

Integrated Risk Management 2020 Process

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the outcomes from Phase 2 of the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) 2020 Process and to seek a decision, on which proposals should go forward for full consultation in Phase 3.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Note the proposals that officers will be taking forward for internal consideration within Phase 3 of the IRMP 2020 Plan;
- b) Note the feedback received from Phase 2 of the IRMP 2020 Process at Appendix 1
- c) Note the information contained within the impact assessments at Appendix 2; and
- d) Consider and, if appropriate, approve the recommendations, from its Strategy and Resources Committee and Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group, set out in section 10 of this report.

Please note that all appendices to this report can be accessed on the Service's website via the following link:

<https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra/meetings/Fire%20and%20Rescue%20Authority/%20172517>

3 Background

As discussed earlier on the agenda for this meeting (see report 13), a number of changes to the forecast Service budget deficit are likely to arise and, as a result, the Fire Authority now needs to plan for between £0.9m and £1.7m worth of reductions in its current revenue budget by 2020.

The purpose of the Fire Authority's IRMP 2020 Process is, therefore, to ensure that:

1. It has appropriate plans in place to deal with a potential shortfall in the Service's budget going forward to 2020; and
2. The Service's resources continue to be used to best effect to reduce risk within the County.

During Phase 1 of the Process, officers undertook an initial, internally-focussed, impact assessment on approximately 50 different options for change that could be used to support reductions in the Service's current revenue budget. The information gathered from this process was considered by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 25 September 2013, which resulted in the Fire Authority's deciding on the following actions:

- Members of the Strategic Risk and Planning (StRaP) Working Group were to lead the Phase 2 Impact Assessment process, providing due consideration to the options presented in Table 1 below;
- Officers were to lead on the internal impact assessments and implement (as appropriate) the options presented in Table 2 below; and
- The Fire Authority should receive, from the Strategy and Resources Committee in February 2014, refined proposals for consideration for formal consultation during Phase 3 of the IRMP 2020 process.

Option	Description
1	Close up to 4 'Low Risk' fire stations – The stations under consideration are Baschurch, Clun, Hodnet and Prees
2	Remove one full-time fire engine from the Shrewsbury or Telford area
3	Merge the Fire Control function with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
4	Explore changes to the current Wholetime shift system
5	Explore changes to the current Fire Control shift system

Table 1- Options to be explored by StRaP during the IRMP 2020 Phase 2 Process

This report summarises all of the feedback received during the Phase 2 process and asks the Fire Authority to consider which options it would like to take into Phase 3 of the process, which will involve formal consultation on those options.

4 The Phase 2 Officer-Led Process

Officers considered various proposals during Phase 1 and identified a number of them that did not require any further impact assessment in order to be included in the IRMP 2020 Plan.

A number of proposals needed a further impact assessment during Phase 2 and were added to the initial list from Phase 1. They will now go forward for consultation with Service staff only, during Phase 3 of the IRMP 2020 process (full list presented in Table 2 overleaf).

If the options in Table 2 were implemented, they would reduce the Service's annual revenue budget by approximately £450k. They would be implemented at an appropriate time to assist in meeting the forecast deficit in the Service's budget during the period between 2015 and 2020.

Option	Description
1	Reduce the budgeted contributions to Capital Reserve, for items purchased from Reserve
2	Reduce the Ill Health Retirement Contribution budget
3	Reduce the Occupational Health Budget
4	Review the current Hydrant Maintenance contract
5	Reduce the recruitment advertising budget
6	Reduce the Medical Reports budget.
7	Reduce the non-specialist work costs in Workshops
8	Reduce the support staff pay budget
9	Convert all grey book posts, in Business Fire Safety, into green book posts
10	Utilise Retained Duty Staff to cover short to medium term Wholetime vacancies

Table 2 - Officer led changes to be included in the IRMP 2020 Plan

5 The Phase 2 Member-Led Process

Appendix 1 summarises the feedback received by the Fire Authority during the Phase 2 process. With 2,415 responses received from the public and 189 from staff, via the two 'Online Feedback Tools', this has been the biggest response that the Fire Authority has received during any of the numerous consultation processes it has undertaken, since Integrated Risk Management Planning was introduced in 2003.

Although the preference was for responses to be fed into the process via the online tools, several hundred letters and emails were also received from concerned residents across the Service area, as a direct result of local campaigns, set up in the affected station areas. The Service has ensured that all of this feedback has been interpreted appropriately and then captured within the Feedback Tool. It also includes responses from people without online access, who used facilities put in place by the Service to enable them to respond. The results summarised in Appendix 1 are, therefore, a complete reflection of all of the feedback received.

In addition to the feedback returned via the Feedback Tools, StRaP members also gained significant first-hand experience of what people think about the proposals through attendance at numerous meetings with staff and local councillors across the County. Many of these meetings were also attended by the Members of Parliament for the local areas, who recognised the financial challenges faced by the Fire Authority, but also stated their preference that the Authority did not close any of the four on-call fire stations as a consequence. The MP's supported the Authority, and its efforts to overcome the financial challenges, by arranging and attending a meeting with the Government's Fire Minister (Brandon Lewis MP), along with the Chair of the Fire Authority, other Authority Members and the Chief Fire Officer.

In addition to the feedback received from individual members of the public and Service staff, a number of letters were also received from organisations, wishing to comment on the options being explored. Copies of these letters have been included in Appendix 3.

Philip Dunne (MP for Clun) also undertook a survey of his constituents, in relation to the potential closure of Clun fire station. This survey attracted a significant response (829 responses), within a relatively short time, with the overwhelming majority of people wishing to see the station remain. A copy of the letter sent to the Chair of the Fire Authority, along with the results from this survey, are included in Appendix 3, for Members' reference.

6 Summary of the Phase 2 Feedback

This section summarises the feedback received on each of the five options being explored during Phase 2. More detailed information is provided in Appendix 1.

Option 1 - Close up to four 'low risk' fire stations (public and staff)

Of the three options being explored with the public, this proposal has been the most contentious and has drawn a significant number of responses, especially from those people living near to the stations under threat.

The results for each of the four stations demonstrate that the level of support for keeping these stations open is significant.

Although the feelings against closing each of these four stations is not as pronounced amongst the Service's own staff, in no case is the average response, from any group of staff, a positive one.

Option 2 - Remove a full-time fire engine from the Shrewsbury or Telford area (public and staff)

Although the overall strength of feelings against the loss of a fire engine from either Shrewsbury or Telford is not as strong as it is for the previous proposal, the average response from the public is still a negative one. As would be expected, the greatest levels of concern about each of the fire engines in the two areas, come from each respective area.

It is evident, however, that there is more positive support for losing a fire engine from the Telford area, especially amongst the Service's staff, than there is for losing one from Shrewsbury.

Option 3 - Merge Shropshire's Fire Control function with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (public and staff)

The general feeling amongst members of the public towards this proposal is fairly well balanced, with the overall average being neither supportive nor unsupportive.

Apart from the Service's Fire Control staff, who would obviously be directly impacted by any such move towards this proposal and are, therefore, relatively unsupportive, there is also a relatively balanced level of opinion amongst other members of staff.

Option 4 - Changes to the Wholetime shift system (staff only)

The contrast between the responses from those staff, who would be affected (Wholetime) and those that would not (all other), results in the overall staff result being a balanced one. It may be worthy of note, however, that of the 48 Wholetime staff, who did respond to the survey, 11 of them (approximately 23%) do appear to support the suggestion.

This is echoed in the responses to the three 'example' shift systems that were discussed during this process. With only approximately 14 staff being required to convert across to any new shift system, it is possible that there would be sufficient volunteers to make such a change, if it were to be explored further.

Option 5 - Changes to the Fire Control shift system (staff only)

Although only seven of a total of 17 Fire Control staff responded to this proposal (a notably higher response rate than was achieved from station-based personnel), the response was largely negative.

In considering the two 'example' shift systems, explored during this phase, again the response was largely negative, with only one response supportive of the 'self-roster' system. It should be noted that, unlike the systems explored with the Wholetime staff, the 'self-roster' system would require all control staff to convert from their current shift system.

7 Proposal Impact Assessments

In responding to the Online Feedback Tool, members of the public and Service staff were asked to state what issues they thought the Fire Authority should consider, when making its final decisions on the options being explored.

The five documents in Appendices 2a to 2e constitute the final impact assessments for each option being explored by Members. They include a summary of all of the issues highlighted by respondents to the Feedback Tools, as well as evidence relating to each of those issues, where quantifiable evidence can be provided.

Members are asked to note and reflect on these impact assessments, whilst deliberating the recommendations contained in this report.

8 Outcomes of the Phase 1 and 2 Processes: StRaP Discussion

a) The closure of up to four of the 'low risk' fire stations

StRaP was impressed by the commitment to the public and to the Fire and Rescue Service, demonstrated by the on-call staff at Baschurch, Clun, Hodnet and Prees. During the Phase 2 consultation process all four stations had put forward cases to keep their stations open in a very professional, constructive and reasoned manner, explaining in detail the types of incidents, in which they were involved, and the life risks associated with their areas.

StRaP believes that the outcomes of Phases 1 and 2 indicate that the savings likely to arise from the closure of up to four of the 'Low Risk' fire stations (a total of approximately £391k) is outweighed by the potential negative impacts on service delivery, likely to arise from such a change. Of particular relevance is:

- The impact on response times to incidents in these station areas
- The impact on the overall resilience of the service during busy periods; and
- The level of public concern that has been seen.

In considering this matter, StRaP also noted that the Service has already reduced its fleet of fire engines by 15% in 2004 (a reduction of five fire engines), which resulted in the current complement of five fulltime and 23 on-call fire engines spread across the Service area.

StRaP also considered the work carried out by these stations, including their support to other station areas and the contribution to local and national resilience, the difficulty of the topography, especially in the Clun area, and the time it would take for fire engines from other stations to reach an incident, should the stations be closed. Members were also concerned about the impact that any closures would have on the local communities in these areas. As a result, StRaP agreed to remove this option from any further stages of the IRMP 2020 process.

However, StRaP also felt that, if the Fire Authority were to maintain these stations, there would be a need for the Service to ensure it is making best use of all of its on-call staff by way of a review into this matter, which would need to form part of the 2020 implementation plan.

In the meetings attended by StRaP members, during the Phase 2 process, it became clear that the communities served by the Service are concerned about the terminology used in the Fire Authority's IRMP Response Standards, particularly the term 'low risk'. There was a general feeling that this did not reflect the potential risk from any emergency incident in these areas. The terminology used in the IRMP Response Standards will need to be reviewed to take account of this.

b) Remove one of the fulltime fire engines from the Shrewsbury or Telford area; and explore changes to the current Wholetime shift system

StRaP was impressed by the constructive approach taken by wholetime staff in the numerous feedback sessions they attended during Phase 2. Members commented that staff had a good understanding and appreciation of the challenges facing the Service into the future and also demonstrated that they are prepared to play their part in helping the Service to meet these challenges, with ideas for alternative shift systems being put forward throughout the process.

The outcomes from Phase 2 have led to the conclusion that, despite the significant reductions in budget that could accrue if either of these options were to be fully implemented (up to a maximum of £900k), an appropriate balance between cost and benefit might not be achieved without some form of alternative fire cover being put in place.

The main urban areas of Shropshire (Telford and Shrewsbury) have seen a significant reduction in calls, with a fall in the number of incidents of approximately 26%, since 2003.

It is noted that both areas have experienced a growth in population and buildings during the same periods and still experience a significant number of calls. The possibility for simultaneous calls in these areas, therefore, needs to be fully explored before any such change is made.

StRaP agreed that the reduction of one fulltime fire engine from the Shrewsbury or Telford areas could produce significant savings and did warrant further consideration during Phase 3. They were clear, however, that any proposal that is taken forward must be informed by full risk assessments. A number of possible options should be considered and then refined further before going out to public consultation.

StRaP noted that the work the Service has procured, from an independent company specialising in risk assessment, will provide detailed analysis of the workload distribution that would result from various changes to the current number of fulltime fire engines. Officers are confident that the results from this risk analysis will be capable of evidencing the impact from a number of alternative options for providing fire cover in the Shrewsbury and/or the Telford areas.

The options being explored are:

- i The complete removal of one of the five fulltime fire engines, with no alternative cover being put in place;
- ii Reducing the cover on at least one of the fulltime fire engines, so that it covers only the busiest periods of each day, possibly with some call-back arrangement in place for the remaining hours of the day (requiring shift system changes for a number of staff);
- iii The replacement of one of the fulltime fire crews with an on-call crew, who would be based in an alternative location, where the target response time (10 minutes in these towns) is currently difficult to achieve, and which will be guided by the outcomes of the risks assessment from the independent company.

Members are aware that the option (iii), outlined above, would require the Fire Authority to invest in the building of a new fire station in the most appropriate area.

Members agreed that the results from this risk analysis could form the basis of a number of options, all based on the reduction in the current level of fulltime resources available in the Service, that could then be consulted on during Phase 3. StRaP would seek approval from the Fire Authority for it to delegate responsibility to StRaP for deciding on which options should be taken out to formal consultation.

Members noted that, depending on the option that is eventually implemented, the full £900k savings may not be fully realised, however, the Service would be able to continue to deliver a good, perhaps even slightly improved, level of service in these areas.

c) Merge the Fire Control function with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service; and explore changes to the current Fire Control shift system

StRaP did have concerns about this option, including the potential loss of resilience and local knowledge.

Members noted the Service's ongoing project with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and Cleveland Fire Brigade. This project is looking at improving the resilience of each Service's Command and Control facilities, and could lead to opportunities for efficiencies to be made. StRaP also noted that the Police Improvement Fund project, led by West Mercia Police, in collaboration with Warwickshire Police, had recently received approval from central government. This involves the building of a new joint customer contact and command and mobilising centre for the two services. The three fire and rescue services that are co-terminus with these police services, including Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, have stated their intent, as part of the project, to explore the opportunity that may arise for a joint police and fire control centre.

Members noted that these discussions are at an early stage and need to be fully explored before the Fire Authority can make any final decisions on its Fire Control function. However, Members thought it would be prudent to consult with all relevant stakeholders, on the possible merger of this function, as part of Phase 3 of the IRMP 2020 process, so that the Fire Authority will be in a position to make a final decision on the matter, if a merge option were to arise out of the projects.

9 Strategy and Resources Committee 6 February 2014

Having considered all of the information available to it, StRaP made a number of recommendations to the Strategy and Resources Committee, which met on 6 February. These were based on the assumption that the forecast deficit, likely to be experienced by the Service by 2020, would be around £1.7m. However, the day before the Committee met, the Government announced the 'Council Tax Referendum Spending Limit', which gave the Committee additional options that could result in reduction of the forecast deficit to around £0.9 million. Because of this change, the Committee felt it was able to agree that only one of the seven recommendations, put forward by StRaP, should be considered by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 26 February, namely:

1. The closure of the four 'Low Risk' fire stations should not progress through to Phase 3 of the IRMP 2020 Process.

The Committee agreed that an urgent meeting of StRaP be arranged to reconsider the other six recommendations, with any revised recommendations going directly to the Fire Authority meeting on 26 February. The recommendations, which StRaP was asked to review were:

2. The removal of one of the fulltime fire engines, from either the Shrewsbury or Telford areas, should go through to Phase 3
3. StRaP should consider the results from the risk analysis work and identify at least two options for how fire cover in these could be changed. One of these options could involve some form of change to the current wholetime shift system

4. The possible merger of the Service's Fire Control function, with that of at least one other service, should be included in Phase 3
5. Specific consultation on changes to the current shift systems, operated in Fire Control, should not be included in Phase 3, but may be required at a later date if an option for change to the function does arise
6. StRaP should consider possible changes to the terminology used in the Fire Authority's current IRMP Response Standards, and should consult on those changes as part of the Phase 3 process; and finally,
7. The Fire Authority should delegate responsibility to StRaP, for developing and implementing a consultation process capable of exploring those issues identified above, and report the results back to the Fire Authority's October meeting.

10 Recommendations to the Fire Authority

StRaP met on 12 February 2014 and considered how the change in the financial forecast for the Service going forward to 2020 should be reflected in the proposals being explored within the IRMP 2020 Process.

After considering each of the recommendations in turn, and the various savings involved, the Group unanimously agreed that the following recommendations should be put to the Fire Authority for its approval:

1. The closure of the four 'Low Risk' fire stations should not progress through to Phase 3 of the IRMP 2020 Process
(as already agreed by the Strategy and Resources Committee)
2. The removal of one of the fulltime fire engines, from either the Shrewsbury or Telford areas, should not go through to Phase 3
3. The Service should explore possible changes to the current wholetime shift systems, in order to generate up to £400k savings.
4. The possible merger of the Service's Fire Control function, with that of at least one other service, should be included in Phase 3.
5. Specific consultation on changes to the current shift systems, operated in Fire Control, should not be included in Phase 3, but may be required at a later date, if an option for change to the function does arise.
6. StRaP should consider possible changes to the terminology used in the Fire Authority's current IRMP Response Standards, at its meeting in March 2014, and should consult on those changes as part of the Phase 3 process.
7. The Fire Authority should delegate responsibility to StRaP for developing and implementing a consultation process capable of exploring the issues identified above and report the results back to the October meeting of Fire Authority.

It is not possible to predict the outcome from the Phase 3 consultation process. However, in combination with the £450k worth of 'officer led' changes (highlighted in section 4), if the recommendations listed above were subsequently to be implemented, this could generate up to a maximum of £1.15m of the potential budget reductions required by 2020.

In the event that any of these potential reductions are not taken forward, and the assumptions around budget reductions prove to be inaccurate or over-optimistic, then the Chief Fire Officer would be required to look to drive out further reductions to existing budgets, over the 5-year period to 2020, in order to ensure a balanced budget is achieved.

11 Financial Implications

If the recommendations contained within this report are accepted and go on to be fully implemented, there is the potential for the Service's annual revenue budget to be reduced by up to a maximum of £1.15m per year by 2020.

12 Legal Comment

Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides the statutory authority for the Fire Service National Framework and requires fire authorities to have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions. The Framework sets out requirements to produce an IRMP and any considered budget cuts must take the Framework and IRMP into full account.

13 Initial Impact Assessment

Contained within Appendices 2a to 2e

14 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Collation of the results from the Online Feedback Tools

Appendix 2a – Impact Assessment on Option 1

Appendix 2b – Impact Assessments on Option 2

Appendix 2c – Impact Assessment on Option 3

Appendix 2d – Impact Assessments on Option 4

Appendix 2e – Impact Assessment on Option 5

Appendix 3 – Correspondence from organisations

The Appendices can be viewed on the Service's website via the following link:

<https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra/meetings/Fire%20and%20Rescue%20Authority/%20172517>

15 Background Papers

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority

25 September 2013, Report 10 – IRMP 2020 Planning Process:

Phase One Impact Assessment Summary Outcomes