibility of multiple completions (by the same people) distorting the analysis. Therefore, while making it easy to complete the questionnaire online, ORS monitors the IP addresses through which questionnaires are completed. A similar analysis of 'cookies' was also undertaken – where responses originated from users on the same computer using the same browser and the same credentials (e.g. user account).

Profile Tables

- 3.5 The tables that appear without commentary below and on the following page show the unweighted profiles of the responses to the survey provided by personal respondents (please note that the figures may not always sum to 100% due to rounding).

Table 1: Age – Respondents who provided a personal response

Age	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Under 54	27	43
55 to 64	18	29
65+	18	29
Not known	12	-
Total	75	100

Table 2: Gender – Respondents who provided a personal response

Gender	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Male	44	70
Female	18	29
Other	1	2
Not known	12	-
Total	75	100

Table 3: Disability – Respondents who provided a personal response

Disability	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Yes	3	5
No	58	95
Not known	14	-
Total	75	100

Table 4: Ethnic Group – Respondents who provided a personal response

Ethnic group	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
White British	58	95
BAME	3	5
Not known	14	-
Total	75	100

Table 5: Working for Shropshire FRS – Respondents who provided a personal response

Do you work for Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service?	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Yes	9	15
No	52	85
Not known	14	-
Total	75	100

Table 6: Respondent type (summary)

Respondent type	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Personal	75	83
On behalf of an Organisation	15	17
Total	90	100

- 3.6 The following 15 organisations (including businesses) identified themselves as part of their responses to the questionnaire:
- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
 - Bridgnorth Town Council
 - Canal and River Trust Operations
 - Church Stretton Town Council
 - Farlow Parish Council
 - Market Drayton Town Council
 - Midlands Partnership (NHS) Foundation Trust
 - Much Wenlock Town Council
 - Pontesbury Parish Council
 - Shrewsbury Town Council
 - Telford and Wrekin Council
 - Telford and Wrekin Local Policing Command
 - Alveley and Romsley Parish Council
 - Shelve Parish Council
- 3.7 Responses submitted on behalf of organisations can differ in nature to those submitted by individual members of the public if, for example, they represent the collective views of a number of different people or raise very specific issues. For this reason, ORS typically reports the consultation responses from organisations separately to those of individuals.
- 3.8 The main body of this chapter therefore focuses *only* on individual respondents' views; the views of organisations are covered in a separate section at the end of the chapter.

Interpretation of the data

- 3.9 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' categories, or multiple answers. An asterisk (*) in the profile tables denotes a figure that is less than 0.05.
- 3.10 Where differences between demographic groups have been highlighted as significant there is a 95% probability that the difference is significant and not due to chance. Differences that are not said to be 'significant' or 'statistically significant' are indicative only. When comparing results between demographic sub-groups, overall, only results which are significantly different are highlighted in the text.
- 3.11 The example comments shown throughout the report have been selected as being typical of those received in relation to each proposal.

- 3.12 Charts are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The charts show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with:
- Green shades to represent positive responses (E.g. agreement)
 - Grey shades to represent 'other' and/or 'don't know' responses
 - Yellow shades to represent neutral responses (neither positive nor negative)
 - Red shades to represent negative responses (E.g. disagreement)
 - The darker the colour, the more extreme the response (E.g. Dark green represents strong agreement)
- 3.13 The numbers on charts are percentages indicating the proportions of residents or respondents who gave a particular response on a given question.
- 3.14 The number of valid responses recorded for each question (base size) are reported throughout in parentheses. As not all respondents answered every question, the valid responses vary between questions. 'Don't know' responses have been treated as invalid when calculating percentages.
- 3.15 In cases where the base size is less than 50, an unweighted count has been used to show the number of responses, rather than a percentage.

Individual responses to the consultation questionnaire: main findings

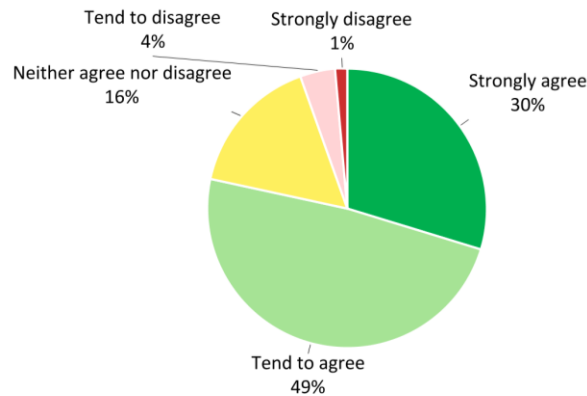
The consultation document

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked for their views on whether the consultation document was clear and easy to understand and gave them valuable information about how SFRS works. They were also asked whether they were interested in the future plans of SFRS, and whether the Service had correctly identified the main risks facing the community.

Clarity and ease of understanding

- 3.16 Figure 1 shows that less than 4 in 5 (78%) respondents agreed that the consultation document was easy to understand: 30% strongly agreed and just under half (49%) tended to agree.
- 3.17 Around 1 in 6 (16%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1 in 20 (5%) respondents disagreed.

Figure 1: Having read the consultation document, to what extent do you agree/disagree that the document was easy to understand?

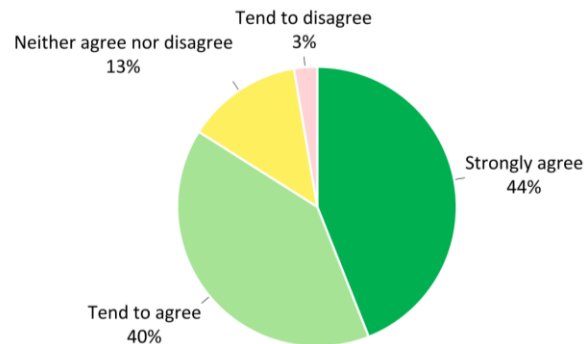


Base: Respondents who provided a personal response (74)

Information about how SFRS works

- 3.18 It can be seen in Figure 2 that over four fifths (84%) of respondents agreed that the consultation document gave them 'valuable information about how SFRS works': 44% strongly agreed and 40% tended to agree.
- 3.19 Around 1 in 8 (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and less than 1 in 20 (3%) respondents disagreed.

Figure 2: Having read the consultation document, to what extent do you agree/disagree that 'it gave me valuable information about how SFRS works'?

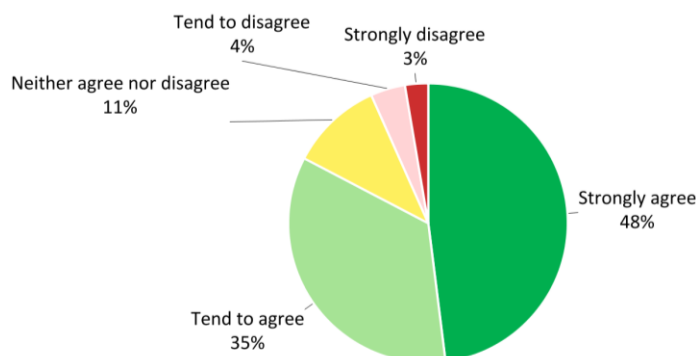


Base: Respondents who provided a personal response (75)

Interest in the future plans of SFRS

- 3.20 Figure 3 shows that more than 4 in 5 (83%) respondents agreed that they are interested in the future plans of SFRS: 48% strongly agreed and 35% tended to agree.
- 3.21 Just over 1 in 10 (11%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) disagreed.

Figure 3: Having read the draft IRMP, to what extent do you agree or disagree that: I am interested in the future plans of SFRS

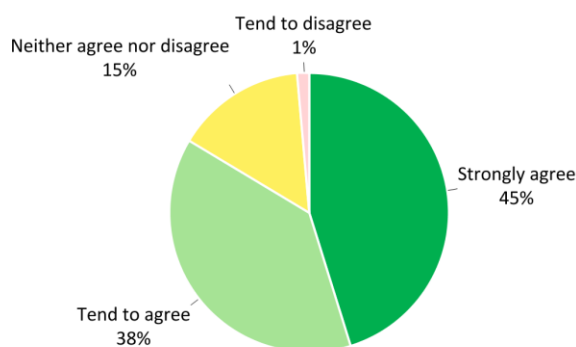


Base: Respondents who provided a personal response (75)

Identifying the main risks facing the community

- 3.22 Figure 4 below shows that more than 4 in 5 (84%) respondents agreed that SFRS has correctly identified the main risks facing the community: 45% strongly agreed and 38% tended to agree.
- 3.23 Around 1 in 7 (15%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 1% disagreed.

Figure 4: Having read the draft IRMP, to what extent do you agree or disagree that: SFRS has correctly identified the main risks facing the community



Base: Respondents who provided a personal response (73)

Response time standards

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told that SFRS wants to show more clearly how its response standard will affect each community, and asked to comment on the following proposed aspects of it:

The arrival of the first fire engine in Urban areas within 10 minutes;

The arrival of the first fire engine in Town & Fringe areas within 15 minutes;

The arrival of the first fire engine in Rural areas within 20 minutes; and

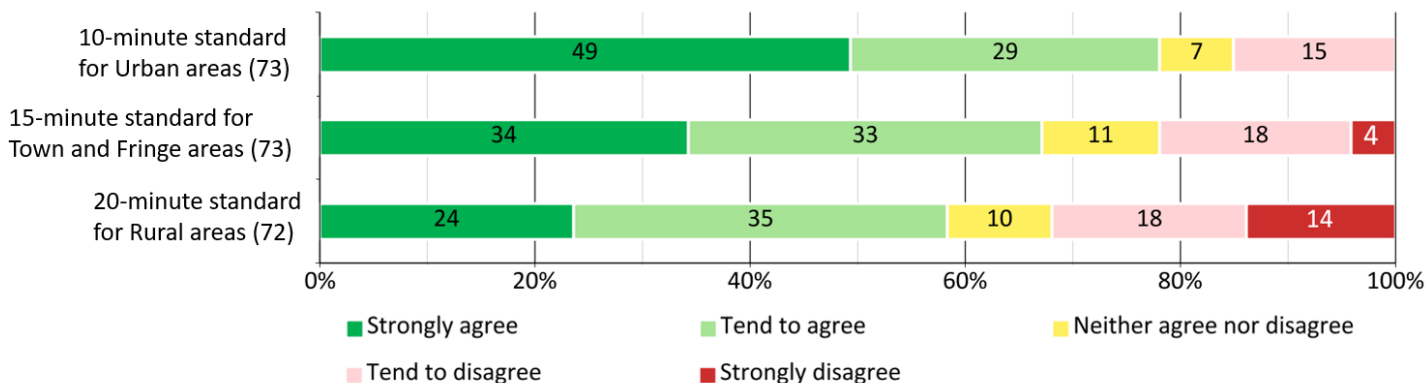
To achieve this standard on 85% of occasions or more.

3.24

- 3.25 Figure 5 shows that over 3 in 4 (78%) respondents agreed that a 10-minute response-standard for Urban areas is appropriate: just under half (49%) strongly agreed, and 29% tended to agree. Less than 1 in 20 (7%) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and around 1 in 7 (15%) disagreed.

- 3.26 Two thirds (67%) of respondents agreed that a 15-minute response-standard for Town Fringe areas is appropriate: 34% strongly agree whilst a similar proportion (33%) tended to agree. Around one in ten (11%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, whilst over a fifth (22%) disagreed.
- 3.27 Less than three fifths (58%) of respondents agreed that a 20-minute response-standard in rural areas is appropriate: around a quarter (24%) of respondents strongly agreed and 35% tended to agree. 1 in 10 (10%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Nearly a third (32%) disagreed: around 1 in 7 (14%) strongly disagreed and under a fifth (18%) tended to disagree.

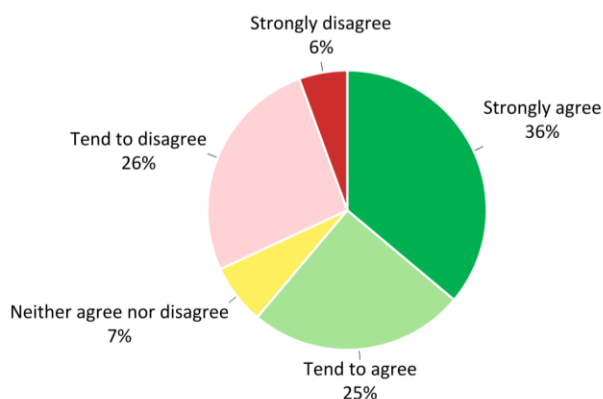
Figure 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following standard is appropriate:



Base: Respondents who provided a personal response (shown in brackets)

- 3.28 Figure 6 shows that around three fifths (61%) of respondents agreed that achieving the response times – of 10 minutes for urban areas, 15 minutes for Town and Fringe areas, and 20 minutes for rural areas – on at least 85% of occasions for all incidents is appropriate: 36% strongly agreed and a quarter (25%) tended to agree.
- 3.29 Less than 1 in 10 (7%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Nearly a third (32%) of respondents disagreed: around 1 in 20 (6%) strongly disagreed and over a quarter (26%) tended to disagree.

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following standard is appropriate: Achieving these times on at least 85% of occasions for all incidents.



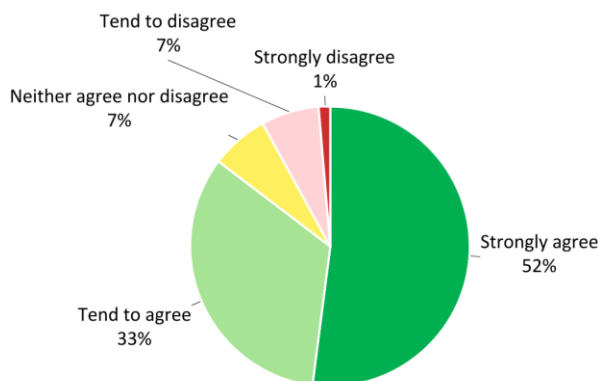
Base: Respondents who provided a personal response (72)

Undertaking a review of the deployment of emergency resources

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told that SFRS wants to review how to allocate resources like vehicles and crews more flexibly to cope with variable risks and demand and ensure the right resources are in the right place, at the right time. It does not propose to reduce its emergency services.

- 3.30 It can be seen in Figure 7 that over four fifths (85%) of respondents agreed that such a review of response standards should be undertaken: over half (52%) strongly agreed and third (33%) tended to agree.
- 3.31 Less than 1 in 10 (7%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Less than 1 in 10 (8%) respondents disagreed: only 1% strongly disagreed and 7% tended to disagree.

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that such a review should be undertaken?



Base: Respondents who provided a personal response (75)

Prevention and protection plan

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told that:

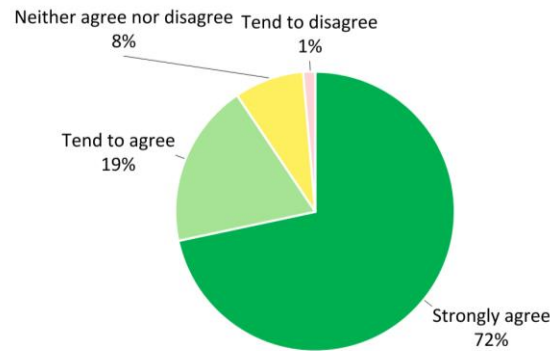
Prevention teams work with the public, using educational campaigns and Safe and Well Visits to prevent emergencies happening in people's homes, particularly those who are vulnerable or elderly. SFRS proposes that people in rural areas will have greater opportunity to access Safe and Well visits by SFRS and obtain more safety information

Protection teams work with businesses to conduct safety audits, give advice, and reduce the risk of deaths and injuries from fires. They also provide guidance and enforcement of safety legislation. SFRS proposes to increase the Protection team from 9 to 12 members of staff.

Prevention

- 3.32 Figure 8 shows that more than 9 in 10 (91%) of respondents agreed with the plan to ensure people in rural areas have an opportunity to access Safe and Well visits by SFRS, and to get more safety information: over 7 in 10 (72%) strongly agreed and under a fifth (19%) tended to agree.
- 3.33 Less than 1 in 10 (8%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and whilst only 1% disagreed.

Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following plan: to ensure people in rural areas have greater opportunity to access Safe and Well visits by SFRS, and to get more safety information.

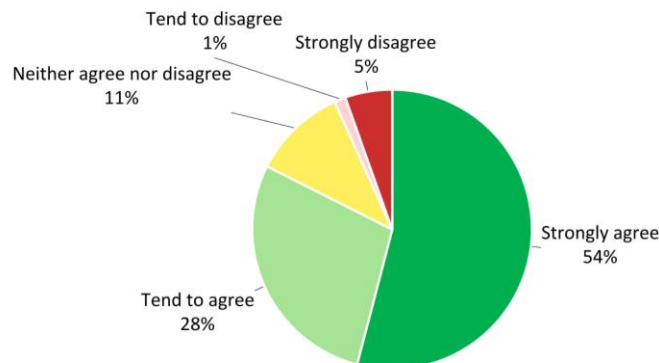


Base: Respondents who provided a personal response (74)

Protection

- 3.34 It can be seen in Figure 9 that more than 4 in 5 (82%) respondents agreed with SFRS' plan to increase the Protection staff from 9 to 12 people: more than half (54%) of respondents strongly agreed and 28% tended to agree.
- 3.35 Around one in ten (11%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) disagreed: 5% of respondents strongly disagreed and just 1% tended to disagree.

Figure 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following plans: to increase the Protection staff from 9 to 12.



Base: Respondents who provided a personal response (74)

Organisations' responses to the consultation questionnaire: main findings

The consultation document

Clarity and ease of understanding

- 3.36 Of the 15 responses on behalf of an organisation, 13 agreed that the document was clear and easy to understand: 7 strongly agreed and 6 tended to agree. One neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1 disagreed.

Information about how SFRS works

- 3.37 Fourteen responses on behalf of organisations agreed that, having read the IRMP draft, it gave them valuable information about how SFRS works: 12 strongly agreed and 2 tended to agree. One neither agreed nor disagreed, and no respondents disagreed.

Interest in the future plans of SFRS

- 3.38 All 15 responses on behalf of organisations agreed that, having read the IRMP draft, they are interested in the future plans of SFRS: 12 strongly agreed and 3 tended to agree.

Identifying the main risks facing the community

- 3.39 Fourteen responses on behalf of organisations agreed that the SFRS has correctly identified the main risks facing the community: 9 strongly agreed and 5 tended to agree. One neither agreed nor disagreed, and no respondents disagreed.

Response time standards

- 3.40 Twelve responses on behalf of organisations agreed that a 10-minute standard response time for Urban areas is appropriate: eight strongly agreed and 4 tended to agree. Two neither agreed nor disagreed, and no respondents disagreed. One respondent did not answer.
- 3.41 Twelve responses on behalf of organisations agreed that a 15-minute response standard for Town Fringe areas is appropriate: seven strongly agreed and 5 tended to agree. Two respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and none disagreed. One respondent did not answer.
- 3.42 Thirteen responses on behalf of organisations agreed that a 20-minute response standard in rural areas is appropriate: seven strongly agreed and 6 tended to agree. Two respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and no respondents disagreed.
- 3.43 Twelve responses on behalf of organisations agreed that achieving these times on at least 85% of occasions for all incidents is appropriate: eight strongly agreed and 4 tended to agree. Two neither agreed nor disagreed, and no respondents disagreed. One respondent did not answer.

Undertaking a review of the deployment of emergency resources

- 3.44 All 15 responses on behalf of organisations agreed that such a review should be undertaken: twelve strongly agreed and 3 tended to agree.

Prevention and protection plan

Prevention

- 3.45 All 15 responses on behalf of organisations agreed with the plan to ensure people in rural areas have greater opportunity to access Safe and Well visits by SFRS, and to get more safety information: twelve strongly agreed and 3 tended to agree.

Protection

- 3.46 Fourteen responses on behalf of organisations agreed with the plan to increase the protection staff from 9 to 12: twelve strongly agreed and 2 tended to agree. One respondent neither and agreed nor disagreed, and no respondents disagreed.

Further comments

- 3.47 Of the 90 respondents who engaged who engaged through the questionnaire, 37 gave a further comment at the end of the questionnaire.

COMMENTS ABOUT THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT
<i>"The IRMP gives a great insight into the work of Shropshire FRS and the valuable efforts in keeping responding reactively to incidents and being proactive in keeping residents and businesses safe"</i>
<i>"First a note of thanks to all the dedicated team providing and excellent service to the community. I know the service is complex and detailed, but I think the integrated risk management plan was much too detailed for a member of the public to read and understand, it really needed a simple summary"</i>
<i>"The document is rather wordy – depending on the intended audience. It may benefit from a straightforward table listing the risks and maybe a risk rating. There is no real mention of the crucial role of fire control and its response times and resilience in terms of business continuity – essential to the public and partners. A key risk mitigation measure is education and especially with children. This may be understated in the document."</i>
COMMENTS ABOUT SFRS'S VISION AND AIMS
<i>"A very thorough review with clear and appropriate vision and aims."</i>
<i>"I totally agree with the vision for SFRS and I think the aims well thought out and achievable."</i>
COMMENTS ABOUT PREVENTION
<i>"Help for elderly is essential."</i>
<i>"Firefighters can carry out fire prevention."</i>
<i>"It would be good for home safety booklets to be circulated on a regular basis say every 4 or 5 years."</i>
<i>"SFRS could make announced visits to village halls to consult with the general public."</i>
<i>"We welcome measures to keep people safe in their homes for longer and this will become ever more important as our population continues to age at the projected levels."</i>
<i>"It would be useful for one of the protection staff to meet occasionally with representatives of community groups and service providers for the vulnerable and elderly co-ordinated by an elected member of the town council. This would help to target those individuals most in need of safe and well visits by SFRS."</i>
<i>"Fire and Rescue Services must not only consider response arrangements, but also recognise the vulnerabilities within communities regardless of urban, semi-urban & rural locations. Ensuring that delivery of prevention activities is efficient & effective, we need to constantly improve our understanding of the vulnerabilities within our communities regardless of geographical location & strive for improved data sharing with key partners. Appropriate interventions delivered to prevent fires & other emergencies happening in the first place (delivered by FRS or in conjunction with other agencies to make best use of public resource)"</i>

<p><i>“Obviously, prevention is rather than intervention has to be better for the people of Shropshire. SFRS must continue to ensure that the appliances and crews are at the right place at the right time. Also, the crews are highly trained and effective, this also includes the equipment. However, with ever increasing businesses and a growing population then the preventative teams must be able to manage an increased workload. The technological advances in fire safety and expectations that the staff are able to converse professionally, with a high degree of competency and confidence with any groups, agencies and organisations is of paramount significance. This can only be demonstrated if the officers are highly trained, qualified, dedicated, and sufficient in number. The people of Shropshire and business communities deserve this level of skill and assistance.”</i></p>
<p>COMMENTS ABOUT PROTECTION</p>
<p><i>“The increase in resources to deliver statutory functions including fire protection is a challenge for each and every FRS, but in the wake of Grenfell, it is correct that the focus is on improvements in building safety & making our communities safer places to live work & visit. It is vital that as a sector we make best use of our resources & the government funding to support these improvements. Shropshire's IRMP includes an extensive summary of the risks in its service area. It will be interesting to see how & if the risk profile of individual FRS's, including Shropshire's will need to change.”</i></p>
<p><i>“Shropshire FRS have enforcement powers under the fire safety order but rarely use those powers for prosecution when, in some cases, further action should definitely have been taken. The service needs to be seen to be carrying out their responsibilities where business owners within Shropshire are appearing to 'get away with it' putting people at risk because the fire service won't do anything anyway! Additional staff will certainly help.”</i></p>
<p>COMMENTS ABOUT RESPONSE</p>
<p><i>“Prevention in rural areas is important but what about using technology to improve response capability when firefighting in rural areas? Things like cobra systems and lighter appliances or foam systems.”</i></p>
<p><i>“We also agree that the prevalence of natural emergencies becomes ever more a challenge. We have seen some of the worst floods in Shrewsbury in our lifetime during this year alone and those 1 in 100-year episodes are going to become more frequent. Therefore, having the skillset locally to deal with these incidents is extremely important. We recognise how fortunate we are in Shrewsbury to have such dedicated crews at the fire station attending to our local needs in such a speedy fashion and we welcome the projected response times both for the inner town areas and on the fringes.”</i></p>
<p><i>“In view of the resources required for flooding events, namely on the main river communities do you have engagement with the proposed River Severn partnership which is a cross party government initiative which may be useful to know what their intentions are as they plan their work.”</i></p>
<p><i>“As a rural area alongside the River Severn, Alveley and Romsley has benefited from the work done by the fire and rescue service and other agencies during the flooding earlier in the year. We understand that the fire and rescue service does not have a formal responsibility for dealing with floods. Does this need to be reviewed?”</i></p>
<p><i>“We wish to thank Bridgnorth fire crew for the continued support and efforts to keep the community safe and respond to incidents in and around Bridgnorth. We support the continuation of river rescue training for all crew as we note the high increase in flooding incidents and water rescues from 2014/2015 to 2019/2020 (as shown on page 29).”</i></p>
<p><i>“Bishops Castle fire station might benefit with being water rescue trained then they may be able to assist Montgomery (Mid and West Wales) with flooding related calls between Montgomery and Bishops Castle, and maybe Shropshire and Mid and West Wales could provide cover at each other's stations to increase the availability. E.g. Bishops Castle are on a long incident so Montgomery cover Bishop's Castle whilst they are away and vice versa. At least then it's only 15-20 minutes to respond from Bishops Castle or Montgomery to Churchstoke, Mellington, Pentre, Snead etc.”</i></p>
<p><i>“I agree that more work needs to be done to look at appropriate vehicle and team members to attend incidents, i.e. not always a large pump and maybe something smaller and more agile for rural areas.”</i></p>
<p><i>“Is there any way you can reduce call outs to automatic fire alarms which are false alarms particularly those that are repeat culprits like Princess Royal hospital and Shrewsbury hospital?”</i></p>

COMMENTS ABOUT MOBILISATION/RESPONSE TIME STANDARDS
<i>"Changing the risk categories from high, medium, and low to urban, fringe and rural does not fit with the explanation of risk, 'making it clearer'. It appears that these are the response times simply because they are based around distance from fire stations. I don't disagree with the outcome, but the methodology to get there is false. Be more upfront about the rationale. Or are you concerned that fire engines will become deployed much like ambulances are now sited - no longer in stations but temporarily parked spaced out all across the territory? Is there a fundamental difference in those services to account for the siting outcome? Is the existence of fire stations limited (apart from as a garage for specialist equipment)?"</i>
<i>"I believe the times to attend should be a measure for the fire service however I don't believe that these need to be advertised to the general public. This would put in necessary expectation from the public of timings to attend. People would start calling 999 again let say if the crew were 1 minute outside of the time published. The public just need to be aware that you will get there in the fastest possible time."</i>
<i>"15 and 20 minutes (with only an 85% achievement rate) is a long time for a fire to be going after someone has actually noticed it, wherever one may be."</i>
<i>"Understand that Shropshire is very rural but why is my rural property less important than an urban property in terms of response. Knowing that response is twice as long, is there a danger that rural residents will call you out 'just in case' and waste your time?"</i>
<i>"It is difficult, as with no nationally agreed approach to response standards, individual FRS set out their own standards as to what the public can realistically expect an attendance to take based on local approach & appetite for risk. There are no direct implications/consequences from not measuring/reporting response standards. It may be fair to say that no FRS accurately measure/reports the difference response times make in terms of improved outcomes. However, to demonstrate accountability & transparency & to satisfy the expectations of the public & HMICFRS, a failure to set, measure & publish response standards is likely to attract a negative response. Are our communities satisfied that we get there as quickly as possible or do they require standards by way of assurance?"</i>
<i>"In some instances/areas it appears nearest and/or quickest appliances are not being mobilised. The turnout software seems to be broken and doesn't take into account quicker/easier roads for appliances to travel."</i>
<i>"For the majority of people the fire and rescue service is a service that they hope that they will never use, however, if they do need to use it they want to know that a fire appliance will respond and in Shropshire, judging by figure 3 on page 79 of the IRMP that's pretty much a nailed on certainty. First class."</i>
<i>"Cleobury Mortimer Fire and Rescue Service was universally commended for its prompt support."</i>
COMMENTS ABOUT PARTNERSHIP WORKING/INTEGRATION
<i>"There will be an increased demand for more units and personnel given the plans to build more housing in Shropshire. It is the opinion of this parish council that the fire service, whilst working in close partnership with other agencies and stakeholders, should remain/provide standalone services and not be overly integrated with other services. Each service provider has specialist training in the areas required."</i>
<i>"Shropshire is a growing community and needs our own fire service up-to-date. I am not aware of any issues regarding SFRS, so, if it isn't broken, leave it alone."</i>
<i>"Market Drayton town council does not support the Shropshire fire and rescue merging with police authority."</i>
<i>"I'm an ex-NHS worker, I see a future more closely linked to ambulance service...I know you respond to some calls now for ambulance calls, perhaps the NHS should jointly fund training and cars for responses. A smaller vehicle jointly funded and staffed. This would free up your fire trucks, as at present they're used for medical calls, these could be kept for fire service calls."</i>
<i>"The impact of Covid-19 on people's mental health may result in an increase in river incidents and arson. Create more partnerships to enhance countywide prevention activities, not just rural."</i>
<i>"I would suggest working with parish councils in rural areas using village newsletters and have drop in events would all highlight the important work you do."</i>
<i>"To work with the council about the number of cars parked on the main roads blocking traffic and delaying SFRS."</i>

"It is probably not evident to the majority of the public in what is undertaken by the fire service and maybe there is a role both for the service and organisations like parish & town councils through their elected members to bring this level of service to their attention. If there is anything that Shrewsbury Town Council can do to assist in disseminating that information through our elected members, on our many noticeboards, through our website or via our social media channels, we are only too happy to help. Additionally, consideration should be given to using the services of the Shropshire association of local councils to engage with the 200 parish and town councils over the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin areas"

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

"Has the IRMP taken into consideration the expansion of MOD Donnington and providing additional support to the MOD fire service which was recently privatised and also plans to build a lithium-ion battery manufacturing facility a short distance from Shifnal/Tong?"

"[I'm] surprised by the stats for fire in more than one room, at night. Is this an opportunity for publicity and maybe a service? Residential risk assessment, alarm recommendation, resident buys and service fits the device. Maybe already in place?"

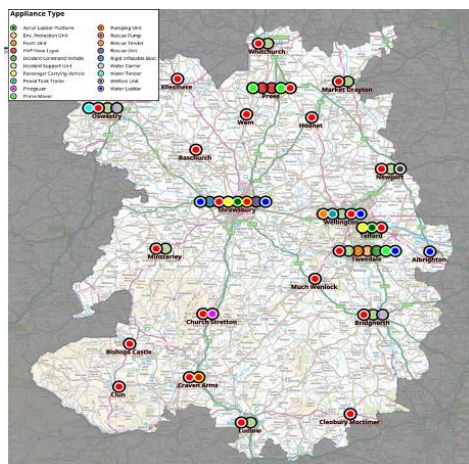
"The new housing that is being introduced has bad access with narrow roads and a lack of parking. How will SFRS be able to access properties?"

"The service does an excellent job in extremely difficult circumstances, are there any plans to introduce any electric vehicles or the use of drones or robots to assist in the foreseeable future?"

4. Focus Groups with Members of the Public

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter reports the views from the three focus groups with members of the public.
- 4.2 The meetings lasted two hours and used a ‘deliberative’ approach to encourage participants to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing their ideas in detail. The focus groups began, for the sake of context, with a concise review of SFRS’s resources, incident levels (both overall and by station ground), strategic roles and finances, before the IRMP issues were considered. Discussion was stimulated via a presentation devised by ORS and SFRS to inform and stimulate discussion of the issues - and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they wished throughout the discussions. Examples of information given at the sessions can be seen below and overleaf.



SFRS Stations and Premises

PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES

PERSONNEL TOTAL = 607
187 Wholetime Firefighters & Officers
315 On-call Firefighters
85 Support Staff
20 Control Room Staff
23 FIRE STATIONS
3 Wholetime (Shrewsbury, Telford & Wellington)
20 On-call
2 Wholetime & On-call (Shrewsbury & Wellington)
28 FIRE ENGINES (+ special appliances)
2020/21 BUDGET → £23.221M

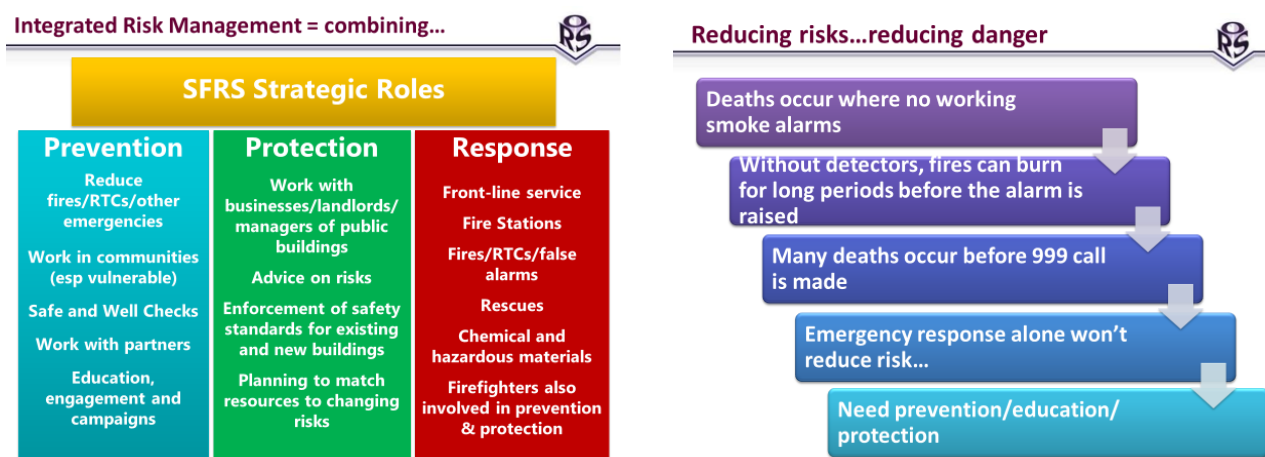
SFRS INCIDENTS 2019-20

TOTAL INCIDENTS ATTENDED	3,842
Fire (Primary, Secondary and Chimney)	1,091
Road Traffic Collisions	288
Special Service Calls*	785
False alarm (Good Intent, Malicious and AFA)	1,678

*Special Service Calls are other non-fire incidents requiring the attendance of an appliance or officer, e.g. flooding & water rescues, hazardous materials spills & leaks, animal rescues, etc.

RTC attendances increasing as proportion of total





- 4.3 The chapter has been structured to address each of the areas of discussion in some detail. The views of the three meetings have been merged to give an overall report of findings, rather than three separate and potentially repetitive mini-reports; but significant differences in views have been drawn out where appropriate. All participants were encouraged to express their opinions freely and to ask questions throughout, and all the meetings were successful in stimulating wide-ranging and informed debate on the issues under consideration.

Main findings

Estimates of risk and SFRS finances/resources

- 4.4 To investigate their background perception of fire risk in the community, participants were asked to 'guesstimate' the annual total death rate from fires across Shropshire and also certain key facts about the finances and resources of the service.
- 4.5 Some focus group participants were better informed about their fire and rescue service than many people elsewhere – that is, their 'guesstimates' in relation to some important financial, resource and risk information were within 'reasonable' limits. Nonetheless, while some were very accurate indeed, most people tended to:

Radically over-estimate the number of fire deaths and serious injuries per year across Shropshire. Some guessed between 1500 and 3000, and there were many who assumed that 150-500 deaths happen alone (the actual figure for both deaths and serious injuries is 3.8);

Underestimate the crewing costs of a 24/7 fire engine. The lowest guess was £20,000, but most assumed £250,000-£750,000 (whereas the true figure is about £1 million for a wholetime appliance); and

Under- or over-estimate the budget of their fire and rescue service by a wide margin. Some guesstimates were as low as £4-10 million and many were as high as £40-£100 million (whereas the actual figure is £22.3 million).

- 4.6 Participants were also asked about their awareness of fire engine crewing. Many were unaware that SFRS employs both wholetime and on-call crews, with the latter being much more prevalent to reflect the area's rurality.

- 4.7 Finally, when asked about the most common cause of accidental death, many respondents answered ‘house fires’, ‘road traffic collisions’ and ‘drowning’². In the light of the estimates of the number of fire deaths per year in Shropshire, it is unsurprising that ‘house fires’ was so prominent, whereas the risk, of course, is very low from that cause. Poisoning was not mentioned at all, and falls were cited by very few people, though both factors are significant causes of accidental death. Overall, the answers showed how people over-estimate the number of casualties due to fire. Such assumptions are a challenge for FRSs in seeking public understanding for fire cover reviews.
- 4.8 Once involved in the focus groups, the participants showed considerable interest in SFRS: the initial awareness issues (above) prompted a range of following questions about SFRS – for example:

How do you decide how many on-call firefighters to page for an incident?

Are on-call firefighters readily available?

What does it cost to train firefighters, do you train in batches and do you use a lot of resources during training?

Does flooding affect the SFRS budget?

Do you co-operate across the border with Wales?

The population and housing is increasing – so does the number of incidents go up as well?

Do you get consulted on big planning applications for housing?

Response time standards

- 4.9 Prior to discussions around response-time standards, participants were informed that:

Budget constraints have had a significant impact on SFRS’ fire station, appliance and personnel numbers;

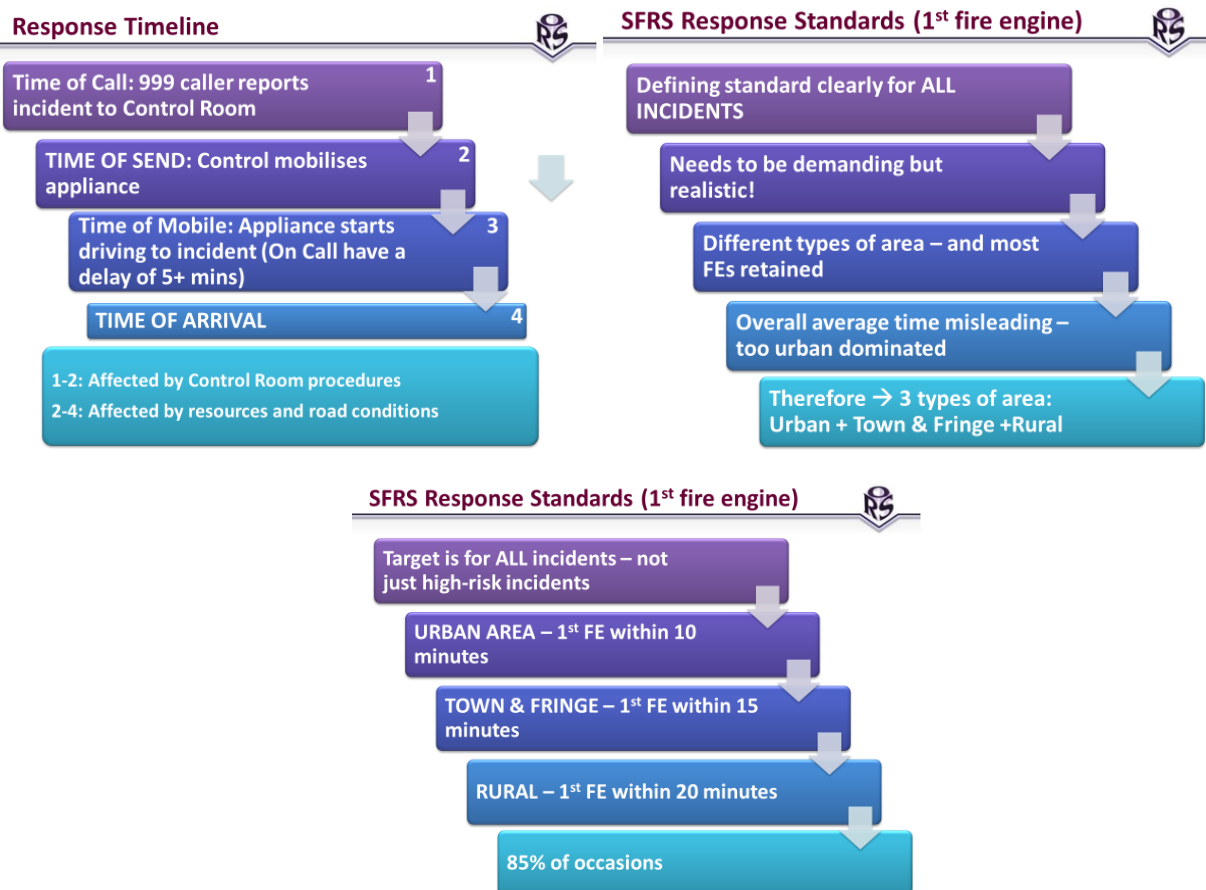
Road congestion and ‘safe driving’ policies impact on response speed

Prevention work has reduced the number of fires in the home, which has impacted on the current attendance standard; and

While response-time standards must be appropriate and possible, the priority is always to deliver a prompt, safe and effective response service.

- 4.10 They were also shown the following information outlining the various aspects of SFRS’s current response time standard.

² The answers are: falls, poisoning, drowning and road traffic collisions.



- 4.11 There was general approval for the responsiveness of SFRS, and for the response time targets particularly; and in all the groups there was an evident sense of ‘realism’ about what is possible in rural areas where of necessity the fire service is on-call rather than wholetime. Some of the telling and realistic comments were as follows.

*There are bound to be different response times in urban and rural areas – it’s a fact of life
It all depends on the local conditions – so you can’t always predict times and keep to them
It all depends on where you live!*

- 4.12 From their sympathy with SFRS, there were some worries expressed that explicit and public response targets can be counter-productive for the fire and rescue service – for example:

*Any target could be a rod for your own back
Specific targets lead people to complain
I would change the wording to “approximately” because it could be a rod
Targets like this increase expectations!
The times could make firefighters hurry and cut corners in order to meet the targets – so I’d prefer saying, “As soon as possible”!*

- 4.13 However, while this ‘anti-target’ view predominated in the first focus group (urban) by a four-to-one majority, it certainly did not prevail in the other two groups (and overall) because people generally valued

the information, were impressed by the response standards, and could see that such standard can function as 'protection' for emergency cover resources which otherwise might be reduced (in the absence of explicit targets). This was succinctly and firmly expressed in two statements (to widespread agreement):

I think the public like to know – and the standards can protect the fire engines and stations

You need targets to be accountable – like schools' exam results. You have to have proper targets!

4.14 Two examples of the clear appreciation for SFRS's performance and targets were:

I'm surprised by how good the rural response times are – I thought they would be a lot longer!

I live in Shrewsbury, so I thought our times would be 20 minutes – but they're actually 15 minutes – so this is reassuring to me.

4.15 Overall, then, both the principle and specific times of SFRS's response standards were endorsed clearly. While one group (as we have seen) had reservations about whether explicit time standards are necessary or desirable, all the groups readily endorsed the following important points:

The current response performance is good (opinion widely held across three groups);

The standards as now defined are reasonable and acceptable (unanimous opinion);

It is important to provide clarity by differentiating rural and urban response times (unanimous opinion [if there are to be standards at all]);

Overall 'average times' are relatively uninformative to the public; and

The 85% achievement target is satisfactory given that there will be exceptions in different circumstances. (This was a more abstract idea to focus on than specific times, but only one person had reservations about this percentage: "*I don't think we should have percentages – you can just aim for the target*").

4.16 One matter not pursued in depth in the discussions was whether any response standard should encompass all incidents or apply only to the more serious incidents. The inclusion of RTC's in the standard was certainly welcomed, but (apart from that) there was no overall conclusion about whether the target should relate to all or only the more serious incidents.

Undertaking a review of the deployment of emergency resources

4.17 Participants were informed that risk varies by time of day and geographical area and were asked for their views on whether SFRS should reflect such variations in its deployment of fire stations, firefighters, appliances, and equipment.

4.18 A few people questioned whether the proposal would mean that fire engines would be deployed off-station, like ambulances *that move about near the dangerous motorways*? Others asked, *Does this mean you could have a floating resource?*

4.19 Overall, though, the focus groups were almost unanimous in thinking that the flexible use of resources is obviously important and rational – for example, some typical comments were:

This all makes good sense!

You do need to move resources to where they're most needed

I assumed this was happening already – it should be normal to rationalise the allocation of resources against risk!

Prevention and protection plan

Prevention proposals

- 4.20 Participants were asked whether SFRS should continue its targeted Safe and Well Visits, particularly focusing on identifying and targeting advice and information toward vulnerable people who are at risk and in need – as well as those in rural areas. This issue stimulated a number of questions, such as:

How many Safe and Well visits to you do a year?

Do you do repeat visits?

Do you still do your work with schools as effectively as before?

- 4.21 The responses about targeting rural areas were very positive, with some suggestions of how the targeting might be done (although some disagreed), including for example the following comments.

You could use Zoom groups with carers – you could set up video calls and repeat the process

But vulnerable people don't usually have the technology or know-how for Zoom

You could use Neighbourhood Watch to distribute information locally

The parish councils could also play a role in informing people in rural areas – if you gave them the information. Parish magazines could be used, too, or visits to parish council meetings

The on-call firefighters should also have a role, with other volunteers, too

You need to avoid impersonation, though, if you go calling on people when not in uniform

The information highlights the wide range of work you do – for example, in care homes – and your roles are very varied – which isn't well-known to the public!

- 4.22 Some comments were concerned about wasting money in prosperous areas – for example:

I can afford a smoke detector – like most people!

- 4.23 While everyone endorsed the importance of prevention and targeting rural areas, a few people expressed concerns about the potentially wide scope of Safe and Well Visits which struck some as possibly intrusive and a form of 'safeguarding' or 'paternalism' – for example:

Don't overdo the safeguarding!

There is a fine line in Safe and Well Visits – it's important not to be too intrusive

It's OK if the capacity really is there – but you must not lose your focus on fires. Don't blur the lines!

Don't overdo the social work aspect – all agencies have to co-operate to make this work well.

- 4.24 Despite a few people having such reservations, the three groups overwhelmingly supported the prevention proposals – to target Safe and Well Visits, particularly focusing on identifying and targeting advice and information toward vulnerable people and rural areas. In effect, support for the general proposal was unanimous.

Protection proposals

- 4.25 Participants were asked whether SFRS should:

Continue to expect staff and the public to report premises with higher risks;

Increasingly target higher risk places for inspections (e.g. waste sites, commercial premises, care and children's homes and other locations with 'sleep risk'); and

Increase its specialist Protection personnel from nine to 12 to assist the implementation of post-Grenfell recommendations.

- 4.26 These proposals were just as popular as the prevention ones, perhaps even more so in that they seemed 'obviously good ideas' to the participants. For example, the following were typical comments.

I know a wood factory in south Staffordshire where no one has followed up on safety recommendations made by the fire service about the storage of flammable wood

I had no idea just how much good work you do with businesses!

It's good to have more staff for this if you can afford it nowadays

We don't have many high rise, high risk buildings in Shropshire, but it all makes sense!

There are obvious gains in doing all this.

5. Written Submissions

Written submissions: introduction

- 5.1 During the formal consultation process, written submissions were received from the Canal & River Trust and the Shropshire, Telford, and Wrekin Dementia Action Alliance. ORS has read both submissions and summarised them in this chapter. It is important to note the following section **is a report of the views expressed by submission contributors**.

Written submissions: summaries

Canal & River Trust

- 5.2 Canal & River Trust looks after more than 44 miles of waterway in Shropshire, including the Montgomery, Shropshire Union, and Llangollen canals, the Belvide and Knighton Reservoirs and the Trench and Middle Pool Reservoirs near Telford.
- 5.3 The Trust makes the following main points:

As well as being home to a number of residential boats, as a rural County many of the Trust's waterways are used for boating holidays. In addition, there has been a growth in popularity of other forms of craft such as canoes and paddleboards, which can pose additional risk and require different types of potential rescue if users get into difficulty. The Trust is happy to support SFRS to improve water and boat safety;

The Trust holds information about a number of potentially useful access points to its waterways that would make responses to incidents easier and safer, as well as help gain access to its assets such as tunnels, weirs, and locks. The Trust is happy to work with SFRS to share this information;

The Trust has a memorandum of understanding with the Environment Agency (EA) that states the latter will attend and lead the response to Category 1 & 2 (Major/Significant Impact) pollution incidents on Trust waterways, whereas the Trust will respond to Category 3 & 4 (Minor/No Impact) pollution incidents. It is likely that any issues arising as a result of fires would be classed as Category 1 or 2 and that the EA will be the lead for pollution response;

With regard to potable abstractions, there is one at Hurleston Reservoir at the far Northern end of the Llangollen Canal – and while this may be across the Welsh border, the plan states that support is sometimes given to major incidents in this vicinity and SFRS “*should be aware that pollution incidents may impact on drinking water supply and need to be reported accordingly*”;

With regard to waterfowl in distress, the RSPCA will be the contact to rescue oil contaminated birds, but the Trust will often be involved in the clean-up of the wider affected area, so should be notified;

Many nearby surface water drains may discharge to the Trust's waterways so, even if a fire or incident isn't on or adjacent to a canal, it may still be impacted by contaminated run-off;

The Trust may also need to notify nearby moorings/marinas if a fire poses a health risk – and for incidents on the canal, there's a risk of pollution occurring once the fire has been put out as a result

of oils/fuels leaking from, say, a sunken boat. The Trust can deploy floating booms to surround the boat to contain any pollutants, so again suggests that SFRS “*let us know as soon as possible*”; and SFRS should monitor for fish in distress when dealing with incidents as the Trust has aeration equipment and access to fisheries contractors, who can perform fish rescues if needed.

Shropshire, Telford, and Wrekin Dementia Action Alliance

- 5.4 The Alliance quotes data from 2019 that shows around 3,628 people with dementia in Shropshire and 1,270 in Telford and Wrekin – a number that is predicted to grow year on year. It also says that dementia can increase vulnerability and heighten risk, and that many people with dementia (and their carers) may have further increased risks through co-morbid physical conditions, age, and mobility, or hearing or sight problems.
- 5.5 The Alliance is interested in SFRS’s future plans and view its Prevention work as a core function in helping to ensure that people with dementia can remain safely within their own homes and communities for as long as possible – and in raising awareness of dementia in communities and within partner agencies.
- 5.6 As SFRS has previously committed to ‘dementia friendly’ principles, the Alliance would wish to see this reinforced in future working to include:

The provision of preventative support to vulnerable and ‘at risk’ groups such as people with dementia (including ‘safe and well’ checks);

The provision of dementia awareness and other training to all staff so they are able to communicate effectively and understand barriers;

Co-ordination with partners where a multi-agency approach is required, including in the identification of vulnerable/at risk residents and any appropriate follow up and

Active working with partners to identify and promote other initiatives that help to support people with dementia and other vulnerable groups.

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