



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority

# **OPERATIONAL COVER PROPOSALS – CONSULTATION OUTCOMES**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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**Agenda No:**

**Date:** 27 September 2013

**Purpose of Report:**

To present the outcomes of the consultation on the proposals to remove two appliances from operational service.

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 During 2010 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) undertook the most comprehensive review of its operational activity since 1986. Under the term "Fire Cover Review", the Service 'risk-profiled' the whole county against a risk matrix and looked at how the location and provision of resources matched the risk.
- 1.2 As a result, on 16 December 2011, following a period of scrutiny and consultation, the Fire Authority agreed changes to the operational model. These were based on a series of recommendations from the Chief Fire Officer.
- 1.3 One of the other recommendations was that the Fire Authority requested to be kept up to date as to operational activity levels on an annual basis. The calendar year outcomes for 2012 were presented to the Fire Authority on 22 February 2013 and the Chief Fire Officer was tasked with further analysis and bringing any recommendations to a future meeting.
- 1.4 On 28 June 2013 the Chief Fire Officer presented the further analysis and recommended that the Fire Authority take steps to implement the following:
  - The removal of the 12 hour appliance from Station 19 West Bridgford;
  - The removal of the retained appliance from Station 26 Arnold.
- 1.5 The Fire Authority agreed to consult on this recommendation and tasked the Chief Fire Officer with presenting a report to the September meeting on the outcomes of the consultation, taking into account previous consultation on these proposals. This report details the outcomes.
- 1.6 In addition, the Chief Fire Officer was also tasked with bringing another report to this meeting detailing further options to meet the risk profile of the county and to further reduce the number of appliances to a level not less than 30. This report will be presented at the December meeting as work has been delayed by the significant preparations around the potential for industrial action.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 In 2011 the Fire Authority consulted widely on a number of proposals that had emanated from the Fire Cover Review. Two particular aspects related to the stations at Arnold and West Bridgford. The proposals at this time were to remove from service the second appliances from both stations but to replace them with the new concept of targeted response vehicles (TRV).
- 2.2 At its meeting of 16 December 2011 the Fire Authority considered the outcomes of the consultation. In respect of the proposal for these two stations there was general support from the public with the primary opposition coming from employees within deliberative meetings. A questionnaire survey also returned positive responses, with 55% supporting the changes at Arnold and 51% supporting the changes at West Bridgford.

- 2.3 The 2011 report provided further detail for elected members to consider, including the concerns that had been expressed around the whole concept of TRVs and their proposed locations.
- 2.4 Ultimately the Fire Authority made the decision that before implementing any TRVs they would require a cost benefit analysis of their effectiveness. Having made this decision the unanimous outcome was to retain the second pump at Arnold but to reduce the crewing of the second pump at West Bridgford by 12 hours per day. This was implemented by Officers on a 10:00 – 22:00 hours basis utilising overtime, although nominally ten operational posts were attributed within the budget.
- 2.5 In April 2013 the Chief Fire Officer presented the outcomes of the cost benefit analysis of the concept of TRVs to the Community Safety Committee. Although the merits of the concept were recognised, it was difficult to establish whether any financial benefits would be made and as a consequence the recommendation was not to take this further at this stage, but to monitor its implementation elsewhere.
- 2.6 The result of this was that the arrangements put in place by the Fire Authority in December 2011 remained.
- 2.7 Earlier in 2013 (22 February 2013) the Chief Fire Officer had presented the operational statistics for the Service, which had been one of the outcomes from the Fire Cover Review. This had shown significant further reductions with call rates now at a little over 10,000 per annum (a little over 50% are actual incidents).
- 2.8 Against this reduction, and facing a further reduction in its revenue budget, the Chief Fire Officer was tasked with bringing a more detailed analysis with recommendations to the June 2013 Fire Authority meeting. As stated in Paragraph 1.4 above, that analysis resulted in a recommendation to remove both second appliances from service.
- 2.9 The Fire Authority agreed to consult on this proposal in line with their own consultation strategy which had been developed and agreed by the Policy and Strategy Committee and had been formally adopted in February 2013. On the advice of the contracted company Opinion Research Services (ORS), the consultation was targeted primarily at the areas affected, as the issues had previously been consulted upon more widely.
- 2.10 NFRS is a member of the Fire Services Consultation Association and ORS is the sole provider of consultation services under a national framework contract. The service commissioned was to undertake a research programme which included an online and paper survey, two community forums (one in the City of Nottingham and one in the south of the county) and four focus groups, two in Arnold and two in West Bridgford.
- 2.11 In addition, there were opportunities for staff to comment and the Chief Fire Officer held a briefing session for elected councillors of the districts affected by the proposals. The consultation period ran for 12 weeks from July through

to September and was managed by ORS using their independent status and industry standard practices.

- 2.12 The report on the consultation outcomes which has been produced by ORS is appended to this report in full. In summary, it details the dates and activities undertaken and presents the sentiments and judgements of respondents and forum/focus group participants. It does include some verbatim comments in an attempt to capture the view of everyone concerned.
- 2.13 In summary those who attended events and responded to the consultation process generally agreed with the proposals. The online and paper survey showed 64% of respondents in agreement with the proposals to remove Arnold's retained appliance and 59% agreeing to the removal of West Bridgford's second appliance.
- 2.14 In respect of the forums and focus groups a more detailed analysis was presented, but in both cases there was general support for the proposals. Interestingly the public awareness of the fire risk in the community and the costs of providing a fire service covered a broad range.
- 2.15 The key message within the final report is that the Fire Authority can be confident that in terms of the consultation process there is an understanding of the financial difficulties being faced and that the proposals have met with general support. The Fire Authority have consulted twice on these two particular stations, and although there was a difference in respect of a TRV replacing the pumps in the first proposal, there has on both occasions been no significant opposition to the proposals.
- 2.16 On this basis it is therefore recommended that the Fire Authority agree to the proposal put forward on 28 June 2013 and implement the following:
- The removal of the 12 hour appliance from Station 19 West Bridgford;
  - The removal of the retained appliance from Station 26 Arnold.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 As the Fire Authority is aware, the Service has to meet an initial budget deficit of circa £1.8 million in the financial year commencing April 2014. The proposed savings relating to the recommendations contained within this report will realise an initial saving of circa £500k with some in-year savings which will help with transitional costs.
- 3.2 The costs associated with the consultation have been met from within the existing budget for consultation. Outline estimates received are circa £15k.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 There are significant human resources implications arising from any decision to remove appliances from service. In this case these relate primarily to Arnold station as West Bridgford has been crewed on an overtime basis.

- 4.2 In respect of Arnold there will be a combination of re-deployment and redundancy options available to all staff. Those affected have already been met by the Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Authority and 'consultation' has been commenced in a general manner.
- 4.3 The change proposed at West Bridgford will see the deletion of ten wholetime posts (vacant) from the establishment.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

Any amendments to the establishment of the Service must undergo an equality impact assessment to ensure there is no intentional or unintentional disadvantage applied to any group.

## **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that "it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area". This report does not contain any implications which would affect that duty.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority has a statutory duty to maintain, train, equip and mobilise a Fire Service as well as provide appropriate fire safety advice to the community. These duties are contained in Section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
- 7.2 Part 3, Section 21, of the same Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a Framework and it is this Framework that places a duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities to produce a plan which identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community. This plan is known as the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).
- 7.3 The reviewing and updating of operational cover is conducive with those legal duties and does not place the Authority at any risk of breaking those duties.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The update and analysis of the risk profile and the operational activity levels are part of the Service's risk management process. The reduction in response is based on a clear evidential framework and in line with an externally accredited methodology.
- 8.2 Failure to appropriately resource the organisation in response to community risk and requirements puts a financial risk on the Fire Authority, in that the budget deficit will not be met. The actions proposed in this report mitigate this risk.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 9.1 Agree to remove from operational service the 12 hour appliance from Station 19 West Bridgford.
- 9.2 Agree to remove from operational service the retained appliance from Station 26 Arnold.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

Frank Swann  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

## Responding to Change 2013 Report of Consultation Outcomes

**Opinion Research Services**  
**September 2013**





As with all our studies, findings from this research are subject to Opinion Research Services' Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract

Any press release or publication of the findings of this research requires the advance approval of ORS. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation



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# Acknowledgements

Opinion Research Services (ORS) is pleased to have worked with Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) on the consultation reported here.

We are grateful to all those who undertook the survey – and to the members of the public who took part in the forums and focus groups. The latter were patient in listening to background information before entering positively into the spirit of open discussions. They engaged with the service, with the issues under consideration and with each other in discussing their ideas readily.

We thank NFRS for commissioning the project as part of its programme of consultation. We particularly thank the senior officers who attended the deliberative sessions to listen to the public's views. Such meetings benefit considerably from the readiness of fire officers to answer participants' questions fully and frankly.

At all stages of the project, ORS' status as an independent organisation engaging with the public as objectively as possible was recognised and respected. We are grateful for the trust, and we hope this report will contribute usefully to thinking about NFRS's development at a time of serious financial constraints. We hope also that ORS has been instrumental in strengthening NFRS's public engagement and consultation through the forum and focus group participants.

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# Project Overview

## The Commission

1. On the basis of our long-standing experience with the UK fire and rescue service, and our status as the sole approved provider of research and consultation services under the terms of the Fire Services Consultation Association's National Framework Contract, ORS was commissioned by Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) to undertake a research programme which included: an online and paper survey; two community forums (one in the City of Nottingham and one in the South of the county); and four focus groups - two each in Arnold and West Bridgford.
2. The point or purpose of the deliberative sessions was to allow NFRS to engage with, and listen to, members of the public about some important issues – so that the participants would become more informed about the fire and rescue service, and the current constraints upon it; but also so that the discussions could contribute to NFRS's planning for the future. The sessions (and indeed the survey) primarily focused on proposals for Arnold and West Bridgford Fire Stations.
3. This consultation programme conforms to the Gunning Principles, which require, above all, that consultation should be at a 'formative stage', before authorities make decisions. The same principles also require that people should be given sufficient information and time to consider the issues in an informed manner, and also that their views should be taken conscientiously into account by the authority.
4. In this context, ORS' role was to design, facilitate and report the consultation between July and September 2013. We worked in collaboration with NFRS to develop the questionnaire and prepare informative stimulus material for the deliberative meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

## Online and Paper Survey

5. The Consultation Document included two simple, user friendly and informal consultation questions, with an ORS Freepost envelope for ease of return. As well as the main questions, detailed respondent-profiling information was requested. The consultation documents were widely distributed and the questions were available for Nottinghamshire residents to complete on-line.

## Deliberative Research

### Attendance and Representativeness

6. The forums and focus groups were designed to inform and ‘engage’ the participants both with the issues and with NFRS – by using a ‘deliberative’ approach to encourage members of the public to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing service delivery issues in detail. The meetings lasted for between two and 2.5 hours.
7. In total, there were 39 diverse participants at the larger forums and 41 at the focus groups – a total of 80 people. The dates of the meetings and attendance levels by members of the public were as follows:

AREA	TIME AND DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
<b>South Forum</b>	<b>6:00pm – 8:30pm Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>City Forum</b>	<b>6:00pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Arnold Focus Group 1</b>	<b>6:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2013</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Arnold Focus Group 2</b>	<b>6:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2013</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>West Bridgford Focus Group 1</b>	<b>6:30pm – 8:30pm Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>West Bridgford Focus Group 2</b>	<b>6:30pm – 8:30pm Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013</b>	<b>9</b>

8. The attendance target for the forums was around 20 people and the required number of participants for focus groups is eight to 10, so the recruitment programme was largely successful. At the forums, around a third of participants had attended a previous session in February 2013 and had been re-invited by ORS and the remaining two-thirds were new attendees – whereas all focus group participants were fresh recruits. Those who had not attended previously were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS’ Social Research Call Centre. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent and broadly representative of the wider community.
9. Overall (as shown in the table below), participants were a broad cross-section of residents from the local areas and, as standard good practice, were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part.

CRITERIA	FORUMS	FOCUS GROUPS	OVERALL
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male: 18</b> <b>Female: 21</b>	<b>Male: 20</b> <b>Female: 21</b>	<b>Male: 38</b> <b>Female: 42</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-34: 9</b> <b>35-54: 17</b> <b>55+: 13</b>	<b>18-34: 12</b> <b>35-54: 15</b> <b>55+: 14</b>	<b>18-34: 21</b> <b>35-54: 32</b> <b>55+: 27</b>
<b>Social Grade</b>	<b>AB: 10</b> <b>C1: 12</b> <b>C2: 6</b> <b>DE: 11</b>	<b>AB: 14</b> <b>C1: 14</b> <b>C2: 4</b> <b>DE: 9</b>	<b>AB: 24</b> <b>C1: 26</b> <b>C2: 10</b> <b>DE: 20</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>3 BME</b>	<b>3 BME</b>	<b>6 BME</b>
<b>Limiting Long-term Illness</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>

10. In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors, and the venues at which the forums met were readily accessible. People's special needs were taken into account in the recruitment and venues.
11. Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, forums and focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from Nottinghamshire (and especially the affected areas of Arnold and West Bridgford) the opportunity to comment in detail on NFRS's proposals. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meeting (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions. In summary, the outcomes reported here are reliable as examples of the reflections and opinions of diverse informed people reacting to the proposals included within NFRS's *Responding to Change 2013* document.

## Discussion Agenda

12. ORS worked in collaboration with NFRS to agree a suitable agenda and informative stimulus material for the meeting, which covered all of the following topics:

Initial questions about risk and the NFRS budget

The changing profile of NFRS – including resources, strategic roles, and incident profiles

The importance of prevention in the context of protection and response services

Responding to Change 2013 consultation issues:

## Removal of the Retained Duty System Fire Engine from Arnold Fire Station

## Removal of the 12-hour engine from West Bridgford Fire Station.

13. Each section of the discussion began with a short presentation devised by ORS and NFRS to inform and stimulate discussion of the issues, following which the above matters were reviewed in sequence. Participants were given extensive time for questions prior to being invited to make up their minds on each discussion topic.

## The Report

14. This report concisely reviews the sentiments and judgements of questionnaire respondents and forum/focus group participants about NFRS and the proposals for Arnold and West Bridgford Fire Stations. Verbatim quotations are used, in indented italics, not because we agree or disagree with them – but for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of view. ORS does not endorse the opinions in question, but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly. The report is an interpretative summary of the issues raised by participants.

# Consultation Findings

## Online and Paper Survey

### Introduction

15. The Consultation Document included two consultation questions, which were as simple, user friendly and informal as possible, with an ORS Freepost envelope provided. As well as the main questions, detailed respondent-profiling questions were included. The consultation documents were widely distributed and the questions were available for Nottinghamshire residents to complete on-line. The numbers of responses are shown in the table below:

Response group	Number
<b>Total responses</b>	169
<b>Paper responses</b>	64
<b>Online responses</b>	105

### Respondent Profiles

16. The gender split was uneven with 69% male and 31% female respondents. There was more of a balanced split with the age groups (35 to 44 (22%), 45 to 54 (31%) and 55 or over (30%)) with those aged 16 to 24 (3%) and 25 to 34 (13%) being the least represented groups.

### Consultation Question Responses

17. The table below shows the summary findings.

Question	Strongly agree %	Tend to agree %	Neither agree/ disagree %	Tend to disagree %	Strongly disagree %
<b>Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to remove the retained fire engine from Arnold Fire Station?</b>	<b>32</b> (54)	<b>32</b> (54)	<b>4</b> (6)	<b>7</b> (12)	<b>25</b> (42)
<b>Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to remove the part-time fire engine from West Bridgford Fire Station?</b>	<b>35</b> (59)	<b>24</b> (40)	<b>4</b> (7)	<b>9</b> (16)	<b>28</b> (47)

( ) = base numbers

Larger/bold numbers = highlight results where majority opinion falls



Green = Positive results

Red = Negative results

18. The highest level of agreement (64%) was for the proposal to remove the retained fire engine from Arnold Fire Station.
19. Around three-fifths of respondents (59%) also agreed with the proposal to remove the part-time fire engine from West Bridgford Fire Station.

## **Forums and Focus Groups**

### **Introduction**

20. Following the introductory material, the forums and focus groups addressed the two main consultation issues: the removal of Arnold Fire Station's Retained Duty System (RDS) fire engine; and the removal of the 12-hour fire engine from West Bridgford Fire Station. The forums discussed both issues, whereas the more geographically-focused focus groups only considered the proposal for their local area.
21. Overall, the sessions considered a wide range of important issues that are reported fully below. The report has been structured to address each of the areas of discussion in some detail. The views of the six meetings have been merged to give an overall report of findings, rather than six separate and rather repetitive mini-reports – but significant differences in views have been drawn out where appropriate.

### **Public Awareness of Risk and Finances**

22. In order to investigate their background perception of fire risk in the community, participants were asked to 'guesstimate' the annual total death rate from fires across Nottinghamshire and also certain key facts about the finances of the service.
23. Perhaps not surprisingly, many people radically over-estimated the number of fire deaths in Nottinghamshire each year – with some participants at one of the Arnold focus groups guessing at between 2,000 and 3,000. Overall, though, most of the guesses were in the range of 10 to 30 deaths per year – and although the actual number is lower at 5.2 deaths per year over the last five years, the estimates were typically more reasonable than those given in other areas.
24. On the other hand, most people (again sometimes radically) under-estimated how much it costs to crew one 24/7 wholtime fire engine per year. There were some guesses as low as £200,000 or £300,000; but overall most people estimated at least £500,000 and several said three-quarters of a million to one million pounds. The latter is a reasonable estimate, in fact.
25. Some participants guessed relatively accurately that NFRS' annual budget is in the region of £50 million (the actual figure is £46 million), but most other estimates were either much higher (up to a couple of billion!) or much lower (just £5 million).

26. When asked how much each band D household pays per year for NFRS services there were widely varied estimates: a small number guessed very accurately, but most estimates were much higher (at £100 to £200 per year) and people were pleasantly surprised to learn that the actual figure is currently £69.69.
27. Overall, then, many people tended to overestimate both risk (expressed as the number of fire deaths) and the costs of running the Fire and Rescue Service. These trends are not unique to Nottinghamshire and, indeed, the estimates given in these groups were no less accurate than those typically given elsewhere. In fact, in terms of fire deaths, Nottinghamshire participants were, on the whole, more accurate than those in most other areas.

## Consultation Issues

### Arnold Fire Station

#### Context

28. Participants were informed of NFRS' proposal to remove the RDS fire engine from Arnold Fire Station on the following grounds:

Nottinghamshire has seen a large reduction in incidents over last six years, leading to an overprovision of fire engines in some areas (including Arnold)

Arnold is a low risk area: the number of incidents attended by the Arnold fire engines has reduced from 1,355 in 2008 to 842 in 2012 and the number of incidents attended by the RDS engine has reduced from 329 to 102 in the same period

The station can be supported by wholetime engines from surrounding areas

NFRS has less money to spend and must review its resources.

#### Participants' Views

29. In discussion, the questions asked clearly reflected some initial concern about the proposal, chiefly around:

The possibility of increased response times and consequent fatalities

*What difference will this proposal make to response times? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*If the difference in response times will be about a minute and the fire deaths are much lower than we thought then fine, but fires can develop quickly in a minute. What will be the impact on deaths from these changes? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*Losing a fire engine won't affect the call outs – but will it affect fatalities directly? (South Forum)*

*I cannot dispute professional judgement but there can never be guarantees about possible fatalities! (South Forum)*

The potential impact of fewer fire engines during simultaneous incidents

*How likely is it that two or more serious incidents could happen at the same time? (South Forum)*

*How often do you have two incidents to attend at the same time? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*If a major fire happens in the city and takes cover from Arnold and West Bridgford, what would happen if there was a fire in Arnold etc.? (City Forum)*

Whether a reduction in the number of available firefighters will reduce the amount of important prevention work undertaken

*The statistics show a decline in the incidents due to more prevention but will the amount of prevention be affected by the removal of this RDS engine? (South Forum)*

*Will the change have an impact on any of the other services you offer? (Arnold Focus Group)*

Whether this proposal represents the 'thin end of the wedge'

*Are we going to be sat here in another few years talking about Stockhill losing an engine? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*My reservation is that once that's gone what will be sitting here talking about in a few years' time. Is it the thin end of the wedge? Where will the axe fall next? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*Is there an intention to close Arnold fire station? (Arnold Focus Group)*

30. Other, less frequent questions and concerns were around: the effect of new housing developments on risk levels; whether NFRS's 'weight of attack' will be maintained; the impact of the proposal on the Arnold RDS staff; the possible risks of the proposal; and the fate of the engine itself. Some typical questions and comments were:

*If we have one at Carlton and will have one at Arnold, what will be the effect of new housing developments? Won't we need these resources? (City Forum)*

*Won't Arnold risk be rising due to the amount of house building planned in the area? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*I was told that two fire engines would always be sent to a house fire and to a household with a higher level of risk. Will this be maintained? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*What will happen to the RDS fire fighters? How will they be affected? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*How do the firefighters feel about this proposal? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*It sounds like quite an obvious thing to do. You've obviously done your risk assessments and so on but we haven't talked about any negative impact (Arnold Focus Group)*

*What do you do with the fire engine? (South Forum)*

31. After discussion and clarification, the City forum unanimously endorsed the removal of the Arnold RDS fire engine, as did the overwhelming majority of participants at the South forum and the Arnold focus groups. In fact, across all of the groups that discussed this issue, only four people (one at the South forum and three at the Arnold focus groups) considered the proposal unreasonable on the following grounds:

*No one doubts the firefighters' professionalism; but fire cover is like insurance on your house and we don't like to reduce cover if it could go wrong (South Forum)*

*If it doesn't cost much, we might as well keep it (South Forum)*

*When it's gone it's gone and on the whole I don't agree with it. (Arnold Focus Group)*

There was also one 'don't know' at the Arnold Focus Groups insofar as:

*It is hard to come to a decision because we have not had the 'opposition' case to the issues. You have made it sound reasonable, but we need an opposing view.*

32. Participants' typically understood the financial constraints within which NFRS must now operate and considered the change somewhat inevitable because of this (and the large reduction in incident numbers):

*The budget is going to continue to be reduced so they have to do it (Arnold Focus Group)*

*It's sensible given there have to be savings and after the statistics we've been shown. (Arnold Focus Group)*

33. Other reasons given for supporting the proposals were:

The lack of negative impact on response times due to the amount of neighbouring resource

*The response time for the second engine from another station seems very little different from now (South Forum)*

*The one that's going is retained and it takes longer for them to get going than, say, Stockhill anyway (Arnold Focus Group)*

*We've still got a fire engine there; we're not losing anything major and there is a lot of support available so the proposal is reasonable (Arnold Focus Group)*

*We are fortunate that we are close to that many fire engines (Arnold Focus Group)*

*The response time will still be very strong even if there were a couple of incidents because we are in the city and there is a lot of resource here. (Arnold Focus Group)*

Trust in the judgement of NFRS officers

*I trust the professionals to propose what is right. (South Forum)*

The significant unavailability of the Arnold RDS appliance

*Sometimes you can't even mobilise the retained one because of availability so it's not the resource it should be anyway (Arnold Focus Group)*

*It makes sense in an era of needing to make savings. It's available only half the year so you may as well take it away. (Arnold Focus Group)*

The potential for more radical solutions if this proposal is rejected:

*If we rejected this idea, would it be necessary to do something else? (South Forum)*

34. The overall sense of the meetings was that:

*If we said we didn't want to lose it we couldn't really come up with any good reason, just a gut feeling about not wanting to lose a local resource. We have to be reasonable and practical and if keeping it means that something else more valuable goes then that wouldn't be fair. (Arnold Focus Group)*

35. The importance of monitoring the situation (and reversing it if required) was, however, noted:

*How often do you re-check risk categories for different areas? (Arnold Focus Group)*

*Could we get a second engine back if it is really necessary? Will you continue to monitor the situation? (Arnold Focus Group)*

## West Bridgford Fire Station

### Context

36. Participants were informed of NFRS' proposal to remove the 12-hour fire engine from West Bridgford Fire Station on the following grounds:

Nottinghamshire has seen a large reduction in incidents over last six years, leading to an overprovision of fire engines in some areas (including West Bridgford)

West Bridgford is a low risk area: combined mobilisations by the two fire engines has reduced from 1,741 in 2008 to 1,364 in 2012 (and the appliances attended just 701 incidents in 2012)

Five of the six busiest areas attended by West Bridgford fire engines are outside West Bridgford

Risk levels can be managed by one wholetime engine with support from surrounding areas

NFRS has less money to spend and must review its resources.

## Participants' Views

37. In discussion, the questions asked clearly reflected some initial concern about the proposal, chiefly around:

The possible impact of fewer fire engines during simultaneous incidents

*If you send two engines to serious fires, will you be able to cover other fires effectively with a reduced number of vehicles?*

*What happens if there's a fire and the wholetime engine is out? (West Bridgford)*

The effect of the proposal on Nottingham City (given the frequency with which the West Bridgford appliances attend incidents there)

*Can you manage in the other areas without the West Bridgford fire engine...like in the city? (South Forum)*

*Have you done a conscientious consultation in the city about this – because 80% of the 'effect' is in the city not West Bridgford? (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

*Will the remaining cover be adequate for the city and West Bridgford? (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

The disruption caused by roadworks and their possible effect on response times

*Do you think other appliances will be able to get here in 10-12 minutes given the chaos in Highfields with the work on the tram system? (West Bridgford)*

The potential for risk levels to rise in the area in future

*Will the future trends in risk match the previous trends? (South Forum)*

*How far can you continue to reduce incidents? (City Forum)*

*What about the impact of new developments in the area? (West Bridgford)*

Whether this proposal represents the 'thin end of the wedge'

*Is there a potential that you could reduce the number of engines even further so that only Central has two? (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

*If the budget is cut again, does that mean that in a few years' time we'll be back here talking about taking the other engine away? (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

38. Other, less frequent questions and concerns were around: the effect of the proposal on (and the views of) the West Bridgford firefighters; the risk of over-burdening remaining stations; whether a reduction in the number of available firefighters will reduce the amount of important prevention work undertaken; and whether the relocation of Central Fire Station will impact on fire risk and cover in West Bridgford. Some typical questions and comments were:

*What will happen to the staff concerned? Do the firefighters oppose the proposal?*  
(City Forum)

*Will the other stations be over-burdened or stressed by increased demand?* (West Bridgford Focus Group)

*It is a good thing to do more prevention work. Will this continue?* (West Bridgford Focus Group)

*Is the money for prevention ring-fenced or will that part of the service come under pressure too?* (West Bridgford)

*Would moving the Central Fire Station have a knock-on effect to West Bridgford?*  
(West Bridgford Focus Group)

39. Participants at one of the West Bridgford focus groups also questioned whether the proposal would be 'the right thing to do' even if NFRS was not driven by financial constraints:

*If it wasn't about cost, would it be the right thing to do?* (West Bridgford)

40. After discussion and clarification, the City forum unanimously endorsed the removal of the West Bridgford 12-hour fire engine, as did the overwhelming majority of participants at the South forum and the West Bridgford focus groups. In fact, across all of the groups that discussed this issue, only two people - one at the South forum and one at the West Bridgford focus groups - considered the proposal to be unreasonable ( a view mainly driven by concerns about further financial and thus service reductions in future) and there were two 'don't knows' at the West Bridgford focus groups.

41. The main reasons given for supporting the change were:

An understanding of the financial constraints within which NFRS must now operate

*Given the current situation in terms of funding, something has to happen* (West Bridgford Focus Group)

*It's easy to see why there needs to be savings and a logical argument has been made in respect to taking the second fire engine out* (West Bridgford Focus Group)

The fast response times from neighbouring stations

*Even if it comes from Central the response time will be quick* (West Bridgford Focus Group)

*It's not just about West Bridgford...we can use all the other resources in the city too*  
(West Bridgford)

The reduction in overtime costs (as the 12-hour engine is crewed on an overtime basis)

*The 12-hour overtime means substantial wage costs* (South Forum)

That it better matches resources to risk

*This seems to be a well thought through and professional attempt at making sure the proposals fall in one of the least impact areas* (West Bridgford)

*You need to be able to cover the risk effectively where there is most demand (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

*I think it's a valid, reasoned proposal, especially when you consider the risk map (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

Trust in NFRS to ensure it is 'doing the right thing'

*Some sort of reduction in appliances is inevitable because you haven't got the means to maintain everything you have. Something has to happen...and we trust that there's a professional job behind it all to make sure the proposals are the right ones (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

The potential for greater efficiency

*Will the remaining fire engines become more efficient because they will be busier and need a certain level of calls? (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

The potential for more radical solutions if this proposal is rejected:

*What will be the opportunity costs of not doing this? What would have to be done instead? (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

42. As at Arnold, the importance of monitoring the situation (and reversing it if required) was noted – and one participant suggested the need for a public education campaign to ensure the wider community is aware of the implications of the proposals:

*Could you test this proposal for, say, a year and could you reinstate it if necessary? (West Bridgford Focus Group)*

*Will there be a media campaign to reassure people that the service will be maintained at an acceptable level? (West Bridgford)*

## Conclusions

43. Almost two-thirds of survey respondents agreed with the proposed removal of the RDS fire engine from Arnold Fire Station – and just under six in ten with the proposed removal of the part-time fire engine from West Bridgford Fire Station.
44. This was supported by forum and focus group participants, who almost unanimously endorsed the two proposals given the financial constraints within which NFRS now has to operate – and the need to match resources to risk.
45. It should be noted, however, that although participants felt they could endorse the proposals under consideration, they did have significant concerns about the impact of any future funding reductions on NFRS:

*If there are even more public expenditure reductions, how will things continue in future? (South Forum)*





*This project was carried out in compliance with ISO 20252:2012.*