



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

FUTURES 2025: EFFICIENCY STRATEGY UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 24 February 2023

Purpose of Report:

To present to Members progress against the recommendations agreed at the meeting of the Fire Authority held on the 23 September 2022 including the outcome of public consultation relating to proposed changes to fire cover.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the outcomes of Phase 1 of the Workforce Review including the associated exempt report relating to discretionary compensation payments to affected individuals.
- Receive further reports from the Chief Fire Officer.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In September 2022, the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented to Members a Futures 25 Efficiency Strategy. The report set out options for consideration by the Fire Authority to enable the setting of a balanced budget for the financial year 2023/24.
- 1.2 The report included nine recommendations of which eight received support, including:
- Note the proposed reduction in support roles and the move to a second phase of Workforce Review;
 - Support a period of public and workforce consultation to save £2m from the operational establishment;
 - Note the proposed changes to reduce demand upon the response resources;
 - Note the review of the Service incident attendance time measure;
 - Consider the option to pursue a referendum to increase council precept above the current cap (not supported);
 - Support the review of Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) commitments to communities;
 - Endorse the limited use of reserves for financial year 2023/24 to support planned Service reductions;
 - Agree to receive further update reports to future meetings of the Fire Authority;
 - Support the Chief Fire Officer in investigating sustainable longer term strategic options for the Service.
- 1.3 The purpose of this update report is to set out the current position relating to each of the recommendations previously made.
- 1.4 Since the previous report was presented, the 2023/24 financial position including budget assumptions has evolved because of budget and council tax precept announcements by Central Government and a revised firefighter pay offer. The impact and implications of these are set out in full within the Budget Proposals and Council Tax report which is presented for consideration at this Fire Authority meeting.
- 1.5 The Government revised the Council Tax precept limits of 1.95% and are permitting Combined Fire Authorities to increase Council Tax by 2.95% or up to £5 for a Band D property without the need for a local referendum. In

addition, Business Rates revaluation will result in increased collection rates for the Authority.

- 1.6 The Budget Proposals and Council Tax report indicates that should the Authority agree to raise Council Tax by the agreed maximum level, then it will be possible to set a balanced budget for 2023/24 with some use of reserves, although this is still dependent on the firefighter pay award being finalised. Estimates of the 2024/25 budget position show a deficit in excess of £1.1m although there remains significant uncertainty around the financial position this far ahead due to the one-year Government funding settlement.
- 1.7 The Home Office have requested that Authorities who seek to raise Council Tax up to the £5 limit set out a productivity and efficiency plan. Phase 2 of the Futures 2025 programme is the vehicle through which the Service intends to deliver this plan and further information relating to Phase 2 of the programme is set out in this report.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Since the initiation of the Futures 2025 strategy, significant energy has been deployed in developing plans for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS). It should also be recognised that this has been at a time of a registered pay dispute between the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) employees and the national employers. Alongside the move to Joint Headquarters, a 30% turnover of support staff, delivering £1.6m of temporary savings and positive increases in productivity for the Service.
- 2.2 These factors have delayed the Service's ability to deliver progress as desired against all Futures 2025 recommendations approved by the Fire Authority. Given the latest pay offer, optimism exists that this will be accepted and capacity can be redirected to the Futures 2025 work in the coming weeks and months.
- 2.3 Should the £5 increase in Council Tax be approved by Members and the assumptions around pay awards hold, it will be possible to set a balanced budget position for 2023/24 largely due to:
 - Increased Council Tax income;
 - Inflationary increases to Revenue Support Grant and Business Rate income;
 - Revaluation of business rate properties;
 - Stronger than expected Business Rate collection following recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic;
 - Temporary firefighter vacancies while the Service reviews the establishment and deployment of resources to risk;
 - Use of reserves.
- 2.4 The Authority has set aside £1.126m in an Earmarked Reserve to support the budget through this uncertain time, £404k of which will be required to balance the 2023/24 budget, leaving £722k for use in future years. This is insufficient

to cover the projected deficit for 2024/25 currently estimated to be £1.1m. The Futures 25 Efficiency Strategy is still required to identify sufficient savings to put the Service in a stronger financial position and allow investment in key areas of the Service to deliver the CRMP.

- 2.5 Whilst the local government finance settlement is a one-year offer, the £5 option has the greatest value in mitigating future service efficiencies in the short term. The £5 option also comes with a clear government expectation, that:

However, we are also clear that precept rises should not be in place of sound financial management and we expect FRAs to exhaust all other options to reprioritise budgets, seek efficiencies and to maximise productivity of their existing resources before looking to local taxpayers for additional funding. As such, as you consider your individual service budgets in this Settlement, I am asking all FRAs set out to me in writing how, in principle, you will be reprioritising within your budget, delivering efficiencies, and driving productivity improvements in your local area. I would like you to do this by mid-January alongside any responses to the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement consultation. As part of the Spending Review 2021/22, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association made a commitment on behalf of the fire sector in England to create 2% of non-pay efficiencies and to increase productivity of the fire sector by 3% by 2024/25.

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire

WORKFORCE REVIEW – PHASE 1

- 2.6 The Workforce Review encompasses a review of the structure and budget associated with the Green Book establishment. The Green Book establishment comprises all NFRS staff who are on local government terms and conditions and are eligible for membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- 2.7 Phase 1 of the Workforce Review confirmed that a temporary reduction of £250K to Green Book pay budgets could be made permanent through the disestablishment of posts across several departments and removal of vacant posts. This process is now underway and sits within the CFO's scheme of delegation to amend the permanent establishment, whilst remaining within the overall pay budget. The Authority will still receive recommendations over discretionary payments – ie: those incurring redundancy.
- 2.8 In addition, changes to the way that the Service assesses development of operational staff has resulted in a redundancy situation for two occupied posts. The specific implications and recommendations related to this are presented for consideration by Members in the exempt Discretionary Compensation Board report which is included later on the agenda for this meeting.

Fire Cover Review

- 2.9 In September 2022, Members agreed to launch a period of public consultation relating to proposed changes to fire cover in the City and County. This report sets out a summary of the outcomes of the public consultation. The full report on the public consultation outcomes, published by the independent consultant is included as Appendix A.
- 2.10 To save £2m from operational resources, the optimisation modelling undertaken during the Spring and Summer 2022 proposed the following options as having least impact on the community:
- Removal of the second appliance from London Road;
 - Removal of the second appliance from Stockhill;
 - Conversion of West Bridgford from one wholetime appliance to one day shift crewing appliance;
 - Conversion of Ashfield from one day shift crewing and one On-Call appliance to one wholetime and one On-Call appliance.
- 2.11 In line with best practice guidance, and following Member approval, a public and workforce consultation regarding the proposals ran for a 12-week period from 30 September 2022 until 23 December 2022.
- 2.12 To ensure impartiality, an external social research agency, Opinion Research Services (ORS), was commissioned to administer an open consultation questionnaire, facilitate focus groups with members of the public, and co-ordinate feedback from direct engagement sessions with staff members.
- 2.13 1,814 completed questionnaires were submitted. These consisted of 1,800 individual respondents and 14 by organisations. In addition, 12 written submissions were received through the Service's "talk2us" engagement mailbox, including responses from Ashfield District Council, Rushcliffe Borough Council and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.14 Of those that completed a personal questionnaire:
- 14% had a disability or limiting illness;
 - 8% were from an ethnic minority background;
 - 50% were male (with the remainder reporting as female or other); and
 - 63% were over the age of 45.
- 2.15 Of the total returns, 48% of submissions came from the Rushcliffe area, with the next highest recipient area being the City of Nottingham with 14%, and 5% of submissions were from employees of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.16 The three public focus groups were attended by residents from across Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham. Of the areas directly impacted by the proposals, 34% of attendees were from the City of Nottingham, 13% from Rushcliffe and 8% from Ashfield.

- 2.17 An equal split of males and females attended the focus groups; the majority were aged between 25 and 54; 18% were from an ethnic minority background; and 18% had a disability or limiting illness.
- 2.18 Regarding the proposals to remove the second appliances from London Road and Stockhill, the consultation questionnaire responses from members of the public showed:
- 81% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing;
 - Staff member responses showed 60% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing;
 - 12 of the 14 organisations that responded to the questionnaire disagreed with the proposal, with nine strongly disagreeing.
- 2.19 In consideration of the proposal to convert West Bridgford from one wholetime appliance to one day shift crewing appliance, the consultation questionnaire responses from members of the public showed:
- 78% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing;
 - Staff member responses showed 52% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing;
 - 8 of the 14 organisations that responded to the questionnaire disagreed with the proposal, with seven strongly disagreeing.
- 2.20 Concerning the proposal to convert Ashfield from one day shift crewing and one On-Call appliance to one wholetime and one On-Call appliance, the consultation questionnaire responses from members of the public showed:
- 43% agreeing or strongly agreeing;
 - Staff member responses showed 83% agreeing or strongly agreeing;
 - Five of the 14 organisations that responded to the questionnaire agreed with the proposal. However, five strongly disagreed with it.
- 2.21 The general feedback from the focus groups for the proposal to remove appliances from London Road and Stockhill was that they were of concern to attendees, but that they understood the rationale for them. Most attendees across the three focus groups supported the proposed rebalancing of resources between West Bridgford and Ashfield, with it typically considered to be a 'sensible and rational change that would ensure fire and rescue cover is concentrated in areas of greatest risk and demand'.
- 2.22 Public consultation is an excellent method of gauging the level of resistance or support for change and reassurances that NFRS would need to provide in the delivery of its services where they are subject to change. However, consultation is not a means of purely seeking agreement or objection to the proposals, as a significant funding gap remains at this time.
- 2.23 Whilst the budget position is more positive and with advice from the CFO at this point, this report does not seek to action recommendations that were subject to public consultation as we await confirmation of the pay negotiations and precept decisions in the short-term. However, given the

operational savings were developed in financial increments up to £3m and assessed with ORH, these could potentially be a scalable element to the future approach of balancing the budget for the Fire Authority.

- 2.24 The CFO and wider team will consider the financial position following agreement of the budget, including precept level and the changes to the financial position regarding the current pay claims. A further report will be provided for Members' consideration at a future meeting outlining potential savings options from operational resources and currently within the consulted model.
- 2.25 Part of the review will also seek options to address identified gaps in resourcing to risk faced by communities, namely the Ashfield area and work has already commenced at the request of the CFO on viable options – these will be reported for Members' consideration.

Proposals to Reduce Demand Upon the Response Resources and Impact on Attendance Time Measures

- 2.26 The previous report identified that alongside proposed operational workforce reductions, a review of demand would take place and proposals made to the Community Safety Committee to reduce, as an example, Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS).
- 2.27 A report was presented to the Community Safety Committee in December 2022 identifying a modified approach to UwFS during daytime hours to hospitals in the County.
- 2.28 The implementation of this approach was deferred by Officers to provide additional assurance to the Community Safety Committee relating to arrangements in place for UwFS in other Services. In addition, the Committee requested that the Service investigate charging premises. This information will be presented to a future Community Safety Committee.
- 2.29 The subsequent impact on attendance time measures and CRMP commitments is yet to be fully determined. This work will be undertaken as part of the Service's next CRMP development prior to its delivery in 2025, a delay resulting from reduced capacity in recent months.

FUTURES 2025 – PHASE 2

- 2.30 As outlined in previous reports Phase 1 of the Workforce Review identified a wider change and improvement programme is required to support the Service's CRMP commitment to be outstanding by 2032. Structural redesign and business improvement is required to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service.
- 2.31 The Service has made significant productivity improvements since its first HMICFRS inspection published in June 2019. This was recognised by the Inspectorate during their second inspection published in July 2022. The

Service's CRMP which runs from 2022-25 continues to drive productivity improvements, for example:

- Safe and well checks have increased from a target of 9000 in FY 20/21 to those completed so far in FY 22/23 of 12073;
- The number of business safety checks has increased from 125 in 21/22 to 405 so far in 22/23;
- The number of Fire Protection inspections on non-domestic premises has increased from 552 in 21/22 to 908 so far in 22/23.

2.32 These productivity improvements have been made through existing ways of working and resourcing models. It is recognised by the Service that to achieve a step change in productivity and efficiency improvements, a more fundamental review of service design, systems and processes is required.

2.33 Phase 2 of Futures 2025 is the vehicle through which the Service will deliver this efficiency and improvement programme. Scoping is now well underway, and it is recommended that Members agree to continue to receive updates on the progress and outcomes of this work throughout the lifespan of the current CRMP and ongoing review of the commitments contained within it.

2.34 This routine reporting will supplement the Home Office request that efficiency and productivity plans are published and shared with them by March 2023. This requirement has been put in place as a condition of the option to increase Council Tax precept and is linked to Local Government Association (LGA) commitment to create 2% of non-pay efficiencies and to increase productivity of the fire sector by 3% by 2024/25.

2.35 Phase 2 will commence in April 2023 and aims to address several key issues. This includes an anticipated ongoing budget deficit, meaning that it is likely that the options for changes to fire cover will need to be enacted to ensure future balanced budgets.

2.36 In addition, it is incumbent on the Service to ensure that operational resources are deployed to best effect to manage risk in communities. The use of interim cover moves of fire appliances is a well established and routinely used way of balancing available resources to demand and risk countywide. It is recommended that the Chief Fire Officer present a paper to the Fire Authority at a future date to set out options for a longer-term solution to enhance fire cover that addresses these points, to satisfy the Authority's statutory duties to identify and address all foreseeable fire and rescue risk.

2.37 Phase 2 of Futures 25 aims to:

- Ensure that the Authority is able to set a balanced budget in 2024/25 and beyond;
- Balance resourcing to risk, both in an operational and non-operational context;
- Address shortfalls in resourcing in certain departments through service redesign;

- Deliver service and productivity improvement through streamlining of business processes and systems;
- Integrate service delivery functions for community benefit;
- Review non-pay spend with a view to driving further efficiencies.

- 2.38 An earmarked reserve of £900k has been set aside to deliver the change programme. The budget will be used to support a project team, costs associated with improved systems and processes and the provision of specialist skills where necessary. The reserve will also be used to fund the cost of workforce changes such as those associated with redundancy where applicable.
- 2.39 The aim of the Futures 25 programme is to seek to have a broader organisational development approach and not only deal with the significant change as highlighted in this report, but continue to develop NFRS as a well-regarded organisation, both by employees and communities.

LONGER TERM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

- 2.40 At the previous meeting of the Fire Authority in September, Members agreed to support the CFO in investigating sustainable longer-term strategic options for the Service which aim to build the longer-term sustainability and resilience of the Service.
- 2.41 This work is likely to continue into the medium to longer-term, progress has been limited due to the competing demands upon the Service in recent months, it includes opportunities associated with existing collaborations that are being evaluated. In addition, wider conversations are developing relating to the potential opportunities which may be offered by devolution.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The financial position of the Authority over the next four years remains very uncertain. It is expected that the total deficit for the four years up to 2026/27 will exceed £4m. This may be higher if the pay award is settled at the higher level that is pending agreement and detailed in this report.
- 3.2 The Authority currently has £1.126m in earmarked reserves to support the budget, but this is likely to be insufficient, requiring ongoing savings to be made through the Futures 25 Efficiency Strategy.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Changes to the permanent Green Book establishment will result in a small number of redundancies. The implications of this are outlined in more detail in the Discretionary Compensation Board report which is presented as an exempt report at this meeting.

- 4.2 If changes to fire cover are actioned, then there will be a requirement for the relocation of operational staff to different stations. This will be managed in line with the well-established consultation and policy framework.
- 4.3 As with any organisational change, Phase 2 of Futures 25 will continue to cause anxiety for staff. The Service will aim to mitigate this so far as is possible by ensuring that staff are able to effectively engage, participate and support the delivery of the wider Service improvement.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this report gives a review of activities rather than introducing a new policy. Any future changes will be supported with an equalities impact assessment and reported to Members.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications associated with this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Fire Services Act places a Statutory Duty on Authorities to make provisions for firefighting, fire safety and responding to road traffic collisions and other emergencies. With the budget available, NFRS will continue to meet its statutory duties.
- 7.2 The Secretary of State, under Section 22 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act (FRSA) 2004 has the power of intervention, if the Secretary of State considers that a fire and rescue authority is failing, or is likely to fail, to act in accordance with the Framework prepared under Section 21 of the FRSA.
- 7.3 Sections 10 to 13 of the Local Government Act 1999 (c. 27) (best value inspections) apply in relation to a fire and rescue authority's compliance with Section 21(7) of the FRSA as they apply in relation to a best value authority's compliance with the requirements of Part 1 of that Act. Fire and rescue authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions.
- 7.4 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 includes the need to plan for business continuity events, including periods of industrial action. Given the ongoing national issues and the consideration of this report, the Service has reported its resilience arrangements to the Policy and Strategy Committee and is reviewing its future arrangements.
- 7.5 The Authority has a statutory responsibility to consult on changes to fire cover. Consultation will be conducted in accordance with HM Government Code of Practice on Consultation and failure to comply with the code may result in Judicial Review of any decisions taken.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Balancing the budget continues to provide challenges across the sector. The Futures 25 Strategy represents a wide-ranging change programme that has the potential for tension in the Service, which will require ongoing and positive employee engagement, this is a clear focus for the Service.
- 8.2 Financial implications are already detailed within this report, however, Members are aware of the risk in not balancing the budget, and scrutiny this may attract nationally. The Strategy seeks to manage and mitigate that risk.
- 8.3 Communities expect to have confidence in the capabilities and management of the Fire and Rescue Service, the current and future challenges, both financially and operationally, have a risk of eroding that confidence. Regular reports to Fire Authority, supporting Committees and a communications plan, will seek to update on progress and assure Committees that the strategy is balanced, proportionate and effective.
- 8.4 The operating environment can be a direct challenge upon the Service's capacity for continuous improvement and the recent and continued focus of HMICFRS ensures that Service's assess its risk and resources to meet that risk, seeking continuous improvements.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are potential collaboration opportunities to ensure the efficient and resilient delivery of the Service. These will be investigated further as part of a Phase 2 of the Futures 2025 strategy.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the outcomes of Phase 1 of the Workforce Review including the associated exempt report relating to discretionary compensation payments to affected individuals.
- 10.2 Receive further reports from the Chief Fire Officer.

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

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Futures 2025 Efficiency Strategy Consultation

Report of findings

Opinion Research Services

31st January 2023



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Report of findings

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This version of the report will be deemed to have been accepted by the client if ORS has not been informed of any amendments within a reasonable period of time (1 month)

This study was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252:2019, ISO 9001:2015, and ISO 27001:2013.

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1. Executive Summary

The commission and consultation

- 1.1 Since 2010, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) has seen budget reductions of £9.6 million in cash terms, reductions that are significantly higher in real terms due to other factors like inflation. A recent review of financial planning to take account of the cost-of-living crisis, further increases in inflation, and uncertainty caused by the conflict in Ukraine, shows that the Service's potential budget deficit has increased to more than £3.3 million in 2023/2024.
- 1.2 In 2021, NFRS began a comprehensive review of its fire and operational response cover. The independent report provided formed the basis for a full Fire Cover Review, which was completed in 2022 with the aim of making cost savings and matching remaining resources to risk. Following this Review, the proposals below have been put forward to generate £2 million savings per year:
- Remove one of the two fire engines at London Road Fire Station to save around £1 million a year
 - Remove one of the two fire engines at Stockhill Fire Station to save around £1 million a year
 - Reinstate 24/7 wholetime cover at Ashfield Fire Station, investing around £660,000 a year
 - Remove the night shift at West Bridgford Fire Station, saving around £660,000 a year, to be reinvested into Ashfield Fire Station (as above).
- 1.3 To understand the views of local residents, staff and other stakeholders on these proposals, a formal consultation was undertaken by the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority between 30th September and 23rd December 2022. NFRS commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open online consultation questionnaire, three online focus groups with members of the public, six written submissions, and 249 signatures gathered via a campaign leaflet organised by the Ashfield Independents, backing *"the reinstatement of Ashfield Fire Station to a 24-7 wholetime model"*.

Key Findings

- 1.1 The key findings below and overleaf are expanded upon in the remainder of the executive summary and covered in comprehensive detail in the main body of the report.

- » The extent to which questionnaire respondents agreed or disagreed that NFRS needs to make changes to respond to its challenges depended on where they were responding from. Those living in Ashfield were far more likely to agree than those living in Nottingham City and Rushcliffe District for example. This suggests a strong correlation between support for and opposition to the consultation proposals and acceptance of the rationale underpinning them.
- » There was some understanding of the need for change in the written submissions, even among those who disagreed with NFRS's proposals. In the focus groups, although the proposals were not unequivocally supported, they were viewed as having the least impact on the most people across the City and County.

- » Many questionnaire respondents were opposed to NFRS using an independent specialist to undertake the Fire Cover Review and provide recommendations. In contrast, there was widespread confidence in the focus groups that the Review was undertaken thoroughly and that NFRS would not propose anything that would be unduly detrimental to public safety.
- » Most questionnaire respondents were opposed to the proposed changes in Nottingham City. However, while they were not overwhelmingly supported, the reasoning underpinning them was understood in all three focus groups and in some of the written submissions.
- » In the questionnaire, support for or opposition to the proposed changes at Ashfield and West Bridgford Fire Stations was again influenced by area of residence: support for both proposals was higher in Ashfield and Mansfield Districts, but lower in Rushcliffe District. Similarly, support for redistributing resources in this way was much higher in Ashfield than it was in Rushcliffe.
- » While there was concern about the impact on West Bridgford of rebalancing resources as proposed, some of the written submissions and most focus group participants were supportive of NFRS doing so to ensure fire and rescue cover is concentrated in the areas of greatest need – albeit this support was reluctantly given by some in the Nottingham City and south Nottinghamshire sessions.
- » Most questionnaire respondents did not agree that an increase of seven seconds to the average attendance time would be acceptable as an outcome of meeting the required budgetary savings. Support was again highest in Ashfield and lowest in Nottingham City and Rushcliffe.
- » There was generally strong support for a one-off £5 council tax increase for NFRS.

The need for change

- 1.4 Over a third (36%) of individuals responding to the open online questionnaire agreed that NFRS needs to make changes to respond to its challenges. The strongest level of agreement (68%) was among people living in Ashfield District, while agreement was lowest among those living in Rushcliffe District (28%) and Nottingham City (30%). Respondents who work for NFRS were more likely to agree with the need for change than those who do not: agreement levels were 60% and 34% respectively.
- 1.5 Of the 14 organisations responding to the questionnaire, five agreed that NFRS needs to make changes to respond to its challenges. However, eight organisations disagreed, and one expressed a neutral view.
- 1.6 There was some understanding of the need for change in the written submissions, even among those who disagreed with the proposals themselves. In the focus groups, while participants said they would not be required in an ideal world, they understood the rationale for the proposed changes in reducing the Service's budget deficit. The phrase 'least worst option' was used frequently, and it would be fair to say that although the proposals discussed below were not unequivocally supported, they were recognised as those that would have the least impact on the most people across the City and County.
- 1.7 Many general concerns centred around the issue of resilience, and whether removing three appliances and 44 firefighter posts from the Service would mean NFRS is too thinly spread to respond to (and prevent) incidents. This, it was felt, would lead to greater reliance on response from neighbouring services like Derbyshire, and would mean NFRS has reduced availability to offer over the border assistance itself.

The Fire Cover Review

- 1.8 Only three of the 14 organisations and just over a third (35%) of individual open questionnaire respondents agreed with NFRS using an independent specialist to undertake the Fire Cover Review and provide recommendations. Of the latter, respondents from Ashfield were in strongest agreement (53%), and those from Rushcliffe District were in lowest agreement (31%). Over three-fifths (62%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed with the approach, whereas agreement was much lower amongst people who do not work for NFRS (33%).
- 1.9 The main concerns expressed by questionnaire respondents were around the cost of the Independent Review; and that an independent specialist may not understand the nuances of providing fire and rescue cover in Nottinghamshire. Several also felt that the Review's conclusions were inaccurate, particularly with respect to estimated response time increases. In contrast, there was widespread confidence in the focus groups that the Fire Cover Review was undertaken thoroughly and that NFRS would not propose anything that would be unduly detrimental to public safety.

The Proposals

Proposals for Nottingham City

- 1.10 Overall, only two of the 14 organisations and 14% of individual questionnaire respondents agreed with the proposed change to fire cover in the City of Nottingham. The strongest agreement - at 40% - was from people living in Ashfield District, whereas agreement was much lower among those living in Rushcliffe District and Nottingham City, with only 9% and 7% agreeing respectively. Over a third (36%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed with the proposed change, whereas much fewer (13%) who do not work for NFRS agreed.
- 1.11 While the proposals to remove the second fire engines from both Stockhill and London Road fire stations were not overwhelmingly supported, the reasoning underpinning them was understood in all three focus groups and in some of the written submissions. Concerns focused on reduced response levels and increased response times in the Service's busiest and most deprived area; increased risk to firefighters and the public; that the reduced number of fire engines would be insufficient to respond to large-scale or simultaneous incidents; and that more rather than fewer resources are needed given the number of high-rise buildings and developments within the City and its surrounding areas.

Proposals for Ashfield Fire Station and West Bridgford Fire Station

- 1.12 Five of the 14 organisations and nearly half (47%) of individuals responding to the open questionnaire agreed with the proposed change to fire cover at Ashfield Fire Station. The strongest agreement was among people living in Ashfield and Mansfield Districts, with 87% and 90% saying that they agreed respectively. Agreement was much lower among those living in Rushcliffe District though, with only a quarter agreeing. Over four-fifths (83%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed with the proposal, nearly six-in-ten (58%) strongly. By comparison, a lower proportion (43%) of those who do not work for NFRS agreed.
- 1.13 Only three of the 14 organisations and 18% of individual online questionnaire respondents agreed with the proposed removal of the night shift at West Bridgford Fire Station to enable reinvestment in Ashfield Fire Station. The strongest agreement was among people living in Ashfield District, with over two-fifths (45%) agreeing with the proposed change. There were also higher levels of agreement among people living in Bassetlaw District, Mansfield District and Newark and Sherwood District, where 32%, 38%, and

32% agreed respectively. Conversely, only 5% of respondents from Rushcliffe District agreed. Over two-fifths (41%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed with the proposed changes at West Bridgford, compared with 17% who do not work for NFRS.

Matching resource to risk

- 1.14 Four of the 14 organisations and nearly a quarter (24%) of individuals responding to the open questionnaire agreed with the principle of redistributing operational resources in the way proposed. The strongest agreement was once again among people living in Ashfield District; over two-thirds (69%) said they agreed with this principle, 41% strongly. Agreement was much lower among those people living in Rushcliffe District, at 7%. Nearly half (49%) of respondents who work for NFRS agreed with the principle of redistributing operational resources, over a quarter (26%) strongly. By comparison, a lower proportion (22%) of those who do not work for NFRS agreed.
- 1.15 As might be expected, the main concerns expressed by questionnaire respondents, some written submissions and focus group participants in relation to rebalancing resources were around the proposed changes at West Bridgford. These concerns primarily centred on reductions in fire cover, increased response times and corresponding impacts on public and firefighter safety; ensuring sufficient levels of fire and rescue cover for a district that is experiencing significant development; the increased pressure on and sustainability of the on-call model; and neighbouring appliances being busier and thus not able to reliably provide night-time cover in the West Bridgford area.
- 1.16 On the other hand, some of the written submissions and most people across all three focus groups supported the proposed rebalancing of resources between Ashfield and West Bridgford Fire Stations, which they considered a “sensible” and “rational” change that would ensure fire and rescue cover is concentrated in the areas of greatest risk and demand. This support was, however, understandably reluctant among some focus group participants in Nottingham City and south Nottinghamshire.
- 1.17 Participants were particularly reassured about the close proximity of London Road Fire Station to West Bridgford, though there was again some understandable worry about the “double whammy” of losing resource from both stations. Indeed, this concern was shared by many questionnaire respondents, and in some of the written submissions.

Emergency response times

- 1.18 Overall, only three of the 14 organisations and just over a fifth (22%) of individual questionnaire respondents agreed that an increase of seven seconds to the average attendance time would be acceptable as an outcome of meeting the required budgetary savings. The strongest agreement was among people living in Ashfield District, with nearly half (48%) agreeing that the increase would be acceptable. Agreement was lower among those people living in Rushcliffe District and Nottingham City, where only 15% and 14% agreed respectively. Two-fifths (40%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed that a seven second increase would be acceptable, whereas a lower proportion (22%) of those who do not work for NFRS did so.

Council tax

- 1.19 Overall, nine of the 11 organisations who provided a valid answer to this question and four-fifths (80%) of individuals responding to the open questionnaire said they would support a one-off £5 council tax increase for NFRS. The strongest support was from people living in Ashfield District and Broxtowe

Borough, with 86% and 87% agreeing respectively. Support was lower among those living in Bassetlaw District, where only 58% said they would support an increase.

- 1.20 Many participants across the three focus groups said that they would be prepared to pay a one-off £5 council tax increase (or more) for NFRS if it meant reducing the Service's budget deficit and the extent of the changes needed to make the required savings. Several, however, acknowledged that they might not have been as tolerant of such an increase had they not been fully informed about the extent of NFRS's financial challenges and what is being proposed to address them. There was also widespread acknowledgement among participants that while they might be able to afford to pay the additional £5, many others would struggle to do so. Concern was also expressed that while a £5 payment for NFRS does not seem like a great deal in isolation, if other public services were to ask for something similar, it would become unaffordable for even more people.
- 1.21 Those who did not support the £5 increase felt that government funding and investment should be increased; NFRS should use its reserves to reduce its funding deficit; it would not actually be a one-off in the face of ongoing financial challenges; they should not have to 'pay more for less'; or that they could accept the implications of the proposals and did not see a need to mitigate them through council tax increases.

Overall comments

- 1.22 Consultation has been described as a dialogue, based on a genuine and purposeful exchange of views. ORS' role is to analyse the outcomes of this dialogue and to give an accurate account of the feedback received during the 12-week public consultation on the 'Futures 2025' proposals by way of an independent and detailed report.
- 1.23 We have an obligation to report that feedback robustly, for decision-makers to be able to conscientiously consider the issues raised. This does not mean that the Fire Authority's decisions should be determined only by the feedback from consultation; majority views should not automatically decide public policy, 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. It is for Authority to take decisions based on all of the evidence available.
- 1.24 This executive summary has summarised the consultation outcomes to highlight the overall balance of opinion. We trust that it is a sound guide to these outcomes and how they might be interpreted, but readers are urged to consult our full report for more detailed insights and understanding of the assumptions, arguments, conclusions and feelings about the possible changes to how fire and rescue cover is provided across Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottinghamshire.

2. The Consultation Process

Background and commission

- 2.1 Since 2010, NFRS has seen budget reductions of £9.6 million in cash terms, reductions that are significantly higher in real terms due to the impact of other factors, such as inflation. In February 2022, financial planning and forecasting predicted a budget deficit of around £2.1 million for the 2023/24 financial year. Following a review of financial planning to take account of the cost-of-living crisis, further increases in inflation, and uncertainty caused by the conflict in Ukraine, the potential budget deficit has now increased to more than £3.3 million in 2023/2024.
- 2.2 In 2021, NFRS began a comprehensive review of its fire and operational response cover and has received an initial, independent report of this process. The findings formed the basis for a Fire Cover Review, which was completed in 2022 with the aim of making cost savings and matching remaining resources to risk.
- 2.3 As part of this process, NFRS commissioned ORH, an independent, sector-leading modelling expert with extensive experience of emergency services around the world, to look at ways of optimising resource use and responding in the most efficient and effective way. Through this review the following proposals have been made. These would generate £2 million savings per year, while having the least detrimental impact on response times across the county and City.

Removal of one of the two fire engines at London Road Fire Station

- This would generate savings of around £1m a year

Removal of one of the two fire engines at Stockhill Fire Station

- This would generate savings of around £1m a year

Reinstatement of 24/7 wholetime cover at Ashfield Fire Station

- This would require investment of around £660,000

Removal of the night shift at West Bridgford Fire Station

- This would generate savings of around £660,000 a year, to be reinvested into Ashfield Fire Station (see above)

- 2.4 In order to understand the views of local residents, staff and other stakeholders on these proposals, a formal consultation was undertaken by Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority between 30th September and 23rd December 2022. NFRS commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to

undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open online consultation questionnaire and three online focus groups with members of the public.

- 2.5 Key elements of the consultation were undertaken by ORS as an independent organisation - for example, designing the consultation questionnaire and presentation material for the focus groups (in conjunction with NFRS); recruiting and moderating the three deliberative online focus groups; and analysing and reporting all responses to these consultation elements.
- 2.6 The 12-week formal consultation period gave the public, staff and stakeholders sufficient time to participate, and through its consultation documents and website information, NFRS sought to provide people with sufficient information to understand its proposals and to make informed judgements about them.

Quantitative engagement

Consultation questionnaire

- 2.7 ORS and NFRS designed an open consultation questionnaire which included questions around:
- NFRS's financial challenges and the need for change
 - The approach taken to the Fire Cover Review
 - The proposals for London Road, Stockhill, West Bridgford, and Ashfield Fire Stations
 - The principle of matching resources to risk
 - Emergency response times
 - Council tax.
- 2.8 Respondents were also invited to make further comments, suggest alternatives to address the specified challenges, and highlight any equalities issues (positive or negative) that might arise from the proposed changes. Finally, there was a demographic profiling section to enable NFRS to understand who within its communities had responded to the consultation.
- 2.9 The questionnaire was available online and in paper format (on request) between 30th September and 23rd December 2022, to be completed by residents, representatives from business, public and voluntary organisations, and employees of NFRS. In total, 1,814 questionnaires were completed, all of which were submitted online. Most responses (1,800) were from individuals, but 14 valid responses identified themselves as organisations.
- 2.10 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, and are more likely to be completed by motivated people. As such, because the respondent profile (as outlined in the full report) is an imperfect reflection of the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham populations, its results must be interpreted in that context.

Qualitative engagement

Online public focus groups

- 2.11 A programme of three deliberative online focus groups was undertaken with a diverse and broadly representative cross-section of residents from across Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham. ORS worked in collaboration with NFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the groups before facilitating the discussions and preparing an independent report of findings.

Attendance and Representation

- 2.12 The focus groups were designed to inform and 'engage' participants with the Service's challenges and its proposals to meet them. This was done by using a 'deliberative' approach to encourage people to question and reflect on the proposals in detail. The meetings lasted for two hours and were attended as below in Table 1.

Table 1: Focus groups (area, time and date and number of attendees)

Area	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
City of Nottingham	Wednesday 30 th November 2022 6:00pm - 8:00pm	13
North Nottinghamshire	Thursday 1 st December 2022 6:30pm - 8:30pm	13
South Nottinghamshire	Tuesday 6 th December 2022 6:00pm - 8:00pm	12
TOTAL		38

- 2.13 The attendance target for the focus groups was around 12 people, which was achieved in all cases. Overall, the 38 participants who took part represented a broad cross-section of residents from each of Nottinghamshire's seven districts/boroughs and the City of Nottingham.
- 2.14 Around half of participants had attended a similar engagement event for NFRS in November/December 2021 and agreed to take part in future events. The others were recruited by Acumen Field, a specialist recruitment agency, who initially sent out a screening questionnaire as an online survey to a database of contacts and, more widely, on social media platforms. They then collated the responses to establish a pool of potential recruits, which was 'sifted' to establish a contact list. People were then contacted by telephone, asked to complete a more detailed screening questionnaire and either recruited or not to match the required quotas. All those recruited were sent all the necessary details in a confirmation email and telephoned a day or two before the events to confirm their attendance.
- 2.15 In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors. The recruitment process was monitored to ensure social diversity in terms of a wide range of criteria (including, for example: gender; age; ethnic group; working status; and disability/limiting long-term illness (LLTI)). As standard good practice, people were recompensed for giving up their time to take part with a £45 gift voucher. Overall, as shown in the table overleaf, participants represented a broad cross-section of residents across the county.

Table 2: Participant demographics

Gender	Age	Working status	Ethnic group	Limiting illness or disability	District/Borough	
Male: 19 Female: 19	16-34: 9 35-54: 19 55+: 10	Working: 28 Not working: 10	White British background: 31 Ethnic minority background: 7	Limiting illness or disability: 7	Ashfield: 3 Bassetlaw: 3 Broxtowe: 3 Gedling: 4	Mansfield: 3 Newark & Sherwood: 4 Rushcliffe: 5
					+ Nottingham City: 13	

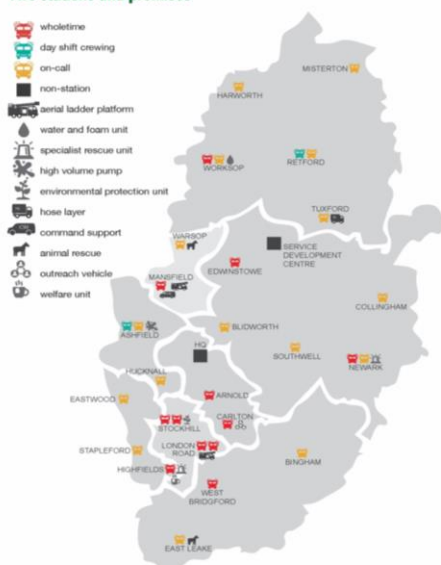
- 2.16 Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham the opportunity to participate. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meetings (as reported in Chapter 4) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline based on similar discussions.

Discussion agenda

- 2.17 The focus groups were independently facilitated by ORS, although two members of NFRS staff were also present to answer 'technical' clarification questions from participants. The meeting format followed a pre-determined topic guide which allowed space for a general discussion of the key questions under consultation. A series of slides were shared at set points during the sessions, which ensured that participants had sufficient background information to actively deliberate on the engagement issues. These (as shown in the selection below and overleaf) included detail on NFRS' resources, buildings and infrastructure, its activity, its budgets – and the proposals themselves.

Nottinghamshire FRS: Fire buildings & infrastructure

Fire stations and premises



24 fire stations

- 10 wholetime (crews on duty 24/7)
- 2 day-crewed (wholetime during the day, on-call in the evenings/overnight)
- 12 on-call (people carry a pager which alerts them when an emergency incident occurs)

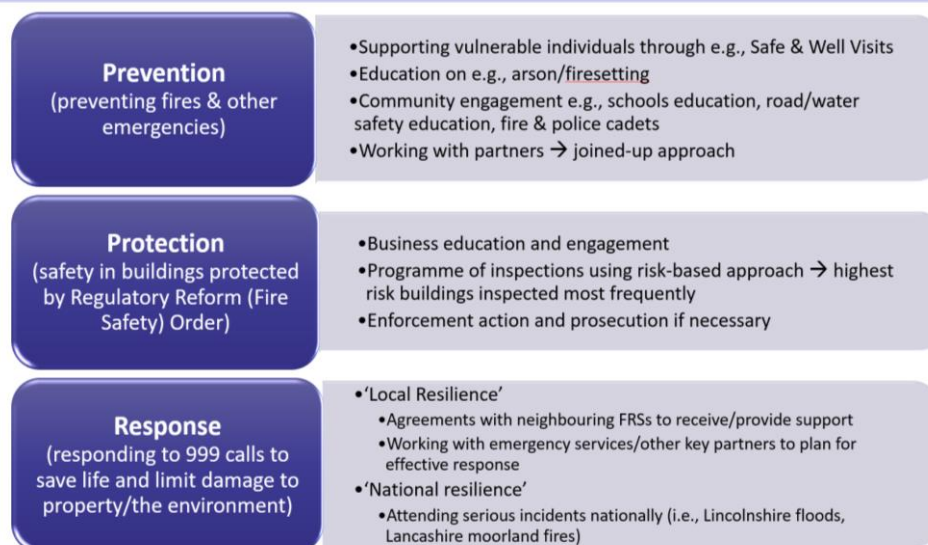
30 fire engines + specialist vehicles, including:

- 2 aerial ladder platforms
- Specialist water/animal rescue vehicles
- Command and welfare support units

Share some fire stations with partners, including:

- Emergency response hub at Hucknall (shared with police and ambulance service)
- Joint fire/police station at West Bridgford

Nottinghamshire FRS: activity

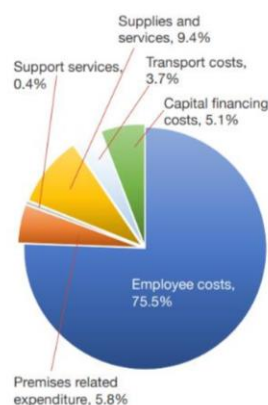


Nottinghamshire FRS: budgets

NFRS mainly funded from combination of council tax, business rates and Govt. grants

Cost of providing services across Nottinghamshire during 2022/23 = £46m

Council tax charge for NFRS = £84.57 per year for Band D property

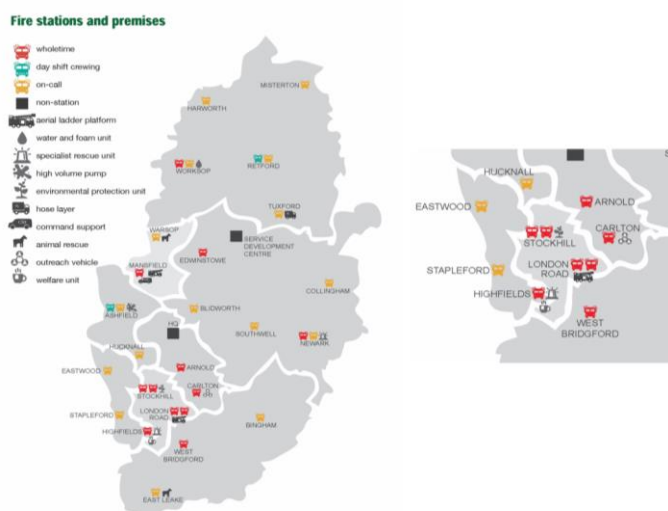


Proposals for London Road and Stockhill Fire Stations

Stockhill and London Road Fire Stations → only NFRS stations with two wholetime fire engines

To make c.£2m savings, NFRS proposes to remove one of the two fire engines at both stations

Would increase time it takes 1st fire engine to attend incidents in the City of Nottingham by **21 seconds** on average



Written submissions

- 2.18 During the formal consultation process, six submissions were received from the following:
- Ashfield District Council
 - Rushcliffe Borough Council (2)
 - Firefighters at West Bridgford Fire Station
 - Firefighters at Ashfield Fire Station
 - A Nottinghamshire resident.
- 2.19 Furthermore, 249 signatures were gathered via a campaign leaflet organised by the Ashfield Independents, backing *“the reinstatement of Ashfield Fire Station to a 24-7 wholetime model”*.

Nature of consultation

- 2.20 Accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take public, staff and stakeholder views into consideration. This should involve fair and accessible engagement whilst reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully. This does not mean that the majority views should automatically decide policy; and the popularity or unpopularity of the issues under consideration should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the correct course of action in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, support or opposition are important, but are considerations to be taken into account, as opposed to factors that determine authorities' decisions.
- 2.21 Above all, public bodies have to consider the relevance and cogency of the arguments put forward during public consultation processes; and not only count the numbers of people. In this context, it was helpful that the consultation programme included both 'open' and deliberative elements, to allow many people to take part via the open questionnaire, whilst promoting informed engagement through the deliberative focus groups.

The report

- 2.22 In contrast to the more thematic approach in the executive summary, the full report that follows considers the feedback from each element of the consultation in turn (which can at times be repetitive given that similar issues emerged across the different strands) because it is important to provide a full evidence-base for those considering the consultation and its findings. We trust that both the summary and full report will be helpful to all concerned.
- 2.23 ORS is clear that its role is to analyse and explain the opinions and arguments of the different interests participating in the consultation, but not to 'make a case' for any viewpoint. In this report, we seek to profile the opinions, views and arguments of those who have responded, but not to make any recommendations as to how the results should be used. Whilst this report brings together a range of evidence for NFRS and the Fire Authority to consider, decisions must be taken based on all the information available.

3. Consultation Questionnaire

Introduction

- 3.1 The open consultation questionnaire was available online between 30th September and 23rd December 2022, and as a hard copy that was available on request. 1,814 questionnaires were completed; all of which were submitted online. 1,800 questionnaires were completed by personal respondents whilst 14 were completed by organisations.

Duplicate and Co-ordinated Responses

- 3.2 It is important that engagement questionnaires are open and accessible to all, whilst being alert to the possibility of multiple completions (by the same people) distorting the analysis. Therefore, while making it easy to complete the questionnaire online, ORS monitors the IP addresses through which questionnaires are completed. A similar analysis of 'cookies' was also undertaken – where responses originated from users on the same computer using the same browser and the same credentials (e.g., user account).
- 3.3 After careful analysis of the raw dataset, ORS did not find any responses that appeared to be attempting to systematically skew results.

Profile Tables

- 3.4 The tables that appear without commentary below and on the following page show the unweighted profiles of the responses to the questionnaire provided by personal respondents (please note that the figures may not always sum to 100% due to rounding).

Table 3: Age – All Respondents

Age	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Under 35	232	15
35 to 44	347	22
45 to 54	319	20
55 to 64	301	19
65 to 74	254	16
75 or over	114	7
Not Known	233	-
Total	1,800	100

Table 4: Gender – All Respondents

Gender	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Male	763	50
Female	737	48
Other	22	1
Not Known	278	-
Total	1,800	100

Table 5: Disability – All Respondents

Disability	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Has disability	215	14
No disability	1,318	86
Not Known	267	-
Total	1,800	100

Table 6: Ethnic Group – All Respondents

Ethnic group	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
White British	1,364	92
Non White British	116	8
Not Known	320	-
Total	1,800	100

Table 7: Working for NFRS – All Respondents

Do you work for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service?	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Works for NFRS	81	5
Doesn't work for NFRS	1,459	95
Not Known	260	-
Total	1,800	100

Table 8: District/Borough– All Respondents

District/Borough	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Ashfield District	174	12
Bassetlaw District	25	2
Broxtowe Borough	120	8
Gedling Borough	93	6
Mansfield District	41	3
Newark and Sherwood District	76	5
Rushcliffe District	714	48
Nottingham City	212	14
Outside Nottinghamshire	39	3
Not Known	306	-
Total	1,800	100

Table 9: Respondent type– All respondents

Respondent type	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Personal	1,800	99
On behalf of an Organisation	14	1
Total	1,814	100

- 3.5 The following organisations (including businesses) identified themselves as part of their responses to the questionnaire:
- Annesley and Felley Parish Council
 - Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service
 - East Leake Parish Council
 - Fire Brigades Union Nottinghamshire (branch and public meetings)
 - Kinoulton Parish Council
 - Lindley's Autocentres
 - Member of Parliament for Nottingham North
 - Member of Parliament for Nottingham South
 - Member of Parliament for Rushcliffe
 - Notts999Fire (a social media account that promotes the Fire and Rescue Service)
 - Rugby Road Social Committee.
- 3.6 Responses submitted on behalf of organisations can differ in nature to those submitted by individual members of the public if, for example, they represent the collective views of a number of different people or raise very specific issues. For this reason, ORS typically reports the consultation responses from organisations separately to those of individuals.
- 3.7 The main body of this chapter therefore focuses *only* on individual respondents' views; the views of organisations are covered in a separate section at the end of the chapter.

Interpretation of the data

- 3.8 For simplicity, the results for the open engagement online questionnaire are presented in a largely graphical format, where the numbers on the pie or bar charts indicate the percentage or proportion giving a particular view. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a 'traffic light' system in which green shades represent positive responses (such as 'agree'), red shades represent negative responses (such as 'disagree'), and yellow shades represent neither positive nor negative responses. Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" categories, or multiple answers. An asterisk (*) denotes any value less than half of one per cent.

- 3.9 All open-ended responses have been read and classified (coded) using a standardised approach (code frame). This approach helps ensure consistency when classifying different comments and the resulting codes represent themes that have been repeatedly mentioned. Quotes are edited using ellipses to ensure anonymity.

Questionnaire Findings (individuals)

Financial challenges and the need for change

Since 2010, NFRS has seen budget reductions of £9.6 million in cash terms and these reductions are significantly higher in real terms due to the impact of other factors, such as inflation. In February of this year, financial planning and forecasting predicted a budget deficit of around £2.1 million for the 2023/24 financial year. Following a review of financial planning to take account of the cost-of-living crisis, further increases in inflation, and uncertainty caused by the conflict in Ukraine, the potential budget deficit has increased to more than £3.3 million in 2023/2024.

In 2021, NFRS began a comprehensive review of its fire and operational response cover and has received an initial, independent report of this review. The findings formed the basis on which a Fire Cover Review was completed in 2022 with the aim of making cost savings and matching remaining resources to risk.

As part of this process, NFRS commissioned ORH, an independent, sector-leading modelling expert with extensive experience of emergency services around the world, to look at ways of optimising resource use and responding in the most efficient and effective way. Through this review the following proposals have been made. These recommendations would generate £2 million savings per year, while having the least detrimental impact on response times across the county and City:

Removal of one of the two fire engines at London Road Fire Station

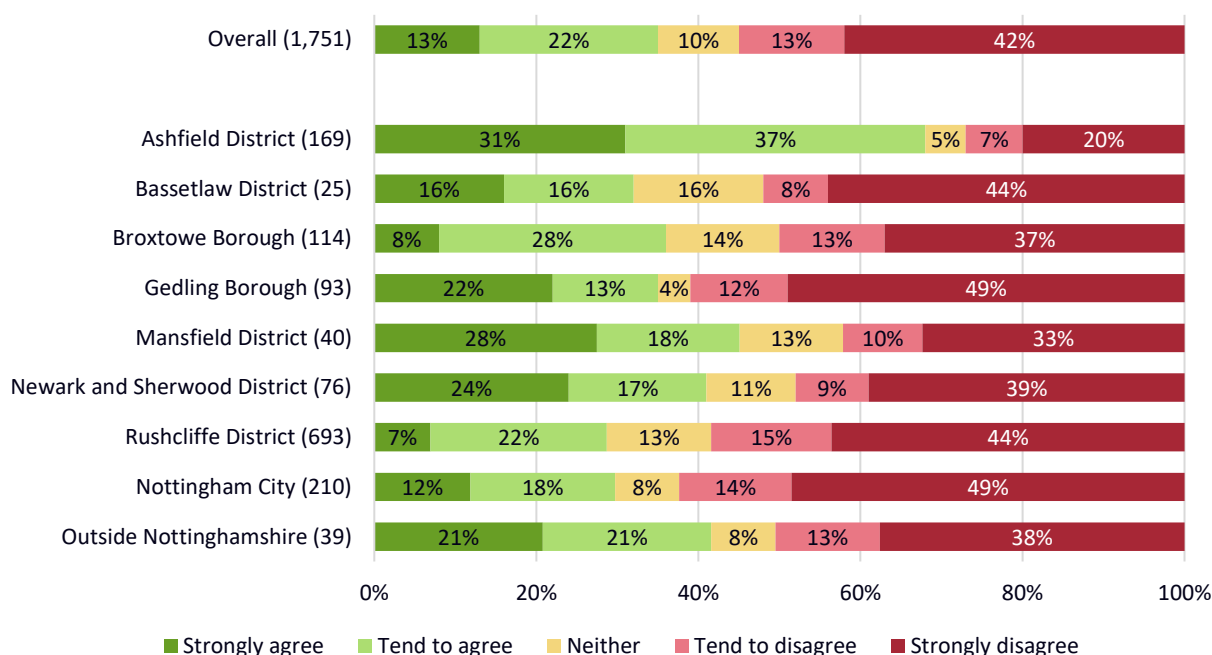
Removal of one of the two fire engines at Stockhill Fire Station

Conversion of Ashfield Fire Station from a daytime only wholetime fire engine and one On-call fire engine to one 24/7 wholetime fire engine and one On-call fire engine

Conversion of West Bridgford Fire Station from one 24/7 fire engine to a daytime only fire engine.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that NFRS needs to make changes to respond to its challenges?

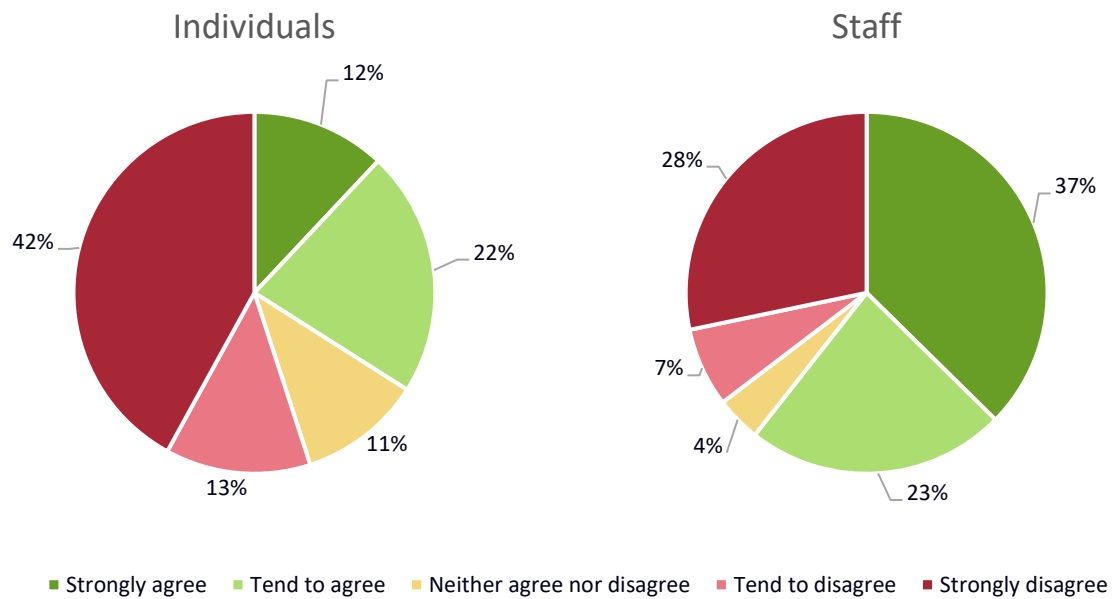
Figure 1: Agreement that NFRS needs to make changes to respond to its challenges (all personal responses by area)



Base: Numbers in brackets show the number of respondents giving a valid answer within each sub-group

- 3.10 Overall, over a third (36%) of people responding agreed that NFRS needs to make changes to respond to its challenges.
- 3.11 Comparing responses across areas, the strongest level of agreement was among people living in Ashfield District, with over two-thirds (68%) saying that they agreed with the need to make changes, 31% strongly. Agreement with the need to make changes was lowest among those living in Rushcliffe District and Nottingham City, with only 28% and 30% agreeing respectively.
- 3.12 As previously noted in Table 7, 5% of the people responding work for NFRS. The figure overleaf shows the level of agreement broken down between staff and other individual respondents.

Figure 2: Agreement that NFRS needs to make changes to respond to its challenges (personal responses broken down by individuals and staff)



Base: Individuals (1,420), Staff (81)

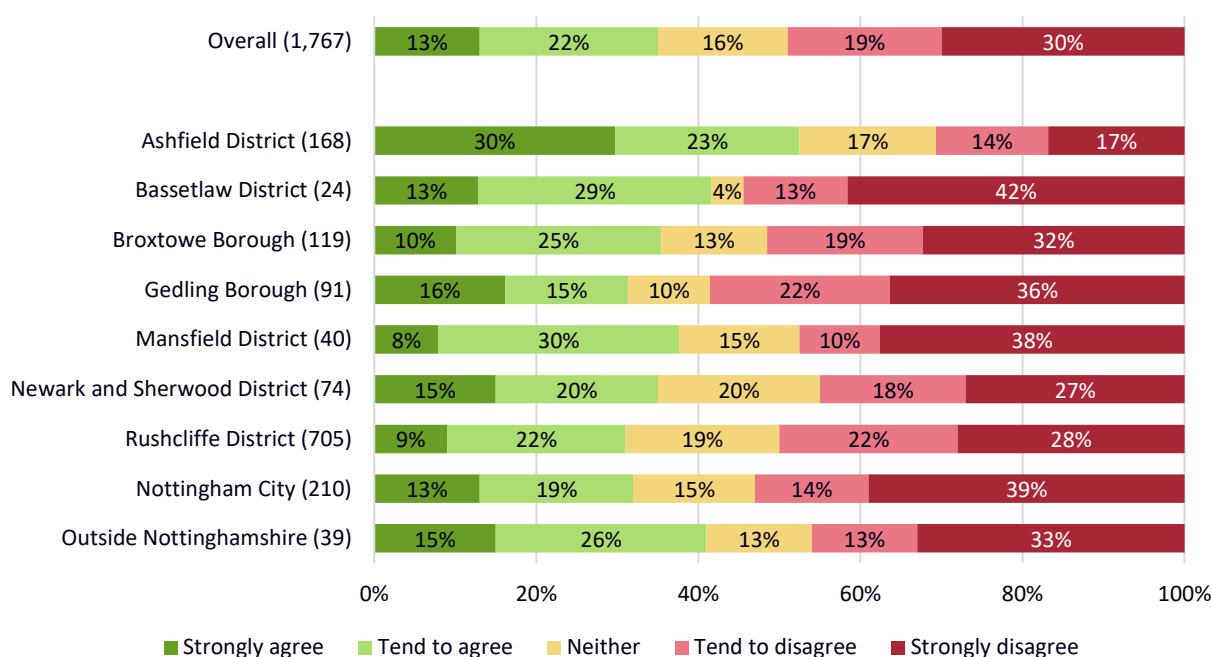
- 3.13 Figure 2 shows that the level of agreement between these sub-groups differs. Three-fifths (60%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed that the Service needs to make changes to respond to its challenges, with almost four-in-ten (37%) strongly agreeing. By comparison, a much lower proportion (34%) of those who do not work for Nottingham Fire and Rescue Service agreed.

The Fire Cover Review

NFRS commissioned ORH, an independent sector leading specialist, to undertake its fire cover review and make recommendations to save £2m per year with the least possible impact on operational response times across the county and City. ORH reviewed emergency incident data across a five-year period.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach of using an independent specialist to undertake the Fire Cover Review and provide the Service with recommendations?

Figure 3: Agreement with the approach of using an independent specialist to undertake the Fire Cover Review and provide the Service with recommendations (all personal responses by area)

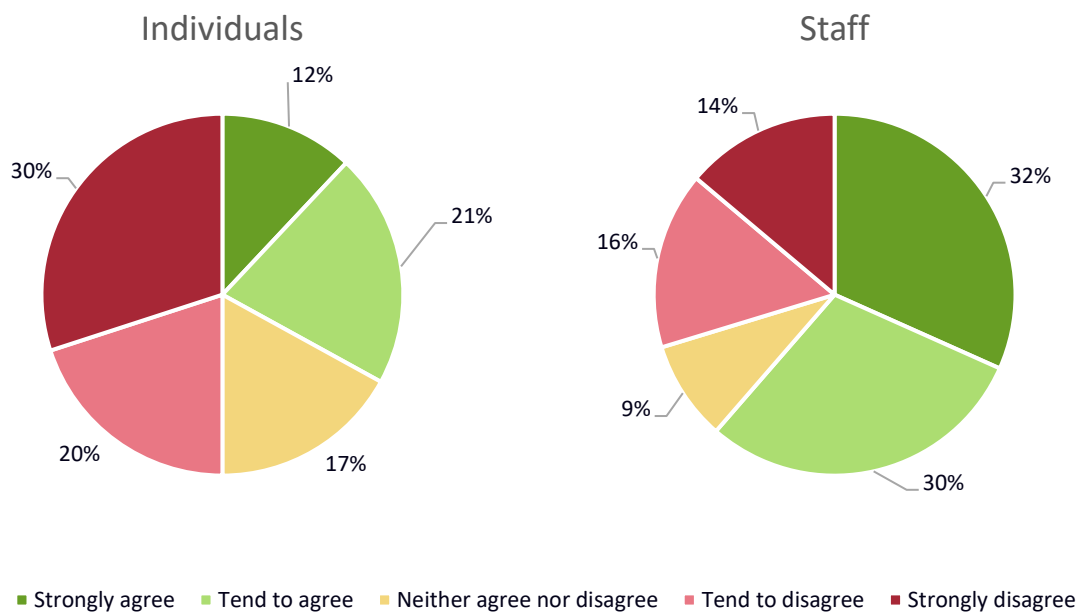


Base: Numbers in brackets show the number of respondents giving a valid answer within each sub-group

- 3.14 Overall, just over a third (35%) of people responding agreed with the approach of using an independent specialist to undertake the Fire Cover Review and provide the Service with recommendations.
- 3.15 Comparing responses across area, the strongest agreement was from people living in Ashfield District, with over half (53%) saying that they agreed with this approach, 30% strongly. Agreement was lowest for those living in Rushcliffe District, with only 31% agreeing.

3.16 The following figure shows the level of agreement broken down by whether they worked for NFRS.

Figure 4: Agreement with the approach of using an independent specialist to undertake this review and provide the Service with recommendations (personal responses broken down by individuals and staff)



Base: Individuals (1,434), Staff (81)

3.17 Figure 5 shows that again the level of agreement between these sub-groups differs. Over three-fifths (62%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed with the approach of using an independent specialist to undertake the Review and provide the Service with recommendations, nearly one-third (32%) strongly. By comparison, a much lower proportion (33%) of those who do not work for NFRS agreed.

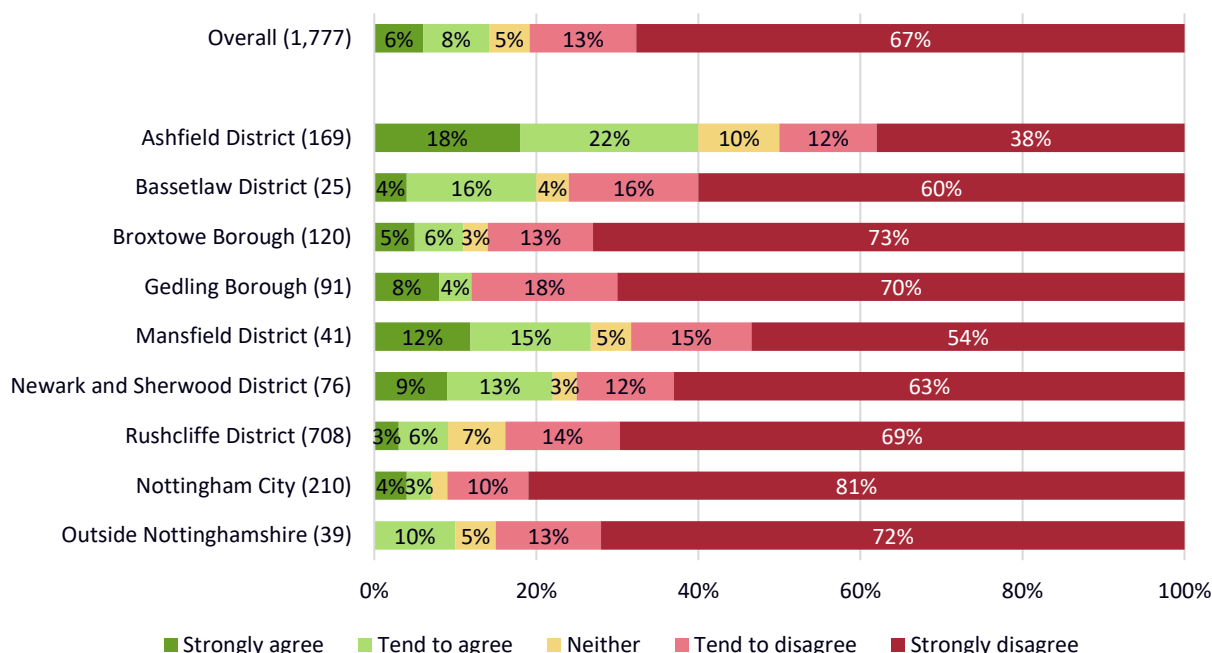
Proposals for London Road and Stockhill Fire Stations

Stockhill and London Road Fire Stations are the only two stations in the Service that have two wholetime fire engines. To make cost savings, NFRS is proposing to remove one of the two fire engines at these fire stations.

This change would increase the time it takes the first fire engine to attend incidents in the City of Nottingham by 21 seconds on average. Incidents in the City of Nottingham will always be attended by the nearest available fire engine.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to fire cover in the City of Nottingham?

Figure 5: Agreement with the proposed change to fire cover in the City of Nottingham (all personal responses by area)

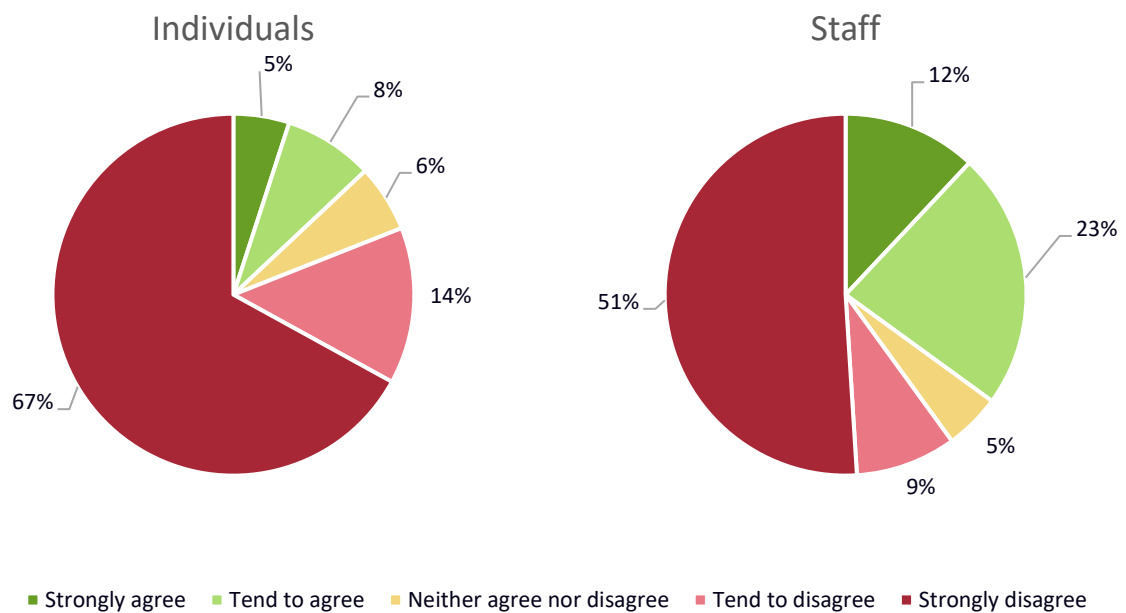


Base: Numbers in brackets show the number of respondents giving a valid answer within each sub-group

- 3.18 Overall, only 14% of people responding agreed with the proposed change to fire cover in the City of Nottingham.
- 3.19 Again, comparing responses by area, the strongest agreement was from people living in Ashfield District, with two-fifths (40%) saying that they agreed with this proposed change. Agreement was much lower among those people living in Rushcliffe District and Nottingham City, with only 9% and 7% agreeing respectively.

3.20 The following figure shows the level of agreement broken down by whether respondents work for NFRS.

Figure 6: Agreement with the proposed change to fire cover in the City of Nottingham (personal responses broken down by individuals and staff)



Base: Individuals (1,442), Staff (81)

3.21 Figure 7 shows that over a third (36%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed with the proposed change to fire cover in the City of Nottingham. By comparison, a considerably lower proportion (13%) of those who do not work for NFRS agreed.

Proposal for Ashfield Fire Station

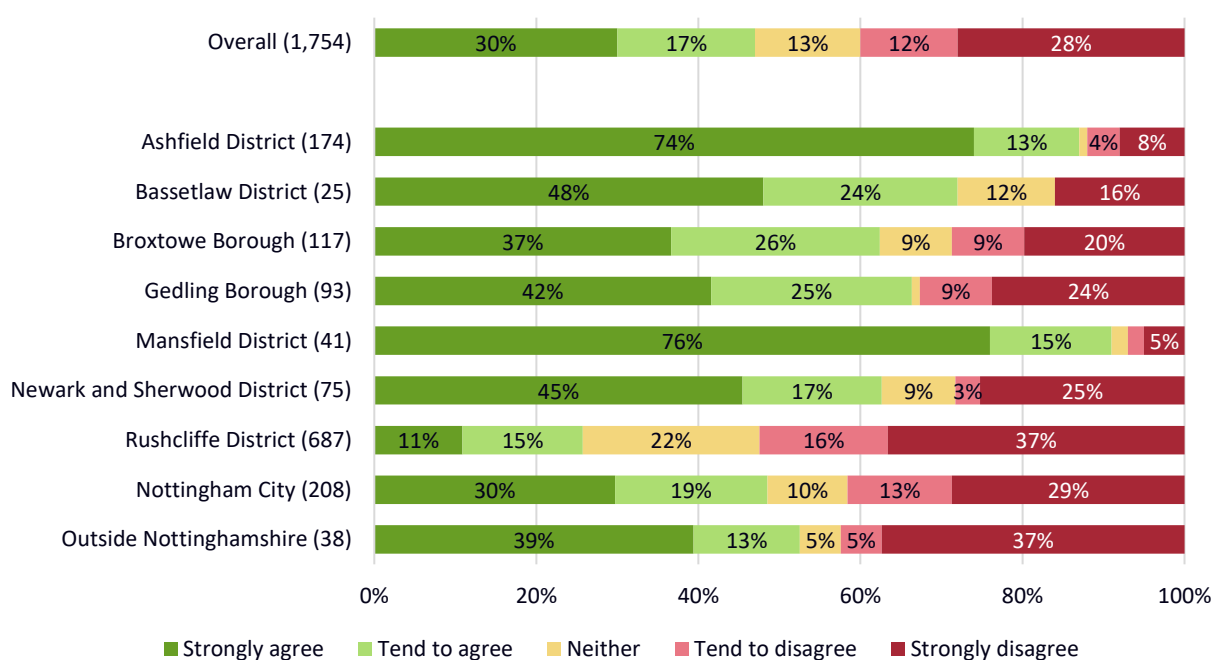
The independent report of NFRS's initial fire and operational response cover review showed that if both second appliances were to be removed from London Road and Stockhill Fire Stations to make the required budgetary savings, the best use of remaining resources, based on maintaining the quickest response times at both district/borough and county level, would be to restore a wholtime 24/7 crewing model at Ashfield Fire Station.

Currently, Ashfield Fire Station is crewed in the day by wholtime firefighters that are based at the station and available for immediate response. Overnight, it is staffed by On-Call firefighters who are called in to the station to respond to incidents as required.

Reinstating wholtime 24/7 fire cover at Ashfield would reduce the time it takes for the first fire engine to attend all incidents in the Ashfield District by 48 seconds on average.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to fire cover at Ashfield Fire Station?

Figure 7: Agreement with the proposed change to fire cover at Ashfield Fire Station (all personal responses by area)

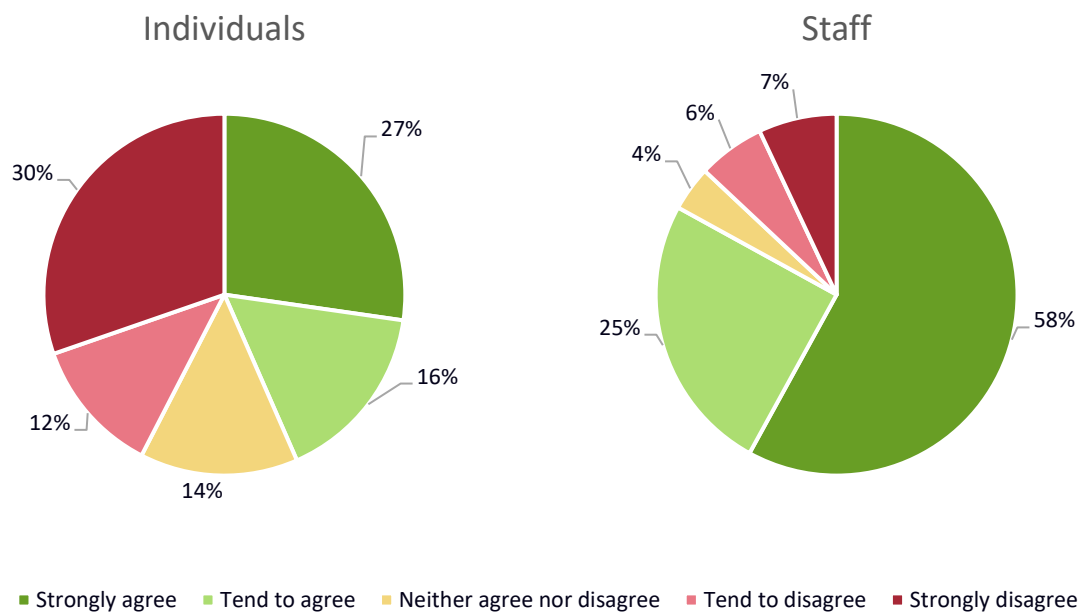


Base: Numbers in brackets show the number of respondents giving a valid answer within each sub-group

- 3.22 Nearly half (47%) of people responding overall agreed with the proposed change to fire cover at Ashfield Fire Station.
- 3.23 Comparing responses across areas, the strongest agreement was among people living in Ashfield and Mansfield Districts, with 87% and 90% saying that they agreed with this proposed change respectively. Agreement was much lower among those living in Rushcliffe District, with only 25% agreeing.

3.24 The following figure shows the level of agreement broken down by whether respondents work for NFRS.

Figure 8: Agreement with the proposed change to fire cover at Ashfield Fire Station (personal responses broken down by individuals and staff)



Base: Individuals (1,421), Staff (81)

3.25 Figure 9 shows that the level of agreement between these sub-groups once again differs. Over four-fifths (83%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed with the proposed change to fire cover at Ashfield Fire Station, with nearly six-in-ten (58%) strongly agreeing. By comparison, a lower proportion (43%) of those who do not work for NFRS agreed.

Proposal for West Bridgford Fire Station

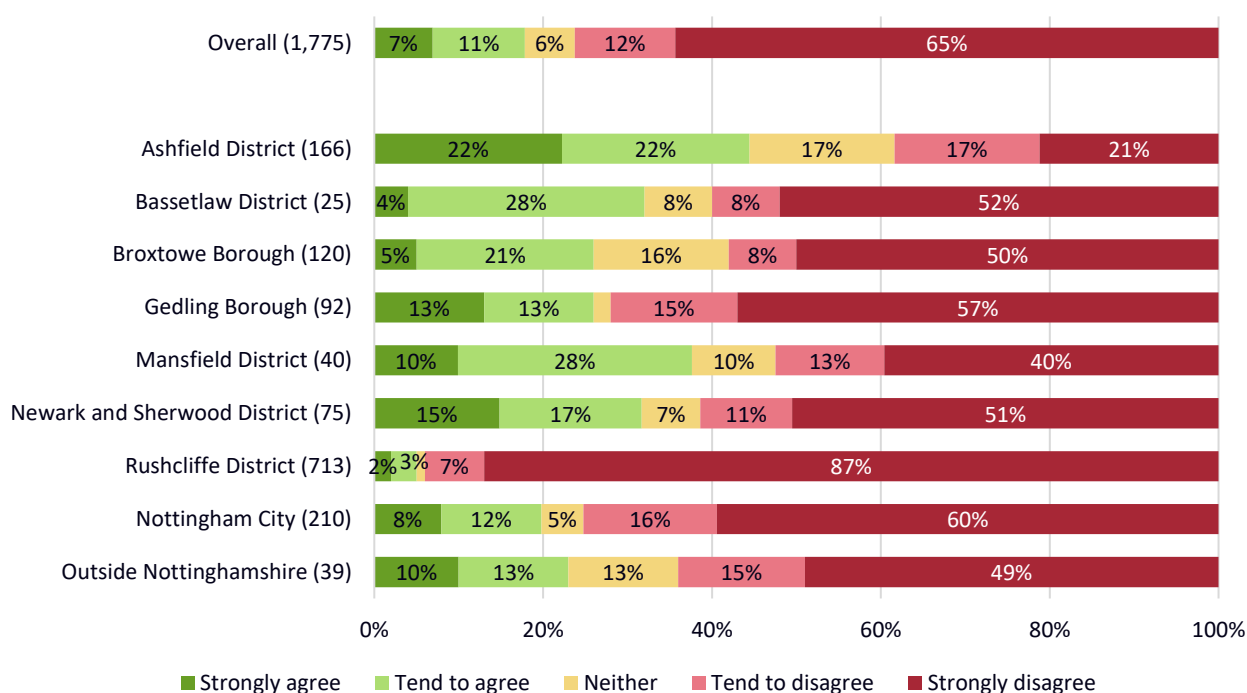
To support the proposal for Ashfield Fire Station, NFRS is proposing to remove night-time fire cover from West Bridgford Fire Station to allow resources to be reallocated.

West Bridgford is an area identified in the review as having a lower number of emergency incidents and a lower risk profile than other areas. Also, in 2017, Central Fire Station was relocated to the new fire station on London Road, which is only two miles from West Bridgford Fire Station. This is the closest distance between any of the Service's fire stations. As with all incidents, the nearest available fire engine would continue to be sent on all occasions.

This change would increase the time it takes the first fire engine to attend incidents in Rushcliffe District by an average of 43 seconds.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to fire cover at West Bridgford Fire Station?

Figure 9: Agreement with this proposed change to fire cover at West Bridgford Fire Station (all personal responses by area)

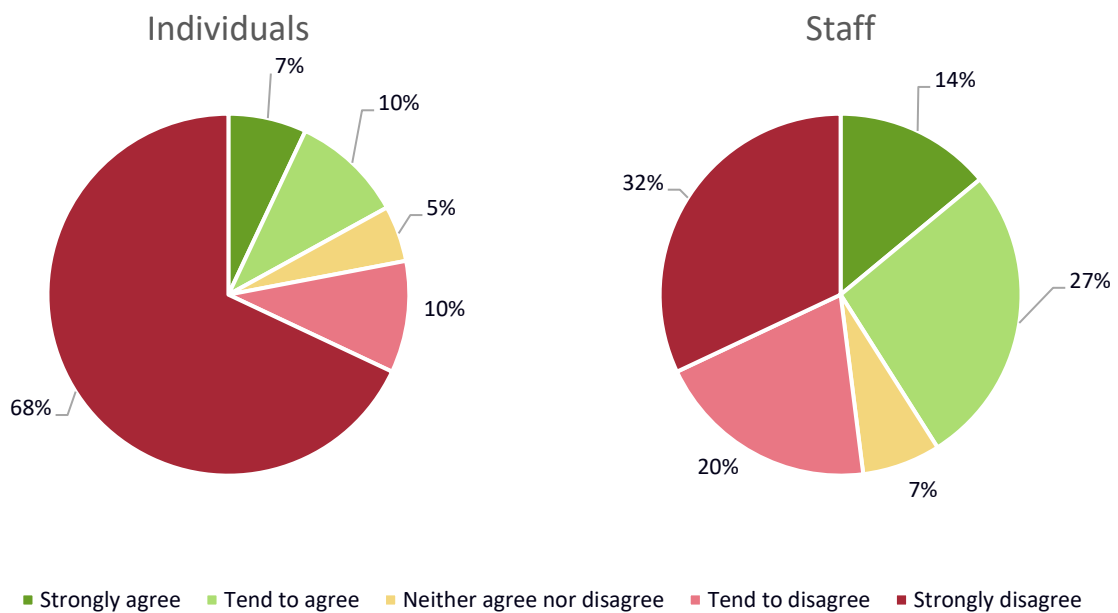


Base: Numbers in brackets show the number of respondents giving a valid answer within each sub-group

- 3.26 Overall, only 18% of people responding agreed with this proposed change to fire cover at West Bridgford Fire Station.
- 3.27 Comparing responses across areas, the strongest agreement was among people living in Ashfield District, with over two-fifths (45%) agreeing with the proposed change, 22% strongly. There were also higher levels of agreement among people living in Bassetlaw District, Mansfield District and Newark and Sherwood District, where 32%, 38%, and 32% agreed respectively. Conversely, only 5% of respondents from Rushcliffe District agreed with the proposed change.

3.28 The following figure shows the level of agreement broken down by whether they worked for NFRS.

Figure 10: Agreement with this proposed change to fire cover at West Bridgford Fire Station (personal responses broken down by individuals and staff)



Base: Individuals (1,446), Staff (81)

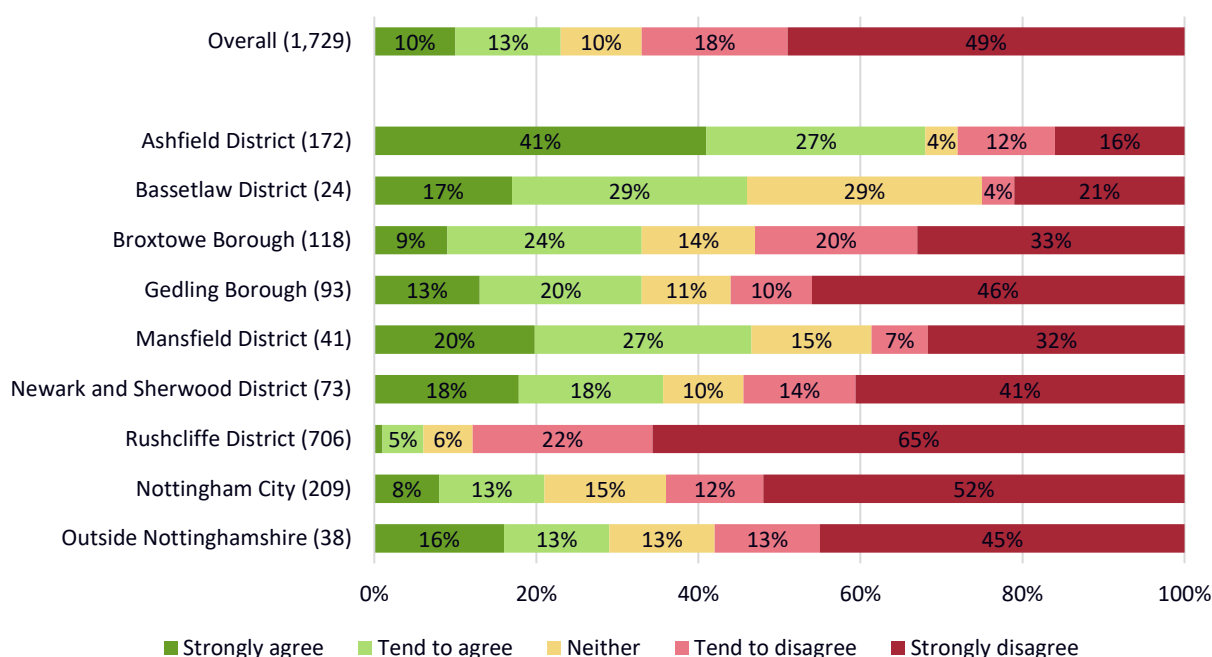
3.29 Figure 11 shows that again the level of agreement between these sub-groups differs. Over two-fifths (41%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed with the proposed change to fire cover at West Bridgford Fire Station, with over one-in-eight (14%) strongly agreeing. By comparison, a much lower proportion (17%) of those who do not work for Nottingham Fire and Rescue Service agreed.

Matching resource to risk

The fire cover review shows that the proposal to add overnight fire cover at Ashfield Fire Station, and remove it from West Bridgford to fund this, ensures the quickest average response times across the whole county and City whilst meeting the required budgetary savings.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of redistributing operational resources in this way?

Figure 11: Agreement with the principle of redistributing operational resources in this way (all personal responses by area)

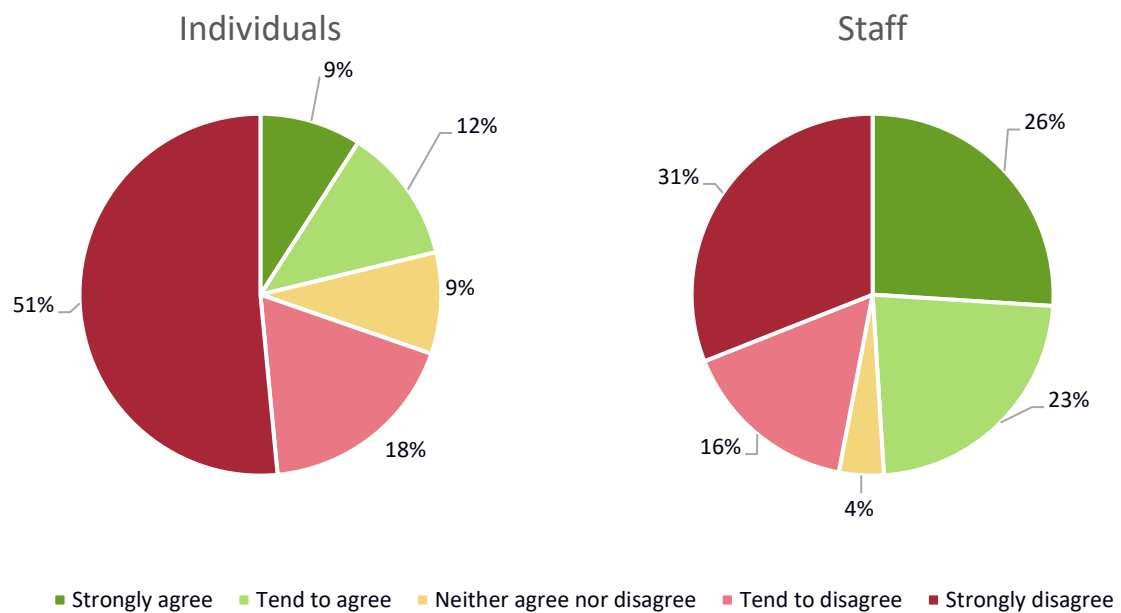


Base: Numbers in brackets show the number of respondents giving a valid answer within each sub-group

- 3.30 Overall, nearly a quarter (24%) of people responding agreed with the principle of redistributing operational resources in this way.
- 3.31 Comparing responses by area, the strongest agreement was from people living in Ashfield District, with over two-thirds (69%) saying that they agreed with this principle, 41% strongly. Agreement with the principle was lower among those people living in Rushcliffe District, with only 7% agreeing.

3.32 The following figure shows the level of agreement broken down by whether respondents work for NFRS.

Figure 12: Agreement with the principle of redistributing operational resources in this way (personal responses broken down by individuals and staff)



Base: Individuals (1,438), Staff (80)

3.33 Figure 13 shows that the level of agreement between these sub-groups differs once more. Nearly half (49%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed with the principle of redistributing operational resources, with over a quarter (26%) strongly agreeing. By comparison, a lower proportion (22%) of those who do not work for NFRS agreed.

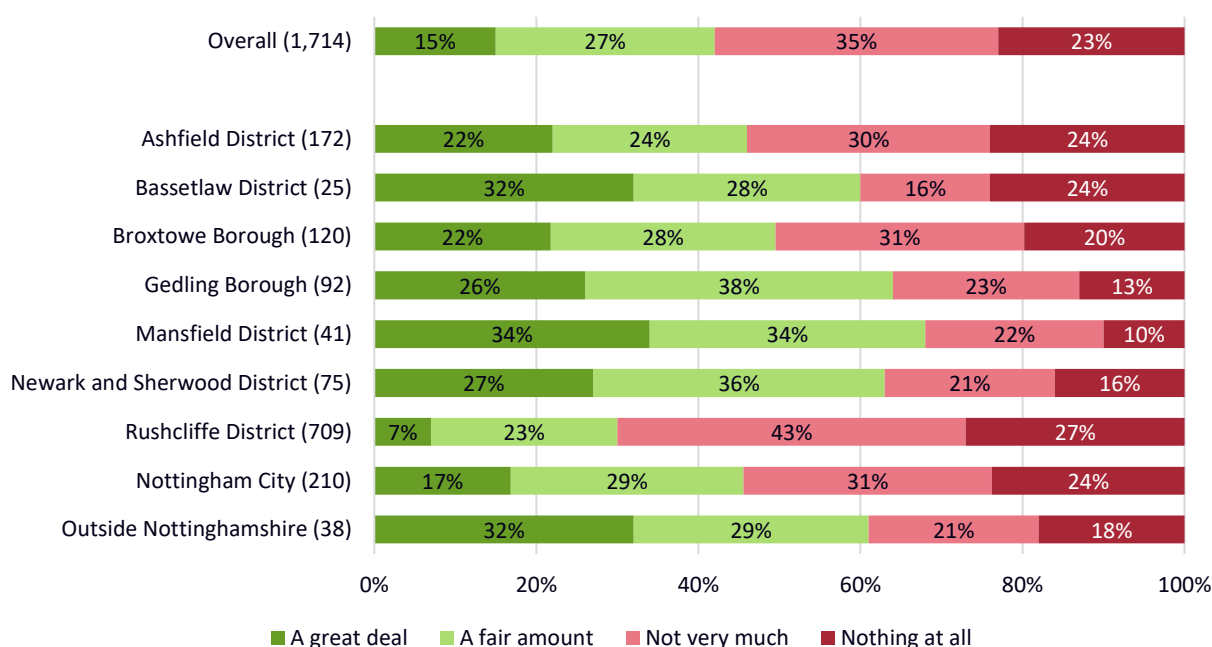
Emergency response times

NFRS's current response standard is to reach incidents within eight minutes, on average, from the time the first fire engine is dispatched. Based on the most up-to-date information available, the average time currently being taken to reach incidents across the county and City is seven minutes and 57 seconds.

When the overall impact of the proposals is considered, the average time for a first fire engine to arrive at an incident, from the point it was mobilised, is predicted to increase by seven seconds across the county and City.

To what extent were you aware of NFRS's response times before taking part in this consultation?

Figure 13: Awareness of NFRS's response times before taking part in this consultation (all personal responses by area)

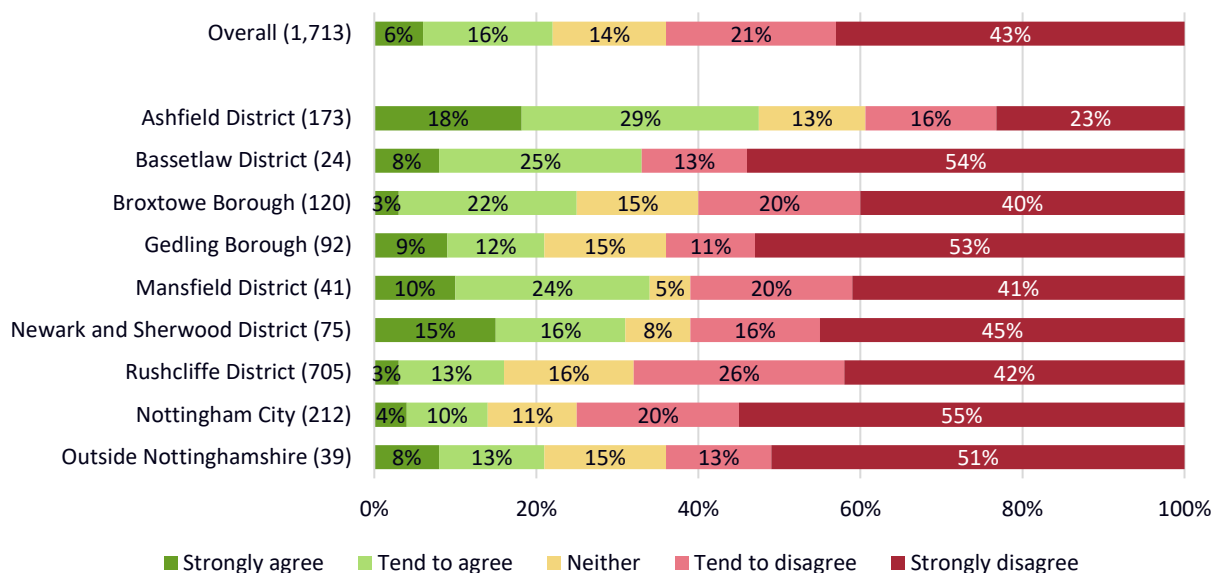


Base: Numbers in brackets show the number of respondents giving a valid answer within each sub-group

- 3.34 15% of people responding felt they knew 'a great deal' about NFRS's response times before taking part in this consultation, while a further 27% felt they knew 'a fair amount'. On the other hand, almost three in five people said they did not know very much (35%) or that they knew 'nothing at all' (23%).
- 3.35 Comparing responses across district/borough, the highest level of awareness was amongst those people living in Mansfield District with 34% aware 'a great deal' and a further 34% aware 'a fair amount'. Conversely the lowest level of awareness was amongst those people living in Rushcliffe District with only 7% aware 'a great deal' and 23% aware 'a fair amount'.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that an increase of seven seconds to the average attendance time would be acceptable as an outcome of meeting required budgetary savings?

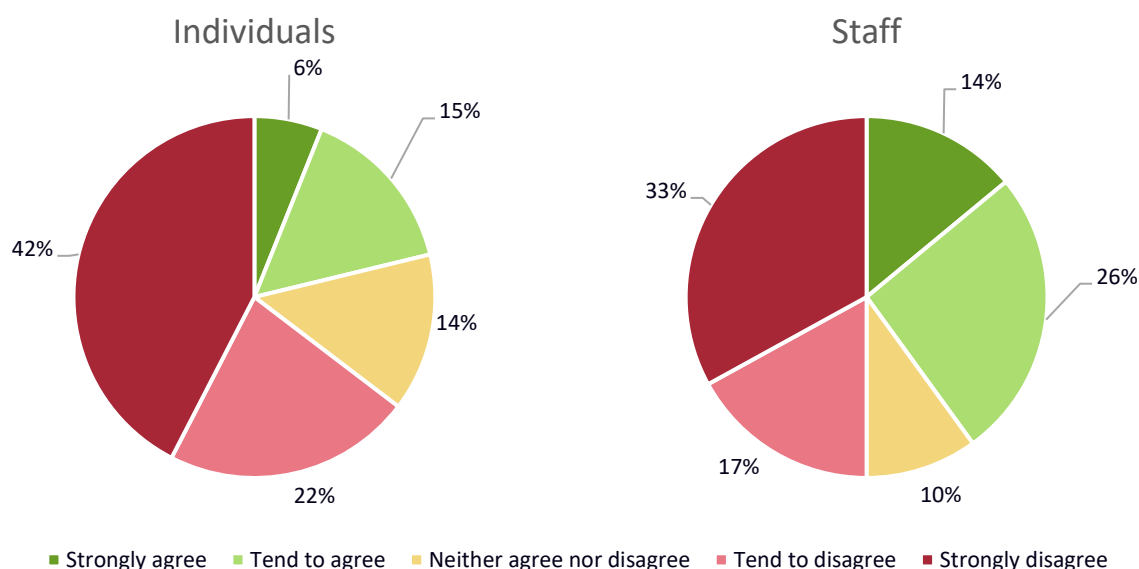
Figure 14: Agreement that an increase of seven seconds to the average attendance time would be acceptable as an outcome of meeting the required budgetary savings (all personal responses by area)



Base: Numbers in brackets show the number of respondents giving a valid answer within each sub-group

- 3.36 Overall, just over a fifth (22%) of people responding agreed that an increase of seven seconds to the average attendance time would be acceptable as an outcome of meeting the required budgetary savings.
- 3.37 Comparing responses across areas, the strongest agreement was from people living in Ashfield District, with nearly half (48%) agreeing that the increase would be acceptable, 18% strongly. Agreement that the increase would be acceptable was lower for those people living in Rushcliffe District and Nottingham City, where only 15% and 14% agreed respectively.

Figure 15: Agreement that an increase of seven seconds to the average attendance time would be acceptable as an outcome of meeting the required budgetary savings (personal responses broken down by individuals and staff)



Base: Individuals (1,446), Staff (81)

- 3.38 Figure 16 shows the differing level of agreement between those who work for NFRS and those who do not. Two-fifths (40%) of people responding who work for NFRS agreed that an increase of seven seconds to the average attendance time would be acceptable as an outcome of meeting the required budgetary savings. By comparison, a lower proportion (22%) of those who do not work for NFRS agreed.

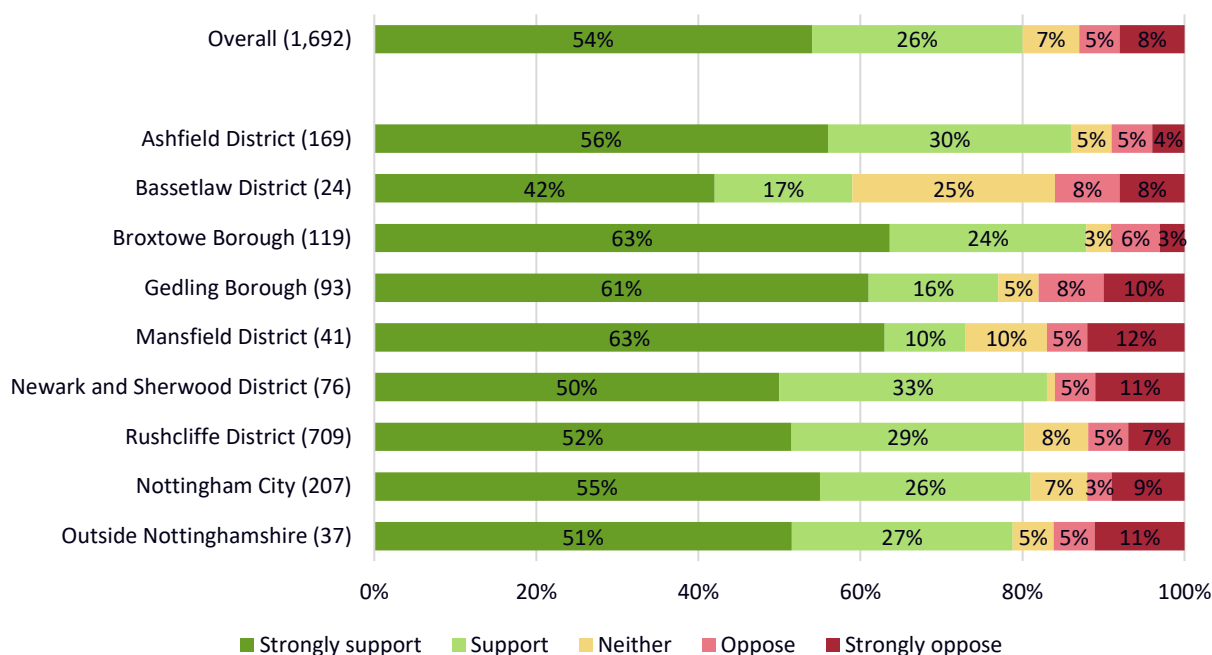
Council tax

More than half of the total funding NFRS receives is through council tax; currently costing a Band D property owner £84.57 per year (households in other bands will pay more or less than this). The Fire Authority could raise this, but is limited to an increase of 1.95% , which would not cover the budget deficit.

If permitted by Government, an additional £1.2 million could be raised through a one-off £5 council tax increase for all households, raising the contribution of a Band D property to £89.57 per year. This would reduce NFRS's budget deficit and reduce the extent of the changes needed to its operational response model. However, it would still not meet all the budgetary savings required.

If it was possible, to what extent would you support or oppose a one-off £5 council tax increase for NFRS?

Figure 16: Support for a one-off £5 council tax increase for NFRS (all personal responses by area)



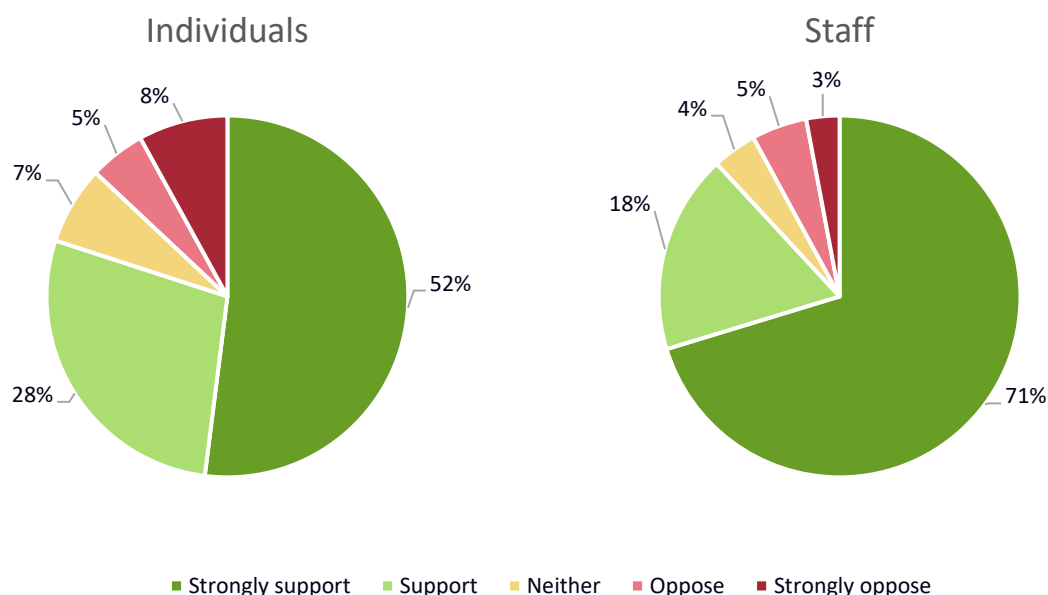
Base: Numbers in brackets show the number of respondents giving a valid answer within each sub-group

- 3.39 Overall, four-fifths (80%) of people responding said they would support a one-off £5 council tax increase for NFRS.
- 3.40 Comparing responses across areas, the strongest support was from people living in Ashfield District and Broxtowe Borough, with 86% and 87% agreeing respectively. Support for a one-off £5 council tax increase for NFRS was lower among those living in Bassetlaw District, where only 58% said they would support it.

3.41 Looking at other differences in response, the level of support ranged from 75% for those describing themselves as Non-White British, to 83% for those aged 45 to 54.

3.42 The following figure shows the level of support broken down by whether respondents work for NFRS.

Figure 17: Support for a one-off £5 council tax increase for NFRS (personal responses broken down by individuals and staff)



Base: Individuals (1,437), Staff (79)

3.43 The level of support for a one-off £5 council tax increase for NFRS among respondents who work for the Service was slightly higher, with almost nine-in-ten (89%) saying they would support such an increase. By comparison, four-fifths (80%) of people who do not work for NFRS said they would support it.

Any other comments

3.44 The comments made in response to the questionnaire have been read, categorised and summarised. It is important to note that the following section is a report of the views expressed by respondents. If these views are not supported by the available evidence, ORS has not sought to highlight or correct those that make incorrect statements or assumptions, and this should be borne in mind when considering the responses.

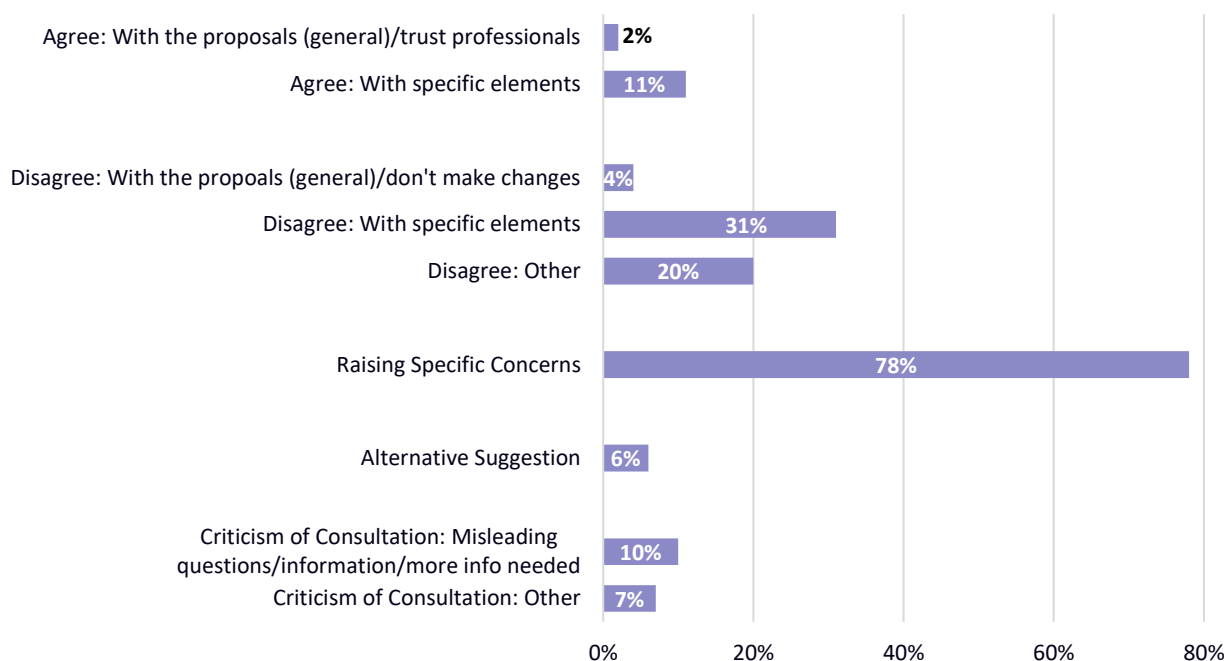
If you have any other comments you would like to make or want to suggest any alternatives to address the specified challenges, please write below.

3.45 When asked if they had any other comments or wanted to suggest any alternatives to address the specified challenges, the types of responses can be broken down into three categories:

- Those taking the opportunity to reiterate their agreement or disagreement for the proposals outlined
- Those raising specific concerns
- Those providing alternative proposals or criticising the consultation.

3.46 Figure 19 below shows the percentage in each category.

Figure 18: Other comments – High level summary (personal responses)



Base: Personal Responses (713)

3.47 Of all respondents providing a comment or alternative proposal, 2% did so to reiterate their agreement with the proposals in general and over one-in-ten (11%) agreed with specific elements.

3.48 4% offered a comment to reiterate their disagreement with the proposals in general, almost a third (31%) were disagreeing with a specific element and one-fifth (20%) were disagreeing in some other way.

3.49 Below are some of the specific comments from those reiterating agreement with the proposals.

"Ashfield fire station definitely needs to be upgraded to 24/7 manning. There are, to my knowledge, 3 paint manufacturing plants on the ground, other heavy industrial areas and obviously the motorway. Please can this be upheld?" (Individual)

"With regard to the one-off council tax increase I would agree that this is a positive option however funding from the government needs to be reviewed. It shouldn't be down to the taxpayer to feel this burden constantly..." (Individual)

3.50 Some of the specific comments from those reiterating disagreement with the proposals are below.

"Appalling suggestions to have one engine in the city centre especially facing the extreme weather conditions we have experienced over the year. Not to mention these are expected to worsen. Ashfield should always have been fully crewed and to redistribute funds from Bridgford for this is just moving the problem around" (Individual)

"Removal of the second engines from the busiest stations in the county is ridiculous. Many stations up north have almost comparably 0 calls and cost the service millions per year. Saying 7 second increase for the first attendance means nothing when most high-rise fires require two engines to even go up the building, so why haven't you published the third and fourth fire engine attendance time difference because that's the real attendance time, when 1 fire engine can't do anything until the next truck arrives. This is fudging the numbers to cut the real front line of the fire service. Close West Bridgford station and sell it to the police" (Individual)

"Massive housing, shopping, business, schooling, leisure and general developments on the southern fringes of Nottingham especially plus in all the local villages make an expansion of this essential lifesaving service a must do. Satellite stations will also be needed soon as more developments takes place further out of the Nottingham ring road areas. Nottingham Knight and Wheatcroft Islands plus the whole ring road system is often blocked by accidents so stations further out will be needed rather than cutting cover" (Individual)

"To reduce fire cover in areas where thousands of new houses are being built, or have been built, and where new industrial units are being built, is totally unacceptable. You would be better off reducing the upper management and using the money to keep fire cover" (Individual)

"As a resident of West Bridgford the proposal to remove our resources overnight is obviously alarming but one I could understand given the distance to London Road, however the addition of removing resources from London Road (and stating in the review that it's ok to remove overnight cover from West Bridgford due to the proximity to London Road) is a double blow to the area and would put us at risk. Whilst I understand the need to fully staff Ashfield, I cannot support a move that will put my family at risk" (Individual)

3.51 One-in-ten (10%) of those responding to this question raised criticisms of the consultation in relation to misleading questions and information, as well as requests for more information. A further 7% made other criticisms of the consultation process. The following quotations highlight some of the issues raised.

"All the previous information doesn't give enough information about the population of the area each fire station covers i.e., residential, commercial or industrial or the historic incidence of each area. It also doesn't seem to have given any thought to the impact of the current energy crisis and the probability of desperate people using unsafe practices to cook, heat and light their homes" (Individual)

"Disclosing average response times before and after the proposed changes don't provide sufficient information. More crucially, what is the current and estimated slowest response time? In other words, how wide is the distribution of response times and how is the forecast to be influenced by the proposed changes? Furthermore, how wide is the distribution at night when the critical changes could be made?" (Individual)

- 3.52 As noted in the previous chart, 6% of respondents to this question provided alternative proposals, with a range of suggestions given as below.

"All the emergency services need to make cuts, you have just built a brand-new fire station in Worksop, the police are in the council building and the ambulance service desperately need a new building. Would it not make sense for all three services to be together in your new building? Police and EMAS would obviously rent your space meaning income for you and savings for all in the long run" (Individual)

"It would seem that the time has come to establish a regional, East Midlands, fire service. Even with the present model, resilience has been greatly compromised and reliance on neighbouring authorities has become a matter of routine. The amalgamation of HQ functions and senior leadership roles would seem to be a better place to start than further reducing front line cover, if the aim of the exercise is to save money" (Individual)

"Stop all non-emergency activity until proper funding is in place" (Individual)

"I am aware of an option to reduce the number of firefighters on each appliance from the current standard of 5 down to 4. This would create a significant saving whilst still having an appliance attending incidents within the current timeframes" (Individual)

"Alternative suggestion: rather than a day/night shift, split into three. 0400 – 1200, 1200 – 2000, 2000 – 0400..." (Individual)

"Has changing the rota of what hours/days staff work and any savings that could be made been looked into rather than 4 on 4 off currently worked? 24 hour on 2 days off maybe, only 3 watches required then?" (Staff)

"... Should the cuts go ahead why not run 03 as a tech station model with a standard of 7, two dedicated to the ALP? Relying on 01a1 to attend the City with the ALP with not only put firefighters at risk in waiting times but also our Mansfield area at risk of slower response times" (Staff)

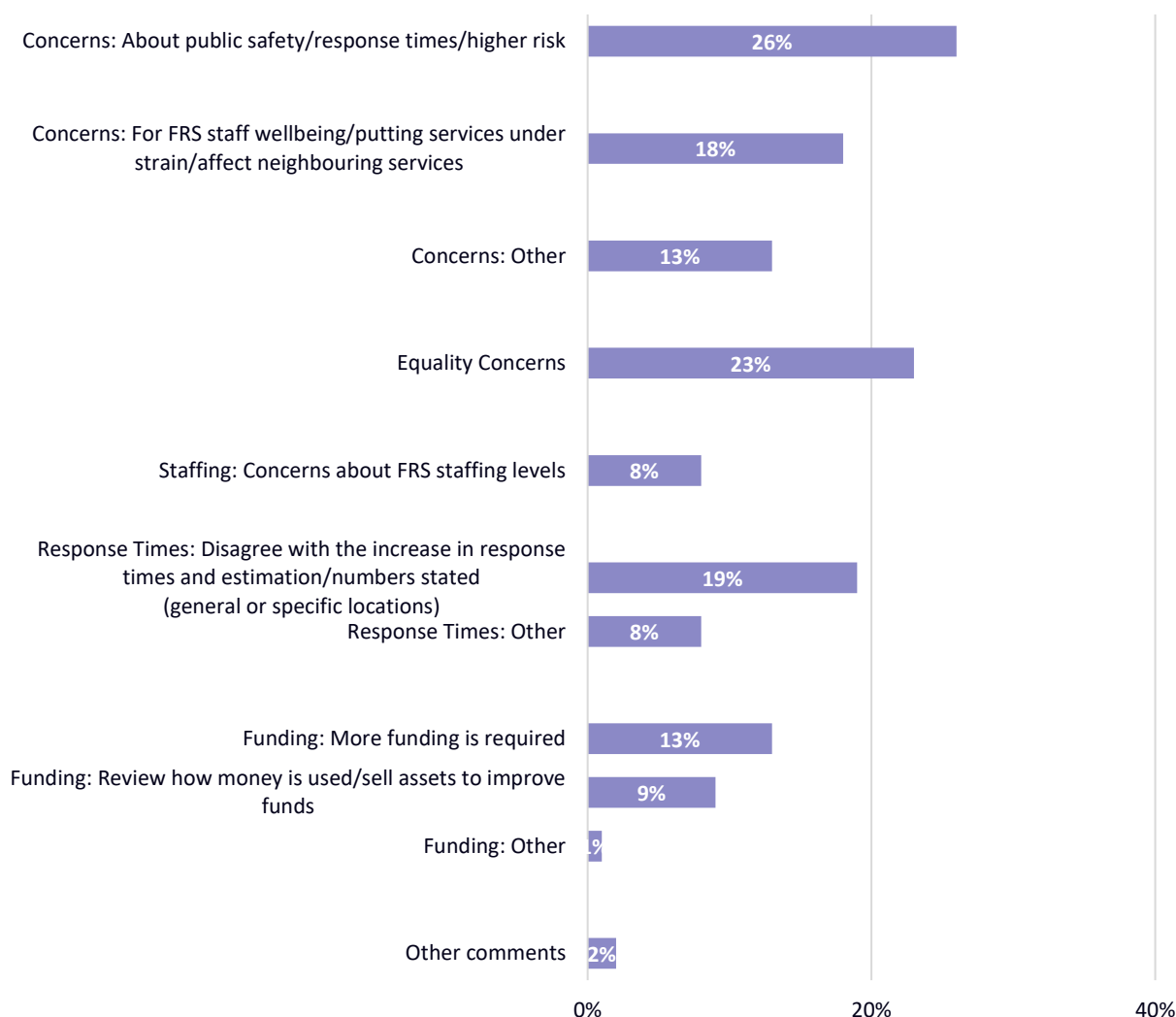
"Most of these calls will be AFAs. Does the AFA policy/stand by policy need updating and reviewing? For example, could 03 be left unstaffed if 20 were in, or could there be a rota system for each standby station?" (Staff)

"Going by your data, it would only take an extra 7 seconds to reach an incident, should West Bridgford go day crewing? Why not get rid of West Bridgford all together and keep 2 appliances at a London Road to cover this. Losing a pump saves you £1 million, and then getting rid of the ongoing expenses of running the station and selling it would more than cover the £3 million deficit?" (Staff)

"I believe that change to the structure of NFRS would be a better use of restructuring budgets without the need to remove fire appliances that would heavily impact on the important rescue work that the fire service is known for. There are areas within the fire service which have multiple management heads and with this comes a management costing. One area has seven managers. A removal of six managers at £45,000 a piece amounts to a saving of £270,000. This is just one area and goes 1/8 towards cost savings. As a public body should your chief positions be on six figure salaries?" (Individual)

3.53 The following figure provides more detail around the specific concerns raised when respondents were asked if they had any other comments or wanted to suggest any alternatives to address the specified challenges.

Figure 19: Other comments – More detailed breakdown of those raising specific concerns (personal responses)



Base: Personal Responses (713)

- 3.54 Of all the respondents who raised a specific concern, over a quarter (26%) noted a concern relating to longer response times leading to higher risk and reduced public safety. Nearly a fifth (18%) raised concerns around the wellbeing of FRS staff, services being placed under strain or adverse effects on neighbouring services; and over one-in-ten (13%) raised other, more specific, concerns.
- 3.55 Nearly a quarter of those responding (23%) raised an equality issue, and nearly one-in-ten (8%) raised concerns about NFRS staffing levels. Nearly one-in-five (19%) disagreed with the estimated increase in response times, and a further 8% raised other points around response times.
- 3.56 Around one-in-eight (13%) said more funding is required for NFRS, and nearly one-in-ten (9%) suggested a review into how money is used, using reserves to cover the budget shortfall, or the sale of assets to raise funds.
- 3.57 Some of the specific comments made can be seen below and overleaf.

"Night-time closure of West Bridgford and removal of one engine from London Road. I don't think the fact this area has both a premiership football ground and an international cricket ground, which now holds more events, has been taken into account. When these grounds are in use, traffic from the city is almost at a standstill. We also have major roads and an increase in housing and there have been a number of incidents of people in the water. A delay to the service could prove to be more fatal" (Individual)

"With global warming, and high temperatures coming the chances of massive fires needing more than one appliance are increasing. If a station only has one engine what happens if there are two fires simultaneously in an area. Rural areas are at very high risk here, and slower response times with longer distances to travel put lives, and land at risk. They should not be changed" (Individual)

"West Bridgford day manned only - if, as seems obvious, this did not work at Ashfield why is it being implemented at West Bridgford? If London Road is busy does this not leave more than an extra 7 second response time for that part of the county at night. This is also leaving a big strain on the retained stations who I am sure are finding it hard to recruit. There is a large amount of construction in the county which must bring a potential increase in fires and RTA's. ORH - the QMC hired Price Waterhouse Coopers to review staffing at their hospitals and submit a report. The cost of this was astronomical and the report never made the light of day! Surely, you have enough experience to do a review in-house..." (Individual)

"... The removal of one pump from London Road ... also affects the availability of the aerial ladder platform [ALP]. The ALP is crewed by what is called "jump crewing" where a crew from a fire appliance leave a pump on station and "jump" on to the ALP. If you remove a pump from London Road ... and the ALP is requested there will be no pump available. Also, if London Road are committed to a job, they can't be called for the ALP which means the next ALP is from Mansfield. It's a similar situation at Stockhill where they jump crew the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU). The difference is that there is no second EPU in Notts..." (Staff)

“The suggestion that this would increase response times by 7 seconds is false. If you remove three of the city’s fire appliances at night, then you are left with just enough to respond to an automatic fire alarm in the city. With these proposals, all of the city appliances would attend an AFA or fire at one of the high-rise buildings (which contain flammable cladding). In this situation, then there will be no resilience whatsoever for attending other incidents as all wholetime city fire appliances will be at the first incident. Therefore, if a fire happens in Carlton, West Bridgford, Beeston or the city, then you will be relying on appliances attending from further afield (often on call stations) and see response times rise by ten to fifteen minutes on such occasions. You have the data but fail to understand it and how it works” (Staff)

“I believe that it is a retrograde step to reduce provision for emergency services at a time when the need for emergency cover may increase dramatically for unforeseen reasons. There is an ageing population in Nottingham, and this may well increase the risk of fire or other needs for rescue services. Also, the increasing age of rented housing stock and older wiring within these also contributes to the risk. Nottingham is in an area with a high risk of flooding from the Trent which is likely to require the services of fire and rescue if buildings and residents are put at risk. I believe the present level of provision should not be reduced but that the additional increased provision should go ahead” (Individual)

“You haven’t quoted the revised response time for individual areas. If you remove night cover for West Bridgford, it is quite obviously going to take much longer to attend! Night-time is the most dangerous time for undetected fire while sleeping. There are also a higher proportion of band D and above properties in West Bridgford. So, not only do you want to put us at greater risk. You would like us to pay more to avoid the decision because you believe that we are wealthier and to subsidise the rest of the area too. Sounds a little bit like emotional blackmail! The worst service for the highest contributors” (Individual)

“My concern is that by removing the two fire engines in the city, this will have an impact on on-call crews around the city, making them too busy to sustain the current level of availability ... these changes mean [they are] likely to respond every night...” (Staff)

“The response time of under 8 mins does not take into account NFRS standard operating procedures for the many high-rise risks in the city area. It is more important what time the second and third appliance responds to a 999 call. This will be massively affected by losing an appliance from London Road and Stockhill. Night-time cover in the city will be extremely stretched with losing West Bridgford and London Road’s second truck and this will have a knock-on effect across all regions” (Staff)

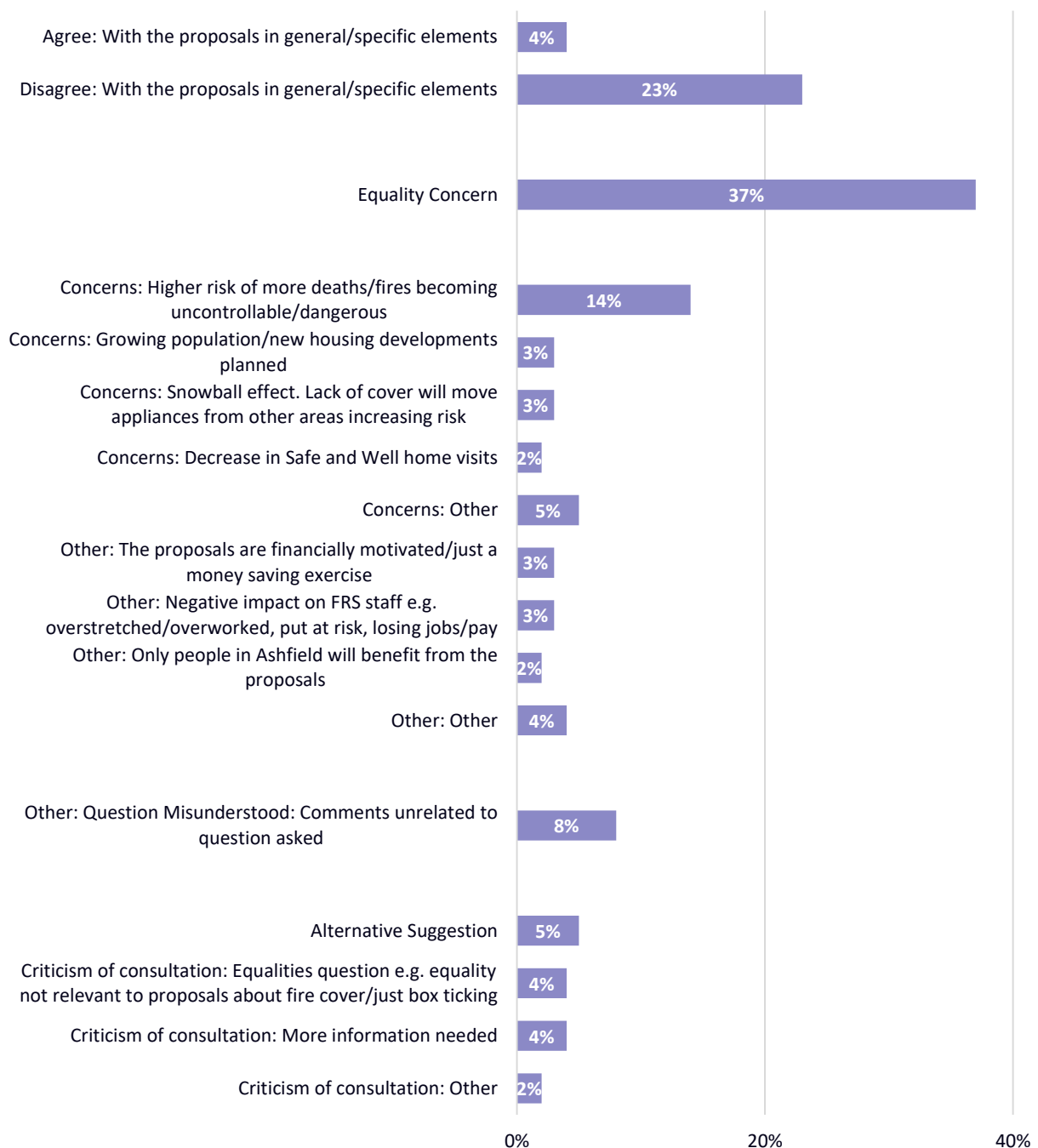
“... What this proposal does not tell the public is how this will affect the outcome of an incident having more than one fire appliance needed to attend to resolve. This puts a serious delay and knock-on to attendance of second and third appliances needed also for other jobs in the local area...” (Staff)

Equalities impacts

Are there any positive or negative impacts relating to equalities that you believe should be taken into account? If so, are you able to provide any supporting evidence and suggest any ways to reduce or remove any potential negative impact and increase any positive impact?

3.58 When asked if there any positive or negative impacts relating to equalities that should be taken into account, a variety of responses were provided - some covering areas beyond equality. Figure 21 below shows the high-level responses to this question.

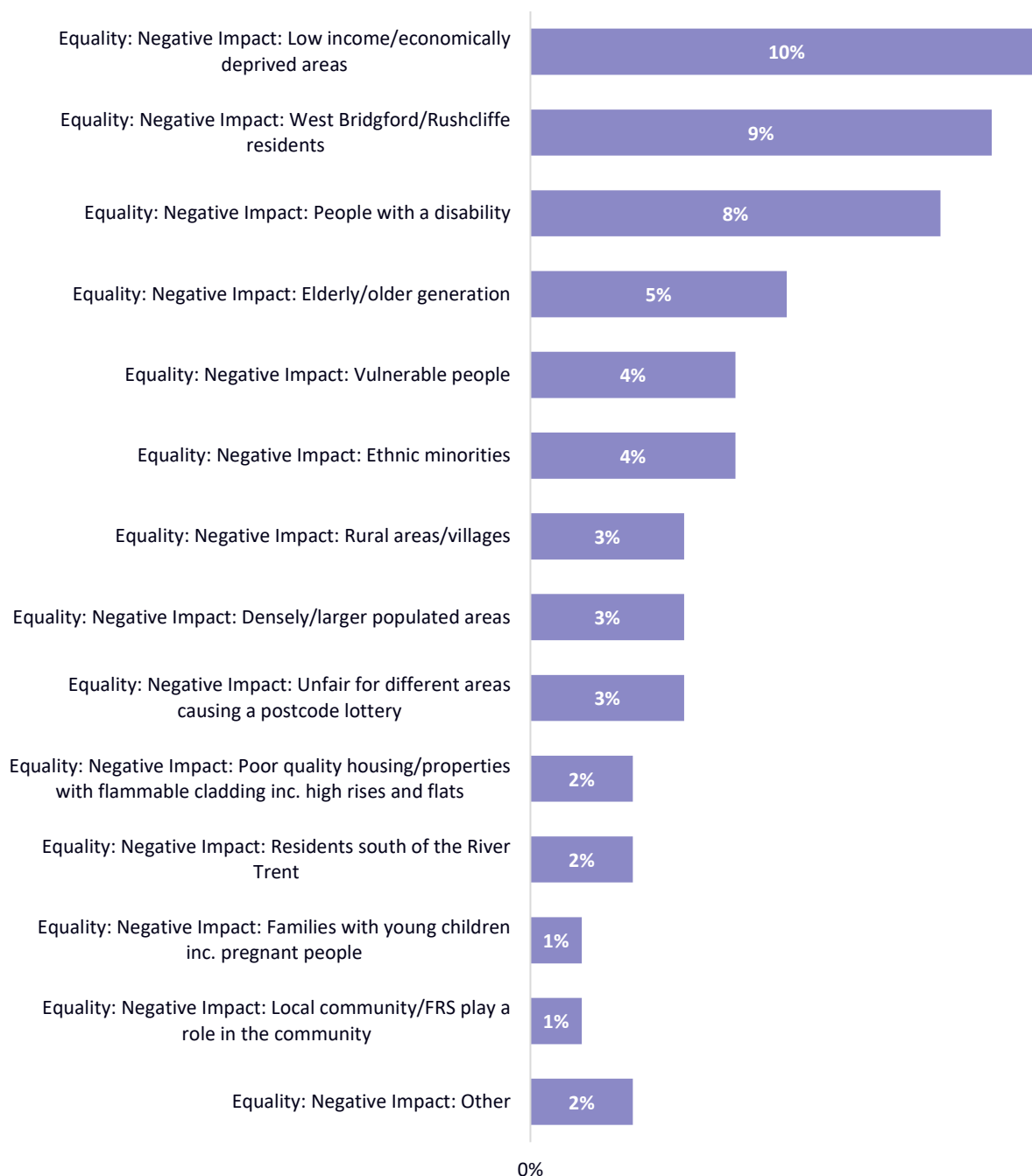
Figure 20: Positive or negative impacts relating to equalities – High level summary (personal responses)



Base: Personal Responses (249)

3.59 Of those giving a response to this question only around two-fifths (37%) gave an answer specifically about equality concerns. The following figure looks at these in more detail. Others either reiterated their reasons for supporting or opposing the proposals and criticising the consultation, or misunderstood the question, believing it to be asking about equality and diversity within the Service itself.

Figure 21: Positive or negative impacts relating to equalities – More detailed breakdown of those raising equality concerns (personal responses)



Base: Personnel Responses (249)

3.60 One-in-ten (10%) of those giving a response to this question noted potential equalities issues relating to negative impacts on low income/economically deprived areas; 9% raised the potential for negative impacts on West Bridgford/Rushcliffe residents; and 8% raised equality issues relating to negative impacts on those with a disability. As can be seen above, concerns for a range of other groups were also raised.

3.61 The quotations below and overleaf highlight some of the specific equality issues raised.

"A delayed response time will have a negative impact on the disabled vulnerable older residents who have either a physical or mental disability. Six of my residents would have difficulty escaping from smoke or fire due to mobility or mental health issues. Keeping a night-time fire service in West Bridgford would be a positive impact as they are nearby. These residents live in their own bungalow and have an efficient wired in fire alarm system in place..." (Individual)

"A number of communities will be negatively impacted by the removal of fire engines from an equality point of view. This is due to Rushcliffe being an ageing population, and a number of the city areas which will be impacted by the proposals being home or work areas for BAME communities" (Individual)

"As a manager of six care homes in the West Bridgford area, I find these cutbacks a serious worry with the implications they might have upon my care homes" (Individual)

"As I have mobility issues and live in a fifth floor flat in West Bridgford, it is vital to me that I have emergency assistance asap in the event of a fire in my building. Because I would not be able to escape the building without physical assistance as I would not be able to use the lift. Therefore, I could not countenance a longer delay for emergency response than already exists" (Individual)

"The proposed option takes the average response time in Rushcliffe to 10.30 mins which is the longest from any borough. This will have a disproportional impact on those with disabilities who will find it more difficult to escape in a fire" (Staff)

"Inhabitants of Rushcliffe are being unfairly treated. The slowest response time is in Rushcliffe, but this reorganisation makes this slower still and increases the discrimination against residents of West Bridgford" (Individual)

"For those with mobility issues/disabilities that would prevent them from self-rescuing, surely increases in attendance times and pre-determined attendance [not] being met, allowing the fire crews to commit and facilitate rescues could be catastrophic" (Staff)

"The City has a higher proportion of people from the BAME community ... Reducing fire cover for our BAME community to dangerous levels is negatively impacting them ... This is particularly relevant to people living in high-rise buildings where there are higher proportions of people from different ethnic backgrounds. This will increase response times to buildings in the city (particularly when both Stockhill and London Road are deployed to other incidents which will occur around 4,000 times per year based on incident data) ... It is inevitable that on one of those occasions another fire will break out at the same time, or someone will be requiring some other form of assistance. Removing the resilience for additional appliances removes fire cover on all of these occasions and this impacts the BAME community more than it does in rural areas as a higher proportion of people from diverse backgrounds live in the areas most affected" (Staff)

"Nottingham City, in particular the city north, has the highest number of BAME communities. Removal of 50% of available resources will adversely impact these communities. No mention is made in this consultation of the preventative work crews carry out. This will be significantly curtailed if the proposed reductions are implemented as appliances will be stretched across the county dealing with incidents. If prevention works, then reduction in these areas will lead to an increase in incidents leading to substantial risk for our vulnerable communities" (Staff)

“Removing the second fire engine from both stations will significantly reduce available time for public facing activities in the area. As the city has the highest proportion of marginalised groups, they will be negatively affected as they won't have regular visits to homes, schools and other events to receive advice and education from the service, leaving them more vulnerable to another aspect of life” (Staff)

“Have rural areas been taken into account and the risk of accidents and fires at farms? What other mitigations are in place? What is the day / night-time risk of fire for Rushcliffe?” (Individual)

“It would be right to consider blocks of flats with combustible cladding and the over representation of minority ethnic individuals in poor quality housing. Equally important would be how 7 seconds could mean a great deal more to a disabled person with limited mobility” (Individual)

Questionnaire Findings (organisations)

^{3.62} As outlined above, the response to the consultation included 14 questionnaires: The following organisations (including businesses) identified themselves as part of their responses to the questionnaire:

- Annesley and Felley Parish Council
- Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service
- East Leake Parish Council
- Fire Brigades Union Nottinghamshire (branch and public meetings)
- Kinoulton Parish Council
- Lindley's Autocentres
- Member of Parliament for Nottingham North
- Member of Parliament for Nottingham South
- Member of Parliament for Rushcliffe
- Notts999Fire (a social media account that promotes the Fire and Rescue Service)
- Rugby Road Social Committee.

^{3.63} These responses are summarised below. Counts have been quoted rather than percentages due to the low number of submissions (i.e., 14 responses). Where the counts sum to fewer than 14, this is most likely due to the exclusion of 'don't know' responses, or to reflect where a question may have been left unanswered.

Financial challenges and the need for change

^{3.64} Of the 14 organisations responding to the questionnaire, five agreed that NFRS needs to make changes to respond to its challenges. However, eight organisations disagreed, and one expressed a neutral view (i.e., neither agreed nor disagreed).

The Fire Cover Review

- 3.65 Three organisations agreed with the approach of using an independent specialist to undertake this review and provide the service with recommendations. Three expressed a neutral view and eight disagreed.

Proposals for London Road and Stockhill Fire Stations

- 3.66 Only two organisations agreed with the proposed change to fire cover in the City of Nottingham, with two expressing a neutral view. The majority, 10 organisations, disagreed. Of those disagreeing, nine strongly disagreed.

Proposal for Ashfield Fire Station

- 3.67 Five organisations agreed with the proposed change to fire cover at Ashfield Fire Station. Five disagreed, all strongly. The remaining four organisations expressed a neutral view.

Proposal for West Bridgford Fire Station

- 3.68 The proposed change to fire cover at West Bridgford Fire Station was supported by three organisations, with a further three expressing a neutral view. The majority, eight organisations, disagreed. Of those disagreeing, seven strongly disagreed.

Matching resource to risk

- 3.69 Four organisations agreed with the principle of redistributing operational resources in the way proposed. However, seven organisations disagreed, six strongly. The remaining three organisations expressed a neutral view.

Emergency response times

- 3.70 Most of the responding organisations were aware of NFRS's response times before taking part in this consultation, with six organisations answering that they knew 'a great deal' and three organisations saying they knew 'a fair amount'. Three organisations said they did not know very much, and the remaining two answered that they knew 'nothing at all'.
- 3.71 Only three organisations agreed that an increase of seven seconds to the average attendance time would be acceptable, with two expressing a neutral view. The majority, nine organisations, disagreed. Of those disagreeing, seven strongly disagreed.

Council tax

- 3.72 The majority, nine organisations, said that they would support a one-off £5 increase for NFRS. Of these, six stated they strongly supported the increase. One organisation opposed the increase, one expressed a neutral view, and a further three said they didn't know.

Any other comments

- 3.73 The FBU raised several issues around funding, and expressed concern around misleading response time increase estimates, fewer resources and less resilience, and associated risks to public safety.

"These proposals are based on too many unknowns, the funding for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue service will not be known until late December, this could dramatically change what the Service looks like in the future. We believe that until the funding for the Service is known this should not have gone out to public consultation. The Service still has substantial reserves that can be used to offset these cuts, allowing time to secure future funding. The Fire Authority sets its own minimum reserve levels which are higher than many other services. How can this be rationalized when these cuts will have a devastating impact on the public across Nottinghamshire and will increase the risk to firefighters. Additionally, NFRS has some flexibility in borrowing power...

... The 7 second change to response times across the county reported in this consultation, is both misleading and does not reflect the true impact these cuts will have to the communities of Nottinghamshire. Are the Fire Authority prepared to gamble with lives of people they represent when there are options to postpone or stop these cuts? Residents in the City will be put at increased risk of injury or death if these cuts are allowed to go ahead, with Nottingham City still having over 20 properties with Grenfell style cladding...

... Fewer resources and slower response times can only lead to increased risk. We have seen already this year a dramatic increase in fire deaths across the county ... The cost-of-living crisis will have a negative effect on society, sending areas into deprivation. This is a time when we should be investing in public services not cutting them ... NFRS is increasingly being called to incidents outside of the county, that stretches our resources now, with the further cuts to NFRS and other services, the risk to communities across Nottinghamshire can only increase. It is plain to see that making these cuts will cost lives and increases the risk to firefighters, are the fire authority prepared to let this happen? It is impossible to predict where the next tragedy will be, don't let it be in Nottinghamshire because you supported these cuts" (FBU)

- 3.74 Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS), in its response, said that it understands the fire and rescue sector's financial challenges but is concerned that NFRS's proposals will result in an increased need for mobilisations of its own appliances into Nottinghamshire; increased response times and more vulnerable communities within Derbyshire; and reduced availability of over the border assistance from NFRS.

- 3.75 DFRS also noted an increase in over the border mobilisations (in both directions) over recent months. It also said that its mobilisation into Nottinghamshire is often as the first pump in attendance, in many cases to areas where reductions on cover are proposed. This, it feels, will only increase if the proposals are implemented.

"Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service [is] fully aware of the financial challenges faced across the sector. We also understand and appreciate that a high proportion of any fire service's funding is spent on employee costs and because of this any reduction to finances may impact on employee numbers...

... The principle of sending the quickest appliance, irrespective of county, to any incident is long established, fully supported and is a vital component in lessening the impact on our communities when they need us the most. The data presented in the ORH report does not make reference to DFRS mobilisations into Nottinghamshire, or indeed vice-versa. We would welcome data that models the impact on DFRS based on the proposed changes. However, given our own data we consider that any reduction to fire cover in NFRS can only have the impact of increasing the number of mobilisations of DFRS appliances into Nottinghamshire. Furthermore, such changes also reduce the availability of over border assistance to our own incidents within Derbyshire...

... Our initial 6 months data for 2022/23 has seen a significant increase in over border mobilisations. DFRS appliances were mobilised into Nottinghamshire 524 times between April and September and NFRS pumps 278 times into Derbyshire over the same period. For stations such as Ilkeston we have seen a 42% increase in over border mobilisations compared to the previous year. We also note that our mobilisation into Nottinghamshire is often as 1st pump in attendance. For Ilkeston in 2021/22 this was at 60%, Long Eaton was 53% and for Alfreton 42% of mobilisations were as 1st pump. These levels appear to be maintained as we move through 2022 into next year, and it is notable that many such incidents are in the station areas where a reduction to cover is proposed. We anticipate that any removal of appliances in Nottinghamshire will only increase the number of occasions in which DFRS provide the 1st pump attendance.

Whilst the proposed change to cover at Ashfield will bring expected benefits to the surrounding communities, we are concerned about the potential implications of removing 2 appliances from the Nottingham City area by day, and 3 overnight. This is likely to produce a knock-on effect for Derbyshire, in the form of an increase to our over border mobilisations of both appliances and accompanying officers. This would lead to an increase in our own response times to incidents within Derbyshire, with fewer local appliances available, leaving our communities more vulnerable.

In summary we are concerned about the proposals being made as a result of the fire cover review. However, we recognise both the challenges faced by NFRS and the excellent longstanding relationship with DFRS. Accordingly, we welcome the opportunity to engage in further discussions and ask that additional data modelling is provided to enable us to fully understand what this impact will mean for DFRS and our communities" (Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service)

- 3.76 Annesley and Felley Parish Council stated its support of the proposed changes at Ashfield Fire Station, whereas East Leake and Kinoulton Parish Councils outlined their reasons for opposing the proposed changes in South Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City.

"... The statement says, "less fire means less cover", that's wrong! Over the south side of Nottinghamshire there has been an immense number of new houses being built. Our local fire stations are always out, and we think that a village of our size should have a full-time fire station. East Leake fire station would have to cover more in Nottingham city centre ... We are against reducing night cover and removing a fire engine from London Road especially as there is a number of large developments in the pipeline, such as the freeport at Ratcliffe on Soar, and the airport. Additional congestion on the road. Working with other fire authorities, important for our area as we are in range of 3 different ones..." (East Leake Parish Council)

"We are seriously concerned at any reduction in services and possible response times from West Bridgford Fire Station, at a time when Rushcliffe's population continues to increase rapidly. In Kinoulton, we are almost as far from West Bridgford as possible within Rushcliffe and are particularly worried about the implications of the proposed changes in our relatively remote location" (Kinoulton Parish Council)

- 3.77 The MP for South Nottinghamshire, while understanding the reasoning for the consultation proposals, said they could not support them on the grounds of public safety, and a lack of fire and rescue resilience in Nottingham City especially. They also advocate more Government funding, and fewer requests of residents to fill public service funding gaps.

"Whilst I understand the budget situation and why these proposals are being brought forward, I cannot support them. The removal of a fire appliance from London Road and Stockhill fire stations and the loss of overnight cover will make Nottingham residents less safe. There will be less resilience in the face of multiple incidents as seen during summer wildfires. I am particularly concerned that this is reducing the availability of fire appliances in the city, which has multiple risk factors including deprivation and HMOs. The reduction in cover comes just when the city is seeing population growth and an increasing number of high-rise buildings. We know that unsafe construction and refurbishment continues as we saw at Grenfell...

... It is not possible to keep filling the gap in budgets by pushing additional cost onto City residents, particularly during a cost-of-living crisis. The Fire Authority must listen to the concerns of firefighters and support staff and work with them and with local people and organisations to press the Government to provide an adequate and longer-term financial settlement for Nottinghamshire Fire Service. I hope that the Fire Authority will consider the maximum use of reserves whilst seeking further central funding" (MP for South Nottinghamshire)

- 3.78 The MP for North Nottinghamshire criticised the lack of Government funding they feel has led to NFRS's financial challenges. They also expressed opposition to the removal of the second appliance at Stockhill given it is a busy station that serves a motorway junction and often supports Derbyshire FRS.

"I believe that the Authority and FRS have been put in an impossible situation due to a persistent lack of funding from central Government. The people of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire should not have to face increased response times to fill funding gaps due to central government failure. Specifically, I think that removing the second appliance at Stockhill station is a mistake. This is a busy station that serves a large community, a junction of the M1 and sits near the force area border with Derbyshire, meaning it may sometimes need to support that service..." (MP for North Nottinghamshire)

- 3.79 Finally, in a lengthy response, the MP for Rushcliffe responded in depth to some of the questionnaire's questions in turn. In answer to the first, they agreed that NFRS needs to make changes in the way it manages its budget but said they cannot understand why NFRS *"is in this situation in the first place"*. They note that NFRS's *"dramatic"* reductions in firefighter numbers is not reflective of the situation among other fire and rescue services that have experienced similar funding settlements.

"Whilst it is true that funding from central Government has been cut since 2010, this has been done in response to the considerable reduction in the number of fire incidents ... Reductions in settlement agreements from central Government do not explain the drastic reduction of fire fighters in more recent years, as many authorities who have had similar or higher settlement reductions have not made similar cuts to their number of firefighters..."

... Nationally, Nottinghamshire has lost approximately 10-fold the number of total workforce staff. By its own figures ... NFRS state that in the five-year period between 2016 and 2021, it saw a 10.65% reduction in its total workforce, compared to the national average for England being a 1.6% reduction ... Some comparable authorities have managed to increase their number of firefighters since 2015. One example is the stark contrast between Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services and those in Derbyshire. Both authorities have seen similar cuts to their real terms spending power of 6.7% and 6.6%, respectively. However, Nottinghamshire has lost 21% of its full-time firefighters, while Derbyshire has increased theirs by 2%. These local and national comparisons would indicate a more proactive approach has been taken at other fire authorities to a justifiable cut in the settlement. This proactive approach has produced more sustainable operational models for fire services than the one currently operating in Nottinghamshire ... I would urge the management of NFRS and the Fire Authority to take on board best practice from other fire authorities who are operating sustainably within their current budget settlements..."

- 3.80 The Rushcliffe MP said they support the commissioning of an independent specialist to undertake the Fire Cover Review, but also that they placed significant weight on the views expressed to them by West Bridgford firefighters. In particular, the firefighters said that West Bridgford Fire Station has higher call out rates than others and shared their concerns about the accuracy of the estimated 43 second response time increase within Rushcliffe District.

"... They believe the 43 second increase would not be a true reflection of the average response time increase. They believe this is because it doesn't include several scenarios, such as multiple fires simultaneously across the county or the increased time for second, third appliances etc. (a house fire needs 3 appliances on average and a tower block could need between 4 and 6) ...

"... Firefighters ... tell me that the response times suggested are very much based on perfect scenarios and Bingham and East Leake on call stations being available, which isn't always the case. The London Road appliance not being already committed to another incident is highly likely, as the single appliance left at London Road is likely be dealing with over 2000 calls annually..."

- 3.81 The MP strongly disagreed with the proposal to convert West Bridgford Fire Station from a wholetime appliance to a daytime appliance on the grounds that: it would leave Rushcliffe as the only Nottinghamshire district without 24/7 wholetime cover; the estimated longer response times across the district are unjustifiable, particularly given its rurality; West Bridgford experiences more call-outs than some other wholetime appliances across Nottinghamshire; and that the proposal would also have a detrimental effect on Nottingham City.

“West Bridgford is currently the only wholetime appliance in the borough of Rushcliffe and in south Nottinghamshire. Under these proposals, Rushcliffe would be the only borough in the county without wholetime cover, after a summer that saw an increase in rural and field fire incidents. Given the rural nature of Rushcliffe and the inevitably longer response times this leads to, I can see no justification for leaving it as the only borough without full time fire cover. This is especially true when you factor in the call out rates of fire stations across the county which show five other stations having lower call out rates than Rushcliffe...”

... I am also astonished that, given Rushcliffe already has the longest response times in the county, NFRS has chosen to target it for measures that would increase response time here even further ... Rushcliffe would see an average increase of 43 seconds to incidents. Rushcliffe already has an average response time of 9 minutes and 47 seconds. This increase would result in an average response time of 10 minutes and 30 seconds - the longest in the county and a full 28 seconds longer than the next longest response time in Newark... Most fire incidents require more than one appliance on site (three for the average house fire incident), and the average response time for the arrival of a second appliance would be increase by 1 minute 15 seconds.

... Under the proposals, Rushcliffe would have on-call cover at night from Bingham and East Leake, but the turn out time... is significantly more due to on-call teams having to travel to the station ... therefore, I am concerned that the average 43 seconds quoted in the proposal would in fact be much longer...

... Rushcliffe has more incidents than Gedling, but Gedling currently hosts two wholetime stations which would be unaffected by the proposals in their current form. Given the higher call out rates for West Bridgford, it is unclear to me why this is the case. Furthermore, out of 12 wholetime appliances across 10 stations in the county, 5 had lower call out rates than West Bridgford, showing that the nightshift in West Bridgford is not only key to the people in Rushcliffe, but also in Nottingham City itself”

Finally, the impact on the city of Nottingham should be considered. The West Bridgford appliance is often first in attendance to the Clifton area. It will not only be Rushcliffe that suffers if it is removed at night”

- 3.82 In relation to the seven second average response time increase, the MP described this as a “nonsense” that will not reflect reality on the ground, especially in Rushcliffe.

“... In the very best circumstances, Rushcliffe will see an average response time of 43 seconds. I am astonished that NFRS and the Fire Authority is trying to deflect attention from this by promoting an abstract average figure across the county that won't be a reality for any community ... and so shouldn't be used as a means of matching resource to risk...”

- 3.83 Finally, the MP supported precept flexibility, but said they would expect the decision to withdraw 24/7 wholetime cover from West Bridgford to be reviewed in the event of any increase.

"If the precept were to be raised, I would expect the decision to withdraw wholetime cover from West Bridgford fire station to be reviewed. The decision may be operational, but I can't justify a precept increase to my constituents if they were to not only see no benefits from it but actually be worse off in terms of their fire cover"

(MP for Rushcliffe)

Equalities impacts

- ^{3.84} Across the organisational responses, equality issues relating to negative impacts on people with a disability, ethnic minority groups, economically deprived areas and those living in poor quality housing/properties with flammable cladding were raised as below.

"Nottingham is a community that suffers from significant deprivation, but this is particularly acute in the wards of Aspley, Bilborough and Bulwell - the vast majority of which are part of the poorest 10% by index of multiple deprivation. Fire risk accompanies poverty and, therefore, this community particularly needs high-quality cover." (MP for Nottinghamshire North)

"The reduction in cover in the city will have a negative impact on a population already facing deprivation. A higher proportion of city residents identify as black or minority ethnic and/or disabled. Some do not have English as a first language. Many are living in poor quality housing and are at increased risk." (MP for Nottinghamshire South)

4. Focus Groups

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter reports the views from the three online focus groups with members of the public. The views of the three meetings have been merged to give an overall report of findings, rather than three separate and potentially repetitive mini-reports - but any differences in views have been drawn out where appropriate.
- 4.2 The following section is a report of the views expressed by focus group participants. If these views are not supported by the available evidence, ORS has not sought to highlight or correct those that make incorrect statements or assumptions, and this should be borne in mind when considering the responses.

Main Findings

There were some initial concerns around resourcing and resilience

- 4.3 Initial concerns focused on the issue of resilience, and whether removing three appliances and 44 firefighter posts from the Service would mean NFRS is too thin on the ground in terms of its ability to both respond to incidents and prevent them from occurring in the first place. This, it was felt, would mean greater reliance on reciprocal agreements with neighbouring services, who are also stretched resource-wise.

"I am happy to accept the modelling ... I trust it is seven seconds and if people can model it in a more efficient manner than great. We may end up with less appliances but used in a more efficient way with not much difference on response times, but surely that is going to have an impact on maximum capabilities? And if we have less appliances in the region, is there a bigger need to have a more comprehensive reciprocal agreement so if something happens in a town centre or there's a major fire, we have got more provisions to get to that maximum capacity?" (North Nottinghamshire)

- 4.4 With specific regard to prevention and protection, some participants noted what they saw as an over-emphasis on protecting response times at the expense of other activity. They asked what was being done to measure and minimise the impact of the proposed changes on the Service's ability to maintain levels of prevention and protection.

"... You talked a lot about maybe harder to measure measures that you do with all the prevention but then the savings proposal seems to focus on the eight minutes. How do we measure some of the less quantitative pieces of work that you do?" (North Nottinghamshire)

- 4.5 There was also worry about fire and rescue resource reductions more generally, not least in terms of accommodating the increasing impacts of climate change.

“What account has been taken about issues in the future like, for example, climate change and more heatwaves and more flooding?” (South Nottinghamshire)

- 4.6 Participants also sought reassurance around the way cover moves are made when appliances are called out from one-pump stations; whether NFRS has explored all available options to offset the need for reductions by investing in modern technology; and whether the Fire Cover Review considered future developments in such technology in addition to retrospective incident data.

“.. Is there any technology that is available or that other countries have got that we are missing out on? We always seem to be downsizing [instead of having] more opportunities to grow” (North Nottinghamshire)

“... most of the data you have got is retrospective. Did [the Review] try to look forward to include material, technology and innovation in the future ...?” (Nottingham City)

The proposals for London Road and Stockhill Fire Stations were of concern, but the rationale for them was understood

- 4.7 While the proposals to remove the second fire engines from both Stockhill and London Road were not overwhelmingly supported, the reasoning underpinning them was understood in all three focus groups.

“Obviously there is cut that needs to be made ... With the data you have given I wouldn’t say that the change is anything dramatic. I wouldn’t say it is unsensible ... I don’t personally have any major concerns. It is a shame that it has to happen but personally I would say it’s quite palatable really” (Nottingham City)

“I think it is the most logical thing to do because cuts need to be made somewhere and there is no choice in that matter ... it’s the most effective” (South Nottinghamshire)

- 4.8 The main concern around the proposal was that the reduced number of fire engines would be insufficient given the amount of high-rise accommodation that has been or is being developed within the City and its surrounding areas. The legacy of the Grenfell Tower disaster was clear in influencing people’s worry in this regard.

“The high rises in the City may cause more incidents and impact more people and a high-rise building needs more than a response to a crash; there are more things and more people at risk in the City ...” (Nottingham City)

- 4.9 On a related note, the increasing amount of student accommodation in the city area was a worry; several participants noted the poor quality of some of this housing, and the prospect of some of the worst landlords neglecting their fire safety duties.

“My concern is about student housing that is not necessarily regulated by the university but by private landlords ...” (South Nottinghamshire)

- 4.10 The potential for larger (including terrorist) incidents in the City was also raised, as was the fact that the estimated 21 second response time increase across the City is an average, and might be somewhat longer to some areas.

“... I work in Nottingham City Centre ... So, seeing two fire engines go and the West Bridgford one not being manned all the time, that’s slightly concerning because I feel like something happens in Nottingham every time I am at work... When something happens in Nottingham it feels a lot bigger and my concern is that you have almost lost three from the centre of Nottingham ... No-one wants to think about terrorism or anything like that but you would think they would target the bigger cities” (North Nottinghamshire)

“... If you’ve got less fire appliances available and the average response time is increasing to an average of 21 seconds, well an average can vary and that 21 seconds can turn into a lot more ... it’s ok if it is shorter in some instances ... but if it is longer, that can be the difference between someone living and someone dying” (Nottingham City)

The reasoning for rebalancing resources between Ashfield and West Bridgford Fire Stations was understood, but there were some concerns

- 4.11 Most people across all three groups supported the proposed rebalancing of resources between Ashfield and West Bridgford Fire Stations (though this support was understandably reluctant among some participants in Nottingham City and especially south Nottinghamshire). It was typically considered a ‘sensible’ and ‘rational’ change that would ensure fire and rescue cover is concentrated in the areas of greatest risk and demand.

“You should have more service in a place that requires more; it’s obvious” (Nottingham City)

“I think it’s great. The data has been looked at and where there is a greater need, then this is where the fire service is. It’s that simple... ” (South Nottinghamshire)

- 4.12 Participants were particularly reassured about the close proximity of London Road Fire Station to West Bridgford, though there was some understandable worry about the proposed loss of resource there. In general, though, there was a sense that West Bridgford has more surrounding resource in support of it than Ashfield, which was another reason given in support of the change.

“On the face of it, the proposals look quite sensible and quite rational. The relocation of Central Fire Station to London Road is fundamental in that view... ” (South Nottinghamshire)

“... there are really large towns in the Ashfield/Mansfield area that could really benefit from a 24-hour service. I feel like you have got possibly some good resources [locally] that can tend West Bridgford...” (North Nottinghamshire)

- 4.13 As noted, although they supported the proposed change in principle, South Nottinghamshire participants were concerned about increased response times, especially to areas south of West Bridgford, and about ensuring sufficient levels of fire and rescue cover for a district that is experiencing significant housing and other development. They also sought to understand how the proposed changes have/will be communicated to avoid their use for political gain. That is, they felt it should be made clear to Ashfield residents that their station upgrade would not be an ‘extra’, but something that is only achievable via reductions at West Bridgford.

“How is this objectively communicated to the residents in both areas? This session has explained the why’s in detail but if you are not in the discussion then you may not understand what is happening. And if you don’t understand it looks like Ashfield is getting additional resource when they are getting it from somewhere else that is losing it. It feels like that may be affecting the political landscape ... and I don’t think that’s fair” (South Nottinghamshire)

There was more support for than opposition to a one-off £5 council tax increase for NFRS

- 4.14 Many participants across the three groups said they would be prepared to pay a one-off £5 council tax increase (or more) for NFRS if it meant reducing the Service’s budget deficit and the extent of the changes needed to make the required savings.

“I would absolutely pay that £5. It’s the price of a cup of coffee and insurance for your washing machine or phone ... so why wouldn’t you pay it in case you need the fire service and it’s a question of life or death? I would absolutely, without a second thought, pay that £5” (North Nottinghamshire)

“I think we do need to have services on a better footing, and we need to be billed for that ... We can’t complain about losing services if we are not prepared to do something about it” (South Nottinghamshire)

- 4.15 Indeed, some participants at the North Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City discussions spontaneously raised the prospect of a council tax increase prior to any explicit questioning on the issue. They were of the view that the number of new houses being built and sold in the City and County would surely yield a significant income for the Service; and if not, most people would not mind paying a little extra to protect their local fire and rescue resources.
- 4.16 Several, however, acknowledged that they might not have been as tolerant of such an increase had they not been fully informed about the extent of NFRS’s financial challenges and what is being proposed to address them. Indeed, a common theme at the Nottingham City group especially was that the fire and rescue service is often the ‘forgotten’ emergency service in the sense that it is the least visible. As such, it may not feature as prominently as the NHS or the police in people’s thinking about financial struggles and funding needs.

“... I would pay the £5 and would be happy to do that but more so based on the information you have provided tonight with the rationale behind it, and seeing the impacts and the costs and what it means on the ground” (South Nottinghamshire)

“I suppose what I think of when I think of something that needs money then it is the NHS ... It's there all the time ... on the television. It's really well advertised and is visible all the time and there is hardly any visibility of the fire service. I hear about them hardly ever and so when I think of where I would prefer my money to go then the NHS is the first place that comes to mind” (Nottingham City)

- 4.17 On a related note, there was a sense that without understanding the detail of the Service's challenges and proposals, people might expect to see tangible improvements as a result of paying the £5 charge, rather than simply 'not losing something'.

“They wouldn't understand [not losing a service] ... they would want to understand and physically gain something” (South Nottinghamshire)

- 4.18 There was widespread acknowledgement among participants that while they might be able to afford to pay the additional £5, many others would struggle to do so, especially in the current economic climate. Concern was also expressed that while a £5 payment for NFRS does not seem like a great deal in isolation, if other public services were to ask for something similar, it would become unaffordable for even more people.

“Thinking across Nottingham generally ... I think people would say they literally can't afford anymore ... Nottingham is not overall a well-off place and with the pressure that people are under already then a lot of people would say to do what you have proposed rather than finding more money” (Nottingham City)

“... I think you'll find there will be other services with a council tax increase as well for their services like the police and other things and when you add it all up ...” (North Nottinghamshire)

- 4.19 Furthermore, participants at the Nottingham City group noted a considerable amount of residual mistrust among the City's residents toward the City Council following a report into inappropriate spending. A 'PR' campaign was thought to be needed as a result of this to ensure City residents are aware that the Council and NFRS are entirely separate entities.

“Having been in this discussion I would gladly pay the £5 but I think a lot of people would find that unpalatable at the moment, not just because of the cost-of-living crisis but because Nottinghamshire County Council have been under scrutiny because of the way they mismanaged public funds. I think that would have a big bearing on what a lot of people in Nottingham City think about that” (Nottingham City)

- 4.20 The reasoning among those who did not support the £5 increase was that the government should be requesting more of large multinationals and super-rich individuals rather than ‘ordinary people’; they were concerned that it would not actually be a one-off in the face of ongoing financial challenges; or that they felt they could accept the implications of the proposals and did not see a need to mitigate them through council tax increases.

“... It’s weird because part of this consultation is about, ‘It will only cost you 21 seconds’ and if that’s all it’s going to cost then why should we pay more?” (North Nottinghamshire)

- 4.21 Finally, it was said at the South Nottinghamshire group that the proposed one-off increase would only be a stopgap and that more long-term funding solutions must be found to ensure NFRS has a sustainable future.

“It’s £5 for one year ... but what happens the year after and the year after that? It just seems to be a bit of a stopgap. Every little thing is helpful obviously but it’s not a solution in my opinion ... It doesn’t solve the problem in the longer term” (South Nottinghamshire)

Overall, there was widespread understanding of NFRS’s challenges and the need to address them through the proposed changes

- 4.22 Ultimately, while they said they would not be required in an ideal world, all focus group participants understood the rationale for the proposed changes in reducing the Service’s budget deficit.

“It boils down to the fact that there is not a magic pot of money, and they have to make cuts somewhere ... If there were five other better options, then they would be the options on the screen” (North Nottinghamshire)

- 4.23 There was also widespread confidence that the Fire Cover Review was undertaken thoroughly and that NFRS would not propose anything that would be unduly detrimental to public safety.

“I feel like they would not have got through the proposals if they were not viable and safe enough; they would have been scrapped if they were going to cause significant risk to life ... It’s not pleasant to think about response times increasing but I think they are going to be within reason and overall, I am in agreement and can put my trust in the fire service” (Nottingham City)

- 4.24 The phrase ‘least worst option’ was used frequently, and it would thus be fair to say that although the proposals were not unequivocally supported, they were recognised as those that would have the least impact on the most people across the City and County.

“... There are going to have to be some difficult decisions that have to be made regarding cuts and money and I have trust and confidence that the Fire Service will be doing what is safest for everyone” (South Nottinghamshire)

- 4.25 Finally, a few participants suggested that the background consultation information could have been presented more simply to aid understanding among ‘laypersons’. One specific suggestion was as follows, which could be something to consider in future.

“... What I would like to see presented is something a layperson can see very easily... that gives each area on that map a score out of ten for current and then after the proposal... So, ‘Ultimately the service for Ashfield is currently 7.2 and for West Bridgford it is 6.9 and after those changes it affects the overall service mark out of ten by this small degree’. Then very easily, people could look at that map and say, ‘Ok the overall reduction or improvement in service is probably worth it for the savings that you get’ or ‘What areas have now been affected to redistribute that service across the area?’” (North Nottinghamshire)

5. Submissions

Introduction

- 5.1 During the formal consultation process, six submissions were received from the following:
- Ashfield District Council
 - Rushcliffe Borough Council (2)
 - Firefighters at West Bridgford Fire Station
 - Firefighters at Ashfield Fire Station
 - A Nottinghamshire resident.
- 5.2 Furthermore, 249 signatures were gathered via a campaign leaflet organised by the Ashfield Independents, in support of the Ashfield proposal.
- 5.3 All submissions have been read and summarised in this chapter. It is important to note that the following section is a report of the views expressed by submission contributors. If these views are not supported by the available evidence, ORS has not sought to highlight or correct those that make incorrect statements or assumptions, and this should be borne in mind when considering the responses.

Summaries of written submissions

Ashfield District Council

- 5.4 Ashfield District Council welcome the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority's recommendation to convert Ashfield Fire Station from one day shift crewing and one on-call appliance to one wholetime and one on-call appliance. The Council believes that the proposal will save lives.
- 5.5 The Council also:
- Notes the announcement of a full-scale assessment of resources across Nottinghamshire's fire station network, including an assessment of whether stations have enough equipment to serve their communities
 - Confirms that it will take part in the public consultation, citing its firm opinion that Ashfield Fire Station should be fully staffed, 24 hours a day
 - Acknowledges the role of the Ashfield Independents and the Labour Party, who have been campaigning since 2018 to ensure the people of Ashfield have a wholetime fire station.

Rushcliffe Borough Council (1)

- 5.6 Rushcliffe Borough Council appreciates that it is a difficult financial time and that NFRS has done much to reduce its costs and work within a tight financial envelope. However, the Council is extremely concerned and unhappy about the proposed reduction of service in Rushcliffe to enable an increase in resources at Ashfield. In addition, it says that *"the reduction of service from Loughborough Road is exacerbated by the reduction of service at London Road Fire Station"*.

- 5.7 The Council highlights the significant housing growth and associated population base in Rushcliffe, which is a large borough with major A-roads and many rural roads. It also notes the table outlining the impact on first appliance attendance time in the Chief Fire Officer's pre-consultation report, which states that Rushcliffe currently has the second longest first appliance attendance time in the county, and that the proposed changes will see an average 43 second increase to this time.
- 5.8 In light of this, Rushcliffe Borough Council opposes the proposed changes and asks that the Fire Authority reconsiders them to ensure that residents of Rushcliffe are treated fairly and respectfully.

Rushcliffe Borough Council (2)

- 5.9 The following further questions were asked by Rushcliffe Borough Council, which it asked to be considered before adopting any future strategy that looks at reducing the provision of full-time fire stations in Rushcliffe:

Were over the border coverage times included in the modelling used for the strategy and if not, why not?

Did the modelling take account of commercial as well as domestic properties and if not, why not?

Was consideration taken of access to Rushcliffe over the River Trent crossings and the consequences of any of these crossings being unavailable/inaccessible?

Firefighters at West Bridgford Fire Station

- 5.10 The West Bridgford firefighters understand the position NFRS finds itself in and that savings need to be made. However, they feel that this should be rectified through investment, not cuts, and that a *"long-term solution is being put in place for what could be a medium-term problem"*.
- 5.11 In considering the proposals for Nottingham City, the firefighters agree that the loss of a second fire engine is preferable to losing cover from a station area completely, and that (under service parameters) this will have least impact on first fire engine attendance in the London Road and Stockhill station areas. However, they are concerned that the proposals would result in:
- A reduction in city cover
 - The removal of resource from the busiest area of Nottinghamshire
 - Increasing response times for additional fire engines
 - Increasing risk to communities and crews.
- 5.12 In considering the proposal for West Bridgford Fire Station, the firefighters feel that it represents a *"massive reduction in fire cover for the area"*. They are also concerned that the station already has one of the longest initial turnout times due to its geographical area, which *"will be made significantly longer under the proposals"*.

- 5.13 Other concerns are that the proposal represents a “huge” increase in risk to the community; that all neighbouring appliances will be busier and thus not able to reliably provide night-time cover in the West Bridgford area; that the wrong station has been selected for the change; and that the proposed model “has failed at another station”.
- 5.14 While the West Bridgford firefighters support improving fire cover at Ashfield Fire Station to mitigate against an increase in fire deaths in the area and reduce risks to the community and crews, they do not feel it should be achieved at West Bridgford’s expense.
- 5.15 Finally, the firefighters outline concerns about the modelling used to underpin the proposals, the parameters used for the Fire Cover Review, and that the “consultation will not be taken into consideration and cuts will be made regardless”.

Firefighters at Ashfield Fire Station

- 5.16 Ashfield firefighters understand the case for change, especially in light of the financial challenges faced by NFRS. Indeed, when considering the proposed changes in Nottingham City, the firefighters say that while “reduction in fire cover is always detrimental to the service and the public... there is a need to make financial changes and savings”.
- 5.17 The firefighters are supportive of the proposed changes at Ashfield Fire Station, describing them as the “right move for the service to protect our community”. They are, though, worried that the proposals for West Bridgford will greatly reduce fire cover in that area, placing further pressure on surrounding stations such as London Road, which is also set to lose its second appliance if the changes are approved.

Residents

- 5.18 One resident wrote to oppose the proposed redistribution of resources between Ashfield and West Bridgford Fire Stations, stating that “there are many elderly people, a lot also in retirement homes or care homes and many vulnerable residents in West Bridgford who especially rely on speedy help from the fire service in an emergency...”
- 5.19 249 signatures were gathered via the following campaign leaflet organised by the Ashfield Independents, backing ‘the reinstatement of Ashfield Fire Station to a 24-7 wholetime model’.

We back the campaign for a full-time fire station

We back OPTION 4 in your consultation - “the reinstatement of Ashfield Fire Station to a 24-7 whole time model”. We strongly believe this will save lives.

Name	Address and Email	Signature

Please return to: Ashfield Fire Station Campaign, FREEPOST, Ashfield Independents.

I WILL...

☐ ... vote for the Ashfield Independents at the next election.

☐ ...display a poster to show my support for the team.

☐ I would like a postal vote.

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