



# **LEICESTERSHIRE**

## **FIRE and RESCUE SERVICE**



## **Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-2020**

### **Report of Consultation Outcomes**

**Opinion Research Services**

**January 2015**



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

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

© Copyright January 2015

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The ORS Project Team.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Preamble .....	7
Introduction.....	7
Awareness of Incident Reductions .....	8
Crewing Fire Engines with a Minimum of Four People as Standard .....	8
Removal of a fire engine from Loughborough Fire Station .....	8
Removal of a wholetime fire engine from a Leicester city fire station .....	9
Removal of a retained fire engine from Oakham Fire Station .....	9
Introduction of Day Crewing Plus at Wigston Fire Station .....	10
Disestablishment of the Wholetime Resilience Team .....	10
Increasing Council Tax.....	11
Some General Issues .....	11
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Opinion Research Services.....	15
The Commission .....	15
Deliberative Forums.....	16
Consultation Programme Proportional and Fair.....	18
Some FBU Criticisms.....	19
ORS Report .....	21
<b>Deliberative Forums.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Introduction.....	22
Awareness of Incident Reductions .....	23
Proposal A – Crewing all Fire Engines with a Minimum of Four People as Standard .....	23
Forums with Members of the Public .....	23
Forums with Staff .....	25
Councillors’ Forum.....	27
Voluntary and Business Sector Forum .....	28
Proposal B – Loughborough Fire Station .....	29
Forums with Members of the Public .....	29
Forums with Staff .....	30
Councillors’ Forum.....	31
Voluntary and Business Sector Forum .....	32

---

---

<b>Proposal C – Leicester City</b> .....	32
<b>Forums with Members of the Public</b> .....	32
<b>Forums with Staff</b> .....	34
<b>Councillors’ Forum</b> .....	36
<b>Voluntary and Business Sector Forum</b> .....	36
<b>Proposal D – Oakham Fire Station</b> .....	36
<b>Forums with Members of the Public</b> .....	36
<b>Forums with Staff</b> .....	37
<b>Councillors’ Forum</b> .....	39
<b>Voluntary and Business Sector Forum</b> .....	39
<b>Proposal E – Wigston Fire Station</b> .....	40
<b>Forums with Members of the Public</b> .....	40
<b>Forums with Staff</b> .....	42
<b>Councillors’ Forum</b> .....	43
<b>Voluntary and Business Sector Forum</b> .....	43
<b>Disestablishment of the Wholetime Resilience Team</b> .....	44
<b>Forums with Members of the Public</b> .....	44
<b>Forums with Staff</b> .....	45
<b>Councillors’ Forum</b> .....	46
<b>Voluntary and Business Sector Forum</b> .....	46
<b>Increasing Council Tax</b> .....	47
<b>Forums with Members of the Public</b> .....	47
<b>Forums with Staff</b> .....	48
<b>Councillors’ Forum</b> .....	49
<b>Voluntary and Business Sector Forum</b> .....	49
<b>Some General Issues</b> .....	50
<b>Forums with Members of the Public</b> .....	50
<b>Forums with Members of Staff</b> .....	50
<b>Councillors’ Forum</b> .....	53
<b>Voluntary and Business Sector Forum</b> .....	53

---

---

---

---

# Acknowledgements

Opinion Research Services (ORS) is pleased to have worked with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) on the consultation meetings reported here. All the forum participants engaged with the issues under consideration and discussed their ideas readily, so we trust the report will contribute to service planning by LFRS at a time of serious financial constraints.

We thank LFRS for commissioning the project as part of its programme of public, staff and stakeholder engagement and consultation about its risk management planning. We particularly thank the senior officers and staff who attended the sessions to listen to people's views and answer questions. Such meetings benefit considerably from the readiness to answer participants' questions fully and frankly, as in this case.

We are grateful to all the participants who took part in the 11 interesting meetings and shared their views readily with us. They were patient in listening to background information before entering positively into the spirit of open discussions about challenging topics, with some controversial aspects in some cases.

At all stages of the project, ORS's status as an independent organisation consulting as objectively as possible was recognised and respected. We are grateful for the trust, and we hope this report will contribute usefully to thinking about LFRS's development in difficult times.

# The ORS Project Team

## Project Design and Management

Dale Hall

Kelly Lock

## Fieldwork Management

Leanne Hurlow

Joanne McCarley

## Forum Facilitators

Dale Hall

Kelly Lock

## Report Authors

Dale Hall

Kelly Lock

---

# Executive Summary

## Preamble

1. This short executive summary cannot do justice to the lengthy and complex discussions reported more fully in the following chapters, so readers are encouraged to read not only this section but also to pursue the detailed arguments and considerations reviewed in the rest of the report. Essentially the summaries of findings, which start the next page, are descriptions of the balance of opinion in each of the meetings, without the detailed reasons that people gave for their views.

## Introduction

2. Opinion Research Services (ORS), a generic social research company, was commissioned by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) to undertake consultation about the Service's draft proposals through a programme of deliberative forums, as follows:

Six forums with members of the public (in Leicester City (2), Loughborough, Oakham and Wigston – as well as one for participants from across the county);

Three forums with members of staff (two with firefighters and support staff and one with middle managers);

One forum with councillors; and

One forum with Leicestershire's voluntary and business sectors.

3. In total, 125 diverse people attended the six sessions for randomly recruited members of the public. A total of 55 LFRS staff attended one of three employee forums (23 firefighters and support staff and 32 middle managers); and there were five attendees at a councillors' forum and 14 at another forum for the voluntary and business sector. Therefore, the opinions reported here are based upon lengthy in-depth discussions with a total of 199 people. The meetings gave diverse people the opportunity to participate and the outcomes are broadly indicative of how informed public opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions.
  4. LFRS's total consultation was much wider than the forums. Overall, the programme was conscientious, open, accessible and fair to members of the public, staff and stakeholders across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland; it was proportional to the importance of the issues.
  5. Public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public views, but this does not mean that the majority of views expressed in consultations should automatically decide public policy. Consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the right or best decision in the circumstances. For the public bodies considering the outcomes of consultation, the key question is not *Which proposal has most numerical support?* but, *Are the reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of the proposals cogent?*
-

---

## Awareness of Incident Reductions

6. Overall, very few people were aware of the reduction in risk when measured in terms of the number of emergency incidents per year. Some members of the public thought that LFRS should do more to publicise its success in this regard.

## Crewing Fire Engines with a Minimum of Four People as Standard

### Forums with Members of the Public

7. Where this proposal was discussed by members of the public it was endorsed either unanimously (at Loughborough and one of the Leicester City forums) or by a significant majority (at Wigston and the county-wide forum). Some suggested, though, that the proposal should be trialled before being confirmed.

### Forums with Staff

8. The great majority in the firefighter and support staff forums opposed this proposal as unreasonable and unsafe.
9. Two-thirds of the middle managers were also opposed to crews of four as standard. However, about the same proportion were in favour of centralised crewing, annualised hours, and running watches with crews of six – providing this enables LFRS to maintain an official crewing standard of five, while accepting four if that is unavoidable. This is an important alternative proposal that may be a helpful compromise between different points of view.

### Councillors' Forum

10. All five councillors accepted the proposal to crew fire engines with a minimum of four people as standard, but they were concerned that it should not lead to even smaller crews being used.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

11. Most of the voluntary and business sector participants opposed the proposal on the grounds of firefighter safety, firefighter redundancies, and the potential for increased sickness levels through stress.

## Removal of a Fire Engine from Loughborough Fire Station

### Forums with Members of the Public

12. Although they did not wish to lose a valued local resource, most members of the public at Loughborough were able to accept the proposal to remove the second Wholetime Duty System (WDS) appliance from their local fire station. In the other forums where this issue was discussed, a three-quarters majority at one of the Leicester forums also endorsed the proposal, whereas opinion was exactly split at the county-wide forum. Of those who discussed this in depth, the majority found the proposal acceptable.



### Forums with Staff

13. Almost all firefighters and support staff in two forums rejected the proposal to remove the second WDS appliance from Loughborough Fire Station.
14. The middle managers were divided on the issue. However, most of those supporting the proposal did so only if crewing levels are not also reduced to four as standard.

### Councillors' Forum

15. All five councillors opposed the removal of a fire engine from Loughborough Fire Station.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

16. The majority of participants at the voluntary and business sector forum rejected the proposed removal of a fire engine.

## **Removal of a Wholetime Fire Engine from a Leicester City Fire Station**

### Forums with Members of the Public

17. Overwhelming majorities at the two Leicester city and all-county public forums accepted the loss of a WDS appliance reasonable.

### Forums with Staff

18. Almost all firefighters and support staff were opposed to the removal of one WDS fire engine from the Leicester city area.
19. But most of the middle managers accepted the proposal on financial grounds and because of the need to match resources to risk.

### Councillors' Forum

20. Four of the five councillors thought it was feasible to remove one fire engine from the Leicester City area.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

21. Opinion was divided on this issue in the voluntary and business forum.

## **Removal of an On-call Fire Engine from Oakham Fire Station**

### Forums with Members of the Public

22. After a very detailed discussion, opinion at the Oakham public forum was broadly divided on this issue.

### Forums with Staff

23. Almost all firefighters and support staff were opposed to the removal of the on-call fire engine from Oakham Fire Station.
24. In contrast, most of the middle managers felt they could support the removal of the on-call appliance from Oakham, but only if this proposal is not combined with crewing level reductions and the disestablishment of the Resilience Team.

### Councillors' Forum

25. Almost all the councillors opposed the removal of the RDS fire engine from Oakham.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

26. Only one of the voluntary and business sector participants supported the proposed change at Oakham. The others were divided between opposition and 'don't know'.

## **Introduction of Day Crewing Plus at Wigston Fire Station**

### Forums with Members of the Public

27. An absolute majority (13) of the public at the Wigston forum supported the proposal, but there were 10 'don't knows' (on the grounds that some people required more information about the system). At the all-county forum, though, two-thirds of the participants were in favour; and there was unanimous support at one of the Leicester City sessions.

### Forums with Staff

28. Some firefighters and support staff saw merits in Day Crewing Plus at Wigston, but most were decidedly opposed.
29. The middle managers, though, were broadly supportive of the proposal.

### Councillors' Forum

30. All five councillors were undecided on Day Crewing Plus. Overall, they saw some merit in this proposal, but were generally undecided.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

31. Opinion was divided at the voluntary and business sector forum.

## **Disestablishment of the Wholetime Resilience Team**

### Forums with Members of the Public

32. Opinion on this issue was broadly divided at the Wigston forum: only three opposed it, but there were many 'don't knows'; and the division of opinion was similar at the all-county forum.

### Forums with Staff

33. An overwhelming majority of the firefighters and support staff opposed this proposal.
34. However, an equally overwhelming majority of the middle managers supported the disestablishment of the Resilience Team.

### Councillors' Forum

35. The councillors were undecided on disbanding the Resilience Team – although one felt it should be considered.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

36. In a ratio of more than two-to-one the voluntary and business sector participants endorsed the disestablishment of the Resilience Team.

---

## Increasing Council Tax

### Forums with Members of the Public

37. In some of the more rural and prosperous areas, the prospect of increasing LFRS's council tax precept was readily endorsed, but in other meetings (especially in Leicester City, but also in the all-county forum) it was strongly questioned.

### Forums with Staff

38. Due to the length of time spent on the main proposals there was less time to consider council tax issues in depth. There seemed to be a range of opinions, but one recurrent theme was that it would not be right to increase council tax unless doing so could avoid all the service cuts.

### Councillors' Forum

39. The councillors supported an increase in LFRS's council tax precept.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

40. The voluntary and business sector forum generally supported a £5 to £10 LFRS precept increase, though some had reservations based upon people's ability to pay.

## Some General Issues

### Forums with Members of the Public

41. The public accepted the need to reduce spending by adjusting emergency cover more closely to match reducing risk levels, but there was also a concern about what might be called the 'What if?' question – namely, how resilient LFRS will be in major emergencies.
42. There were also concerns that any reductions in staff should not result in less fire prevention.

### Forums with Members of Staff

43. The firefighters and support staff forums argued that, while demand for LFRS's services is reducing across Leicestershire, risk is not - and that resources should be based on the latter, not the former. There was concern about the term 'incidents' within the consultation document insofar as it refers only to numbers. Some staff members claimed that the number of incidents is secondary to time spent at incidents and their severity and that this should be taken into account. They said that incidents in the rural hinterland of Leicester can be serious both in terms of their initial impact and ultimate outcome.
44. Some staff complained about the consultation process, most notably that it was not as inclusive as it should have been and that operational staff had not been included in discussions about the challenges, proposals and viable alternatives at an earlier stage.
45. As reported above, participants at the firefighter and support staff forums were firmly opposed to LFRS's proposals and front-line cuts in general. In terms of alternative ways to achieve savings, the following were suggested:

Reducing non-frontline firefighter costs by using firefighters to maintain vehicles and take over all community safety work

Reducing station manager posts

Looking systematically at shift systems to identify efficiencies

Sharing premises with other partners

Selling of spare land on fire station sites

Renting out community rooms in fire stations

Job sharing

Improving stations' environmental credentials

Merging with another fire and rescue service.

46. The prospect of a merger with one or more neighbouring FRSs was raised and supported by firefighter and support staff, who questioned why it has not been explored and pursued.
47. The middle managers suggested that LFRS must change its AFA policy to reduce unwanted attendances. The managers were also concerned about maintaining community safety work.

#### Councillors' Forum

48. The councillors were concerned about the health and safety of the firefighters in the context of the changes, though they also recognised that savings must be made.

#### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

49. The voluntary and business sector asked if LFRS has made or is proposing to make savings to its 'back-office' functions and if how?

## Overall balance of opinion

### Introduction

50. There is an inevitable tension between accuracy, on the one hand, and summary brevity, on the other. Both above and below we have sought to identify the main trends in opinion, but always at the risk of ignoring the subtlety of people's reasons and the strength of their feelings. Nonetheless, it seems appropriate to attempt assess the overall balance of opinion, and we hope this is helpful.
51. Therefore, in the remainder of this chapter, after summarising the views in the most compressed manner possible, we have tried to make judgements on where the balance of opinion lies – highlighted as *ORS judgements*. These judgements are tentative and corrigible; they are not based on a precise 'science' but on our measured assessment of how the degrees of support for the draft proposals compare with the degrees of opposition.
52. Of course, the so-called *ORS judgements* below are not to tell the Fire Authority what it should decide about the proposals: we have sought only to assist the Authority by describing the relative degrees of support and opposition for each of them. The Fire Authority will note, for example, that whereas the firefighters and support staff opposed the proposals in general, the operational middle managers supported most of them. In other words, there is an important diversity of views even within the LFRS – so the Authority will wish to consider their cogency of the opinions, as it will for all the viewpoints reported.

### General

53. In general, the public were more inclined to accept the proposals than the firefighters – even, for example, Loughborough and Leicester residents who felt reassured by the way their questions were answered about the possible withdrawal of a wholetime fire engine from both places. Overall, the operational middle managers were much more positive about most of the proposals than the firefighters, who opposed every one of them.

### Crews of Four

54. After hearing all their questions answered by senior officers, the public were able to accept this proposal, though some suggested that it should be tested before being generally introduced. Like the public, the councillors also accepted the proposed change.
55. The firefighters and support staff, and also the middle managers, opposed standard crews of four. However, the latter proposed a ‘compromise’ consisting of centralised crewing, annualised hours, and running watches with crews of six to enable LFRS to maintain an official crewing standard of five, while accepting four if that is unavoidable.
56. The voluntary and business sector forum generally opposed the proposal for standard crews of four.
57. **ORS judgement** – *much more opposition than support, but an important alternative proposal was made by the middle managers.*

### Removal of a Fire Engine from Loughborough Fire Station

58. Most members of the public at Loughborough and Leicester were able to accept the proposal to remove the second WDS appliance from Loughborough (but opinion was split at the county-wide forum).
59. The firefighters and support staff rejected the proposal to remove the appliance from Loughborough, while the middle managers were divided on the issue. Most of those supporting the proposal did so only if crewing levels are not also reduced to four as standard.
60. The councillors and the voluntary/business sector participants opposed the removal of a fire engine from Loughborough.
61. **ORS judgement** – *a balance of support and opposition, but much more controversial than removing a fire engine from Leicester.*

### Removal of a Wholetime Fire Engine from a Leicester City Fire Station

62. Overwhelming majorities of the public at the two Leicester City forums, and at the all-county public forums accepted the loss of a WDS appliance reasonable.
63. The firefighters and support staff were opposed to the removal of one WDS fire engine from the Leicester City area, but most of the middle managers accepted the proposal on financial grounds and because of the need to match resources to risk.
64. Nearly all the councillors thought it was feasible to remove one fire engine from the Leicester City area, but opinion was divided in the voluntary and business forum.
65. **ORS judgement** – *much more support than opposition.*

### Removal of an On-call Fire Engine from Oakham Fire Station

66. After a detailed discussion, opinion at the Oakham public forum was broadly divided on this issue.
67. Almost all firefighters and support staff were opposed to the removal of the on-call fire engine from Oakham; but in contrast most of the middle managers supported the proposal.
68. Almost all the councillors opposed the removal of the on-call fire engine from Oakham; and the voluntary and business sector participants were divided between opposition and 'don't know'.
69. **ORS judgement** – *more opposition than support.*

### Day Crewing Plus at Wigston Fire Station

70. A clear majority of members of the public supported the proposal, with unanimous support at one of the Leicester City sessions.
71. Some firefighters and support staff saw merits in Day Crewing Plus, but most were decidedly opposed. The middle managers, though, supported the proposal.
72. All five councillors were undecided on Day Crewing Plus and so was the voluntary and business sector forum.
73. **ORS judgement** – *more support than opposition.*

### Disestablishment of the Wholetime Resilience Team

74. In the public forums that discussed the issue there were divisions of opinion on this proposal, but with a majority in favour, and many 'don't knows'.
75. An overwhelming majority of the firefighters and support staff opposed this proposal, but an equally overwhelming majority of the middle managers supported it.
76. The councillors were undecided on the proposal, but the voluntary and business sector participants supported it.
77. **ORS judgement** – *more support than opposition.*

### Increasing Council Tax

78. The members of the public were divided on the desirability of increasing LFRS's council tax precept.
79. The staff thought it was reasonable to increase the precept, but many felt it would not be right to do so unless service cuts could be avoided.
80. The councillors supported an increase in LFRS's council tax precept and so did the voluntary and business sector forum.
81. **ORS judgement** – *more support than opposition, but a complex topic that was not equally covered in all the meetings.*

---

---

# Introduction

## Opinion Research Services

82. Opinion Research Services (ORS) is a generic social research company that works mainly for the public sector to conduct important applied research in health, housing, local government, police and fire and rescue services across the UK. The company was established in 1988 and has worked extensively with fire and rescue services (FRSs) across the UK since 1998. In 2004 it was appointed by the Fire Services Consultation Association (FSCA) as the sole approved provider of research and consultation services, under the terms of a National Framework Agreement. The same framework contract was retendered in 2009 and ORS was reappointed once more as the sole approved provider.
83. While working with FRSs across the UK, ORS has specialised in designing, implementing and reporting employee, stakeholder and public consultation programmes for a wide range of integrated risk management plans (IRMPs) – in many cases covering controversial and sensitive issues. In addition, ORS has extensive experience of statutory consultations about education, health and housing, and many other issues, including budgetary consultations.

## The Commission

84. On the basis of its experience of many IRMP consultations, ORS was commissioned by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) to undertake consultation about the Service's draft proposals – through a programme of consultation consisting of:
- Six forums with members of the public (in Leicester City (2), Loughborough, Oakham and Wigston – as well as one for participants from across the county);
  - Three forums with members of staff (two with firefighters and support staff and one with middle managers);
  - One forum with councillors; and
  - One forum with Leicestershire's voluntary and business sectors.
85. As well as giving general advice, ORS's primary role was to design, implement/facilitate, analyse and report the various deliberative forums held between September and December 2014. We worked in collaboration with LFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.

## Deliberative Forums

### Forums with Members of the Public

86. The consultation forums reported here took place in October 2014 and were intended to provide insights into public views about the draft proposals included in LFRS's *Integrated Management Plan 2015-2020* consultation document. The point of these deliberative sessions was to allow LFRS to engage with, and listen to, members of the public about some very important issues – so that the participants would become more informed about the fire and rescue service and the current constraints upon it; but also so that the discussions around people's views could inform LFRS's planning for the future.
87. ORS's role was to recruit, design, facilitate and report the forums. We worked in collaboration with LFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.
88. In total, 125 diverse members of the public attended the six sessions and the programme of meetings was as follows:

Meeting	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
<b>Wigston</b>	<b>6.30pm – 9.00pm Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>All-county</b>	<b>6.30pm – 9.00pm Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2014</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Loughborough</b>	<b>6.30pm – 9.00pm Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2014</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Oakham</b>	<b>6.30pm – 9.00pm Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2014</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Leicester City 1</b>	<b>6.30pm – 9.00pm Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Leicester City 2</b>	<b>6.30pm – 9.00pm Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014</b>	<b>16</b>

89. The forums were designed to inform and 'engage' the participants with the issues, with LFRS and with each other – by using a 'deliberative' approach to encourage participants to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing important issues in detail. The meetings lasted two-and-a-half hours.
90. Participants were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS's Social Research Call Centre. Having been initially contacted by phone, all participants were then written to - to confirm the invitation and the arrangements; and those who agreed to come then received telephone or



written reminders shortly before each meeting. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent, diverse and a broad cross-section of the wider community. As standard good practice, and to ensure a representativeness, people were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part.

91. In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors, and the venues at which the forums met were readily accessible. People's special needs were all taken into account in the recruitment and at the venues. The random telephone recruitment process was monitored to ensure social diversity in terms of a wide range of criteria – including, for example: local authority area of residence; gender; age; ethnicity; social grade; and disability/long-term limiting illness (LLTI). The table below shows the demographic make-up of the individual sessions and overall.

	City 1 (24)	City 2 (16)	County-wide (16)	Loughborough (19)	Oakham (26)	Wigston (24)	Overall (125)
<b>Gender</b>	Male: 13 Female: 11	Male: 9 Female: 7	Male: 11 Female: 5	Male: 9 Female: 10	Male: 17 Female: 9	Male: 12 Female: 12	Male: 71 Female: 54
<b>Age</b>	16-34: 17 35-54: 2 55+: 5	16-34: 11 35-54: 3 55+: 2	16-34: 4 35-54: 5 55+: 7	16-34: 6 35-54: 6 55+: 7	16-34: 2 35-54: 7 55+: 17	16-34: 6 35-54: 7 55+: 11	16-34: 46 35-54: 30 55+: 49
<b>Social Grade</b>	AB: 6 C1: 7 C2: 3 DE: 8	AB: 1 C1: 8 C2: 1 DE: 6	AB: 6 C1: 4 C2: 4 DE: 2	AB: 3 C1: 9 C2: 2 DE: 5	AB: 8 C1: 11 C2: 3 DE: 4	AB: 4 C1: 8 C2: 6 DE: 6	AB: 28 C1: 47 C2: 19 DE: 31
<b>Ethnicity</b>	BME: 18	BME: 5	BME: 2	BME: 1	BME: 0	BME: 6	BME: 32
<b>LLTI</b>	1	0	1	1	4	5	12

#### Forums with LFRS Staff

92. Three forums were undertaken with LFRS staff: two with firefighters and support staff (with 12 and 11 attendees, including Trade Union representatives) and one with middle managers (with 32 attendees). LFRS undertook a conscientious programme of invitations to these sessions and full and frank discussions were had in all three.

#### Councillors' Forum

93. LFRS sent out many invitations and five councillors attended the forum and fully engaged with the issues in an excellent discussion.

#### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

94. ORS sent out over 1,000 invitations and reminders to voluntary and business sector organisations and 14 people attended. Nonetheless, the resulting discussion was very valuable and worthwhile.

## Qualitative Research

95. Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, forums cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public, staff and stakeholder opinion, all the meetings gave diverse people the opportunity to participate. For the forums with members of the public especially, because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse; so we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meetings (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed public opinion would incline on the basis of similar discussions. In summary, the outcomes reported here are reliable as examples of people's opinions and attitudes about LFRS's proposals.

## Discussion Agenda

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

Staff and financial resources

Distribution of emergency cover resources

Incident profile and numbers

Reality of reducing risk

Role of prevention, protection and response

Budget reductions

Draft *Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-2020* proposals.

97. The discussions were prompted by a presentation devised by ORS and LFRS to inform and encourage debate and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they wished throughout. Not all the proposals were discussed in equal detail in each of the groups due to time constraints – and the geographically-based sessions inevitably focused on the issues relevant to that particular area. Overall, the forums were used to 'test' people's reactions to the LFRS's draft proposals.

## Consultation Programme Proportional and Fair

### Accountability

98. LFRS's consultation programme was conscientious, in the sense of being open, accessible and fair to members of the public, staff and stakeholders across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland: the consultation was proportional to the importance of the issues and conformed with good practice. The key good practice requirements for proper consultation programmes are that they should:

Be conducted at a formative stage, before decisions are taken

Allow sufficient time for people to participate and respond

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

Be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken.

99. Taken together, these four elements do much to ensure the ‘accountability’ of public authorities. Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully. This does not mean that the majority views expressed in consultations should automatically decide public policy, for consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the right or best decision in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are very important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine authorities’ decisions.
100. In other words, consultation should not be seen as just a ‘numbers game’, but rather as a debate about the merits of the draft proposals under consideration. For the public bodies considering the outcomes of consultation, the key question is not *Which proposal has most numerical support?* but, *Are the reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of the proposals cogent?*
101. In this context, both LFRS and ORS were clear that this important consultation programme should include both quantitative (undertaken by LFRS) and deliberative elements in order to:
- Provide many people with the opportunity to take part via the open questionnaire routes
  - Promote informed engagement via the deliberative forums with members of the public, staff and stakeholders.
102. Given people’s general unawareness of how their fire and rescue services operate and manage their resources and costs, consultation with informed audiences – who have the opportunity to question and test the evidence for particular proposals – is especially valuable. All elements of the consultation are important and none should be disregarded, but the deliberative forums, and also the detailed and considered submissions, are particularly worthy of consideration because they explore the arguments and the reasons for people’s opinions. There is no doubt that LFRS’ consultation programme conforms to good practice by including a range of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, through which people could participate and as a means for the authority to understand the reasons for people’s opinions.
103. As well as providing the public, staff and stakeholders with sufficient information to consider the proposals intelligently, LFRS has also conducted its consultation in a timely manner and is taking account of the outcomes before making a decision. Both the scale and nature of the programme compare well with consultations undertaken by other fire and rescue services and public bodies.

## Some FBU Criticisms

104. In passing, we should acknowledge and respond to some criticisms of the consultation process by the FBU. Towards the end of the Union’s detailed and considered submission, it alleges that LFRS was irresponsible in spending public funds to commission ORS to undertake part of its consultation programme and to write an independent report. In fact, of course, LFRS was seeking to ensure that it fulfilled its legal obligation to provide a fair and accessible consultation programme – in particular by conducting independently facilitated discussions with a wide range of the public and stakeholders

(including three meetings with its firefighters and staff) to examine in-depth their opinions and arguments about the draft proposals. ORS provides such services for a wide range of fire and rescue services (including [in 2014 alone] Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, East Sussex, Dorset, Merseyside, Nottinghamshire, West Sussex and Wiltshire) as well as for many other public bodies. In this case, we believe the process worked well and has informed this report.

105. The FBU also complains that it was unable to attend most of the forums and that its members and others with a very close connection with LFRS were ineligible to attend. In fact, it is standard good practice to exclude those with a direct personal interest in the issues from attending forums which are intended for *members of the general public*. It is important for members of the public in forums to be able to consider the issues in a thoughtful way, without feeling pressurised or caught between competing 'sides'. It is also relevant that the FBU is not the only union with an interest in the issues, and it is arguable that if it were to attend then the other unions should be included, too.
106. In this case, moreover, the FBU's viewpoint was not wholly excluded, for its members picketed several of the meetings (in a polite and entirely non-offensive way) and expressed their points of view to those arriving for the discussions. In addition, the facilitator answered forum participants frankly when asked about firefighters' views on the draft proposals.
107. A further consideration is that the FBU has many other routes through which to express its views. Apart from its campaigns in the public media about the draft proposals, it is regularly and systematically consulted by LFRS about all important matters. The union has also made a substantial submission, and its members (and in some cases its representatives) took an active part in three lengthy forums facilitated by ORS with LFRS firefighters, staff and middle managers. In other words, the FBU was not excluded; and its points of view were not disregarded.
108. The union complains that the forums were 'rushed' and too few had the opportunity to take part. In fact, the meetings were not hurried in any way, but lasted in each case about three-and-a-half hours, so there was plenty of time for those there to express their points of view in detail – and, of course, the notes taken then provided the basis for our report of firefighters' views. During and at the end of the meetings with firefighters, there were no complaints about discussions having been rushed or in any way superficial; in fact, the ORS facilitator was complimented and thanked by several participants and the lengthy meetings ended in each case on a positive note. The same was also true of the equally in-depth forum with middle managers.
109. The union says that too few firefighters were able to take part in the forums due to their being on duty. Of course, such meetings should be as inclusive as possible, but there will always be some practical limitations on the numbers able to take part in detailed and lengthy forums. In this case, a total of 55 LFRS employees attended the deliberative forums, not an inconsiderable number.
110. Moreover, those that attended were able to explain their objections to the draft proposals in a detailed, measured, clear and emphatic manner – so there is no reason to think that important considerations and issues went without notice. In any case, all LFRS employees were able to use the on-line questionnaire and to make submissions in order to express their views. The forums, while important, were only one part of an extensive consultation process.

111. The FBU criticised LFRS's design and distribution of the consultation questionnaire, and the initial difficulties some people apparently had in using the on-line questionnaire. These matters were not handled by ORS, so our comments can only be brief. First, there are always practical difficulties in distributing questionnaires, but there is no reason to think that the process was not conscientious or failed to be inclusive overall. Second, the LFRS questionnaire meets the key requirements for such documents – in (a) providing clearly formulated questions; (b) allowing respondents to express their views on the issues; and (c) not leading them to a particular point of view. In this case, the questions seem to have been designed (i) to remind respondents of key relevant information while posing clear questions and (ii) to distinguish between people's views on general principles and specific draft proposals. Contrary to what the FBU says, quantitative questionnaires of this kind typically use 'closed questions'; but, of course, the LFRS version included open-ended invitations to make textual comments as well.
112. Overall, the FBU argues that LFRS's consultation was fatally flawed because it misled the public on some key issues. It is not our role to be advocates for LFRS, but it is appropriate to briefly explain here the issues in dispute. First, the union claims that, contrary to what LFRS says, the Resilience Team has been disestablished. The point was discussed in several forums and in each the LFRS senior managers explained that the team has not been disestablished, but its role has changed in emphasis recently. Second, the union claims that LFRS has misled the public about the risks associated with reducing the number of fire engines. Since this is a matter of evidence and professional judgement, it is not for ORS to comment on the important matters of detail. Third, the FBU contends that LFRS's failure to specify which of Leicester's stations might lose a fire station deprived the public of important information. This point is clearly a matter of judgement, but in our opinion LFRS demonstrated that the choice of which fire station (if any) was finely balanced; the Service provided relevant evidence about each of them and invited comments on which would be the most appropriate.
113. ORS recognises the important concerns of the FBU and also the challenges faced by LFRS to reduce its expenditure while continuing to provide a safe and resilient emergency service to the public in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

## ORS Report

114. This report reviews the sentiments and judgements of forum participants about LFRS's *Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-2020* proposals. Verbatim quotations are often used, in indented italics, not because we agree or disagree with them – but for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of view. ORS does not endorse the opinions in question, but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly. The report is an interpretative summary of the issues raised by participants.

---

# Deliberative Forums

## Introduction

115. As previously explained, the forums facilitated by ORS were as follows:
- Six forums with members of the public (in Leicester City (two), Loughborough, Oakham and Wigston – as well as one for participants from across the county);
  - Three forums with members of staff (two with firefighters and support staff, and one with middle managers);
  - One forum with councillors; and
  - One forum with Leicestershire’s voluntary and business sectors.
116. The forums with members of the public and stakeholders were designed to inform and engage the participants both with the issues and with LFRS – by using both a deliberative approach to encourage people to reflect in depth about the fire and rescue service, while both receiving and questioning background information and discussing LFRS’ proposals in detail (though, due to time constraints, not all of these proposals were discussed in all forums, which were understandably focused on the issues relevant to their local area).
117. The forums with staff and were designed to allow the participants to explain their opinions in detail. Senior officers were present to answer technical or policy questions, but the meeting were not argumentative debates between ‘management and staff’; they were in-depth examinations of the opinions of the firefighters, staff and middle managers about the draft proposals.
118. For each of the draft proposals the findings from the forums are presented below in the following order:
- Members of the public
  - LFRS staff
  - Councillors
  - Voluntary and business sector stakeholders
119. In each section, for each type of forum, we have sought to indicate the broad balance of opinion, without treating the matters as ‘simply numerical’.

## Awareness of Incident Reductions

### Forums with Members of the Public

120. Few participants across all six public forms were aware of a reduction in incident levels, both in their area and across Leicestershire:

*I was unaware of this. There are two things that affect our knowledge of incident numbers: the number of times we see or hear a fire engine; and what we hear and see on the news (Leicester City)*

*I was surprised as there is little publicity that incidents had been reduced... (Loughborough)*

*I am not aware due to the platforms used for communications. Not everybody has access to the internet or knows how to use Twitter (Leicester City)*

*You're grateful for what they do and they're there when you need them but you don't really sit there thinking about it (Leicester City)*

121. There was a general feeling that LFRS should better publicise its successes to improve the already positive public perception of its work:

*We don't get regular updates on performance. They should publicise successes more (Wigston)*

*They don't go around shouting about how well they're doing (Wigston)*

*It's a shame that when it's such a positive thing and such an asset that it is not publicised...you only tend to hear the bad things in the news (Loughborough)*

*It would be good to know about this sort of thing. If we want to know this sort of thing we have to go and look for it specially (Leicester City)*

*It is something the wider public do want to know about. (Loughborough)*

## Proposal A – Crewing all Fire Engines with a Minimum of Four People as Standard

### The Proposal

122. LFRS proposes to crew all of its fire engines with a minimum of four firefighters as standard.

### Forums with Members of the Public

#### Arguments FOR Crewing all Fire Engines with a Minimum of Four People as Standard

123. Participants at the Wigston, Loughborough and Leicester City forums recognised the point of this proposal in achieving the savings required to meet LFRS's budget shortfall, though participants at the latter were more cautious in their acceptance (while ultimately agreeing that a blanket reduction in crewing levels is preferable to losing fire stations):

*This seems ok and safe to do, especially in the City. It sounds sensible (Leicester City)*

*If safety is not compromised then this could be an acceptable way of saving money...other areas have done this successfully (Wigston)*

*I don't like the option, but it might be necessary (Loughborough)*

*We don't like this option, but it's better to have more stations throughout the county with a minimum of four crews than to lose an entire station. (Loughborough)*

124. The proven efficiency of this system (as demonstrated by its use and effectiveness in Leicester City) was also considered a reason to implement it on a county-wide basis. Some, though, suggested that a pilot system may be necessary to evaluate its success prior to such a roll-out:

*If this system has been in place for quite some time already then it has been proven to be efficient (Leicester City)*

*It's been happening for a while in the City without any negative effect (Leicester City)*

*I agree with that this proposal is efficient as it is already being practiced (Wigston)*

*I acknowledge that the City has already been doing this, but there should be a pilot scheme. (Loughborough)*

125. At Leicester City though, participants said that while they had been convinced by LFRS's arguments and evidence at the forum, they represent only small proportion of the population – and that only by ensuring this evidence is heard more widely will the general population be convinced of the proposal's merits:

*The statistics showing 93% of incidents only need up to two engines show that this is safe...but there's only a few of us in the room that know this information. (Leicester City)*

#### Arguments AGAINST Crewing all Fire Engines with a Minimum of Four People as Standard

126. The Loughborough participants were concerned about the potential impact of this proposal on crew safety, with some suggesting that it may breach health and safety standards and affect firefighters' abilities to undertake their work effectively. Further, at Wigston people questioned why a four person crew is not standard currently if it is a safe system of work and what effect the proposal may have on LFRS's ability to crew its various appliances with an appropriate mix of staff. Some typical comments were:

*I'm not sure if you will meet your health and safety standards with this proposal. (Loughborough)*

*This would be a reduction and would reduce the ability of the crew to do the job and would increase the risk to the crew (Loughborough)*

*My concern is that you're still going to get the odd situation where it's going to be chaos and nobody can foresee that until it happens. Will four people be enough? (Loughborough)*

*Why do you use crews of five or six if crews of four are actually safe?! (Wigston)*

*We did have some concerns about whether a crew of five would be as effective as a crew of four (Leicester City)*

*Do you have specialist staff and would that determine the make-up of the crew? And would this be affected by going to a crew of four? (County-wide)*



*How will you manage the skill mix required within crews when you consider the redundancies? (Wigston)*

127. Other significant concerns were about the impact of the proposal on response times (to Road Traffic Collisions [RTCs] as well as fires and especially in rural areas) and LFRS's prevention work:

*I am concerned that response times would change with the minimal amount of staffing and am unconvinced that they would stay the same (Wigston)*

*I'm concerned about rural areas. This area doesn't lend itself to this option compared to the City. Rural areas would be more at risk (Loughborough)*

*Other areas have done this without compromising safety so it could be a good way of saving money but we highly value the community and education work the firefighters do, especially what they do in schools with 'difficult' children. If this diminishes the young people who benefit from the intervention may lose out (Wigston)*

*Will there be enough staff to maintain work in schools and the community which is valuable in reducing fire and arson (Wigston)*

*I'm concerned that this might reduce prevention work by wholetime staff (County-wide)*

*RTCs are important for the FRS too; we need to recognise them specifically. (County-wide)*

128. Finally, while they may have been prepared to accept this proposal in isolation, some people were more reluctant to do so having considered it as part of the 'package':

*Can you combine this with the reduction to 14 staff at Wigston? (Wigston)*

### **Balance of Opinion**

129. Where the proposal to crew all fire engines with a minimum of four people as standard was discussed by members of the public it was endorsed either unanimously (at Loughborough and one of the Leicester City forums) or by a significant majority (20/24 at Wigston and 14/16 at the county-wide forum). This was, however, a reluctant endorsement in many cases for the reasons outlined above and there was a sense that a pilot scheme might be sensible to test the feasibility in practice.

### **Forums with Staff**

130. Staff were almost unanimously opposed to the proposed reduction in crewing levels insofar as it would: limit firefighters' ability to tackle many incidents effectively and safely; place significant 'moral' pressure on the first attending crew to commit in a hazardous way; jeopardise the 'golden hour' through slower responses; and result in a more 'defensive' form of firefighting that may not be acceptable to the public. Some of the many typical comments were:

*We need five people to handle complex incidents safely and it is not feasible to reduce the total number as standard. The weight of attack won't be there in the first few minutes to do the job safely (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*We need to consider safe weight of attack across the county overall – four is too few! (Middle Managers)*

*There would be a big pressure on the crews of four who would be able to do little at many incidents (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*When you're waiting for that second appliance there is unbelievable moral pressure. This is far more acute with four (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*It would jeopardise the golden hour...it will be slower with crews of four (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Does this mean that we will commit to new Health and Safety standards which would be not to commit to a serious house fire without waiting for further back up...so that we would no longer attack fires so positively but become more defensive? This change could affect our role to the public substantially as we wouldn't be doing the same tasks in the same way. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

131. The inability of a crew of four to commit to a rescue using breathing apparatus (BA) was an extremely important issue for staff, who also questioned which specific role would be lost from a crew of five under this proposal and what would be expected of a smaller first appliance crew in terms of carrying out simultaneous tasks at an incident:

*If you want to commit to a rescue or use BA you need five or more...weight of attack is just as important as speed of attack (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*The BA guidelines prevent entry to a building with fewer than five firefighters (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Each person has a role in a crew...that's why there's five on an appliance. If we're going to remove one, which role will be removed? And we wouldn't have enough people to, say, commit a BA team to carry out rescues and put a ladder up. We'd have to choose... (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

Indeed, it was said that: *if we have crews of four we need to train for that and amend our operational procedures accordingly, for example for BA operation.* (Firefighters and Support Staff)

132. Other issues raised by staff in relation to this proposal were that: it is particularly unsuitable for one-pump stations and for areas outside the City due to the lack of stations in close proximity to each other for back-up; it may be impossible to sustain crews of four in practice due to, say, sickness; and that there is a need for more health and safety evaluations and task-based assessments to test its feasibility prior to implementation:

*At a one-pump station with a crew of five it is all hands on deck. Four people at an RTC with two casualties is hard work (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Many one-pump stations serve rural hinterlands and there is more pressure waiting for second appliance (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*City stations ride with four because they are in close proximity to each other; it wouldn't be as appropriate elsewhere (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*If the drop to four is accepted, appliances will be off the run more. At the moment, if someone is sick we can go down to four until we can get some cover. If we drop to four and*

*someone is sick, that pump will be off the run. And if everyone else is on four, where is that extra person coming from? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Have there been any task-based risk assessments to test the feasibility of using crews of four? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Why are we consulting on proposals that affect the health and safety of employees? DCLG says this shouldn't be done with the public until they have been fully assessed and addressed. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

133. Finally, it was said that while this proposal may seem acceptable in isolation, taken together with LFRS's other proposals it creates a service with too little resilience – and participants questioned whether the Service has evaluated Warwickshire's recent decision to reverse its four-person crew policy:

*There's the shrinkage of the system...it's not so much for or against but is it actually possible? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*This is a proposal in isolation sounds good, but such 'leanness' can be adverse in certain situations (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Warwickshire have recently reversed their decision to crew with four. Have you looked at why they decided to do this? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

### **Balance of Staff Opinion**

134. Across the two firefighter and support staff groups, 19 of 23 participants considered the proposal to be unreasonable, and there were four 'don't knows'.
135. Most of the middle managers (24 of 32) were opposed to crews of four as standard. However, a significant number (21) were in favour of centralised crewing on annualised hours and running watches with crews of six – providing this enables LFRS to maintain an official crewing standard of five, while accepting four if unavoidable. This is an important alternative proposal that may be a helpful compromise between different points of view.

### **Councillors' Forum**

136. Although all five councillors accepted the proposal to crew fire engines with a minimum of four people as standard, they were concerned that it could ultimately lead to even smaller crews being used – for example:

*If you aim for five currently, will accepting four as standard mean that you will actually have crews of three going out? (Councillor)*

137. They also questioned why, if it is considered safe, the change has not been implemented previously – and suggested that more use could be made of on-call staff in backing up crews of four:

*Why is it now deemed safe to crew with four when the previous standard has been five? (Councillor)*

*Could you have crews of 4x4 with RDS crew members as back-up? This would give greater cost-savings. You could make more use of RDS staff (Councillor)*

### Balance of Councillors' Opinion

138. All five councillors accepted the proposal to crew fire engines with a minimum of four people as standard, but they were concerned that it should not lead to even smaller crews being used.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

139. Only two of the 14 voluntary and business sector forum participants supported the proposed crewing changes. The remaining 12 were concerned about the proposal both generally and more specifically around: firefighter safety; firefighter redundancies; and the potential for increased sickness levels through stress. Some typical comments and questions were:

*I can understand you using crews of four when necessary, but to make that the normal standard is a different matter (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*Four should be the minimum not the standard because five gives you some scope or margin of extra people (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*It is hard to reduce budgets, but why is it necessary to make this a standard level of crewing? Would you do it if you did not have to do it for financial reasons? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*What about firefighter safety when there are crews of four? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*What effect will this have on the cover available? Does it reduce the numbers of firefighters needed on each station? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*Have sickness absences been affected in the City by having crews of four as standard? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

140. People were especially concerned about the impact of reducing crewing levels at one-pump stations and suggested that, if this proposal is implemented, it should be on two-pump stations only:

*This could be a substantial change on stations with only one engine (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*Four should be sufficient but only wherever you have two fire engines on the same station. (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

141. It was also said that: *management should have the discretion to reduce to four in an operational context. (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

### Balance of Vountary and Business Sector Opinion

142. Most of the voluntary and business sector participants opposed the proposal on the grounds of firefighter safety, firefighter redundancies, and the potential for increased sickness levels through stress.

## Proposal B – Loughborough Fire Station

### The Proposal

143. LFRS proposes to remove one Wholetime Duty System (WDS) fire engine from Loughborough Fire Station.

### Forums with Members of the Public

#### Arguments FOR Removing the Second WDS Fire Engine from Loughborough Fire Station

144. Interestingly, this proposal had near-unanimous (albeit reluctant) support at the Loughborough public forum. Participants generally felt that some of LFRS's necessary savings can be reasonably achieved by removing the second WDS fire engine from their local fire station, in light of the reducing number of incidents in the area:

*I appreciate that savings have to be made (Loughborough)*

*I agree. I think that from the stats and everything that it's valid and feasible way of doing it. The statistics have changed my mind (Loughborough)*

*The idea that there is a reduced amount of incidents means that this proposal makes sense. (Loughborough)*

145. It was also said that, as Loughborough Fire Station is in close proximity to other stations (and will of course retain one WDS appliance), the reduction is feasible to achieve necessary financial reductions:

*Money could be saved and other stations such as Castle Donington and Birstall Fire Station could provide backup (Loughborough)*

*There are two other fire stations in the area that can support. I see the logic behind it (Loughborough)*

*Cover from other stations would mean that there is greater cover geographically for Loughborough. (Loughborough)*

146. Finally, one participant at Leicester cited the good condition of the roads in Loughborough as a reason for removing an appliance there (as opposed to, say, two from the City):

*Leicester is a very congested city whereas the roads are better in the Loughborough area. (Leicester City)*

#### Arguments AGAINST Removing the Second WDS Fire Engine

147. However, Loughborough participants were understandably concerned about longer second appliance response times in their area (if a fire engine is removed) – concerns echoed by those at Leicester City and at the county-wide forum. Indeed, it was suggested that the predicted extra three minutes it would take for a second appliance to arrive from Birstall, Castle Donington or Shepshed could result in loss of life due to firefighters being unable to commit to an incident without back-up. Some typical comments were:

*Will this affect your KPIs for attendance times here? (Loughborough)*

*They shouldn't remove one in Loughborough, because it's not safe (Leicester City)*

*How many deaths could be attributed to a three minute gap? There are the sorts of things we have to have confidence in. We have to know that the Service has it covered (County-wide)*

*Can the first crew deploy into a house with breathing apparatus before the second fire engine arrives? (County-wide)*

148. Leicester City participants were particularly keen for LFRS to explore alternatives to this proposal, including the removal of a WDS appliance from nearby Birstall Fire Station:

*What are the alternatives to this? (Leicester City)*

*Why don't you take one fire engine from Birstall instead? (Leicester City)*

149. The impact of new housing developments on the need for FRS cover in the area (for RTCs in particular) was a concern for some participants – who also suggested that more housing will result in more council tax, potentially reducing LFRS's future savings requirement and subsequent need to make radical changes:

*A new housing development means more traffic, which might mean more incidents (Loughborough)*

*We are concerned about the impact of housing development, for example in Whitchurch. And what happens to the new budget? New houses mean more council tax. (Loughborough)*

150. Finally, participants at the county-wide forum questioned whether the proposal would be reversible if proven to be detrimental to public safety:

*Will it be 'once it's gone, it's gone'? Or will there be potential to bring the staff and engines back if the risk changes? (County-wide)*

### **Balance of Opinion**

151. Although they did not wish to lose a valued local resource, most members of the public at Loughborough ultimately accepted the proposal to remove the second WDS appliance from their local fire station. In the other forums where this issue was discussed, a majority at one of the Leicester City forums (11/16) endorsed the change, whereas opinion was exactly split at the county-wide forum between those who supported and opposed it.

### **Forums with Staff**

152. Most members of staff were opposed to the removal of Loughborough's second WDS engine because: the lack of immediately available back-up will increase the risk to firefighters and the public; it will reduce standards and service-wide resilience (particularly when taken together with LFRS's other proposals); and because the area has significant risk in the form of a large and fluid student population. Some typical comments were:

*There is an impact on firefighter risk regarding the response times. If there is only one pump on persons reported and there will be a delay in the second appliance, how can that not have an impact on life risk? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*There would be an increase in risk if Birstall was out on another call (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*If Loughborough has only one pump and the others are on Day Crewing Plus then this will reduce resilience at a big incident that lasts a long time (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*You have to overlay the reduction in ridership factor which has massive implications (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Loughborough's demographic and risk changes with the student population – it can change overnight. And they tend to cause a lot of problems as far as I can see! (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

153. LFRS's stated three to four minute second appliance response time increase for the Loughborough area was also strongly disputed. This was described as 'misleading', with participants suggesting a more accurate time of 11 to 13 minutes, during which time the first attending crew may be tempted to commit to an incident without appropriate back-up:

*We would be waiting an awful long time for the second appliance. In some cases we have waited 11 to 13 minutes after the arrival of the first appliance. The figure of three to four minutes is misleading and inaccurate. Firefighters will try and act without the resources they need to do so safely, otherwise lives will be lost (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*There's massive pressure on the first crew, especially if it's a crew of four. Health and safety could go out of the window big time as the pressure on you to deliver is massive. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

### **Balance of Staff Opinion**

154. Almost all members of LFRS staff rejected the proposal to remove the second WDS appliance from Loughborough Fire Station.
155. The middle managers were split on the issue - about a third were prepared to accept the proposal, more than a quarter were opposed, and there were three 'don't knows'.
156. However, most of those supporting the proposal did so only if crewing levels are not also reduced to four as standard: if this reduction is implemented only three would be in support, 20 would object and the rest were unsure:

*When this is combined with the other changes (crews of 4) there are still adequate resources in Leicester but in Loughborough I think there'll be an increased risk. (Middle Managers)*

### **Councillors' Forum**

157. All five councillors rejected the proposal to remove the second WDS appliance from Loughborough Fire Station on the grounds that: second appliance cover may not be available from elsewhere within a reasonable timeframe; and that the amount of prevention work undertaken by firefighters in the area may reduce:

*A Loughborough fire engine is due to be removed but will there be cover available from Birstall? (Councillor)*

*They are preventing many fires with their 'hidden' prevention work. (Councillor)*

158. The Councillors also questioned: *if you remove a fire engine what do you do with them?*

### **Balance of Councillors' Opinion**

159. All five councillors opposed the removal of a fire engine from Loughborough Fire Station.

### **Voluntary and Business Sector Forum**

160. The majority of participants at the voluntary and business sector forum rejected the proposed removal of a WDS fire engine from Loughborough Fire Station due to their concerns about: the potential for additional casualties as a result of lengthier second appliance response times; the impact of the change during simultaneous incidents; the increased pressure on Birstall Fire Station; and Loughborough's student population and the risks it brings:

*How many more casualties will result from the second fire engine's three minute longer response time? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*How do you factor the probability of simultaneous calls into the system? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*Birstall cannot really cover for both Leicester and Loughborough stations (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*Loughborough has a lot of HMOs and students and high rise buildings. (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

### **Balance of Voluntary and Business Sector Opinion**

161. The majority of participants opposed this proposal.

## **Proposal C – Leicester City**

### **The Proposal**

162. LFRS proposes to remove one WDS from the Leicester City area.

### **Forums with Members of the Public**

#### Arguments FOR the Removal of a WDS Fire Engine from Leicester City

163. Participants at the Leicester City public forums were generally convinced by the arguments and evidence for removing a WDS fire engine from the City. Those who endorsed this proposal did so chiefly on the grounds that incidents in the City could be appropriately and adequately covered – and that the saving generated by the change would be significant. Some typical comments were:

*I've been persuaded by what I've seen this evening. I had a pre-conception before coming that it shouldn't be done but the information has made things more clear and it's obviously been thought through (Leicester City)*

*We agree with it...if they'd taken an engine out we probably wouldn't have noticed. It will still be within the ten minutes (Leicester City)*



*We agree that if this option doesn't have any risk and can't do any harm then there are no problems (Leicester City)*

*This option has less impact and poses no major risk to life (Leicester City)*

*You can bring resources in from elsewhere to help with big incidents (Leicester City)*

*As we now know, fire engines across the area can help. (Leicester City)*

164. Further, some participants at the county-wide forum were of the opinion that the City can afford to lose two WDS engines:

*There seems to be the capacity to take two fire engines from the City rather than just one! (County-wide)*

#### Arguments AGAINST the Removal of a WDS Fire Engine from Leicester City

165. Even though most Leicester City participants accepted the feasibility of this proposal, a minority expressed some concern about: response times; firefighter redundancies; reduced prevention activity; and the amount of development and growth anticipated in the City. Further, some questioned why LFRS has not implemented such a change previously if it considers it safe to do so:

*The firefighters could be waiting for the second appliance because they don't think it's safe to carry on (County-wide)*

*Does removing the fire engine affect response times in any way? (Leicester City)*

*We are concerned that this proposal would result in a loss of jobs...but it's a case of having to balance things (Leicester City)*

*Will prevention be affected? (Leicester City)*

*Maybe at the moment we could manage with 17 less firefighters but where is the growth of the City and County factored into this? (County-wide)*

*Why didn't you do this a few years ago if that crew is surplus? (Leicester City)*

*If it is safe, why was it not possible to do this before? (Leicester City)*

166. In the context of this proposal (and indeed the others), there was some worry about the impact of combining redundancies with a recruitment freeze on the age profile and experience of operational staff - and thus LFRS' future sustainability:

*Do you know the retirement profile for the next five years? (Leicester City)*

*Will you have a big age gap if you do not recruit over the next few years? (Leicester City)*

#### **Balance of Opinion**

167. Overwhelming majorities at the Leicester City and all-county public forums accepted the loss of a WDS appliance from the City as reasonable insofar as:

*There are lots of resources in the city; it is safe (Leicester City)*

## Forums with Staff

168. One of the chief concerns among LFRS's firefighters and support staff was that this proposal lacks clarity and transparency. Many participants desired more information and particularly questioned how people can be expected to form a proper judgement on the proposal without knowledge of, say, the station from which the WDS appliance will be removed and the precise impact of the proposal on response times and life risk in the City. Some of the many typical comments were:

*I find it really difficult that we're having a consultation with the public on this when they don't know where the engine will be going from (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*By not specifying an engine in the city, if we as trade experts don't know how are we going to have meaningful engagement with members of the public? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*We need a clear statement that these changes will not jeopardise lives; the consultation document is not reassuring enough (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*The information is too vague, I want to know if my extra money will save lives or not and exactly whether the proposals boil down to in terms of lives lost etc. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*The document does not actually say that there will be no impact on life risk from these proposals so we need to know what the actual position is...all it talks about is 'lessening the impact of incidents' (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Does the consultation document mean that the removal of a city fire engine will have zero effect on the loss of life in the city based on the resources that will be left in the city? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

169. While acknowledging that LFRS's 10 minute response time standard will not be compromised under this proposal, staff said that changes will be experienced within that 10 minutes that could have a significant impact in some cases:

*It will have an impact on response times in that particularly area. Just because 10 minutes is the performance standard...a lot can happen in ten minutes and an impact within that time can be significant. So just because the difference is within ten minutes doesn't mean it won't have an impact. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

170. Again it was said that, while the suggested change might be sustainable in isolation, it must be considered together with LFRS's other proposals as well as other systems such as ALP switch crewing – all of which apparently amplify the possible negative implications of any reduction in the City:

*You can't look at taking the pump out in isolation, a lot of other things have to be taken into account as all of the various proposals will have a cumulative effect (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Wigston going DCP will impact ability to support City stations. It's about health and safety risks to public and firefighters (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*The risk factor is greater if we have two fire engines with crews of only four; it's not just about the number of engines (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*We switch crew the ALP so the City loses a pump when that goes out and we go from the City to Loughborough sometimes, and the Birstall pump won't always be available to Leicester.*  
(Firefighters and Support Staff)

171. Finally, as a variant proposal, some firefighters and support staff suggested that – if the proposal is ratified – then LFRS should consider introducing an RDS system at the station that loses the appliance to maintain resource levels there.
172. In contrast to the firefighters, most of the middle managers accepted the proposed change in Leicester on financial grounds and because of the need to match resources to risk (though there were some concerns about the implications of the proposal for Birstall and the possible impact of switch crewing on firefighter availability):

*No one wants to see closures or reductions, but the number of calls for the City stations has hugely reduced in the last 20 years and there has been a growth in the number of fire engines in the City and surrounds. So if it's down to money I can't disagree with the proposals; they are fair in the context of all the issues* (Middle Managers)

*We are risk-based but we don't have the money to cover all risks to the highest possible level. We have to consider what we can afford and what's reasonable...* (Middle Managers)

*Birstall station replaces one that closed so if it provides cover for the City it could jeopardise its own response times in its own area* (Middle Managers)

*In the City we'll be combining this reduction with switch crewing, but if those appliances are committed then crews might not be available.* (Middle Managers)

173. More radically, some managers suggested that LFRS should consider removing two appliances from Leicester in order to protect Loughborough from what the managers saw as a detrimental reduction there (though most participants were uncertain about the feasibility of such a change):

*We should close a Leicester station completely and reduce by two fire engines but we should leave Loughborough alone* (Middle Managers)

*It would be safer to keep the appliance at Loughborough and remove one from Shepshed...*  
(Middle Managers)

### **Balance of Staff Opinion**

174. Almost all firefighters and support staff were opposed to the removal of one WDS fire engine from the Leicester City area:

*We don't know what effect the removal will have in practice; it is too complicated*  
(Firefighters and Support Staff)

*I don't think it is safe or feasible to remove any appliances from the City.* (Firefighters and Support Staff)

175. Most of the middle managers accepted the proposed change in the City area on financial grounds and because of the need to match resources to risk.

## Councillors' Forum

176. Four of the five councillors considered it feasible to remove one WDS fire engine from the Leicester City area (the remaining one was a 'don't know').

## Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

177. Seven of the 14 voluntary and business sector forum participants accepted the loss of a WDS appliance from the City, whereas six did not. There was one abstention, with the participant questioning whether there is a realistic alternative. Of particular concern was the crewing of the City's special appliances:

*Will the crewing of the special appliances be affected by these proposals? Removing an engine from Leicester should not be allowed to affect the crewing of special appliances.*  
(Voluntary and Business Sector)

## Balance of Voluntary and Business Sector Opinion

178. Opinion was divided on the draft proposal to remove a fire engine from Leicester in the voluntary and business sector forum.

## Proposal D – Oakham Fire Station

### The Proposal

179. LFRS proposes to remove the on-call fire engine from Oakham Fire Station.

## Forums with Members of the Public

### Arguments FOR the Removal of the On-call Fire Engine from Oakham Fire Station

180. Those who accepted the removal of the Oakham on-call fire engine did so on the grounds that the area's incidents can be sufficiently dealt with by the remaining WDS engine:

*Most incidents need only one or two fire engines...and mostly the incidents [around Oakham] can be dealt with readily by one.* (Oakham)

### Arguments AGAINST the Removal of the On-call Fire Engine from Oakham Fire Station

181. Oakham participants' questions reflect some of the concerns they had about the proposed removal of the on-call appliance from their local fire station. These were primarily around: the number of incidents attended by the on-call fire engine; the future of the appliance itself; and how cross-border arrangements work in practice:

*How many incidents did the RDS crew actually attend last year?*

*Would the fire engine be removed totally or could it stay there? It could be a kind of resilience appliance for this area*

*Do the cross-border resources incur a charge and how much would it be?*

182. However, participants' main concerns were around: the potential for simultaneous incidents and the impact of a loss of an appliance at such times; the impact of the proposal on LFRS's important

prevention work; and, importantly, the potential for second appliance delays due to distances, poor road networks and the loss of local firefighter knowledge:

*If we lose the second fire engine, what will happen if we have another incident while the main engine is elsewhere? (Oakham)*

*How would you manage a second incident within a day if the first pump was out? (Oakham)*

*Will the removal of the second engine impair prevention? (Oakham)*

*Our roads are dangerous around here and it's awkward for non-local crews to deal with RTCs in this area. The second engine supports our first engine and other support does not know our local area so well (Oakham)*

*Distance and types of road must be relevant! (Oakham)*

183. Oakham participants also noted that, unlike in most other areas, incident numbers are not decreasing in theirs. In light of this, they did not consider it prudent to remove the second appliance for such a comparatively small saving:

*The vision is to decrease the number of incidents, but that is not happening so the cut of £97,000 is not worth it (Oakham)*

*Your vision is to decrease the incidents, but in Oakham there has not yet been a decrease. (Oakham)*

184. Further arguments against the removal of Oakham's on-call engine included: the potentially increased risk for older Oakham residents if prevention work is decreased in the area; that it penalises hardworking and successful RDS staff; and that the plans of neighbouring FRSs are hereto unknown and potentially incompatible:

*Elderly people can't respond to smoke detectors like fit people can (Oakham)*

*If this is a quiet area it is because the staff does such a good job and so this proposal penalises them and does not reward them at all...but it does not save much money either (Oakham)*

*You don't know what Stamford's plans are. (Oakham)*

### **Balance of Opinion**

185. Opinion at the Oakham public forum was broadly divided: nine of the 26 participants were supportive of the proposed removal of the on-call fire engine from Oakham Fire Station; seven were opposed and there were a further nine 'don't knows'.

### **Forums with Staff**

186. The overwhelming majority of staff participants were against removing Oakham's on-call engine on the grounds that: firefighter and public safety would be put at risk; and it is a very important back-up resource for the first appliance at serious incidents (of which there are apparently many in the area):

*It is not worth the increased risk and it endangers the firefighters and the public (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*The second fire engine is very important for serious incidents because we need to commit as soon as possible. It is too stressful and pressured to wait for the slower second engine (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*During an RTC near the A1...the first pump attended with four people and it was very stressful dealing with the two casualties and the RDS pump made a big contribution (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Rutland has a disproportionate number of RTCs and injuries from them... (Middle Managers)*

187. The rurality of Oakham was also considered an important reason to retain both appliances there – and staff participants were very sceptical about LFRS's suggested four minute additional second engine response time. Further, it was suggested that the nearest supporting appliances are often unavailable while committed at other incidents or off-the-run – and that the possibility of cross-border cover may be jeopardised in future should Lincolnshire implement reductions at its border stations:

*This will affect the second engine response time by more than four minutes. It can take about 18 minutes to get to Oakham from Melton and the pressure of waiting for that second appliance can be unbearable (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*It would take a lot longer than specified for the second engine to get to Oakham from other stations. The first attending appliance will have no support for a long time (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*I doubt the 14 minutes for the second pumps is right (Middle Managers)*

*Uppingham has been off the run a lot more since the Resilience Team has gone...and when they're there you have to factor the five minutes to get to the station (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*The areas of support that are key to assist this station are lacking. There's no reference to the number of times these stations have been unavailable (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*It's linked with the availability from Lincolnshire; do we know their plans? (Middle Managers)*

188. Further, it was said that Oakham has a specialist rescue vehicle that is specific to its area and staff wondered what would happen to this if the proposed reduction is implemented:

*They have a Heavy Rescue Tender at Oakham so this will be affected by these proposals as well which isn't mentioned in the document. And it is situated at Oakham for very good reasons due to the nature of the area...that is not mentioned so what would happen to that when the RDS is not available to crew it. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

189. In light of the issues noted above, the savings to be achieved through this proposal were considered negligible compared to the loss of service that would result:

*That RDS pump is so important for back-up and for the relatively low cost of it, it just doesn't seem worth it (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*The savings are very small, just £97,000. They are not worth the increased risk and it endangers the firefighters and the public. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

### Balance of Staff Opinion

190. Almost all firefighters and support staff were opposed to the removal of the RDS fire engine from Oakham Fire Station.
191. However, in contrast most of the middle managers felt they could support the removal of the RDS appliance from Oakham Fire Station but, importantly, only on the proviso that this is not done in conjunction with other changes such as crewing level reductions and the disestablishment of the Resilience Team:

*This is linked to dropping to crews of four. It is possible if we stay as we are but otherwise not... (Middle Managers)*

*It's also linked to the Resilience Team who support RDS stations. The second appliance is already compromised and more so if we remove the Resilience Team. (Middle Managers)*

### Councillors' Forum

192. One Councillor from the Oakham area described it as a *Cinderella area...with reducing public services, out on a limb and neglected although we pay a high council tax*. As such, they did not wish to see the loss of another valued local resource and rejected the proposed removal of the on-call appliance.
193. Three of the other councillors also opposed the proposed change (and there was one 'don't know'). People's principle objections were around traffic risks on the nearby A1 and what they considered to be LFRS's unrealistic suggested second appliance response time from stations elsewhere – particularly given the area's difficult road networks:

*The A1 is a major risk factor in the area (Councillor)*

*Have calls to RTCs reduced? Oakham has nearby traffic risks from the A1 (Councillor)*

*The response times of 14 minutes are unrealistic; it will take longer to arrive from some of those places (Councillor)*

*The roads to the A1 have a lot of heavy goods vehicles using them through villages which slows down the traffic flows. (Councillor)*

### Balance of Councillors' Opinions

194. Almost all the councillors were opposed to the removal of the RDS fire engine from Oakham Fire Station.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

195. Only one of the 14 voluntary and business sector forum participants supported the proposed changes at Oakham Fire Station – of the remaining 13, seven were opposed and there were six 'don't knows'.
196. The main arguments against the removal of Oakham's on-call engine were around: possible second appliance response time delays and subsequent restrictions on what can be achieved by the first appliance in terms of 'offensive firefighting'; the growth and development of the area; firefighter welfare; and that the plans of neighbouring FRSs could prove incompatible in future:

*You cannot get from Uppingham to Oakham in 14 minutes (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*The second fire engine's arrival time is important because it's delay can mean the first fire engine is limited in how it reacts to particular incidents. Are there any responses you cannot do before the second fire engine arrives – like entering buildings for rescues? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*Are we reducing our 'offensive firefighting' with this change? The university would be concerned about this if there is a proposal to reduce that (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*There is huge growth taking place in Oakham; it is changing with big housing projections...so I'm unhappy about the Oakham proposal because it halves Oakham's current fire engines (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*Rutland is going to grow in terms of housing and traffic flows on the A47 (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*Will the cross-border cover be reduced if the relevant Stamford Lincolnshire fire engine is removed in a similar review there? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

### **Balance of Voluntary and Business Sector Opinion**

197. Only one of the voluntary and business sector participants supported the proposed changes at Oakham Fire Station – of the remaining 13, seven were opposed and there were six 'don't knows'.

## **Proposal E – Wigston Fire Station**

### **The Proposal**

198. LFRS proposes to change the duty system of the first fire engine at Wigston Fire Station from Wholetime to Wholetime Day Crewing Plus (DCP).

### **Forums with Members of the Public**

#### Arguments FOR the Introduction of Wholetime Day Crewing Plus at Wigston Fire Station

199. Those who endorsed the proposed introduction of DCP at Wigston Fire Station did so chiefly on the grounds of efficiency, practicality and feasibility. Also, the fact that the system has already been successfully operating at Oakham, Birstall and other fire stations was a persuasive factor for many:

*I think that this option is reasonable (Leicester City)*

*This option sounds practical (Wigston)*

*I believe it could work as it has been done in those other areas (Wigston)*

*This proposal is already working! (County-wide)*

200. The Wigston participants were further encouraged by the fact that the system is voluntary and not forced upon staff:

*On the basis that it is voluntary to sign up to this system and it has been shown to work safely elsewhere, I agree it would work. (Wigston)*



### Arguments AGAINST the Introduction of Wholetime Day Crewing plus at Wigston Fire Station

201. Some Wigston and Leicester City forum participants were concerned that this proposal may have an adverse effect on the work-life balance of affected staff, with many seeking clarification on whether family needs have been taken into consideration:

*Is this a family-friendly system? Have you taken that into account? (Wigston)*

*A lot of people don't work and live in the same area these days and the practicalities of getting a partner and children to a unit to stay at the accommodation could be difficult (Wigston)*

*Could the lack of family-friendliness be an issue? Taking one person out of the family unit for such a long period of time puts a lot of pressure on that family. (Leicester City)*

202. Some people also questioned whether there is any danger associated with a firefighter being on-call at night-time having worked a full shift during the day:

*It sounds an awful lot of hours that they would be working (Wigston)*

*I think it's potentially quite dangerous...they could be out on lengthy incidents, put their head down for five minutes and then be called out again (County-wide)*

*Is it not expecting too much for an individual who has had a busy day to work in the night as well? (Leicester City)*

203. Several Wigston attendees raised the issue of cost, particularly in relation to redundancy payments and capital financing for accommodation. With particular regard to the latter, there was some suggestion that 'saving to spend' is somewhat counterproductive in an economic climate where significant savings are required:

*We are concerned that redundancy payments may lessen the savings (Wigston)*

*We believe that the costs of new buildings to implement the new system will be taken from the savings. It's saving to spend, so what's the point? (Wigston)*

### **Balance of Opinion**

204. Members of the public at Wigston were somewhat divided over the proposed introduction of Day Crewing Plus at their local station. Overall, 13 were in agreement, but although only one person explicitly disagreed with the proposal, there were 10 'don't knows' on the grounds that people required more information about the system's implications in practice:

*It is well sold and on paper it sounds good, but I would like more information (Wigston)*

*I require more information to make an informed decision (Wigston)*

*We have limited information and there are no firefighters here to put their point of view. What will be the impact on people working? (Wigston)*

205. At the all-county forum though, 11 of the 16 participants were in favour, two were against and there were three don't knows – and there was unanimous agreement at one of the Leicester City sessions.

## Forums with Staff

206. Staff participants were concerned that a DCP system at Wigston could increase pressure on crews there and, importantly, negatively impact on both their safety and welfare, especially during major incidents and spate conditions:

*There could be an impact on their welfare (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*The Health and Safety for the crews is poor; it can be a big strain. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

Essentially it was said that:

*As a one-pump station they need to deal with serious incidents without much support so you need to consider the profile of incidents to look at what level of risk and complexity they involve. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

207. There are also, apparently, other issues specific to Wigston insofar as the station attends a high number of incidents and stand-bys:

*I'm at Oakham which is DCP but Wigston attends a lot more. I do DCP and I'm shattered all the time and I'd be worried about the welfare of staff working the system at a busier station (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*I'm against it purely on health and safety grounds, especially given the busy profile of the station (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*I'd like to ask if the call data covers all the calls they attend outside the station area? Wigston is in a strategic area where they might be needed for a range of duties like stand-by during their negative hours. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

208. Other issues and concerns around DCP more widely were: the apparently high sickness levels that result from it; its impact on Service-wide resilience; and the potentially high capital costs involved in providing suitable quality accommodation for firefighters working the system:

*Day Crewing Plus is by far the highest issue across the Service with regard to sickness so can it achieve what it sets out to achieve in light of sickness and operational burnout? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*We have more than half the wholtime stations on Day Crewing Plus which reduces resilience across the service (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*This would be the sixth station that goes to DCP and you can see the arguments for cost savings and the lack of impact for members of the public. But the people working it will be working very long hours and it does impact on overall resilience across the county. There may come a time when we don't have sufficient resources to deal with larger incidents and this may be a step too far (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*There would be a capital cost to set this system up (Middle Managers)*

*The public would find it counter-intuitive to build accommodation while making reductions. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

209. There was some discussion among the middle managers about the possibility of a day crewing only system at Wigston. Around half considered this feasible but others were concerned that it might reduce the availability of dual contract staff and jeopardise the back up support given by the station at night-time.

210. It was acknowledged that the system is popular with some firefighters, but this was not thought to be down to its attractiveness per se, but because of the financial benefits it offers. Further, uncertainty about what may be on offer at other stations is another apparent factor in why some people apply for DCP. This, it was said, does not result in a workforce with strong morale:

*Initially there was little interest here in Day Crewing Plus until it became pensionable*  
(Firefighters and Support Staff)

*The financial incentive is primarily the pension as an effect of the final three years earnings*  
(Firefighters and Support Staff)

*People feel like they're being forced into DCP because they don't know what they will be offered at another station. People need to be aware of the options available if they don't want to work that system...* (Firefighters and Support Staff)

211. One participant said that: *we need a middle way between 2-2-4 and DCP so that people who don't want DCP have another satisfactory option...for example, by offering extra hours as a compromise for those who don't want it* (Firefighters and Support Staff).

212. Finally, participants complained that there has never been a full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) for DCP:

*There has been no EIA on DCP so we question whether this is the right system.* (Firefighters and Support Staff)

### **Balance of Staff Opinion**

213. Though two members of the firefighters and support staff forum saw the merits of Day Crewing Plus at Wigston, almost all other participants were opposed to the proposed change.

214. The middle managers, though, were broadly supportive of the proposal.

### **Councillors' Forum**

215. All five councillors were undecided on Day Crewing Plus, primarily due to what they referred to as the *fatigue factor* for the firefighters working the system and the *loss of valuable, experienced people*. However, one said that *you could have more Day Crewing Plus stations instead of removing a whole fire engine* – suggesting that they saw at least some merits to the system.

### **Balance of Councillors' Opinion**

216. Overall, some councillors saw some merit in this proposal but were generally undecided.

### **Voluntary and Business Sector Forum**

217. Opinion was divided at the voluntary and business sector forum on the proposed introduction of Day Crewing Plus at Wigston Fire Station. Participants were chiefly concerned about the need to

adequately cater for local risks – and asked about firefighter welfare during spate conditions and the views of the FBU on the introduction of the system:

*This is one of the high risk areas with two nearby chemical plants and the M1 so these are risk factors long term (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*Suppose you had spate conditions...is there a minimum rest time then? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*What does the FBU think about Day Crewing Plus in terms of acceptability and safety? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

### **Balance of Voluntary and Business Sector Opinion**

218. The forum was divided on this proposal.

## **Disestablishment of the Wholetime Resilience Team**

### **The Proposal**

219. LFRS proposes to disestablish its Wholetime Resilience Team.

### **Forums with Members of the Public**

#### Lack of Awareness

220. Participants across the forums with members of the public were unanimously unaware of the LFRS Resilience Team and were keen for some clarification of its functions and the implications of its loss:

*There's too little information available. Why did you have it in the first place? Will losing it make a big difference in practice? (Wigston)*

*We don't actually understand what this team do (County-wide)*

*What is their current role and tasks? Do you pay them? (Wigston)*

#### Arguments FOR the disestablishment of the Resilience Team

221. After discussion, the key arguments of those in favour of the proposal were that it would provide feasible and safe economies without major visible changes at any particular fire station. It seemed a costless efficiency saving.

#### Arguments AGAINST the disestablishment of the Resilience Team

222. In discussion, concerns were raised around disestablishing the Resilience Team, which was considered by many to be an asset too valuable to lose. People were predominantly concerned about the implications of losing the cover provided by the team to the county's on-call fire stations:

*Retained firefighters will surely still need support (Leicester City)*

*If the retained staff still need the help then they should keep the Resilience Team (Oakham)*

*I'd be worried that there would be enough coverage there to make sure the on-call engines go out. I do think there might be a need for some (County-wide)*

*When you have sickness etc. isn't that when the Resilience Team comes into play? (Wigston)*

*You haven't got zero on-call stations so doing away from the whole team may be a step too far (County-wide)*

*It will have a bad impact on the remaining on-call firefighters. It will put more pressure on them. (Loughborough)*

Further, it was said that: *if you're reducing to smaller wholetime teams under DCP, you might need the Resilience Team to cover them sometimes. (Wigston)*

### Balance of Opinion

223. Following discussion and clarification, nine of the 24 Wigston participants were in favour of disbanding the Resilience Team, three were not and exactly half were 'don't knows' on the grounds of insufficient information. The split was similar at the all-county-forum, with seven in favour, three opposed and six 'don't knows'.

### Forums with Staff

224. Firefighters and support staff clearly value the Resilience Team for the cover it provides to on-call stations, which often have difficulties recruiting and retaining operational staff:

*They provided a massive amount of cover and this has increased year on year. It was necessary due to the lack of availability on on-call stations (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

225. Participants also stressed the future importance of the Resilience Team if the proposal to crew all fire engines with four as standard is implemented:

*I am worried about the impact on wholetime staff, especially if we have crews of four as normal practice (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Combined with 4-4 it will result in no resilience across the service and any sickness will have a big impact. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

226. Several people said that the consultation data presented was misleading and that demand for the Resilience Team to prevent on-call fire engines from going 'off-the-run' is greater than ever. They were also concerned about how demand at on-call stations will be covered in the light of reduced crewing levels and switch crewing at wholetime stations:

*The data implies the need has reduced when the actual demand for the Resilience Team has increased. How can we cover stations properly to stop them going off the run? The graphs are misleading (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Demand for the Resilience Team has actually increased and how is the cover going to be provided if the team is gone. It says it will be covered but how if we're reducing crewing levels and with switch crewing? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

227. Finally, operational staff claimed that the Resilience Team has already been disbanded in some areas, which has apparently correlated with a reduction in on-call availability:

*Do we know the impact on the RDS being off the run while the Resilience Team has been out at Southern...the unavailability of the RDS has risen in that time. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

228. Though they questioned the potential impact of using the Resilience Team differently on RDS availability, the middle managers typically supported its disestablishment on the grounds that it is an expensive resource that provides limited cover:

*They only provide cover Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm but they are expensive. (Middle Managers)*

### Balance of Opinion

229. Only one member of the firefighters and support staff team supported the disestablishment of the Resilience Team, and then only if LFRS has sufficient number of staff generally:

*Stations should be staffed correctly in the first place so in principle I can support this... I don't mind not having this team as long as we have enough people to crew our pumps. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

230. The overwhelming majority (28) of the 32 middle managers supported the disestablishment of the Resilience Team.

### Councillors' Forum

231. All five councillors were undecided on disbanding the Resilience Team – although one felt it should be considered. Their primary concerns were around: firefighter redundancies and the need to utilise natural wastage where possible; and the potential for on-call stations to be 'off-the-run' more frequently as a result of the change:

*What happens to Bilston if the Resilience Team is dispensed with and only three RDS attend? (Councillor)*

*How many of these posts could be saved by natural wastage? (Councillor)*

### Balance of Councillors' Opinions

232. The councillors were undivided on this issue.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

233. Eight of the 14 voluntary and business sector forum participants endorsed the disestablishment of the Resilience Team, whereas three rejected it and there were three 'don't knows'. Those who supported the change argued that:

*Management needs to be able to manage as required within the budget. (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

234. There was some concern that aspects of the overall changes may make this proposal undesirable - and that the significant RTC risks on the M1 may require a need for occasional fill-in firefighters (Voluntary and Business Sector). As a compromise, it was suggested that LFRS could establish a smaller team that could also undertake some other functions.

## Balance of Voluntary and Business Sector Opinions

235. The forum broadly endorsed this proposal, by a clear majority.

## Increasing Council Tax

### The Discussion

236. LFRS explained to participants that even if all of the above proposals are accepted, it will still be faced with an outstanding budget deficit of £1.8m. As such, the Service sought people's views on whether they would be prepared to pay more for their Fire and Rescue Service – and on the following council tax options:

No increase at all

A 1.99% yearly increase

A one-off £5 increase with no further increases or a one-off £5 increase with a 1.99% yearly increase

A one-off £10 increase with no further increases or a one-off £10 increase with a 1.99% yearly increase.

## Forums with Members of the Public

### Arguments FOR Increasing Council Tax

237. Many participants across the six forums supported an increase in LFRS's council tax precept, suggesting that what they saw as small incremental increases would make little difference to their income in practice, but could make a significant difference to the Service's finances:

*They are reasonable amounts of money. It's like pocket money! (Leicester City)*

*We would be happy to pay the £5 and 1.99%, because it doesn't seem like that much. (Loughborough)*

238. Indeed, some participants at Oakham recommended that a one-off payment of £20 might be acceptable, in light of the revenue it would generate for LFRS:

*You should go further and consider a £20 one-off! (Oakham)*

239. If council tax increases are proposed, it was said that they should be expressed in monetary rather than percentage terms so that residents can see how little extra they will be paying in actuality:

*You need to go down the detail when you ask people – not just percentages. Getting the Council to explain it in plain English is a problem (Loughborough)*

*The message has to be got across that it's not that much. (Loughborough)*

### Arguments AGAINST Increasing Council Tax

240. In contrast to the above, there were many arguments were made against significant council tax rises – chiefly that they may be unaffordable for many residents and that the cost of a referendum (that would be difficult to win) would be prohibitive for the Service. The tone of the discussions in Leicester was very different indeed to that in Oakham – for example:

*We don't want an increase in council tax because people are increasingly under strain to pay taxes (Leicester City)*

*It's not fair to punish the taxpayers...it's not our fault that the Fire and Rescue Service has less money (Leicester City)*

*Where exactly would the money for a referendum come from? (Leicester City)*

241. Further, the Loughborough forum suggested that the additional council tax generated through new housing developments should render large increases unnecessary:

*What about housing development? ...New houses mean more council tax (Loughborough)*

*The amount of new housing developments in the area will make a difference to this surely. (Loughborough)*

### **Balance of Opinion**

242. At Wigston, the idea of no council tax increases at all was wholly rejected: participants favoured either annual increases by 1.99% (13) or a larger increase subject to a referendum (10). Oakham participants also rejected the idea of no increases: indeed, they typically favoured a larger £10 one-off increase followed by year-on-year increases of 1.99%.
243. At the all-county and Leicester City forums, there was a balance of opinion towards not increasing council tax at all (7 of 16 and 9 of 16 respectively), with fewer endorsing annual increases of 1.99 (5 of 16 and 4 of 16 respectively). Very few indeed favoured larger increases.

### **Forums with Staff**

244. A majority of staff felt that LFRS should raise its council tax to a level that is more in line with similar services. Indeed, there was a sense that the Service should go for more rather than less:

*If you're going to have a referendum you might as well go for broke! (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

245. Those who opposed a council tax increase did so because they considered it unfair to gather extra revenue from the public in addition to implementing the aforementioned proposals – and even those who supported a rise (as taxpayers rather than members of staff) felt they - and their families and friends - would only be prepared to pay it if the extra revenue is used to mitigate the need for service reductions:

*It's not right to ask for a council tax increase if all these proposals will take place anyway (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*We can't sell this to the people of Leicestershire (that the council tax will go towards avoiding redundancies etc.) if there's a chance that some of this money won't go towards that. At*



*present it's very ambiguous...I need to be able to tell my friends and family that any extra they are paying in council tax will go towards saving firefighters' jobs (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*If we did achieve an increase in council tax would it go to staving off redundancies or would it go elsewhere? As a council tax payer I would only be happy to pay more if it went to saving jobs... (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

### Balance of Staff Opinion

246. Due to the length of time spent on the main proposals there was less time to consider council tax issues in depth. There seemed to be a range of opinions, but one recurrent theme was that it would not be worthwhile increasing council tax unless doing so could avoid all the service cuts.

### Councillors' Forum

247. The councillors supported a £5 to £10 LFRS precept increase: four leaned towards the former and one towards the latter on the grounds that larger rises may be unaffordable for many residents:

*Going up by £10 would be unpopular! (Councillor)*

*The Fire and Rescue Service is an insurance policy but the parishioners would not be happy with a big increase (Councillor)*

*There is some rural poverty in Rutland as well as some well-off people. (Councillor)*

248. One, though, said they would favour an increase of £15 as a one-off for the precept (Councillor).

### Balance of Councillors' Opinions

249. The councillors supported an increase in LFRS's council tax precept.

### Voluntary and Business Sector Forum

250. The voluntary and business sector forum generally supported a £5 to £10 LFRS precept increase on the grounds that:

*You are going to have to ask for more funding at some stage so it's best to do it progressively as soon as possible. (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

251. One participant, though, said:

*We're on good incomes; it might not be the same in the City (Voluntary and Business Sector).*

252. It was also said that LFRS must enter into better and more regular dialogue with its communities:

*...Because they are willing to pay more to be sure of getting additional and better services (Voluntary and Business Sector).*

### Balance of Voluntary and Business Sector Opinion

253. The voluntary and business sector forum broadly supported increasing in LFRS's council tax precept, though some had reservations based upon people's ability to pay.

## Some General Issues

### Forums with Members of the Public

254. Though there was understanding of the need to make reductions in the current financial climate and to better match resources to demand, this was tempered by concern about having sufficient resources to cope with large-scale incidents – what might be called the ‘What if?’ question:

*All of the proposals we have talked about involve a loss of wholetime roles and although we have been assured that there is enough resilience in the system to draw on to cover sickness, holiday, compassionate leave etc. this is a lot of staff to lose and that worries me. So for example, if there is a lot of sickness due to a flu outbreak, who do you draw on if you’re paring down your staff so much? (County-wide forum)*

255. There were also concerns that staff reductions will result in less fire prevention being undertaken, though these were allayed at Loughborough through reassurance that this would not be the case:

*We value the work firefighters do in schools and public education (Wigston)*

*We are reassured by the fact that education is not going to be affected. We are happy that people separate from this are still going to be going into schools and demonstrating smoke alarms. (Loughborough)*

256. People observed that the reductions appear to be primarily among front-line operational staff – and this was an issue for some participants, who would prefer to see savings made through reducing administrative and managerial positions:

*Look at the support staff and back-office staff rather than the highly-trained and highly-skilled front-line staff (Wigston)*

*Managerial reduction is a good idea. Is that on the cards? (County-wide)*

*Will the management positions be reduced; they should be! (Wigston)*

257. Finally, there was frustration that the proposals are driven by the need to make financial savings rather than an attempt to improve the quality of service provided by LFRS – and concern about the implications of the suggested changes for staff morale:

*I totally appreciate the dilemma but this whole exercise is all about saving money and not about the Fire Service or the firefighters. However much you couch that in voluntary redundancies, natural wastage and redeployment...but you are going to get compulsory redundancies and a lot of unhappy people (Wigston)*

### Forums with Members of Staff

258. It was argued that, while demand for LFRS’s services is reducing across Leicestershire, risk is not - and that resources should be based on the latter, not the former. Further, staff were concerned that risk is being shifted to the front-line firefighters and that this should be carefully considered when planning future resources:

*Demand is reducing but actual risk is increasing with more buildings (such as the expansion of the University at Loughborough) and we base our resources on risk not demand. And it's not necessarily the case that new properties are safer...timber framed properties especially (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*I think the risk has increased in real terms re cars on the roads, number of buildings, population etc. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Risk is increasing; it's demand that is reducing. The reduction in demand should not correspond to a reduction in the number of appliances available to deal with that risk (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*It's a shift in risk rather than a decrease or increase...it shifts the risk from the members of the public to the firefighters when you reduce the resources and that is unacceptable. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

259. There was concern about the use of the term 'incident' within the consultation document insofar as it refers exclusively to numbers. Some staff members claimed that the number of incidents is secondary to time spent at incidents and their severity and that this should be reflected:

*'Incidents' is a meaningless statement. It could include false alarms so a reduction could involve reductions to those, whereas others like fires and RTCs could have increased. And there is no indication as to the length and seriousness of these incidents...we have to consider how much time we spend at each incident as many small incidents can swallow up resources. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*It's not about the number of incidents it's the severity. The few we've had that have been bloody big jobs with very big financial loss attached to them. If we haven't got the weight of attack then the financial implications could be massive (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*A lot of work is being done to reduce calls, but we have to take account of the potential severity of jobs; I worry that some incidents might be more severe. (Middle Managers)*

260. The fact that many of the reductions are focused in the rural hinterland of Leicester City was a cause for concern insofar as incidents there can be more serious both in terms of their initial impact and ultimate outcome (the latter because of the reduced weight of attack to tackle them in their early stages):

*A Road Traffic Collision in a city centre is more likely to be a low speed shunt than in the rural areas of the county where there are high speed, high impact shunts. That lack of weight of attack is going to more devastating out there... (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*There's a focus on quantity of calls not quality of calls. For example, if there's an incident in the City you can hit it with a lot of resources very quickly. Out in the hinterland the weight of attack is likely to be less and that's where a lot of these cuts are focused. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

261. Some staff complained about the consultation process, most notably that it was not as inclusive as it should have been in terms of the number and timing of deliberative sessions – and that operational staff were not included in discussions about the challenges, proposals and viable alternatives at an earlier stage:

*The process is not as inclusive as it could have been. The meetings are being held on one date and from nine until five. This excludes RDS, most of whom work during the day and the people who are working on shift (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*We need more meetings for those members of staff who haven't been able to attend today (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*We're disappointed that we haven't been involved in any discussions about viable alternatives earlier on...it would have been a hell of a lot easier to understand these proposals if we'd had a discussion earlier. The proposals have been laid down and that lack of early discussion has been disappointing...it would have helped us understand the pitfalls and the stresses we are under a lot better. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

262. As reported above, participants at the firefighter and support staff forums were firmly opposed to LFRS's proposals and front-line cuts in general:

*The audience you've got here don't believe there should be any front-line cuts...the money can be found in different ways. (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

263. In terms of 'different ways' to achieve savings, the following were suggested:

Reducing non-frontline firefighter costs

*Jobs that have been done by firefighters like vehicle maintenance and administration are now being done by others...give them back (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*Cut community safety and give the roles back to the firefighters (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

Reducing station manager posts

*Review the posts of those who retire. Have a station manager for three stations rather than one each. We are top-heavy and could reduce posts if people are due to retire (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

Looking systematically at shift systems to identify efficiencies

Sharing premises with other partners

Examining land on fire station sites to establish whether parts could be sold off for other uses

Renting out community rooms in fire stations

*We've got nice community rooms; rent them out and charge people. I know they're pennies and it won't be a big amount but every little counts (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

Job sharing

Improving stations' environmental credentials

*Have we looked at solar power and wind power and how economic some of our older stations are to run? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

264. The middle managers also suggested that LFRS must change its AFA policy to reduce unwanted attendances:

*We shouldn't attend unless there's a 999 call. We attend many pointless AFAs when we should keep the resources at the stations. (Middle Managers)*

265. The managers were also concerned about maintaining the balance of IRMP insofar as:

*It's all about the balance of IRMP; we need to continue prevention and protection, which must be targeted effectively (Middle Managers).*

266. Finally, the prospect of a merger with one or more neighbouring FRSs was raised and supported by firefighter and support staff, who questioned why it has not been explored and pursued – even in relation to sharing only back-office and management functions:

*Merger would clearly be a viable alternative; what are the key reasons for dismissing the idea of a merger with neighbouring services and going down the route of reducing services? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*We should be very willing to explore every opportunity given the dire situation we are in. Have we done enough? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

*There were no hurdles to prevent us rushing into bed on fire control so how does that not apply to sharing and merging with regard to management and support services? (Firefighters and Support Staff)*

### **Councillors' Forum**

267. The councillors were concerned about the general health and safety of the firefighters in the context of all these changes – though they also recognised that savings must be made.

### **Voluntary and Business Sector Forum**

268. The voluntary and business sector desired clarification on whether LFRS has made or is proposing to make savings to its 'back-office' functions and if so, what these would be:

*These are all for front line services. Are you considering savings in support and back-office functions? (Voluntary and Business Sector)*

*It is important to know that back-office savings are being made as a context for these matters. (Voluntary and Business Sect*



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