



# DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

<b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>	DSFRA/11/11
<b>MEETING</b>	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY (Ordinary Meeting)
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	27 MAY 2011
<b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>	RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM CONSULTATION ON THE DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY CORPORATE PLAN 2011/12 TO 2013/14 AND EIGHT KEY PROPOSALS
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<p>(a) <i>that the outcome of the consultation on the Draft Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2013/14, as summarised in this report and detailed in the appended consultation report, be noted</i></p> <p>(b) <i>that the recommendations associated with the eight key proposals, as amended where appropriate to reflect the outcomes of the consultation, be considered for approval.</i></p>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<p>This report presents a summary of the results and recommendations from the consultation on the Draft Corporate Plan 2011/12 – 2013/14 and eight key proposals. The consultation took place over a twelve week period between 17/01/2011 and 10/04/2011. The questionnaire results show that most respondents agree with implementing the eight key proposals. Written comments received from the surveys, letters and emails show that there are some concerns relating to specific proposals. An underlying message from the results is that some respondents are not aware that the business support functions of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service are a focus for identifying efficiencies and improvement.</p>
<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>	As indicated in the report.
<b>EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b>	

<b>APPENDICES</b>	A Detailed consultation report (enclosed separately with this agenda and page numbered separately)
<b>LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>	<p>Report DSFRA/10/26 considered by the meeting of the Authority held on 16 December 2010.</p> <p>Report CSCPC/11/2 considered by the meeting of the Committee held on 13 January 2011.</p>

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 On 17 January 2011 consultation commenced on the Draft Strategy 'Towards 2014', Draft Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2013/14 and eight key proposals. The twelve week consultation period closed on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

1.2 The consultation on the Draft Corporate Plan and eight key proposals was set against the context of the public sector finances and our approach to meet the anticipated budget shortfall. The following information was shared with staff earlier this year and provides the context for the paper that follows.

*"The Government have stated that the Fire & Rescue Service as a whole will receive a 25% reduction in Government grant over the next four years as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review for 2011/2014.*

*Whilst we know what our (DSFRS) settlement is for 2011 and 2012 (1% reduction in year 1 and slight growth of 2% in year 2), we do not know what our settlement will be for 2013/14 or 2014/15. As a result, we have had a good first two year settlement compared with other Fire & Rescue Services but are anticipating a far worse settlement for the subsequent two years.*

*The Government have said that they will 'back load' grant reductions for the Fire & Rescue Service to give us time to make arrangements to reduce costs. The total figures for the whole of the Fire & Rescue Service are 6% for the first two years, meaning that in 2013 and 2014, 19% still needs to be found from the FRS budget as a whole (almost an average of 10% in each year).*

*Therefore, we need to start to make changes now to avoid having to find what could equate to £3.5m in 2013 and a further £3.5m in 2014. This does not include inflation or other budget pressures.*

*The Minister has outlined the following areas where he believes efficiencies could be made:*

- *Flexible staffing arrangements*
- *Improved sickness levels*
- *Pay restraint and recruitment freezes*
- *Shared services/ back office functions*
- *Improved procurement*
- *Sharing Chief Officers and other senior staff*
- *Voluntary amalgamations between Fire & Rescue Authorities*

*These will all be explored further and many of these are already included within the proposals that follow.*

*It should be noted that this issue is not of our making. However, we have a responsibility and an obligation to manage the resultant impact effectively and with your help we can do just that. Moving forward together. Shaping our service for the future.*

*We have no plans to close fire stations or reduce fire engines as a result of these budget reductions.*

*We believe there will be no need for large scale compulsory redundancies but we will need staff to be flexible in their roles and, in some cases, move to different roles if this is to be achievable. We may seek to establish levels of interest in voluntary redundancy, flexible retirement and early retirement – evidence to date suggests that staff welcome this approach.*

*We will continue to crew front line fire engines appropriately and meet our emergency response standards which remain unchanged.*

*We will continue to lobby Government for a fairer allocation mechanism of the 'fire' pot of money, in particular we want to see a 'sparsity factor' included.*

*We plan to meet our budget shortfall through:*

- *Improving efficiency*
- *Reducing spending and;*
- *Generating income.*

*Improving efficiency by:*

- *Better management and control of spending and suppliers*
- *Sharing managers and operational/business support functions*
- *Changing how we respond to co-responder calls for the ambulance service*
- *Providing better targeted prevention advice*
- *Buying slightly smaller fire engines for relevant areas*
- *Commencing discussions with staff as to how we can make the existing shift system work better rather than imposing a new shift pattern/start finish times*
- *Savings from reductions in the senior management team in 2010*
- *Managing with fewer operational and non operational staff (standardising crewing levels in Somerset & Devon, considering Day Crewed Plus and improving business processes)*

*Reducing costs:*

- *Risk managed approach to reduce spend*
- *Not attending repeated false alarms from the same premises and/or charge for repeated defective alarm system call outs*
- *Ending the Regional Management Board (a political body)*
- *Reducing spending by Councillors*
- *Pay restraint (recognising national conditions of service apply)*
- *Using money saved in 2010/11 as a result of tight budget management (ring fenced reserves).*

*Generating income:*

- *Selling training and other services to public sector and private sector companies*

*Given what we know at this time, these are our intended actions to meet the budget shortfall. Our energies have been directed to date on avoiding closure of fire stations, reducing the number of fire engines and not making compulsory redundancies. At this stage, we believe that with flexibility from staff and trade unions we can meet the budget shortfall without resorting to these less palatable changes."*

1.3 The type of savings we are progressing include;

- *robust budget management and control of non essential spending on non salary budgets which could generate £1.5m;*
- *increased income generation could generate over £1m;*
- *procurement improvements and efficiencies could realise over £1m;*
- *non uniform staff reductions could equate to over £500k.*

However, we will still need to consider changes that affect staff given that this equates to approx 85% of all costs. We therefore want to continue to work with staff to develop future options.

### ***Consultation Approach***

- 1.4 As in previous years, the annual requirement to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) has been integrated with the production of the Corporate Plan. Normally the document is published before 31 March, but as the budget announcement was delayed towards the end of 2010, and because of the nature of the proposals being put forward for consultation, it was agreed that publication of the joint IRMP / Corporate Plan should be delayed to allow for a full consultation to be undertaken.
- 1.5 The consultation invited views and opinions on the draft strategy and draft corporate plan but specifically sought opinion on eight key proposals included in the plan. These key proposals were:
- Co-responding
  - Targeted prevention services
  - Targeted protection services
  - Light Rescue Pumps (LRPs)
  - Cost recovery for repeat faulty automatic fire alarms (AFAs)
  - Crewing arrangements (Including consideration of Day Crewed Plus)
  - Standardisation of crewing arrangements across Devon and Somerset; and
  - Commercial activity.
- 1.6 These proposals were specifically consulted on as they were considered to have most influence on changing aspects of our service.
- 1.7 This report presents a high level summary of the key consultation results together with the recommendations for consideration by the Authority. A full detailed report on the consultation is set out in Appendix A to this report which is enclosed separately with the agenda for this meeting.

## **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY**

- 2.1 On 13 January 2011 the Community Safety and Corporate Planning Committee approved the consultation approach for engaging with key stakeholders. In accordance with the agreed approach staff involvement was focused around specific engagement workshops held for those proposals where staff are most likely to be affected. These workshops gave staff opportunity to informally ask questions and feedback their opinions.
- 2.2 Key stakeholders were written to directly, and the consultation was also promoted in local newspapers, outgoing emails and social media (Facebook and Twitter) to increase public awareness. A consultation document and questionnaire were developed specifically for capturing opinion on the eight key proposals.
- 2.3 Dedicated pages on the internet site provided links to the key documents (the consultation document, published Equality Impact Assessments, the full Draft Corporate Plan and the Draft Strategy) and gave details of how people could respond to the proposals.
- 2.4 Respondents had the following opportunities to respond:
- the Service website,

- telephone,
- email,
- fax
- by writing to the Consultation Officer at Service Headquarters.
- hard copy or online questionnaire survey

2.5 The online survey could be accessed both through the front page of the Service’s external website and through the links attached to the stakeholder emails and social media posts.

2.6 In discussion with the Service’s Communities and Workplace Equality section, links were provided on the Service website to facilitate the translation of the website and consultation documents online.

2.7 In total the consultation attracted 328 responses as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of survey responses

Surveys – Paper	117
Surveys – Online	179
Letters / Emails	32
Total Responses	328

2.8 In response to the data collected, both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to analyse the responses received.

2.9 In the presentation of the qualitative results the number of times a particular theme was commented on is identified in brackets after each comment. This is provided to give an indication of the frequency of opinion.

### **SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY PROPOSAL 1: CHANGING HOW WE RESPOND TO CO-RESPONDER CALLS FOR THE AMBULANCE SERVICE**

***(Note: Co-responding schemes are in place at 19 of our fire stations where firefighters, trained to deal with some medical emergencies respond to medical incidents at the request of the Ambulance Service).***

3.1 Key stakeholders were asked to comment on a proposal where appropriately trained firefighters are sent directly to the medical emergency from their home address or place of work. The current arrangement requires the Ambulance Service control room to contact the Fire Service control room first, whereby up to five firefighters will be mobilised to attend the fire station to collect a suitable vehicle and they then proceed to the incident. We considered an alternative option where only one firefighter would attend after being alerted directly by the South West Ambulance Service.

3.2 The results of the online survey were positive and showed support for the proposal. Up to 288 respondents answered questions on this proposal. Overall 67.7% (195) of respondents agreed that the proposal should be implemented. Those who disagreed or did not know how they felt were asked to provide additional information as to why they held their opinion. The key reasons for disagreement were:

- There should be separate fire and medical services; co-responding should complement the fire and rescue primary role and not duplicate the role of paramedics (20)
- There should not be a single or lone responder; currently co-responders are sent in pairs for safety and to deliver better care (18)
- Changes should only be made to save lives more effectively and to improve the services delivered. Why change the existing system which works well? (16)
- There may be issues around staffing, resilience and recruiting fire-fighters. Any new staff would result in increased training and salary costs. (14)

3.3 Five key stakeholders provided comments to Key Proposal 1 by letter/email. These responses included:

- concerns that the Fire Authority would be exposed to considerable costs;
- that the areas of responsibility between the two services [fire&rescue and ambulance] are not clearly defined;
- concerns that rural fire cover would suffer; and
- that sending only one fire fighter is not enough for an emergency.

3.4 The Fire Brigades Union expressed concern that the “fire service should not be a sticking plaster for the ambulance service.” In addition the union sought clarification on the following points:

- insurance for employee when undertaking the role of co-responder
- crewing of appliances - never restricted due to co-responder only being available for medical calls
- recruitment of extra firefighters - this process can take in excess of a year, so how would DSFRS manage the additional pressure on crewing during the period of recruitment?"

3.5 The Retained Firefighters’ Union considered that only having one person responding was unacceptable. It also thought that taking a van between the place of work and home may have issues.

***Recommendation 1***

3.6 The Retained Firefighters’ Union (which is the only trade union representing fire-fighters working on a co-responding basis) has engaged positively and proactively with both the Authority and Service Managers on this issue and recognises the need to reduce costs whilst maintaining or improving public safety. In addition, staff working on the busiest co-responder fire stations have actively engaged with the staff workshops and as such an agreed position where both time and money is saved can be presented to Members of the Authority based on:

- Three firefighters to be alerted
- Two firefighters to attend co-responder emergencies
- Crews to be alerted directly by South West Ambulance Service
- Harmonisation of payment rates at fire fighter level
- This arrangement to be reviewed in one year’s time

3.7 **It is recommended to the Authority that this arrangement be adopted.**

4. **SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY PROPOSAL 2:  
PROVIDING MORE TARGETED PREVENTION SERVICES AND ADVICE**

4.1 Key stakeholders were asked to comment on a proposal to achieve a better outcome for the community by delivering a more targeted service to those most vulnerable and at risk. The number of prevention services delivered directly to the community will be reduced, but more time and effort will be spent on ensuring that the services that are delivered are targeted at those members of the community that will benefit most from our help. To achieve this, it will be necessary to work closely with our key partners to ensure that our targeting is effective. The service's commitment to provide accessible community safety information to the wider public will not change. A benefit of this proposal is that it would also release up to £100,000 for re-investment into community safety.

4.2 The results of the online survey were positive and showed support for the proposal. Up to 277 respondents answered questions on this proposal. Overall 71.8% (199) of respondents agreed that the proposal should be implemented. Those who disagreed or did not know how they felt were asked to provide additional information as to why they held their opinion. The key reasons for these responses were:

- Proactively educating and informing the public is very important and should not be reduced. (12)
- Improvements shouldn't need any additional funding (especially if other services are cut) (9)
- Concentrating on a smaller group of people adversely affects the wider population. Why limit help? (8)
- Most 'vulnerable', as defined in the proposal, are least likely to listen to advice and do not deserve special attention (7)

4.3 Five key stakeholders provided comments to Key Proposal 2 by letter/email. These responses included:

- support for targeting our prevention service to the most vulnerable people;
- recognition of the importance of partnership working;
- questions as to how the most vulnerable groups would be identified;
- concerns and opportunities around future funding; and
- that existing DSFRS youth prevention and home safety check initiatives should be retained.

4.4 The Retained Firefighters' Union agreed with the proposal.

4.5 The Fire Brigades Union welcomed the targeted approach but asked whether the Service intended to stop home fire safety visits to the elderly and stated that it could not agree with the proposal to spend the money saved from this change, £100,000, in services that should be covered by other services - drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and abuse and mental health issues. It was felt that this money should be re-invested in recruiting 3 wholetime firefighters per year.



## ***Recommendation 2***

Having listened to the results of the consultation it is recommended that the proposal is implemented with the following criteria:

Wide communication is undertaken with stakeholders to explain how the vulnerable groups are identified

4.6 ***It is recommended to the Authority that this arrangement be adopted.***

## **SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY PROPOSAL 3: PROVIDING MORE TARGETED PROTECTION SERVICES AND ADVICE**

- 5.1 Key stakeholders were asked to comment on the proposal to expand a system of fire safety checks (currently being piloted) which are less time consuming for both the fire service and the business community than a full fire safety audit. These checks, which are less time consuming, would be introduced as a first step. Fire safety audits would only be carried out where a need has been identified in a fire safety check; following a complaint from the public or partner agency; or where a fire has occurred.
- 5.2 The results of the online survey were very positive and showed support for the proposal. Up to 263 respondents answered questions on this proposal. Overall 79.5% (209) of respondents agreed that the proposal should be implemented. Those who disagreed or did not know how they felt were asked to provide additional information as to why they held their opinion. The key reasons for these responses were:
- Why change it? The proposal is less effective – worries about high risk properties being missed, less reach from fewer events and a reliance on referrals and statistics. (10)
  - Regular checks are important.(6)
  - Audits to be carried out based on risk (eg. new businesses).(3)
- 5.3 Four key stakeholders provided comments to Key Proposal 2 by letter/email. Of these responses the proposal was broadly supported, there were recommendations for increased partnership working with local authorities and also for seeking opportunities for cost recovery.
- 5.4 A response was received from a staff group representing fire safety officers. Their key suggestion was to increase the scope of the proposal to include conducting fire safety checks rather than audits following fires events and complaints. It was also suggested that performance measurement is focused on the number of checks/audits resulting in enforcement action.
- 5.5 The Retained Firefighters' Union supports the proposal.
- 5.6 The Fire Brigades Union supports the proposal.

## ***Recommendation 3***

5.7 Having listened to the results of the consultation it is recommended that the proposal is implemented with the following criteria:

- To extend the use of fire safety checks to include after fire events and complaints.
- To consider developing performance measurement indicators based on the number of checks / audits resulting in enforcement action.

5.8 **It is recommended to the Authority that this arrangement be adopted.**

6. **SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY PROPOSAL 4:  
PROVIDING SMALLER FIRE ENGINES TO MEET LOCAL NEED**

6.1 Key stakeholders were asked to comment on the proposal to introduce smaller fire engines to those areas where having a larger fire engine is a disadvantage and where there is not necessarily the requirement to have the larger engine. The current arrangements for getting additional equipment and support to an incident would continue.

6.2 The results of the online survey were very positive and showed support for the proposal. Up to 268 respondents answered questions on this proposal. Overall 80.2% (215) of respondents agreed that the proposal should be implemented. Those who disagreed or did not know how they felt were asked to provide additional information as to why they held their opinion. Comments from the public included:

- It's a good idea for inaccessible areas as long as all risks are taken into account (11)
- Determination of the suitability of using a Light Rescue Pump or what equipment is needed for an incident may be a problem which needs to be resolved early on. (10)
- As the range of incidents in any area is large, the more equipment and water that can be carried the better. (8)
- Smaller pumps mean reduced manpower (sic) and equipment which lessens resilience (and potentially increases the need for the attendance of multiple pumps at incidents). (7)

6.3 Four key stakeholders provided comments to Key Proposal 4 by letter/email. Of these responses there was general support with the caveat that the views of the crews should be sought and safe systems of work maintained. One of these responses considered the proposal to be inappropriate.

6.4 The Retained Firefighters' Union commented that many stations struggle with large fire appliances and that for many years the stations have been asking the service to review them. It was stated that there is a need to ensure that we have got the resources to carry out the work without compromising the safety of our fire-fighters.

6.5 The Fire Brigades Union hoped that with their contribution in this process that a vehicle will be bought that is fit for purpose. The union indicated that there were the following outstanding issues to be agreed: the number of crew, equipment carried and mobilisation criteria.

6.6 The comments provided from the staff workshops indicated that staff were supportive of the proposal and would like to be involved if the proposal progresses.

***Recommendation 4***

6.7 Having listened to the results of the consultation and staff engagement it is recommended that the proposal is implemented with the following criteria:

- Continue staff involvement in the evaluation of these fire engines
- Extensive communications to be undertaken in the areas where smaller fire engines are to be used

6.8 **It is recommended to the Authority that this arrangement be progressed.**

7. **SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROPOSAL 5:  
RECOVERING COSTS FOR REPEATED DEFECTIVE AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM  
SYSTEM CALL OUTS**

7.1 Key stakeholders were asked to comment on the proposal to recover costs and reduce false alarms; the purpose of the proposal is not to make a profit but to only recover the costs incurred as a result of attending repeated false alarms caused by poorly maintained or defective automatic fire alarm systems. We would therefore continue to respond to such calls but there would be a financial incentive for commercial owners to ensure their systems are fit for purpose. Over time, fewer false alarms would be presented, ensuring fire appliances remain available for real emergencies. The Localism Bill 2010 seeks to introduce the ability for fire and rescue services to charge for responding to false reports of fire caused by automatic fire detection equipment. Should this Bill become law we propose to adopt the powers contained within it and recover our costs accordingly. It is important to note that we would not be recovering costs for attendance at calls made by any individual as this would only apply to those repeat calls from defective or poorly maintained automatic fire alarm systems which repeatedly give false alarms.

7.2 The results of the online survey were very positive and showed support for the proposal. Up to 267 respondents answered questions on this proposal. Overall 91.8% (245) of respondents agreed that the proposal should be implemented. Those who disagreed or did not know how they felt were asked to provide additional information as to why they held their opinion. The key reasons for these responses were:

- People will be encouraged not to call or will turn off alarms they can't afford to maintain for fear of being charged. (9)
- Definition of 'repeated' needs to be made clear through the wider clear communication of the change if it is made. (7)
- How do you determine what is defective vs. what is oversensitive? (6)
- The FRS is a public service that should respond to any alarm to ensure public peace of mind as much as anything else. (6)

7.3 Four key stakeholders provided comments to Key Proposal 5 by letter/email. These responses included support for the proposal, concern that there would be a conflict of interest between enforcing and charging and concern that charging would promote negative behaviour through switching off alarms.

7.4 The Fire Brigades Union does not support the proposal and does not believe that the Service should be charging for repeated attendance. It is the unions view that any repeated calls or poorly maintained systems should be dealt with first by training. This will reduce calls and if systems are not being maintained then this should be dealt with by enforcement.

7.5 The Retained Firefighters' Union agrees with the proposal. It considers that charging businesses for call outs will ensure systems are well maintained. This in turn will make it a safer place to be for their employees and clients.

### ***Recommendation 5***

7.6 Having listened to the results of the consultation it is recommended that the proposal is implemented, should the Localism Bill become enacted and the new legislation permits, with the following criteria:

- The detail of what constitutes a repeated false alarm is widely communicated to businesses.
- The charging structure (cost recovery) is widely communicated to businesses.
- Within the Service's Protection Strategy, work with business owners to ensure appropriate systems and maintenance arrangements are put in place.

7.7 ***It is recommended to the Authority that this arrangement be adopted.***

### **8. SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY PROPOSAL 6: MANAGING WITH FEWER OPERATIONAL STAFF BY LOOKING TO MAKE CHANGES TO CREWING ARRANGEMENT ON SOME STATIONS, SUCH AS DAY CREWED PLUS**

8.1 Key stakeholders were asked to comment on the introduction of a crewing system called Day Crewed Plus. The system is successfully used in other fire and rescue services in England and also in Europe. It works by having operational fire-fighters permanently located at a fire station during the day, similar to the day crewed system, then during the evening the same fire-fighters remain on call to attend emergencies throughout the night. To enable this to work the fire-fighters must remain close to or on the station during the evening.

8.2 The results of the online survey were supportive of the proposal. Up to 257 respondents answered questions on this proposal. Overall 78.2% (201) agreed that the fire and rescue service should require fire-fighters to work the type of fire station crewing arrangement that best meets local requirements and 61.2% (156) of respondents agreed that the proposal should be implemented. Those who disagreed or did not know how they felt were asked to provide additional information as to why they held their opinion. The key reasons for these responses were:

- Shifts are too long. Fire-fighters will be tired and ineffective. (12)
- Morale and general wellbeing would be lower as the proposal will affect the work / life balance and family life. WT fire-fighters should not have the threat that RDS staff will take their jobs hanging over them. (10)
- Consideration ought to be given to things other than cost (firefighter's opinions, local requirements, community safety work). (10)
- Unfair and outdated badly thought out proposal. (8)

8.3 Six key stakeholders provided comments on Key Proposal 6 by letter/email. These responses included comments that:

- recognised the need to make savings and be efficient;
- considered the proposal to be a reduction in service standards and family values;
- expressed concern over firefighter and public safety; and

- that there appeared to be no facility or indication that any local public consultation in respect of specifically identified localities would be adopted by the fire authority prior to any implementation.

- 8.4 Seven staff responses were received that were against the proposal. Five of these were on behalf of operational fire station Watches and two were submitted from individuals.
- 8.5 The Retained Firefighters' Union stated that at the current time they do not have members who are affected by this proposal.
- 8.6 The Fire Brigades Union does not support the proposal to introduce Day Crewed Plus. It considers the duty system to be in breach of the Working Time Directive, the Sixth Edition of the Grey Book and it believes there has been no Equality Impact Assessment of the effects on equality that cover age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 8.7 Feedback from the staff engagement workshops indicated that some whole time staff are not fully aware of all the approaches being taken by Service Managers to meet the anticipated budget shortfall and as such feel that operational firefighters are bearing the brunt of savings. As outlined earlier, this is not the case but it remains the perception of some staff. Whilst there were many specific questions raised as to how the proposal would operate, there were some concerns raised as to what would happen in the future if further savings were needed and statements such as 'change should be driven by what is best for the community not fiscal policy'.

***Expressions of interest***

- 8.8 It was intended that effective engagement with trade unions on this issue (including negotiation as to payment rates, duty system etc) would take place but it became clear that the Fire Brigades Union do not support the application of this model within the Service, despite the Fire Brigades Union having agreed an identical system in Lancashire and a similar system operating in Merseyside. The reasons for this different approach are not clear.
- 8.9 As such, in order to determine if such a model would be workable, discussions were held through a series of staff workshops and the opening 'offer' was increased to match that which was presented by Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service and agreed with the Lancashire Fire Brigades Union.
- 8.10 Expressions of interest to work this revised proposal were sought from all wholetime Firefighters, Crew Managers and Watch Managers. In total this amounted to 635 letters. Expressing an interest was entirely voluntary and did not commit the individual at this stage.
- 8.11 In total 92 members of staff expressed an interest in working the day crewed plus duty system. This represents a 14.5% response from whole time staff (Firefighter to Watch Manager) and clearly indicates an interest from rank and file staff in this model. Staff were asked to identify where they would most like to work such a system; the most popular stations are shown in ranked order of interest in Table 2 overleaf. Staff were free to express an interest for more than one station and did not have to include the station where they currently work.

Table 2: Ranked summary of interest by station.

Station	Ranked order of interest
Plympton	1
Paignton	2
Plymstock	= 3
Exmouth	= 3
Torquay	5
Barnstaple	6
Exeter (M'moor)	= 7
Camels Head	= 7
Taunton	9
Crownhill	10
Exeter (Danes)	11
Greenbank	12
Bridgwater	= 13
Yeovil	= 13

(Correct as of 19 May 2011)

- (Notes:**
- 1. Seven members of staff withdrew their interest after they had submitted their forms and two expressions of interest were received from fire-fighters from other fire and rescue services.**
  - 2. The list above merely indicates where staff interested would wish the system to work. Any decision to introduce this system would clearly start at a point where there is interest as this system would be voluntary).**

### **Recommendation 6**

8.12 The consultation document and staff briefings have presented Day Crewed Plus as one model worthy of consideration – there may be others options that could also work locally. Taking into account the views from staff and public through consultation and staff engagement it is recommended that the following is progressed as part of our budget strategy:

Commence discussions with Trade Unions in an attempt to either:

- secure a collective agreement with respect to Day Crewed Plus on a limited number of stations, or
- alternatively, agree a different staffing model for DSFRS which presents significant savings.

8.13 The intended outcome is to improve efficiency of DSFRS without reducing the service delivered to the public.

8.14 The DCFO has been asked to lead discussions with Trade Unions with the aim to secure agreement on a future model and a subsequent report will be presented to members shortly. It may not be possible to secure agreement with the trade unions, however discussions will be entered into with an open mind from a Service Management perspective and it is expected that trade unions will adopt a similar approach.

8.15 It is anticipated that these initial discussions will aim to be concluded within one month.

8.16 **It is recommended to the Authority that this arrangement be noted and that a subsequent paper with specific proposals be presented to a future Fire Authority meeting.**

**9. SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY PROPOSAL 7:  
MANAGING WITH FEWER OPERATIONAL STAFF BY STANDARDISING STATION  
STAFFING LEVELS ACROSS DEVON AND SOMERSET**

9.1 Key stakeholders were asked to comment on the proposal to review the staffing levels across the wholetime fire stations and determine the most appropriate number of fire-fighters to provide emergency response and maintain firefighter safety. This will mean that stations in Somerset have the same number of firefighters on each whole time watch and the same leave arrangements as fire stations in Devon. This proposal only relates to those fire stations crewed by wholetime firefighters. The current station staffing levels were set before Devon and Somerset FRS combined in 2007.

9.2 The results of the online survey were positive and showed support for the proposal. Up to 258 respondents answered questions on this proposal. Overall 71.3% (184) of respondents agreed that the proposal should be implemented. Those who disagreed or did not know how they felt were asked to provide additional information as to why they held their opinion. The key reasons for these responses were:

- Can't have a standard system where station's responsibilities (number of pumps / aerials / urban / rural) are all different. (14)
- Proposal may reduce resilience / adversely affect service delivery. (5)
- Purely a cost cutting / money saving idea (4)
- Bad for morale (3)

9.3 Five key stakeholders provided comments to Key Proposal 7 by letter/email. These responses included disagreement with the proposal as presented in 9.1 above due to the impact it will have on frontline services. There was also agreement with the proposal.

9.4 A detailed proposal on increasing productivity on the current duty system was received from the staff at Yeovil Fire Station. The suggestion in essence is not to reduce the number of Firefighters on each whole time watch to that in Devon (7 Firefighters), but to set the watch establishment level at 8. This will allow station based staff to undertake additional activity with an increase in productivity, including some work that is currently undertaken by officers within the Group Support Team at Somerset. As a result, Day Crewed Plus (if adopted) would not be applied at this station.

9.5 Members are recommended to agree to this subject to an annual review of the effectiveness of the arrangement. The establishment therefore at Yeovil would become 7+1 per whole time watch, supported by Retained Duty System staff at the station.

- 9.6 This example does show how engagement at station level can ensure efficiencies are made whilst taking staff with us on this journey during what are unprecedented times. It is encouraging that staff understand the need for us to make savings and are prepared to work with the Service Management to ensure the impact of such is managed locally.
- 9.7 Following staff representations around the viability of the Technical Rescue capability at Barnstaple and Bridgwater, it is recognised that due to the high level of skills required to carry out these tasks, and the length of time required to develop the competency to be an effective team member, it is important to maintain resilience within the workforce at these locations. Therefore the watch strength on these stations will be set at eight.
- 9.8 This further demonstrates meaningful consultation and a willingness to respond to constructive contributions which aim to ensure we provide cost effective solutions without impacting on the service delivered to the public.
- 9.9 The Fire Brigades Union response called for this proposal to be removed from the corporate plan as it is not achievable. The reason given is that current staffing levels reflect the number of special appliances and the union suggested that any changes to establishment/staffing levels can only be looked at once an agreement is reached on shift patterns as laid down in Key Proposal 6.
- 9.10 The Retained Firefighters' Union agrees with the proposal but questioned why after 4 years are there still so many differences between Devon and Somerset. Their response stated the need to ensure that if a lower crewing level is used then this must be adequate to be able to perform the many tasks required.
- Recommendation 7**
- 9.11 Having listened to the results of the consultation and staff engagement it is recommended that the following consistent arrangement be implemented:
- The number of wholetime fire-fighters per watch on a one pump station in both Devon and in Somerset will be consistent at seven
  - Yeovil Fire Station will operate with a watch strength of seven plus one, subject to a review of effectiveness on an annual basis
  - The number of wholetime fire-fighters per watch on a one pump special rescue tender station in both Devon and in Somerset will be consistent at eight
  - The number of wholetime fire-fighters per watch on a two pump station in both Devon and in Somerset will be consistent at thirteen
- 9.12 We will engage with key stakeholders (e.g. Town Councils) to reassure them that public safety and response times will not be compromised.
- 9.13 These proposals will not make any wholetime firefighter compulsorily redundant.
- 9.14 No firefighter currently located on a station where there is a requirement to reduce staff numbers will be required to move
- 9.15 These arrangements will take place over time as and when staff leave, are promoted or retire from the stations affected.
- 9.16 **It is recommended to the Fire Authority that this arrangement be adopted.**



**10. SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY PROPOSAL 8:  
SELLING TRAINING AND OTHER FUNCTIONS**

- 10.1 Key stakeholders were asked to comment on the proposal to expand the range of training offered and develop further commercial opportunities. To do this will require deliberate and active marketing of the products offered and the development of the DSFRS brand.
- 10.2 The results of the online survey were positive and showed support for the proposal. Up to 260 respondents answered questions on this proposal. Overall 75% (195) of respondents agreed that the proposal should be implemented. Those who disagreed or did not know how they felt were asked to provide additional information as to why they held their opinion. The key reasons for these responses were:
- Corners might be cut/distraction from primary function especially if trainers are taken off stations. (5)
  - The service lacks to business skills to make this succeed (See Fire Service College) (3)
  - Good idea if a market has been identified. Income should be used to avoid having to cut corners.(3)
  - DSFRS should not need to sell services to fund itself. (3)
- 10.3 Four key stakeholders provided comments to Key Proposal 8 by letter/email, and two Representative bodies provided comment. (Total individual responses: 6). These responses included comments that income generation should not become the primary focus, whether there was sufficient capacity to provide commercial training and support for the proposal.
- 10.4 The Retained Firefighters' Union agree with the proposal but that it must result in better fire and rescue service for our own staff and community.
- 10.5 The Fire Brigades Union supports the proposal as long as it does not have a negative impact on our emergency response and training.
- 10.6 The feedback from the staff workshops was generally very positive towards the development of commercial services. A need to improve communication on commercial services within the organisation was identified.

***Recommendation 8***

- 10.7 ***It is recommended to the Fire Authority that this arrangement be adopted.***

**11. SUMMARY OF DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 There were few comments received on the Draft Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2013/14. Of those received nine were from external respondents, three from a representative bodies and one from a member of staff.
- 11.2 The responses received were very specific in their content but there was a general recognition of the need to make savings as a result of the macroeconomic environment and that savings should not compromise the saving of lives. Opinions were given that suggested cuts were only at the expense of front line staff and that there were no reductions being considered for back office administration staff.

- 11.3 A small number of respondents (8) from the whole consultation expressed the view that the supporting information for the consultation explained the proposals in very broad detail and contained insufficient detail to enable an informed opinion to be given.
- 11.4 Respondents offered alternative suggestions as a means of achieving savings and included:
- Conduct a review of administration functions
  - Reduce senior managers
  - Delay the appliance replacement programme
  - Delay the building maintenance programme
  - Consider charging for lift rescues
- Recommendation 9**
- 11.5 In addition to the changes outlined above, additional changes to the draft corporate Plan are:
- Use the term fire engine in public documents
  - Provide more information regarding our approach to improving fire fighter safety
  - List the Environment Agency as a specific strategic partner
- 11.6 It is recognised that some of these proposals will require change and we remain committed to working with staff to deliver efficiencies in the way we operate. The alternative of reducing the service to the public by closing fire stations or reducing the number of fire engines just to save money is not necessary or recommended at this stage. Members, however, will be aware that the financial pressure on the Service for the future means that we need to start now to ensure we don't have to make less palatable decisions in the future.

**LEE HOWELL**  
**Chief Fire Officer**