

## Integrated Risk Management Planning Members' Working Group Update

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Alan Taylor, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260225, Andy Johnson, Head of Performance and Risk, on 01743 260287 or John Harrison, Temporary IRMP Manager, on 01743 260182.

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report advises Members of the progress made by the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Members' Working Group (the Group) towards identifying and developing the strategic IRMP priorities for the next three year period. In addition it also presents the feedback from the 2009/10 Staff Consultation and an update on ongoing reviews. Members are requested to approve the recommendations made by the Group at their meeting held on 25 November 2008.

### 2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Note the responses to the 2009/10 consultation Process (appendix 1) and the full FBU response (appendix 2);
- b) Note the progress made with ongoing reviews;
- c) Approve the Strategic IRMP Priorities, as proposed by Group;
- d) Agree that these priorities be consulted upon as part of the budget consultation process in January 2009;
- e) Agree to progress the Retained Development Project as part of the IRMP process; and
- f) Approve the use of £107,000 from the 2009/10 growth budget, to kick start the Retained Development project.

### 3 Background

The Fire Authority delegated authority to the IRMP Members Working group to develop its IRMP Action Plan 2009 and beyond at its meeting in April 2008.

Members of the Group met on 25 November 2008 to receive and discuss the feedback from the 2009/10 consultation process; receive an update with regard to ongoing reviews; and identify the priorities for the next 3 year strategic IRMP.

## **4 Staff Consultation Response**

Appendix 1 provides a full report on the feedback received from the 2009/10 IRMP Consultation process, undertaken with station based staff between June and November 2008. A copy of the full FBU response to the consultations is also provided in Appendix 2.

The significant outcomes from the consultation process are as follows:

- There is overwhelming support for the maintenance of current fire stations from those staff and Representative Bodies (RB's) who responded to the consultation;
- There is overwhelming support for the proposal to make better use of resilience stations and extending specialist functions to other stations.

At the request of the Group, the opportunity was taken in a small number of cases to explore individual comments by staff to further improve and inform communication and the IRMP process.

## **5 Ongoing Reviews**

As well as the major refurbishments planned for the Shrewsbury and Wellington sites there are a number of projects that fall out of this, and previous year's, IRMPs.

These are:

### **1. Station Risk Profiles**

Following presentations to all stations and watches, as part of this year's consultation process, staff are required to complete a risk profiling exercise for their station area. This involves the use of new computer tools made available to all stations during the process. This work is progressing, with the first phase expected to be complete in January 2009. Members of the IRMP Team continue to support staff as necessary.

The outcome from this work will give direction to the Authority's Strategic IRMP over the coming years.

## 2. Aerial Provision

Staff from Telford Central and Shrewsbury have been heavily involved in this review, which is exploring how Shropshire's Aerial appliance requirements will be met into the future. An element of this is the possibility of introducing Combined Aerial Rescue Pumps (CARPs) into the Service.

It is envisaged that this review will be completed by early 2009, with any recommendations being consulted upon during the 2009 consultation process.

## 3. Water Rescue Provision

This project continues to look at identifying various costed proposals for improving service delivery in this area. Again, it is envisaged that this review will be completed by early 2009, with any recommendations being consulted upon during the 2009 consultation process.

Members will note that at the time of writing, the Authority is awaiting the Government's response to Sir Michael Pitt's report into the 2007 flooding. The report was published during the summer of 2008 and a response is expected from Government on or around 11 December 2008.

## 6 Strategic IRMP Priorities

Members will be aware that the last remaining strategic IRMP priority was the review of fire cover for the remaining areas of the county. With this now complete, and included in the recently completed consultation, the Group need to identify the strategic priorities for the next three year period.

The Service recently held a two day strategic planning workshop, which involved all the Service's middle and senior managers. The feedback and comments from the workshop will inform the Improvement priorities which will appear in the 2009/10 Corporate Plan.

The emerging theme from the two days was that the Service should focus on **Improving Customer care** underpinned/supported by the three main areas of:

- i. **Improving Competence, by:**
  - Developing our managers and leaders;
  - Improving core and specialist skills; and
  - Improving performance and management.

- ii. **Improving Capacity, by:**
  - Prioritising resource allocation against demand;
  - Improving resilience; and
  - Enhancing RDS support.
  
- iii. **Improving Communication, by:**
  - Implementing a consultation strategy;
  - Sharing learning experiences; and
  - Improving station/departmental management

Whilst it is acknowledged that these emerging themes are yet to be formally endorsed, the Group agreed that there would be great advantage gained from integration of the priorities stated within the Fire Authority's two main strategic documents – the Performance Plan and the IRMP Strategic Plan.

The Group therefore recommends that Members accept these as the proposed Strategic IRMP Priorities and therefore consults upon these as part of the Budget Consultation Process, planned for January 2009.

## 7 Retained Priority

The Service's strategic planning workshop went on to identify that driving improvements in the Retained service continues to be a strategic priority for the Authority. It is widely acknowledged that the significant investment made over recent years, following the Retained Review, has made a considerable difference to improving service delivery.

- Retained Firefighter numbers up by 10%
- Retained availability up from 94% to 99%
- Over 40,000 Home Fire Risk Assessments conducted by Retained Personnel.

However there remain a number of key priorities that still require addressing, to further improve the quality of service delivery. These include;

- Supporting Retained Firefighter Development
- Improving Station Management structures.

In accordance with the direction given to the Group, by the Strategy and Resources Committee, they have started to explore a number of options for how the Service might address these issues. Officers are looking at the possibility of creating Retained Development Teams, including options for how they could be funded through efficiencies.

At this stage the structure and responsibilities of these teams are subject to further analysis. Officers asked the Group to consider a proposal involving the investment of £107,000 from the 2009/10 growth budget. This investment would give the Service the capacity to make significant progress, both in

terms of delivering on some of the immediate priorities in this area, as well as developing the longer term solutions.

The Group agreed to make the following recommendations to the Fire Authority, in relation to this matter;

1. Agree to progress the Retained Development Project as part of the IRMP process; and
2. Approve the use of £107,000 of the 2009/10 growth budget, to kick start this project.

## **8 Financial Implications**

The implications of the Fire Authority approving the proposed investment of the £107,000 of 2009/10 growth budget, are discussed in detail within the separate Budget Report also being presented to the Fire Authority as part of this meeting (Agenda Item 11 – 2009/10 and Later Years Budget Summary).

## **9 Legal Comment**

In 2003 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister requested fire authorities to prepare IRMPs. Although this request does not have the force of statute, there was a clear expectation that the request would be complied with. This expectation has been further formalised by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, which states that fire and rescue authorities must 'have regard' to the Government's National Framework Documents, which in turn state that fire authorities 'must' have an IRMP in place covering a minimum of a three year period (Draft National Framework 2008 to 2011).

## **10 Equality Impact Assessment**

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached to this report.

## **11 Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

IRMP Action Plan 2009/10 Staff Consultation Response Document November 2008.

### **Appendix 2**

IRMP Action Plan 2009/10 Staff Consultation FBU Response November 2008.

## **12 Related Papers**

### **Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority**

17 December 2008, Paper 11 – 2009/10 and Later Years Budget Summary

## 13 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

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.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	*
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity	*	Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	*
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings	*	Retained	*
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	*
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*



Directorate	Performance Improvement	Department/ Section	Integrated Risk Management
Name of officers completing (minimum of 2)	J Harrison Andy Johnson	Job title	IRMP Manager Head of Risk
Name of Policy/Service/Activity to be assessed	Report to the CFA Members Working Group Update	Date of assessment	28/11/2008
New or existing policy	N / E		

**1)** Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy/service/activity (referred to as policy in document) and also consider the following:

Those that will benefit from the development of future IRMP strategic priorities are all communities in Shropshire, including its population, businesses and visitors to the county. All members of SFRS.

**1 a)** Who implements this policy?

The Fire Authority own the IRMP process, with the Chief Fire Officer being responsible for the implementation of any actual changes to service delivery as required.

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**2)** How does your current policy meet the needs around age, disability, race, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation and caring responsibilities?

The IRMP process looks at the Service at the strategic level. It attempts to ensure that we have distributed our limited resources around the county in the most effective way to provide the most appropriate response.

Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? E.g. physical or other.

This report does not therefore have any specific impact in terms of furthering or hindering equality of opportunity, nor does it have any impact on the Service's responsibilities as they relate to reinforcing or challenging stereotypes.

**2a)** Where do you think improvements could be made?

The outline strategic proposals, included in this report will be subject to a full EQIA at the time they are implemented as part of a formal project. Staff will be given the opportunity to comment at that stage.

**2b)** Have issues of equality been identified in this area of service delivery by SFRS?

No.

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**3)** Have we had any specific feedback or complaints on this area?

No.

Is there evidence that this has come

from any of these specific groups: race, gender, disability, religion/belief, age, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities?			
<b>3a)</b> Do we have any feedback from managers or frontline staff on this policy?	All proposals put forward will be subject to IRMP consultation and feedback will be available at an appropriate time.		
<b>3b)</b> Is there any feedback from voluntary/community organisations?	As with previous IRMP consultations feedback will be sought from all appropriate stakeholders.		
<b>3c)</b> Is there any research / models of practice that may inform SFRS view?	No		
<b>4)</b> Detail the Actions / Improvement areas you have identified, or the need for further research. (These must be put onto the Action and Improvements Form <b>FB 367</b> for consideration by Steering Group)  If you have found considerable actions or research this will require you to proceed to a full assessment.	If the proposals for improved use of resources, outlined in the report, are taken forward as proposals for implementation, they themselves must be subject to EQIA. This assessment should make full use of the feedback obtained from IRMP consultation.		
<b>5)</b> Should the policy now proceed to a full impact assessment?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>This report does not have any specific impact in terms of furthering or hindering equality of opportunity, nor does it have any impact on the Service's responsibilities as they relate to reinforcing or challenging stereotypes.</td> </tr> </table>	No	This report does not have any specific impact in terms of furthering or hindering equality of opportunity, nor does it have any impact on the Service's responsibilities as they relate to reinforcing or challenging stereotypes.
No	This report does not have any specific impact in terms of furthering or hindering equality of opportunity, nor does it have any impact on the Service's responsibilities as they relate to reinforcing or challenging stereotypes.		

**I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed.  
I understand the Impact Assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.**

Line Manager		Date	
Please note that this impact assessment will be scrutinised by the Equality and Diversity Officer.			



## Appendix D

### Equality Impact Assessment Actions and Improvements Form

When you have completed the Equality Impact Assessment a number of actions or improvement areas will have been identified, it is important that these are captured and put into normal work activities. In some cases there maybe a few small actions required in other cases you will need to process to a full impact assessment, you will need to complete this form for both of these situations when you identify actions that need completing, or have identified that future investigation will require specific resources that need to be put into the business planning process.

This form is to allow you to record the outcome from your impact assessments so that the actions or improvements can be carried out by your Department and monitored and in some cases approved by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group. Please ensure that this form is given to your line manager for discussion at your team or one to one meetings for incorporation into individual work plans.

<b>Directorate:</b> Performance Improvement	<b>Department:</b> IRMP
<b>Brigade Order/activity that has identified need, issue/objective:</b> Outline proposals for Strategic IRMP priorities (as outlined in the CFA IRMP report – 17 <sup>th</sup> December 2008)	<b>EQIA No:</b>

Action	Comments inc. Details of Consultations required/carried out	Resources / Finances allocated to this objective/target	How will this be monitored to ensure it is effective	Responsible for this action	Due Date	Progress
If the proposals for improved use of resources, outlined in the CFA IRMP report, are taken forward as proposals for implementation, they themselves must be subject to EQIA.	This assessment should make full use of the feedback obtained from IRMP consultation.					

Head of Department		Date completed	
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This form must be sent to Management Support when completed for monitoring and/or consideration by the Equality & Diversity Steering Group



**Shropshire**  
Fire and Rescue Service

## **IRMP Action Plan 2009/10**

### **Staff Consultation Response Document**

**November 2008**



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# Executive Summary

This years IRMP consultation took a somewhat different approach to previous years, designed primarily on the one hand to consult with staff on the findings of the completed Fire Cover Review and on the other to culminate in the local completion of the 2009/10 Station Risk Analysis Return that will continue to inform the development of Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority's next strategic IRMP.

Also in comparison to previous years, the consultation process started a little earlier, this year running from late June to early November in order to enable staff to complete the Risk Analysis Return by early January 2009. As part of the consultation process station based personnel received an introduction to and a demonstration of the services new Corporate GIS system which will be an integral part of both the initial Station Risk Analysis Returns and future integrated risk management.

In addition to this, the consultation covered the following main areas,

- An update on last years IRMP proposals
- An update regarding ongoing internal and external reviews

As in previous years the consultation presented the opportunity to keep staff informed of significant internal and external reviews. These included national reviews regarding the responses to the 2007 summer flooding which potentially impacts on the future provision and direction of water safety within the county as well as local reviews investigating the proposed provision of small fires and difficult access vehicles, the future provision of aerial cover, the proposed redevelopments of the current Shrewsbury and Wellington sites and an update on work following the cultural audit.

As previously mentioned the consultation sought the feedback from staff on the results of the fire cover review for the remaining areas of the county. The presentation given outlined the current provision of fire cover within the county and demonstrated the predicted effects on response times and resilience levels that changes to current levels of cover would impact upon. Staff and their representative bodies were invited to comment on the proposals and make suggestions with regard to future operational specialist functions.

A great deal of effort was put into obtaining feedback from all operational members of staff within Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. The consultation process involved presentations by members of the Fire Authority and the Service's IRMP Team. All consulted staff were then asked to complete a questionnaire which asked for their views on various aspects of the consultation and the proposals contained therein.

Employee Representative Bodies (RB's) were also asked to comment, again supported by the same presentations given to staff. Following completion of the consultation process, full details of the feedback received from staff and their RB's has been included in this report, along with the Fire Authority's response to that feedback.



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The significant outcomes from the consultation process are as follows:

- Overwhelming support for the maintenance of current fire stations from staff and RB's who responded to the consultation.
- Overwhelming support for making better use of resilience stations and extending specialist functions to other stations.

Outcomes will be considered by the Fire Authority on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008. Any changes approved by the Authority will be made to the appropriate document, the final version of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Action Plan for 2009/10 will be published on 1st April 2009.

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# Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform all interested groups of:

- the details of the consultation process undertaken with the staff and Employee Representative Bodies of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority, on the IRMP presentation for 2009/10 which represents the Authorities draft Action Plan.
- the comments received from the staff of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority and their RB's from this consultation process; and
- Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority's response to the comments made following this consultation process.

The results from this consultation process will be used to assist the Fire Authority in developing its Strategic IRMP and informing its IRMP Action Plan for 2009/10, prior to its final release on 1 April 2009.

# Approach to Consultation

The consultation process for Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority's 2009/10 Draft IRMP Action Plan has been undertaken as detailed in the 2009/10 IRMP presentation and builds upon the experience gained in previous IRMP consultations.

In keeping with consultation best practice, the Fire Authority has concentrated a lot of its efforts on getting feedback on its proposals from its staff (the people likely to feel greatest impact from the draft proposals). To this end, a presentation on the Fire Authority's Draft Action Plan was presented on thirty eight occasions to members of operational staff within Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. A total of 368 staff, representing 74% of the operational station based workforce attended the consultation presentations. The presentations were given by a member of the Service's IRMP Team, an Executive Officer and in the vast majority of cases at least one representative from the Fire Authority's Members IRMP Working Group who responded to any questions asked. In addition to this, other Fire Authority Members supported the presentations on a significant number of occasions.

On completion of each presentation members of staff were provided with a feedback questionnaire so that information about their thoughts on the proposals contained within the presentation regarding the development of the Authority's Strategic IRMP could be gathered.

Representative bodies were also invited to submit their comments and to this end a submission from the FBU was received that covered National and Local issues and in particular gave feedback on the following targeted areas;

- Update on the previous years proposals
- Current ongoing reviews
- Regional Control Centres (RCCs)
- Training
- Assessment Development Centres
- IPDS Centre.

Where clearly attributable, comments from the FBU have been inserted within the feedback for each of the questions asked within the consultation questionnaire.

## The Questionnaires

The questionnaires consisted of a series of 'questions' or 'statements' about the Draft Action Plan. Staff were asked to rate their 'level of agreement' with each statement on a scale of 'Strongly Agree' through to 'Strongly Disagree'. In addition they were invited to submit any other comments they considered appropriate. The questions on which they were asked to comment were as follows;

1. Fire Cover Review: Do you agree with the outcomes of the fire cover review that we should maintain all of our current fire stations?

2. Fire Cover Review: Do you agree with the outcomes of the fire cover review that we should make better use of our resilience stations?
3. Fire Cover Review: Do you agree with the outcomes of the fire cover review that we should extend specialist functions to other stations?

Fire Cover Review: Staff working which duty system should be trained to carryout these functions;

	Wholetime	RDS	Both
Large Animal Rescue Technicians			
Logistical Support at Level 3 Incidents			
Mass Decontamination Support			
Guideline Pathfinders/Extended BA			
Safety & Rescue (4 pumps and over)			
Water Safety			
Other Areas			

4. The IRMP Consultation process: I am satisfied with the IRMP consultation process

All responses had to be back to the IRMP Team by the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2008. This ensured that all feedback received could be duly considered by the Fire Authority's Members IRMP Working Group during the last week in November, prior to taking any recommendations for changes to the draft document, to the full Combined Fire Authority meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008.

The overall response to this consultation process has been good, with a total of 193 questionnaires being returned by the close of the consultation period; this is a significant increase from the previous year's consultation responses [124] and represents just over 52% of those staff consulted and 39% of all station based operational personnel. The table below shows a break down of the respondents to the questionnaire by department and/or groups.

All responses, including those returned anonymously, have been included in the statistics and comments contained in this report.

Group of Staff	Number of Responses	Number of Staff*	Percentage of staff
Retained	130	320	41
Wholetime	56	175	31
Anonymous	7	-	-
Overall figures	193	495	39

\*figures accurate as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008



## **How the results are presented in this report**

The report has been split into 4 sections. Each section details the responses made by staff to one of the statements/questions listed in the questionnaire. The last section deals with other comments made that do not specifically relate to one of the 'Questionnaire Statements'. Each of the statement sections comprise of the following sub-sections:

- The statement or question on which people were commenting;
- A summary of the responses and comments received;
- The Fire Authority's response to the feedback received;
- A summary table showing the number of responses received and the overall breakdown of percentage figures for each of the 'Agreement Ratings' (i.e. 'Strongly agree' through to 'Strongly disagree').
- A detailed breakdown of the response from the various groups and departments within the organisation; and
- Comments received by staff and RB's.

# The IRMP Presentation 2009/10

## Response to Question 1

**Question asked:**

Fire Cover Review;  
*Do you agree with the outcomes of the fire cover review that we should **Maintain all of our current fire stations?***

**Response Summary**

The majority of respondents (96%) stated that they either ‘Strongly agree’ or ‘tend to agree with the statement. Only 1% ‘strongly disagreed’ with the remaining 3% ‘Tending to disagree’. There is overwhelming support for this statement.

Comments from staff were again overwhelmingly supportive of the statement.

**Fire Authority’s response**

It is clear and perhaps not surprising that staff who responded to this statement overwhelmingly supported the current provision of resources currently maintained by the Authority.

The comments made reflected this, pointing strongly to the potential effect on the local communities served as well as the wider county wide implications for the provision of cover during busy periods and large incidents.

**Summary table of responses to this question**

	Count	Total %
Strongly Agree	141	74
Tend to Agree	44	22
Tend to Disagree	5	3
Strongly Disagree	1	1
Total	191	100



**Detailed summary of responses to Question 1**

	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Tend to Agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Overall Response</b>	<b>191</b>	141	44	5	1
Retained	<b>129</b>	88	35	5	1
Wholetime	<b>55</b>	48	7	0	0
Anonymous	<b>6</b>	5	2	0	0

**Comments made in response to Question 1*****Comments in agreement with statement***

- I believe we should maintain our current stations to maintain effective countywide cover. A lot of stations have had improvements made to them in recent years, so a return should be sought on the basis of this investment.
- Particularly in rural areas due to the time it would take for other appliances to reach certain areas.
- The provision of the only local emergency service is currently provided by the fire service and is greatly appreciated, particularly in the rural areas.
- Although the stats show that stations could theoretically close, I feel it is vitally important for the communities involved to keep the stations open. Especially as the vulnerable are losing their lives to fire.
- We are running a skeleton staff and stations.
- IRMP Slide show showed us the need to maintain the current station numbers.
- Strongly agree that to loose any one of the brigades fire stations would be a reduction in service to those communities. Would also loose a lot of public support.
- I feel these stations provide important cover to the specific areas helping to provide competent coverage and maintaining good community relations.
- The savings are low if any. The backlash from the local communities' would show the brigade in a poor light. In the current economic climate local authorities should not be seen as making communities poorer.
- Any closure would have a damaging effect on the community in question and so I have no hesitation in saying we should maintain all stations.
- Never any doubt.
- I think that we sometimes struggle for cover as things stand, i.e. relief crews at protracted incidents. So if any stations were to close we could not maintain operational standards.

- RDS prove good value for money.
- I feel they should to keep up the standards.
- I believe what is in place is good.
- I believe we are at the minimum cover for the resilience cover.
- Only need a 10 pump fire and we are stretched.
- I agree, it is a good idea to use quiet stations for specialist and relief.
- When the weather is good no doubt station areas could be covered from other stations, but the way the climate is changing, i.e. floods, gales, etc. then we would struggle how would we reassure the public in perhaps some of the more remote areas of the county
- To close fire stations in the county would cause a public outcry. We need to support our communities in every way.
- I agree, but should be monitored as to give best value.
- I believe the County Council should continue to keep stations open assuming that the finance can be maintained and manning levels kept at the correct operation numbers.
- I agree with this because it gives us flexibility within the brigade at all levels.
- The likes of Prees and Hodnet should be kept open as they maybe small stations but the personnel are still capable of saving lives and that is the most important thing of all.
- As all the RDS stations have been revamped or in the process of it makes sense to maintain them to the present standards.
- For the cost of running a RDS station it is nothing for the service received.
- If it found that the benefits out way the cost of retaining these stations then it can on the best value possible.
- Like the IRMP says use them more for fire cover, relief etc.
- The currently used model (FSEC?) appeared to demonstrate that losing even one (BS) retained station would impact upon resistance and public safety.
- Nobody wants to see a reduction in fire covers. The FSEC'C tool is just what it states, it assists in predicting incidents not infallible and may be proved wrong.
- In the current climate of change for change sake, I believe that maintaining fire cover for Shropshire is more important in our community.
- I feel that given the rural and remote nature of the County of Shropshire, any closures of any stations would be detrimental to the population.

### ***Neutral comments***

- Problems recruiting and maintaining stations that have poor catchments area and industry to support daytime cover.
- We should constantly review the status of stations. It wouldn't be a good idea to rely on pure prediction statistics to decide on the fate of stations. The predictions of lives lost can rely on many factors such as available equipment and crew skill comp.
- In times of making changes just for changes sake, if no financial gain can be made then all stations should remain open.



### ***Comments in disagreement with the statement***

- With some stations only turning out to 30 or 40 calls a year are they really needed, and half the time they are manned by RSO's to keep them on the run.
- Are these outcomes the ones that have already been announced on local radio and press? Will these comments now have any effect on IRMP?
- If you can maintain cover and times with other stations covering this area once a significant amount of money is saved then if all the criteria are met closing stations may be an option.

### **Comments made by the Fire Brigade's Union**

After the Fire Cover Reviews that have taken place in Telford and Shrewsbury, the rest of Shropshire has now been assessed and SFRS has justified that it needs all its stations where they are.



## Response to Question 2

### Question asked:

Fire Cover Review;  
*Do you agree with the outcomes of the fire cover review that we should **Make better use of our resilience stations?***

### Response Summary

92% of respondents 'Strongly Agreed' or 'Tended to Agree' with the statement made. Of the remaining 8%, 6% 'Tended to disagree' whilst the remaining 2% 'Strongly disagreed'.

### Fire Authority's response

The Authority acknowledges from the consultation that whilst a large proportion of staff supported this comment there are clearly areas of concern raised by staff that would require further analysis to ensure any solutions adopted remain robust over future years. Most notably these include the commitments of individual RDS staff on specific stations for both the training elements and the operational workloads that additional specialist skills are likely to bring. The Authority has been mindful to adopt this approach to date when introducing specialist responsibilities and will continue to do so in making future decisions in this respect.

In addition to this the authority recognises that a balance needs to be struck between the levels of activity being experienced by individual stations and the needs of the communities they serve.

### Summary table of responses to this question

	Count	Total %
Strongly Agree	98	52
Tend to Agree	76	40
Tend to Disagree	12	6
Strongly Disagree	3	2
Total	189	100



**Detailed summary of responses to Question 2**

	Number of Responses	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Overall Response</b>	<b>189</b>	98	76	12	3
Retained	<b>129</b>	66	50	11	2
Wholetime	<b>54</b>	32	20	1	1
Anonymous	<b>6</b>	0	6	-	-

**Comments made in response to Question 2*****Comments in agreement with statement***

- Resilience crews should be used more for relief crews and given the option to extend the working hours on the fire ground. To compensate for loss of a days work with main employer.
- Stations that can give good cover should be used for as many specialist vehicles as possible and should have the option to extend their time on the fire ground if all the crew agrees (i.e. relief crews).
- I agree that better use could/should be made of our resilience stations. There is concern amongst our crew that the stations in question will be liable to cover a disproportionate number of make ups off their patch. The brigade should seek to maintain resilience station crew's morale and levels of training.
- They can be used to provide extra specialist functions.
- Some stations could specialise, i.e. command support, safety.
- Would agree that to make use of our out lying stations. To use their resources and time to assist in the organisations attempts to improve specialist appliance activities.
- Better use should be made of the stations in question to maintain morale and numbers of RDS staff.
- Maybe mobilising one of these stations to a busier area during spate conditions or when large incident is occurring might be effective.
- HVPU- Prees and Hodnet  
MPU- SY retained and Baschurch  
HPU- Craven Arms and Clun  
It was said Baschurch cover HVPU with Prees, but they cover in Shrewsbury so would be a better idea. Also Hodnet are trained on the re-robe unit so they can already drive vehicles.
- Giving these stations specific / extra responsibilities would not only help the brigade, but also inspire / keep the interest of the quieter stations.
- Spread the skill factor around the brigade.
- With the number of incidents falling we need to have a wider and better trained resilience crews.
- I think it is a good idea that we consider using the stations identified with low risk areas to greater effect.



- Yes, make use of stations with rangers and carry more equipment so it can be used at incidents instead of sending more appliances.
- Yes, good idea.
- If this enables us to retain the stations in the lower risk areas.
- Extra training for the resilience station and try to involve other stations that might come into contact with these stations.
- As we know our county relies on our retained stations to cover most of the county and to back up our whole time stations we could use our rural stations a lot more for all aspects of work.
- By using these stations for things like reliefs and standbys, they would be better used, gain more experience and free up wholetime crews.

### **Neutral comments**

- Retained stations when on relief should be given the opportunity to stay longer than 3 hours due to losing days pay at work.
- As long as consideration is made for retained working hours, i.e. not using the same appliances to maintain early morning relief calls disrupting their working days.
- Depending to what extent! Competencies need to be kept up on all equipment and appliances. Depending on if resilience stations remain where they are or are moved due to IRMP.
- Be careful not to give some stations too much to do, some stations have lots on the side, whereas others do not.
- They might find it difficult to keep up with training and standards might start to slip.
- But wouldn't like to have our jobs reduced.
- Bring the Shrewsbury retained in on standby instead of Baschurch, then they are covering their area better.
- Fire cover in Shrewsbury when both WT crews are out. At present, BS, MS,,etc. have been brought in while SY ret. Crews wait at home/work. 5 minutes etc. on attendance fires. I believe SY Ret should be brought in on standby.
- If these appliances are needed to meet attendance times within their areas, should they be sent around the county for lengthy period of time, i.e. reliefs and stand-bys?
- If they are away from stations on relief's who will attend these areas within the 20 m.
- Consideration towards removal of guidelines from appliance. As technology has improved greatly their use is no longer needed.
- Full consideration must be given to maintaining competence of personnel who are trained in specialist roles.
- But would like to see the old two pump stations used more effectively due to staffing and the facility that they / we have.
- Will number of personnel allow this?
- If retained personnel are being released from work will it cause friction with other employers?
- Whilst I agree in principle, I feel it may be harder to achieve, especially given the present climate in business. I admit I don't have knowledge in the area and would like to be proved wrong, but I feel employers would be reluctant to let workforce go if they knew it wasn't to benefit the local community,





- especially if it is for protracted lengths of time to other areas of the county,
- Should use spare on call personnel to crew further appliances, i.e. 5 people from different stations who are on call but unable to ride on appliances due to the appliance already being full to crew a spare appliance kept centrally to increase resilience for minimal cost.
- I am for better use of resilience stations but only if it doesn't have an adverse impact on their current stations, duties and cover of their own community.
- This does seem like a better use of resources.

### ***Comments in disagreement with the statement***

- If you have made resilience station i.e. put an R pump for strategic cover then should you be moving this appliance to other parts of the county. They were put there for a purpose perhaps that should remain the case.
- I feel (from being RDS) that there isn't sufficient time already for all the training required before introducing specialist skills. I would prefer to introduce new skills to wholetime.
- No real extra skills - specialists are already backed up.
- If resilience stations are going to be given extra duties, i.e. be priority to relief and fire cover, I don't think it is fair to other stations that they miss out. As we have already lost a large section of our patch due to Tweedale becoming whole time.
- We have lost enough calls already and rely on reliefs, etc.
- Should not move turnouts from local stations to justify targets and figures.
- Not sure this will be as effective as it may appear considering manning levels and availability. I am assuming that this idea is aimed at the smaller 1 pump rural stations, i.e. Hodnet, Prees etc.

### **Comments from the Fire Brigade's Union**

The conclusion is that Shropshire's provision is reasonably accurate. What it has provided is an identification of opportunities that can be exploited at those stations where there is lower activity levels in comparison to other stations. The opportunity is that other needs and provisions of the Service, such as specialist water provision, RTC, Incident Command, and large animal rescue, can be spread more evenly around the county.

This will provide a homogenised approach to resources, where appliances of various types and their personnel are positioned where they are needed.



## Response to Question 3

### Questions asked:

Fire Cover Review;

*Do you agree with the outcomes of the fire cover review that we should*

- a) **Extend specialist functions to other stations?**
- b) **Staff working which duty system should be trained to carryout these functions;**
  - Large Animal Rescue Technicians
  - Logistical Support at Level 3 Incidents
  - Mass Decontamination Support
  - Guideline Pathfinders/Extended BA
  - Safety & Rescue (4 pumps and over)
  - Water Safety
  - Any Other Areas

### Response Summary

In response to the question ‘Do you agree that we should extend specialist functions to other stations?’ A little under half of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ with an additional 41% opting for ‘tend to agree. The remaining 10% ‘Tended to disagree’ or ‘Strongly disagreed’.

### Fire Authority’s response

The Fire Authority notes all comments made and is mindful of the needs to balance training and competence levels for all staff.

### Summary table of responses to question 3a

	Count	Total %
Strongly Agree	93	49
Tend to Agree	78	41
Tend to Disagree	13	7
Strongly Disagree	5	3
Total	189	100



**Detailed summary of responses to Question 3a**

	Number of Responses	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Overall Response</b>	<b>189</b>	93	78	13	5
Retained	<b>130</b>	77	49	4	-
Wholetime	<b>54</b>	15	28	9	2
Anonymous	<b>5</b>	1	1	-	3

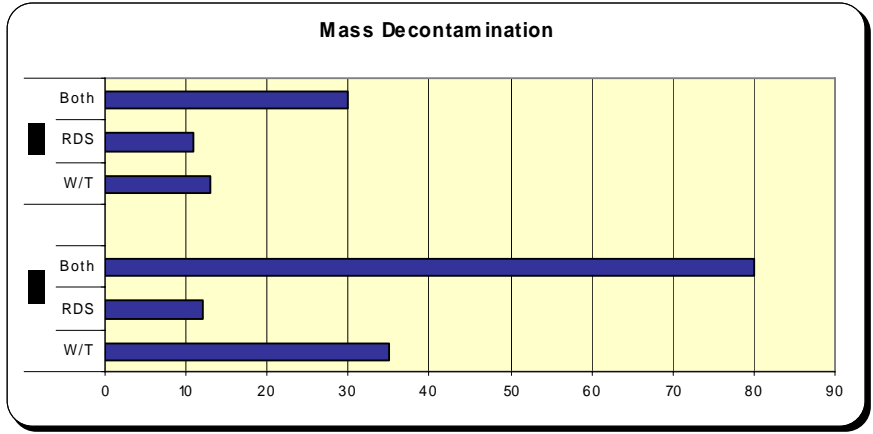
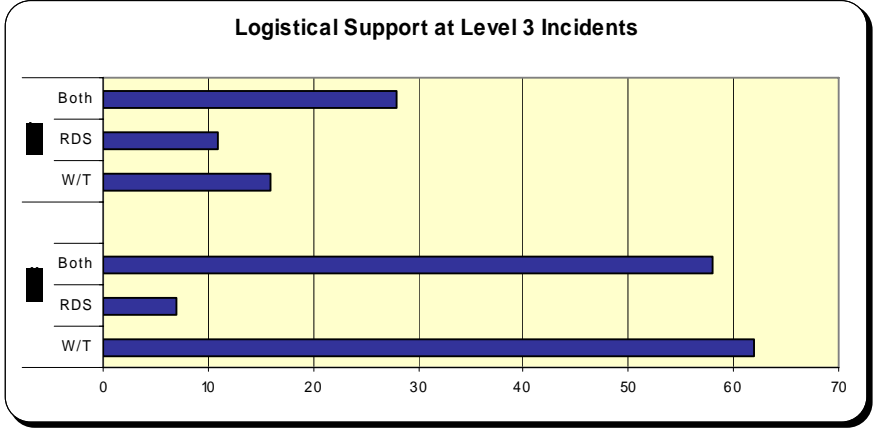
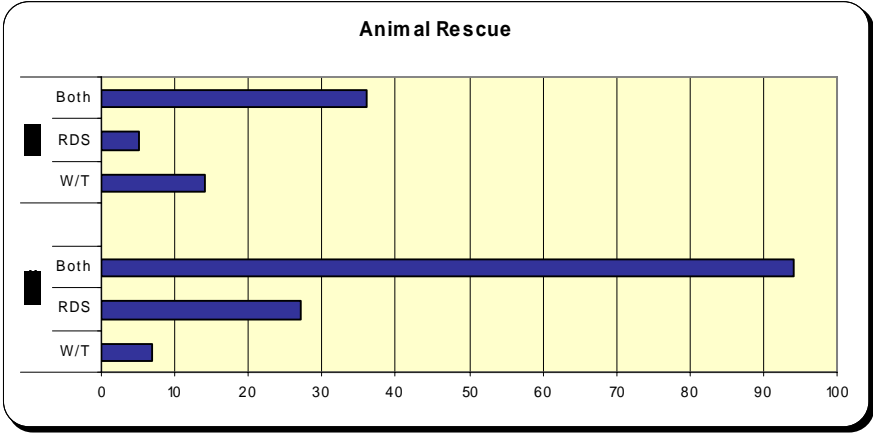
**Detailed summary of responses to Question 3b**

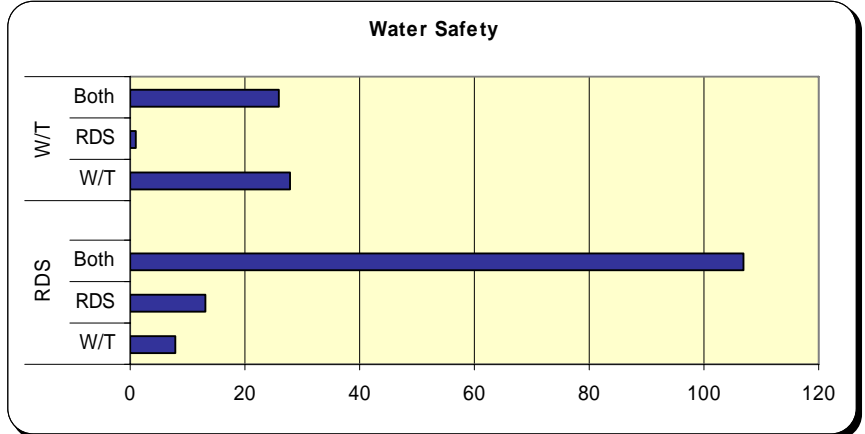
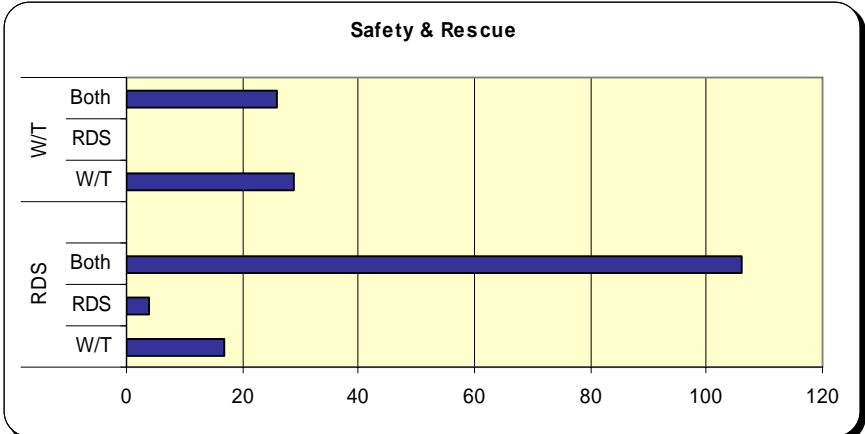
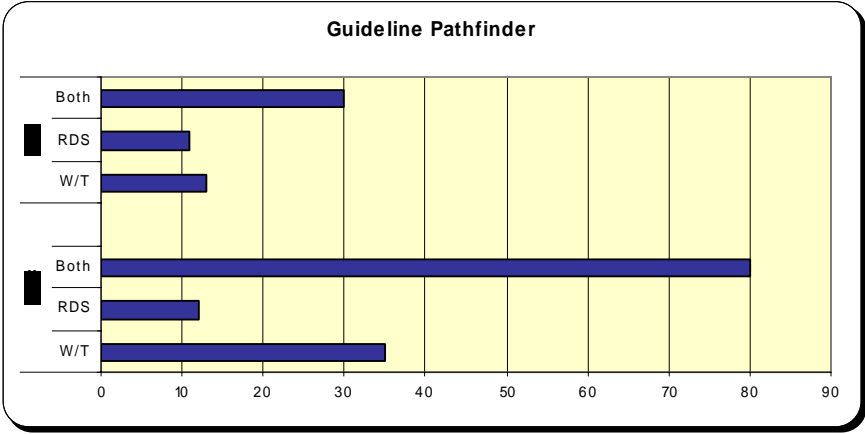
In response to the question 'Staff working which duty system should be trained to carryout these functions' the following numbers opted for Wholetime, RDS or both.

Staff working which duty system should be trained to carryout these functions	Wholetime	RDS	Both
Large Animal Rescue Technicians	25	33	131
Logistical Support at Level 3 Incidents	82	19	87
Mass Decontamination support	52	23	112
Guideline Pathfinders/Extended BA	90	4	92
Safety & Rescue (4pumps and over)	50	4	134
Water Safety	41	14	134

This response is further broken down in the graphs below indicating for each function highlighted how wholetime and RDS staff actually responded.







When asked to identify other specialist functions that could be considered the following areas were identified.

- The Boat
- Aerial Appliances
- Urban Search & Rescue
- Floods
- 72(d)'s
- RTC
- Fire Ground Feeding
- L4P
- Line Safety
- Rope Rescue
- Technical Rescue (confined space, at height)

### **General Comments made in response to Question 3**

#### ***Comments in response to Question 3***

- Due to our cover in the Shrewsbury area we feel we could assist in launching or making ready the boat in the event of a river rescue.
- (RDS) Specialist function dependant on usage. (i.e. water suppose, RTC rescue) areas that are going to be called upon regularly to maintain competence levels. Safety and Rescue. Utilise the attending O-i-C. They would normally be utilised as sector officers who monitor the safety and welfare of personnel. Animal Rescue, Due to the Geographic's of the county most large animals will be located in retained areas. The nearest station should attend to assess and stabilise the incident until specialist w/t staff arrive.
- All personnel should be treated as equals. Specialist roles / skills should be available to all.
- We would utilise staff who have experience and confidence in dealing with large animals for this function; I am sure that we have these people available working both duty systems.
- I feel both wholetime and RDS should be trained to carry out the above functions, however additional training sessions will be needed and I feel both whole time and RDS do not receive enough time to carry out effective training.
- Two strategically placed retained stations should be trained in each of the above subjects.
- RTC Stations more training especially stations covering A41 / A49 /A5 / M54.
- Line Safety - specialist stations should be near to hilly ground e.g. Wrekin. RTC Stations to be near major roads e.g. A49 / A41/ A5 / M54.
- Each station area should have its calls logged over a 12/24 month period to see what incidents occur most and then decide if specialist training is required.
- RTC.
- Retained stations with rangers should be used form specialist RTC cover.
- If RDS cannot keep competencies up due to lack of time - give them more time!! There are far less



'safety critical' pieces of equipment than guidelines. Surely it would be better practice to learn guidelines as opposed to say 'ladders'.

- Fire ground feeding.
- I feel that involving 'emergency incidents' where no confusion or delay can be acceptable would be better suited to wholtime stations, because of their day to day involvement dealing with incidents and training.
- I think when a full time pump goes out on stand by the RDS should come in on stand by to keep turn out times to as short as possible at Tweedale.
- I feel it is important for both wholtime and retained to have a range of skills and to stay competent in the skills in which they have new and old.
- As rescue tender attends all animal rescues technicians would gain more experience with dealing with large animals. Training time and rescue tender attendance.
- If resources allow, all personnel should be trained to carry out as many functions as possible for the benefit of everyone concerned. (Obviously certain specialist equipment assigned to certain stations can only be used by those personnel in order to maintain competence). Especially rescue tender crews which attend all animal rescues.
- Training should be made available for all personnel, but believe more in depth training should be made available for specialist stations, i.e.

**Large Animal Rescue Technicians** - Retained/Wellington

**Logistical Support for Level 3** - Personnel at Tweedale/ Shrewsbury where vehicles are based.

**Water Safety** - Shrewsbury due to boat.

- I feel that in the rural county in which we live we cannot just rely on the small number of wholtime crews that are centrally located. Training and support should be offered to all members.
- Having all personnel trained to same level makes sense. Having to wait around for someone with specialist skills to arrive at incident wastes time and looks unprofessional. Because we carry a rescue path on the retained at Wellington we should have more water training.
- **Logistical Support at Level 3 Incidents** - limit to TW and SY where vehicle available for training.
- **Mass Decontamination Support** - SY and other station with equipment available for training.
- **Safety & Rescue** - Differences between safety and rescue must be taken into consideration.
- Large Animal: All/most retained stations out in the countryside, i.e. I haven't seen many cattle in Shrewsbury and Telford town centres! Guide lines should be laid by specially trained BA crews, wholtime have tried to practice this.
- SRT at RDS at Shrewsbury could be trained as boat handlers. This would keep the boat on the run at all times.
- Both wholtime and retained should be trained so that the best cover is given at any one time.
- I feel that all stations should have specialist training to deal with incidents to gain more experience.
- Floods! Could front line appliances carry submersible pumps 110V? They are inexpensive, don't take much room and we could actually help people in floods.
- I think we should be trained for all circumstances possible. Especially the water rescue as, I feel, it is the small water incidents, i.e. ponds and rivers that save most lives, as opposed to flooding.



- If they are given more time to train on specialist resources.
- Please note with across border appliances coming into our area or our crews going out over the border a better understanding of each others procedures/training would be advantageous. Ref Chirk some training has been organised at district level.
- The question of who responds will depend on their location too, e.g. mass decontamination at those stations who respond. The question of wholetime/retained is irrelevant if we are doing the same job - however I have serious doubts as to the sustainability of competency at retained stations where current training time is already limited.
- Large animal handling - for retained you should ask stations who have farmers or the like stationed and train them up as they will be able to maintain competency better.
- We are moving in the right direction placing equipment around the county to the known risk areas. May be the bigger hurdles to overcome will be training both from having the trainers in place and particularly from the RDS point of view having the time to train.
- How can someone become a specialist on 3 hours a week training and maintain competency?
- Water rescue - stations near river and beauty spots such as BN, SY etc. should have more training.
- We should all be specialist as we all will at some stage work together. The more trained personnel trained the better.
- Extended specialist functions yes. Need to be placed across brigade but it should be available to both RDS and WT members.
- None of the above applies because each station should be trained on a topographical merit basis.
- As long as this does not impede on their training competency. Carrying out training on RDS stations, if done properly, does not leave a lot of time for extra i.e. special appliance training.
- ADO Whelan stated retained are struggling to keep up their competency levels due to lack of call, then he wants them at incidents to monitor the wholetime! What about our safety! Insulting and dangerous.
- If this goes ahead I strongly disagree.
- I think it is important to train both wholetime and retained staff to maintain efficiency throughout the brigade. My one exception is level 3 as this may need more focus.
- I agree that some of these should be done by wholetime, but as a retained fire-fighter I like to improve my skills and am always looking for different skills to learn. The problem with this is the time element, keeping proficient with my normal skills.
- Use of staff that are already employed either retained or wholetime.
- Specialist functions should not take precedence over core skills.
- Large animal rescue technicians would be useful on WT and Retained appliances. Specialist functions should only be extended once core skills are in place.
- Specialist functions should only be extended when all current competencies can be realistically achieved, i.e. guidelines on retained trucks.
- Areas where I have indicated 'both' are areas I feel time delays at incidents involving the subjects would have an adverse effect and should be covered under core skills by everyone. With the exception of large animal rescue. All these subjects could have personnel at 'strategically placed'





stations trained to a higher level (strategically placed being either where incidents are likely to occur, e.g. water based or larger stations). These will then be backed up by wholetime personnel trained to higher level, primarily the stations that will be mobilised e.g. SY for SRT. WL for animal rescues, but ideally specialists across all wholetime stations where the IRMP has highlighted there are more facilities for wholetime to maintain competencies.

- In light of information that guidelines have been removed from retained appliances, I would therefore ask if retained stations should have any specialist vehicles. The core skills of a fire fighter should come ahead of trying to keep certain groups happy.
- Areas highlighted for wt areas are risk critical. More times to train in these subjects without the expense of increasing RDS funding. Better justification of 5 w/t pumps is this is needed.
- It was mentioned during the presentation that 'specialists' would be strategically located, i.e. water safety @ SY/BN etc. and so on depending on specific risks associated with each station area.
- Urgent requirement to have additional support for crews mobilised to rescues from height, below ground and confined spaces. Currently crews sent to deal with these incidents have to attempt rescues without adequate training or back up.

### **Comments from the Fire Brigade's Union**

As with all good opportunities there must be a realistic approach to its implementation and future running; and here the consideration must be training and maintenance of competence.

The FBU in Shropshire agree that redistributing appliances around the county as they have is a better use of resources and will provide a better service to the public of Shropshire. We are also aware that SFRS have shown great commitment to the Retained Duty System (RDS) staff in terms of greater support through Retained Support Officers (RSOs) and greater training provision, but this commitment must be maintained to support all stations where specialist appliances are allocated.



## Response to Statement 4

### Statement:

IRMP Consultation Process  
**I am satisfied with the IRMP Consultation Process.**

### Summary of responses

A total of 95% of all respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the IRMP process. A number of responses indicated that they found the presentation informative and insightful giving them an opportunity to be involved in the IRMP process.

A small number of responses pointed to there being little or no feedback on comments made or how staff suggestions had led to any changes in policy decisions.

### Fire Authority's response

The Fire Authority recognises that the IRMP process is an integral part of SFRS risk management and reduction strategy, and as such the Authority remains committed to consulting on it with all areas of the Shropshire community as widely as possible.

The staff consultation sessions do not have a set time limit and staff are encouraged to ask all questions they may have about the proposals, the content and details of the presentations are limited to an acceptable length. Staff were encouraged to seek further information from the evidence documents on the SFRS web site or by contacting the IRMP team.

### Summary table of responses to this statement

	Count	Total %
Strongly Agree	72	39
Tend to Agree	105	56
Tend to Disagree	7	4
Strongly Disagree	2	1
Total	186	100



**Detailed summary of responses to Statement 4**

	Number of Responses	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Overall Response</b>	<b>186</b>	72	105	7	2
Retained	<b>128</b>	56	70	2	-
Wholetime	<b>52</b>	15	33	3	1
Anonymous	<b>6</b>	1	2	2	1

**Comments made in response to IRMP Statement 4*****Comments in agreement with statement***

- I welcome the Brigade / Fire Authority's desire to bring those issues to the attention of fire crews and to involve us in the IRMP review.
- Resilient crews should be used more for relief crews and given the option to work more hours.
- We are looking at subjects that are current and relevant.
- Very informative - cheers.
- Very good presentation - good to have CFA and Chief Fire Officer and Councillors attending.
- Very Good.
- It seems to be a thorough review and a sensible plan for the future.
- Involving the watches more in the IRMP process is a very good one and helps people feel involved as well as more meaningful data.
- Very good ideas.
- Very good presentation.
- The IRMP process is far better now than in previous years. Also very good to have an opportunity to give feedback.
- Good to know what is going on.
- The brigade and fire authorities are forward looking by consulting with all ranks with varied experiences enabling a better view of the bigger picture.
- Very good talk and I thought the councillors for the Fire Authority were good to talk to and had a very good approach on how a brigade should be run.
- It gave an insight of the process and the aims of the brigade in the future.
- This felt like the most informed and informative consultation I've been to and everyone felt comfortable in expressing opinions or asking questions.



### ***Neutral comments***

- Whilst we are striving to give best value and performance to people living and visiting Shropshire. I feel the area we should be working on much more than we do is to reduce the number of serious RTC by reducing the attendance times to RTC's. The casualty will have a much better chance of survival, especially in rural areas. Better working partnerships with 999 control operators, ambulance control staff and public awareness. Warning signs on more roads identifying serious collisions in recent years, especially along the A49.

### ***Comments in disagreement with the statement***

- As with the talk of competency levels, will the same happen as did with the SFU? The day of the IRMP talk we were talking about the possibility of 2 individual units, and then the same night rumours were already out that the small fire unit was going!! Does IRMP take into consideration anything that is discussed at station level or are we not heard!!
- A follow up of comments made by persons do not seem to happen until 12 months after, in which time people feel that they have forgotten.
- There is no feedback that highlights any suggestions made by staff that have actually led to a change in policies, etc.
- What consultation process?
- ADO Whelan stated retained aren't happy because their number of calls have dropped affecting their pay so he wants to give them these extra jobs to increase their pay! 3 hrs week specialists!

### **Comments from the Fire Brigade's Union**

Much of the frustration for The Fire Brigades Union lies with the national direction of the Fire Service. There is a lack of clear leadership, with the CLG providing hindrance in its expectations of the Fire Service rather than solutions in terms of proper guidance and leadership.

The Fire Brigades Union believes that leadership should be restored by the re introduction of an advisory body along the lines of the CFBAC, where historically the Fire Service has evolved with sound and good practices.

As for Shropshire, an island of sanity in a whirling sea of unnecessary and unproductive change has left the public of Shropshire with probably the best performing FRS in the UK. This is due to a cautionary and sensible approach to IRMP using new information and ideas without losing sight of traditional values.

SFRS is well placed to enter the three year IRMP phase and The Fire Brigades Union in Shropshire hope to work closely with the Service to complete the ongoing reviews to mutual satisfaction.

# Other comments received

## **Other comments received from staff**

- Like the IRMP says use them more for fire cover, relief etc.
- We should try to utilise the smaller stations to keep up training standards and interest.
- No comments.
- Making sure that station areas are equalled out, to spread out the jobs each station has.
- Public Outcry.
- Re last years turn out area changes to stations turn out areas - I feel further work is needed checking the attendance times of second appliances to the Claverley area. This has in the past been done by Wombourne who border Claverley, they are now not included on PDA with BN.
- Will RDS O-i-C's be in development roles or fully competent? If any developmental role, will this have any bearing on the vital role of Safety Officers if they have not been successful in ITOP and/or ADC?

## **Other comments received from the Fire Brigade's Union**

Due to the cautious approach that SFRS has taken to IRMP over the initial years Shropshire has guided itself to a position where; because the changes that have been made have been sensible ones, in year 6 Shropshire is now able to show that risk is being managed countywide. The Service is now in a position where the individual identification and management of Risk can be assessed by each station and personnel at each station are empowered to interact with regard to provision of cover, training and equipment.

The FBU gave a very detailed response to the Fire Authority's IRMP Presentations 2009/10 for which the Authority is grateful. A copy of their response will be made available to all Fire Authority Members and members of the public as part of the consultation report presented to the Fire Authority on 17th December.

## **Fire Authority's response to other comments made**

The Fire Authority notes the all comments received.

The Fire Authority wished to put on record their thanks to all of its Staff and the Fire Brigades Union for their constructive input and involvement in the IRMP process.





**The Shropshire Fire Brigades Union Response to  
Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's Integrated  
Risk Management Plan 2009/10**



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## **Introduction**

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) represents approximately 48,000 members covering all ranks and duty systems in the fire & rescue service including approximately 4,000 officers, 11,500 firefighters working the retained duty system and 1,500 firefighters (control). This represents over 85% of all uniformed operational personnel currently serving in the fire & rescue services in the UK.

As we have pointed out in previous years of IRMP, the Fire Brigades Union in Shropshire fully supports the principle of risk-based fire service planning and the concept of risk based emergency cover provision.

This stance is also supported by The Fire Brigades Union nationally when the position was formalised in the national policy position adopted at the Fire Brigades Union Annual Conference in 2002.

Risk-based response planning methodology, and the system of measurement which underpins it, should be the same throughout England to allow valid comparisons between brigades on a like-for-like basis, and to satisfy communities that like-risk will receive a like-response irrespective of location in England.

## **Communities and Local Government (CLG)**

Last year we point out that there was little evidence that CLG has given sufficient, if any, guidance on IRMP since its inception 6 years ago. Guidance from a competent and central source is needed so that the collective national response is capable of providing a coordinated intervention response locally and nationally.

The CLG have dressed up the National Framework to give the pretence that they are providing some coordination, but of course, rather than produce any substantial guidance which is desperately needed, they have tried to justify existing “modernisations” (many of which in our view will be detrimental to the Service) which do not seem to give a coherent direction. The most obvious example of this is the contradictory approach to the continuing project to regionalise local Emergency Fire Control Rooms to Regional Control Centres whilst decentralising local fire service provision standards. This does not show an homogenised approach and nor does it inspire confidence in the direction that the CLG is leading Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs).

## **The National Framework**

In the National Framework, the CLG have used terminology such as:





*“Two of the key priorities for Fire and Rescue Authorities set out in this National Framework are ensuring that public expectations of Fire and Rescue Authorities are met and ensuring delivery of an enhanced resilience capability. There has been a huge expansion in resilience activity within the Fire and Rescue Service in recent years which is set to continue. In response, Communities and Local Government has made significant investment in Fire and Rescue Service resilience with a major provision of resources and training, as part of its ongoing Fire Resilience Programme.”*

This gives the impression that the entire Fire Service is striving forward together to achieve a better service under their direction. However they also point out:

*“Fire and Rescue Authorities [should be] working together and with other agencies to respond effectively to regional or national emergencies. These are the right expectations for the Government and for the public.”*

And;

*“The Framework also point out that recent large scale incidents have re-emphasised the importance of well integrated services across authority boundaries and the evidence for the potential gains in effectiveness and efficiency. In taking forward development of their IRMPs, authorities need to ensure their plans and operational practices are properly integrated with their neighbours and consider the joint resources they have available to respond to incidents of every type and size.”*

The language here gives the impression that CLG have been at the forefront directing FRSS. This sadly is not the case.

It also tells FRSS what is expected of them, but, in counties where funding has been significantly reduced; how does the CLG expect affected Fire Authorities to be able to continue to provide the service to their public and also contribute to any national response when required?

In those services in the country, where IRMP has had to be used as a method of justifying cuts to their intervention provision, the public must also expect a worse service both locally and nationally. This is an obvious concern of The Fire Brigades Union on behalf of the UK public, but also from the Fire Brigades Union's point of view, the result of such cuts to frontline services will lead to our members Health and Safety being put at risk in terms of being able to carry out emergency tasks in a safe manner.

In previous years, we have indicated the importance of the limit of the “lag” between the attendances of appliances at incidents as described in the FBU's Critical Attendance Standard (CAST) system analysis. We have also tried to make clear the importance of not allowing Firefighters to attend incidents without adequate resources (speed and weight of attack)

*“It is essential to avoid situations which could motivate or pressurise fire-fighters to act unsafely in the interests of saving life”*

Review of Standards of Emergency Cover



## **Statistics**

Whilst the CLG (as would be expected) concentrate heavily on statistics that show an improving service such as falling death and fire rates (which are undoubtedly successes), there is still a continuing need to maintain intervention services. This is illustrated in the statistics below that do not appear to be widely circulated by the CLG.

Figures (based on answers to parliamentary questions) show that:

- Over 300 (322) people a week are being rescued from fires and road vehicle crashes by the fire service across the UK.
- Over 100 (114) people a month are being rescued from fires and vehicle crashes by fire crews across the West Midlands region.
- More than 4,000 (4,024) people were rescued from fires in the West Midlands region in the period 1997-2006, the ten most recent years for which data is available. Over 300 (318) were rescued in 2006 alone. For this period, Shropshire fire crews rescued in excess of 200 (203).
- Over 9,000 (9,732) people involved in road traffic collisions were rescued by fire services in the West Midlands region in the 10 years to 2005/6. In 2005/6 alone, fire crews rescued over 1,000 people (1,068), a 36 per cent rise on 1996/7. For the ten year period Shropshire fire crews rescued just under 900 (882).

The Fire Brigades Union believe that these official figures are an underestimate as they do not include thousands of other rescues performed by the UK's fire services at other emergencies including the 2007 floods, other water rescues and those rescued from the London Underground on 7/7, nor figures on rescues from a range of other 999 incidents. The figures also exclude members of the public evacuated with the assistance of the fire service for their own safety or assisted in other ways. they also assume that one person only is rescued in every road traffic collision involving persons rescued even though these Government figures include incidents involving multiple vehicles with one or more passengers.

It has also become more evident in recent years that Fire and Rescue Services have further developed into a critical all-round local emergency rescue service. Our emergency rescue role now extends much further into rope rescues, water rescues, building collapse, terrorist attacks, and a range of many other emergency incidents.

## **unusual incidents**



Apart from incidents caused by increasing weather extremes, FRSs have been facing a greater diversity of incidents and perhaps a greater expectation from the public that the Fire Service is most equipped to deal with most emergencies.

Some examples in just the last few months include:-

Fire crews were called to assist the ambulance service to move a bariatric patient near Falkirk. At a similar incident in West Yorkshire in October, Firefighters assisted ambulance crews to move a 47 stone woman (in an emergency situation) to an ambulance. This included creating an exit to allow egress.

Two builders (one with a fractured skull) were rescued the Fire Service from a forgotten sewer shaft at a derelict Sheffield school.

In Southampton, Firefighters rescued a man who fell into a culvert in September.

### **Global weather/resilience**

In last year's response to IRMP we highlighted many concerns regarding the effects of global warming causing weather extremes and how this affects the community and the fire service. Most obvious amongst those was the increased risk of flooding. There have been occurrences of major flooding again in the last 12 months, but thankfully not to the extent of 2007 (it now seems accepted that this particular weather extreme is expected to occur on a much more regular basis).

The FBU nationally produced a report into the floods of 2007 and in Shropshire the FBU submitted a report to the Service on how the flooding incidents impacted on SF&RS and our members.

As shown in the Service's IRMP presentation this year, there still remains some uncertainty surrounding the allocation of responsibility and funding for flooding incidents (see below under Water Rescue Provision).

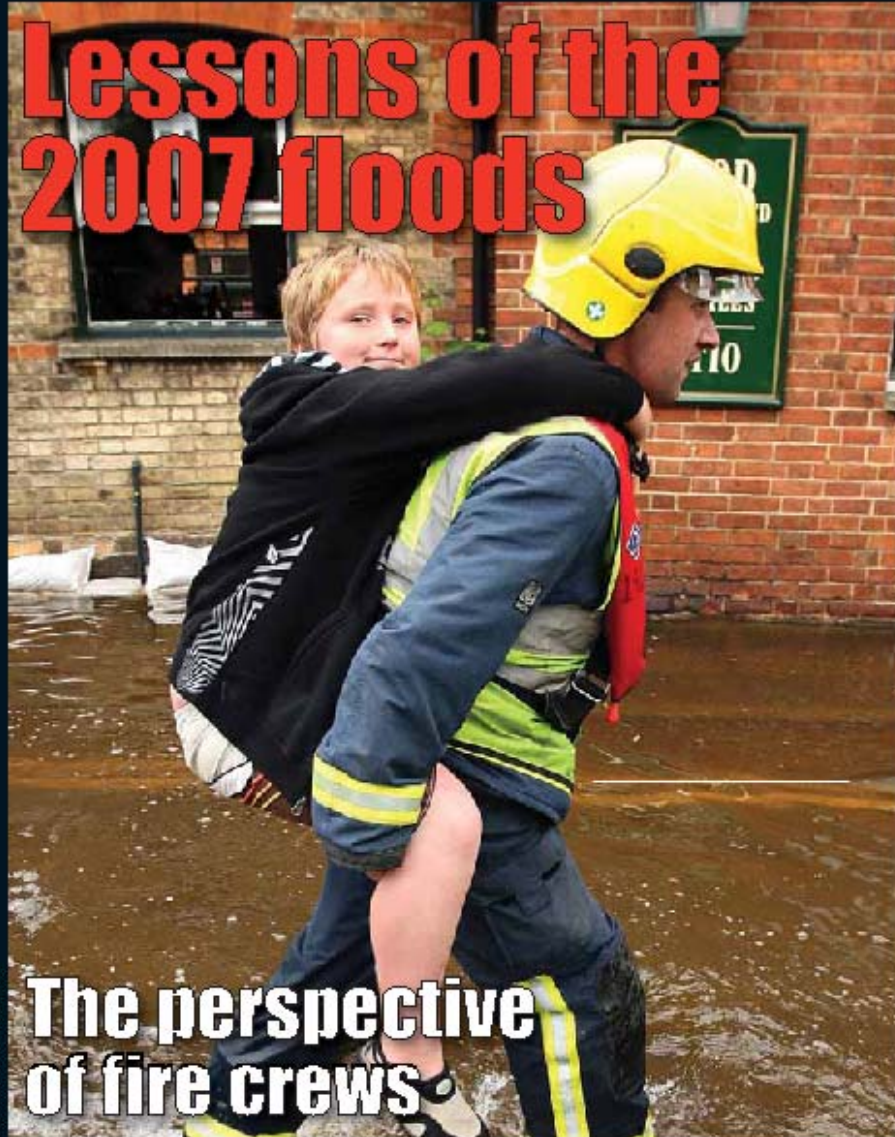
However weather extremes continue to provide hazardous incidents which are likely to become more regular occurrences. The other (as well as flooding) main types of severe weather that need to be planned for at national level include storms and gales, low temperatures, dense fog, heat wave and drought.



The Fire Brigades Union



# Lessons of the 2007 floods



PETER MCARDONAGHY / IMAGES

## The perspective of fire crews

A report by the Fire Brigades Union

June 2008



## Storms and Gales

The most significant storms in recent decades were those of 16 October 1987 and 25 January 1990. More recently, a storm battered many parts of the UK on 18 January 2007, with gusts of wind up to 77mph recorded at Heathrow. This caused 9 deaths and widespread damage to trees and buildings across the UK, along with power disruption.

## Heat Waves

By definition a heatwave is regarded as when temperatures reach 32°C or more. The most recent significant widespread heatwave was August 1990. The only other occasions when at least half of England experienced 32°C were in 1976 and 1911. Although the hot summer of 2003 is estimated to have resulted in 2045 attributable deaths, mainly among vulnerable populations. Since then, the Heat Health Watch system<sup>7</sup> has been introduced and during the hot weather of July 2006 significantly fewer (680) attributable deaths were recorded.

Of course, from FRSs point of view, heatwave and drought have a direct correlation to the number of heathland fires and therefore has a direct impact on fire service resources and to the welfare of our members.

In recent years the fire service has had to deal with both large numbers of heathland fires (eg 2003, 2005 and 2006) or major flooding (2000, 2007 and 2008) and sometimes both.

Some examples of extreme weather causing difficult incidents for fire services to deal with in the last 12 months are:-

- Three teenagers were rescued from a river in Coventry
- One teenager dies and another rescued from flash floods in Oxfordshire in June
- 8000 lightning strikes cause 800 wild fires in California in one day in June
- Flash flooding in Dorset and Somerset in May
- Chaos in Merseyside as one is killed on M57 and John Lennon airport forced to close during flash floods in May

## **Fatalities Campaign**

With the amount of important intervention work that frontline Fire Crews are undertaking and the greater diversity of incidents and expectation from public and Government alike, the Fire Brigades Union nationally is concerned that there is a growing gulf between the CLG and FRSs.





Since the disbanding of the CFBAC, there is concern that there has become a lack of direction and guidance to Fire Authorities (FAs) which should be readily available.

### **Guidance**

In June 07, following concerns raised by the FBU, Andrew Dismore MP asked the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if she would place in the House of Commons library copies of all valid operational guidance issued to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

In the written parliamentary answer (27 June 2007) from the then fire minister Angela Smith ( the minister responsible for the Fire Service has changed twice since June 07) that the Department was “currently in the process of reviewing all operational guidance issued to the fire and rescue service” and that would likely “result in the review, re-issue or withdrawal of some of the considerable body of existing guidance.” The minister did give the reassurance that recently issued operational guidance was available on the Communities and Local Government website.

However, this operational guidance is not available on the CLG website. Instead the website claims that “a project is underway to review all existing guidance relating to operational, technical and professional matters.”

### **Centre of Excellence**

For more than two years discussions and consultations have taken place around The Centre of Excellence, a national body that potentially could have plugged the current vacuum in research and policy development that The Fire Brigades Union believes has led to weaknesses in the fire service in a number of key risk-critical areas such as the training of personnel, risk and task analysis, operational policy and procedure, and data collation and analysis.

This body could have provided a much needed central ‘brain’ to help ensure local Integrated Risk Management Plans properly protected the public and frontline fire crews. But due to a reluctance to fund it centrally, The Centre of Excellence has now become a missed opportunity that will probably never resurface.

### **Campaign**

Therefore The Fire Brigades Union has launched a campaign, due to concerns outlined above, to highlight and remedy the rising number of Firefighter fatalities. The Fire Brigades Union sees the lack of leadership and guidance from Government on safety critical areas as the cause.



The Union is calling for a national Fire and Rescue Service body that will take responsibility for ensuring that the findings and recommendations from fatal or other serious incidents are considered and implemented across the UK.

This body would be tasked with keeping adequate records of incidents involving the deaths and serious injury of Firefighters at national level, and it should also be responsible for developing and agreeing safety critical national guidance based on the lessons learned from deaths and from other serious incidents and ensure that local Integrated Risk Management Plans provide an effective emergency response whilst taking into account Firefighter safety, training and resources necessary to provide the adequate response.

### **Improved Guidance**

The Fire Brigades Union is looking to press for Government through this campaign to provide guidance to Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) when developing integrated risk management plans (IRMPs).

The Union will also be pressing for a better balance to be restored between community safety initiatives and operational intervention and will demand greater emphasis on training for operational emergency response and the technical knowledge that is required to support such response.

Through the campaign The Fire Brigades Union is hoping to achieve two objectives. These are:

- Improve Emergency Planning – The Fire Brigades Union is concerned nationally that several FRSs Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) do not adequately take into account Firefighter safety, training and resource needs. Therefore the Fire Brigades Union is looking for improvement in the guidance given to Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) when developing IRMPs.
- Invest in Emergency Response –The Fire Brigades Union is concerned that among some policy makers there has been a campaign to undermine and denigrate the importance of Emergency Intervention (see response times below). The FBU fully supports the drive to prevent fires through education and community engagement, but responding to fires and other emergencies remains at the heart of the Fire Service. Failing to take account of this fact threatens to further endanger the safety of Firefighters. Therefore The Fire Brigades Union's campaign is for this to be recognised and taken into account in all policy development at a national and local level, so that a balance can be redressed in those FRS where frontline services continue to be downgraded.

### **Response Times**

The National Audit Office have shown figures to confirm that overall death rates due to fires are falling. However, the time taken by Fire Services to respond to emergency calls is rising. While 46 per cent of fires were responded to within five minutes in 2001, the



figure fell to 37 per cent in 2006. For England, response times to primary fires have increased by 16 per cent.

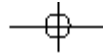
Amazingly, it has been suggested that around 80 per cent of fire deaths have already happened at the point at which the Fire Service is called and therefore the reduction in response times does not equate to a worse service, and that slower responses to emergencies were not a matter of grave concern! It is against this type of ill informed opinion that has forced The Fire Brigades Union to embark on the campaign.

### **Attacks on Fire fighters**

This is another area of concern for the safety of our members at work that the Fire Brigades Union has done much research into in recent years and is still a continuing problem as highlighted in the FBU's document of February 2008 "Easy Targets? Tackling Attacks on Fire Crews in the UK."







The Fire Brigades Union



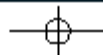
# Easy targets?

**Tackling attacks  
on fire crews  
in the UK**



A report by the Labour Research Department (LRD)  
for the Fire Brigades Union

February 2008



In the document, there still appears to be a problem in this area nationally and Shropshire is not immune to that trend. The number of attacks is reported to be running at around 50 a week nationally; this figure had been 40 a week in 2005.

The Document also found that under-reporting may suggest that the figure could be as high as 120 attacks a week.

The attacks included scaffolding poles being thrown through windscreens of fire engines; crews being attacked with concrete blocks, bricks and bottles; being shot at; equipment tampered with or stolen; direct physical assaults on fire crews; and equipment being urinated on.

Specific examples in the last 12 months include a Firefighter who suffered a broken arm in an attack on Teeside and in Nottinghamshire, an RDS Firefighter who was seriously assaulted. The case in Nottinghamshire is even more disturbing as the Firefighter is unable to return to his duties and has lost his primary employment as a miner as result of his injuries. This is compounded by the present problem regarding ill health injury provision in the pension scheme where an injured Firefighter who is unfit to continue as a Firefighter and where no other role can be found under redeployment; is under threat of losing both jobs and left with no income.

In the last 12 months Shropshire has experienced attacks on firefighters in the Harlescott area of Shrewsbury involving fireworks being shot at the fire appliance and also in Wellington.

Of course the resultant effect of Firefighters being hampered to such an extent that they cannot carry out their duty will mean that the public will not receive the emergency service they require; leaving them at risk.

In some areas the increasing use of CCTV (most camera footage is unsuitable for use in prosecutions) and police riding in appliances have left the public with the impression that Firefighters are part of law enforcement and are therefore fair targets. It is important that FRS maintain the neutrality of their profession away from law enforcement.

Many Services are working in the community to try to address some of the underlying causes. There are many effective community, youth and education programmes run by Fire and Rescue Services, which have integrated the issue of attacks on fire crews into their schemes of work and teaching strategies.

There is an opportunity whilst we have now embarked on a school CFS programme in Shropshire that we also capitalize on that opportunity to raise the profile of the Fire Service and also sew the seeds of future recruitment to the Fire Service from all areas of the community.



## Shropshire

### Integrating risk management

In year one of IRMP, in our response to SF&RS draft action plan we described the methodology of IRMP and how it should be put into practice as:

*“We believe that before any changes are proposed or implemented in the area of intervention as a result of any proposals to alter activity in the areas of prevention and/or protection, the outcomes of such additional activity, must clearly demonstrate proven and sustainable long -term benefits to the communities that we serve.*

*We are concerned that in a number of areas changes are being proposed without sufficient research to demonstrate whether there are benefits to be obtained.”*

And in year 2:

*“Due to the way in which the ODPM has instigated IRMPs for the Fire Service, as it seems with everything else that they do, IRMP is a process thrown at the Fire Service expecting the Fire Service to cope and produce the definitive article at the drop of a hat. What is actually needed is greater time, resources and underpinning of the system to ensure that it is applied correctly.*

*The method being used is an iterative method. This would be the correct method had the full Risk Assessment already been carried out and the Risk Management already applied. The iterative method in other words should be used to fine tune a plan and not in the initial stages of the plan. By starting with the iterative method and only dealing with restricted areas at a time, means that assumptions need to be made; that the rest of the model of Fire Cover is perfect. The flaw in this methodology is that any actions taken in isolation from the whole brigade will have a knock on effect into other areas, without those other areas being fully assessed.”*

An appropriate analogy of the situation that FRSs faced in the early days of IRMP would be a stranger entering a worker's office, disturbing everything on the desk, throwing piles of paperwork in the bin and wiping everything off the computer, and then expecting the worker to continue their work without any loss in production.

Due to the cautious approach that SFRS has taken to IRMP over the initial years Shropshire has guided itself to a position where; because the changes that have been made have been sensible ones, in year 6 Shropshire is now able to show that risk is being Managed countywide. The Service is now in a position where the individual identification and management of Risk can be assessed by each station and personnel at each station are empowered to interact with regard to provision of cover, training and equipment.

The involvement of all personnel in the process armed with the tools (GIS and SFWEB), puts Shropshire in the ideal position to carry IRMP through to the 3 year plan strategy.



Observing the position that other Services find themselves in (where after making wide ranging changes in the first years of IRMP; they have since had to carry out continuous reviews of their earlier decisions and are still requiring further revision) by comparison Shropshire can point to its IRMPs and show real progression based on sound principles.

The Fire Brigades Union has had a particular concern in the last couple of years where risk information appeared to be either out of date or not available to Incident Commanders. This has been identified and is being acted on through better contingency planning and 7 ii d inspections.

### **Last year's update**

#### Redevelopment of Shrewsbury

Now that the decision to stay at Shrewsbury has been made; one of the drivers in the presentation last year was that training facilities were severely hampered due to the demand of car parking at the site. We would hope that this is central to the plans of the future of the site now being drawn up.

It also seems that the use of the Telford site is being brought in to consideration. There is obviously a logic to look at all buildings in the service as a whole, and we trust that the Service will continue to keep the FBU and all affected employees up to date with any developments and proposals.

#### Officer Resilience

This project has been completed and the Fire Brigades Union is pleased that the Service has implemented this using Station Managers on the recognised Grey Book Flexi system rather than creating a different and complicated system which was initially alluded to in last year's plan. This has provided better working conditions for our officer members and also better welfare provision for Firefighters attending incidents.

#### Cultural Audit

The FBU has been heavily involved in working through the outcomes of the Cultural Audit and would like to think that in conjunction with the Service have helped to address some of the important issues raised by the Cultural Audit. However, the Cultural Audit should not be seen as the end of process; there is a need to continue to make sure that SFRS provides an equitable workplace free from discrimination, bullying and harassment for its entire staff.



## On going reviews

### Small Fires Unit (SFU)

Firstly, all Fire and rescue services should have assessed their appliances (including small vehicles) and equipment as well as operational procedures with regard to the risk of attacks on fire crews (see above).

We have been watching with interest the development of these vehicles in other Services particularly in Merseyside and Cheshire, but it is in North Yorkshire where they have caused the greatest controversy in the last 12 months. A nine month pilot using 8 vans has been trialled. It is evident that North Yorkshire are looking at these vehicles due to severe funding issues and not based on Risk Management.

North Yorkshire F&RS hoped that all eight vans will eventually be used to tackle road crashes, small blazes and car fires. This would create serious safety issues for our members and would hope that Shropshire does not find itself, in the future, with the necessity of looking at such drastic measures.

We are aware now that future purchases of SFUs in Shropshire are looking doubtful following the Chief Fire Officer's report to the Fire Authority in October. This report suggests the continued use of the Land Rover at Tweedale and to update the other Land Rover based at Market Drayton to the same specification.

The pilot in Shropshire also considered the difficult access issues in areas of Ironbridge and Broseley and the feasibility of combining the SFU with a Limited Access Appliance (LAA) and Landrover pump (L4P).

It is clear that the L4P can be useful for some "nuisance" calls and possibly during spate conditions; however the FBU is pleased that SFRS has thoroughly assessed the viability of these vehicles and concluded that there is no cost benefit to proceed with the purchase of these vehicles.

### Aerial Provision

The IRMP presentation with regard to Aerial Provision starts with a slide with a Combined Aerial Rescue Pump (CARP) in operation at an incident. Obviously the project will research all options and recommend the best value for Shropshire, but it would seem that a CARP is very much in the forefront of the Service's mind.

Unsurprisingly, the FBU has concerns with many aspects of these vehicles. In the South West, aerial provision and CARPs have had much media attention due to the incident at the Penhallow Hotel. With pressure on funding threatening to reduce numbers of Firefighters in that region, CARPs and aerial provision has become a very contentious issue in the South West.



In Suffolk a CARP had to be sent back to suppliers after it was found to be too heavy. The £400,000 CARP was also found to be in danger of toppling over.

Merseyside and Strathclyde Fire Services have also had difficulties with their CARPs. Manoeuvrability, reliability, dual function machines (what happens if one aspect fails?), compromised ability (each aspect is not equivalent to dedicated appliances), reduced equipment and difficulty reaching heavy equipment when the vehicle is being used as an aerial are just some of the difficulties.

The positioning of a pump compared to the positioning of an aerial have different operational considerations to be borne in mind. Also any aerial capability is always restricted by incline which will have a severe limiting effect in positioning the pump.

There would also be another issue in terms of staffing a CARP; which is the availability of trained operators especially at protracted incidents. This has already caused crewing difficulties at large fires in Shropshire with two dedicated aerial appliances, we believe that problem can only be exasperated with a CARP.

SFRS have in previous years, as part of the IRMP process, endorsed the FBU's Critical Attendance STandard (CAST) analysis. The task analysis under the CAST system shows that crewing of CARPs must be a minimum of 6. We would expect that SFRS also see the crewing of CARPs as a minimum of 6.

Due to these numerous difficulties outline above; the FBU nationally have commissioned a report into CARPs. We will be happy to share our finding with SFRS when the report is completed.

Aerial appliances are expensive vehicles, but are being used more frequently as firefighters use safer methods for working at height. There has also been a severe cut in the number of Aerial appliances both nationally and regionally in recent years and therefore Shropshire is possibly in a position where it may need to keep a self sufficient Aerial capability. This may lead to a conclusion that the need remains for a dedicated appliance rather than a compromise machine.

## Water Rescue Provision

Due to the dichotomy of opinion at a national level between the Pitt Review and the CLG Flooding Review that surrounds this issue, SFRS is reluctant to commit too heavily in this area financially, and this is understandable. It is probable that, unless another incident of the scale of the floods last year is repeated, the national direction on this will remain rudderless. However, we are aware that SFRS continues to commit to the provision of SRT training for our personnel and the provision of a boat for water rescue. Of course, the realms of flooding incidents are not necessarily the same as water rescue; which is where the waters can become somewhat muddied.

Occurrences of inland flooding (hopefully Shropshire will not have to deal with tidal flooding!) is likely to increase over the coming years due to rising temperatures and sea





levels, and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events (see above). Inland flooding includes river flooding and surface water flooding (caused by excess rainfall) and as they can and do occur simultaneously which is a significant risk in Shropshire.

There are many issues in Shropshire which will still require attention concerning equipment such as the rescue path, training provision and crewing arrangements. We know that this is part of an ongoing review and The Fire Brigades Union are happy to be involved in that process.

#### Wellington /TCAT Development

This is an opportunity which SFRS cannot afford to miss if the all aspects of the development fall in favour of the Service.

One of the concerns that the FBU had during the presentation of the IRMP is the artist impression and plans of the future building. It is noticeable that there is an apparent lack of training facilities, no provision of parking, difficulty of access for RDS responding to calls, difficulty of access for appliances and a dubious notion of compatibility in respect of shared facilities (where it widely appears to be believed that the appliance bay can serve another function as a gym, for example).

The FBU has already raised these concerns with the management of SFRS due to the apparent acceleration of the development when the plans being considered by the Learning Skills Council. The FBU has been assured by SFRS that the designers are fully aware of our requirements which are fully embedded into the specifications of the development.

#### Fire cover review

After the Fire Cover Reviews that have taken place in Telford and Shrewsbury, the rest of Shropshire has now been assessed and SFRS has justified that it needs all its stations where they are. This is not wholly surprising to the FBU because although it was known that there were flaws in the old Standards of Fire Cover and that they needed to be updated; they were based on certain risk logic. As with many initiatives to “modernise” the Fire Service in the UK, instead of evolving new methodology from the knowledge already possessed, the Government, through various departments has insisted on revolutionising vast swathes of Fire Service policy. Therefore, after six years of desperately analysing the risks and resources in Shropshire; the conclusion is that Shropshire’s provision is reasonably accurate. What it has provided is an identification of opportunities that can be exploited at those stations where there is lower activity levels in comparison to other stations. The opportunity is that other needs and provisions of the Service, such as specialist water provision, RTC, Incident Command, and large animal rescue, can be spread more evenly around the county.



This will provide a homogenised approach to resources, where appliances of various types and their personnel are positioned where they are needed.

However, as with all good opportunities there must be a realistic approach to its implementation and future running; and here the consideration must be training and maintenance of competence.

The FBU in Shropshire agree that redistributing appliances around the county as they have is a better use of resources and will provide a better service to the public of Shropshire. We are also aware that SFRS have shown great commitment to the Retained Duty System (RDS) staff in terms of greater support through Retained Support Officers (RSOs) and greater training provision, but this commitment must be maintained to support all stations where specialist appliances are allocated.

### **Reginal Control Centres (RCCs)**

An IRMP response would not be complete without addressing the issue of Regional Control Centres.

The FBU's opposition to the regionalisation of Emergency Fire Control is well known. That opposition is based around exorbitant unnecessary costs, a diminished service delivery and a belief that the resilience of RCC will actually be less than the resilience provided by the current system.

Notwithstanding the above, and although the responsibility of the function of the Emergency Fire Control Room will be discharged to the LACC, the public of Shropshire will hold SFRS responsible for its intervention cover, which includes the ability to mobilise appliances correctly.

The FBU nationally has already raised concerns over the Governments poor record on large scale IT projects similar to the RCC project. Another example occurred in August this year, when a hardware fault collapsed the London Ambulance control room for a twelve hour period. This is the latest in a long line of examples of IT failures that have caused chaos.

The question for SFRS is; if the RCC does fail for whatever reason, what contingencies will the Service provide? Will the public of Shropshire accept that this function has been discharged and is the responsibility of the LACC? There is a strong possibility of a vehement media outcry if the RCC fails to perform its duty correctly, which potentially, will be directed toward SFRS and the Fire Authority.





## **Training**

The service has continued to put greater emphasis on training and operational competence. There are more large scale exercises taking place as well as greater time allocated to training in normal working hours. There has also been a Service wide operational assurance assessment taking place.

## **Assessment Development Centres (ADCs)**

We are pleased that the service has addressed the issues which we raised in last year's response; namely that of operational testing of managing incidents in the supervisory stage of the ADC process by including practical and theoretical firefighting tests.

This is the step at which a Firefighter discernibly changes role to that of a manager. The ADC process at all levels had clearly accounted for various management aspects but had overlooked the management of operational incidents. The Situational Resilience exercise in the ADC is no substitute for risk critical operational testing.

However, although pleased that this aspect is now included, we feel that the process this year could be streamlined somewhat. It is evident that with extra testing taking place the logistics and timespan of the process have become more onerous. We would like to see the system reviewed after this first year and some investigation given to amalgamating some of the parts of the tests, with a view to shortening the length of the process and also to lessen the number of event days. Can the new practical and theoretical parts of the process be somehow amalgamated with the original ADC parts?

There are other parts of the ADC tests that should now be fine tuned as the process is beginning to embed itself into the Fire Service. One such aspect is the time critical pressure that is applied in all parts of the tests. Is this necessary?

For example, in part one of the ADC, the Situational Judgement tests are multiple choice and need to be done quickly reflecting the need for prompt decision making. This same time pressure is applied to the second part of the test, where in depth analysis is required to manage the development of a team, create business cases, construct letters or web sites and other detailed work. Surely the emphasis here should be quality of the work and not what can be rushed in a relatively short space of time.

## **Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) Centre**

It is a concern to the FBU in Shropshire, that there appears to be a tendency in parts of the country to return to Fire Service Exams, or at least move away from the IPDS principles. As central funding for IPDS has disappeared, it may be that the system is in a precarious position. This must also be a concern for the Service. We can see that the system still needs further development (and arguably always should) but a wholesale change would not benefit the Service neither locally nor nationally.



## **Conclusion**

Much of the frustration for The Fire Brigades Union lies with the national direction of the Fire Service. There is a lack of clear leadership, with the CLG providing hindrance in its expectations of the Fire Service rather than solutions in terms of proper guidance and leadership.

The Fire Brigades Union believes that leadership should be restored by the re introduction of an advisory body along the lines of the CFBAC, where historically the Fire Service has evolved with sound and good practices.

As for Shropshire, an island of sanity in a whirling sea of unnecessary and unproductive change, has left the public of Shropshire with probably the best performing FRS in the UK. This is due to a cautionary and sensible approach to IRMP using new information and ideas without losing sight of traditional values.

SFRS is well placed to enter the three year IRMP phase and The Fire Brigades Union in Shropshire hope to work closely with the Service to complete the ongoing reviews to mutual satisfaction.

