

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/23/27
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	11 DECEMBER 2023
SUBJECT OF REPORT	STRATEGIC BUSINESS CHANGE PLAN – TRANCHE ONE
LEAD OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p><i>(a). That the Authority considers the contents of this report and endorses the planned areas for change;</i></p> <p><i>(b). That, subject to (a) above, the planned areas for change be included within the proposals for the Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2024-25 to be considered at the Budget Meeting in February 2024.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The purpose of this report is to give visibility and assurance to the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority (“the Authority”) of the steps that the Executive Board is taking to ensure future sustainability of Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (“the Service”).</p> <p>The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is proposing to make changes to the current service delivery operating model to address the predicted budgetary deficit as reported within Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in accordance with powers as set out within the Authority’s approved Scheme of Delegations. The aim is to boost productivity and facilitate diversity and inclusion within the workforce. This will begin the step change towards achieving the Service’s desired future Target Operating Model (TOM).</p> <p>This paper outlines some of the key areas of focus that are within the first tranche of the ‘Sustainable Transformation Programme’. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A change to Whole Time Duty Systems; • Changes to the operating model for specialist rescue capability (SRT); • Amendments to the Pay for Availability remuneration agreement; • Amendments to the policy and practice for dealing with unwanted fire signals; and <p>This report set out the case for change and plans to address current and future challenges.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	As indicated in the paper.

EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	An initial assessment has not identified any equality issues emanating from this report.
APPENDICES	None.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	CRMP artwork long table 2022.pdf (dsfire.gov.uk)

1. **BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In January 2020, the Authority approved a series of proposals which were innovative, progressive and driven from staff and public feedback. They were designed to improve the reliability of emergency cover, in particular for On-call stations. The proposals also removed resources such as appliances and stations that were not needed and provided investment where it was needed to improved services. This work has been implemented gradually under the Service Delivery Operating Model (SDOM).
- 1.2 The work undertaken over the past three years through the SDOM has addressed the most significant risks as identified within what was the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), now the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The current CRMP 2022-27 sets out and explained what the key risks facing our community are. This also explained in broad terms what the Service would do to mitigate against these risks. A commitment was made to increase preventative activities in order to make our communities safer. We also gave a commitment to relocate resources to match the changing risk profiles.
- 1.3 The high-level actions to reduce the risks faced by our communities are covered within four high level strategic priorities set by the Fire & Rescue Authority. These are:
- Priority 1: Our targeted prevention and protection activities reduce the risks in our communities, improving health, safety and wellbeing, and supporting the local economy;
 - Priority 2: Our operational resources provide an effective emergency response to meet the local and national risks identified in this plan;
 - Priority 3: Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service is recognised as a great place to work: our staff feel valued, supported, safe, and well-trained to deliver a high performing fire and rescue service; and
 - Priority 4: We are open and accountable, using our resources efficiently to deliver an effective, sustainable service that demonstrates improving public value.
- 1.4 The Authority continues to scrutinise performance against these strategic priorities at its Committees. Priority 4 is key in the current economic climate and the Service is striving to provide an efficient and effective service in the face of diminishing resources. The amount of money available is also reducing so there is a need to ensure the efficient and effective use of resources in order to provide the best service to the communities of Devon and Somerset.
- 1.5 The Service has not been immune to the impact on finances seen across the globe over the last year or so. There is a responsibility to deliver a balanced budget for 2024-25 and beyond in line with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The financial gap as highlighted within the MTFP has been the subject of recent report to the Authority.

- 1.6 The savings required to meet the budget deficit are due to a number of factors including unfunded and unbudgeted pay awards, a cost-of-living crisis and an increase in utilities and resources. To do nothing now is not an option. There is a need to drive organisational transformation further to deliver two key priorities:
- Financial sustainability
 - Creating a more inclusive organisation
- 1.7 The Service will continue to develop and set out a longer-term strategy in line with the Community Risk Management Plan from 2025/26 up to 2027. To support the strategy paper, we will be commissioning a fire cover review for our service area. The review will model the risk areas against the demand placed on us under our capacity and capability project. This will allow the service to generate further options in line with the sustainable transformation programme.

2. PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS BUDGETARY DEFICIT

- 2.1. The specific purpose of this report is to:
- Identify the plans that are in scope;
 - Provide assurance to the Fire Authority, that plans are being developed to reduce the deficit outlined within the 2024/25 MTFP;
 - Provide an overview of the areas that officers are considering and will progress to outline business cases;
 - Ensure the support of the Authority to enable the proposals to be implemented in accordance with the approved Scheme of delegations, where appropriate; and
 - Highlight the proposals that may require consultation and subsequent approval of the Authority.
- 2.2. The focus for the first tranche of the change and improvement plan is for the following reasons:
- The financial benefits that are expected are required to meet the forecasted budget deficit over the next few years;
 - They provide opportunities for the Service to ensure we are resourcing to risk;
 - They provide the Service with an opportunity to position itself as an employer of choice welcoming diversity to the role of Firefighter and throughout the Service as a whole; and
 - To clearly outline the Service's case for change and plans to address current and future challenges.

- 2.3. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service ("the Service") has a legal responsibility to present a balanced budget, which must be approved by the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority ("the Authority"). The budget for the financial year 2024-25 will be considered and approved by the Authority at its meeting on 16 February 2024.
- 2.4. The Service regularly updates its Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), using calculations such as expected funding of revenue support grants, precept receipts through taxation, income generation and forecast budget spend. This allows the Service to estimate if the current funding can meet the demands of our operating model or if there is likely to be a deficit in that funding. This is then forecast over a 4-year period.

- 2.5. In 2023-24, the Service was funded as below:

Formula funding grant	£7,293,000
Share of non-domestic business rates	£16,259,000
District councils collection funds	£61,860,000
Total	£85,412,000

- 2.6. The MTFP has demonstrated that the existing operating model is not sustainable against the backdrop of increased costs, primarily as a result of unfunded pay awards and across the board inflationary price increases. If the Service does not adapt, within the forthcoming 2024-25 financial year, it would face a revenue deficit of £3m, rising to circa £7.8m and £8.6m in 2025-26 and 2026-27 respectively. The Service's Extended Leadership Team (ELT) has been set a savings target of £4m for the forthcoming year and, if successful, this would allow a balanced budget to be presented in 2024-25 whilst also providing for the resumption of the revenue to capital contributions. This would, of course, also improve the Authority's longer-term financial position by reducing the forecast deficit in 2025-26 and 2026-27 to circa £3.8m and £4.6m respectively.
- 2.7. To this end, the ELT has been investigating options to reduce overall operating costs to bridge the impending budgetary gap. This is not an easy task due to the fact the Service's largest revenue spend is its people which equated to 79% of spend within the 2022/23 financial year.
- 2.8. The Service has reserves, however, these are earmarked to progress the extensive capital programme required to ensure that its appliances and estates are effective for the future. Based on the current capital programme, it is expected these Reserves will have been fully exhausted by financial year-end 2025/26 (assuming no call on this reserve is made to support the Service's core revenue budget). It is within this context that the Service must re-think the way in which it delivers to the public, ensuring that it is not only able to live within its annual funding envelope, but goes further to generate underspends to support a programme of capital investment.

- 2.9. Whilst the need to meet the MTFP and provide a balanced budget is a key driver for change, there is also the need for reform of the Service's operating model to ensure that it continues to strive to evolve in delivering even better services and outcomes for our communities.
- 2.10. The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) identifies that the risks of climate change is increasing and will, in future, shape the national infrastructure and resilience. This, in turn, will shape the services to be delivered to keep our communities safe. This is combined with changes in the way people live their lives and changing demographics and behaviours, affecting local risk profiles. The Service must ensure it is agile enough to respond to these changes, planning and building for them now rather than dealing with them retrospectively. Therefore, all the decisions the Service takes will be cognisant of and using risk-based analysis.
- 2.11. In addition to this, the Service has committed in its target operating model to ensuring that it welcomes everyone and proudly exhibits its values and ethics. By promoting equality, recognising diversity, and championing inclusion, the workforce will be unified, more innovative, bring diversity of thinking and representative of the communities served. This is also a prominent consideration in all plans.
- 2.12. This paper outlines some of the key areas of change and corresponding 2024/25 savings amounting to **£1.752m** within the first tranche of the proposals. Alongside these reductions, a £5 council tax increase would conservatively deliver an additional **£1.3m** of funding. Together they total **£3.052m**.
- 2.13. These initiatives include:
- **(£1.3m)**: A change to Whole Time Duty Systems;
 - **(£0.133m)**: Changes to the operating model for specialist rescue capability;
 - **(£0.250m)**: Amendments to the Pay for Availability remuneration agreement;
 - **(£0.069m)**: Amendments to the policy and practice for dealing with unwanted fire signals.
- 2.14. The proposed plans are also formed on the basis of the desire to avoid the need for:
- Removal of front-line pumping appliances (also known as P1);
 - Station Closures; and
 - Compulsory redundancies
- 2.15. Each of the planned areas for change are addressed in more depths in the following paragraphs of this report.

3. WHOLETIME ESTABLISHMENT AND SHIFT PATTERNS

- 3.1. The Service runs a 2-2-4 shift system for its station based wholetime (WT) staff. This means there are 4 watches, made up of 7 members of staff (8 if they are a specialist rescue station) per station that work on a pattern of 2-day shifts, 2-night shifts and then 4 days off.
- 3.2. This is a popular shift pattern with some staff (not all, but for staff that have only ever worked in the Service it will be the only shift pattern that they know). It is not efficient and doesn't add the greatest value for money from a Service perspective to the communities served. It has been in place for over 40 years and is the only WT operational shift pattern available. The hours of work are 9-hour days between the hours of 09:00- 18:00, the night shifts operate over a 15-hour shift from 18:00 – 09:00 with staff standing down and resting from 00:00 – 07:00 unless they are involved in operational incidents.
- 3.3. As part of the Service Delivery Operating Model (SDOM) consultation in 2019, a change in wholetime duty system was considered but never concluded. Over the years, other Fire Rescue Services (FRS) have introduced different and more efficient shift systems which have supported a reduction in the number of operational personnel required to ensure a standard crew of 5 is available, ensuring optimum crewing levels are achieved 24/7. Introducing a new wholetime duty system will seek to achieve flexible working patterns, that would also remove current barriers of adding to the diversity of our workforce, demonstrating the Services commitment to equality and diversity and inclusion. The change would also ensure greater productivity would be achieved as there would be an increase in hours that could be used for community safety work and operational preparedness directly supporting the Authority's strategic priorities.
- 3.4. Due to the predicted financial deficit, the Service also considers this an attractive option as a change to shift system would enable significant financial savings which could be achieved via natural attrition, given the number of expected retirees planned over the course of the next 12 to 24 months and would not have any impact on the response to the community.
- 3.5. The Service currently budgets in the region of £23.2m on wholetime salaries for station based staff. If it is opted to do nothing, with inflation this is expected to rise to £24.8m by the 2026-27 financial year. The proposed changes in shift system will accommodate a potential saving in the region of £2.3m reducing the wholetime salary spend to £22.4m by the financial year 2026-27. This is based on the Service pursuing a form of an annualised hours system that is compliant with the nationally recognised Firefighter Grey Book terms and conditions.
- 3.6. ***Key Outcomes This Change Would Achieve For Wholetime Fire Stations.***
 - Ability to continue to ensure standard crewing of 5 wholetime firefighters per pumping appliance to maintain availability, ensuring that the required number of staff are always available, as per the current policy.

- Staff will have more choice in the shifts they work, giving more flexibility to meet personal commitments and a better work life balance. Improving opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to consider the role of Firefighter as a career.
- A change would also need less adjustments for internal station alterations for sleeping provision requirements, as an annualised hours shift system could see shorter shifts introduced which would reduce the current need to provide sleeping accommodation. which would also open the doors for more cultural diversity to the role of firefighter.
- Supports increased efficiency in the Service's provision of response activity, and resultant savings, enabling the service to set a balanced budget.
- The working pattern is Grey Book compliant. Which are the agreed terms and conditions of service.
- It is expected that this approach would be beneficial to mobilising times at night as crews would be actively working and alert rather than resting.
- Build upon current utilisation of day duty staff (operational) to ensure maintenance of skills and command hours are achieved as applicable to the role and ensuring optimum crewing levels are maintained.
- Reduces the use of bank staff, pre-arranged overtime, or TOIL, which adds additional costs to the current system.
- Facilitates a positive working environment through movement of staff via a hub model, creating a more inclusive workforce and broadening local risk knowledge.
- Allow staff available for duty, but not required for response activity on a station, to undertake other service priority activities, such as Community Safety.

3.7. ***What does it mean in practice?***

- Staff are contracted to provide a set number of hours per year, after leave, and are asked to say when they are available to work (subject to business rules governing the system).
- Given an individual's stated availability, managers will ensure the correct amount of people are on duty, with the required competencies, to ensure there are always enough members of staff available per pumping appliance.
- Wholtime duty system staff would be expected to work at any station within their hub and sometimes any station within the Service as required. which is no change to the current policy, contracts and terms & conditions.
- This supports a change in shift start and finish times to mitigate peak time for incidents, for example, start and finish at 0700 and 1900 hours. This would support our strategic priority of providing the most effective response possible.

3.8. **Anticipated potential financial benefits (based on achievement via attrition).**

Option	Current Cost	Future Cost			Saving against 'As Is' cost			
		Year 1 FY24/25	Year 2 (+5%)	Year 3 (+2%)	Year 1 FY24/25	Year 2 (+5%)	Year 3 (+2%)	Total
1. As Is'	£23.2m	No change	£24.3m	£24.8m	-	-	-	-
2. Typical Annualised Shift System	£23.2m	£21.9m m	£22.0m	£22.4m	£1.3m based on a reduction of x26 posts	£1.01m based on a reduction of x18 posts	-	£2.31m

3.9. **Expected non-financial benefits.**

- Inbuilt flexibility ensures that staffing levels are consistent across the year;
- Cover can be provided at short notice by those who are available, providing increased resilience, without additional cost;
- Overtime does not become a consideration until the annualised hours of local resources are spent, therefore demonstrating cost avoidance;
- Where this system has been implemented in other FRSs short-term sickness rates have been reduced, because of the flexibility inherent in the system;
- Support a reduction in estates footprint and therefore operating costs as there will be no need to provide sleeping accommodation (which can also be a cultural barrier for some);
- Ability to dial resources up and down in line with Service risk;
- Increased hours available for community safety work and training to ensure the Service continues to employ professional staff who demonstrate operational competence; and
- Enables greater diversity into the role of firefighter, therefore providing improved outcomes to our communities.

3.10. ***Any associated risks with changes to WT shifts***

Risk	Mitigation
There is a potential for a dip in performance (as is usual for any significant change) during implementation as staff move along the change curve.	Planned staff engagement and good implementation planning involving middle managers to minimise service disruption.
The rep bodies may choose not to support the proposed changes which could lead to discord and disruption on a short-term basis.	Good engagement with Rep Bodies via the Employee Relations Committee, and ensuring the system chosen is compliant with grey book terms and conditions.
Achievement of full savings cited are dependent on moving forward with the proposed changes to Specialist Rescue.	Both proposals are cited within this paper, so the Service and FA are aware of the dependencies between each piece of work.
Having adequate systems in place to manage the change	There is a risk that the supplier may not be able to meet our demands for system change in the desired timeframes to make the savings as per the benefits realisation plan.
Attrition may affect benefits if they are not in line with current predictions	Regular workforce planning sessions will be undertaken to manage this.
Implementation may not keep pace with retirements, meaning current resilience is compromised for a period.	Regular workforce planning sessions will be undertaken to manage this.

4. **SPECIALIST RESCUE CAPABILITY CHANGES**

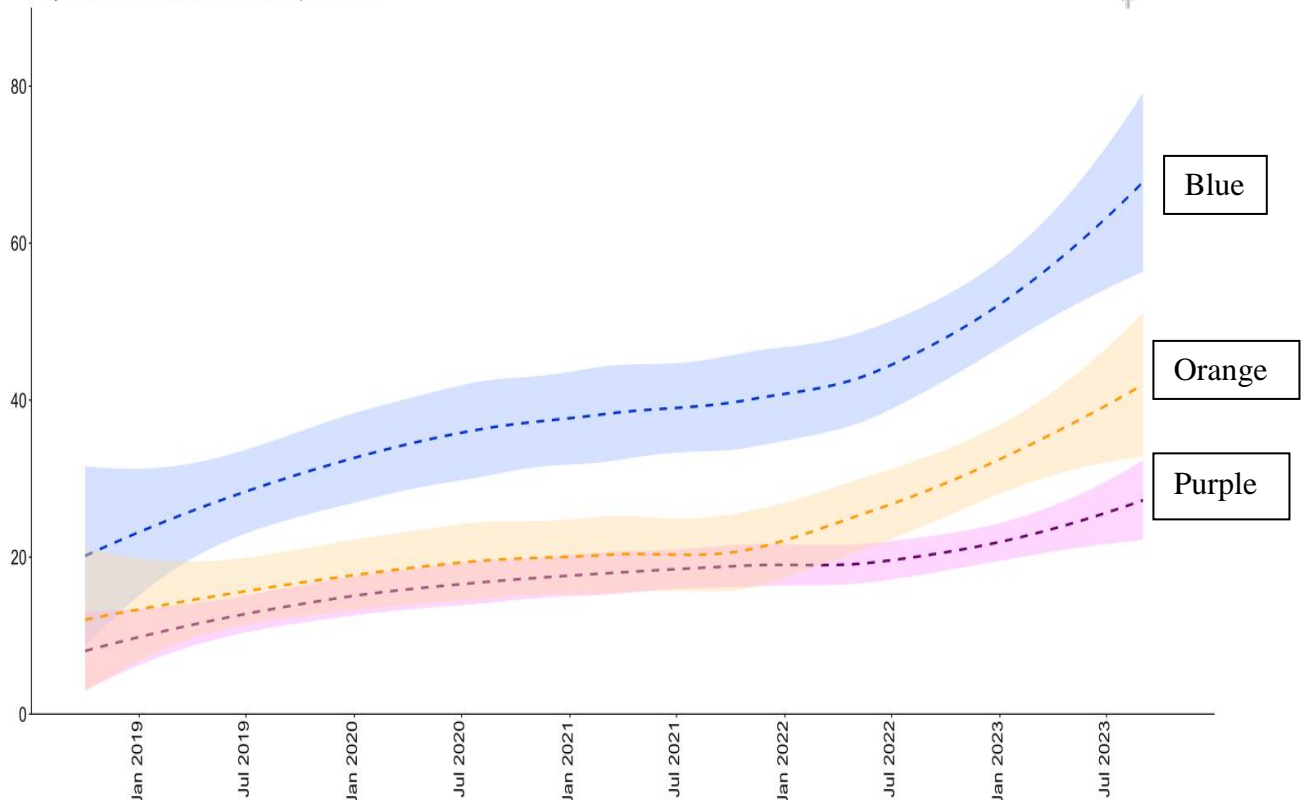
Case For Change

- 4.1. Currently the Service has 3 Specialist Rescue Teams trained in rope, water, boat, and animal rescue, these are based at Camels Head Station in Plymouth, Barnstaple Station, and Bridgwater station. A further water, boat and animal rescue station based at Exmouth Station and a water and boat trained team at Station 60 (known as USAR, based at Service Headquarters). Certain On-Call stations are trained with Level 2 working at height and confined space. High level options of change to how the Service delivers this capability have been investigated to ensure that the full context of risk, resourcing and cost have been considered.

- 4.2. The strategic case for change is driven by the commitment within the Community Risk Management Plan to review our specialist rescue capability to ensure that it is correctly located and have the appropriate crewing levels, training and equipment required to deal with incidents effectively and in the most efficient way. This also includes considering our flood response capability to ensure that all specialist rescue capabilities are matched to the risk and needs of our communities. It is key to also note that Specialist Rescue is not a statutory duty under the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004, and, whilst the Service is not recommending or considering non-attendance at these incidents, it is also cognisant of the fact that the HMICFRS annual assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022, identified responding to fires and emergencies as an area that still requires improvements with the need for continuous review by FRS to ensure that;
- Fire and rescue services should continually review whether its resources are located where the risks lie.
 - Fire and rescue services should manage their resources properly and appropriately, aligning them with the services' risks and statutory responsibilities.
- 4.3. The Service currently operates with three levels of safe working at height & confined space (SHACS), with all stations being level 1 trained. 16 stations have been trained to a level 2 standard, which enables rescues trapped at height and securing casualties at height. Level 3 capability (animal, water, boat & line) ensures the Service has sufficient provision in place to be able to rescue their own staff should the need occur, level 3 also covers the requirements of level 2.
- 4.4. At present, all SRT personnel are trained to maintain the same levels of competence across each of the disciplines, however, as the data demonstrates, the risk profile across each station ground varies and therefore so do the types of incidents frequently attended.
- 4.5. The initial look into potential high-level options demonstrates that there is the ability for the Service to deliver the capability in a more cost effective and efficient way. Whilst the final options for consideration are yet to be fully defined, initial analysis has shown that there is potential to gain cost savings without significantly impacting the services that we provide. The Service currently spends in the region of £1m on specialist rescue capability. If it opts to do nothing, with inflation this cost is expected to continue to rise.
- 4.6. Through the Network Fire Service Partnership (NFSP a developed partnership with Dorset & Wiltshire and Hampshire Fire Services a response plan (identifies the pre-determined level of response sent to an incident) agreement was introduced with the Service. Often, our Service is exceeding this with the resource that it mobilises (in comparison to the other services in the partnership) which all has a knock-on effect to the day to day running commitment and cost to the service.

- 4.7. In development of any new operating model, there are several potential options that could be considered, supported through statistical data from 01/10/2018 to 30/09/2023. This data has shown that there have been 2399 alerts of resources to 1674 different incidents. Of which 1389 we attended (57.9%) 1045 (43.5%) of these were attended for a duration greater than 20 minutes. This is an indicator that is used to identify that meaningful activity has been carried out on the incident ground.
- 4.8. Whilst these numbers may appear significant, in comparison the Service attended nearly 4500 dwelling fires and 4000 road traffic collisions over the same period. This small number of specialist rescue incidents makes it more difficult to predict as the overall level of demand (away from specific locations) is low, however more detail will be provided within the full business case. It is also important to note that dwelling fires and Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) have an agreed Emergency Response Standard (ERS) whereas specialist rescues does not.
- 4.9. The data demonstrates a potential over provision of specialist rescue resources in some areas and that the provision may not be matched to risk and may not provide value for money in comparison to other operational resources. Whilst the Service has seen an upward trend in the number of specialist rescue resources alerted to incidents since the start of 2022 this is not matched by the increase in attendances of over 20 minutes, meaning although resource mobilisations may have increased this does not necessarily equate to an increase in need.

Trend of SRT resources alerted by month (blue)
 not attended or attended for under 20 mins (orange)
 and attended for over 20 mins (purple)
 May include more than one resource per incident



Potential Financial and Non-Financial Benefits

- 4.10. It is difficult to pinpoint the potential financial savings as options are still in the development stage. However, the initial data and risk analysis has posed a number of potential alternative operating models which could include removing some or all of the skills from specific stations and reducing the burden of this provision on the On-Call. This could generate savings up to £416,000.00 over three years or **£0.133m** in 2024/25.
- 4.11. Further savings may be realised through a reduction in FTE from 8 to 6 which is currently required for rope rescue. This will be dependent on the Services risk appetite and the supporting data.
- Other benefits associated with making a change are to assure that resources are matched to the risk and focused where most needed;
 - Reduce the current burden on some staff who struggle to maintain competency. (Under the introduction of NFCC competence framework, there is a likely requirement for each service to allocate an additional 12 on call drill nights per annum to ensure competence SHACS level 2 is maintained); and
 - Release capacity within the Training Academy for more training in other statutory operational areas.

Any Potential Associated Risks

- 4.12. A Fire and Rescue Service response is inherently about managing risk due to its very nature. This can never be fully eliminated in all that the Service does, however, below are some risks associated with making a change to the way the Service responds to specialist rescue incidents.

Risk	Mitigation
There is a potential for a dip in performance (as is usual for any significant change) during implementation as staff move along the change curve.	Planned staff engagement and good implementation by middle managers planning to minimise service disruption.
The rep bodies may choose not to support the proposed changes which could lead to discord and disruption on a short-term basis.	Good engagement with Rep Bodies via the Employee Relations Committee.
Having adequate systems in place to manage the change.	There is a risk that the Service current systems may not be able to meet our requirements without some additional development, this work would need to be prioritised internally.
Whilst the decision is being taken on a new operating model, on call staff may stop prioritising specialist Rescue training in anticipation of the change.	Clear communication to staff about the expectations of training to be given whilst any transition is in discussions competence led by middle managers for all station-based staff,

Risk	Mitigation
Service reputation may be impacted during transition to a new operating model if the community does not fully understand the impact of any changes.	Accurate messaging about what any changes mean to be communicated.
The data we captured may not be granular enough level for the Service need.	The Service will instigate a fire cover review in 2024 to support the current use of data, any changes will be carefully monitored and evaluated at regular intervals.

5. **PAY FOR AVAILABILITY ON CALL SYSTEM**

- 5.1. One of the key risks identified is the availability of the On Call fire appliances. The Service has 99 On Call appliances, the largest number in England, providing approximately 88% of the response capability maintained by the Service to deal with emergency incidents.
- 5.2. The Service initiated several projects under the Safer Together Programme to introduce measures to mitigate the risks identified. One of these projects was the introduction of a new duty system for On Call firefighters known as Pay for Availability (P4A). P4A was designed to support the recruitment and retention of staff into On Call roles and consequently enable the improvement of fire engine availability. This duty system was introduced in a staggered approach with the first group of six stations adopting P4A in October 2020 and the last group in December 2021. At the time, it was not possible to achieve a collective agreement with the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) to introduce the new system, therefore, it was introduced with stations signing up on a voluntary agreement reached in accordance with the Industrial Relations 1 form (IR1) with the Fire & Rescue Services Association (FRSA). Within that agreement, it was set out that a review of P4A would take place from 12 months of implementation. That review is currently underway. 6 stations remain on the old system currently. So far, the review has identified potential areas for efficiency improvements.

Areas of focus identified

- 5.3. The first areas of focus have been identified as below.
- Consider stopping availability payments when the pump goes off the run (not available) Potential saving if availability and incident levels remain consistent. this was part of the original concepts.
 - Consider removing the provision for crews to receive payment for availability and payment for work activity at the same time (e.g., when at incidents, undertaking station duties etc.). this was part of the original concept.

5.4. **Further possible areas of focus may be:**

- Consider whether the inclusion of seven additional specialist appliance crew, for National Resilience assets, is providing value for money. The provision costs the service approximately £185K per year and is not funded through the government New Dimensions Grant.
- Consider reviewing the approach to the crewing of specials, in particular Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs), Water Browsers and Heavy Rescue Tenders. Currently the additional 18 on-call personnel employed to crew these resources cost the service approximately £475K per year.

5.5. Potential Financial Benefits to any changes include:

1. Currently there are several scenarios in which firefighters are paid for availability, even when their pump is off the run and there is a very low likelihood of those firefighters being called into action. This is estimated to have cost the service more **than £400k** in 2022/23 and is on course to do the same in 2023/24. This cost could be avoided if the P4A terms were to change.

Overall, making the changes outlined above where crews would receive a payment for activity and not for availability, could potentially save **over £465K** (plus on costs) based on activity levels for 2022/23.

2. At present crews receive a payment for availability and activity at the same time. Examples of work activities; attending an incident, drill nights and standard testing of equipment. The following section explores the potential opportunities where payment for availability or payment for work activity occurs at any one time.

5.6. It should be noted however, that to make these changes the Service would look to gain collective agreement to ensure the Service had one standardised on call system in place across DSFRS, as previous experience has demonstrated the difficulties in manging numerous different systems at once. This would mean that the Service would seek to bring the remaining 6 stations onto P4A which may reduce some of the stated financial benefits, but would provide consistency across the service which is agreed by the representative bodies. As such, we have conservatively assumed a saving of **£0.250m**, however, this is very likely to increase.

5.7. ***Any potential risks***

Risk	Mitigation
Financial savings made from changes may be absorbed into the cost of onboarding 6 more stations to P4A	The Service will ensure it accounts for this in its financial forecasting.
The Service may not gain collective agreement.	If collective agreement cannot be gained, the Service will need to further review P4A as a system to ensure long term sustainability. The relevant legal, operational, and financial considerations will be taken if a decision is made to adopt it or not. The Fire Authority maintain the right to consider if P4A has been successful as part of the original implementation agreement as part of the Safer Together Programme

6. **UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS**

- 6.1. Fire alarms sound to alert people inside a building that there is a fire so they can escape and call the fire service. However, faults with systems and other issues can cause alarms to sound when there is no fire. The impact of mobilising appliances when they are not needed is not just financial. In addition to the monetary cost of mobilising appliances unnecessarily, the Service also:
- Increases its carbon footprint and contributes to poor air quality in the environment.
 - Increases road risk both to own personnel and the public.
 - Causes disruption to on-call personnel which impacts local businesses and the local economy when staff are disturbed from primary employment.
 - Disruption to whole-time work routines, interrupting crucial operational risk, prevention, protection, and training activities all of which are designed to keep our staff and the public safe.
- 6.2. It is clear, if we reduce unnecessary mobilisations to incidents where our crews are not used, we can provide a more efficient and effective service to the communities of Devon and Somerset.
- 6.3. This is an issue that is prevalent across the Fire Sector and several FRS have already changed their approach to unwanted fire signals or are in the process of doing so and have used or are using the National Fire Chiefs Council guidance documents for reducing attendance at Unwanted Fire Signals. For example, Scotland has implanted a policy to reduce unwanted fire signals, only attending where there is a sleeping risk such as hospitals, care homes and domestic settings during certain hours.

- 6.4. Fire services have for many years continued to attend fire alarms in non-domestic premises. In 2007 the regulatory reform order made it the responsibility of the 'responsible person' to provide a risk assessment and to deal with fire alarms and to investigate their origin.
- 6.5. The scale of the problem is large. The Service attended 4,946 incidents from fire alarm signals last year from 10,126 calls. Of these, less than 3% are because of fires and often are either out on or arrival or require little fire-fighting action, for example isolating at power source. Only 7 attendances out of over 4,946 mobilisations required firefighting with a hose reel jet.
- 6.6. Unwanted fire signals can be broken down into the following categories: -
- Alarm Commercial/Industrial (e.g. Factory);
 - Alarm Retail/Public assembly (e.g. Swimming Pool);
 - Alarm Residential (e.g. Hotel); and
 - Alarm domestic (House).
- 6.7. The Service is investigating and proposing to:
- Develop of outline proposal for call challenge for domestic and residential alarms to support Fire Control to help reduce mobilisations to unwanted fire signals;
 - Change our attendance model at non-sleeping risk, to attend only if there are signs of fire, Commercial/Industrial and public assembly (extending some of our non-attendance policies currently in place);
 - Investigate if alarms in the residential category can be sub-divided for improved call challenge.

Anticipated benefits from any changes to unwanted fire alarms

- 6.8. The Service will ensure any changes made are risk assessed and therefore will not be recommending a blanket non-attendance to any automatic fire alarm (overall costs to the service annually of unwanted fire signals are in the region of £500k) that alerts control, however if the Service was to review how it responds by:
- Reviewing its attendance at non-sleeping risk (commercial industrial and public assembly)
- 6.9. There is a potential financial saving of approx. **£69k per annum**. Additional cost avoidance would also likely be made from:
- Introducing formalised Domestic and Residential alarms call challenge.

- 6.10. However, this is not quantified currently. Before implementing any changes to this key area, the Service, would ensure it consults and engages appropriately with key stakeholder groups. It must be stated, however, that the non- financial benefit of any changes that would reduce unwanted fire signals are that the Service's resources would be available to respond to real emergencies when needed, as well as not drawing staff away from community safety and operational preparedness activities.
- 6.11. It should be noted that the Service would send the full pre-determined attendance to any property where a 999 call reports a fire or smell of smoke.
- 6.12. ***Associated risks with changes to unwanted fire signal policy***

Risk	Mitigation
Impact on community through non-attendance for the small percentage of fire alarm signals that result in fires due to delayed attendance	Continuous evaluation to ensure risk is mitigated as far as practicable
Fail to deliver on our HMI requirements which aim to improve our overall scoring if unwanted fire signals are not reduced.	Clear rationale for any changes that are or are not made based on risk communicated to the HMI and additional work to reduce unwanted fire signals also cited.
Not gaining Community and Rep body buy in to implement proposed changes.	Clear consultation and engagement plan to be in place for all key stakeholders.
Reduced payments to on-call by non-attendance may affect morale/retention	Clear rationale of drivers for change and benefits to the community they serve to be communicated to staff via robust comms plan.

7. OTHER WORK PROGRESSING ACROSS SERVICE.

- 7.1. The ELT is also reviewing several areas of work across departments to ensure that efficiency gains are being acted upon, for example, there is also a review of:
- Light Fleet;
 - Standby Cover moves of operational resources;
 - Pre-Determined Attendance in line with our NFSP partners;
 - Flexi Duty Officer and rota review;
 - Ongoing professional and technical services capability modelling and reviews;
 - Environmental strategy; and
 - Review of estates strategy and requirements.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1. A Business case is under preparation for each of the areas for change identified within this report. It is anticipated that, with the exception of the AFA proposals, the planned changes would be undertaken within the CFOs delegated powers.
- 8.2. The CRMP for 2022-27 indicated that, if there was any review of the proposals contained within it that resulted in significant change to the service that communities received, these would be consulted upon further as required.
- 8.3. Details of any consultation to be undertaken will be reported to the Authority in due course.

GAVIN ELLIS
Chief Fire Officer