



**Harry Brant Brigade Secretary** | Leicestershire  
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Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Nicholas Rushton CC

C/O Members Secretariat

Combined Fire Authority  
 County Hall  
 Glenfield  
 Leicester  
 LE3 8RA

Dear Councillor Rushton and all members of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority,

This is an open letter on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union to express our concerns regarding Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which is out for consultation, to the Combined Fire Authority. Our concerns encompass various aspects that impact the safety and effectiveness of the service, as well as the well-being of our dedicated firefighters and members of the public.

**Issues Within CRMP:**

- **Night Cover at Castle Donington Fire Station:** We are troubled by the plan to facilitate night cover at Castle Donington Fire Station by moving personnel from other fire stations. This approach raises questions about resource allocation, reduction in night cover in Loughborough and will also cause wellbeing issues for on station personnel. There is no detail in how this will be facilitated, no details around how crew will be made up. This is a great concern.
- **An Increase in Water Rescue Resources:** The Fire Brigades Union has long argued that response to water-based incidents should be included within the responsibilities of a Firefighter, however this is not currently within the role of a Firefighter as no

agreement with the Fire Brigades Union has been agreed for response to these incident types within the rolemap of a Firefighter. We are concerned about where the resources are coming from for the additional water resources that are proposed within the CRMP.

- **Skilled Drivers:** We note a lack of skilled drivers at the firefighter level service wide. This deficiency can hinder emergency response capabilities and impacts appliance's ability to be on the run. We are aware of the services strategy to attempt to increase these numbers, however in the short-term, current drivers are missing out on not being part of Breathing Apparatus teams. This will result in skills fading, driver fatigue and decline in wellbeing.
- **Positive Industrial Relations –** We note within the CRMP the intentions from the service to build positive Industrial Relations and the Fire Brigades Union welcome this approach. Positive industrial relations with recognised Trade Unions are paramount to progress for all affected stakeholders.

#### **Issues not addressed in CRMP:**

- There are several aspects not addressed in the CRMP, including the establishment profile for safe-to-command junior officers and emergency response drivers. We seek clarification on how these important matters will be handled and our own members be championed and developed accordingly.
- **Self-Rostering Shift Systems:** The introduction of self-rostering shift systems raises concerns about potential shortfalls and their impact on primary carers. We urge a comprehensive assessment of the impact of such shift systems on the well-being of firefighters and the service's overall effectiveness.
- **Service Inefficiencies and Direct Entry at Station Manager level:** The exclusion of Direct Entry in the CRMP raises concerns about safety and cost. Inexperienced individuals commanding complex incidents may compromise firefighter and public safety. We urge a re-evaluation of this decision. Further to this, currently, LFRS have 2 Senior Managers who provide no cover at Strategic Level and with Direct Entry 2 Station Managers who will provide no operational cover for 3 years of their training period. The inefficiency in this process rather than promoting from within the rank and file appears to be a waste of taxpayers' money that could be used elsewhere.
- **Wildfires and Flooding Incidents:** The plan does not adequately address the challenges facing firefighters during increasing wildfires and flooding incidents, including prolonged exposure to harsh conditions without the correct resources and PPE.
- **Crewing Levels:** We are concerned about the potential reduction of crewing levels on new Variable Response Vehicles (VRVs) and its impact on firefighter safety and

operational effectiveness. We don't want the vehicles' ability to be crewed with just 2 people, down from the usual 4, or the ideal number of 5 to become the norm.

- Moving Resources to cover short falls in 'on-call' cover – Not mentioned within the document is the frequent covering of essential station areas, not limited to but most frequently Market Harborough, by 'City' resources. We urge the service to look at improvement of recruitment and retention of our On-Call Stations and urge caution at the continued approach of taking resources from the city to cover these short falls.
- Response Times: The increase in response times to life risk incidents from 10 to 12 minutes is worrisome. The 10-minute attendance at life risk at Primary Building fires and an increase to 12-minutes at all other life risk incidents, does this not a different priority on different incident types where lives are at risk?

In summary, a lot of these issues can be resolved with an increase in funding to the service from local sources and central government. It is evident the brutal impacts that cuts are having on all public services up and down the country and is truly apparent within the fire service. Not only are these cuts impacting our previous workload but they have also increased workloads coming in from partner agencies such as the Police and East Midlands Ambulance Service. A lot of time and resources are spent assisting those agencies at incidents. We urge our Chief Fire Officer and the CFA to lobby for adequate funding for the Fire Sector which will only bring positive outcomes to the communities we protect and serve.

We trust that you will take these concerns seriously and consider the implications of the CRMP on the safety and well-being of both firefighters and the wider public. We are open to dialogue and collaboration to ensure the best possible outcomes for all stakeholders.

Thank you for your attention to these critical matters. We look forward to your response and the opportunity to discuss these concerns further.

Yours sincerely,

Harry Brant  
Brigade Secretary  
On behalf of Leicestershire Fire Brigades Union

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