

CABINET - 16 MARCH 2010

FIRE AUTHORITY INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN 2010-11

**Report by the Director for Community Safety & Shared Services
and Chief Fire Officer**

Introduction

1. This report proposes a number of projects to be included within the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management (IRMP) – Action Plan for the fiscal year 2010-11. The proposal summarises areas where the Service's Strategic Leadership Team believe service improvements will be achieved. To meet the requirements of the IRMP process each proposal must be supported by robust evidence validating both their inclusion and contribution to improved community safety and/or firefighter safety. Similarly, each proposal must be cognisant of the prevailing economic constraints.
2. These proposals, if approved by Cabinet, will be included in the final version of the IRMP Action Plan 2010-11. The projects will be monitored through established performance management systems and reviewed every quarter through the Project Implementation Team (PIT). The progress of the projects will be reported every quarter to the Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities. An EQIA has already been completed for project 1 due to the amount of details research undertaken. All of the other projects will have an EQIA completed as the projects are progressed. If any projects offer any major implications concerning equality and inclusion the issues will be taken to the internal officer groups for decision and recommendations to Cabinet Member if appropriate.
3. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 received Royal Assent on 22 July 2004. Part 3, Chapter 21, of this legislation requires the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework to which Fire Authorities must have regard when discharging their functions.
4. The Secretary of State initially published the latest Fire and Rescue National Framework in May 2008. The purpose of the framework is to provide strategic direction from central government while ensuring that authorities continue to make local decisions. The framework sets out the government's objectives for the Fire and Rescue Service and what fire and rescue authorities should do to achieve these objectives.
5. The 2008-11 Fire and Rescue National Framework requires each fire and rescue authority to produce a publicly available IRMP covering at least a three-year time span which:

- Is regularly reviewed and revised and reflects up-to-date risk information and evaluation of service delivery outcomes.
 - Has regard to the risk analyses completed by Local and Regional Resilience Forums including those reported in external Community Risk Registers (CRRs) and internal risk registers to ensure that civil and terrorist contingencies are captured in their IRMP.
 - Reflects effective consultation during its development and at all review stages with representatives of all sections of the community and stakeholders.
 - Demonstrates how prevention, protection and response activities will be best used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities in a cost effective way.
 - Provides details of how fire and rescue authorities deliver their objectives and meet the needs of communities through working with partners.
 - Has undergone an effective equality impact assessment process.
6. Fire and Rescue Authorities should review the effectiveness of 'cross-border' integration arrangements with neighbouring authorities and set these out appropriately in their IRMPs. Such reviews may best be carried out jointly and Regional Management Boards provide a potential forum for this to be taken forward.
7. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority published its strategic IRMP in April 2008, providing the strategic direction for the next three to five years. The strategic document is subjected to annual review and updated and amended as required. The current strategic IRMP requires no amendment for the fiscal year 2010-11 and will be refreshed as a new five year strategic document for the fiscal year 2013-14.
8. The projects proposed for the action plan 2010-11 have been subjected to consultation for 12 weeks starting from the 31 October 2009. As has occurred in previous years, the plan was published electronically via an introductory letter that provided an overview of the IRMP proposal and a link to the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) consultation portal where further information was available. During this period Oxfordshire County Council Fire Authority consulted with the following stakeholders either electronically or via hard copy letter asking for stakeholder comments including the opportunity to complete the IRMP questionnaire:
- Over 120 organisations who represent individuals or groups as part of our approach under the Disability Discrimination Act.
 - All Elected Members from Oxfordshire County Council.
 - Our 6 neighbouring fire and rescue services.
 - All 24 internal OFRS fire stations and all Officers and managers.
 - Over 300 parish councillors.
 - Over 240 district councillors.
 - 14 MPs, MEPs or Members of the House of Lords who reside in Oxfordshire.

- Over 230 business or business interest groups.
9. Presentations of a detailed nature were also given to the following groups:
- OCC Leader and Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities.
 - OCC Elected Members whose constituency is in either the Abingdon and Didcot areas.
 - OCC Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee.
 - South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse District Council Elected Members.
 - Abingdon Town Council Elected Members.
 - Chief Executive of Oxford City.
 - All F&RS personnel who are potentially affected by this proposal.
 - Fire Brigades Union (FBU).
 - Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Managers.
10. In addition to the above because of the interest generated by proposal 1 (review of Didcot and Abingdon Fire Stations), it was agreed that two public meetings should be organised in the Abingdon and Didcot areas. These were held on the evenings of the 11 January 2010 at the Civic Centre in Didcot (attended by 80 members of the public) and at the Guildhall in Abingdon on the 15 January 2010 (attended by 83 members of the public). Abingdon and Didcot have population levels of approximately 36000 and 23450.
11. In all, over 3,100 responses were received either by e-mail, consultation questionnaire or by letter. The responses were as follows:
- OCC consultation questionnaire – 21 people registered and completed the questionnaire.
 - E-mails – 18. Six raised objections to project 1. Two of the 6 E-mails were from Abingdon and Didcot Town Councils.
 - Standard letters (taken from the FBU website) – 3,129 who oppose project 1.
 - Other letters - One letter supporting project 1 has been received from West Oxfordshire District Council via a Councillor whose division is covered predominantly by RDS fire engines.
 - A part of our approach to customer excellence OFRS sent acknowledgement replies to the addresses on the FBU standard letters. Over 20 have been sent back to OFRS indicating 'not known at this address' so therefore the names were fictitious.
 - Additionally, following acknowledgement replies to the addresses on the FBU sponsored letter addressees, approximately 32 members of the public complained to OFRS via telephone stating they had not signed a petition or written to the Fire Authority using the FBU letters objecting to project 1. They requested that their objections be removed and their names be deleted from the database.

12. A further breakdown of consultation is provided later in this paper complete with management responses.
13. The Senior Management from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has written to all respondents and these responses will be made available on the internet for public access in April 2010.
14. The following items summarise the projects for inclusion in the IRMP Action Plan for the fiscal year 2010-11.

Project 1: Day crewing review at Abingdon and Didcot Fire Stations

Objective:

15. To improve the overall balance of fire cover and resilience throughout the county through supporting the Retained Duty System (RDS) with wholetime (WT)/professional personnel on both a permanent and temporary basis through a revised duty system at Abingdon and Didcot Fire Stations.
16. This project will be led by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Public Responses:

17. In response to the questionnaire asking whether the project should be progressed, 21 people responded as follows - 81% (17 people) said no, 14% (3) said yes and 5% (1) said they didn't know.
18. Due to the scale of written responses to this project, the results have been annexed separately (see Annex 1). However, a bullet point summary of stakeholder feedback/concerns is provided below:
 - Acknowledgement of the correct principle of underpinning RDS stations and improving fire appliance availability.
 - The benefit of providing additional wholetime Watch Managers to RDS stations improving supervision and managerial support.
 - Concerns over extended response times at certain periods of the week in Abingdon and Didcot.
 - Concerns in using an Oxford fire appliance to supplement fire cover in Abingdon or Didcot at weekends.
 - Total reliance on RDS staff at certain periods over weekends in Abingdon and Didcot.
 - FBU's concerns in respect to firefighter safety.
 - The need to up-skill the RDS firefighters at Abingdon and Didcot.

Project 2: Special Appliance review including aerial rescue appliances and specialist rescue capability

Objective:

19. To review the specialist appliances within Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS), looking in particular at the locations and crewing. Also, identifying better working arrangements with neighbouring fire authorities with respect to the Fire Services Act Section 13/16 agreements concerning the Integrated Risk Management Plans of neighbouring services.
20. This project will be led by the Emergency Response Manager.

Public Responses:

21. In response to the questionnaire, 59% of respondents (10 people) said that we should review our special appliances, 24% (4) didn't, whilst 18% (3) didn't know.
22. Other responses questioned the need to undertake the review stating:
"We pay council tax to have our fire service to help us. Would we be relying on neighbouring counties to help us out if needed with specialist vehicles? I am sure they would not be happy and what if their help is unavailable?"

Management Response:

23. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service already have agreements with other fire and rescue services and without that mutual support the cost of fire and rescue would be significantly higher. These agreements are formalised in sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and OF&RS have an agreement with the six neighbouring brigades. It is essential that during any review of specialist appliances cognisance is taken of neighbouring F&RSs to ensure response is contemporary and cost effective.
24. *"If the Heavy Rescue Unit (HRU) comes under the umbrella of this review, how will the future crewing of this special appliance [project 1] provide an enhanced capability for Road Traffic Collisions in South Oxfordshire and incidents involving HGVs countywide?"*

Management Response:

25. If the proposal outlined in project 1 were to be approved, the HRU would still be crewed by competent, professional fire-fighters.
26. *"It depends if review means reduce - or whether review means re-look at and consider best options for residents/tax payers".*

Management Response:

27. The project is exactly as stated: we will examine our arrangements to make sure that they are adequate, accurate and correct.

Project 3: Use of operational staff to deliver our obligations under the Fire Safety Order

Objective:

28. Reducing risk within premises is an integral part of the overall community risk reduction process. To maximise this, it is proposed to utilise wholetime operational personnel in undertaking fire safety visits within suitable premises to give advice on reducing risk, gather appropriate risk data and assist organisations to comply with their legislative responsibilities.
29. This is based upon advice from the Chief Fire Officers Association via circular 2009/1015.
30. This project will be led by the Fire Protection Manager.

Public Response:

31. In response to the questionnaire, 59% (10 people) said yes, 18% (3) said no and 24% (4) said they didn't know.
32. *"Need to way up the benefits of using Ffs time in dealing with low risk premises against that of carrying out home fire risk assessments (HFRAs) and fire risk information as these have a far direct impact on safety."*

Management Response:

33. Operational staff have a finite amount of time available and since the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the role of operational personnel has changed in relation to fire safety inspections. Business and premises owners are expected to act more autonomously in respect of risk assessments, especially at low risk sites. Our risk information processes are becoming more sophisticated with the launch of a new data capture/record/review process which will lead to the lower risk premises being inspected less frequently.
34. Our approach to home fire risk assessment will continue to be targeted and specific as per our risk reduction programmes, offering a robust service where it is needed the most.
35. *"This is probably good, but I cannot help being sceptical when one of the county's stated aims is to reduce its workforce 10%"*

Management Response:

36. OFRS have no plans to reduce its workforce by 10%, in fact in 2010/11 the overall wholetime establishment will grow by four Watch Manager positions.
37. *"It is a good idea as long as it still allows time for proper operational training."*

Management Response:

38. Firefighter safety is paramount to any proposal we make and our commitment to that forms the infrastructure of our future planning. Inspections will not be carried out to the detriment of operational training.

Project 4: Review of co-responder arrangements with South Central Ambulance Service.

Objective:

39. To review the current arrangements whereby fire crews at specific sites respond to life threatening emergencies, such as heart attacks, in order to increase the resilience and opportunity to expand the provision of this "co-responding" service within rural communities in Oxfordshire.
40. The project will be led by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Public response:

41. In response to the questionnaire, 71% (12) people thought that this was a good idea, 12% (2) thought that it wasn't, whilst 18% (3) didn't know.
42. *"Are the fire services paying for ambulance/medical aid? Surely their sole role is to provide fire and rescue cover?"*
43. *"Needs addressing and in particular the equitable financing of the scheme."*
44. *"Surely additional recourses are needed too in order to facilitate this".*
45. *"Co-responder appears to be an important option to promoting life saving responses - but obviously needs to work within the commitments and resources available".*
46. *"Co-responding is a good idea, if all staff are properly trained and there is proper funding for it. Defibrillators should be carried on all frontline fire engines in case of a firefighter requiring first aid. Normally funding can be sorted to provide this type of equipment, therefore the cost to the fire service would be minimum."*
47. *"Co-responding should not rely on or utilise fire and rescue service vehicles or equipment. Once an engine has been committed to a co-responding shout, fire cover in that immediate area has been compromised as a result. The*

resources that should be available for fire and rescue purposes have been re-distributed to cover a shortfall in the ambulance service. Fire and rescue standards as a direct result will be reduced.”

48. *“With co-responding are we partly to blame for the reduction in Ambulance cover in these areas. Co-responders do a great job but with them in place we meet the attendance times that the Ambulance service should be meeting. The more we commit our crews to this, the higher the chance that a primary fire and rescue service call will get a delayed response.”*

Management Response:

49. The co-responder scheme will be funded entirely by the South Central Ambulance Service, who will provide the training, equipment, uniform and vehicles required to make the scheme a success.
50. There are areas within our county where our Ambulance Service experiences extended attendance times. Our strategically positioned stations/personnel will be able to offer an initial service to the local community as an auxiliary to the oncoming Ambulance without committing F&RS vehicles. In all cases where a co-responder is called, an ambulance will be mobilised.

Project 5: Review of Prevention and Risk Reduction.

Objective:

51. A review of fire and rescue risk reduction activities and partnership working especially in relation to fire, youth diversionary work and road safety to ensure we are appropriately aligned with the risk in the county, with a view of achieving maximum positive outcomes for local communities.
52. The project will be led by the Risk Reduction Partnership Manager.

Public Responses:

53. In response to the questionnaire, 65% of people (11) agreed that we needed to review our prevention and risk reduction, 12% (2) said no, and 24% (4) didn't know.
54. *“I am concerned that if there are fewer fulltime firefighters in Abingdon this will not happen”.*

Management Response:

55. The proposed changes to the crewing of Abingdon outlined in project 1 will have a positive impact in the delivery of risk reduction activities across the county, whilst ensuring there is sufficient resource at Abingdon and Didcot station to progress local initiatives.

Project 6: Operational resilience review.

56. Through historical data and software modelling OFRS will review the current provision of fire appliances to ensure operational resilience and value for money.
57. The project will be led by the Service Delivery Manager.

Public Responses:

58. In response to the questionnaire, 44% of people (7) thought that the review was focusing in the right areas, 31% (5) thought that we weren't and 25% (4) didn't know.
59. *"I think you should consider how you present the case in a public consultation".*
60. *"Historical data and computer modelling may be helpful - however I would like to see any review firmly based on the experiences and knowledge of the fire crews and residents of local communities as they are likely to know more about the issues and risks"*
61. *"This issue should be looked at in its entirety, and conclusions established, well before project 1 is even considered. It appears that the purpose of this review is to highlight 'problem' areas within the brigade, and to ensure that emergency resources are evenly and suitably distributed throughout to provide the best standards of cover. Surely the first project can only be merited and discussed once conclusions have been drawn from this topic."*

Management Response:

62. A countywide review of our operational resilience is necessary in order to establish that the right number and type of equipment and personnel is in the most appropriate location, and also that the tax payer is receiving value for money. Local communities, residents and members of our organisation will be consulted if the review recommends that major change to permanent fire appliance locations and crewing methodologies are needed.

Project 7: Local Government Standard for Equality.

Objective:

63. A review of the organisational performance against the criteria of the Local Government Standard for Equality to ensure we maximise our opportunities to create a safer Oxfordshire.
64. This project will be led by the Assistant Chief Officer.

Public Responses:

65. In response to the questionnaire, 56% of people (9) thought that we should aim to achieve Local Govt. standards for equality, 13% (2) people thought that we shouldn't and 31% (5) didn't know.
66. *"Having worked for the county I believe it's just a box ticking exercise and it is fundamental attitudes of leadership that need challenging on this issue"*
67. *"Keeping the local community safe and not follow direction from the present Government"*

Management Response:

68. OFRS has achieved our stated target concerning standards for equality and will continue to make this our core business in all aspects of our service delivery. We do not view this as a box ticking exercise and our past, present and future actions will bear this out; our risk reduction strategies now reach deeply into all our communities; our 'Walk the Talk' strategy works diligently towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, progressing equal opportunities to all, by developing practices that promote the right for everyone to participate in all aspects of life.

Project 1 Risk Analysis and Opportunities

69. Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) has 24 fire stations, 18 of which are purely crewed utilising retained firefighting personnel. The remaining six wholetime stations also have a retained complement. Our wholetime establishment levels are 248 and our retained workforce is approximately 380. OFRS has a fleet of 35 frontline fire engines and 28 of these are crewed by Retained Duty System (RDS) personnel.
70. The Service has been subjected to several reports and reviews in recent years concerning our RDS workforce. Several recommendations from these reports indicate that for the RDS approach to be sustainable in the short to medium-term, additional wholetime support is required. This position has been further endorsed this year via the commentary from the Audit Commission concerning our 2009 results of the Comprehensive Area Assessment report.
71. In 2008/09 there were over 17,500 hours where our retained appliances were not available to their local communities. The majority of this time occurred during week days and predominantly covering approximately 09.00hrs to 17.00hrs. This was due to crewing issues such as availability of staff or insufficient personnel with the correct level of competencies to establish safe working practice. The projected figures for non-availability for 2009/10 are over 20,000 hours which places our communities at risk due to the increased attendance times where the next nearest available fire engine needs to be mobilised. This can result in a delay of approximately 25 minutes before an emergency response would be in attendance.

72. The redeployment of the 2 posts from Abingdon and 2 from Didcot are specifically required to address the above risks. These posts will support crewing and make a positive impact on the projected 20,000 hours of non-availability and provide a higher level of resilience for emergency response across Oxfordshire. The four posts form part of a wider investment and complement the additional 4 wholetime Watch Manager positions approved by Council in the financial year 2010/11. A further 8 additional posts are identified within the medium-term plan 2010/11 to 2014/15, and the 16 Watch Manager positions will have a wider role across Oxfordshire addressing community risks via locality working. Their tasks will include:
- (a) Improved line management – currently retained Watch Managers are only contracted for 2 hours per week. The wholetime managers will specifically target recruitment and retention initiatives by working directly with local employers and managing the workforce availability and employment contracts.
 - (b) Improved operational training – allowing flexibility to programme and deliver training tailored to local risks and mentoring new staff.
 - (c) Enhanced incident command – improvement to safe systems of work including risk assessment, premises information, risk gathering, monitoring and audit of health and safety managerial systems.
 - (d) Alignment to the local agenda – creating a named lead Officer available on a regular basis to work with:
 - (1) Local schools and youth groups regarding educational activities including road safety and youth diversionary work;
 - (2) Providing technical fire safety advice and business support under the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order;
 - (3) Working with town and parish councils, particularly in relation to Crime and Disorder Partnerships and Neighbourhood Action Groups;
 - (4) Working within Oxfordshire concerning the emerging issues from the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
73. The movement of four personnel (two from Abingdon and two from Didcot) and the introduction of mixed crewing in the evenings and at weekends, will produce a marginal increase in our mobilisation time during specific periods at Didcot and Abingdon (i.e. evenings and during periods at weekends). Therefore, our attendance times at operational incidents will also marginally increase. However, the majority of time when this occurs will be outside of the peak call demand period.
74. Extensive Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) software modelling based upon five years of data and historical incident call demand has been utilised to examine the impact of the movements in attendance times. Additionally, a third party (Phoenix Active) has examined our mobilisation data over a three year reference period and the likely impact across Oxfordshire of the proposed changes to Abingdon and Didcot. Both models support that there is no additional risk to life which is not considered tolerable and we would still be

able to meet our response standards to the vast majority of the calls in both Abingdon and Didcot.

75. Mixed crewing is utilised in many other fire and rescue services and the proposed changes will improve the operational experience, competence and confidence of the retained duty staff at Abingdon and Didcot fire stations. The introduction of mixed crews will establish a crewing methodology which is more resilient than stations which purely rely on RDS staff. It will also create mobilisation times which are likely to be quicker than our current RDS stations which cover large towns such as Thame, Witney and Bicester. These towns are covered by RDS staff and are able to provide a suitable and sufficient fire and rescue service to their local communities.
76. The Strategic Leadership Team of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service strongly believe that many of the comments/concerns raised by both the internal and external stakeholders can be addressed through the review when examining future working practices and shift patterns.
77. Project 1 will specifically and significantly contribute to delivery against the following Oxfordshire County Council priorities;
 - Healthy and thriving communities.
 - Better public services.
78. The proposal will leave the same number of fire engines at Abingdon and Didcot and the same number of firefighters on those fire engines. However, the proposal will ensure a minimum of five firefighters on the first fire engine at Abingdon and Didcot, (currently we move between four and five personnel due to leave etc) which will allow a wider operational role to be implemented quicker when attending incidents. The outcome of project 1 will be a more sustainable RDS workforce, an increase in the operational availability, effectiveness and resilience countywide, and a safer Oxfordshire through the ability to deliver increased levels of community safety education.

Financial and Staff Implications

79. There are implications on both the Wholetime and Retained salary budgets which are identified below:
80. **Project 1: Wholetime Budget** – The effect on the wholetime budget is a potential efficiency saving of £21k per annum associated with the removal of three day crewing housing allowance payments from Abingdon and Didcot. This efficiency is already identified within the council agreed budget for 2010/11.
81. **Project 1: Retained Budget** – The impact on the retained budget is the increased RDS establishment at Abingdon and Didcot by three at each station (six in total). This has the potential impact of £36k which will be met from the existing retained budget. This will be achieved through a reduction in the

amount of managerial hours claimed by RDS Watch Managers via the additional support of the sixteen wholetime Watch Managers posts.

82. **Project 4: Co-Responders** - will, on implementation, create an efficiency saving of £26k per annum, this is already identified in the 2010/11 council budget.
83. **Project 1: Travel and Subsistence** – There will be a minor increase on the travel and subsistence budget that will be met from existing resource levels.

RECOMMENDATION

84. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED:**
 - (a) **to approve all seven of the proposed projects for inclusion in the IRMP action plan 2010/11;**
 - (b) **in light of the concerns expressed through the extensive internal and external consultation, to instruct the Chief Fire Officer to mitigate as far as practicable concerns raised when considering any future duty system;**
 - (c) **in recognising the public concern around the potential impact of project one on attendance times to incidents during specific short periods, to instruct the Chief Fire Officer to report to the Cabinet Member for Safer and the related Scrutiny Committee on a four monthly basis in the first twelve months after implementation. This report to also include details of the beneficial elements to RDS stations from the staff redeployment of the four Watch Managers; and**
 - (d) **to instruct the Chief Fire Officer to provide performance data relating to the implementation of project one to the South and Vale of White Horse District Councils and Abingdon and Didcot Town Councils.**

JOHN PARRY

Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer

Background papers: Oxfordshire Fire Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan 2008-13, The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11,

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March 2010

Consultation Feedback

IRMP Project 1 – Day Crewing Review at Abingdon and Didcot Fire Stations

The projects proposed for the action plan 2010-11 have been subjected to consultation for 12 weeks starting from the 31 October 2009. As has occurred in previous years, the plan was published electronically via an introductory letter that provided an overview of the IRMP proposal and a link to the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) consultation portal where further information was available. During this period Oxfordshire County Council Fire Authority consulted with the following stakeholders either electronically or via hard copy letter asking for stakeholder comments including the opportunity to complete the IRMP questionnaire:

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Presentation of a detailed nature was also given to the following groups:

- OCC Leader and Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities
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- OCC Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee
- South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse Elected Members
- Abingdon Town Council Members
- Chief Executive of Oxford City Council
- All F&RS personnel potentially affected by this proposal.
- Fire Brigade Union
- Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service Managers

In addition to the above, it was agreed that two public meetings were organised in the Abingdon and Didcot areas. The first meeting was held on the evening of 11 January 2010 at the Civic Centre in Didcot and was attended by 80 members of the public. The second meeting was held at the Guildhall in Abingdon on 15 January 2010 and was attended by 83 members of the public. Minutes of these meetings are available on request.

What follows is a summary of the feedback from the consultation period for project 1 - Day Crewing Review at Abingdon and Didcot Fire Stations.

Oxfordshire County Council Consultation Portal - 21 Responses in total - In response to the questionnaire, 81% (17 people) said no, 14% (3) said yes and 5% (1) said they didn't know.

E-Mails – 18 were received directly referring to the 2010/11 action plan, of which 6 raised objections to project 1, Two of the 6 E mails were from Abingdon and Didcot Town Councils.

The objections associated with project 1 fall into the following categories:

1. *Concern in the increased reliance of Retained Duty System personnel which will be less resilient than wholetime.*

Managements Response - As Abingdon and Didcot are two of the largest towns in the county we have little difficulty in recruiting retained firefighters to those two stations. Indeed many of the retained personnel at Abingdon and Didcot have been part of the team for a long time so have many years of operational experience.

Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters perform the same life-saving roles as their full-time colleagues and are equipped and trained to deal with the full range of emergency situations. They regularly form part of the response to significant incidents in Abingdon and Didcot areas and indeed every fire station in Oxfordshire has a retained crew.

2. *The removal of the appliance from Oxford at weekends to support the Abingdon and Didcot area.*

Managements Response – Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service have 5 fire appliances in Oxford City, of which 3 are crewed by Wholetime firefighters and two by RDS firefighters. The loss of one wholetime appliance for approximately 20 hours per week is considered to be acceptable and does not compromise the fire cover in Oxford City or increase any risk to firefighters. Management have also given the undertaking that the implementation of utilising the Oxford fire appliance can only go ahead subject to sufficient resources being available to crew the retained appliance at Rewley Road during those times.

3. *I oppose this project on the grounds that there will be unacceptable cuts to the service currently provided in those areas.*

Managements Response – The proposals in the plan are not 'cuts' they are in fact a different way of staffing the two fire stations that improve the use of the resources in those areas and allows greater flexibility of our workforce to assist other towns and villages in the county where there is no fire cover during the working week i.e. Monday to Friday 0900 - 1700 hours. However, it is accepted that at certain times of the day e.g. evenings and part weekends, there may be a marginal increase in the mobilisation times of fire appliances.

The following paragraphs are a summary of the response received from the Fire Brigades Union concerning project 1.

4. *The FBU oppose this project as it will bring greater risk to the community and to firefighters due to increased attendance times to incidents.*

Whilst the FBU applauds the desire of the Authority to maintain fire cover at all 24 stations on a 24/7 basis, this should not be achieved by lowering the standards of cover that exists already in other areas of the county.

The terms of reference published by the Authority to explain the proposal are difficult to follow, excessively jargonistic, and presented in a way that would be almost impossible for a stakeholder to understand.

Fire Brigades Union comments concerning times and statistics

We have serious concerns about the statistics used and the times quoted by the Authority to justify these changes.

We believe that the time periods that the statistics have been drawn from give misleading figures

The main arguments revolve around the amount of additional time taken to respond to incidents in the affected areas.

Additional response time will:

- *Adversely affect the safety of the community in that it will take longer for help to arrive increasing the potential for serious injury or loss of life.*
- *Adversely affect the resultant damage to property affected by fire as this will have longer to develop.*
- *Adversely affect the safety of Firefighters who will face a more developed fire because of a longer response time and will potentially have to wait longer for backup which will again affect their safety as the fire will be developing whilst they await support.*

In addition, the fulltime support response which is currently supplied to the County as a whole which was recently applauded by the Health and Safety Executive will be significantly reduced by the implementation of this project.

The proposals will mean that greater reliance will be placed on the Retained Crews in Abingdon and Didcot to make up shortages created in the full time cover, or even replace entirely the full time crew at certain times of the week.

As the main argument revolves around the response times that will be affected by the proposals, we are very disappointed that the data used for justification is flawed.

Fire Brigades Union comments concerning mobilisation times

The Brigade has chosen to use comparisons of mobilisation times to support the justification of these proposals. Our contention is that the time taken to arrive at the incident should be used when determining data which would support any changes in fire cover within the County.

This would rule out any statistical anomalies in the times registered for when the appliance books mobile.

The data selected by the Brigade to measure is not the time for appliances to arrive in attendance at the incidents, but the time taken for the appliances to state that they are mobile to the incident.

Why does the organisation not use the times taken for the crews to arrive at the incidents, preferring to use flawed mobilisation times?

Fire Brigades Union comments concerning reference periods

The reference period that the Brigade has chosen to draw its figures from includes the 13 month period in which the majority of the whole time firefighters at Abingdon were displaced from their homes behind the fire station by the floods.

They also do not include the most up to date figures that are readily available for the entirety of 2009

Why did the organisation choose that reference period to use? It cannot possibly be relevant.

In our opinion the use of the data and reference periods in this way gives rise to flaws in the data which means that any quoted times are not indicative of the true picture.

We call on the Authority to commission an independent review of the methodology and statistical analysis used to present this proposal.

Fire Brigades Union comments concerning firefighter competencies

“A firefighter is a firefighter is a firefighter irrespective of the duty system that they work”

This phrase has been in general use since the firefighters pay campaign back in 2002.

What does it actually mean though?

The reality is that the incidents faced by fire crews are the same no matter whether whole time or RDS staff, however due to the time available for training, whole time and RDS firefighters take different lengths of time to become fully competent.

The duration for whole time firefighters is approximately 2- 2 1/2 years and 3 to 3 1/5 years for RDS.

Because the average ‘churn’ factor for RDS staff is approximately 7 years, the competencies of RDS staff are in a continual state of flux which means that it has an additional detrimental effect on mobilisation times when the Brigade’s competency based mobilizing system is taken into account.

At the moment the time available for RDS staff to maintain proficiencies in their 'core skills' is significantly less than their whole time colleagues.

*The end result of this is that whilst the RDS staff in Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service are absolutely committed to delivering a service whilst **also** undertaking their primary employment, they are unable to attain the required full range of skills that whole time firefighters possess.*

This has led to certain pieces of equipment and practices only being used and undertaken by whole time firefighters.

All of the above factors mean that the removal of the whole time support pumps that would happen if this proposal were to be implemented mean that there is a very serious detrimental impact on the levels of service delivery, not just in the communities of Abingdon and Didcot, but also county wide.

The FBU feel strongly that such a review of fire cover on a very localized basis, prior to a county wide review of how the Fire Authority deliver its service is a flawed approach and one that may lead to a waste of resources.

OFRS managerial response which has been sent to the Secretary of the Oxfordshire Branch of the Fire Brigades Union.

Time and Statistics - In respect to the statistics that supported this proposal, OF&RS refute your assertion that the Brigade in anyway misled the community. The statistics provided to Active (OF&RS Consultants) covered three years of operational data across the Brigade. The three years of data selected were the last full three years of data available to avoid accusations of being 'selective'. The Brigade acknowledged from the release of this information that there was a 12 month period where the personnel from Abingdon were in temporary accommodation and the average response times were likely to be longer.

It is accepted, and has been publicly acknowledged, that there will be times when the response is longer to incidents than it currently is due to roster changes and is considered tolerable. OF&RS have carried out extensive modelling of this proposal and the risk to life from the current crewing levels to the proposed changes shows no appreciable increase in risk and the area remains either well below average or very well below average. Modelling has been carried out on both Fire Services Emergency Cover (FSEC) and Phoenix computer software. In addition, OF&RS has carried out extensive CFS campaigns across Oxfordshire in the form of home fire risks assessments. This includes both Abingdon and Didcot. Through the various campaigns F&R have addressed a large number of 'vulnerable' categories and those premises that live beyond 14 minute response standard. OF&RS remains committed to carrying out CFS activities to continue to lower risk across these station areas and the whole of Oxfordshire.

Fire losses in the Abingdon and Didcot areas need to be weighed in relation to the benefits in the rural areas where fire cover will be improved. Again, FSEC looks at fire loss as a whole across the county and confirms what the FA proposes is both tolerable and acceptable.

With regard to any increased risk to firefighters, it is acknowledged there may be a slight increase in fire development, however this is not a 'step change' and can be expected at any operational incident. The risks to firefighters will be made no greater than those faced by our Retained staff who are based on 75% of Oxfordshire's stations.

As you will be aware, OF&RS invest heavily in training personnel to a competent standard. In particular, emphasis is made on employing safe systems of work and procedures at operational incidents to bring about positive outcomes. Therefore, the FA and management have every confidence that when our firefighters are faced with a challenging incident the IC and crew will deploy according to the DRA, ensuring crew safety at all times and any exposure to risk is balanced against benefit i.e. the DRA mantra.

I would also remind you of the words contained in your reply to the 2010/11 IRMP on page 2 under 'The 1985 Standards of Fire Cover':

"This can be achieved by the setting of realistic attendance standards and the introduction of meaningful Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which do not expose firefighters to greater risk than they would be exposed to in the 'normal' execution of their duties".

This section talks about setting 'realistic attendance standards' for which, given the size of town and risks existing in those areas, an 11 and 14 minute response time is considered realistic and was adopted following extensive consultation in 2006/07 IRMP. Any exposure to developed incidents by firefighters due to slightly extended attendance time is considered to be with the 'normal' execution of their duties.

With regard to Wholetime support to incidents in RDS areas, this has been considered and risk assessed and a decision with regards to its role as incident support vehicle will be made in due course. This question, however, does throw up a paradox. You appear to be indicating that the WT appliance is imperative to the safety of Abingdon and Didcot communities and yet you find it acceptable for the appliance to attend other incidents leaving first attendance in those areas to RDS firefighters. As you are aware the WT appliance may be committed elsewhere in the county for long periods as is the case for one pump incidents, fireground relief duties, training and emergency cover moves. This obviously leaves the current RDS appliances as the first response vehicle to the Abingdon and Didcot areas which have historically been shown to meet the response needs of the communities.

Mobilisation Times - The simple answer to this is logic i.e. identify the variables and measure them. Therefore, the variables in this respect are the distance firefighters have to travel to the station. Non-variables such as two fire appliances leaving the same fire station and travelling to the same incident along the same route should be similar in travel time taking into account weight of traffic at the time of mobilisation. It could also suggest that a supporting appliance may wait for additional crew to attend the station as their attendance is slightly less critical. However, this was never factored in.

Firefighter Competencies - The FA is reassured by the FBU's statement that "A firefighter is a firefighter irrespective of the duty system that they work" as there was without doubt a number of dissenting voices from serving personnel at the public meetings. OF&RS, supported by the FBU, have taken positive steps to ensure that all appliances arrive at incidents with a minimum crew of 4 (normal crew of 5) and that personnel have the correct skills and are therefore safely deployed in accordance with SOPs. In respect to the additional skills the WT firefighters have i.e. laying a guideline, PPV stage 2 and working at height level 2, these are a necessity for incident support and, as stated earlier, OF&RS have not finalised its approach in this respect, albeit RAs have been carried out. Any decision regarding the role of Abingdon and Didcot as incident support will be made in conjunction with other work being undertaken by the service.

The above concludes the correspondence with the Fire Brigades Union.

Letters – A total of 3129 letters were received objecting to the proposed changes at Abingdon and Didcot. The objection letters were in three formats, (see base of report) taken from templates found on the Fire Brigades Union website, and all opposed the changes on the grounds of unacceptable cuts to the service. The managerial responses to these standard letters are also at the base of this report.

A part of our approach to customer excellence OFRS sent acknowledgement replies to the addresses on the FBU sponsored letter addressees and, in order to promote community safety, enclosed information about smoke detector ownership. Over 20 have been sent back to OFRS indicating 'not known at this address' so therefore the names were fictitious.

Additionally, following acknowledgement replies to the addresses on the FBU sponsored letter addressees, approximately 32 members of the public complained to OFRS via telephone stating they had not signed a petition or written to the Fire Authority using the FBU letters objecting to project 1. They requested that their objections be removed and their names be deleted from the database

The one letter supporting project 1 has been received from West Oxfordshire District Council via a Councillor whose division is covered predominantly by RDS fire engines.

Public Meetings – Notification of the public meetings went out via the standard approach of the Media and Communications Team within County Hall to all the media outlets plus the OCC intranet and OCC public website. Media interest culminated in coverage of the project and public meeting dates via the BBC Radio Oxford, BBC and Meridian Television News as well as several articles within the Oxford Mail plus the Abingdon and Didcot Herald series.

Abingdon and Didcot have population levels of approximately 36000 and 23450. A total of 4 public meetings were held and a total of 165 people attended (80 Didcot, 83 Abingdon and 2 at HQ Kidlington). Overall the concerns raised at these meetings are summarised below;

- Acknowledgement of the correct principle of underpinning RDS stations and improving fire appliance availability
- The benefit of providing additional wholetime Watch Managers to RDS stations improving supervision and managerial support

CA13

- Concerns over extended response times at certain periods of the week in Abingdon and Didcot
- Concerns in using an Oxford fire appliance to supplement fire cover in Abingdon or Didcot at weekends
- Total reliance on RDS staff at certain periods over weekends in Abingdon and Didcot
- FBU's concerns in respect to firefighter safety
- The need to up-skill the RDS firefighters at Abingdon and Didcot.

Fire Brigade Union website - examples of the 3 standard letters.

To: IRMP Team

From:

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue,
Fire Service HQ,
Sterling Road
Kidlington
Oxford,
OX5 2DU

Date:

Integrated Risk Management Action Plan 2010 / 2011

Dear Sir or Madam

I wish to register my opposition to project 1 of the Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Services Integrated Risk Management plan 2010 / 2011.

I oppose this project on the grounds that there will be unacceptable cuts to the service currently provided in those areas.

Can you please advise me of the analysis method used to determine the benefits to the community for this proposed project?

Yours sincerely

To: IRMP Team

From:

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue
Fire Service HQ
Sterling Road
Kidlington
Oxford
OX5 2DU

Date:

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I oppose this project on the grounds that there will be unacceptable cuts to the service currently provided in those areas.

As a regular visitor to the areas affected by the proposals, I consider that I am able to consider myself to be a 'stakeholder' and able to register my discontent.

Yours sincerely

Examples of the 3 OFRS responses to the FBU Standard Letters



**Oxfordshire County Council
Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters**
Sterling Road
Kidlington
Oxfordshire OX5 2DU

Telephone: 01865 842999
Fax: 01865 855241

J.C. Parry, QFSM, BSc, MBA, MIFireE

*Director for Community Safety & Shared
Services and Chief Fire Officer*

| My Reference | Your Reference | Date |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| HQ/1/0195a/MCC/MC/SH | | 11 th February 2010 |
| This matter is being dealt with by | IRMP Team | Direct Line 08000 325999 |
| Email: | irmpteam@oxfordshire.gov.uk | |

Dear

Oxfordshire Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Action Plan 2010-11 Consultation Document.

Many thanks for your correspondence, dated ><, stating your objection to project 1 of the Action Plan.

Your objection has been noted and collated and will be displayed on the public website after the consultation period has ended on the 31st January 2010.

For further information on any of the projects within the Action Plan, please visit our public site on www.oxfordshire.gov.uk, /fire and public safety/fire and rescue service.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin P. Crapper".

Martin Crapper
Major Projects Manager Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service



**Oxfordshire County Council
Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters**
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*Director for Community Safety & Shared
Services and Chief Fire Officer*

My Reference
HQ/1/0195a/MCC/SH

Your Reference

Date
11th February 2010

This matter is being dealt with by IRMP Team Direct Line 08000 325999

Email: irmpteam@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Dear

Integrated Risk Management Plan - 2010/11 Proposed Action Plan

Thank you for your letter dated ><, in which you express your concerns to the proposed changes to crewing in the Abingdon and Didcot area. First of all let me assure you that the proposals in the plan are not 'cuts' they are in fact a different way of staffing the two fire stations that improve the use of the resources in those areas and allows greater flexibility of our workforce to assist other towns and villages in the county where there is no fire cover during the working week i.e. Monday to Friday 0900 - 1700 hours. Albeit, it is accepted that at certain times of the day e.g. evenings and part weekends, there may be an increase in the arrival of fire appliance by as much as 3 – 4 minutes.

This delay is considered tolerable from a Fire and Rescue Service perspective and will not have a significant negative impact on our current agreed response standards of 80% of all incidents (in scope) within 11 minutes and 95% of all incident (in scope - see below) within 14 minutes, which were also agreed through our IRMP several years ago. I would also suggest that the fire cover provision in Abingdon and Didcot will still be of a higher standard than exist in similar market towns such as Witney, Thame and Bicester, the latter fire station attending more incidents (in scope - see below) on an annual basis, with no adverse affects on casualty statistics.

In scope - this refers to category A, B, & C incidents only. Category A refers to incidents that involve life threatening situations. Category B refers to serious/significant incidents that is non-life threatening. Category C refers to incidents that are of an emergency nature.

With regard to alternative proposals, there have not been any proposed, albeit in reviewing the fire cover in Oxfordshire there were several areas explored, however these were rejected after consideration. The current proposal i.e. project 1 was formulated on the back of considerable analysis, which is explained later on in this reply, however, it is a 'proposal' and it was always accepted that this could change through discussion with personnel, managers and negotiation with represented bodies. To date nothing has come forward to provide an acceptable remedy to the worsening fire cover situation in the rural parts of Oxfordshire.

Safety from fire in the home is primary objective to Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, however total reliance on the Fire and Rescue to save life introduces unacceptable risks, that could cost dearly in terms of positive outcomes i.e. injuries and fatalities. Safety in the home comes from firstly understanding and appreciating 'safe practices' in the home to stop fires occurring in the first place. Secondly, should a fire occur, the provision of an early warning device (active protection) such as a smoke alarm and thirdly, the provision of a plan in case of fire, which at a time of need can be executed by all members of the family ensuring the safe evacuation from the home and the calling of the emergency services. It is this proactive approach the Fire and Rescue Service has been promoting for the last 10 years or more and has seen casualties reduced from two to five per year to zero in the last two years, which is a significant achievement.

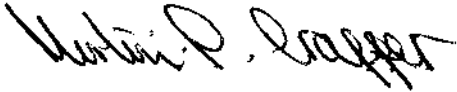
Regarding your question on the analysis used by the service in assessing this proposal I would respond as follows. Initially professional judgement is used in conjunction with several other reviews of fire cover which have been undertaken through the IRMP. The results form the basis of our IRMP proposal, which was then tested through computer modelling. In this instance, two computer models were used, the first analysis is – is there any increase in risk from what we call the 'base case' i.e. fire cover as it currently exists. The computer modelling system is called Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) and is provided to all Fire and Rescue Services by CLG as the preferred modelling system for any change in fire cover arrangements. Our system in Oxfordshire has been through a validation process by Mott Macdonald and was deemed to be robust in its usage.

The second computer model is called Phoenix and is provided by 'Active Solutions'. This is a consultancy that provides workflow and performance modelling to emergency services. They currently have modelling being used in over 32 Fire and Rescue Services and have worked with us on the IRMP proposals and other projects.

The modelling and analysis provides information on the impact of any proposed changes against a base case can identify changes in workflow i.e. incidents attended and speed of response, measured against our response standards of 11 and 14 minutes. The results of the latter are on the county website www.oxfordshire.gov.uk under Fire and Rescue - Integrated Risk Management Plan. In summary, the computer modelling showed no increase in risk and negligible negative impact on performance i.e. it predicts that over the next three years based on the 2006 – 2009 data that only five incidents response times would not be met.

I trust the above provides you with a satisfactory answer to the questions raised. Again I would like to reassure you that the changes in Abingdon and Didcot are not significant in terms of adjustment in fire cover arrangements and will not compromise the first class service provided by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue in the Abingdon and Didcot area.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin C. Crapper', written in a cursive style.

Area Manager Martin C Crapper
Major Project Manager
Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service



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This delay is considered tolerable from a Fire and Rescue Service perspective and will not have a significant negative impact on our current agreed response standards of 80% of all incidents (in scope) within 11 minutes and 95% of all incident (in scope - see below) within 14 minutes, which were also agreed through our IRMP several years ago. I would also suggest that the fire cover provision in Abingdon and Didcot will still be of a higher standard than exist in similar market towns such as Witney, Thame and Bicester, the latter fire station attending more incidents (in scope - see below) on an annual basis, with no adverse affects on casualty statistics.

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serious/significant incidents that is non-life threatening. Category C refers to incidents that are of an emergency nature.

At this juncture I believe it is imperative that the current philosophy is understood in respect of 'prevention and intervention'. Prevention is firstly about education followed by active protection measures, this has three stages in improving public safety.

- Firstly, understanding and appreciating safe practices in the home to stop fires occurring in the first place.
- Secondly, should a fire occur, the provision of an early warning device (active protection) such as a smoke alarm.
- Thirdly, the provision of a plan in case of fire, which at a time of need can be executed by all members of the family ensuring the safe evacuation from the home and the calling of the emergency services. Sole reliance on intervention i.e. the timely arrival of a fire crew will substantially increase the risk to life in a fire situation as smoke can kill in minutes, therefore to ignore preventative measures and rely on the arrival of a fire appliance often provides an unsatisfactory outcome i.e. serious injury or fatality. It is this proactive approach the Fire and Rescue Service has been promoting for the last 10 years or more and has seen casualties reduced from two to five per year to zero in the last two years, which is a significant achievement.

Regarding your question on the analysis used by the service in assessing this proposal I would respond as follows. Initially professional judgement is used in conjunction with several other reviews of fire cover which have been undertaken through the IRMP. The results form the basis of our IRMP proposal, which was then tested through computer modelling. In this instance, two computer models were used, the first analysis is – is there any increase in risk from what we call the 'base case' i.e. fire cover as it currently exists. The computer modelling system is called Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) and is provided to all Fire and Rescue Services by CLG as the preferred modelling system for any change in fire cover arrangements. Our system in Oxfordshire has been through a validation process by Mott Macdonald and was deemed to be robust in its usage. If you require further in-depth information as to the inputs into the FSEC system and more technical detail in terms of how it models the inputs – please let me know and a comprehensive reply can be provided.

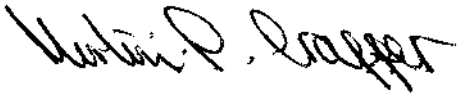
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The modelling and analysis provides information on the impact of any proposed changes against a base case can identify changes in workflow i.e. incidents attended and speed of response, measured against our response standards of 11 and 14 minutes. The results of the latter are on the county website www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

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Yours sincerely

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