10

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
14 June 2006

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

EFFICIENCIES - ANALYSIS OF NOTABLE PRACTICE GUIDANCE

1 Purpose of Report

To provide Members of the Fire Authority with information concerning an analysis of notable practice case studies from other Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), as compiled by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA). Also, to seek Members' guidance on which of the case studies they feel warrant further examination in the interest of identifying further efficiency savings to fund service improvements.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

a) Note and confirm the findings of the analysis to date;
b) Agree the proposals as to which case studies require further exploration; and
c) Agree that the method of analysis conducted in this case is suitable for use with further examples of notable practice.

3 Background

Fire and Rescue Service Circular 14-2006 issued guidance to FRAs on the completion of Annual Efficiency Statements (AESs) and provided a template for such submissions. In addition, the Circular described how many FRAs had expressed a desire to know what other authorities were doing to increase efficiency and explained that the ODPM had joined forces with CFOA and the LGA to compile examples of notable practice from across the Service. Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority's (SWFAs) Chief Fire Officer represents CFOA on the working group, which is known as the Improvement Planning Implementation Group (IPIG).

In conjunction with the above mentioned Circular, IPIG issued its first batch of case studies from across the Service, which were deemed to represent notable practice in the areas of 'shift patterns and crewing changes'. The guidance makes it clear that case studies are of projects that are only starting to be implemented; that they have yet to be proven to work in practice; that some represent opportunities only available in specific circumstances and thus are not available to all FRAs; and, therefore, that they cannot be described as 'best' or 'good' practice at this stage. The guidance does, however, provide an opportunity for the Fire Authority to consider the varying approaches being adopted by other FRAs in order to maximise its own continuing drive to force out efficiencies. This report provides an analysis of the notable practice guidance to enable Members to determine on which, if any, of the case studies they require further information with regard to transferability to Shropshire.

4 Case Studies

The notable practice case studies fall under a number of headings and a brief summary of their relevance to SFRS is provided below. Full details of the analysis conducted to date by officers is provided in the Appendix to this report, including benchmarking, where appropriate against CIPFA statistics provided by the IPIG.

New Shift Patterns for Wholetime Firefighters
Case studies from:
Greater Manchester
Cheshire
Northumberland
West Yorkshire

Analysis reveals that the number of wholetime staff of Sub Officer rank and below employed by SWFA is proportionally well below that of the FRAs, who have submitted case studies, and also well below the national average. Additionally, through its Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Members Working Group, the Fire Authority has taken a number of measures, which have both reduced the numbers of firefighters on wholetime stations, and increased their productivity. Although the case studies do not appear to offer any benefits to SWFA, it is recognised that wholetime staff account for over half of all FRA expenditure, and SWFA will, therefore, continue to monitor closely all national developments with regard to changes in crewing patterns.

Flexible Duty Systems for Senior Officers
Case studies from:
Cheshire
Isle of Wight
Merseyside

Benchmarking shows that, although SWFA employs the ninth lowest number of officers per head of population of all FRAs, the efficiencies made in Cheshire mean that they have now moved to a lower provision per 1,000 population than Shropshire. Further research has identified that Cheshire has, in fact, adopted a very similar incident command structure to that introduced in Shropshire in 1997 and has benefited from having a population almost twice the size with reduced sparsity. Despite this, however, this is an area that requires further exploration to ensure that SWFA maintains its position with regard to the efficient and effective provision of supervision at incidents.

New Shift Patterns for Retained Firefighters
Case studies from:
Devon
Surrey

Both Devon and Surrey are piloting a salary package for retained firefighters, based upon a maximum availability of 84 hours per week, at increased cost to the FRAs concerned. SWFA undertook a Best Value Review of its Retained Service during 2005, during which Retained firefighters in Shropshire did not see changes to their working patterns or pay arrangements as a high priority. They preferred instead to see improvements in training, community fire safety and crewing arrangements. As a result SWFA is making a very significant investment in the Retained Service over the next four years, details of which are well documented and can be obtained from the Retained Project Manager. The Fire Authority's Retained Service Review Implementation Project contains a requirement to revisit the pay arrangements for retained firefighters. Although this is not a high priority, the developments in other FRAs will be taken into account during this review.

Introduction of Dual Wholetime/ Retained Contracts for Existing Personnel
Case studies from:
Kent
Surrey
Bedfordshire

The authorities concerned quite correctly list the many benefits of employing so called wholetime/retained firefighters. These benefits were recognised many years ago by SWFA, which currently employs 22 (over 13%) of its wholetime staff as retained firefighters. In view of the fact that these are such longstanding arrangements in Shropshire, the Fire Authority has not included them within their AES. This is, however, a position that can be rectified within the next AES submission due in July 2006, and further examination should be made of the claim by Surrey to have made savings of £1 million.

Reducing Resources on Night Time Shifts
Case studies from:
Cumbria
Somerset
West Midlands

Both Cumbria and Somerset have included case studies whereby they have changed working arrangements for wholetime firefighters, so that this group of staff works until midnight during night shifts. These arrangements were introduced many years ago in Shropshire and so no benefits can be achieved from these arrangements.

The case study put forward by West Midlands is much more substantial in nature and involves taking 13 of their 62 wholetime appliances off the run during less busy periods, i.e. during the night. Even with this reduced cover, however, West Midlands continues to provide a ratio of 0.65 firefighters on duty per 1,000 population as opposed to SWFA's 0.43 per 1,000 population. West Midlands also continues to provide average attendance times of 5 minutes for the first fire appliance and 7 for the second, i.e. much improved upon any of the standards, which can be achieved with SWFA's 5 wholetime and 23 retained appliances. It is highly unlikely, therefore, that SWFA will be able to follow the example set by the West Midlands, although work continues to consider these issues through this Fire Authority's IRMP.

Devolving the Management of Shift Systems down to Station Manager Level
Case study from:
Surrey

This case study is predominantly about the management of resources at Borough or Station level. Whilst there may be examples of good practice, from which SWFA can learn, it has already been well recognised through the CPA process that SWFA employs one of the smallest workforces yet "are making the most of their enthusiastic and motivated staff".

New Crewing Arrangements for Special Appliances
Case studies from:
Suffolk
Cambridgeshire
Kent
Merseyside
Lancashire
Norfolk
Nottinghamshire
Cumbria
Derbyshire

The majority of these case studies identifies annual efficiency savings achieved through the introduction of more cost-effective arrangements for the crewing of so-called special appliances. SWFA currently crews only one aerial appliance and the heavy rescue tender with wholetime firefighters, the majority of special appliances being more cost effectively crewed by retained personnel, as detailed in the Appendix to this report.

The crewing of aerial appliances by wholetime personnel on retained contracts was previously explored by SWFA through its IRMP process and found not to be viable through lack of support. The introduction of these arrangements in Merseyside, however, may mean that this position could change in the future, and this is a case study, which SWFA may wish to revisit through its IRMP process, when the most recent efficiency savings in this area are fully bedded in.

Creating a Strategic Reserve
Case study from:
West Midlands

This case study describes how West Midlands has identified that its has 15 more fire appliances than are required to deal with incidents under normal circumstances. As such, it is able to release these appliances from operational cover to carry out training and prevention based activities. The removal of these appliances does not impact upon its Service's average attendance times of 5 minutes for the first appliance and 7 for the second, and in the case of vastly increased operational demand they can be recalled to operational duty within one hour.

Shropshire has only 5 wholetime appliances as opposed to the 62 in the West Midlands, and this case study is not, therefore, readily transferable to Shropshire. The principles are, however, applied in a somewhat different and more cost-effective manner, as described in the Appendix to this report. Most notably it is identified that a strategic reserve already exists in Shropshire through SWFA's 23 Retained

appliances, which, in addition to providing normal day-to-day cover throughout the County, can be recalled during periods of increased operational demand at only 5 minutes' notice.

Variable Crewing at individual Fire Stations
Case studies from:
Surrey
Greater Manchester

These two case studies describe very specific arrangements within the Services concerned. They do not appear to identify any proposals that are not already covered within the case studies described above.

5 Next Steps

Examination of the case studies provided by IPIG has identified that in most cases SWFA has previously tackled the issues concerned and can provide benchmarking information to that effect. The Fire Authority's continuing need to force out efficiencies in order to fund improved service delivery, however, means that there is no room for complacency and that any opportunity to learn from notable practice must be explored fully. It is, therefore, recommended that officers be tasked with carrying out further consideration of the case studies in the following areas:

- The case study submitted by Cheshire with regard to the provision of flexible duty officers;

- The case study submitted by Surrey with regard to the use of wholetime/retained contracts for existing personnel. In particular as to the levels of savings which can be declared through the AES; and

- The case study submitted by Merseyside with regard to the crewing of aerial appliances by wholetime personnel on retained contracts.

The second batch of case studies focussing on sickness management and ill-health retirement, training, and equality and diversity are due to be issued by IPIG shortly. Members are asked to decide whether they would wish the same approach that has been adopted for the first batch detailed above, to be implemented for these future case studies.

6 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7 Appendix

Efficiencies - Analysis of Notable Practice Guidance

8 Background Papers

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Fire Service Circular 14-2006

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Business Continuity Planning		Integrated Risk Management Planning	*
Capacity	*	Legal	
Civil Contingencies Act		Member Involvement	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	*	National Framework	
Equality and Fairness		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings	*	Retained	*
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	

For further information about this report please contact Alan Taylor, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201.

Appendix to report on
Efficiencies - Analysis of Notable Practice Guidance
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
14 June 2006

Efficiencies - Analysis of Notable Practice Guidance

In the Spending Review 2004 the English Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) was set the target to achieve £105m gross cashable savings in 2007/08, explained in more detail in Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Fire and Rescue Service Circulars 8/2005 and 30/2005.

A lot of activity has already taken place across the FRS, aimed at increasing efficiency, some of it pre-dating this target, in areas such as shift patterns, crewing arrangements, appropriate use of overtime, reducing sickness and other absences, minimising ill-health retirements, collaboration, partnerships, procurement, risk management, driving down false automatic fire alarms, better use of retained firefighters, support staff and roles and capital Investment. FRAs have reported in their Annual Efficiency Statements that such measures allowed them to achieve £38m savings in 2004/05 and that they expect to achieve cumulative savings of £89m in 2005/06.

Different FRAs face different challenges and many have expressed a desire to know what their colleagues in other FRAs are doing to increase efficiency and to share learning and experiences to date. The CFOA, LGA and ODPM, therefore, joined forces to gather together a number of short case studies from across the Service and disseminate these to all FRAs in a series of guidance notes. SWFA's Chief Fire Officer represents CFOA on the group, which has to date published a number of case studies centered on making better use of operational staff. The group is currently in the process of formulating further case studies on a range of staffing and human resources issues, from sickness and ill-health retirements to training and equality and diversity.

Each of the case studies presented by other FRAs has been subjected to scrutiny by Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority (SWFA) in an effort to identify those, which can be transferred to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) in order to find further efficiency savings. Where possible and appropriate, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) benchmarking information, provided by the Working Group, has been utilised to identify whether or not the case study would prove financially beneficial to SWFA.

New Shift Patterns for Wholetime Firefighters
Case studies from:
Greater Manchester
Cheshire
Northumberland
West Yorkshire

Efficiency savings to be achieved by changes to shift patterns must logically be through a reduction in the number of staff required to crew fire appliances and, therefore, reduce costs. The following table uses CIPFA statistics on the number of wholetime personnel of Sub Officer and below employed per 1,000 population by each of the FRAs, who have submitted case studies. These figures are then benchmarked against those for SWFA to identify potential benefits for this Authority.

FRA	Population	Population divided by 1,000	Sub Officer & below	Sub Officer & below per 1,000 population	League Table Position
Shropshire	447,000	447	190	0.43	**17**
Northumberland	308,400	308	167	0.54	**32**
Average all FRAs (47)	49,855,555	49,856	27,670	0.56	**N/A**
Cheshire	986,100	986	575	0.58	**36**
West Yorkshire	2,095,862	2,096	1,488	0.71	**40**
Greater Manchester	2,530,956	2,531	1,842	0.73	**42**

SWFA clearly benchmarks very favourably in this area with those, who have submitted case studies, and is unlikely to be able to identify efficiencies from any of the case studies. Additionally, through its Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Members Working Group, SWFA has made a number of improvements to the performance and productivity of its wholetime firefighters, including the following:

IRMP Action Plan 2004/05	Reduced attendances at automatic fire alarms providing increased productivity (e.g. increased community fire safety)
IRMP Action Plan 2005/06	Improved use of wholetime staff not required to crew appliances (daytime). Surplus crews are required to undertake community fire safety in rural communities
IRMP Action Plan 2006/07	Reduced establishment at wholetime fire stations by 8 firefighters (4.75% of establishment) by a reduction in aerial appliance cover
IRMP Action Plan 2007/08	Proposal for maintenance of exact establishment requirements at nights to provide further improved productivity in rural community fire safety

In view of the improvements already introduced and proposed, and of the fact that SWFA's five wholetime appliance crews provide substantial support to their retained colleagues throughout Shropshire (23 retained appliances), the benchmarking figures provided above indicate that SWFA is unlikely to benefit at this stage from adopting any of the new shift patterns contained within the guidance. It is recognised, however, that wholetime staff account for over half of all FRA expenditure and SWFA will, therefore, continue to monitor closely all national developments with regard to changes in crewing patterns. Through the current year's IRMP process the Members Working Group has already started to explore means of overcoming an apparent 2.5% productivity deficit occurring through the over-availability of staff on night shifts.

Flexible Duty Systems for Senior Officers
Case studies from:
Cheshire
Isle of Wight
Merseyside

The FRAs above have submitted details on changes they have made to the way in which they provide supervision at operational incidents through the use of flexible duty officers. These changes generally involve a reduction in the numbers of officers employed and consequently provide cashable efficiency savings for the FRA involved. A comparison of the number of officers per 1,000 population by SWFA and the FRAs concerned is provided below:

FRA	Population	Population divided by 1,000	Station Officer & above	Station Officer & above per 1,000 population	League Table Position
Cheshire	986,100	986	40	0.041	**2**
Shropshire	447,000	447	26	0.058	**9**
Average all FRAs (47)	49,855,555	49,856	4,146	0.83	**N/A**
Isle of Wight	139,000	139	15	0.108	**43**
Merseyside	1,364,000	1,364	181	0.133	**45**

This table demonstrates that the number of Station Officers and above employed by SWFA benchmarks very favourably with other FRAs. Shropshire has the ninth lowest number of such officers per 1,000 population of all FRAs, and is well below the average figure.

Officers have undertaken an initial assessment of the changes recently made in Cheshire and it is apparent that Cheshire has actually adopted a similar officer rota and incident command system to that introduced in Shropshire in 1997. The main focus is a four-week rota system, where each officer has one weekend per month providing standby cover from home.

In this instance the size of population clearly makes a difference also, i.e. Cheshire has over twice the population and thus can provide its Incident Command system with fewer officers per head of population. Nevertheless, this is an area that requires further exploration to ensure that SWFA maintains its position with regard to the efficient and effective provision of supervision at incidents.

New Shift Patterns for Retained Firefighters
Case studies from:
Devon
Surrey

Case studies submitted by these two FRAs can be summarised as follows:

Devon
Devon has provided a salary package for retained firefighters based upon a maximum availability of 84 hours per week. The changes are currently being piloted at a number of retained stations and it is recognised that the proposals will increase the cost of the retained service in Devon.

Surrey
Very similar to the Devon proposals, however, the efficiency savings or additional costs do not appear to have been calculated.

Shropshire undertook a Best Value Review of its Retained Service during 2005. This commenced with a consultation survey of all retained firefighters and their partners, and the outcomes of the consultation have been used to prioritise and implement improvements. Retained firefighters in Shropshire did not see changes to their working patterns or pay arrangements as a high priority, they preferred instead to see improvements in training, community fire safety and crewing arrangements. As a result SWFA is making a very significant investment in the Retained Service over the next four years, details of which are well documented and can be obtained from the Retained Project Manager.

The Retained Service Review Implementation Project contains a requirement to revisit the pay arrangements for retained firefighters. Although this is not a high priority, the developments in other FRSs will be taken into account during this review.

The success of SWFA's work in improving the Retained Service has been recognised nationally and is reflected in the following comment received from the head of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's national retained review team:

"… if every FRS had been as proactive as Shropshire post-retained review we'd all be much further along in trying to establish workable solutions to the long-standing problems."

Introduction of Dual Wholetime/ Retained Contracts for Existing Personnel
Case studies from:
Kent
Surrey
Bedfordshire

The above FRSs have introduced, or are in the process of introducing, arrangements whereby their wholetime firefighters can also (in their time off) provide retained cover. A number of advantages of these arrangements are cited including:

- The provision of additional firefighter resource without incurring the costs associated with recruitment and training.
- Improved appliance availability and, therefore, improved service delivery in areas which are served by retained stations.

- Enhanced crewing levels at retained stations.
- Breaking down of cultural barriers.
- Wholetime staff often have greater emergency response experience and are able to advise and support retained staff at incidents.
- Training retained personnel may take a year or more depending upon their availability. Wholetime personnel, once selected, become operational almost immediately.
- Where continuation training is delivered locally by Wholetime/Retained staff it is potentially at a higher standard.
- The ability to undertake community safety interventions in those rural areas where day time availability of retained duty system staff has been historically low.

SWFA employed its first wholetime/retained firefighter many years ago when this concept was virtually unheard of. At that time the Authority actually provided support for the individual concerned to challenge his representative body through the courts for removing his union membership. The Service currently has 22 (13%) of its wholetime firefighters serving on wholetime/retained contracts and actively encourages increased involvement.

In the case studies provided only Surrey appears to include these arrangements in its annual efficiency statements. Surrey is, however, claiming to be making savings of £1 million per annum. Whilst it is difficult at his stage to ascertain whether such figures can be justified, this is an area where SWFA requires further work to ensure that the ongoing cost benefits of these long-standing arrangements can be included as efficiencies.

Reducing Resources on Night Time Shifts
Case studies from:
Cumbria
Somerset
West Midlands

Both Cumbria and Somerset have included case studies whereby they have changed working arrangements for wholetime firefighters so that this group of staff works until midnight during night shifts. These arrangements were introduced many years ago in Shropshire and so no benefits can be achieved from these arrangements, other than to monitor whether Cumbria's claim that the arrangements represent cashable efficiency savings is accepted. This appears at present to be unlikely.

The case study put forward by West Midlands is much more substantial in nature and involves taking 13 of their 62 wholetime appliances off the run during less busy periods, i.e. during the night. The case study proposes between the hours of midnight and 8.00 am as the times of reduced cover. It is believed, however, that current negotiations involve extending this period to 12 hours. The proposals are highlighted as reducing West Midlands' wholetime establishment by 63 posts with a cashable efficiency saving of £1.285 million.

West Midlands and Shropshire are, of course, very different in nature, as shown in the following table which compares the number of wholetime firefighters employed by each.

FRA	Population	Population divided by 1,000	Sub Officer & below	Sub Officer & below per 1,000 population	League Table Position
Shropshire	447,000	447	190	0.43	**17**
Average all FRAs (47)	49,855,555	49,856	27,670	0.56	**N/A**
West Midlands (Days)	2,578,000	2,578	1,735	0.67	**39**
West Midlands (Nights)	2,578,000	2,578	1,672	0.65	**39**

The standard of response provided in each of the FRAs is also very different. Whilst the West Midlands aims to ensure that on average the first fire appliance arrives at any incident within 5 minutes and the second within 7 minutes, in Shrophire's urban areas covered by wholetime appliances the standards set are 10 and 13 minutes respectively. In view of the much reduced performance standards set by Shropshire, and of the difficulties experienced achieving these with only 5 wholetime appliances, it is unlikely that SWFA will be able to follow the example set by the West Midlands, although work continues to consider these issues through this Fire Authority's IRMP.

Devolving the Management of Shift Systems down to Station Manager Level
Case study from:
Surrey

This case study is predominantly about the management of resources at Borough or Station level. Whilst there may be examples of good practice from which SWFA can learn, it has already been well recognised through the CPA process that SWFA employs one of the smallest workforces yet "are making the most of their enthusiastic and motivated staff."

New Crewing Arrangements for Special Appliances
Case studies from:
Suffolk
Cambridgeshire
Kent
Merseyside
Lancashire
Norfolk
Nottinghamshire
Cumbria
Derbyshire

These case studies cover a variety of different approaches to making the best use of human resources.

Each case study is considered briefly below.

Suffolk
Change to specialist duty shifts ensuring that those conditioned to the day duty shift system increase their working hours from 36 to 42 hours
Already dealt with in Shropshire

Cambridgeshire
Reduction in staff for crewing aerial and heavy rescue appliances
The evidence provided suggests that Cambridgeshire still has much higher crewing levels than are achieved in Shropshire

Kent
Reduction in crewing levels for aerial and other specialist appliances
Already achieved in Shropshire.

Merseyside
Introduction of wholetime retained for 3 of its aerial appliances
The acceptance of a turn-in time of 12 minutes for these firefighters would appear to be excessive for Shropshire, where aerial appliances have much further distances to travel. This, however, is an area worthy of further exploration through the IRMP process when the changes introduced in April 2006 have fully bedded in.

Norfolk
Very similar case study to those described above for Cambridgeshire and Kent

Nottinghamshire
Decision to mobilise aerial appliances only upon request
A decision made in Shropshire many years ago

Lancashire
A number of initiatives including, not mobilising aerial appliances unless required, sending only one appliance to Automatic Fire Alarms and reducing officer numbers
All of the initiatives described have been previously introduced in Shropshire

Cumbria
A reduction from three aerials down to two
Shropshire has two aerials, only one of which is crewed at any one time in accordance with the latest IRMP findings and Action Plan

Derbyshire
Reduced attendance to automatic fire alarms, reduction in level of supervision for aerial appliances and changes to aerial crewing
All previously introduced in Shropshire

Summary
The majority of these case studies identifies annual efficiency savings achieved through the introduction of more cost-effective crewing arrangements for so-called special appliances. In the interest of true cost effectiveness, wherever possible, special appliances in Shropshire are crewed by Retained personnel as follows:

Wholetime
Shrewsbury and Telford
Two aerial appliances maintained by the Service: one at Shrewsbury, the other at Telford Central. As from April 2006 only one of these appliances is crewed at any

one time. Shrewsbury personnel also crew the mass decontamination unit provided by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for national resilience and the boat which provides water safety cover throughout Shropshire.

Wellington
Heavy rescue tender providing specialist support to road traffic collisions and other major emergencies throughout the County

Retained
Shrewsbury Retained
Heavy pumping unit for rural water supplies and flooding
Mini pumping unit with off-road capabilities for rural firefighting

Prees
High volume pump supplied by the Office of the deputy Prime Minister for national resilience.
Chemical, biological, radio-active and nuclear re-robe unit to be supplied by the Department for Communities and Local Government during 2006 for national resilience

Church Stretton
Pinzgauer for off-road rural firefighting

Tweedale
Incident Command vehicle for use at large or protracted incidents
Land Rover pump for rural firefighting

Market Drayton
Land Rover pump for rural firefighting

Five Ford Rangers used for a variety of incident support activities, including terrorism incidents, breathing apparatus support and off-road water supply are also crewed by retained personnel at *Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Newport, Bridgnorth and Ludlow*

Creating a Strategic Reserve
Case study from:
West Midlands

This case study describes how West Midlands has identified that it has 15 more fire appliances than are required to deal with incidents under normal circumstances. As such, it is able to release these appliances from operational cover to carry out training and prevention based activities. The removal of these appliances does not impact upon the Service's average attendance times of 5 minutes for the first appliance and 7 for the second, and in the case of vastly increased operational demand they can be recalled to operational duty within one hour.

Shropshire only has 5 wholetime appliances, as opposed to the 62 in the West Midlands. This case study, therefore, is not readily transferable to Shropshire. The principles are, however, applied in a somewhat different and more cost-effective manner as follows:

- When operational crews are involved in some forms of community fire safety activities, e.g. school visits, crucial crew etc, there is the opportunity for them to

de-prioritise for operational incidents, i.e. they can be taken off first call, unless the incident is life risk.

- When undertaking high priority training, for example off-station exercises, they can request with fire control that they be placed on 'delayed attendance', i.e. fire control will be made aware that the crew may take 5 or 10 minutes to mobilise, if required.

- Shropshire does, in fact, have a strategic reserve in the form of 23 Retained appliances, which can all be mobilised within 5 minutes. Thus 23 fire appliances, which cost less in total than £2.5 million per year to crew, provide operational cover on a day-to-day basis throughout Shropshire and additionally provide a strategic reserve for periods of heavy demand or for large-scale incidents. This appears to be much more cost-effective than providing a strategic reserve of 15 wholetime appliances at an estimated cost of £12 million.

Through regular monitoring of the IRMPs of other FRAs, it is clear that London also employs a strategic reserve. In this case the reserve utilises 30 of its total of 170 fire appliances. Though detailed analysis of the arrangements in London has not been carried out, it is likely that the same considerations as described above will apply.

Variable Crewing at individual Fire Stations
Case studies from:
Surrey
Greater Manchester
CIPFA Statistics

These two case studies describe very specific arrangements within the Services concerned. They do not appear to identify any proposals that are not already covered within the case studies described above.