



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 16 February 2018

Purpose of Report:

To present to Members the outcomes of the consultation on mixed and alternative crewing and propose changes to the operational service delivery model.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : John Buckley
Chief Fire Officer

Tel : 0115 967 0880

Email : john.buckley@notts-fire.gov.uk

**Media Enquiries
Contact :** Therese Easom
(0115) 967 0880 therese.easom@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In response to reductions in grant funding and subsequent pressures on finances, the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented a report to the meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2016 entitled 'Sustainability Strategy for 2020' to consider and mitigate the long-term implications.
- 1.2 Part of the strategy was to consider changes to operational service delivery to maximise the availability of resources in line with risk and demand. Underlining this expectation was to avoid the reduction in the number of appliances and potential station closures, maintain the current crewing model of riding 'five and four' and at the same time generate efficiencies.
- 1.3 In pursuance of this aim, the CFO presented a report to the meeting of the Fire Authority on 22 September 2017 seeking approval from Members to consult the public on mixed and alternative crewing models.
- 1.4 The Authority agreed to consult on the proposals in line with their own consultation strategy. Consultation commenced on 25 September, for a period of 12 weeks, and closed on 17 December 2017. This report presents the outcomes of the consultation and proposes recommendations for changes to the service delivery model.
- 1.5 The Service completed a competitive procurement process and awarded a two-year contract to Opinion Research Services (ORS) for the supply of consultation services to support the Fire Authority around the Sustainability Strategy and the next integrated risk management plan (IRMP), currently being developed.
- 1.6 ORS will be in attendance at the Fire Authority meeting to present the findings of their report to Members and respond to questions.
- 1.7 Another consideration is that recent national reports on the fire and rescue service have alluded to the greater utilisation of retained staff, the necessity to create flexible crewing models to support a more diverse workforce, and the need to continually drive improvement. These will be areas of interest in the forthcoming inspection process.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 On advice from ORS the consultation has been wide ranging and used multiple opportunities for engagement. This has included printed and social media campaigns, communications with partners, direct correspondence with Councillors and MPs, an online questionnaire, public meetings, station and departmental visits and targeted forums.
- 2.2 The consultation process has resulted in 2,665 questionnaires completed, 89 attendees at focus groups, 11 individual responses being received, one standardised submission totalling 4,256 and a petition containing 2,375

signatures. In terms of engagement with members of the public this has been the most comprehensive consultation process to date, with the Service having undertaken several analyses to identify low or zero response areas, then subsequently developing more targeted consultation approaches.

- 2.3 The report on the consultation outcomes which has been produced by ORS is appended to this report in full (see Appendix A). In summary, it details the dates and activities undertaken and presents the sentiments and judgements of respondents and forum/focus group participants. It also includes some verbatim comments in an attempt to capture the view of respondents.

ALTERNATIVE CREWING

- 2.4 The consultation sought views on alternative crewing at all retained (RDS) stations enabling crews of less than four to attend smaller, lower risk incidents, as an alternative to crews responding from further afield.
- 2.5 The alternative crewing concept proved to be relatively uncontroversial. Responses to the questionnaires showed that 41% agreed with the proposal, while 53% disagreed. However, the focus groups and the written submissions almost unanimously supported the proposal. The standardised submission concluded that 94% strongly disagreed with all the proposals including alternative crewing.
- 2.6 Respondents recognised the difficulties of RDS availability during weekday traditional working hours, and supported the proposal to respond quicker due to the ability of the Service to manage risk. There was also recognition that this may help with motivation and retention of RDS staff if they are used more frequently in their local area.
- 2.7 There were some concerns raised by the proposal, one of which was that crews of two or three firefighters would become the norm. The CFO believes this concern can be mitigated by the ongoing work to improve recruitment and retention of RDS staff and enhanced performance management systems at the local level. There is also a commitment that crews of less than four will not be transposed to the wholetime duty system (WDS).
- 2.8 A further concern was that firefighters may be put under pressure to take risks without the capacity to mitigate the impact. This is addressed by the ability for Control Room staff to mobilise additional resources based on information gained, and through the development of robust risk assessments, procedures and tactics.
- 2.9 Furthermore, every large-scale incident commences with the attendance of initial crews who are required to identify risks and request additional resources if required. Incident commanders are well trained to deal with this dynamic situation whilst awaiting the arrival of oncoming resources.
- 2.10 It remains the view of the CFO that alternative crewing has the potential to positively impact on initial attendance times, use resources more efficiently and support the recruitment and retention of RDS staff. The concerns

identified are acknowledged but can be effectively managed by organisational policy and procedures.

MIXED CREWING

- 2.11 Since 2010 previous changes to the organisation have delivered savings in the region of £13m per annum. This has resulted in significant changes to managerial structures, support functions and the removal of six appliances. The Authority has previously indicated that they do not want to close fire stations, reduce the number of appliances or move away from the current crewing numbers on wholetime appliances.
- 2.12 Within these parameters, mixed crewing is designed to address a number of issues, namely, the 40% reduction in demand on operational resources over a sustained period of time; the difficulty in recruiting RDS firefighters to provide day-time cover, the changing demand between day and night-time activity; the need to support firefighters working to age 60, and a reduction in funding to the year 2020.
- 2.13 The consultation sought views on the introduction of mixed crewing at Ashfield, Retford and Worksop with the expectation that implementation at two of the three would deliver the necessary financial savings for the Fire Authority.
- 2.14 Responses to the questionnaires showed that 63% strongly disagreed with the proposals, while 22%-25% agreed, the variance in agreement being applicable to the different locations being considered (Retford 25%, Ashfield 23%, Worksop 22%).
- 2.15 The focus groups showed noticeable support for the principle of mixed crewing. Overall, across all the groups there was most support for implementing the change in Retford fire station and least support for doing so in Worksop; but opinion was divided. The standardised submission concluded that 94% strongly disagreed with all the proposals.
- 2.16 There is no doubt that this proposal has raised concerns through the consultation process, most notably that attendance times would increase significantly; that RDS availability is not reliable and that staff are not as well trained.
- 2.17 In terms of attendance times, this must be considered in the context of county wide management of risk. It is accepted that changing an appliance from being WDS to RDS crewed will increase attendance times by an average of five minutes, however this is for a small number of incidents, and will only affect one of the appliances attending. For context, at least two appliances are mobilised to property fires, and at least three are sent if there is a life risk.
- 2.18 There is also a perception that appliances are located at stations waiting to be called out, and will only respond in their local area. This is not the case as Control Room procedures ensure that the most appropriate and quickest

appliance is mobilised, even if that means it is provided from another authority.

- 2.19 In terms of availability of RDS appliances, this is an issue for the Service, but is predominantly during the weekday day-time periods. RDS availability is strong at night which reflects the changing demographics of society and the reduction in shift-workers generally. The CFO believes that recruitment of RDS staff to provide night-time cover will be significantly easier than securing cover during the daytime. Furthermore, some of the savings generated from the proposed implementation of mixed crewing will be re-invested in RDS sections across the county to increase their day-time capacity and resilience.
- 2.20 In response to the question of competence of RDS staff, they undergo the same robust selection, progression and training processes as their WDS colleagues. There are some minor differences in the scope of the equipment they use due to the very infrequent use of such specialist equipment. Where required, additional training will be delivered in these areas based on local risk.
- 2.21 What must also be considered is that of the 253 RDS staff currently employed, 59 are also WDS staff who hold 'dual contracts' with the Authority and a small number of others work for various local authority, airport or private fire and rescue services.
- 2.22 More than half of the appliances in the county are crewed by RDS firefighters, and there is no evidence to underpin the perception that response times or capability of crews is an issue in those areas.
- 2.23 There has also been concern raised over the proposed WDS shift time of 8am to 6pm. Although overall demand at the stations is low, the peak activity period does extend until approximately 9pm. This is acknowledged, however what must also be considered is the availability of RDS staff in the morning should the shift start later, the actual number of incidents that occur after 6pm, the impact of a permanent afternoon/evening shift on WDS staff and the ability to effectively manage transfer of resourcing between shift based and mixed crewing stations as and when required. This will be considered during the implementation stage as each RDS section is unique and the solution will need to be tailored locally.
- 2.24 The concept of mixed crewing (utilising WDS staff during the day and RDS staff at night) is not new, and has been successful within a number of fire and rescue services across the country for many years. Therefore, the CFO believes that mixed crewing could be implemented at all three sites proposed for consultation. This view is based on a number of factors including, the more effective and efficient resourcing of risk and demand; the need to consider alternative working arrangements for ageing firefighters; the need to invest in the resilience of RDS sections; and the requirement to respond to reductions in financial resources.
- 2.25 Although marginal, the hierarchy of responses through the consultation also align with the view of the CFO, in that the preference for change would be at

Retford and Ashfield fire stations and is therefore reflected in the recommendations of this report.

NEXT STEPS

- 2.26 If agreed, no redundancies will emerge through these proposals as any reductions required will be achieved through the normal turnover of staff.
- 2.27 Implementation of the proposals will commence immediately and will involve the recruitment and training of additional retained firefighters. Consultation with the wholetime workforce and their representatives regarding the movement of staff and the creation of the mixed crewing system will also be undertaken.
- 2.28 Alternative crewing will be in place within a few months, however the implementation of mixed crewing will be more complex and phased in over the next 6 to 12 months, with an expectation of being in place fully by April 2019.
- 2.29 At this stage it is not possible to accurately predict the final changes to the permanent establishment of retained and wholetime firefighters, however this will be considered during the implementation phase and proposed to the Authority for approval in-line with normal governance arrangements.
- 2.30 The proposed changes will reduce wholetime ridership costs by approximately £1m, however some finances will need to be re-invested to support the enhancement and resilience of retained sections and it is therefore anticipated that actual savings will be in the region of £800k per annum.
- 2.31 It is also recommended that periodic reviews are undertaken on the impact of Alternative and Mixed Crewing models and future reports are presented to the Fire Authority on the outcomes.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Even when utilising the local flexibility to raise Council Tax, the Authority this has a financial shortfall of £1.4m within the revenue budget that needs to be addressed. The proposals within this report will provide savings of approximately £800k when fully implemented.
- 3.2 Implementation of the proposals will commence immediately, however it is anticipated that it will be April 2019 before the £800k of savings will be fully realised. Reports will be presented throughout the next 12 months to provide updates on progress to Members and a review of the outcomes.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are significant human resources implications arising from any decision to change crewing arrangements. This will include the recruitment and training of additional RDS firefighters and changes to the working patterns of other staff.
- 4.2 Service policies will be followed to implement any agreed outcomes, which will include thorough consultation with individual employees and their representatives.
- 4.3 The proposed changes will require adjustments to the permanent establishment of both wholetime and retained firefighters. This will be fully identified through the implementation process and reported to the Fire Authority in due course for approval, in-line with normal governance arrangements.
- 4.4 It is important to note that no redundancies will result from these proposals as reductions within the wholetime establishment will be achieved through the normal turnover of staff.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

Equality impact assessments have been completed for both mixed and alternative crewing models and are attached at Appendix B.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The duty to consult the public is contained within the National Framework which is issued under Part 3, Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The consultation process that has been undertaken is considered robust and has followed the Authority's consultation framework.

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 proposed changes to crewing arrangements is based on a clear evidential framework and better aligns the available operational resources to demand and risk.

- 8.2 The Authority also has the responsibility to produce a balanced budget and ensure the financial future of the organisation is sustainable. The changes proposed in this report will assist in addressing the £1.4m deficit in the revenue budget.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

The Service will continue to utilise the most appropriate and quickest operational asset to attend and resolve operational incidents, even where that involves the use of assets from neighbouring services.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Approve the implementation of alternative crewing at all retained sections within the Service;
- 10.2 Approve the implementation of the mixed crewing model at both Ashfield and Retford fire stations;
- 10.3 Request that the Chief Fire Officer provide a future report on the amendments required to the permanent establishment of both retained and wholetime firefighter posts; and,
- 10.4 Request that periodic reviews are undertaken on the impact of alternative and mixed crewing, and that outcome reports are subsequently presented to the Fire Authority for consideration.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

Shaping Our Future 2017 Consultation Findings



Opinion Research Services

January 2018

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

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Opinion Research Services (ORS)
The Strand, Swansea, SA1 1AF

01792 535300 www.ors.org.uk

Spin-out company of Swansea University



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Acknowledgements

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

ORS was commissioned to conduct public consultation, and also to review all the outcomes from the wider consultation programme conducted by NFRS in connection with its *Shaping Our Future 2017* consultation. We hope our report will inform the future planning of the service.

We are grateful to all of those who completed the questionnaire or submitted a written submission, petition or online comment – and to those who took part in the focus groups. The latter were patient in listening to background information before entering positively into open discussions about challenging topics, with some controversial aspects in some cases. 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 and we particularly thank the officers with whom we have worked with for their collaboration and for attending the focus groups and meetings to answer people's many questions. Such meetings benefit considerably from such readiness to answer participants' questions fully and frankly, as in this case.

At all stages of the project, ORS's status as an independent organisation facilitating the consultation as fairly as possible was recognised and respected; this is an independent report and has not been influenced or shaped by NFRS or any other party. We are grateful for the trust, and we hope this report will contribute usefully to thinking about NFRS's development in difficult times.

The ORS Project Team

Project Design and Management

Kelly Lock

Kara Stedman

Fieldwork Management

Robyn Griffiths

James Greenwood

Focus Group Facilitators

Dale Hall

Kelly Lock

Report Authors

Kelly Lock

Dale Hall

Hannah Champion

Kara Stedman

Executive Summary and Conclusions

The Commission

1. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) and Nottinghamshire Fire Authority (NFA) are considering options for the future of fire and rescue services across the county in the context of steadily reducing risk (when measured in terms of the number of incidents) and financial constraints. The proposals under consideration were:

Introduce a Mixed Crewing¹ system at two of either Ashfield, Retford or Worksop Fire Stations; and

Introduce an Alternative Crewing² System at all NFRS on-call stations.

2. On the basis of our experience of the fire and rescue service and many statutory consultations, ORS was commissioned to undertake a programme of key consultation activities, and provide this interpretative report of findings.

Extensive Consultation

3. NFRS's consultation ran for 12 weeks from September 25th to December 17th 2017 and included the following elements:

Independent Research (conducted by ORS)

Advising on the nature and scope of the consultation;

Implementing and analysing responses to an online and paper version of an open consultation questionnaire;

Recruiting, facilitating and reporting eight deliberative focus groups with members of the public (in Worksop, Retford, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Newark, Ollerton, Carlton, Beeston and West Bridgford);

Facilitating and reporting two staff focus groups;

Designing informative and interactive presentation material suitable for use at the focus groups;

¹ Fire stations crewed utilising wholtime firefighters at periods of highest demand – in the day - and retained firefighters at periods of lowest demand – at night.

² Mobilising retained fire engines with crews of less than four firefighters, to attend smaller, lower risk incident types e.g. small bin or rubbish fires.

Analysis of written submissions and petitions received by NFRS - as well as other NFRS consultation activity; and

Producing an overall report of all consultation findings and guidance on the interpretation of the material.

NFRS Consultation

Providing details of the consultation proposals on the NFRS website: for example, via a 'website story' that was viewed 2,911 times in total; and a video by the Chief Fire Officer (henceforth CFO) that was viewed 277 times internally by staff;

Publicising the consultation in the local media (broadcast and print) and via: partner organisations; press releases, briefings and interviews; and social media;

Providing and distributing consultation documents to/at fire stations, community events and staff development days;

Providing information on the consultation and proposals to parish councils and local community organisations;

Meetings with Ashfield District Council and the Labour Group in Ashfield;

Responding to internal and external requests for further information or consultation documents³;

72 internal watch/team visits – and a meeting with middle managers; and

Development and distribution of: staff newsletters; staff bulletins; and a staff video.

4. NFRS was conscientious in its efforts to ensure engagement with a wide range of people across the whole of Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham. In addition to Facebook advertising targeted at specific demographics, the Service also undertook several analyses to identify low or zero response areas where they subsequently developed more targeted consultation strategies (document drops in certain areas of the City that had not thus far responded to the consultation for example).

³ For example, an internal request was made for another 10,000 documents: this was refused on the grounds that the consultation document was produced for use by ORS and the consultation team in line with NFRS's consultation strategy and consultation framework, and that the Service had planned methods for distributing them. Furthermore, the requester was informed that producing another 10,000 documents would be cost-prohibitive in terms of printing, postage and processing. The requester was asked instead to direct people to the NFRS website, and if they did not have the means to fill it in online to contact NFRS to request a paper copy of the consultation document and questionnaire.

5. ORS was involved in the consultation programme throughout and, as well as conducting its own research and analysis, has been given access to submissions, petitions and other material received during the consultations.

Summary of Consultation Strands

Open Questionnaire

6. The open consultation questionnaire (with an accompanying Consultation Document) was available online and as a hard copy between 25th September and 17th December 2017. In total, 2,665 questionnaires were completed (2,054 online and 611 by post).
7. It should be noted that while open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, they are not 'surveys' of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically or adventitiously and are more likely to be completed by motivated people while also being subject to influence by local campaigns. As such, because the respondent profile (as outlined in the full report) is an imperfect reflection of the Nottinghamshire population, its results must be interpreted carefully. This does not mean that the open questionnaire findings should be discounted: they are analysed in detail in this report and must be taken into account as a demonstration of the strength of feeling of residents who were motivated to put forward their views (and in many cases concerns) about the proposed changes.

Focus Groups with Members of the Public

8. NFRS and NFA commissioned a programme of eight focus groups with randomly selected members of the public across Nottinghamshire to allow local residents an opportunity to offer their views on the *Shaping Our Future 2017* proposals. These focus groups involved a total of 89 people and participants were recruited by ORS through random digit telephone dialling, with quota controls to ensure the relatively proportional representation of different demographic and socio-economic groups. Care was taken to ensure that no groups were disadvantaged in the recruitment process and participants were recompensed for their time and expenses in attending.
9. NFRS and NFA commissioned the focus group programme in order to fairly 'test' the acceptability or otherwise of their proposals in thoughtful, considered and deliberative or 'jury-style' meetings. The meetings began with detailed presentations by ORS outlining the principles of the proposals and the implications of the changes in the relevant areas. There were lengthy question and answer periods, followed by the residents' detailed and deliberative discussions of the issues.

Focus Groups with NFRS Staff

10. The attendance levels were lower than desired at the two staff focus groups, for a total of only 11 staff attended the two sessions, even though NFRS had undertaken a conscientious programme of invitations. Full and frank discussions were had at both sessions, though.

Written Submissions

11. In total, 11 written submissions were received. To make them readily accessible, they have been reviewed in the relevant chapter, though the main themes have been included in this summary.

Standardised Submissions

12. A joint standardised submission was submitted to NFRS by John Mann MP and the FBU on 8th December 2017. Overall, the responses came in three different formats and there were 4,256 of them: 4,096 were complete, 65 were incomplete and 95 were blank. 4,013 responses (94%) strongly disagreed with all proposals; 49 strongly agreed and two tended to agree with all proposals; and there were 30 mixed responses.

Submissions via Social Media

13. Many questions and comments were raised via social media (mainly Facebook), most of which were objections to the Mixed Crewing proposal and to FRS reductions more generally.

Petitions

14. Petitions are an important form of democratic expression and deserve to be noted carefully. In assessing what weight to give them in the overall interpretation, NFRS and NRA should consider whether:

The points of view expressed reflect general public opinion?

Those signing were reasonably well-informed about the issues?

The petition statements were fair and factual or emotive and exaggerated?

The signatures were spontaneous and self-motivated or the result of active and persuasive campaigns?

15. None of these criteria should be used to disqualify a petition from consideration; but they indicate what relative weight might be given to them when compared with other forms of consultation. In this case, there was one online petition entitled *'Save Ashfield's Firefighters'* that attracted 2,375 signatures.

Consultation Proportionate and Fair

16. The key legal and good practice requirements for proper consultation are based on the so-called Gunning Principles, which state that consultation should: be conducted at a formative

stage, before decisions are taken; allow sufficient time for people to participate and respond; provide the public and stakeholders with sufficient background information to allow them to consider the issues and any proposals intelligently and critically; and be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken.

17. Throughout the process, stakeholders were reassured that **no decisions** have yet been taken. Furthermore, the 12-week formal consultation period gave people **sufficient time** to participate - and through its consultation documents, website/other information and detailed presentations and meetings, NFRS and NFA sought to provide **sufficient information** for staff, stakeholders and residents to understand the proposals and to make informed judgements about them and the supporting evidence.
18. The final Gunning principle listed above is that consultation outcomes should be **properly taken into consideration** before authorities take their decisions. In this case, the draft ORS report will be available to Members almost two weeks prior to the February Fire Authority meeting, allowing sufficient time for consideration of its findings.
19. Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public and stakeholder views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully. Consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what are the right or best decisions in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions.
20. The key question is not, *Does the proposal have majority support?* but, *Are the reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of the proposals cogent?* Consultation is to inform authorities of issues and/or arguments and/or implications they might have overlooked; or to contribute to the re-evaluation of matters already known; or to reassess priorities and principles critically. However popular proposals might be, that does not itself mean they are feasible, safe, sustainable, reasonable and value-for-money; and unpopularity does not mean the reverse.

Consultation Findings

Mixed Crewing Proposal

Introduction

21. This section reviews the consultation outcomes on the Mixed Crewing proposals, including those from social media. In fact, the social media contributions concentrated overwhelmingly on Mixed Crewing rather than on Alternative Crewing, so this section is significantly longer than the corresponding section for Alternative Crewing. The key reason

for the difference is that Alternative Crewing was *relatively* uncontroversial whereas Mixed Crewing was a strongly contested proposal on social media.

Open Questionnaire

22. A quarter (25%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to replace a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm and 8am at **Retford Fire Station**, but **71% disagreed, including 63% who strongly disagreed**.
23. Just under a quarter (23%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to replace a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm and 8am at **Worksop Fire Station**, but **72% disagreed, including 63% who strongly disagreed**.
24. Over a fifth (22%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to replace a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm and 8am at **Ashfield Fire Station** but **73% disagreed, including 63% who strongly disagreed**.
25. Therefore, the results of the open questionnaire were very consistent in terms of the proportions supporting and opposing the different options.

Open Questionnaire: Open Text Comments

26. Most of the open text comments were made in relation to the Mixed Crewing proposal, and were predominantly around:

Concerns that crewing reductions will result in increased danger and risk of injury or death to both firefighters and the public (38% of respondents);

The need to maintain current provision due to general disagreement with the proposals (34%);

The possibility of fires and accidents occurring at any time and the need for a 24/7 fire station to cater for this (17%);

The possibility for and consequences of slower response times (17%);

The need to save money not being placed above the ability to save lives (11%);

Respective training levels among wholetime and on-call staff (6%);

Greater pressure on and workloads for on-call staff (5%); and

The potential for night-time fires to be more dangerous as they have more time to spread and the potential to remain undiscovered for longer (5%).

27. It should also be noted that 6% of respondents said that they generally agreed with the proposals/think they are a good idea.

Focus Groups with Members of the Public

28. The focus group findings contrast markedly with the responses to the open questionnaire. After detailed discussions, across the eight focus groups with randomly selected members of the public there was **demonstrable support for the principle of Mixed Crewing**.
29. In fact, the majorities in favour of Mixed Crewing were sometimes overwhelming (unanimous in one case and almost unanimous in others); and in other cases those in favour typically outnumbered those against by three-to-one. Some of the supporters liked the proposal because it:
- Matches resources to demand or need
 - Provides value for money
 - Is safe and feasible
 - Makes good use of Retained Duty System (henceforth RDS) firefighters
 - Allows WDS firefighters to do a bigger proportion of community fire safety work (during day-time shifts)
30. Other supporters of Mixed Crewing did so primarily on financial grounds (as a ‘necessary evil’) – but while accepting that the measure was safe and feasible on the evidence.
31. Those opposing the proposal (or saying they were ‘don’t knows’) were concerned above all about public safety at night and about demonstrably slower response times; but they were also concerned about NFRS’s ability to recruit and retain sufficient RDS staff – and also about the skills levels and training of RDS staff compared with wholetime firefighters.
32. More generally, the public felt that, if implemented, the change to Mixed Crewing should be monitored and reviewed to ensure its continued safety.
33. An important issue raised in many of the focus groups was that the proposed **6pm shift changeover time was inappropriate and wasteful** in the context of the demand curve for FRS responses – in which fire stations are busiest between about 3pm and 9pm. Having heard this point made in several groups, NFRS should consider this alongside both RDS availability and operational incident activity.
34. Compared with the fairly general support for the principle of Mixed Crewing, there were clear **divisions of opinion on which two of the three possible stations should be selected**.
35. The table on the next page shows the spread of opinion across all the groups. The green ticks indicate the stations (listed across the top) that were most supported for the implementation of the change in each of the discussion groups (which are listed on the left-hand side).

STATION OPTIONS				
	WORKSOP	RETFORD	ASHFIELD	MIXED
Worksop		✓		✓ (Worksop OR Ashfield)
Retford	✓		✓	
Ashfield	✓	✓		
Ollerton		✓		✓ (slightly more support for Worksop)
Carlton	✓	✓		
Beeston		✓	✓	
West Bridgford			✓	✓ (slightly more support for Worksop)
Newark			✓	✓ (Slightly more support for Retford)

36. Overall, across all the groups there was most support for implementing the change in Retford fire station and least support for doing so in Worksop; but opinion was very divided.
37. Part of the reason for the divisions of opinion was the ‘Not-in-my-backyard’ attitude, which meant that people could support the principle relatively enthusiastically on public policy grounds, but still object to its implementation in their own areas. So Retford proposed Worksop and Ashfield; Worksop proposed Retford; and Ashfield proposed Worksop and Retford! To some extent, at least, people disregarded the data on fire calls and mobilisations in favour of their own local stations.
38. Some important considerations mentioned in the discussions were:
 - It is probably undesirable to appear to ‘demote’ two stations by introducing Mixed Crewing in the same local authority area
 - Worksop is more ‘industrial’ and bigger than the others
 - Ashfield has more back-up support (from Mansfield) than the others
 - Retford has available support from Harworth.

Focus Groups with Staff

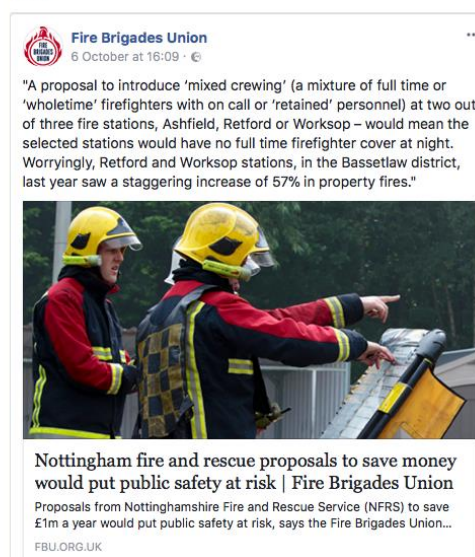
39. Two staff forums or focus groups were arranged by NFRS, but despite the organisation's best efforts a total of only 11 firefighters attended – five in the northern group meeting and six in the southern one. It is not possible to know how representative these 11 RDS and WDS firefighters were of the whole organisation, but their comments deserve careful notice.
40. Overall, the focus groups with staff also contrasted with the findings of the open questionnaire and tended towards support, like the opinions in the public focus groups.
41. Despite some scepticism about the incident reduction data on which NFRS relies, and also about the financial factors behind the policies, the southern discussion group strongly supported Mixed Crewing in principle, by a majority of five-to-one. In contrast, the northern group was less positive and opposed the proposal by four-to-one.
42. Those in favour of Mixed Crewing in the south emphasised the opportunities it could give to WDS firefighters who wish to work days only, and they suggested there might be transfer applications to do that. Those opposing the proposal in the north stressed the potential for RDS recruitment and retention difficulties, and also questioned whether on-call firefighters would accept multiple night-time calls-out.
43. Overall, then, **on the principle of Mixed Crewing, there was a division of opinion in the two small staff groups, but with a small majority in favour.** Both groups, though, thought that RDS recruitment could be improved if there were more flexible contracts; and they also thought that WDS firefighters should be allowed to have dual contracts in order to provide cover on the stations at night.
44. In terms of where Mixed Crewing should be implemented, both groups thought that **Ashfield and Retford are the most appropriate stations.**

Written and Other Communications (including Social Media)

45. Only 11 written submissions were received and **most were opposed** to the introduction of Mixed Crewing.
46. Seven submissions (from John Mann MP; Ollerton & Boughton Town Council; Rampton Parish Council; Headon-cum-Upton, Grove and Stokeham Parish Council; Selston Parish Council; Mr Ray Young [Selston Parish Council and Chairman of Ashfield and Sherwood UKIP Branch]; and an individual resident) objected to the Mixed Crewing proposal, mainly because of longer night-time response times; the potential threats to public safety; and the possible difficulties with on-call availability, recruitment and retention.
47. Rampton and Headon-cum-Upton, Grove and Stokeham Parish Councils rejected NFRS's argument that that between 6pm and 8pm is its period of lowest demand and suggest that if the Service must introduce Mixed Crewing, it should not do so from 6pm but between 12:30am and 8:30am – the 'true low demand period'. (The shift changeover time was also a matter of concern in the public focus groups.) It is unclear as to whether the Councils would

continue to oppose Mixed Crewing on this basis, but it would be safe to assume that an amended changeover time would mitigate against at least some of their anxieties in relation to longer response times and public safety.

48. NFRS undertook a conscientious **Facebook** campaign to publicise its ideas and proposals via ten rounds of Facebook adverts to large targeted audiences – and it appears that a video by the CFO was ‘viewed’ 29,000 times. NFRS also used Twitter, which reached 32,800 people and You Tube, on which the CFO’s video was viewed 4,200 times.
49. In general, the **social media debate** (mainly on Facebook) focused almost exclusively on Mixed Crewing. For example, there was a wide range of Facebook posts opposing the NFRS proposals – most notably from the FBU, John Mann, MP, Gloria De Piero, MP, Save Our Firefighters, and Keep Retford Fire Station. An example FBU post was:



50. Posts like this (which refers to an alleged 57% increase in property fires) generated a **significant number of comments**. Some were general objections to FRS (and other emergency service) reductions, whereas the vast majority objected to FRS reductions generally and to Mixed Crewing specifically. The most common concerns were around the on-call system and its inherently lengthier response times; and it was frequently claimed that retained crews may not be as highly trained as wholetime crews; are often ‘off-the run’; and are difficult to recruit and retain; and, in some cases, take longer than five minutes to turn-out.
51. There was, though, some Facebook support for the proposals as the ‘lesser of two evils’ (better than removing stations or appliances in their entirety) and recognition that NFRS must look at alternative forms of fire cover given the financial constraints within which it is operating. There was some support for on-call fire cover as an efficient and economic system that is increasingly important one in times of financial austerity.

Petitions

52. As far as we know, only one petition was organised during the consultation. The online petition entitled 'Save Ashfield's Firefighters' attracted 2,375 signatures and was organised by Ashfield Independents. The following by Cllr Jason Zadrozny formed part of the information sheet for the petition and was likely seen as being authoritative due to his position on the Fire Authority:

Councillor Jason Zadrozny, a member of the Fire Authority said, "Any decision to reduce the service at Ashfield Fire Station could cost lives. It's that serious! Reducing the service would add in at least 5 minutes to attend any incident - the crucial life saving time as far as I'm concerned. Ashfield Independents are today launching a campaign to retain all services at Ashfield Fire Station. I would encourage everybody to get involved in the consultation and send a clear message that there must be no cuts!"

53. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this campaigning petition also attracted a significant number of comments. In addition to many objections to emergency service reductions, the most common were that: the proposed crewing changes could cost lives as a result of longer response times; the need to make savings is being put above people's safety; Ashfield is a busy station and thus warrants a 24/7 crew; the station is strategically placed to respond to incidents in Ashfield, Sutton and on the M1 and A38 (and to support Mansfield Fire Station); Ashfield has a growing population that needs more than 12 firefighters to adequately serve it; the remaining crew members could become over-stressed; and the on-call system can be unreliable regarding availability.
54. The petition is clearly important in indicating public anxiety about aspects of the proposed changes and NFRS will treat it seriously. Nonetheless, it should be noted that petitions can exaggerate general public sentiments if organised by motivated opponents using emotive language; and in this case the local campaign had the authority of a NFA member behind it. So petitions should never be disregarded or discredited, for they show local feelings; but they should be interpreted in context.

Standardised Submissions

55. A joint standardised submission (in three different formats) was submitted to NFRS by John Mann MP and the FBU on 8th December 2017. Overall, there were 4,096 complete responses. Of these, 94% strongly disagreed with all the proposals; only 49 strongly agreed and two tended to agree with all proposals.
56. Comments on the forms focused mainly on the need to retain a wholetime service at all the stations potentially affected, the possible risk to life as a result of longer response times, and the need for public safety to be put before financial savings. There was also a misconception among some respondents that fire stations are to close.

Alternative Crewing Proposal

Introduction

57. Because Alternative Crewing was *relatively* uncontroversial (whereas Mixed Crewing divided opinion markedly), this section is relatively brief (compared with the last), particularly because the social media contributions concentrated overwhelmingly on Mixed Crewing.

Open Questionnaire

58. **Two fifths (41%) of respondents agreed with the Alternative Crewing proposal while over half (53%) disagreed**, including 44% who strongly disagreed. Therefore, the support for Alternative Crewing in the open questionnaire was nearly twice as high as for Mixed Crewing.

Focus Groups with Members of the Public

59. The members of the public in the eight focus groups found the prospect of Alternative Crewing to be uncontroversial. In fact, that is an understatement since **the principle of crewing with less than four in appropriate circumstances was endorsed almost unanimously across all eight meetings**. People's main reasons for supporting the proposal were based on the:

Importance of getting fire engines quickly to emergencies from the nearest fire stations

Difficulties with RDS availability during working hours on weekdays

'Wastage' involved when two or three RDS firefighters are unable to turn out to an emergency (even in a support role) if the full crew compliment is not available

Fire Service's ability to manage the risks involved with clear health and safety rules and protocols for staff.

60. The (small) minority opposing the proposal were concerned above all that crews of two and three should not become the norm, and that firefighters might be put under pressure to take unwise risks by tackling a fire with too few crew and resources.

Focus Groups with Staff

61. The southern group of six firefighters clearly supported Alternative Crewing, by a majority of four-to-one, but in the norther group (of five) a majority of three were opposed. Overall, then, a **small majority of all the participants favoured Alternative Crewing**.
62. The dominant reasons for supporting the proposal were that response times will improve to many lesser incidents and better use will be made of available resources. Some felt that the public would be indignant if they knew that nearby fire engines with two or three crew members available were not responding in favour of engines coming from further away.

63. The dominant reason for opposing the proposal was that public and firefighter safety would be jeopardised: the latter might be sent to incidents that turned out to be too dangerous for a smaller team, while the public at the emergency scene might then pressurise the firefighters to ‘do something’ regardless of the dangers.

Written and Other Communications (including Social Media)

64. Two submissions (from Flintham and Wysall Parish Council and Shelford Parish Council also writing on behalf of Costock, Whatton and Plumtree Parish Councils) supported Alternative Crewing as a sensible move that will improve efficiency and reduce costs;
65. Two submissions (from Selston Parish Council and Mr Ray Young) objected to the proposal on the grounds that ‘smaller’ incidents could escalate, placing both firefighters and the public in danger. Furthermore, Ollerton & Boughton Town Council seeks reassurance that Alternative Crewing will not be used to attend house fires and RTCs in future.

Standardised Submissions

66. A joint standardised submission (in three different formats) was submitted to NFRS by John Mann MP and the FBU on 8th December 2017. Overall, there were 4,096 complete responses. Of these, 94% strongly disagreed with all the proposals; only 49 strongly agreed and two tended to agree with all proposals. While the submissions mentioned all the proposals, the comments on the forms focused mainly on Mixed Crewing and the need to retain a wholetime service at all the stations potentially affected.

Conclusions

Introduction

67. It is not the role of ORS to make policy recommendations or to go beyond the fact-based interpretation above. Ultimately, an overall assessment of the consultation will depend upon the Authority itself: its members will consider all the consultation elements in the context of all the other evidence available in order to assess the merits of the various opinions as the basis for public policy. The challenge for the Authority is to maintain public and professional confidence in the safety and resilience of NFRS services while also demonstrating that it can successfully deliver appropriate changes to balance its budget. We trust that this report and the following conclusions will make at least some contribution to that endeavour.

Range of Opinions and Assessment Criteria

68. The executive summary above has demonstrated a contrast between (on the one hand) the open questionnaire, petition, most of the submissions/written communications, and the views expressed on social media (that were generally very strongly opposed to the Mixed Crewing proposal) and (on the other hand) the public focus groups, the staff focus groups,

and some submissions that generally accepted the case for change. In this context, the Authority has to balance the outcomes of the different consultation methods.

- 69. When interpreting the findings, a key principle is that consultation is not a referendum: it is not a ‘numbers game’ in which the loudest or majority opinions should automatically prevail. The key issue is not whether most people agree or disagree with the proposals, but, *Are the reasons for their popularity or unpopularity cogent?* However popular or unpopular proposals might be, the Authority will want to consider if they are evidence-based, feasible, safe, sustainable, reasonable and value-for-money. The reasons for people’s views are well documented throughout this report so that the NFA may consider them when making its judgements.
- 70. As well as examining all the evidence and the cogency of opinions, NFA has to consider what weight to attach to each of the consultation elements. ORS suggests that in making its assessments the Authority should have regard to: whether views expressed reflected general public opinion; whether respondents were relatively well or poorly informed about the evidence; whether opinions were ‘thoughtful’ (based on personal deliberation) or the result of organised campaigns marshalling collective sentiments; whether the views expressed were cogent and evidence-based; and how many people were supportive or opposed.

RANGE OF OPINIONS		
	CONSULTATION ELEMENTS MAINLY IN FAVOUR/ACCEPTING of PROPOSALS	CONSULTATION ELEMENTS MAINLY AGAINST THE PROPOSALS
MIXED CREWING	Public focus groups Staff focus groups (majority)	Open questionnaire Staff focus groups (minority) Most of 11 submissions Most social media contributors Petitions and standardised submissions
ALTERNATIVE CREWING	Open questionnaire (large minority) Public focus groups Staff focus groups (majority) Some of 11 submissions	Open questionnaire (absolute majority) Staff focus groups (minority) Some social media contributors Standardised submissions

- 71. With some (allowable) over-simplification, it is possible to summarise the table above by saying that the quantitative elements (open questionnaire, petition and etc.) are opposed to the proposals (especially Mixed Crewing) whereas the deliberative elements (the public and to a large extent staff focus groups) are more supportive.

72. However, as we have said, numbers alone should not determine decisions, for the Fire Authority will consider all the evidence available alongside the consultation outcomes; and in considering the consultation outcomes it will compare the relative enthusiasm for the proposals in the eight public focus groups (and in one of the two staff groups) with the decided opposition evident in the other elements. In summary, the consultation does not 'prove' that the Fire Authority should go ahead with its draft proposals; but nor does the consultation work as a 'veto' on those proposals.

Project Overview

Opinion Research Services

73. Opinion Research Services (ORS) is a social research company that works mainly for the public sector to conduct important applied research in health, housing, local government, police and fire and rescue services across the UK. We have worked extensively with fire and rescue services (FRSs) across the UK since 1998. In 2004 we were appointed by the Fire Services Consultation Association (FSCA) as the sole approved provider of research and consultation services, under the terms of a National Framework Agreement. The contract was retendered in 2009 and ORS was reappointed once more as the sole approved provider.
74. While working with FRSs across the UK, ORS has specialised in designing, implementing and reporting employee, stakeholder and public consultation programmes for a wide range of integrated risk management plans (IRMPs) - in many cases covering controversial and sensitive issues. In addition, ORS has extensive experience of statutory consultations about education, health and housing, and many other issues, including budgetary consultations.

The Commission

75. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) and Nottinghamshire Fire Authority (NFA) are considering options for the future of fire and rescue services across the county in the context of steadily reducing risk (when measured in terms of the number of incidents) and financial constraints. The proposals under consideration were:

Introduce a Mixed Crewing⁴ system at two of either Ashfield, Retford or Worksop Fire Stations; and

Introduce an Alternative Crewing⁵ System at all NFRS on-call stations.

76. NFRS's consultation ran for 12 weeks from September 25th to December 17th 2017 and included the following elements:

Independent Research (conducted by ORS)

Advising on the nature and scope of the consultation;

Implementing and analysing responses to an online and paper version of an open consultation questionnaire;

⁴ Fire stations crewed utilising wholtime firefighters at periods of highest demand – in the day - and retained firefighters at periods of lowest demand – at night.

⁵ Mobilising retained fire engines with crews of less than four firefighters, to attend smaller, lower risk incident types e.g. small bin or rubbish fires.

Recruiting, facilitating and reporting eight deliberative focus groups with members of the public (in Worksop, Retford, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Newark, Ollerton, Carlton, Beeston and West Bridgford);

Facilitating and reporting two staff focus groups;

Designing informative and interactive presentation material suitable for use at the focus groups;

Analysis of written submissions and petitions received by NFRS - as well as other NFRS consultation activity; and

Producing an overall report of all consultation findings and guidance on the interpretation of the material.

NFRS Consultation

Providing details of the consultation proposals on the NFRS website: for example, via a 'website story' that was viewed **2,911** times in total; and a video by the Chief Fire Officer (henceforth CFO) that was viewed **277** times internally by staff;

Publicising the consultation in the local media (broadcast and print) and via: partner organisations; press releases, briefings and interviews; and social media;

Providing and distributing consultation documents to/at fire stations, community events and staff development days;

Providing information on the consultation and proposals to parish councils and local community organisations;

Meetings with Ashfield District Council and the Labour Group in Ashfield;

Responding to internal and external requests for further information or consultation documents⁶;

72 internal watch/team visits – and a meeting with middle managers; and

Distribution of staff newsletters and bulletins and a staff video.

77. It should also be noted that NFRS was conscientious in its efforts to ensure engagement with a wide range of people across the whole of Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham. In addition to Facebook advertising targeted at specific demographics, the

⁶ For example, an internal request was made for another 10,000 documents: this was refused on the grounds that the consultation document was produced for use by ORS and the consultation team in line with NFRS's consultation strategy and consultation framework, and that the Service had planned methods for distributing them. Furthermore, the requester was informed that producing another 10,000 documents would be cost-prohibitive in terms of printing, postage and processing. The requester was asked instead to direct people to the NFRS website, and if they did not have the means to fill it in online to contact NFRS to request a paper copy of the consultation document and questionnaire.

Service also undertook several analyses to identify low or zero response areas where they subsequently developed more targeted consultation strategies (document drops in certain areas of the City that had not thus far responded to the consultation for example).

- 78. ORS was involved in the consultation programme throughout and, as well as conducting its own research and analysis, has been given access to submissions, petitions and other material received during the consultations.

Consultation Methods

Open Questionnaire

- 79. The open consultation questionnaire (with an accompanying Consultation Document) was available online and as a hard copy between 25th September and 17th December 2017. 2,665 questionnaires were completed; 2,054 were submitted online and 611 by post.
- 80. The profile characteristics of respondents to the survey show that the majority of respondents were aged 55 or over, the gender split was almost equal and most (94%) were White. The highest proportion of respondents had heard about the consultation through social media (37%).

Focus Groups with Members of the Public

The Focus Groups

- 81. The meetings reported here used a ‘deliberative’ approach to encourage members of the public from across Nottinghamshire to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing their ideas in detail. The meetings lasted for just over two hours and in total there were 89 attendees. The programme of focus group meetings is shown below.

FOCUS GROUP LOCATIONS	DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Workshop	17 th October 2017	9
Retford	17 th October 2017	11
Ashfield	18 th October 2017	12
Ollerton	18 th October 2017	8
Carlton	31 st October 2017	12
Beeston	31 st October 2017	9
West Bridgford	1 st November 2017	14
Newark	1 st November 2017	14
TOTAL ATTENDEES		89

82. Participants were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS's Social Research Call Centre. Having been initially contacted by phone, all participants were then written to - to confirm the invitation and the arrangements; and those who agreed to come then received telephone or written reminders shortly before each meeting. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent and broadly representative of the wider community. Participant numbers were within the desired range for a focus group in all areas.
83. Overall, the public 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. 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 at the venues. The random telephone recruitment process was monitored to ensure social diversity in terms of a wide range of criteria – including, for example: gender; age; ethnicity; social grade; and disability/limiting long-term illness (LLTI).
84. Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, deliberative focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse members of the public the opportunity to participate actively. Because the meetings were inclusive, the outcomes (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions.

Background Information

85. The focus groups began, for the sake of context, with a concise review of NFRS's resources, incident levels (both overall and by station ground), strategic roles and finances, before *Shaping Our Future* proposals were considered in some detail. Discussion was stimulated via a presentation devised by ORS and NFRS to inform and stimulate discussion of the issues - and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they wished throughout the discussions.

Focus Groups with Staff

86. Attendance numbers were a little lower than desired at the staff forums (only 11 staff attended across the two sessions) – though NFRS undertook a conscientious programme of invitations. Full and frank discussions were had at both sessions.

Written Submissions

87. During the formal consultation process, 11 written submissions were received. The table overleaf shows the breakdown of contributors by type.

Type of Correspondent	Number of respondents
Town and Parish Councils	8
MP	1 (2 separate submissions)
Residents	2
Total	11

88. ORS has read all the written submissions and summarised them in the full report.

Standardised Submissions

89. A joint standardised submission was submitted to NFRS by John Mann MP and the FBU on 8th December 2017. The responses came in three different formats and overall there were 4,256 responses: 4,096 were complete, 65 were incomplete and 95 were blank. 4,013 responses (94%) strongly disagreed with all proposals; 49 strongly agreed and two tended to agree with all proposals; and there were 30 mixed responses.

Submissions via Social Media

90. Social media was regularly updated to encourage consultation feedback and to encourage members of the public and staff to complete the *Shaping Our Future 2017* questionnaire. Many questions and comments were raised (mainly Facebook), most of which were objections to the Mixed Crewing proposal. These have been summarised in the relevant chapter of this report

Petition

91. An online petition entitled ‘Save Ashfield’s Firefighters’ attracted 2,375 signatures.

Consultation Programme Proportional and Fair

92. The consultation programme was very conscientious, in the sense of being open, accessible and fair to members of the public, stakeholders and staff across Nottinghamshire: the consultation was proportional to the importance of the issues and conforms with good practice in its scale and the balance of elements included.

93. The key good practice requirements for proper consultation programmes are that they should:

Be conducted at a formative stage, before decisions are taken;

Allow sufficient time for people to participate and respond;

Provide the public and stakeholders with enough background information to allow them to consider the issues and any proposals intelligently and critically;
and

Be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken.

Taken together, these four elements do much to ensure the 'accountability' of public authorities, particularly the fourth; but this does not mean that consultations are referenda.

94. **Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully.** This does not mean that the majority views expressed in consultations should automatically decide public policy, for consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the right or best decision in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are very important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine decisions.
95. For the public bodies considering the outcomes of consultation, the key question is not *Which proposal has most support?* but, *Are the reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of the proposals cogent?* In this context, both NFRS/NFA and ORS were clear that this important consultation programme should include both 'open' and deliberative elements in order to both: provide many people with the opportunity to take part via the open questionnaire and written submission/petition routes; and promote informed engagement via the deliberative focus groups. There is thus no doubt that the consultation programme conforms to good practice by including both quantitative and qualitative methods through which people could participate and as a means for NFA and NFRS to understand the reasons for people's opinions.
96. As well as providing the public, stakeholders and staff with sufficient information to consider the proposals intelligently, NFRS and NFA have also conducted their consultation in a timely manner and are taking account of the outcomes before making a decision. Both the scale and nature of the programme compare very favourably with similar consultations undertaken by other fire and rescue services and public bodies.

The Report

97. This report reviews the sentiments and judgements of respondents and participants about the aforementioned proposals. 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.

Open Consultation Questionnaire

Introduction

98. The open consultation questionnaire (with an accompanying consultation document) was available online and as a hard copy for 12 weeks between 25th September and 17th December 2017. 2,665 questionnaires were completed; 2,054 were submitted online and 611 by post.
99. NFRS printed and distributed 4,000 consultation documents (with questionnaires, freepost envelopes and posters) to libraries, public buildings, fire stations, businesses, voluntary groups, partners and all emergency services. Further copies were also available on request and an online version was set up by ORS and was available on the NFRS website.

Interpretation of the Data

100. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers. Graphics are used in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts show the proportions (percentages) of residents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a ‘traffic light’ system in which:
- Green shades represent positive responses
 - Beige and purple/blue shades represent neither positive nor negative responses
 - Red shades represent negative responses
 - The bolder shades are used to highlight responses at the ‘extremes’, for example, very satisfied or very dissatisfied.

Need for Interpretation

101. Open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, but they are not ‘surveys’ of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically or adventitiously and are more likely to be completed by motivated people while also being subject to influence by local campaigns. As such, because the respondent profile is an imperfect reflection of the Nottinghamshire population, its results must be interpreted carefully.
102. Crucially though, this does not mean that the open questionnaire findings should be discounted: they are analysed in detail in this report and must be taken into account as a

demonstration of the strength of feeling of residents who were motivated to put forward their views (and in many cases concerns) about the proposed changes.

Respondent Profiles

103. The charts below outline the profile characteristics of respondents to the survey. They show that the majority of respondents were aged 55 or over (38%), the gender split was almost equal (51% male; 49% female) and most (94%) were White. The highest proportion of respondents had heard about the consultation through social media (37%).

Figure 1: Are you completing this questionnaire as an individual or as the representative of a company or organisation?
Base: All Respondents (2475)

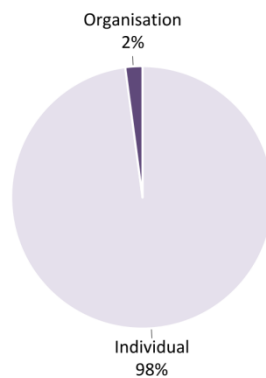


Figure 2: What best describes your gender? Base: All Respondents (2378)

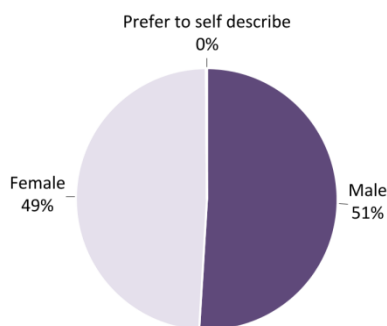


Figure 3: Do you identify as Trans? Base: All Respondents (2158)

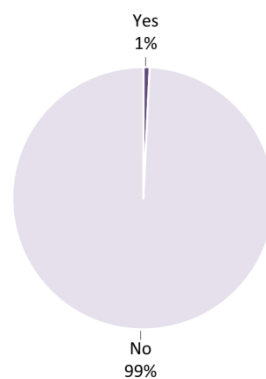


Figure 4: What was your age on your last birthday? Base: All Respondents (2455)

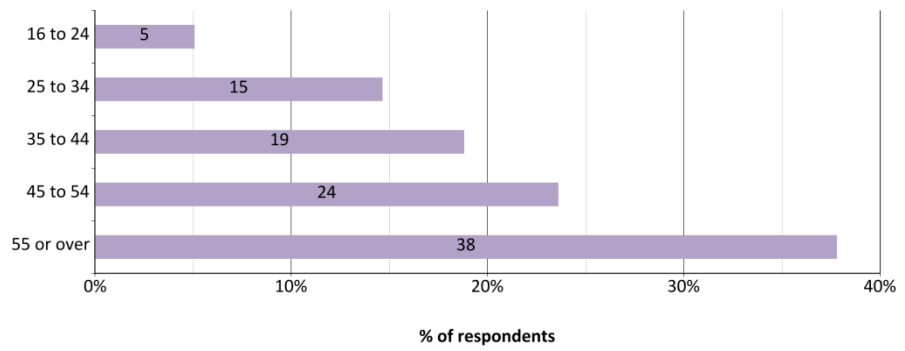


Figure 1: Do you have any long-standing illness or disability? Long-standing means anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time? Base: All Respondents (2264)

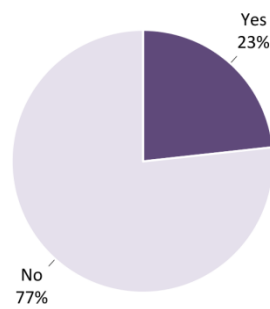


Figure 5: What is your ethnic group? Base: All Respondents (2454)

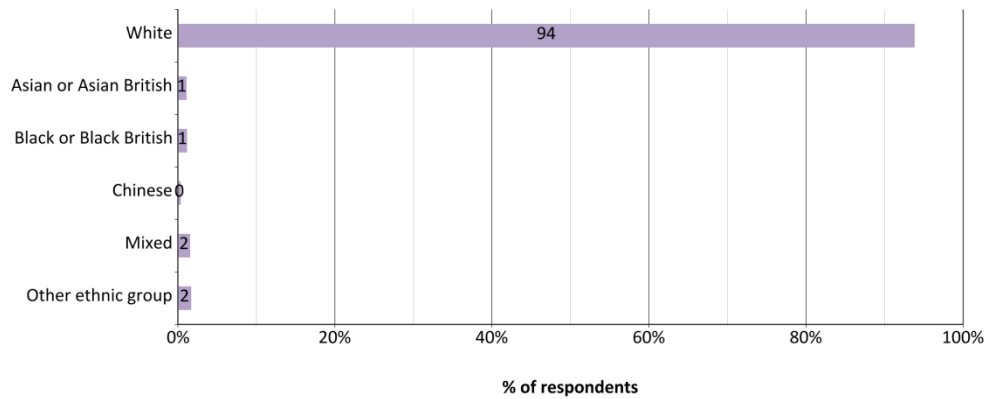


Figure 6: What is your religion/belief? Base: All Respondents (2173)

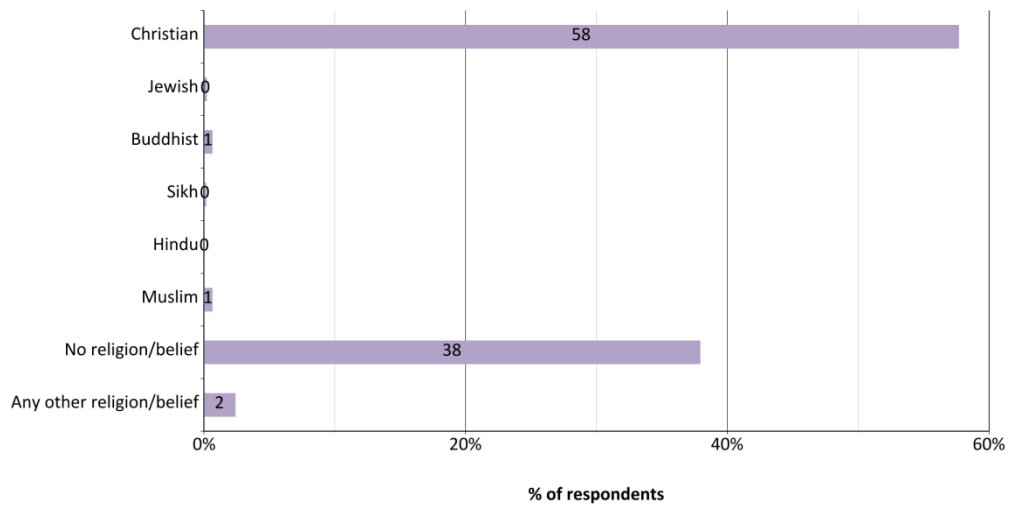


Figure 7: Which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself? Base: All Respondents (2192)

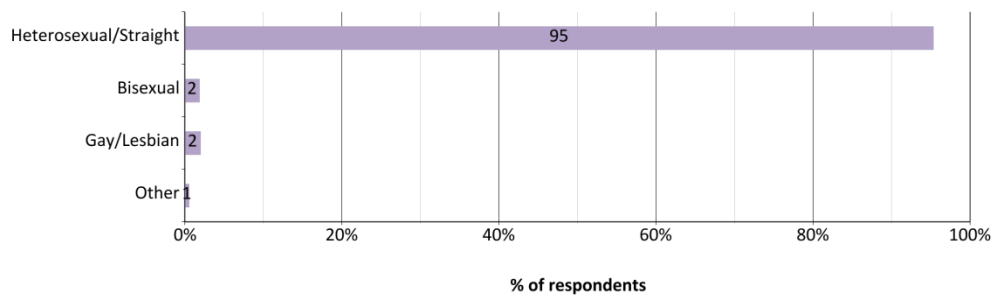
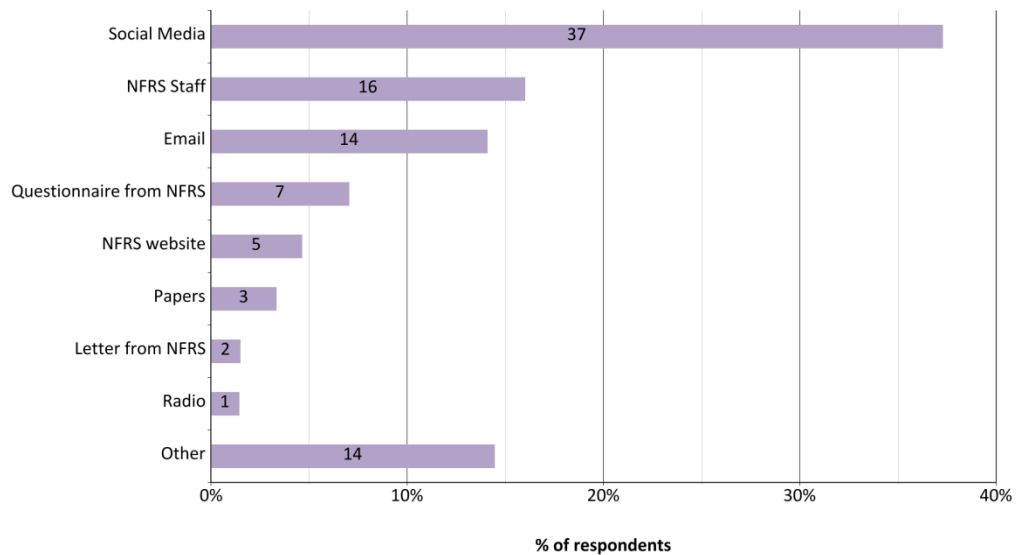


Figure 8: How did you hear about this consultation? Base: All Respondents (2445)



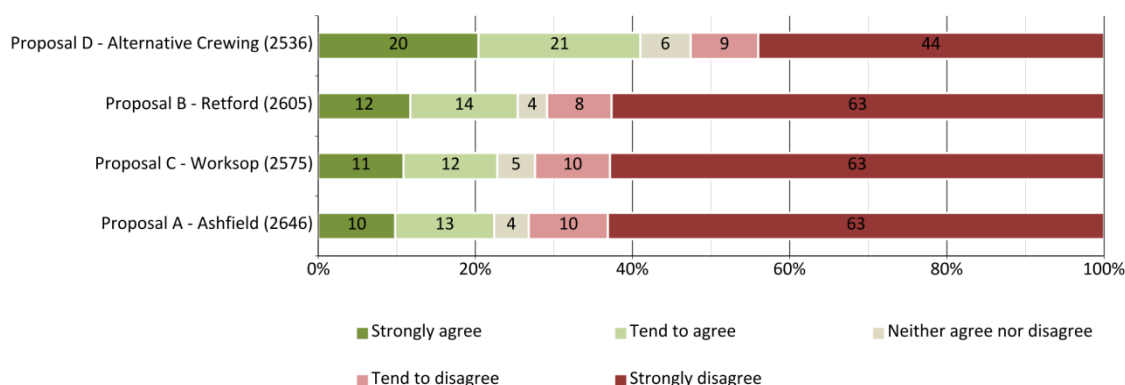
Duplicate and Co-ordinated Responses

104. Online questionnaires have to be open and accessible to all while minimising the possibility of multiple completions (by the same people) that distort the analysis. Therefore, while making it easy to complete the survey online, ORS monitors the IP addresses through which surveys are completed. After careful study of these responses, in which we looked at cookies and date stamps, as well as the nature of the answers; no responses were considered to be identical responses or appeared to be attempting to skew the results.

Main Findings

- 105. Results showed that the proposal with the highest proportion of agreement was Proposal D - to send the nearest appliance, with crews of less than four to lower risk / smaller incident types. Around two fifths (41%) of respondents agreed with this proposal while over half (53%) disagreed, including 44% who strongly disagreed.
- 106. The proposal which gained the second highest agreement was Proposal B - to replace a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm and 8am at Retford Fire Station. However only a quarter (25%) of respondents agreed with this proposal while around 7 in 10 (71%) disagreed, including over three-fifths (63%) who strongly disagreed.
- 107. Just under a quarter (23%) of respondents agreed with Proposal C - to replace a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm and 8am at Worksop Fire Station. Over 7 in 10 (72%) of respondents disagreed with this proposal, including over three-fifths (63%) who strongly disagreed.
- 108. The proposal which gained the least amount of support was Proposal A - to replace a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm and 8am at Ashfield Fire Station. Around a fifth (22%) of respondents agreed with this proposal while around three quarters (73%) disagreed, including over three-fifths (63%) who strongly disagreed.

Figure 9: Ranking the overall findings.

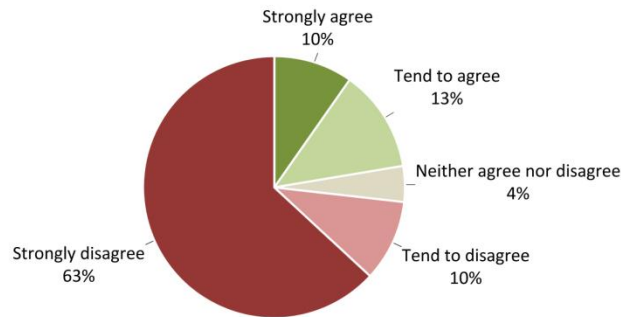


109. The following charts show the results for each proposal.

Proposal A: Ashfield

Figure 10: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the proposal to replace a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm and 8am at Ashfield Fire Station. Base: All respondents (2646)

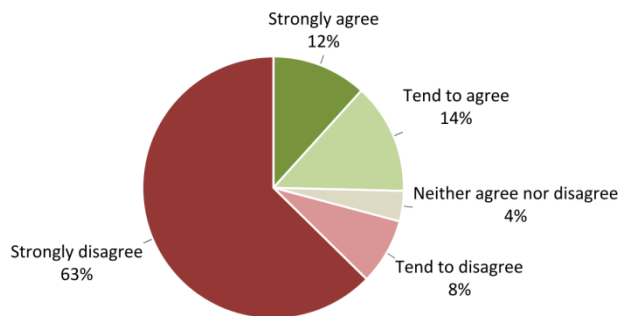
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of replacing a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine, between 6pm to 8am, at Ashfield Fire Station?



Proposal B: Retford

Figure 11: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the proposal to replace a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm and 8am at Retford Fire Station. Base: All respondents (2605)

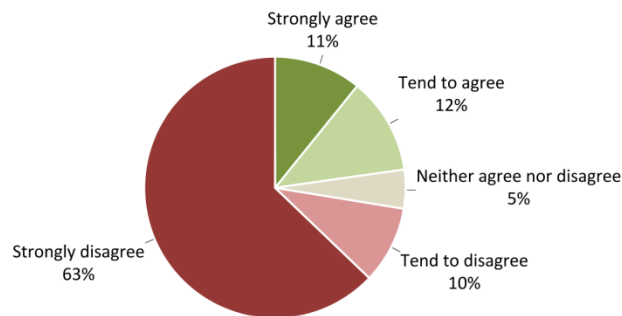
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of replacing a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine, between 6pm to 8am, at Retford Fire Station?



Proposal C: Worksop

Figure 12: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the proposal to replace a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm and 8am at Worksop Fire Station. Base: All respondents: (2572)

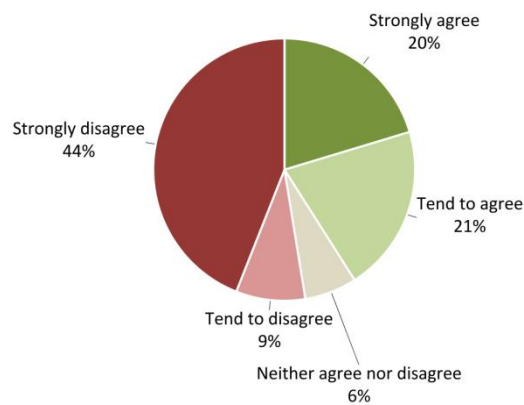
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of replacing a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine, between 6pm to 8am, at Worksop Fire Station?



Proposal D: Alternative Crewing

Figure 13: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the proposal to send the nearest appliance, with crews of less than four, to lower risk/smaller incident types. Base: All respondents (2536)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to send the nearest appliance, with crews of less than four, to lower risk/smaller incident types?



Additional Comments

110. Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments they wished to make on NFRS's proposals. The main themes that emerged, with some illustrative comments, are outlined below.

Figure 14: Further comments. Base: 637

Coded comment	% of respondents	Base
Reduction in crewing will result in an increased danger/risk of injury or death to both firefighters and public	38%	243
Generally disagree with the proposals/don't think they are a good idea/maintain current provision	34%	218
Fires/accidents can occur at any time/a fully equipped/fully manned station needs to be operational 24/7	17%	110
Proposals shouldn't be about money/the emergency services were created to save lives, not money/money should not be put over people's lives	11%	71
Proposals will lead to slower response times generally	10%	66
Proposals will result in longer response times due to retained staff having to travel to the station when the alarm is raised	7%	43
Retained staff do not have the same level of training i.e. can't tackle an internal fire, use breathing apparatus etc.	6%	39
Generally agree with the proposals/think they are a good idea	6%	38
Retained staff will be under greater pressure and work-load/therefore greater danger, due to fewer numbers and less experience	5%	33
People are more vulnerable at night/fires have more time to spread/remain undiscovered for longer	5%	31
Proposals will increase the area coverage of remaining FRS crews/resulting in slower response times to fires/RTC's etc.	4%	27
Savings need to be made in alternative ways	4%	27
Disagree with proposal B/Retford needs to maintain current provision	4%	26
Reduce senior management/wages/bureaucracy/office staff - non-essential lifesaving staff	4%	23
Need better recruitment process for retained staff	4%	23
Disagree with proposal A/Ashfield needs to maintain current provision	3%	20
Already pay high council tax/service should still be provided as pay council tax	3%	20
Reducing FRS capability to respond to incidents in an area with increasing population/building/traffic density etc. is reckless and dangerous	3%	19
Agree that savings need to be made/the FRS are the quietest of the emergency services/especially at night	3%	18
Need more information/not enough information available	3%	18
Disagree with proposal C/Worksop needs to maintain current provision	3%	16
Disagree with proposal D/don't want nearest appliance with crew of less than four to attend lower risk/smaller incidents	3%	16
Cuts will increase workload and pressure on existing staff/some stations already struggle to cover the crewing of the night time retained service	3%	16
Need more firefighters not less	2%	13

Agree with proposal D/crews of 4 or less should be fine to cover small/minor incidents	2%	12
Happy to pay more council tax/increase council tax to maintain service	2%	12
Proposals will lead to reduced service in the north of Nottinghamshire/the north will be isolated	2%	11
Firefighters do an excellent job	1%	9
Proposals will result in worse pay/conditions for firefighters	1%	8
Alternative proposal	1%	8
Proposals mean response times will vary area to area/emergency service postcode lottery is not acceptable when injury or loss of life is possible	1%	7
Other criticism of consultation	1%	7
Smaller crews (4 or less) should use smaller, appropriately equipped, rapid response vehicles/not large appliances (5+ crew)	<1%	3
Agree with proposals if reduction was no less than crews of 3	<1%	3
Agree with proposal A/happy for Ashfield to have retained fire engine between 6pm to 8am	<1%	2
Agree with proposal B/happy for Retford to have retained fire engine between 6pm to 8am	<1%	2
Agree with proposal C/happy for Worksop to have retained fire engine between 6pm to 8am	<1%	1
This is just a tick box exercise/decisions have already been made	<1%	1
Interesting comment	<1%	1
Other	16%	102

111. Around two-fifths (38%) of respondents were concerned that crewing reductions will result in increased danger and risk of injury or death to both firefighters and public:

Any reduction in crew levels and response time attending incidents would place added dangers to the firefighters and the public. Time is the main factor in fighting fires and evacuating members of the public. An appliance with a reduced crew does not enable correct safety standards to be carried out. The crew would have to wait for another crew to arrive before enabling them to do their job. Fire and rescue services are not a profit making business' they are there to offer help in an emergency. The public and the crews deserve a quick response with enough members to carry out their job in safe and efficient manner

At a time when, ambulances are being reduced, A&E's at busting point, and police under similar pressures, reducing fire crews is increasing the public's risk, especially so close to A1, where there are many fatal RTC's still happening

This is a very dangerous proposal that could cause firefighter and public deaths.

112. Around a third (34%) generally disagreed with the proposals and wished to maintain current provision:

For the safety of the inhabitants of Retford & environment I feel it's essential to maintain the current level of fire & rescue availability

As a tax payer in Nottinghamshire I strongly disagree with the proposals. Time is of the essence at fire related incidents. To remove whole time fire cover at night is a total disgrace and should never be allowed to happen. There has to be alternative ways to save money? Manning retained with three is dangerous and totally unacceptable

I strongly disagree with the proposals, the turnout time would double and the fire would have intensified while waiting for the crew to respond resulting in more fire deaths.

113. Just less than a fifth (17%) said that incidents can occur at any time and that a 24/7 fire station is required to cater for this:

I think retaining a 24/7 full time service within our areas is paramount to public safety and protection. While it may be evident that there is a lower need overnight for fire services, the nature of your work is unpredictable and ensuring a full time service is the only way to do that effectively

In my experience more calls may happen during the day, however more deaths have occurred during the night. All large fires start as small fires, getting a full crew there initially often helps.

114. Around 1 in 10 (11%) respondents said that the need to save money should not be placed above the ability to save lives:

Any fire service is an insurance. We have to pay for it or live with the consequences. How can anyone decide what is low risk and what is not? A fridge catching fire turned out to be a disaster. Lives are more important than money - surely?

Money should not be an issue when it comes to minimising risk and ensuring the safety of the public.

115. Around 1 in 10 (10%) respondents said that proposals will lead to slower response times generally:

Any reduction in turnout times is gambling with the safety of people in the community. Crews turning out with less than the minimum is endangering the safety of the crew

I believe just having retained fire fighters overnight is an accident waiting to happen, it will increase response time increasing the risk for injury or death to both the public and fire service, I would much rather have an increase in my fire service council tax bill than lose manned overnight stations.

116. 7% of respondents said that the proposals will result in longer response times due to retained staff having to travel to the station when the alarm is raised:

Changing to retained cover at night will compromise safety, due to longer response times due to retained travel times, bad weather, lack of sufficient retained staff to man two appliances. Lack of skills/experience on retained crews as full time crews attend more incidences

Living out in the villages in North Nottingham means that everything takes so much longer therefore waiting for retained fire fighters is so much longer.

117. 6% of respondents said that on-call staff do not have the same level of training as wholetime staff:

Retained crew do not have the experience or regular training as whole time do. Yes, they are trained, but it's nowhere near the training whole time crew receive

There is no way a retained crew can compare with the skills, training and competence of wholetime professional crew.

118. 6% of respondents said that they generally agree with the proposals:

Given the difficulties over budget, they seem sensible. It would be a good idea to review arrangements after 6 months and 18 months

I think this is an excellent proposal and can't think of any reason why the public would not support this, operationally there are obvious questions that might arise, but I think the evidence would suggest much better use of our RDs system and encourage greater/easier recruitment and maybe force a change in the contractual agreement when employing RDs that looks at targeting specific times during the day for cover.

119. 5% of respondents said that on-call staff will be under greater pressure due to increased workloads - and due to having fewer crew members at certain incidents (under Alternative Crewing):

I am led to believe that those on the retained duty system are already under pressure to perform with minimal training hours, and yet Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue would have them attend fires with fewer staff than those full time employees and therefore subjecting them to increased pressure to perform with fewer personnel. I want a full team available in my area, not a skeleton crew

Retained going out with less than 4 puts them at risk if they turn up and it's not a lower risk incident. This puts a morale pressure on them if they turn up to a house fire which spread from a rubbish bin. They will be waiting even longer for back up due to the cuts to wholetime crews at night.

120. 5% of respondents said that people are more vulnerable at night as fires have more time to spread and can remain undiscovered for longer:

Wholetime pumps should not be replaced by RDs pumps at night. You will be placing at least a 5min delay on the attendance times during the night, which is not acceptable as most domestic property fires happen at night

I do not agree with the removal of wholetime fire engines between 6pm and 8pm purely for the reason that house fires which occur while occupants are asleep are more likely to escalate quicker and become more severe meaning life is more likely to be at risk. Fires which occur at night need quicker attendance than a retained fire fighter could respond to due to the risk of loss of life. Any measure that increases your response time should not be considered.

121. Eight respondents gave alternative proposals. Some examples include:

I would suggest that having retained firemen covering the period from midnight to 10 am would be much more acceptable

The fire station on Watnall Road should be retained. Costing could be helped by setting up a minor injuries NHS drop in there. One fireman and a nurse could run it. Many people who now go to A&E used to pop down there when it was an ambulance station and get a cut bandaged, a child checked over when ill. Now these people go to A&E often calling an ambulance. Some joined up working would keep this fire station open and reduce call out times but give a very much needed facility in West Hucknall as there is no health provision in a huge area here

The solution is to make profitable use of crews time while they are at a fire station awaiting calls. They could do this by taking on routine administrative tasks for commercial concerns

Train fire crews to also be paramedics and look at combining ambulance and fire services, especially administration and possibly management to reduce costs. Review type of attendance needed for vehicle crashes, as you are reviewing need for need for full crew at some incidences does it need a full crew and full fire tender?

122. 19 respondents from organisations also gave comments. Some examples include:

Agree to the idea but also disagree. Not all jobs are the same. What if a bin fire actually turns out to be a skip on the side of a house and we are now looking at a house fire with persons reported. Would we commit crews?

I understand that the fire service needs to save money but reducing whole time personnel and having a longer turn out time for a fire engine turning up to an incident has to be a last resort?

*To reduce the time it takes the fire engine to turn out of the door is irresponsible.
Surely the money could be saved elsewhere.*

Focus Group Findings

Focus Groups with Members of the Public

Introduction

123. A total of 89 randomly selected members of the public from across Nottinghamshire attended eight 2.5 hour focus groups to discuss NFRS’s ‘Shaping Our Future 2017’ consultation proposals. The schedule of meetings was as follows:

FOCUS GROUP LOCATIONS	DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Worksop	17 th October 2017	9
Retford	17 th October 2017	11
Ashfield	18 th October 2017	12
Ollerton	18 th October 2017	8
Carlton	31 st October 2017	12
Beeston	31 st October 2017	9
West Bridgford	1 st November 2017	14
Newark	1 st November 2017	14
TOTAL ATTENDEES		89

124. The focus groups were independently facilitated by ORS and also attended by officers from NFRS to allow participants to ask specific questions about the Service. The group considered all the evidence included in the Service’s Consultation Document, while having a more detailed review of the fire and rescue service and its resources and roles. The meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening and responding openly to a wide range of evidence and issues.

Main Findings

Mixed Crewing

General Principle

125. There was some support across all groups for implementing Mixed Crewing. Specifically, those in support felt the system would align resources with (reduced) demand and reasoned that an increase to night-time response times is preferable to losing an appliance or fire station. They also recognised some of the potential advantages of wholetime firefighters

working day shifts only, such as having more time available to undertake community safety work:

My initial thought was to disagree but you can't argue against the figures and not losing any appliances (Ashfield)

I agree about making the best of constraints and resources. This is an approachable and reasonable way of going about it. I think it's a good proposal (Ashfield)

It's the first time I've heard of this Mixed Crewing but if they (Wholetime and Retained firefighters) both get the same training it makes sense (Beeston)

Full-time officers are more productive on the day shift when they can do community safety; but at night they can't do those sorts of things (Ollerton)

I think it's a good idea (Newark)

Response times might take longer but traffic could also slow you down anyway. (Newark)

126. Furthermore, some supporters explained that although they had initial doubts about some aspects of the proposal, these had been mitigated to some extent by the answers given by NFRS officers to the clarification questions asked at the sessions:

We were worried about the preventative service being impacted by this proposal but we have been reassured that this would continue (Worksop)

The people here tonight have reassured us that we are safe and they will get there as soon as they can. I know that no matter what we will have coverage. (Ashfield)

127. Many others (particularly in the potentially affected areas) ultimately accepted the proposal, though they tended to do so reluctantly, describing it as a 'necessary evil' in the current political and financial climate. Indeed, in the context of frustration about 'government cuts' and their impact on services like NFRS, the Mixed Crewing system was thought to be 'the least worst option' in response to having to make necessary savings:

The alternative is cuts in a serious way, the impact of which would be much greater. Therefore I think that this proposal for the next four years would be better than losing stations and appliances (Worksop)

I think it's a necessary evil. As long as the stats are looked at year-on-year and are addressed accordingly... (Beeston)

I understand the budgetary requirements and that it needs to be done (Newark)

I can understand why this is being put forward and it is the best of bad bunch. I do feel it's sad it's even being put up for consideration; I see it as a necessary evil. (Newark)

128. Despite the support or acceptance outlined above however, the following significant concerns were raised by many about the practicalities and consequences of implementing a Mixed Crewing system:

Public safety may be adversely impacted by longer night-time response times

Is there a difference in response times between wholetime and retained crewing? Does it have a huge impact on incidents and outcome? (Worksop)

There was a house set on fire near me at 4:30am and at least three engines turned up but if you do this proposal would the same level of response have happened? I'm just playing devil's advocate. If they'd have had to wait four minutes longer it could have been a lot worse. Fire cover is a postcode lottery isn't it? (Ashfield)

12 years ago I did have a house fire and the engines with full-time firefighters got there within in five minutes. They said my house was minutes away from being completely burnt down, which is why I am slightly concerned about the use of retained (Newark)

What about the impact on casualties and injuries? (Ollerton)

These figures don't give the impact on deaths and injuries; surely the risk of that is higher at night? (West Bridgford)

My worry is during the day if there is an incident I will notice and get everyone out. In the night I won't know straight away and it might be too late...will there be delay in someone getting to us? (Newark)

On-call recruitment and retention difficulties may result in insufficient firefighters to provide night-time cover

What happens if the RDS crews cannot attend incidents? (Carlton)

I've never heard of retained before and never seen it advertised...are you going to have enough of these people available to do it? It is sustainable? (Beeston)

Do you have enough retained staff living so close to the stations (i.e. within five minutes)? (Beeston)

Will it be possible to recruit the additional Retained firefighters? (Retford)

On-call firefighters may not be as well-trained or experienced in a wide range of incidents as wholetime firefighters (though it was acknowledged that the proposal may result in raised competency levels among on-call firefighters as they are exposed to more incidents) - and the night-time change may put undue pressure on them

Are the retained staff properly trained? (Worksop)

What is the relative competence of RDS and WDS firefighters? (Ollerton)

Do RDS firefighters have the same experience as full-time firefighters if they do less hours overall? (Carlton)

What about experience? Are retained going to have less experience? Will they be provided with the same training as wholetime? (Beeston)

How do retained stills compare to wholetime? Is there a lack of skill or leadership? A retained firefighter might have had a call out in 10 days. My friend is a retained firefighter and there is quite a lot of things he hasn't had experience with...I think in time this proposal could be a good thing because retained firefighters will gain more of this experience by being called out more, but I worry about the introductory period (Worksop)

The proposal may represent the 'thin end of the wedge' in terms of the need for further reductions in future

It would be ok for right now, but what about 12 months down the line? What if this starts off a spiral effect of more and more cuts to the frontline service? (Worksop)

Where could this end? Could there be many more cuts? (Ollerton)

I think it's worrying that this might go ahead but then down the line they make further cuts... (Newark)

129. More generally, there were questions around: how the three stations under consideration had been selected; whether firefighters and their unions agree with the proposal; whether, if implemented, the proposed changes would be trialled in the first instance; how NFRS's remaining required savings will be made; whether the cost of running the affected on-call appliances will increase; and whether any changes, if implemented, will be subject to proper review in future.

130. In relation to the concerns raised, after thorough explanation and discussion of the issues, a reasonable proportion of those expressing them said they felt less anxious about the Mixed Crewing proposal. However, a minority (again mainly in the potentially affected areas) remained opposed to what they viewed as a response to needing to make savings, and said that financial constraints and incident figures should not be a consideration in relation to the emergency services and public safety:

I can't really think of any advantages to it (Worksop)

I don't agree with the principle anyway...how much do we value these services? (Ashfield)

Can't government see what they're doing by all these cuts?! (Worksop)

It's just all cuts, cuts, cuts. (Worksop)

The Options

131. Although most participants either supported or, more commonly, accepted the idea of introducing Mixed Crewing, opinion around which two of three stations (Ashfield, Retford or Worksop) it should potentially be introduced at varied between the eight groups and indeed between individuals in each area. Unsurprisingly and understandably, the *majority* of participants from the potentially affected areas opted for their local station to retain its current crewing system (though it is worth noting that this was *not* the case for around half of the Worksop group, who could accept the change being implemented at their local station). In fact, the theme that *it is acceptable to do it there, but not here* was a recurring one across all the groups.
132. As for opinion among those whose local stations would *not* be affected by any changes, there was majority support for Mixed Crewing at Ashfield at the Beeston, West Bridgford and Newark groups, and while Beeston preferred Retford as the second station, views in the other two groups were more evenly split. The general consensus at Ollerton and Carlton was that Mixed Crewing should be introduced at Retford and Worksop.
133. The table below shows the relative support for each option.

	STATION OPTIONS			
	WORKSOP	RETFORD	ASHFIELD	MIXED
Worksop		✓		✓ (Worksop OR Ashfield)
Retford	✓		✓	
Ashfield	✓	✓		
Ollerton		✓		✓ (slightly more support for Worksop)
Carlton	✓	✓		
Beeston		✓	✓	
West Bridgford			✓	✓ (slightly more support for Worksop)
Newark			✓	✓ (Slightly more support for Retford)

Ashfield

134. Despite the Ashfield group being supportive of the proposal in general, participants objected to Mixed Crewing at their local station because its crews respond to more incidents and it covers a larger population than **Retford and Worksop**:

We've got loads more incidents in Ashfield! We are also going to be affected more by response times so why are we even in the mix for this? (Ashfield)

How many households do you cover in Ashfield compared to Retford? Surely population correlates to risk? (Ashfield)

Purely on mathematics it shouldn't be Ashfield (Ashfield)

Obviously there is an element of wanting to protect our own backyard but we're looking at 1.1% more incidents being affected here compared to 0.4 and 0.5. (Ashfield)

135. That said, a few said that they could accept an increase in response times if Mixed Crewing was introduced at Ashfield. They reasoned that the 1.1% of incidents that would be affected by the change is still a relatively small proportion and that what is proposed would be preferable to more significant frontline cuts:

I think if we're all going to get covered in nine minutes then I accept it. I trust the Fire and Rescue Service to make a good moral judgement (Ashfield)

I accept the four minutes; I think response time depends on time of day anyway. 40% of incidents are false alarms and if four minutes saves the money I would rather this than losing an appliance. (Ashfield)

Worksop

136. Around half of Worksop participants reasoned that Mixed Crewing should be implemented at the stations covering the least populated areas as they are at less risk and therefore will not be as affected by increased response times. In this context, they suggested that Ashfield should retain its current crewing system and that Mixed Crewing should be introduced at **Retford and Worksop**.
137. Though the other half agreed that **Retford** should move to Mixed Crewing because it '*seems to be at lower risk*', they argued that it would make '*more sense*' for **Ashfield** to do so too because it is in closer proximity to neighbouring 'back-up' stations than Worksop. There was also concern about the new number of new houses being built in and around Worksop (in Harworth for example).

Retford

138. Despite some recognition that Retford is a lower risk area than Worksop, it may not be surprising that in Retford twice as many residents favoured introducing Mixed Crewing in Ashfield and Worksop than at Retford.
139. Despite this, and while there was considerable scrutiny across the whole group of the likely impact of the proposal on response times locally, there was also a recognition among some that the proposal for Mixed Crewing might be legitimate and reasonable in Retford in the context of actual risk levels - for example:

It doesn't make sense to protect Retford at the expense of Ashfield and Worksop (Retford)

Worksop has more industry and risk than Retford, and Retford is smaller, so the Worksop station is more important (Retford)

Retford could rely on Worksop and Ashfield could rely on Mansfield [for back-up support] so it is feasible. (Retford)

140. One participant questioned why, if it is considered safe and feasible to introduce Mixed Crewing at each of the three stations, NFRS is proposing to do so at only two - and another was of the view that the crewing system at the third would eventually be changed anyway:

Why are you only considering two of the three stations if it is safe and feasible in all of them?

You will probably have to change the third station in the following year, anyway!

However, many others noted that all three of the stations being considered are in the north of Nottinghamshire, so they could see that it might be excessive for all of them to be changed at once.

Ollerton and Carlton

141. Most of those at the Ollerton group felt that **Retford** should be one of the Mixed Crewed stations, but the 'vote' was very close between the other two. The majority at Carlton felt it should be implemented at **Retford and Worksop**.

Beeston

142. The majority of Beeston participants ultimately agreed that Mixed Crewing should be implemented at **Ashfield and Retford** fire stations. They argued that Worksop station covers a larger area than Retford and is '*industrialised with lots of business*', while Ashfield is in closer proximity to other stations for support:

I would go with Ashfield & Retford; Worksop is a bigger area (Beeston)

Based upon current stats I would also go for Ashfield and Retford (Beeston)

It has obviously been very well thought out and I agree it should be Ashfield and Retford. (Beeston)

143. Interestingly, some participants said they would have initially supported change at Worksop rather than Ashfield fire station simply because the latter attends a larger number of incidents, but explained that they had changed their view after hearing others' arguments as outlined above:

I was towards Worksop and Retford too but now I'm thinking Ashfield and Retford too! (Beeston)

West Bridgford

144. Most of the West Bridgford group supported the introduction of Mixed Crewing at **Ashfield**, mainly because it is better located to receive cover and support from other stations both within Nottinghamshire and in Derbyshire. Views on which should be the second station were more mixed, with only one more participant choosing Worksop than Retford. Interestingly, one participant felt that the proposals are so 'reasonable' that they asked 'why not implement the change at all three stations?'

Newark

145. Similarly to West Bridgford and Beeston, nearly all Newark participants felt that a Mixed Crewing system should be introduced at **Ashfield** because of its close proximity to Derbyshire and other Nottinghamshire fire stations such as Mansfield. However, participants were more undecided as to whether Retford or Worksop should be the second station: while some felt they did not have enough knowledge of the two areas to make a judgement, others claimed that implementing the change at either station would leave the north of the county without sufficient night-time back-up because neither has the neighbouring support that Ashfield has:

Worksop and Retford don't have much else nearby, but Ashfield does have Mansfield (Newark)

I don't know the geography well but although Ashfield is the busiest they have the advantage of Mansfield whereas Worksop & Retford don't have as much support. Therefore I would choose Ashfield for definite but couldn't choose the second really (Newark)

I agree about Ashfield. The response time getting to the other two is a bit more of a worry...I am concerned about response times and the distance away from back-up; where will they get the support from? (Newark)

146. That said, most felt that if they had to make a decision they would prefer Mixed Crewing at Retford than Worksop because it attends fewer incidents and can be backed-up by Harworth if needed:

I agree with Ashfield but choosing both Worksop and Retford would leave north of county without cover. So I would choose Ashfield and then maybe Retford just based on the stats we've been given (Newark)

If it has to be done I would choose Ashfield because of the geography and Retford. I know Retford quite well and I know it looks like Harworth is far away but it isn't really. Also going on stats it also has the lower call outs. It's not like people will be left on their own after 6pm anyway; I know the cover will still be there. (Newark)

Other Issues and Further Suggestions

147. One very important point that emerged across several discussions was that the proposed 6pm shift changeover time is not really appropriate in the context of the '24-hour demand profile' which shows that most calls arise between about 3pm and 9pm. For example, one Retford resident said:

Six pm is not really the best time to change shifts; when you are at your busiest! (Retford)

This quotation reflects a recurrent theme as members of the public reflected about the proposals in detail. In fact, in Retford 10 of the 11 residents felt that the proposed 6pm changeover time should be reconsidered by NFRS.

148. In addition, the importance of continually monitoring any crewing system changes carefully was stressed - and some reasoned that a degree of overnight wholetime cover should be maintained during the transitional period to ensure the changes are made in a safe and efficient fashion.

Alternative Crewing

149. The prospect of mobilising RDS fire engines with crews of fewer than four was very generally considered to be relatively uncontroversial. Indeed, there was almost unanimous support for the principle of Alternative Crewing (in which [depending on the precise circumstances] fewer than four firefighters might ride the fire engine either as the first response engine or in support of others) across all eight groups⁷:

I think its fine and reasonable...one of the best solutions they have (Worksop)

This proposal is common sense (Beeston)

It's a no brainer (Ashfield)

It's a good idea. (Newark)

⁷ Participants were informed that three RDS firefighters would not become the 'new norm'; the target for most incidents would be four, but fewer would be acceptable" for less serious incidents.

150. All groups readily understood the problems of maintaining sufficient on-call cover across all relevant stations on working weekdays, and they were interested in any options to correct this problem (which they acknowledged is unknown to most members of the public, even in on-call areas). Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the current policy of not allowing an appliance with less than four crew members to attend incidents is an historical one that needs updating.

151. Overall, participants considered that it ‘*makes sense*’ and is a better use of resources to allow smaller crews to attend smaller, lower risk incidents - and that the proposed new system could offer a safer service by allowing on-call firefighters to attend more incidents more quickly. Some typical comments were:

It’s common sense that if it is a smaller fire the smaller crew should attend (Ashfield)

It doesn’t make sense to have three people give up their time and then find the pump is off the run (Beeston)

I think it’s a more effective use of resources and gives firefighters more opportunity to become more active in their role (Worksop)

This for general safety of the public (Beeston)

I agree if it means they can get there quicker (Ashfield)

We’d rather see three firefighters than none at all! (Beeston)

I would prefer to have a crew of three than just have to deal with a fire myself so I don’t see a problem with this (Carlton)

If you’ve had an incident and the crew turn up, at least they’re starting the process while waiting for back up and stopping members of the public from being heroes and putting themselves at risk; if there is a crew there they will stop them and take control of the situation. If something happens in Southwell and a crew of three come out you know that Newark and Carlton are on the way (Newark)

If the pump is there at an incident with less crew they can make an assessment and call for more back up if they need it (Beeston)

It can only be an advantage can’t it? Get the wheels in motion quicker while waiting for a bigger crew. (Newark)

152. That said, the practicalities of ensuring smaller crews are not put at additional risk were questioned and discussed. Specifically, it was stressed that crews of three should not be sent to obviously large-scale or serious incidents - and reassurance was sought that accurate and timely assessments would be made by both emergency call handlers and on-scene firefighters to ensure adequate back-up is sent promptly if a small incident should escalate into something larger. Some typical comments were:

*Will that affect the safety of the firefighters going out to serious incidents?
(Worksop)*

Would you feel safe doing this with three crew members? (Retford)

*How would you deal with a house fire with three? You might need more crew than
(West Bridford)*

*What if they get there and it's a bigger incident than what was first realised?
(Ashfield)*

The only down side is that some crews of three could take too many risks... (Carlton)

*Is there a chance of them being sent out to a 'lower scale incident' which turns out to
be larger scale and there's not enough crew and equipment? (Newark)*

*There will need to be stringent risk assessment process to make sure the crews now
how to assess the situation and raise alarm for more crew if needed. (Newark)*

153. Moreover, whether 'crews of less than four' could refer to as few as two firefighters attending an incident (which some considered unacceptable) was also questioned, while there was again concern that the proposal may represent the 'thin end of the wedge' in terms of future crewing reductions:

*Do you mean "less than four" (e.g. even two) or do you mean "three"? (West
Bridgford)*

It wouldn't go down to two would you? It would only go to three? (Newark)

154. More general comments, questions and suggestions in relation to the proposal were also raised. In particular, there was support for the use of smaller vehicles if Alternative Crewing is introduced: it was reasoned that they are cheaper to run and more accessible - and that fire engines are rarely needed for lower risk incidents:

*Do you use different types of fire engines or smaller vehicles? That would be more
efficient! (Retford)*

Focus Groups with Staff

Introduction

155. Two staff forums or focus groups were arranged by NFRS, but despite the organisation's best efforts a total of only 11 firefighters attended - five in the northern group meeting and six in the southern one. It is not possible to know how representative these 11 RDS and WDS firefighters were of the whole organisation, but their comments deserve careful notice.
156. The groups lasted around two hours and considered all relevant evidence. The meetings were thorough and truly deliberative in listening to and responding openly to a range of

evidence and topics - and participants' views on the main issues under consideration are reported below.

Main Findings

Initial questions and comments

157. There was some scepticism in the North group around NFRS's stated incident reductions and public safety improvements: participants argued that although there are fewer fire deaths nowadays, there have been more RTC fatalities. Moreover, there was concern that fire cover is reducing year on year and that money is becoming a priority over safety. The North group also discussed the need to increase council tax to generate more money for the Fire and Rescue Service.

Mixed Crewing

The general principle

158. The southern discussion group strongly supported Mixed Crewing in principle, by a majority of five-to-one. In contrast, the northern group was less positive and opposed the proposal by four-to-one.
159. Those in favour of Mixed Crewing in the south emphasised the opportunities it could give to WDS firefighters who wish to work days only, and they suggested there might be transfer applications to do that. Those opposing the proposal in the north stressed the potential for RDS recruitment and retention difficulties, and also questioned whether on-call firefighters would accept multiple night-time calls-out.
160. Only one participant (in the South group) considered the proposal to be unacceptable - and another in the North group explained that they could not make a judgement because '*the right structure*' needs to be in place to achieve success. This, in their view, is currently not the case.
161. That said, there were concerns and reservations about implementing the new system. For example, the difficulties involved in recruiting and retaining on-call firefighters was discussed, with many participants raising this as an ongoing issue and questioning how many more on-call staff would be needed and how NFRS will increase staff numbers. Indeed, it was suggested that without a robust recruitment plan in place, Mixed Crewing is doomed to failure:

Have you started the recruitment process? How many additional RDS would you need? (South)

Where will the extra retained be recruited from? My station has an eight minute turnout time already in order to recruit staff over a wider area (South)

You need to have a substantial pool of people in order to crew the pumps during the August holiday period when families want to go away (South)

Retention is difficult due to the commitment of time that's required; in terms of when people can't go out and so on and the fact that we go to many fewer jobs (South)

We'll have to recruit for night-time cover if we're going to make this work. We have no problems at night at the moment so we have to change the way we think about this and it will take time to prepare for it. (North)

162. The South group discussed ways in which NFRS could increase its on-call establishment, for example:

Encouraging wholetime firefighters to have 'dual contracts' to provide on-call cover at night;

Examining population data to ascertain which areas will be 'easiest' to recruit from; and

Focusing on recruiting on-call firefighters for specific times of the week.

163. Participants also argued that NFRS could improve on-call staff retention by '*giving us more calls*' and paying them based on how many hours they are available for because '*the current rate is very small per hour for those on-call for a long time.*'

164. The North group was concerned about relying solely on an on-call night-time crew in the affected areas: participants felt response times would be too long and there would be '*less resilience*' without a wholetime pump. Furthermore, a few also questioned how on-call staff would feel about potentially being called out '*several times*' a night, which they argued could happen given the increase in RTCs; while another said that:

There are times when the support pump does not get there in ten minutes so if the wholetime pump did not get there so rapidly there would be a long delay from the other pumps; that could happen if you had two RDS pumps. (North)

165. Some staff from the South of the county also raised questions around the potential impact the proposal could have on how pumps are '*moved around*' the county to provide stand-by cover:

If you take you take extra wholetime pumps out of the run, then we'll have very little to move around! Control are already worrying about this. (South)

The options

166. In the South group there were questions around why three stations in the county's 'northern cluster' had been 'targeted' and why Newark was not included as an option.

167. After much discussion, the general consensus in the south was that Mixed Crewing should be introduced at **Ashfield and Retford**. In terms of rationale, there was worry about its introduction at both Retford and Worksop because this would *'result in a large area not having sufficient cover'*. That said, although one of the main reasons for choosing Ashfield as one of the stations was its close proximity to other stations, there was concern about the impact on stations such as Mansfield:

Retford and Workshop have big travel distances up in the north; it's a massive area to cover (South)

Worksop and Retford would have to cover a big area with RDS at night if both were chosen (South)

If Ashfield was included then there would be more calls going to Mansfield wholetime pump. (South)

168. Staff in the North Group were reluctant to make a choice as to which stations should be converted to Mixed Crewing, but they ultimately agreed with those in the South that the system should not be implemented at both Retford and Worksop because of the large area covered:

The impact of slower response is bigger in the Bassetlaw area because of its size. (North)

169. Overall, then, on the principle of Mixed Crewing, there was a division of opinion in the two small staff groups, but with a small majority in favour.

Alternative Crewing

170. All but one of the staff members in the South group supported the Alternative Crewing proposal. Most reasoned that it makes sense to send smaller crews to incidents such as bin fires – and they acknowledged that response times would improve, in turn improving public safety and allowing incidents to be assessed more quickly at the scene. Staff also felt that: it is preferable for fewer firefighters to be at the scene more quickly than to be waiting longer for a crew of four plus; and that the proposal will help increase retention and efficiencies within the on-call system:

This is absolutely a good thing! (South)

You can't argue with this! (South)

I'd prefer to have three firefighters there as a presence even if they could not fully commit to all the roles without further back up (South)

You could send three to RTCs in order to give first aid and stabilise casualties; and they could put out a car fire, too (South)

Could they extend to three attending a more serious incident to do the initial risk assessment; there is a lot that can be done before the other pump(s) arrive(s) (South)

And it's good to have them working on a full fire engine so they have all the kit necessary. (South)

171. However, the group had several reservations and sought reassurance around some of the practicalities of implementing Alternative Crewing, mainly whether control staff would be able to correctly assess whether an incident is low-risk enough to justify sending out a crew of less than four. Indeed, there was concern that smaller crews could be sent to more serious incidents and in turn feel 'pressurised' to deal with them without appropriate support. It was also stressed that a crew of four should still be the 'minimum target crew', with preparedness to deploy with three:

A lot depends on Control's call challenge; they have to establish where the bin fire is to know how serious it is (South)

There can be a lot of pressure on Control to get the assessment right; there can be a mistake and long delay before the next pump arrives in some areas (South)

Control would have to get the assessments right for RTCs to ensure that sufficient cover was also coming as well as a crew of three (South)

But I wouldn't want them to go to a house fire and be faced by pressure to commit when they shouldn't. (South)

172. Participating staff in the north of the county were less supportive of Alternative Crewing: three of the five participants disagreed with the proposal and the remainder were undecided. The main objection was again that firefighters could be put at risk if seemingly small incidents escalate into something more serious – and they feel compelled to tackle them without sufficient back-up:

With crews of three we would have quicker responses but they would not be safe if they can't do much at more serious incidents (North)

It would put moral pressure on the three who did turn up; the public would expect the crew to do something (North)

There's a risk of that even if they go only to the apparently 'minor' incidents (North)

I like it in some respects; but I don't want to see a group of three turning up first to any primary fire or RTC because of the danger and pressure on the crew. Back up has to be there!! (North)

173. NFRS was also accused of misleading the public by one staff member, who claimed that: 'we've been told that a crew of three could be sent as the third pump to a house fire but that's more than the proposal being told to the public. What if they are the first to arrive?!'

174. Finally, it was suggested that there would be too many limitations on what a crew of three could do:

Crews of three can do very little at RTCs and house fires; we've tried it on station drills but it just doesn't work (North Group)

Written and Other Communications

Written Submissions

175. During the formal consultation process, 11 formal written submissions were received. The table below shows the breakdown of contributors by type.

Type of Correspondent	Number of Respondents
Town and Parish Councils	8
MP	1 (2 separate submissions)
Residents	2
Total	11

176. ORS has read all the written submissions and summarised them in this chapter; none have been disregarded even if they are not expressed in a 'formal' way. It is a painstaking but necessary process to identify the main issues raised by respondents. Detailed written submissions do not lend themselves to easy summary and so readers are encouraged to consult ORS's full report below for a more detailed account of the views expressed. However, the following overview gives a sense of the types of issues raised.

Mixed Crewing

Seven submissions (from John Mann MP; Ollerton & Boughton Town Council; Rampton Parish Council; Headon-cum-Upton, Grove and Stokeham Parish Council; Selston Parish Council; Mr Ray Young [Selston Parish Council and Chairman of Ashfield and Sherwood UKIP Branch]; and an individual resident) objected to NFRS's Mixed Crewing proposal, chiefly on the grounds of: longer night-time response times and potential threats to public safety; and possibly difficult on-call availability, recruitment and retention.

Rampton and Headon-cum-Upton, Grove and Stokeham Parish Councils rejected NFRS's argument that that between 6pm and 8pm is its period of lowest demand and suggest that if the Service must introduce Mixed Crewing, it should not do so from 6pm but between 12:30am and 8:30am – the '*true low demand period*'. It is unclear as to whether the Councils would continue to oppose Mixed Crewing on this basis, but it would be safe to assume that an amended changeover time would mitigate against at least some of their anxieties in relation to longer response times and public safety.

Alternative Crewing

Two submissions (from Flintham and Wysall Parish Council and Shelford Parish Council also writing on behalf of Costock, Whatton and Plumtree Parish Councils) supported Alternative Crewing as a sensitive move that will improve efficiency and reduce costs;

Two submissions (from Selston Parish Council and Mr Ray Young) object to Alternative Crewing on the grounds that 'smaller' incidents could escalate, placing both firefighters and the public in danger. Furthermore, Ollerton & Boughton Town Council seeks reassurance that the Alternative Crewing system will not be used to attend house fires and RTCs in future.

Other issues

Three submissions (two from John Mann MP and one from Mr Ray Young) raised one other issue: both respondents objected to the £40 'incentive payment' given to focus group attendees to cover their time and expenses, describing it as 'bribery'.

Opposition to Mixed Crewing Proposal

John Mann MP

177. Mr Mann states that he has met with local residents who are concerned that the proposals will increase call out times and that this will place lives at risk. He says they believe that any proposals that have any detrimental impact on response times is dangerous and will be a deterioration in service levels. He also:

Challenges the assertion that callout times will increase by only four minutes under the proposals and requests further practical evidence of this assertion;

Questions whether any analysis has been made of the localities surrounding Retford and Worksop Fire Stations to establish *where* [retained firefighters] *will live alongside their travel routes to the station*; and

Questions how the Fire Authority intends to recruit people when vacancies for retained firefighters have been a recurrent problem in recent years - and requests that NFRS and NFA establishes a *clear and deep understanding of why this is happening* prior to implementing any proposals.

Ollerton & Boughton Town Council

178. The Town Council is concerned that:

The nearest whole-time fire engine will not be available during the night, potentially endangering the lives of local people; and that

The Retained Duty System cannot guarantee the same level of availability.

Rampton Parish Council and Headon-cum-Upton, Grove and Stokeham Parish Council (two identical but separate submissions)

179. The Parish Councils strongly object to the proposals because:

Their parishes are between four and six miles away from Retford and Tuxford Fire Stations, and crews are delayed in reaching the areas due to the *small winding roads of this rural location*;

The busy train line crossing at Grove Road (Retford) causes further delays; and

They do not want response times to increase further through the use of on-call firefighters at Retford.

180. The Parish Councils reject NFRS's argument that that between 6pm and 8pm is its period of lowest demand (and in fact enclosed a graph from NFRS's Operational Activity Report 2016 that demonstrates that 6pm is *the peak demand time*). They thus suggest that if the Service must introduce a Mixed Crewing system, it should not introduce it from 6pm but between 12:30am and 8:30am – the *true low demand period*.

181. The Parish Councils say that NFRS should be fighting the Government to allow it to increase its council tax precept to maintain a 24 hour Wholetime Duty System - and that they hope NFRS will reconsider its proposals and keep the Wholetime Duty System at all Nottinghamshire Fire Stations⁸.

Selston Parish Council

182. Selston Parish Council says that the proposed Mixed Crewing system at Ashfield would mean that it could be eight minutes before the first crew is mobilised, and that if the travelling time to the outlying villages of Selston Parish are considered it could be 15 minutes before the first crew is in attendance at an emergency. The Parish Council feels that *six minutes could be the difference, literally, between life and death for our residents*.

Mr Ray Young, Selston Parish Council and Chairman of Ashfield and Sherwood UKIP Branch

183. Mr Young asks the following questions in a letter to NFRS CFO John Buckley as follows⁹:

Are you prepared to put your name to the removal of wholetime fire crews at two of your stations thereby lengthening the attendance times to emergencies between the time of 6.00pm and 8.00am and take the gamble with residents' lives?

Does the fact that you are looking at reducing front line cover mean you have whittled away at everything else?

⁸ It should be noted that only half of NFRS's 24 stations operate the Wholetime Duty System.

⁹ Mr Young has received a full response to all questions from CFO Buckley.

Can you guarantee two Retained crews from Worksop being mobilised to an emergency within 8 minutes of the call coming in at night under the new proposals?

How long would it take the first appliance mobilised from Ashfield at 1.00am to be in attendance at Jacksdale under the present system and how long under the new proposals?

How long for the second Retained crew to be in attendance?

If the call was "persons reported" could the Retained crews be in attendance any quicker?

Where do you propose recruiting the extra Retained Fire crews from and how long and how much will it cost to get them fully trained? Has this been factored in to the equations?

How could you guarantee that an appliance mobilised to a small, low risk incident with only 3 crew would not arrive to a bigger, more serious incident? If they did what could they do without putting their lives at risk and how long before they get back up?

Resident

184. The resident says that *when we need a fire engine we need it now*: they do not consider it prudent to remove or reduce local firefighting in any way, especially in the countryside and small towns where *it will take longer for the fire engine to arrive as it will have further to go, and the drivers will not be as well acquainted with the local area*. They consider that the proposal may save money *but is a disservice to the local communities in many ways*.

Support for Alternative Crewing Proposal

Flintham and Wysall Parish Council and Shelford Parish Council (two identical but separate submissions)

185. Flintham and Wysall Parish Council and Shelford Parish Council (also writing on behalf of Costock, Whatton and Plumtree Parish Councils) is supportive of reducing crewing numbers where necessary to three firefighters instead of the current four. The Council considers this to be a sensitive move that will improve the efficiency of the service and reduce costs.

Opposition to/Concerns about Alternative Crewing Proposal

Ollerton & Boughton Town Council

186. The Council seeks reassurance that the Alternative Crewing system will not be used to attend house fires and RTCs in future.

Selston Parish Council

187. Selston Parish Council feels that classifying some incidents as 'low risk' ignores the fact that fires can spread rapidly. It is therefore concerned for the safety of fire crews and residents.

Mr Ray Young, Selston Parish Council and Chairman of Ashfield and Sherwood UKIP Branch

188. Mr Young asks: *how could you guarantee that an appliance mobilised to a small, low risk incident with only 3 crew would not arrive to a bigger, more serious incident? If they did what could they do without putting their lives at risk and how long before they get back up?*

Other Issues

Mr Ray Young, Selston Parish Council and Chairman of Ashfield and Sherwood UKIP Branch

189. Mr Young asks: *it has come to my attention that you have recruited the services of an independent, professional consultation company to run the focus groups and present balanced information to present balanced data. It has also come to my attention that individuals attending these groups were paid £40.00 for their unbiased opinion. Some would say that could be bribery or it could be seen as a waste of public money, how much of the first £1million savings has it cost for this professional advice?*

John Mann MP

190. John Mann, MP, also objected to the incentives paid to focus group participants and asked if the Fire Authority had authorised them.

Editorial Note

191. The use of reasonable incentives to recompense participants for their time and expenses in attending the evening meetings is *standard market and social research good practice*. Apart from the question of fairness (to those who spend up to 3.5 to 4 hours travelling to and from the meetings, and taking part in lengthy discussions) incentives are necessary to get a representative group of randomly selected participants to attend the meetings. Of course, people are recompensed regardless of the views they express.

Submissions via Social Media

192. Whilst an awareness of live discussions occurring on social media is nowadays an important aspect of any consultation, it should not be considered as the main method of feedback, since respondents providing views over social media are often predisposed to particular viewpoints but often without any information that contextualises their opinions. Furthermore it is never clear whether the comments are a person's final views which they would want included in the analysis/decision making, or just interim thoughts and discussions that inevitably develop as people debate the issues in an online forum.

Nonetheless, important issues were raised via Facebook especially, all of which have been collated below.

Internal NFRS Sources

193. The table that follows outlines NFRS’s Facebook activity - as well as the number of people reached through this medium. The advertising in particular demonstrates the Service’s iterative process in targeting the population demographics and geographical areas that had not sufficiently engaged with the consultation process (identified through analysis of reach).

Facebook	
Week 1 25/9	Two posts and link to CFO (external) video - CFO Video viewed 4,901 times Total reach ¹⁰ of 61,178 Likes/comments/shares 521
Week 2 2/10	Two posts and link to CFO (external) video Total reach of 61,535 Likes/comments/shares 531 CFO Video viewed 5,243 times (cumulative) Retford Fire Station Facebook Post Total reach of 2,347 Likes/comments/shares 28
Week 3 9/10	Facebook Advertising First advertisement (broad demographic/geographic) commenced. Sent to target people within a radius of 25 miles of Nottingham, aged 18+. Total reach of 17,000
Week 4 16/10	CFO Video viewed 5,500 times (cumulative) Reach of video is 16,673 (cumulative) Facebook Advertising Second advertisement (broad demographic/geographic) commenced. Sent to target people within a radius of 25 miles of Nottingham, aged 18+. Total reach of 10,599
Week 5 23/10	CFO Video viewed 9,600 times (cumulative) Facebook Advertising Third advertising (broad demographic/geographic) commenced Ran four targeted Facebook adverts (Ashfield, Retford, Worksop and Newark), each within a 10 mile radius around the town. The advertisement was linked to CFO video. Reach: Ashfield = 2696 ; Retford = 2150 ; Worksop = 2142 ; Newark reach = 1558 . The Ashfield, Retford and Worksop advertisement reached mostly men. Previous advertisements reached a more ‘balanced’ demographic.
Week 6 30/10	CFO Video viewed 12,000 times (cumulative) Facebook Advertising Fourth advertisement (set to target people aged 18+ in the South of the county) commenced. Advertisement was linked to CFO video. Advertisement reached 5,725 people (around equal amounts of men and women in the 55+ bracket, but heavily skewed in favour of a male audience below this age bracket).
Week 7 6/11	CFO Video viewed 13,000 times (cumulative) Facebook Advertising Fifth advertisement (set to target people aged 18-30 within Nottingham). Advertisement was linked to CFO video. Advertisement reached 6,221 people. Advertisement reach still heavily skewed towards men.

¹⁰ The number of people that have seen the posts, according to Facebook.

<p>Week 8 13/11</p>	<p>CFO Video viewed 18,000 times (cumulative) Facebook Advertising Sixth advertisement (set to target women aged 18+ within Notts). Advertisement was linked to CFO video. Advertisement reached 7,520 people.</p>
<p>Week 9 20/11</p>	<p>CFO Video viewed 21,000 times (cumulative) Facebook Advertising Seventh advertisement (set to target 18-25s within Nottinghamshire). Advertisement was linked to CFO video. Advertisement reached 7,593 people.</p>
<p>Week 10 27/11</p>	<p>CFO Video viewed 23,000 times (cumulative) Facebook Advertising Eighth advertisement (set to target those aged 18+ within postcodes that had not engaged with the consultation process. Advertisement was linked to CFO video. Almost 50/50 gender split and fairly even spread of age. Advertisement reached 6,032 people.</p>
<p>Week 11</p>	<p>CFO Video viewed 26,000 times (cumulative) Facebook Advertising Ninth advertisement (set to target specific sections of Nottingham that had not engaged with the consultation process). Advertisement was linked to CFO video. Almost 50/50 gender split, with the majority of men being 35-45 and women aged 45+. Advertisement reached 7,624 people. Normal Facebook post reminding people there were only two weeks remaining until the end of consultation. The post reached 2,027 people. Video with GM, Mick Sharman, explaining proposals a little more. Viewed 1,400 times.</p>
<p>Week 12 11/12</p>	<p>CFO Video viewed 29,000 times (cumulative) Facebook Advertising Tenth advertisement (set to target specific sections of Nottingham that had not engaged with the consultation process). Advertisement was linked to CFO video. Almost 50/50 gender and fairly even spread of age. Advertisement reached 7,171 people</p>

194. Below is a breakdown of the overall Facebook reach, including age and gender.



195. Most Facebook comments in response to NFRS’s posts objected to FRS reductions generally and to Mixed Crewing more specifically:

They should leave the emergency alone hospitals police firemen doctors they all deserve more pay.

Cannot understand WHY a life saving service is reducing skilled staff? Surely the tragic event with Grenfell should highlight that more staff are needed not less!! Unbelievable!!! Safety is fundamental and should not be compromised.

The fire service is an insurance policy, they should be there when needed and like any other public service it costs what it costs...it’s about time the British public said enough is enough, we are not going to stand for our health and safety to be put into jeopardy any longer.

The time must come when someone with balls says enough is enough. How can you have an emergency service that keeps getting cut back.

This government is undermining all emergency services.

Lives come first, not money.

Utterly ridiculous. This is not only putting public lives at risk but Fire fighters as well. This government is full of platitudes after disasters like Grenfell. It's time they put their money where there mouth is and properly show their appreciation for all our fantastic emergency services.

My council tax bill for the police and fire service has risen year after year and you're having your budget cut. Who is doing what with our money?

You shouldn't even be in a position whereby you have to ask this question...boils my blood!

The fire service should get more money not have it stripped away.

I wish CFO's would get together and oppose this constant financial strangulation of such a great service. I'm sure they'd much rather lead a Fire service where they could invest and develop rather than slash and burn. Come on. Fight the government gangsters and say 'No!'...

196. The most common concerns were around the on-call system and its inherently lengthier response times; and it was frequently claimed that retained crews: may not be as highly trained as wholetime crews; are often 'off-the run'; and are difficult to recruit and retain; and, in some cases, take longer than five minutes to turn-out:

Retained firefighters are great at supplementing the fire service but should not be a replacement for a full-time crew. 5 minutes extra to respond may not sound like a long time but when there is an emergency and you are waiting for them to arrive it seems a lifetime and a very scary one at that.

On call/retained take at least 5 minutes to turn out where whole time turn out within 30 seconds and when seconds saves or costs lives I know what I prefer. On a night people tend to be asleep so often this is a more serious fire. Truth it's not a better service but a cost cutting exercise.

Not acceptable to increase response times. Seconds and minutes can mean the difference between life and death. What other options have been looked at to deliver savings? There must be other options that could deliver sustainable savings rather than only consulting on one that would potentially have the most direct impact on the people your service is designed to protect and save. Think again.

According to gov't statistics .. over the last few years the number of fire incidents peak in the late evening, also a higher proportion of fire related deaths occur between midnight and 5 am, This is the time you're intending to increase attendance times by 3 minutes and 54 seconds. Surely you can see that this will lead to larger fires with a corresponding increase in injuries and death?

Training is one issue, retained don't do line rescue, chemical protection. 2 hour drill sessions are way short of what Wtd put in per week. The system has been around a long time but it is a failing system with numerous retained pumps off the run on a daily basis. A visit to fire control will confirm that fact. Far too many times people don't respond to fire calls due to failed system alerts and human error. You cannot run this type of system as first call. Rtd appliances should be backup to whole time only unless they are standalone Rtd stations.

A fire doubles in size every 30 seconds. Even Mr Buckley admits retained take nearly 4 minutes longer to turn out! Getting rid of whole time crews can only result in larger fires!

Retained take longer to turnout...and retained appliances are often unavailable due to insufficient crew. These are facts and the public need to know to allow them to make an informed decision!

At Worksop the average time for the pump to be mobile is around 10 mins then it has to travel to the incident which could be anything up to 10 to 15 minutes just in our area.

It's all about saving money...life's will be lost...no way are the retained as good as the wholetime.

Recruitment and retention of retained personnel has always been an issue. Do all stations currently being looked at for day-manning have their full compliment of retained staff and if so will this need to be increased to accommodate the day-manning plans?

These proposals are frightening! Living in Worksop and the thought that waiting for a fire engine manned by retained staff that live at the far end of the town in the middle of the night does not bare thinking about! I would like to know how these engines are going to be manned by retained staff and respond in the middle of the night if the minimum crew required all respond from the far end of town. 10 years ago you wouldn't have even been able to apply to be a retained fire fighter living that far away from the fire station so I'm puzzled as to why now this is allowed! It's obviously because the goal posts have been moved but in reality the new proposals are just not achievable if all the facts are looked into and where the crew live! God help anyone in a house fire in the middle of the night if these proposals go ahead that's all I can say! It's a sad time when a service like this has to make cuts like this!

197. There was, though, some support for the current proposals as the ‘lesser of two evils’ (that is, as a preferred alternative to removing stations or appliances in their entirety) – as well as recognition that NFRS must look at alternative forms of fire cover given the financial constraints within which it is operating. One contributor also shared the view that all organisations must ‘*change with the times*’ and that they trusted in NFRS to make viable changes:

To be fair [the CFO] could save more money and reduce the number of pumps and crews. He could down grade some wholetime retained stations i.e. remove the wholetime or remove retained he could close stations altogether but he isn't. He's merely changing some shift patterns to save the amount of money he has to save with the least amount of impact on the public. There will still be 30 appliances available 24 hours a day as there are now. There will still be the 24 stations either on call or staffed 24 hours a day. Yes response times may be 5 minutes slower but 5 minutes slower is better than no response at all through a complete removal of an appliance or station. Trust me where I work I've seen the consequence of the removal of an appliance at night. I am by no means condoning cuts as its bonkers...however I am a realist. His hands are tied and at least he's trying to avoid redundancies and frontline cuts. This unfortunately is the lesser of two evils.

The service needs to reassess we all wish the funding was there but if adequate fire and rescue cover can be achieved on a lower budget that has to be explored or else where does the money come from? Lots of people will make noise and support increased public spending but when it comes down to it will shout a lot louder if their taxes rise...if there is a more cost effective equally safe alternative then that option is going to be implemented.

If the management of Notts FRS consider changes viable I would back them. Every organisation has to change with the times even though there will be some, including most trade unions, who wish for nothing to change.

198. It should also be noted that within the debate about the wholetime versus on-call fire cover systems, there was support for the latter as an efficient and economic system of fire cover – and an increasingly important one in times of financial austerity:

In a crowded city full time crews yes I get that but get out where the population is less dense and retained crews I believe can be more effective and obviously more cost-effective...as I see it for your more rural communities the retained firefighters are more effective because they live within the communities they cover they have other employment which means they can bring other skills to the job...local knowledge goes a long way too knowing the people and the area you serve...

I'll admit having full time crews for police fire ambulance for every community would be fantastic but I also understand that it's not practically achievable the funds simply don't exist and if retained fire fighters caused increased risk to the public that would be reviewed and addressed to eliminate the risk...both systems work depending on geographic location and if it's deemed manageable in an area to switch to retained where is the problem?

A good proportion of service is covered by the retained duty system. The system has been working for years. Many communities across Nottinghamshire and the rest of the country have only ever been covered by this system. It's not a new idea, it's an idea that many countries across the world have been using for years. Of course, I would love a hospital, police station and fire station within touching distance at all times, I don't however like most of the tax payers want to pay for it either. It's so sad to read comments putting down and undermining the retained crews, these people are giving up so much for so little and happy to do so.

199. One Facebook user (an on-call firefighter of many years) also sought to correct what they saw as the 'inaccuracies' quoted in relation to the on-call system:

My concern is that views expressed about the retained duty system are not accurate and are undermining the people that currently operate under that system. Painting pictures of poor training and slow response times is not the true picture. Geographically 90% of the UK is covered by the retained duty system. If we were to believe some stories about how ineffective the RDS is, I think it would have raised its head by now. The majority of the population in this country have only ever been served by this system and are happy. I have sadly seen these inaccurate stories used over and over again for years.

200. Finally, one exchange doubted that the consultation findings would have any influence over the decision-making process, with a few users describing the proposals as something of a 'done deal':

If the vast majority of Joe Public in Notts reject these proposals ... What happens then? Will the proposals be canned or will the public be ignored?

Probably be ignored...

Having seen the results of other "consultation" I am concerned as to whether the results will have any influence whatsoever!

As you know they go through all the smoke and mirrors tricks with consultations etc. Then do exactly as they please. Surely it would be better to save all the money that a consultation involves and just go ahead as they will do that whatever the outcome of a consultation.

No matter what the public say you will do what you want. Human life is cheap.

Twitter

201. On Twitter, NFRS posted seven tweets, including the one pinned to the top of its twitter page (examples can be seen overleaf). The combined reach for all posts was **32,843**.

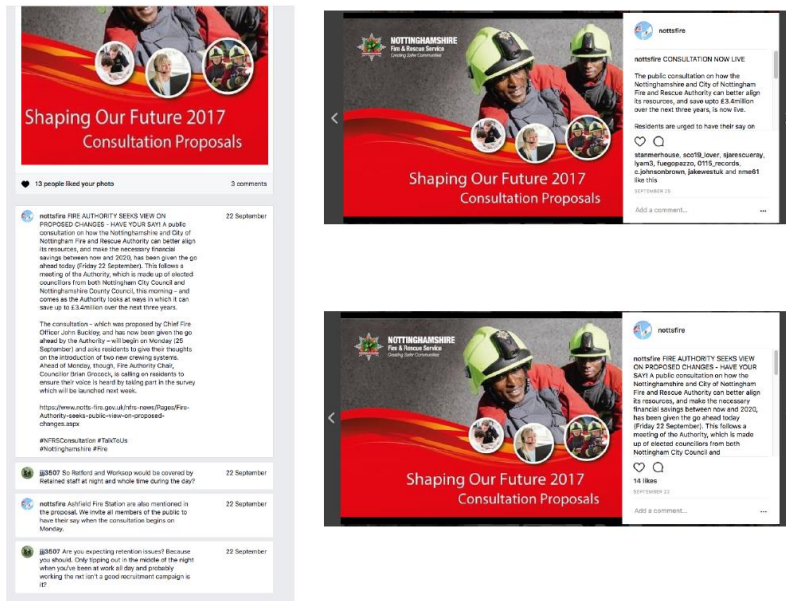


You Tube

202. On YouTube, the CFO's video (a screenshot of which can be seen below) was viewed **414** times. 56% of people viewed the video from an embedded source, such as the 'Spotlight' on the Service website. 52% of the views were from computers, with the rest being from mobile phones, games consoles, etc.



Instagram



203. The above posts were placed on NFRS’s Instagram page. Only two comments were made by members of the public; the first was a clarification question and the second expressed concern about on-call firefighter retention:

Are you expecting retention issues? Because you should. Only tipping out in the middle of the night when you’ve been at work all day and probably working the next isn’t a good recruitment campaign is it?!

External Sources

204. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) shared several posts on its Facebook page, for example:





Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union

21 October at 09:18 · 🌐

<https://www.facebook.com/keepretford/posts/114712129289806>



Fire Service cuts will put Worksop lives “at risk”, warn Union

The safety of Worksop residents will be “put at risk” if plans to cut cover at Worksop and Retford fire station in a bid to save £1m go ahead, the Fire Brigade Union has warned.

WORKSOPGUARDIAN.CO.UK



Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union added 3 new photos.

21 October at 14:18 · 🌐

Members of the FBU standing shoulder to shoulder with Labour Cllr's and John Mann MP, opposing cuts to front line firefighters. 🙌



Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union added 4 new photos.

11 November at 12:23 · 🌐

Another day out campaigning to stop the cuts to Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue.

FBU members standing side by side with Labour.



Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union

4 hrs · 🌐

We've responded to the public consultation, have you?
It's important that our members make sure the Service management team fully understand your views about the proposal to our fire cover. It doesn't take long and you can do it right here, right now.
www.notts-fire.gov.uk/.../service-perform.../public-consultation

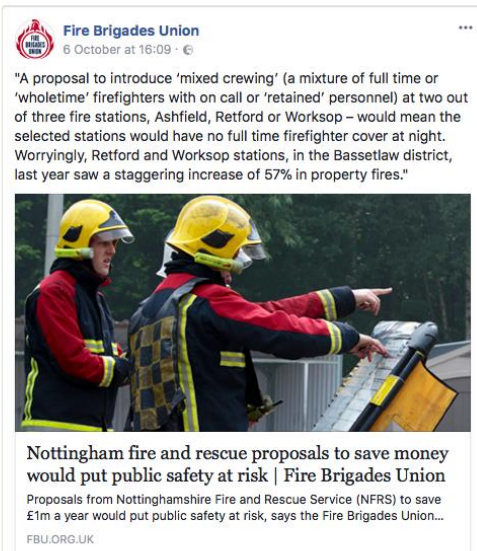
WhatsApp 4G 20:01 4%

Opinion Research Services Limited

**Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service
Shaping Our Future 2017**

Thank you!

Your survey responses have been recorded.



205. The latter two posts generated a significant number of comments. Some were again general objections to FRS (and other emergency service) reductions whereas others objected to the introduction of mixed crewing at Ashfield Fire Station:

Surely it isn't too much to want effective and safe emergency services for everyone. What has this austerity gained for ordinary people? Is there anyone out there listening?

To stretch our vital services even more is so wrong...

When will the people of this country realise that this government's top priority is money not people.

Yes that's a really good idea with the A1 on our doorstep.

Ashfield is one of the most populated areas in the country so warrants fully staffed fire appliances by both whole time and RDS 24/7. The mixed and alternative crewing proposal set out today to the fire authority is unacceptable putting life's at risk. Alternative ways must be sort to save the money.

206. There was, though, some support for the Mixed Crewing model from those who work or have worked it elsewhere:

Worked day crewing for a while and had mixed crew of W/T and retained every evening, it was never a problem...

Lichfield had that system for as long as I can remember - two pumps, one day-crewed by WT, the other day-crewed by RDS, at night both crewed by on-call WT and RDS. It seemed to work... Our shiny new fire station now has one pump, which I'm told is day-crewed by WT and night-crewed solely by RDS.

This is nothing new, this model has been used in West Lothian by the then Lothian and Borders fire and rescue service. The mixed crewing was used at 3 different locations. These have since been reversed back to retained only stations. But the model was used for a few years.

207. Most other comments were again around the wholetime versus on-call debate, with contributors commenting on the latter's lengthier response times and claiming that: the training offered to on-call crews is not as comprehensive as that for wholetime crews; on-call crews lack experience when compared to their wholetime colleagues; and on-call crews are difficult to recruit and retain:

*Imagine if you were trapped inside a burning house. You dial 999. You have 2 options.
1) the crew coming to rescue you are ready to turn out from the Fire Station within 1 min, and arrive at your house within 5 mins of the 999 call.*

2) the crew coming to rescue you are at home. They are ready to turn out from the Fire Station within 6 mins (or may not even get a full crew so next station gets bleeped to turn out and the clock starts again). Assuming first station do get a full crew they will arrive at your house within 11 mins after the 999 call.

Choose an option.

Fact, wholetime firefighters undergo more training than RDS...

I wholly understand the need for part time fire stations. Nobody could justify whole time stations in rural counties. But to crew full time stations with half full time crews awaiting the arrival of part timers for first attendance is unthinkable. I worked in a brigade that had full time crews that were backed up by retained brothers and they were a very respected bunch of guys (women and men). But by the same token I went as Oic onto retained stations ground, where it was evident that experienced was lacking.

The problem there is we cannot recruit or retain RDS staff and I can't agree that it's the way forward because you need WT FF's in any type of Brigade/Service.

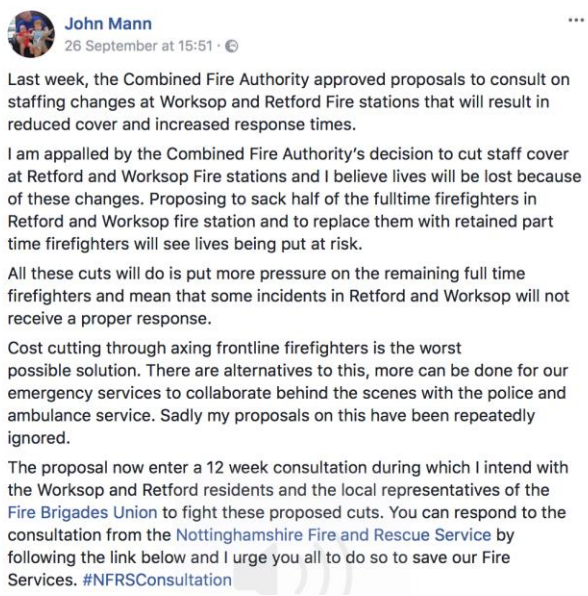
208. Furthermore, a few contributors criticised the wholetime versus on-call debate reported above, suggesting that both systems can and should work together to provide a cohesive service:

I think both roles work well together did in our brigade.

Come to Dumfries & Galloway where you will see how 16 RDS Stations and 1 WT Station work in harmony. Like every job in the UK you will find great personnel and some not so great personnel in both RDS and WT, but we all pull together when it matters most. To many of the RDS it is more than just a job, as it is for many WT, and we take every opportunity to develop our skills and learn new ones. Get a life and support the joint working of these two models. Times are tough just now for everybody, we all know that!! Put doon yer muskets and embrace and celebrate us working together in harmony!!!!

What we really need to do is stop the bickering, acknowledge the differences which make us stronger, and join together to fight the government that is seeking to destroy the Fire Service...we need all the work systems to function together as an effective Fire service.

209. **John Mann MP** shared the following posts on his Facebook page:



John Mann
26 September at 15:51 · 🌐

Last week, the Combined Fire Authority approved proposals to consult on staffing changes at Worksop and Retford Fire stations that will result in reduced cover and increased response times.

I am appalled by the Combined Fire Authority's decision to cut staff cover at Retford and Worksop Fire stations and I believe lives will be lost because of these changes. Proposing to sack half of the fulltime firefighters in Retford and Worksop fire station and to replace them with retained part time firefighters will see lives being put at risk.

All these cuts will do is put more pressure on the remaining full time firefighters and mean that some incidents in Retford and Worksop will not receive a proper response.

Cost cutting through axing frontline firefighters is the worst possible solution. There are alternatives to this, more can be done for our emergency services to collaborate behind the scenes with the police and ambulance service. Sadly my proposals on this have been repeatedly ignored.


The proposal now enter a 12 week consultation during which I intend with the Worksop and Retford residents and the local representatives of the Fire Brigades Union to fight these proposed cuts. You can respond to the consultation from the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service by following the link below and I urge you all to do so to save our Fire Services. #NFRSConsultation



John Mann for Bassetlaw
6 October · 🌐

Notts Fire and Rescue Service have announced cuts to service provision due to Government cuts. They want to change how Retford and Worksop Fire Stations are crewed with the introduction of retained crews at night instead of the current whole time crews.

This relies on people being available and able to immediately get into the fire station when an alarm call comes through. I believe that they will find difficulties in recruiting staff to take on these call-out roles and mos...
[See more](#)



NOTTINGHAM
Fire & Rescue Ser

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service - Shaping Our Future 2017

Potentially far-reaching and fundamental changes that have been and are being implemented across the emergency sector mean Nottinghamshire Fire and...

**John Mann for Bassetlaw**

27 October at 19:33 · 🌐

I was out with local firefighters this morning: There are cuts being proposed for Retford and Worksop fire stations which will slow down call out times. Lives will be put at risk.

You can have your say by clicking on the link and completing the consultation questionnaire. Please do this – its very important that you submit your views!

<https://www.ors.org.uk/.../in.../survey/index/sid/625754/lang/en>

**John Mann**

21 October · YouTube · 🌐

Follow

There was a fire on Ely Close, Worksop earlier this week. This morning I visited with Dominic, from the Fire Brigade Union where we discussed what could happen to response times should the proposed cuts go through in Worksop and Retford.

**Save Our Fireservice**

YOUTUBE.COM

**John Mann for Bassetlaw**

13 November at 16:17 · 🌐

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service have written to confirm that they are paying out an attendance allowance of £40 to people who attend their invite only consultation events on the future of our fire service.

This is the first time that I have ever heard of the public sector paying people to participate in a consultation process.

This is astounding, it calls into question the independence of the consultation and I challenge the use of public money for such a purpose.

I have already heard this described as bribery by a member of the public and believe that the whole process has been undermined.

Nobody will trust the outcomes and I call upon the Notts Fire Service to stop wasting our money and rip this process up to start again.

**John Mann for Bassetlaw** shared John Mann's post.

7 December at 09:45 · 🌐

**John Mann**

7 December at 09:45 · 🌐

I will be live on Facebook tomorrow at 9:30am from the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue HQ after I've handed in over 3,500 responses to the consultation on the future of our Fire Services. Please tune in if you can.

210. Comments made on these posts were mainly opposed to FRS reductions in general, and more specifically concerned about lengthening response times and their potential impact on public safety.

The worst possible scenario ever, these people need to think again.

Essential services are just such. It affects us all, wealthy or not...would the government feel safe if their house was on fire whilst waiting for a fireman to wake up, get dressed, open the fire station doors...

I believe the current retained crew at Worksop have a slow response time. They have to negotiate Carlton Road lights and railway crossing. The traffic created by Morrisons and those traffic lights. The lights at Victoria Square. This all takes up precious minutes.

If my house catches fire at half two in the morning why should I have to wait five to ten minutes longer. I am more likely to be trapped upstairs.

What about fires in Carlton and Langold. They will wait even longer. They can't afford to wait for a five minute call-out. Your dead.

211. **Gloria Del Piero MP** posted the following on her Facebook page:



Gloria De Piero MP
20 November at 18:05 · 🌐

Firefighters Justin Ward and Paul Harley came in to see me about the fight to stop proposals to change the staffing of Ashfield fire station from a full-time crew to a retained crew at night.

I urge every single one of you to take the survey at <https://www.ors.org.uk/.../survey/index/sid/625754/lang/en> expressing the need for Ashfield Fire Station not to have changes made. It doesn't take long at all and the more responses the better.

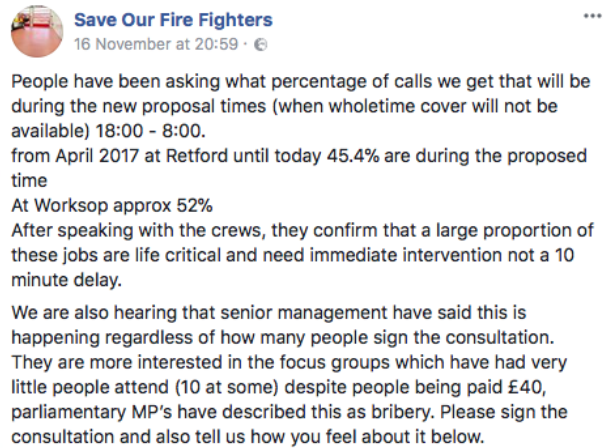
Like Comment Share

212. Comments on this post included:

Express for all stations not to have changes made.

It's no good just campaigning for Ashfield because if they stay on 24-hour standby then other stations will lose firefighters most probably cutting manning down to four on a pump instead of five, and these will be stations that have no retained cover at all – just a thought and a glimpse of the bigger picture. All cuts to emergency services are totally wrong.

213. **Save our Firefighters** shared several posts, including the following, during the consultation period.



Tweets 31 Following 45 Followers 15 Likes 11 [Follow](#)

saveourfirefighters @SOF247
Retford Fire Station is currently undergoing a consultation regarding the reduction of fire cover between the hours of 18:00 to 8:00 (14hrs).
Retford, England
Joined October 2017
[Tweet to saveourfirefighters](#)
5 Followers you know
5 Photos and videos

Tweets Tweets & replies Media

saveourfirefighters @SOF247 · Dec 2
Today's Christmas market is again seeing everyone against the proposals to reduce night time cover at Retford, Worksop and Ashfield. Pop down and say hello and sign to save your station.

1 2 2

Who to follow Refresh View all

- G M Police** @gmpolice Follow
- Followed by Ian Curryer and others
- Council House Nottm** @... Follow
- Followed by Wayne Bowcock and others
- Rob Barber** @Robbiebarb Follow

Find people you know

Trends for you Change

- #MyMentalHealthInWords**
@RoastHse is Tweeting about this
- #MondayMotivation**
@NottmCollege, @newartexchange and 6 more are Tweeting about this
- Bishop of London**
Former chief nurse Sarah Mullally has been appointed Bishop of London



214. Comments made on these posts included:

This is just appalling. Bad for the individual, bad for the community as a whole.

We won't lie down and accept plans to reduce Ashfield fire service. Moving to an 'on call' only night service will cost time + could cost lives.

I wish you all the luck in the world but sadly the management/Fire Authority don't give a monkeys!! Keep fighting...

For 9 days in November whole time cover will be removed from Retford fire station, leaving Worksop the only whole time pump covering Bassetlaw area.

And on top of this because we have no money we are taking pumps off the run from now on at several stations so that we can maintain crewing levels across the brigade as they can't afford to keep the pumps available through offering overtime...what puzzles me is that we are 50 firefighters short yet we have no money to maintain life-saving fire cover through overtime?

215. **Keep Retford Fire Station 24/7** shared many posts similar to the following during the consultation period.



**Keep Retford Fire Station 24/7**

...

19 October · 🌐

People of Retford, Worksop and Ashfield please Digest this news we have just been given.

Last Night. House Fire in Worksop. 1 Person Rescued. Originally called in as rubbish. This would have been a retained Fire Appliance turning out with only 3 firefighters on it under the current proposals. Worksop Retained were UNAVAILABLE. The job was attended by 3 whole time fire appliances, 2 of which are under threat. Worksops attendance within 5 minutes. Retford and Edwinstowe within 14mins.

Please sign the consultation today. Voice your opinion. It could save your life!

#keepretford247

www.opinionresearch.co.uk/nfrs

**Keep Retford Fire Station 24/7**

...

18 October at 21:48 · 🌐

Figure being quoted by Notts Fire and Rescue with regards to incidents at night are only Fire Deaths. They are not taking into account Road Traffic Collisions, and other calls. Remember if you are injured in your home or are unable to let the Ambulance service in, its a fire crew that gains access. As we all know, if your seriously hurt you need treatment straight away.

Please fill in the consultation today.

www.opinionresearch.co.uk/nfrs

216. The posts generated the following comments in opposition to NFRS's proposals:

This station has to run 24 hours. You never know when you might need them.

Strongly disagree with this frankly dangerous proposal.

Strongly disagree with this hairbrained proposal on so many levels.

217. **Retford Fire Station** placed the following information on its Facebook page:

Retford Fire Station
Published by Gerry Williscroft [?] · 26 September · 🌐

Retford Fire Station may be facing changes in the level of cover it provides to our local community but you have the opportunity to have your say on any changes that are brought in and to support or oppose them. Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is asking for your input, as part of the required public consultation, on a series of potential measures that may be implemented as part of the current cost saving measures. please follow this link to have your say on the future of the Service we provide.

<http://www.opinionresearch.co.uk/nfrs>

The options, from Retford's perspective, are to keep the 24/7 immediate cover appliance backed up by an on-call appliance (as has been the case for some years) or to change to a 10/7 immediate cover appliance with only on-call Fire Fighters (on two appliances) responding between the hours of 6pm and 8am. The latter would save approximately £500k per year but it would increase response times to incidents within our area.

Please have your say now - your views will make a difference one way or the other.

Proposal Retford Fire Station

The station is currently crewed 24/7, using one wholtime appliance and one retained appliance.

Total Incidents Attended	2007 640	2016 544	96 fewer incidents
---------------------------------	-------------	-------------	------------------------------

Proposal: Introduce Mixed Crewing at Retford Fire Station

How:
The current fire cover of one wholtime fire engine and a retained fire engine would continue between 8am and 6pm, during the periods of highest demand. During periods of lowest demand, 6pm to 8am, the station would be crewed by two retained fire engines, supported, as it is currently, by other appliances from around the county. This would mean that the wholtime firefighters based at this station would work day shifts, with no requirement to work at night.

False Alarm Incidents	2007 184	2016 211	27 more incidents
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Fire Incidents	2007 262	2016 215	47 fewer incidents
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Why:
Moving to this system would save around £500k and align our resources to demand.

Implications:
Using our historical data and the risk map we have developed over many years, operating only retained fire crews at night means a 0.4% increase (26 incidents) in the number of calls not attended in 10 minutes by NFRS, but would save the Service £500k a year.

Special Service Incidents	2007 194	2016 118	76 fewer incidents
----------------------------------	-------------	-------------	------------------------------

218. A few comments were made on the post, chiefly around the consultation process itself and whether incomplete questionnaires and those submitted through non-official channels would be included within the overall results¹¹:

*They are probably incomplete because there are more questions about the person and their sexuality than there are about the loss of our full-time fire crews! Why should the fact that I have ignored these questions mean that my views on losing our station aren't counted?
Can you tell me where it says all questions have to be filled in for it to be counted?*

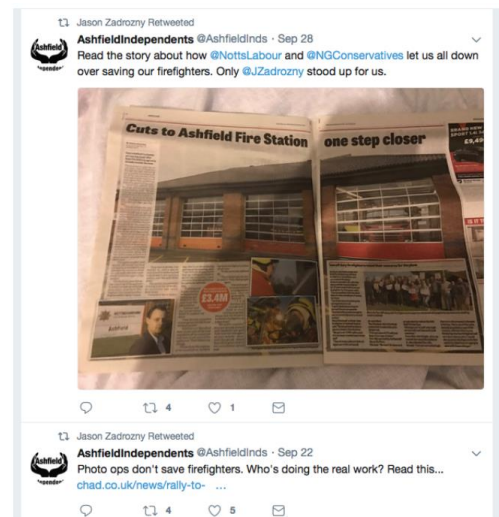
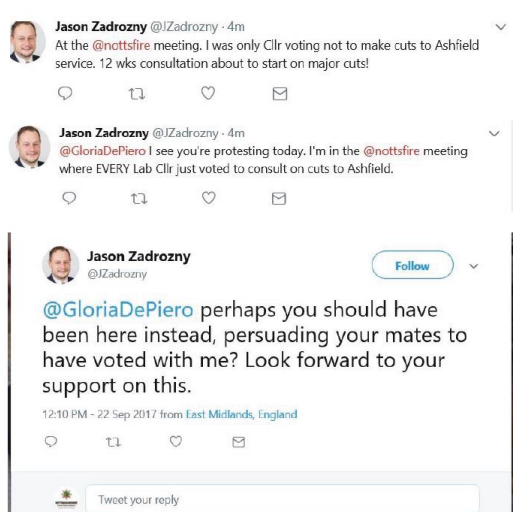
¹¹Reassurance was provided that incomplete questionnaires would be included providing at least one of the consultation questions had been answered - and the results from questionnaires received from both official and non-official channels have been reported.

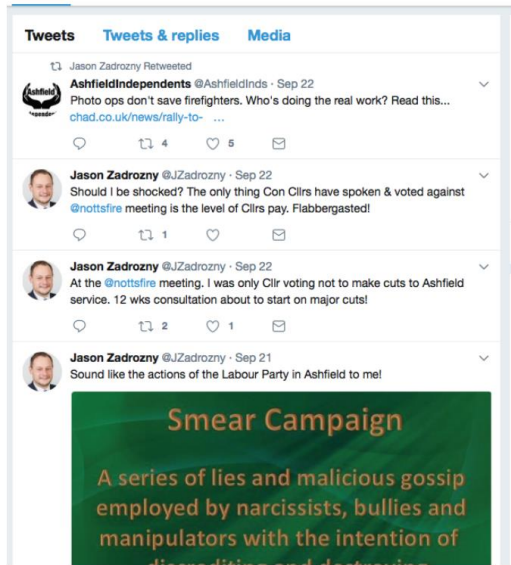
I also understand that unless the form is filled in digitally or an official NFRS Glossy Booklet it will not be accepted. Can organisations order bulk quantities of the consultation? Surely thousands have been printed, or is only the views of the rich that are important with their iPhones?

219. **Russ Dolby** mentioned the *Shaping Our Future 2017* consultation and proposals several times on Facebook, including in the following post which generated significant debate around: the potential for longer response times; the apparent ‘unreliability’ of the on-call system; the respective levels of training given to wholetime and on-call firefighters - and the apparent relative inexperience of the latter compared to the former.



220. Some comments made on external twitter sites can be seen below:





Meetings

- 221. NFRS officers met with the leader of Bassetlaw Council, who outlined his belief that the communities of Bassetlaw do not wish to see changes in fire cover and that the Service is not listening to alternative proposals from the Fire Brigades Union¹².

¹²The officers stated that the FBU had been offered meetings but had cancelled appointments, and that other than a proposal on 24/72 hour crewing (which makes a relatively small saving), there were no alternative proposals from the FBU on the table.

Petitions and Standardised Submissions

Petitions

Overview of Petitions

222. One petition was organised during the consultation, which is reviewed in this chapter. We apologise if there have been other petitions of which we have no knowledge, but we have cross-checked our records with those of NFRS and the one reviewed in the following paragraphs is the only one known about.

Summary of Petition

223. An online petition entitled 'Save Ashfield's Firefighters' attracted 2,375 signatures. The petition was organised by Ashfield Independents and included the following information:

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority are consulting on changing the way that Ashfield Fire Station is manned.

It is currently manned 24 hours a day and has 26 firefighters. Their proposal is to reduce this to 12 staff and there are plans to man it during the day but NOT at night when it would be covered by retained staff.

Councillor Jason Zadrozny, a member of the Fire Authority said, "Any decision to reduce the service at Ashfield Fire Station could cost lives. It's that serious! Reducing the service would add in at least 5 minutes to attend any incident - the crucial life saving time as far as I'm concerned. Ashfield Independents are today launching a campaign to retain all services at Ashfield Fire Station. I would encourage everybody to get involved in the consultation and send a clear message that there must be no cuts!"

The move is expected to save Fire Bosses £500,000 a year. The Fire Brigade Union has been consulted and is against any cuts.

Councillor Zadrozny said, "I know that money is tight but people's safety has to be the number one priority. With the Grenfell Tower disaster still fresh in our minds - announcing potential cuts at this time is particularly sensitive. We will oppose any cuts to the Fire Service with everything we have got. We will be launching an online petition and will be running the biggest campaign we have ever done. This is a campaign that could save lives! For the Fire Authority to even consider this is a disgrace. I hope people join our campaign to save our life saving services."

224. This petition also attracted a significant number of comments. In addition to many general objections to emergency service reductions, the most common specific issues raised were that: the proposed crewing changes could cost lives as a result of longer response times; the need to make savings is being put before people's safety; Ashfield is a busy station and thus warrants a 24/7 crew; Ashfield Fire Station is strategically placed to respond to incidents in both Ashfield and Sutton and on the M1 and A38 (and to support Mansfield Fire Station); Ashfield itself is a large and growing area that requires more than 12 firefighters to adequately serve it; remaining crew members could become over-stressed; and that the on-call system, by its very nature, can prove unreliable with respect to availability.
225. A selection of the most typical comments is included below.

We need a fully manned fire station or lives are going to be lost.

Anyone who has had the misfortune to require the assistance of the firefighters in an emergency knows only too well that every second counts. Having staff only respond from home at night will add over five extra minutes on to the time a fire appliance turns up. This is Not Acceptable.

That extra 5 minutes could actually be the difference between life and death!!

Going ahead with this ridiculous proposal will cost lives. Please rethink this and do not cut jobs and shifts. Our firefighters do a fantastic job so let's make sure we have enough of them to support the Ashfield area.

Firefighters are an essential resource and full cover must be retained at all times. Cuts are counterproductive, cost lives and cannot be entertained.

An extra 5 min response can be the difference between life and death or a small house fire engulfing the whole house. If we lose the present level of service we will not get it reinstated in the future it will be gone for good... If we want a good safe service then we have to pay for it not cut the budget

We need a 24hr manned station! Lives will be put at risk just to save money!!!!

The lives of the people of Ashfield are surely more important than any amount of money to be saved by these cuts to the Fire Service!

Don't trim a vital service just to save some money. Lives are more important.

Local services are essential. It's not about is that fire station near enough to deal with emergencies, people's safety and their very lives should not be calculated in to budgetary constraints.

The idea of the fire station being unmanned at night frightens me. The cuts are just too much. They need to stop when front line emergency services are affected like this.

The Fire Service saves lives! Period! But they can only do that if properly staffed, and this cost cutting exercise takes it way too far! It removes the ability to quickly respond at night, whilst severely and critically making day time shouts less effective, more likely to result in more deaths, and will stress the already hard-worked crews.

It's ridiculous that we are cutting such essential services. Especially at a station so close to the A38 and the M1.

Being close to junction 28 of the M1 is a vital requirement of our much reduced Fire Service. Please keep it.

Ashfield is strategically positioned covering Kirkby and Sutton with many incidents on the M1, also close to give support to Mansfield - SECONDS really do make the difference between life and death and most fatal fires occur during the night, the very time when they propose to cut full-time cover...

This is a busy fire station and needs to be manned 24 hours...

Ashfield is far too busy to rely on retained cover at night and in my opinion these cuts are a step too far which will put lives at risk!

Only 12 staff is ridiculous for an area of this size. I am surprised there are only 26 currently. To cut back these numbers would be sheer folly and cost lives.

We are getting more and more houses built we will need more fire cover not less!!

The fire and rescue service of Ashfield have a large area to cover. With differing buildings and major roads, woods and so on. They are essential emergency service and should be manned 24 hours a day 365 days a year. Fires and rescues are random and cause more devastation during night hours. Every second counts...

On-call Firefighters cover cannot be guaranteed 24/7 like a Wholetime Crew can, therefore when Wholetime cover is removed at night there will be times when the On-Call crew become unavailable and in all cases mobilising times will increase.

Petitions: Need for Interpretation

226. The petition summarised above is clearly important in indicating public anxiety about important aspects of the proposed changes - and NFRS will wish to treat it very seriously. Nonetheless, they should also note that petitions can exaggerate general public sentiments if organised by motivated opponents using emotive language; and in this case there has been considerable local campaigning about changes to services. So petitions should never be disregarded or discredited, for they show local feelings; but they should be interpreted in context.

Standardised Submissions

227. A joint standardised submission was submitted to NFRS by John Mann MP and the FBU on 8th December 2017. Overall, there were 4,256 responses: 4,096 were complete, 65 were incomplete and 95 were blank. 4,013 responses (94%) strongly disagreed with all proposals; 49 strongly agreed and two tended to agree with all proposals; and there were 30 mixed responses. The responses came in three different formats as illustrated below.

Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service - Shaping Our Future 2017

Age Confirmation

Are you aged 16 or over? Choose one of the following answers

- Yes
- No

Proposal A: Introduce Mixed Crewing at Ashfield Fire Station

Between 6pm and 8am - the period of lowest demand for NFRS services - Ashfield Fire Station would be crewed using two retained fire engines, instead of the current one wholtime and one retained fire engine. Between 8am and 6pm, current fire cover (one wholtime and one retained fire engine) would be maintained. This would result in a 1.1% increase in the number of calls not attended by NFRS in 10 minutes (103 incidents per year), but would save around £500k and better align resources to demand.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace a wholtime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm-8am at Ashfield Fire Station?

Choose one of the following answers

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Proposal B: Introduce Mixed Crewing at Retford Fire Station

Between 6pm and 8am - the period of lowest demand for NFRS services - Retford Fire Station would be crewed using two retained fire engines, instead of the current one wholtime and one retained fire engine. Between 8am and 6pm, current fire cover (one wholtime and one retained fire engine) would be maintained. This would result in a 0.4% increase in the number of calls not attended by NFRS in 10 minutes (35 incidents per year), but would save around £500k and better align resources to demand.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace a wholtime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm-8am at Retford Fire Station?

Choose one of the following answers

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Proposal C: Introduce Mixed Crewing at Worksop Fire Station

Between 6pm and 8am - the period of lowest demand for NFRS services - Worksop Fire Station would be crewed using two retained fire engines, instead of the current one wholtime and one retained fire engine. Between 8am and 6pm, current fire cover (one wholtime and one retained fire engine) would be maintained. This would result in a 0.5% increase in the number of calls not attended by NFRS in 10 minutes (45 incidents per year), but would save around £500k and better align resources to demand.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to replace a wholtime fire engine with a retained fire engine between 6pm-8am at Worksop Fire Station?

Choose one of the following answers

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Proposal D: Introduce Alternative Crewing at all Retained Duty System Fire Stations

The diminishing number of retained, on-call firefighters available to NFRS during the day (because of ongoing recruitment and retention difficulties) means that, where a retained appliance has less than four crew members available, it is unable to respond to any type of incident, regardless of proximity or scale, or support other appliances. The Fire Authority is proposing to enable retained crews of less than four to attend smaller, lower risk incidents such as bin fires to: maximise on-call resources; improve response times; improve retention; and offer retained firefighters a more sustainable future.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to send the nearest appliance, with crews of less than four, to lower risk/smaller incident types?

Choose one of the following answers

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

228. 1,677 of these submissions were received: 1,618 were complete, 23 were incomplete and 36 were blank. 1,604 responses (96%) strongly disagreed with all proposals; a further two people tended to disagree with all proposals; and there were 12 mixed responses.

Our Proposals Questionnaire

Proposal A – Ashfield

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of replacing a wholtime fire engine with a retained fire engine, between 6pm to 8am, at Ashfield Fire Station?

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Proposal B – Retford

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of replacing a wholtime fire engine with a retained fire engine, between 6pm to 8am, at Retford Fire Station?

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Proposal C – Worksop

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of replacing a wholtime fire engine with a retained fire engine, between 6pm to 8am, at Worksop Fire Station?

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Proposal D – Alternative Crewing

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to send the nearest appliance, with crews of less than four, to lower risk / smaller incident types?

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Additional comments

Not An Area to cut costs and resources

229. 767 of these submissions were received: 746 were complete, 12 were incomplete and nine were blank. 741 (97%) of responses strongly disagreed with all proposals; a further four strongly agreed with all proposals and there was one mixed response.

Our Proposals Questionnaire

Proposal A – Ashfield

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of replacing a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine, between 6pm to 8am, at Ashfield Fire Station?

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Proposal B – Retford

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of replacing a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine, between 6pm to 8am, at Retford Fire Station?

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Proposal C – Worksop

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal of replacing a wholetime fire engine with a retained fire engine, between 6pm to 8am, at Worksop Fire Station?

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Proposal D – Alternative Crewing

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to send the nearest appliance, with crews of less than four, to lower risk / smaller incident types?

- Strongly Agree
- Tend to Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Tend to Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Additional comments

No these cuts will cost lives

230. 1,812 of these submissions were received: 1,732 were complete, 30 were incomplete and 50 were blank. 1,668 of responses (92%) strongly disagreed with all proposals; 45 strongly agreed and a further two tended to agree with all proposals; and there were 12 mixed responses.
231. Some comments were also made, mainly in relation to: the need to retain a wholetime service at all potentially affected stations; a possible risk to life as a result of longer response times; and the need for public safety to be put before financial savings. There was also a misconception among some respondents that fire stations are to close. Some typical comments were:

Full-time cover is needed in all locations.

These proposals are putting lives at risk!

Response times must be kept to an optimum to avoid deaths.

Safety comes above finances.

We do not need any more cuts this is a totally essential service!!

Save our station!!!

Keep our fire station!!!

Keep Retford fire station we need it!!

Overall Conclusions

Introduction

232. It is not the role of ORS to make policy recommendations or to go beyond the fact-based interpretation above. Ultimately, an overall interpretation of the consultation will depend upon the Authority itself: its members will consider all the consultation elements in the context of all the other evidence available to it – in order to assess the merits of the various opinions as the basis for public policy. The challenge for the Authority is to maintain public and professional confidence in the safety and resilience of NFRS services while also demonstrating that it can successfully deliver appropriate changes to balance its budget. We trust that this report and the following conclusions will make at least some contribution to that endeavour.

Range of Opinions and Assessment Criteria

233. The executive summary above has demonstrated a contrast between (on the one hand) the open questionnaire, petition, most of the submissions/written communications, and the views expressed on social media (that were generally very strongly opposed to the Mixed Crewing proposal) and (on the other hand) the public focus groups, the staff focus groups, and some submissions that generally accepted the case for change. In this context, the Authority has to balance the outcomes of the different consultation methods.
234. When interpreting the findings, a key principle is that consultation is not a referendum: it is not a 'numbers game' in which the loudest or majority opinions should automatically prevail. The key issue is not whether most people agree or disagree with the proposals, but, *Are the reasons for their popularity or unpopularity cogent?* However popular or unpopular proposals might be, the Authority will want to consider if they are evidence-based, feasible, safe, sustainable, reasonable and value-for-money. The reasons for people's views are well documented throughout this report so that the NFA may consider them when making its judgements.
235. As well as examining all the evidence and the cogency of opinions, NFA has to consider what weight to attach to each of the consultation elements. ORS suggests that in making its assessments the Authority should have regard to: whether views expressed reflected general public opinion; whether respondents were relatively well or poorly informed about the evidence; whether opinions were 'thoughtful' (based on personal deliberation) or the result of organised campaigns marshalling collective sentiments; whether the views expressed were cogent and evidence-based; and how many people were supportive or opposed.

RANGE OF OPINIONS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA		
	CONSULTATION ELEMENTS MAINLY IN FAVOUR/ACCEPTING OF PROPOSALS	CONSULTATION ELEMENTS MAINLY AGAINST THE PROPOSALS
MIXED CREWING	Public focus groups Staff focus groups (majority)	Open questionnaire Staff focus groups (minority) Most of 11 submissions Most social media contributors Petitions and standardised submissions
ALTERNATIVE CREWING	Open questionnaire (large minority) Public focus groups Staff focus groups (majority) Some of 11 submissions	Open questionnaire (absolute majority) Staff focus groups (minority) Some social media contributors Standardised submissions

236. With some (allowable) over-simplification, it is possible to summarise the table above by saying that the quantitative elements (open questionnaire, petition and etc.) are opposed to the proposals (especially Mixed Crewing) whereas the deliberative elements (the public and to a large extent staff focus groups) are more supportive.



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

3. Please explain the impact you have identified.

There is a potentially positive impact from the proposals in terms of age because initial discussions with personnel, and engagement with the workforce, has indicated that older operational personnel have shown a greater interest in working a duty system that does not require night working and provides the opportunity to work shorter shifts.

The proposals may potentially have a positive effect on Family status for wholetime personnel, who work on the proposed shifts, due to working hours which may be more aligned to a family friendly provision. It is envisaged that personnel will volunteer to work on the duty system and therefore the addition of a different duty system will increase the flexibility of working options for personnel. There is a small possibility that personnel may be compulsory transferred on to the new duty system if there is a lack of volunteers, which may adversely impact on individual's family status.

The increased demand upon the Retained may have a negative impact on their family status however this will be mitigated by the proposal to increase the establishment at these stations, the option to use secondary voluntary arrangements, and the monitoring of these impacts by management.

Similar impacts to those highlighted for family status may affect gender due to women being the primary care providers in the majority of family settings.

The increased turn-out time for RDS appliances may adversely affect rural areas, however the impact of this has been assessed within the report and will be mitigated to some extent through dynamic mobilising of Control through the Systel mobilising system, and the ability to reinvest savings to improve the availability and resilience of RDS section across the county.

3a) Please explain any steps you have taken or may take to address the impact you have identified.

A proposed increase in RDS establishment at any affected RDS section will assist in mitigating any adverse impact from the identified increase in activity.

4. Identify the individuals and organisations that are likely to have an interest in, or be affected by the policy, function, theme or service. This should identify the persons/organisations who may need to be consulted about the policy or service and its impact.

The Combined Fire Authority, Local Politicians and community leaders, Managers within the organisation, the workforce and particularly those stations affected by the proposals, and workforce representatives.

Local communities.

5. Has consultation (with the public, managers, employees, TUs etc) on the policy, function, theme or service been undertaken?

Yes

5a. Please provide details for your answer including information regarding when consultation will take place if you have ticked yes.

Formal consultation has taken place with the public and staff. Workforce representatives have been engaged informally and had the full opportunity to respond to the formal consultation.

6. Has the Equality and Diversity Officer been contacted?

Yes

If Yes please outline below the outcomes/concerns highlighted in the discussion.

The E&D Officer highlighted a potentially negative impact for the delivery of Prevention initiatives at evenings and weekends, dependant on the model adopted, due to a lack of availability or desire to deliver this role through RDS. This will be mitigated through the reintroduction of Prevention activities for RDS stations (currently being introduced) and also the use of other neighbouring WDS Crews if urgent intervention was required.

If No please ensure that the Equality and Diversity Officer is contacted. Please record here the date the Equality and Diversity Officer was contacted regarding this initial equality impact assessment. Date:

7. Has monitoring been undertaken?		No
8. What does this monitoring show? N/A		
9. If you have answered no to question 7 can a monitoring system be established to check for impact on the protected characteristics?	Yes	
10. Please describe how monitoring can be undertaken and identify this monitoring system as an objective when completing the action plan below. Monitoring is proposed in terms of the expressions of interest and selection stages for these proposals. Additional monitoring is proposed for the workforce at these stations over a period of 6, 12 and 24 months to monitor impact of the new duty systems, including WDS and RDS personnel. Once implemented, formal reviews will be undertaken and presented to the Fire Authority for consideration.		
11. If a monitoring system cannot be established please explain why this is. N/A		
12. Did the Equality and Diversity Officer advise to proceed with a full EIA? Please provide full details of the decision. No Full EIA required at this time.		
13. Proceed to full Equality Impact Assessment?		No

Initial Equality Impact Assessment.

This questionnaire will enable you to decide whether or not the new or proposed policy or service needs to go through a full Equality Impact Assessment.

Title of policy, function, theme or service:		Alternative Crewing							
Name of employee completing assessment:		John Buckley				Department and section: Service Delivery			
1.	State the purpose and aims of the policy or service and who will be responsible for implementing it.								
	<p>The introduction of Alternative Crewing will enable a Retained Duty System (RDS) appliance to respond to an incident with a crew less than four. This will enable the nearest asset to be sent to small scale incidents as opposed to waiting longer for a minimum crew of four to respond from further afield.</p> <p>Responsibility for implementation is Service Delivery managers and Head of Service Delivery.</p>								
2.	Please indicate below if the affect of the policy, function, theme or service will be positive, negative, neutral or unknown.								
	Age	Disability	Family status	Gender	Race	Sexual Orientation	Religion and Belief	Vulnerability	Rurality
Employees	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Public	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Positive	Positive

3.	<p>Please explain the impact you have identified.</p> <p>There is the possibility that this proposal could have a positive impact on vulnerability within the community of an RDS station. Especially in rural areas or areas where the next appliance would take significantly longer to attend an incident with vulnerable people involved. The positive impact would be dependent on the particular circumstances of the incident, however the appliance would be available where it would not normally be under current arrangements.</p> <p>In terms of rurality, communities which are served by stand-alone RDS appliances, are reliant upon the appliance at that station being available. If this appliance is not available due to not having the appropriate staffing levels, then the attendance time to an incident within this community could be significantly increased, this is due to the need for an appliance to be mobilised from another station/location. Alternative crewing will provide greater opportunities for RDS appliances to remain available and therefore have a positive impact on attendance times.</p>
3a)	<p>Please explain any steps you have taken or may take to address the impact you have identified.</p> <p>N/A</p>

4.	<p>Identify the individuals and organisations that are likely to have an interest in, or be affected by the policy, function, Theme or service. <i>This should identify the persons/organisations that may need to be consulted about the policy or service and its impact.</i></p> <p>All retained personnel, Service Delivery managers, Representative Bodies, Finance, HR, L&D, H&S, Equipment Section, Control & Systel Team. Local communities and their political representatives.</p>
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5.	<p>Has consultation (with the public, managers, employees, TUs etc) on the policy, function, theme or service been undertaken?</p>	Yes			
5a.	<p>Please provide details for your answer including information regarding when consultation will take place if you have ticked yes.</p> <p>Formal consultation has taken place with the public and staff. Workforce representatives have been engaged informally and had the full opportunity to respond to the formal consultation.</p>				
6.	<p>Has the Equality and Diversity Officer been contacted?</p>	Yes			

6a.	If Yes please outline below the outcomes/concerns highlighted in the discussion. No concerns have been highlighted.
If No please ensure that the Equality and Diversity Officer is contacted. If Yes , Please record here the date the Equality and Diversity Officer was contacted regarding this initial equality impact assessment.	
Date: 16 February 2018	

7.	Has monitoring been undertaken?			No	
8.	<p>What does this monitoring show?</p> <p>N/A</p>				
9.	If you have answered no to question 7 can a monitoring system be established to check for impact on the protected characteristics?	Yes			
10.	<p>Please describe how monitoring can be undertaken and identify this monitoring system as an objective when completing the action plan below.</p> <p>It is the intention of the Service to monitor the effectiveness of this crewing model over a 6, 12 & 24 month periods. Data will be reviewed regarding how many incidents have been attended and the outcomes. Recruitment and retention of RDS staff will also be monitored through data and meetings with RDS managers.</p> <p>Once implemented, formal reviews will be undertaken and presented to the Fire Authority for consideration.</p>				
11.	<p>If a monitoring system cannot be established please explain why this is.</p> <p>N/A</p>				
12.	<p>Did the Equality and Diversity Officer advise to proceed with a full EIA? Please provide full details of the decision.</p> <p>A full EIA is not required at this time.</p>				
13.	Proceed to full Equality Impact Assessment?			No	