

Additional comments received and Service response.

The following comments were received from staff based at Telford Central and Shrewsbury during the extended consultation period during March 2010.

White Watch Telford Central

Further to my comments on last year's IRMP consultation process I would like my points below to be added to my initial response. I feel it is only right and proper they are considered and brought to the attention of the IRMP working group and the Fire Authority. Mine and my colleague's responses would have been vastly different if the original IRMP questionnaire had stated that Shrewsbury and Telford Central Fire Stations were both being considered for consolidation of the ALP.

1. The Wellington Fire Station model of one pump and one special appliance has been proved to be the ideal arrangement as all watch members are trained to operate the special appliance. This alleviates problems such as staffing when the rescue tender is committed at protracted incidents, time off in lieu, leave, and courses. None of these scenarios will affect staffing because of all watch members being trained to the same standard. Unfortunately this is a problem which already exists at Shrewsbury Fire Station. Shrewsbury has a boat and an ALP at its station; some firefighters are trained as boat operators, swift water technicians, and some as ALP operators. This obviously causes problems and confusion when trying to work out riding positions on the different appliances relief's following incidents and can be confirmed by any officer in charge who has served on that station. This consequently causes knock on effects when planning leave and courses and having to cross reference people's skills.
2. The drill yard at Shrewsbury is unsuitable for effective training with the ALP as there is limited space to extend booms and no roof structures there to provide adequate training. This can be borne out by the fact that the training centre use Telford Central for all initial and refresher courses due to our drill yard and our range of buildings. The consequent cost of the ALP travelling to and from Telford Central for training sessions from Shrewsbury will obviously cause the brigade an ongoing diesel cost due to the vehicles offering only eight miles to the gallon. The main cost however will be time and efficiency savings wasted on crews travelling from Shrewsbury to Telford to maintain their competencies.
3. Reducing the watch strength at Telford Central from nine to seven should be avoided. Telford as a town is entering a massive development stage. New housing developments such as Lightmoor, Lawley Village, Priorslee, Millennium Village Ketley will attract more and more people to the area.

4. Telford Town Centre will be going through a huge re-generation programme in the coming years and the population is set to increase significantly. This will prove a factor when crews carry out fire safety. Community Fire safety is a vital part of the fire service and reducing the watch strength by 22% will make the job of delivering our fire safety message increasingly difficult. With the obvious increase in housing, population and businesses Telford's watch strength should be increasing to cover the increase in workload not reducing it. Are local councilors aware of the pressure from the Local Government Association on brigades to manage down fire calls, false alarms and educating the public in fire safety? To further reduce Telford's watch strength from 15 to 9 to 7 is a perverse one and one which must be highlighted to councilors as we are all working towards the same goal of putting Shropshire's safety first and making us 'the' top performing brigade in the country.

5. After reading the responses from staff, stakeholders and members of the public I was pleased that the majority of people were in fact supportive of consolidating the ALP to Telford Central. It is obvious reading the comments that the decision to locate the ALP at either Telford Central or Shrewsbury is finely balanced. It seems the decision to consolidate ALP cover to Shrewsbury has come down to the brigade being able to save £25,000 on building costs. I feel this is extremely short sighted as the cost does not outweigh the benefit. By investing £25,000 at Telford Central whose turnout area is about to go through rapid growth is a fantastic opportunity especially in the current financial climate where builders are offering competitive prices for building work. Investing the money in Telford Central will allow the £3,000,000 project at Shrewsbury to be more wisely spent as there will be greater space to utilise, less vehicles and less people to accommodate.

To confirm that Telford Central is the better option for ALP consolidation I would like to suggest that both ALP's be stationed at Telford for a 6 or 12 month trial period. By doing this it can be proved one way or the other the merits of making Telford an ALP station without any cost to the Brigade. Training can offer instruction to Telford Crews on the operation of Shrewsbury's ALP at zero cost. The myth of Shrewsbury's ALP not fitting in one of the bays at Telford can also be laid to rest. Should the Brigade find that the ALP's are better suited to Shrewsbury following the trial period then they could reconsider without any concerns about the integrity of the Fire Authority's IRMP process.

White Watch Telford Central

Further to my comments given during the previous proposal review for the consolidation of both ALPs being stationed at TC. I feel it is important to highlight some points that should be considered, these were originally not mentioned due to the fact that myself and my colleagues understanding of the consolidation of the ALPs at Shrewsbury station was not under review or even being considered as an option. I believe some important factors that affect TC being the ideal station for the ALPs compared Shrewsbury station are as followed.

1. Training.

- Shrewsbury has limited or no space for the Alp to be jacked and used. And off site training has traditionally be very difficult to carry out due to Health and Safety reasons for both the members of the public, their property and SFRS personal. Ascertaining what our insurance covers is also often difficult and unclear. The involvement needed to complete the required paper work often tends to put watches off training with the ALP “off station”.
- Telford not only has the space but is the chosen venue for the ALP initial and refresher courses for both Telford’s ALP and Shrewsbury’s ALP.
- This is because not only do we have a variety of buildings with a significant amount of different roofs shapes and sizes that can be used for normal and “blind” access but, we also have two safe areas where we can train with jacking the ALP on a variety of angles and slopes which is often more difficult than cage operation.
- Only a half day course would be needed to train Telford staff in the usage of Shrewsbury’s ALP and no staff moves would be needed, Thus keeping moral high after the devastating split to form Tweedale.

2. Testing

- Again Telford has the space to test ALPs on the drill yard without affecting any other personnel who may wish to drill at the same time. As both ALPs would need to be tested this will take a significant amount of time, especially for monthly and quarterly tests. Thus keeping disruption to the whole station to a minimum. Unlike Shrewsbury who may even have to consider coming to Telford to complete tests.

3. Storage of ALP.

- I feel the major affecting factor of TC no longer being considered as the main ALP station is due to the 25 thousand pound refurbishment cost of the ALP bay. Therefore I would like to state that Telford’s ALP fits into all appliance bays at Telford with no alterations being needed, Shrewsbury’s ALP would also fit as it is shorter than Telfords. I am aware that some Health and Safety issues were raised about the amount of space between the ALP and the appliance bay doors. However I have looked for guidance on this with no success in regards to stated safety spacing. I believe the original concern was with the space needed to close the doors due to the fact they are bi-folding doors. The front doors are controlled remotely which clears the area of any personnel, and if it was still a concern, a simple roller shutter door could be

fitted. Another option would be to lock the rear doors and only use the front doors for vehicle movements, I feel this would be acceptable as, it would increase the “safe area” around closing doors to exceed the space that we have around other bay doors. Reversing the ALP back into the appliance bay is not a concern due to the fact we have an apron in front of the station that allows us to reverse the ALP with out affecting or entering the main road out front. The reversing of appliances into bays is already a widely used practice throughout the brigade, with retained stations and special appliances, plus the added fact the ALP in spare bay would only have to be moved for monthly tests and change over between ALPs.

4. Town planning and future developments.

- Another argument stated in the new proposal for the ALP to be located at Shrewsbury was due to life risk and easy access to the hospital and high rise. I don't believe this is a valid argument as Telford also has a hospital and the ALP would never be used for anything other than firefighting as hospitals have staged evacuation procedures that should be sufficient to eliminate danger to life. Most of Shropshire's High rise, Medium rise (2 of which are housing for the elderly.) and three story properties are located within the Telford and Wellington areas, with more high density, medium rise properties planning to be built around the soon to be redeveloped Telford Town Centre, making Telford a significant life risk area.
- Road networks around TC also provide easy access for the ALP to major routes North, South (A442), East and West (M54). This is extremely beneficial as the ALP is not suited due to its size to make its way quickly and safely through heavy traffic areas with limited space such as the road network around Shrewsbury station.

5. Future needs of Shrewsbury area.

- With the constant threat of flooding and future climatic extremes likely to affect the Shrewsbury and surrounding areas, The boat will be used more often for incidents and the dangers to boat users will be increased. Requiring Shrewsbury crews to concentrate on core boat skills, therefore possibly reducing skills levels required for ALP competencies. Due to possible future trends it may be wise to only have one special appliance that requires a high level of training and skill per station.

6. IRU storage at Telford.

- The new proposal of the ALPs being consolidated at Shrewsbury's and the IRU being permanently stationed at Telford also has a few drawbacks. The first of which is the actual storage of the IRU vehicle. Although this vehicle does fit into the appliance bay, I have been told by driver training that in order for the IRU to be driven out the front doors the vehicles suspension needs to be adjusted by raising it and lowering it so that the fork lift truck on the back does not come into contact with the appliance bay floor potentially causing damage to tiles (this is because of the steep gradient of the front drive). Reversing the vehicle out of the end bay onto the drill yard to alleviate this problem is also not ideal as the RTC compound at the rear is often in use

therefore restricting vehicle movements in that area. Add all this with the practicalities of training a whole station with the IRU vehicle, equipment and fork lift truck presents it's self as a long drawn out process that is far from efficient and not ideal.

I'm sure many of these points have already been considered but, as a firefighter and a resident of the area I felt compelled to restate my opinion on this matter as I think consolidating the ALPs at Shrewsbury is not the best option.
I thank you for time

White Watch Telford Central

Projected cost of mileage claims to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service following the removal of two posts from Telford Central being re-located to Shrewsbury

Distance

Telford Central to Shrewsbury = 34 miles

Mileage allowance

£0.47 pence per mile

Frequency

4 journeys per shift

4 shifts per month

12 months per year

Number of posts affected

2 per watch = 8 posts

Calculation

34 miles x £0.47p per mile = £15.98

X journeys per shift = £63.92

X 4 shifts per month = £255.68

X 12 months per year = £3068.16

X 8 posts = £24,545.28

Projected cost of mileage claims **£24,545.28**

Cost to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service for training of four firefighters per watch as fork lift truck operators

Cost per course

£720 per course (3 operators max)

Number of courses

6 courses (16 operators)

Total costs

£720 x 6 = **£4320 plus VAT**

Fuel cost incurred by Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service for ALP travelling from Shrewsbury Fire Station to Telford Fire Station for training and drill sessions.

ALP Performance = 8 miles per gallon

Cost of Fuel = £5 per gallon

Travel distance Shrewsbury to Telford Central = 34 miles

Cost per return journey = £20

Number of journeys per week to train = 3

Number of journeys per month to train = 12

Number of journeys per year = 144

Calculation = 144 journeys x £20 = £2880

White Watch Shrewsbury

We agree that the ALPs should remain here at SY as we've previously stated individually, however we feel that the importance of how quickly and effectively we can both attend and start to attack a fire within the medieval/historic parts of Shrewsbury hasn't really been emphasized.

As the IRMP predominantly looks at the life risk and not property risks within the County we feel that this figure fluctuates little within the Town of Shrewsbury, inside the loop of the river; the shops are staffed and customers shop within them during the day but we must remember that a majority of these properties are residential as well, with a large proportion of them rented to tenants.

We feel that a contingency plan for the Town Center developed by Operational crews with full consultation from ALP Operators who are both familiar with the difficulties in this part of town and the appliance positioning considerations would be better carried out by SY crews. The speed this appliance can "get to work" is vitally important and any delay could mean that a fire could spread within a property extremely quickly endangering residents and also losing an historic part of the County Town. The crews would need experience in these difficult access areas and SY personnel best located to do this.

Service response to the comments made about the possible costs for ALP consolidation to Shrewsbury and IRU relocation to Telford Central.

As a consequence of the extended IRMP feedback period, staff from Telford Central have put forward comments about the costs (nearly £25k) the Service would incur if it had to compulsorily transfer staff from Telford Central to Shrewsbury, to support the Fire Authority's 'alternative proposal' to consolidate ALP's in Shrewsbury, rather than Telford, which would also involve the IRU moving to Telford.

This paper discusses this point and the potential costs the Service predicts it might actually incur over the full period of implementation of its IRMP proposals.

Travel costs allowance – why pay it and how much?

The 'Grey Book' states:

Reimbursement of expenditure

1. An employee (including a volunteer carrying out operational firefighting duties) who necessarily incurs approved additional expenditure in the course of his or her work in respect of travel, meals, overnight accommodation or compulsory relocation shall be reimbursed such expenditure, subject to the production of receipts or other appropriate evidence, or paid a locally agreed allowance.

The Service's Brigade Order Human Resources 6, Part 1 Section 1 (published in 2001), covers this issue and states:

The payments will be based on the additional costs of public transport at the time of transfer, regardless of whether or not travel to work is normally by private vehicle, and will only be paid for a set period of 12 months from the date of transfer.

However, since this Order was published, there have been instances where staff that have been compulsorily transferred between Telford and Shrewsbury and have been paid an allowance based on the casual user mileage rate, rather than Public Transport Rates: this is currently 47p per mile.

The Service may wish to consider which allowance rate it would give to any staff permitted to receive this allowance as part of its considerations. Calculations based upon both rates have been included within this paper.

Number of transfers likely to be required?

It should be noted that it is not specifically the ALP proposal that will require any transfers. It is the reduced ridership proposal, and the subsequent need to balance numbers and, to some extent, skills that is likely to require these moves. The impact from the ALP proposal is simply on which station people are moved from and to.

Whichever ALP proposal is implemented, there is a chance that some compulsory moves may be required.

The main factor here is where the gaps in staffing numbers arise first; ie. from which station people retire, and how that fits with the staffing numbers we require on each station. Whilst it is unlikely to happen, it is technically possible that we might have to move people to Telford, even though we might require an overall reduction there; eg if all retirees were from Telford, which brought their numbers below those we require after reductions.

Whilst the Brigade could consider moving some people from Shrewsbury to Telford, in order to transfer some of the IRU skills to Telford, this would more than likely also result in the need to train up additional Water Rescue and ALP operatives at Shrewsbury; as many people at Shrewsbury are currently trained in all three aspects of IRU, ALP and Boat, and these numbers would also need to be maintained. It can therefore be seen that the benefits of attempting to transfer skills between stations, in this particular case, would not actually materialise. The assumption is therefore made that we shall plan to train the skills into Telford, rather than transfer.

It follows therefore, that linking any required transfer costs specifically to the ALP proposal, is not actually a true reflection of the situation. We could incur such costs whether the ALP move goes ahead or not, and at this stage knowing exactly how this would all work out over the two years of reductions is difficult to predict. However, in an effort to demonstrate that we have properly reflected on comments made by our staff, we have undertaken the following exercise, which assumes that any costs likely to be incurred as a consequence of the whole of this year's IRMP, could be attributed solely to the ALP proposal.

Currently Telford is under its establishment figures by 2 staff, which leaves us with only two further staff to lose to cover the possible reduction of four at Telford for the coming year. Two recruits are being placed at Telford as part of their initial 8 week deployment following their recruits course. All recruits are clear that their initial placement is temporary, and that they could be moved to another station before they formally start their Development phase. This movement is not subject to the transfer allowance. This is a long-standing procedure that was designed to try and ensure that new recruits get a balance of experience across the Brigade, and has not simply been introduced as a consequence of this year's IRMP. By placing the recruits at Telford (despite the fact that if the 'Shrewsbury ALP' proposal is accepted we would be forced to move them) the Service is clearly demonstrating that the final decision on the two ALP proposals has not yet been made.

In addition to the 2 people we are already short at Telford, there are two further people that may retire over the coming year (1 is certainly going), which would result in further reductions. Retirements/promotions elsewhere in the Brigade may also result in further reductions at Telford (if staff from Telford pick up any of these posts). Finally, there are also 3 people who have requested a transfer from Telford, which could be used to support further reductions, if necessary (voluntary transfer does not attract any travel allowance).

Bearing this in mind, it is very unlikely that we would need to move anyone this year, and it is probable that we may also not have to move any next year, to achieve the 2nd round of reductions if that goes ahead. However, for 'worst case' planning purposes, it would be appropriate to assume that we may need to compulsorily transfer a number of people over the two years. Whilst unlikely, for 'worst case' purposes we shall assume that we have to move all 4 people in year two.

As mentioned previously, we only pay an allowance if the member of staff has to travel further to work, and they would only get the additional mileage incurred. It is therefore assumed here that only 2 of the 4 people transferred, would be eligible for the allowance (ie the other two live closer to their new station). To keep with the hypothetical assumption that all of the costs incurred are attributable to the ALP proposal, it is assumed that compulsory transfers would be from Telford Central to Shrewsbury.

The table below gives the costs quoted within the feedback from staff, and compares them to the costs likely to be encountered based upon the 'worst-case scenario' described above. The Worst-case scenario costings have been calculated based upon a mileage rate, and the Public Transport costs rate.

| Staff Feedback | 'Worst-case scenario' |
|--|--|
| Number of compulsory transfers 2 per watch = 8 posts | Number of compulsory transfers Total of 2 posts |
| Distance = 34 miles (return) | Maximum distance = 32 miles <i>Standard figure used by finance for travel claims from Telford to Shrewsbury return</i> |
| Allowance = £0.47 per mile | <u>Calculation based upon 'Precedence'</u> Allowance = £0.47 per mile |
| Frequency: 4 journeys per shift 4 shifts per month 12 months per year Total 192 journeys | Frequency: <i>Feedback figures do not take account of reduced trips due to annual leave or courses.</i> Total = Maximum of 162 journeys |
| Calculation 34 miles x £0.47 per mile = £15.98 x 192 journeys = £3068.16 x 8 posts = £24,545.28 | 32 miles x £0.47 per mile = £15.04 x 162 journeys = £2436.48 x 2 posts = £4,872.96 |
| | <u>Calculation based upon old 'Brigade Order'</u> Public Transport rates – Shrewsbury to Telford 1. 3 x day returns = 3 x £5.70 2. 2 x singles (start + finish nights) = 2 x £4.40 Total = £25.90 per shift Max of 41 shifts 41 shifts x £25.90 = £1061.90 per post x 2 posts = £2,123.80 |

Cost to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service for training of four firefighters per watch as fork lift truck operators

Comments were made pointing out that the costs for training enough staff on the Fork Lift truck, thereby enabling Telford Central staff to operate the Incident Response Unit, would amount to £4320.

It was noted that this was the costs previously incurred when similar training courses were quoted for in January 2007. The Training Manager has obtained a new quote for the necessary training to be conducted, and the supplier has maintained the costs at the 2007 level. To that end, the Service can confirm that the cost of moving the IRU to Telford Central will be £4320. This simply confirms the estimated costs that were pointed out to Members, staff and stakeholders during the original consultation process, after the 'alternative proposal' was put forward by Shrewsbury staff.

Fuel cost incurred by Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service for ALP travelling from Shrewsbury Fire Station to Telford Fire Station for training and drill sessions.

Staff put forward the following costs, likely to be incurred, if the ALP's are consolidated at Shrewsbury. These costs assume that all training on the ALP would have to be carried out Telford, rather than at Shrewsbury, because it is not possible to undertake any training at Shrewsbury. Based upon this assumption, it has been calculated that the fuel costs likely to be incurred in a year would be £2880.

In actual fact, the Shrewsbury are able to train on their ALP at Shrewsbury station and, where there are reasons that they are unable to, for example if they wish to leave the drill ground available for other training purposes, they go to other stations or alternative off-station sites. This ensures that our crews are getting experience of using the ALP under varying conditions, and are not simply adept at pitching it in the perfect conditions of a drill yard. This applies equally to the Telford site, as well as the Shrewsbury site.

To that end, the Service does not consider that any additional costs will be incurred in respect of the crews maintaining their competencies on the ALP's, if they were both to be located at Shrewsbury.