APPENDIX 2

Cheshire
Fire Authority

**Draft 2024-2028 Community
Risk Management Plan**

Consultation Feedback Report

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Contents

1. Introduction

The National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services in England require all fire authorities, such as Cheshire Fire Authority, to produce a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). Each CRMP must assess fire and rescue risks and demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents and to mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities.

Within the Framework, each Authority is required to ensure that the CRMP reflects "effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies and partners"[1].

The current Integrated Risk Management Plan runs until 31 March 2024 and the Authority began work to develop a new CRMP in the Summer of 2023. The CRMP will cover the next four years to 2028 and set out the Authority's key priorities to keep the communities of Cheshire safe from fire and other emergencies.

This report details the consultation processes undertaken by the Authority in the development of the draft CRMP and is intended to be considered by Members of Cheshire Fire Authority as they decide on the plans and priorities for the final CRMP.

This report provides an executive summary before describing the process of pre-consultation, which the Authority undertook before developing options to put forward for full consultation.

The Authority has a well-established methodology for consultation with the public, staff, and stakeholders, which has been tried and tested through several consultation programmes. This methodology is explained and a summary of the consultation feedback from public, staff and partners is provided, as well as a demographic profile of consultees.

While the report is not an exhaustive summary, full copies of verbatim responses are provided as separate appendices to this report. This includes verbatim comments received through consultation surveys as well as partner responses.

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[1] Home Office, Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018, p.14
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5aec5974ed915d42f7c6bf18/National_Framework_-_final_for_web.pdf

2. Executive Summary

This summary provides an overview of the engagement and consultation process to develop the Authority's draft 2024-2028 CRMP.

Pre-consultation

The Authority undertook a programme of pre-consultation to help develop the draft CRMP. It was undertaken to seek feedback on the guiding principles which officers had adopted to develop the draft CRMP and to gauge broad opinion on a range of themes to help inform the development of options for full consultation.

The programme of pre-consultation took place between July and September 2023.

Section 3.1 outlines the range of engagement methods used to seek views and feedback. Key amongst these was an online survey, which ran between June and July 2023 and gathered 185 responses from the public and 226 members of staff.

Feedback from the pre-consultation process is provided within Section 3.2 and is summarised below.

Guiding Principles

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they supported the guiding principles to develop the CRMP. 81.5% of the public and 84.9% of staff either approved or strongly approved of the principles. Comments from the public were largely concerned with the need to ensure sufficient availability of fire engines and provision of fire cover – which are referenced within the guiding principles. Staff comments centred around several themes:

- Staff wellbeing and firefighter safety.

- Career progression and development, and organisational culture.

- Improving fire cover.

Response times and standards

Most of both public (69.4%) and staff (52.2%) respondents supported measuring from the time of call. Public comments reference the view that this was a more accurate reflection of their physical experience should they need to call 999. Staff comments were more nuanced, with some questioning how much control the Authority would have over improving response times given that call handling is undertaken by a third party (North West Fire Control).

In relation to how the response time is reported, a majority of respondents (59.31% of public and 61.08% of staff) stated a preference for an average response time and preferred the use of a single response standard rather than a standard which is variable dependent on factors such as local risks; with 56.94% of public and 64.48% of staff respondents preferring a single standard.

Respondents were also asked to state how long they would consider it acceptable to wait for a fire engine to arrive in a range of different emergency scenarios. Public and staff responses were broadly similar in these areas, with the expected response times to potential life risk incidents (house and commercial fires, road traffic collisions, water rescues) lower – under ten minutes – than other incidents such as grass fires or animal rescues.

Review of the on-call duty system

Respondents were asked to what extent they would support the Authority reviewing the on-call duty system with the aim of making it more effective and sustainable. Most public and staff respondents (both over 90%) supported such a review. Suggested key priorities were contractual arrangements, followed by the pathway to achieving operational competence and then training commitments.

Review of Duty Systems

Operational staff were asked to what extent a daytime only shift system would appeal. 81.8% of solely on-call staff, 35.7% of wholetime staff and 36.4% of dual-role staff said such a system would appeal at least a moderate amount.13.6% of on-call staff, 54.8% of wholetime staff and 51.2% of dual-role staff said such a system would not appeal at all.

Comments from those who said a system would appeal said that it would enable them to dedicate their weekends as family time and that it would be a route into a fulltime position from an on-call role. Staff who said the system would not appeal highlighted the balance that the current 2-2-4 system provides them and how shift work fits in with their individual circumstances.

Importance of the local fire engine

The public were asked how important it was that the local fire engine responds to an emergency and was designed to test perceptions around the response from the town or village's local fire engine. In reality, the quickest available fire engine is mobilised to respond; but it has been suggested that there is an attachment to having a local fire engine available within a community. 44.9% of respondents stated that it was extremely or very important that the local fire engine responds.

Overall number and availability of fire engines

This question was asked to gauge views on preferences over having a smaller overall number of fire engines but having better availability, or having the same number of fire engines but understanding that there are issues at times with availability.

54.6% of public and 47.2% of staff respondents preferred to maintain the current fleet size of fire engines, while 26.9% of public and 37.5% of staff respondents preferred to have fewer overall fire engines, but with better availability. Comments alluded to the view that although engines may not always be available, the perception is that more engines equal more resilience. In essence, having them available some of the time is better than not having them at all.

Major incidents were one scenario where it was considered important to retain the current fleet size, for the ability to scale up resources and for resilience.

Some staff comments suggest that duty systems in some areas could be changed to increase cover, with others questioning the availability of on-call second fire engines.

Prioritisation of activities

The survey asked respondents to rank how important they perceive each of the Authority's functions (both statutory requirements and non-statutory activities) to be.

An overwhelming majority of both staff and public respondents viewed the Authority's statutory functions as important (responding to fires and road traffic collisions, major incident

response) Results and free text comments show a clear link and rationale for the Authority carrying out its statutory duties and operational activity.

Value for money and precept

While not directly related to the development of the CRMP, the pre-consultation survey also asked the public their views on whether the Authority provided value for money based on its current precept, and opinion on future increases or decreases to the precept.

A total of 66.9% of respondents agreed that the Authority provided value for money, against 6.2% of respondents who disagreed.

Regarding a future precept, 63.4% of respondents said they would pay a higher precept to improve or maintain services, compared with 16% who disagreed. Respondents who would pay a higher precept were asked to provide a monetary figure against an acceptable annual increase. The average figure provided was an increase of £6.90 on a Band D property.

Conversely, 5.3% of respondents agreed that they would be willing to pay a lower precept, understanding services would be reduced as a result. The average reduction suggested by respondents who wanted a decrease was £9.50 on a Band D property.

Fire Cover Review and Options Development

Section 4 provides a description of the fire cover review process and development of consultation options.

The Authority undertakes a fire cover review periodically to ensure that it has the most effective configuration of emergency response resources in the right place to meet risks and demands. These reviews are tied into the development of a CRMP given the lifespan of the respective plan. To inform the latest CRMP, officers carried out a fire cover review, using a range of data and intelligence sources and tools, as well as the feedback from the pre-consultation activities.

The review was carried out using a set of guiding principles, which are explained in section 4.2. These principles inform the development of various options for the configuration of fire cover across Cheshire. Only options which meet these principles in full would be subject to consultation. The final option is outlined in section 4.3

Consultation Programme

The consultation programme is described in Section 5. It ran for a total of 13 weeks from Monday 2 October 2023 to Tuesday 2 January 2024.

As per previous consultation programmes undertaken by the Authority, the programme was split into three main strands of public consultation, staff consultation and partner consultation. Different consultation methods were used for each strand of consultation to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation. The methodologies are explained in Section 5.2.

Consultation response

A total of 459 survey responses were received, of which 377 respondents identified themselves as members of the public and 21 identified as members of staff; as well as two business owners and three local partners (Knutsford Town Council, Chester Aid to the Homeless and an unnamed Cheshire West and Chester councillor). Other respondents declined to state which category they belonged to. In addition to the survey responses, there was one email response from a member of the public.

In addition to the survey, a total of ten partners and local stakeholders provided a consultation response on behalf of their organisation or membership. These were:

• Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
• West Cheshire Trades Union Council
• Warrington and District Trades Union Council
• Chester Retired Firefighters
• Birchwood Town Council
• Bollington Town Council
• Holmes Chapel Parish Council
• Northwich Town Council
• Stockton Heath Parish Council

All of these responses were received electronically.

Identification of Risk

Section 6 of the report concerns the identification of risks, which is a requirement of a CRMP.

Respondents were asked to what extent they considered that the draft CRMP identifies key fire and rescue risks; whether the proposals within the CRMP address the risks identified; and if there are any additional risks which respondents feel should be considered in the development of the final CRMP.

Overall, 64.70% of respondents felt that the draft CRMP either completely or mostly identifies the key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire, compared to 16.77% of respondents who felt it identified only few or no risks.

Amongst public survey responses, those who felt the CRMP either completely or mostly identified key risks was slightly higher at 68.70%, with 14.58% who felt the draft CRMP identified few or no risks.

Amongst staff survey responses, 61.91% of respondents felt that the draft CRMP either completely or mostly identified key fire and rescue risks; compared to 19.05% who felt the draft CRMP identified few or no key risks.

Respondents were also able to highlight any additional risks which they felt should be considered. Risks identified by the public and staff included the impacts of climate change, road safety and an ageing population, which were already referenced within the draft CRMP.

There were no significant comments received from partners regarding this question.

Management of Risk

This section also asks for views on the management of risks which have been identified, again a requirement of a CRMP. Overall, 60.78% of respondents felt the proposals within the draft CRMP either completely or mostly addressed the key risks, against 19.17% who considered the draft CRMP to address little or none of the key risks identified.

Public feedback through the survey was slightly more favourable than the overall results, with 64.46% stating the draft CRMP either completely or mostly addresses identified risks and 16.97% believing the draft plan either addresses little or none of the identified risks.

Staff feedback was more in line with the overall results, with 61.91% of respondents stating that the draft CRMP either completely or mostly addressed key fire and rescue risks; compared to 19.05% who felt it addressed few or none of the risks.

Free text comments

Of 126 additional comments from members of the public, 36 reference the fire cover proposals. Of these, there are 19 which state a preference for increased fire cover in Cheshire, calling for more full-time resources. Nine comments raised concerns over the impact on overnight and weekend cover from the fire cover proposals, while eight comments relate to the specific proposed changes at Northwich and Stockton Heath.

Five public comments suggest that increasing pay for on-call firefighters can help to improve recruitment and retention of on-call staff and there are 17 comments referencing community prevention work, including a preference for more education and awareness of existing and emerging risks.

Of the four staff comments, two relate to the fire cover proposals and a further comment highlights the need to ensure adequate water supplies to non-domestic premises. Feedback from staff focus groups identify risks such as domestic violence and vulnerable families, as well as suggesting improvements to the Authority's risk based inspection programme.

There were no significant comments received from partners regarding this question.

Safe use of Lithium-ion Battery Products

The consultation sought feedback from respondents on what type of lithium-ion products they own in the home, as well as any key safety considerations they have regarding these products. This feedback is intended to help shape the development of fire prevention advice regarding the use of lithium-ion battery products.

Section 7 details the feedback received through the consultation regarding lithium-ion battery products. Amongst both public and staff respondents, the vast majority owned a small lithium-ion appliance such as a mobile phone, laptop, digital camera or toy, while over two thirds of respondents owned a product such as a rechargeable toothbrush or other hygiene product. Fewer respondents stated that they owned a vaping device, or a larger item such as electric bike or vehicle.

Overall survey responses indicate a broad spread in preferences regarding safety advice, albeit most respondents would prioritise information regarding the safe charging of devices (57.96% of public response, 46.67% of staff response) and the safe disposal of products (64.08% of public response, 73.33% of staff response).

There were no significant comments from partners on this issue.

Changing how we Measure and Report our Response Times

The draft CRMP proposes to change our response standard from a response standard of ten minutes to life-risk incidents, with a target of meeting this on 80% of occasions, to an average response time to all primary fires within ten minutes. Instead of reporting this time from time of alerting the fire station, reporting is proposed to begin from when the 999 call is answered, before the control operator alerts the station.

Feedback received on this issue is provided within Section 8.

Overall, 65.62% of survey respondents outlined support for the proposed change, compared to 14.93% who opposed.

From public respondents, 66.58% express support for changing the measuring and reporting of response times, compared to 14.86% who oppose the change. Staff responses show

66.67% of respondents in support of the proposed change to the measuring and reporting of the response time, with 19.05% opposed.

Free text comments

Thirteen free text comments expressed support for the proposed change, with reasons for this including the proposed measurement from time of call and the use of a ten-minute response standard. Other comments acknowledged the benefit of being able to benchmark and compare response times more effectively, either with the Home Office figures or other fire and rescue services, under the proposed standard.

Twelve comments were received regarding the proposed change in response standard from a percentage pass rate to the use of an average figure; suggesting that a move to an average figure could mask instances where there are significantly longer response times.

Some respondents queried whether the change to measuring primary fires as opposed to life-risk incidents meant that the Service was either not prioritising or measuring performance against non-fire life risk incidents, such as road traffic collisions.

Staff comments largely reflected the feedback received from comments from members of the public.

Partner feedback

Feedback from partners included a response from the FBU, Chester Retired Firefighters and West Cheshire Trades Union Council. The FBU and Chester Retired Firefighters offered support for the proposed change to measure response from the time of call. The FBU also suggested that all life risk incidents, not only primary fires, should be incorporated within the standard.

Proposals to Change the Provision of Fire Cover Across Cheshire

The proposals to improve fire cover across Cheshire consist of a package of proposed changes which, cumulatively, is predicted to lead to an improved provision of guaranteed fire cover across the county and provide capacity to undertake more fire safety work in the community. Together, these proposals would enable the Service to meet its current and new proposed response standard while working within its current budget. Section 9.1 outlines these proposals in more detail; however they are summarised below.

- Converting four on-call fire engines at Runcorn, Macclesfield, Northwich and Winsford into full-time fire engines which would operate during weekday daytime hours.
- Changing the duty system at Knutsford Fire Station from On-Call to Day Crewing.
- Reorganising the provision of full-time fire cover in the daytime in Warrington.
- Reviewing the On-Call Duty System

Survey responses

Section 9.2 provides an analysis of survey responses on this issue. The overall response shows that most respondents support the overall package of proposals. A total of 65.17% support the package compared to 22.52% who oppose them.

Amongst responses from members of the public, 66.31% support the introduction of the package of proposals, compared to 22.02% who oppose them. Analysis shows that in many areas across Cheshire, most respondents outlined support for the proposals.

However, there are localities where there is more opposition to the proposals, namely Northwich, Stockton Heath and Winsford. Reasons for the opposition from respondents include a view that the proposals mean a loss of services locally and this is perceived to lead to greater risk during night-time and weekends.

While staff responses to the survey were more limited, this also shows most respondents (52.38%) in support against 33.34% of staff respondents who oppose the proposals.

Public comments

The survey also asked for respondents to identify the benefits and potential drawbacks of the proposals. 204 comments were provided from the public which identified what they considered to be a benefit of the proposals, while 205 public comments were provided which outlined a perceived negative of the proposals. Section 9.4 provides an analysis of free text comments received from public respondents.

Of the 204 public comments regarding the positive aspects of the package, the most frequently raised feedback was the benefit of having improved fire cover across Cheshire because of the proposals, which featured in 73 comments. Responses highlighted the reassurance that this proposal would provide during weekdays, quicker response times and the increase in areas that are afforded with an element of guaranteed fire cover.

Associated positive impacts from the proposed conversion of four on-call fire engines to weekday fire engines include a wider area of Cheshire having guaranteed cover; more reassurance for more residents and more availability to meet periods of higher demand. Nine respondents stated that they considered a benefit of the proposals to be a more effective and efficient use of existing resources.

Three comments made specific reference to the proposed change at Knutsford, all of which considered the proposal to be a positive move.

There were ten comments which referred to the proposed changes in Warrington. Nine of these relate to the change in fire cover and raise some concerns over what is felt to be a reduced level of cover in certain areas, while a further comment queried how the impact on staff would be managed with regards to the disposal of housing stock at Stockton Heath.

Staff comments

Section 9.5 contains the comments received from staff of which 16 identify a benefit of the proposals and 15 highlight a drawback. Comments received shows a majority of respondents agree that the proposals to convert the four on-call fire engines would lead to improved levels of guaranteed fire cover, particularly during periods of peak activity. Coupled with this is the increased capacity to undertake community safety work to reduce risk and demand.

Staff concerns with the proposals centred on the effect on overnight and weekend cover, as well as the impact on affected staff.

Comments received from staff were largely supportive of the proposed introduction of day crewing at Knutsford, indicating that there was an understanding of the rationale behind the proposal and that it would enable better fire cover. However, specific queries were raised in relation to the element around the transfer of the technical rescue unit from its current base at Lymm to Knutsford. These centred on the staffing numbers of the unit and the compatibility of training requirements with a day crewing duty system. An alternative

suggested was to use Knutsford as a specialist animal rescue capability and maintain technical rescue at Lymm.

Feedback from those based at Knutsford station focused on the issues around allocation of day crewing housing and transfer of staff on and off station. Feedback from operational staff working at Stockton Heath raised questions around the release of the housing associated with the station and the support that could be offered to help those affected to navigate their change in circumstances.

Partner feedback
Feedback from partners is detailed in Section 9.6.

Conversion of four on-call fire engines into weekday fire engines
In its response to the consultation, the FBU offered its qualified support for the proposal to convert four on-call fire engines into full-time weekday engines; while Holmes Chapel Parish Council and Bollington Town Council expressed support for the proposals, citing improved response times and additional benefit to the community arising from the changes.

The submissions from Northwich Town Council and unitary councillor Sam Naylor raised concerns over the element of the proposal to change the second fire engine at Northwich Fire Station from on-call to a full-time weekday fire engine.

Introduction of Day Crewing in Knutsford
Councillors in Knutsford Town Council confirmed their support for the draft CRMP and the proposal for Knutsford Fire Station, via a response to the survey.

The consultation response of the FBU outlines its support for this proposal but does raise an objection to the intention of transferring the technical rescue unit from its current base in Lymm to Knutsford This objection is echoed by the Chester Retired Firefighters.

Reorganisation of fire cover in Warrington
Responses were received from several stakeholders regarding the proposal to reorganise fire cover in Warrington. The FBU state that the current on-call provision at Stockton Heath should be maintained; citing that the risk profile in the area requires the maintenance of current arrangements. Warrington District Trades Union Council outline their objection to the proposal for similar reasons.

The response from Stockton Heath Parish Council outlines the Council's support for the plan and understanding of the rationale behind the proposed change. The response from Birchwood Town Council did not provide any further comment beyond seeking reassurance that additional prevention and protection work, which the proposals enable, will be carried out in the Birchwood area.

Reviewing Our On-Call Duty System
The consultation asked for views on the on-call duty system, in relation to areas of focus to be considered when conducting a review of the system to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. A total of 153 public and 14 staff comments were provided, these were categorised by theme and subject matter. Analysis of these is contained within Section 10.

Public comments

The most frequently raised feedback, present in 18 public comments (11.76% of public total) and five staff comments (35.71% of staff total) is the need to ensure pay and recognition for

on-call firefighters is improved, which is felt in turn will improve both recruitment and retention.

In 12 comments, residents called for a further increase in full-time resources and reduction in the number of on-call resources across the county; citing the changes to work practices and the challenges around availability.

Other themes from public commentary include suggestions to make the recruitment processes more effective/efficient; raise awareness amongst the community and employers of the on-call duty system and consider ways to improve flexibility (including widening the catchment area).

Staff feedback

Five comments from staff also referenced the need to improve pay and recognition for on-call firefighters. Other comments called for an improvement in the speed of the recruitment process and reducing the length of time it takes for on-call firefighters to gain operational competency.

Partner feedback

Feedback from partners was provided by the FBU, Chester Retired Firefighters and the West Cheshire Trades Union Council. Pay and recognition was again highlighted as an area which required consideration. The FBU also outlined a range of other issues to consider including increasing awareness of the duty systems amongst employers and improving career development opportunities for on-call staff. Both the FBU and Chester Retired Firefighters highlighted the impact of the Service's migration policy on on-call availability.

Equality Impact Assessments

Section 11 explains the production of a suite of Equality Impact Assessments to support the consultation process. As part of the consultation, consultees were asked to provide views on equalities considerations which they consider to be relevant.

Section 11.1 provides a commentary of equalities feedback received. A total of 124 comments were submitted. While the majority (82 comments) stated that the respondent had no further comment to make, feedback was received which suggested that age should be a key consideration within the proposals and the service which is provided to the community. One comment suggested that urban and rural geography should be a consideration in the proposals.

Three comments referenced the recent news regarding cultural issues within the fire and rescue sector, while there were 14 comments made that were general in nature and not necessarily linked to equalities matters.

Additional Comments

Section 12 of the report provides an analysis of additional comments provided by respondents to the survey. As with other free text comments received, these were categorised by theme and subject matter.

A total of 142 comments were provided. Of these, 48 (33.8%) were the consultee stating they had no further comment to make. This left 87 public comments and 7 staff comments of substance.

There were 29 public comments which expressed support for the proposals within the draft CRMP. Consultees acknowledged the depth and detail of the draft CRMP, and the proposals

were viewed as a positive step forward for the Service and community. There were 14 comments which expressed concern or opposition to the proposals within the draft CRMP. The majority of these centred around the proposed removal of the second fire engine in Northwich and the perceived impact that this would have on the community.

Two staff comments referred to the draft CRMP, with one comment highlighting a concern regarding the proposed change to fire cover in Warrington, while another outlined the perceived overall benefit from the fire cover proposals. There were also comments which called for better facilities for women across the Service.

Appendix: Additional Resources

An appendix to this report, *Cheshire Fire Authority Draft 2024-2028 Community Risk Management Plan Consultation Feedback: Additional Resources*, provides an analysis of public and staff survey respondents by a range of demographic characteristics. The document also contains a copy of the consultation survey, full copies of free text comments received, non-survey responses received and partner responses. Please note the Fire Brigades Union response is provided as its own appendix due to the size and formatting of the response.

3. Summary of Pre-Consultation

The CRMP has been developed in line with some guiding principles to improve the service provided to the community and to improve the organisation for those who work within it. The principles are:

- Giving our colleagues and communities a genuine say in the development of our Service.

- Continuing to respond to incidents as quickly as we do now and where possible, even quicker in the future.

- Increasing the availability of fire engines, especially during daytime hours.

- Enabling our staff to be more productive and effective, keeping our communities safe.

- Strengthening our prevention and protection programmes to meet the needs of those most at risk.

- Providing high quality, sustainable workplaces for our colleagues by continuing to modernise our buildings and facilities.

- Continuing to promote our Service's safe, supportive, and inclusive workplace culture.

Pre-consultation can be understood as a process to obtain feedback to help turn the guiding principles into a suite of firm proposals. It was undertaken to gauge broad opinion on a range of themes to help inform the development of options for full consultation.

The pre-consultation activity took place between June and September 2023. Results were presented to Members of Cheshire Fire Authority on 29 September 2023 for consideration as part of the approval for launching the consultation on the draft CRMP.

While pre-consultation feedback is summarised in this report, a full copy of the report can be accessed by this link:
https://authority.cheshirefire.gov.uk/documents/s13578/Item%203%20-%20Appendix%202%20Draft%202024-2028%20CRMP%20Pre-Consultation%20Summary.pdf

3.1 Methodology

The pre-consultation included the following activities:

Online survey for public and staff

An online survey was developed and hosted on the platform SurveyMonkey. This was accessible via the Service website and homepage of the intranet. The next section provides more detail on the questions asked within the survey.

Visioning workshop sessions with Fire Authority Members

Officers engaged Fire Authority Members at an early stage of the development process. Visioning sessions were provided at two Member Planning Days on 7 July and 11 August 2023.

Here, officers provided an overview of data and information on several topics:

- Horizon scanning analysis to highlight new and emerging risks.
- Performance data to show levels of risk, demand, and fire cover/availability.

Members were then provided with the guiding principles for their agreement and approval and asked if there were any other principles which officers should consider as part of the CRMP development. Key feedback included the desire to maintain the current fleet of 35 frontline fire engines.

Members were also asked to outline what they saw as key risks which should be accounted for within the CRMP. The growth of lithium-ion battery products and electric vehicles were seen as a key risk, as was the impact of climate change.

Risk identification workshop with Year 10 work experience students

Officers carried out a workshop on 7 July 2023 with eight Year 10 high school students who were in Service on a work placement. Students were asked to identify the key fire and rescue risks they considered to be facing the community. Again, lithium-ion battery products (e-scooters and bikes) and the impact of climate change were highlighted, alongside more traditional fire and rescue risks such as road safety, deliberate fires, and home fire safety.

Fire cover review workshops with staff

Two workshops were held with groups of staff: at the Staff Engagement Forum meeting on 14 July and a separate session on 26 July. Participants at both sessions encompassed staff from a range of roles and duty systems. At the workshops, attendees were provided with the following information:

- An update on the progress of the fire cover review.
- Information regarding the availability of on-call fire engines.
- Demand data for each fire engine in Cheshire.
- Overall costs for a fire engine on each duty system within Cheshire.
- The overall budget for service delivery in Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Participants were then split into two groups and each group were asked to design their own model to provide fire cover using the data above, and as far as possible within the same cost base as the current budget.

The crewing configurations devised by each of the groups were then analysed and compared to configurations being developed by the fire cover review team. These helped to inform the development of options for fire cover within the CRMP, which is outlined in more detail in Section 4 of this report.

Trade union briefing

A dedicated briefing took place to update trade union representatives on the purpose of the pre-consultation activity and share a summary of the findings of pre-consultation.

3.2 Response Rate

The survey ran between 16 June and 17 July 2023 and gathered 185 responses from the public and 226 from members of staff.

The survey asked questions on several issues, which are outlined below:

- Views on the guiding principles
- Expected response times for various incidents.
- Response standards and associated measuring/reporting
- Number of fire engines and availability
- Crewing arrangements (for staff only)
- On-call duty system
- Risk identification
- Perceptions on value for money and increasing/decreasing the precept (public only)

3.3 Summary of Feedback

The following section provides a summary of the pre-consultation feedback received.

Guiding principles

Survey respondents were asked to what extent they supported the guiding principles to develop the CRMP. 81.5% of the public and 84.9% of staff either approved or strongly approved of the principles as set out, compared to 4.9% of public and 1.8% of staff respondents who disapproved.
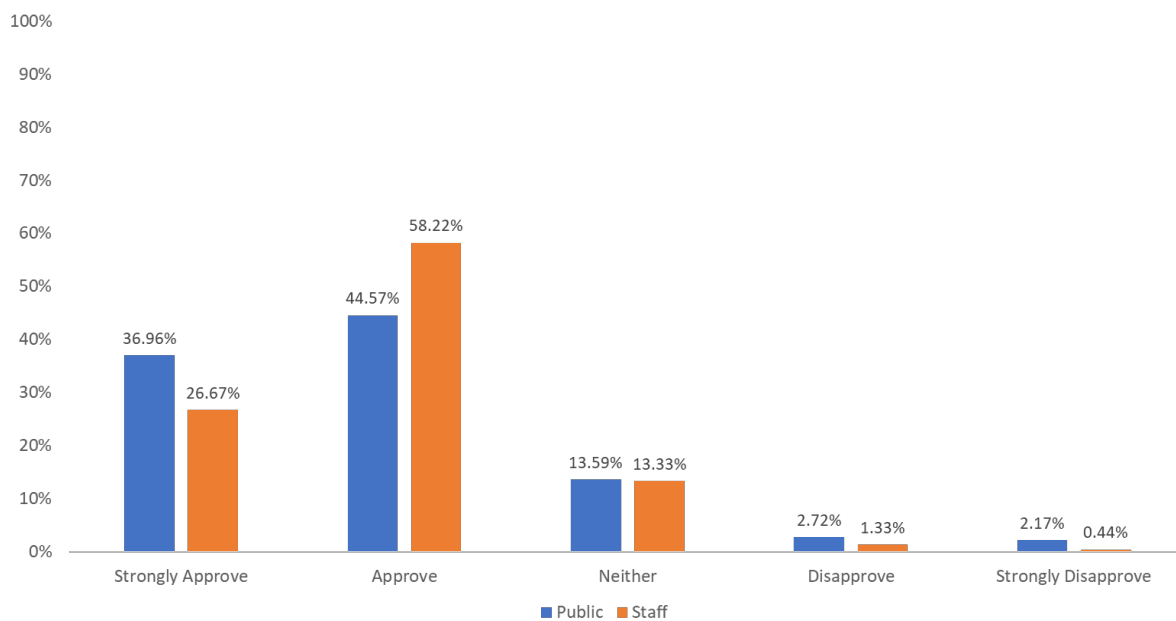
Narrative comments

Respondents were asked if there were any other issues that they felt should be included within the guiding principles. Comments from the public were largely concerned with the need to ensure sufficient availability of fire engines and provision of fire cover – which are referenced within the guiding principles. Staff comments centred around several themes:

- Staff wellbeing and firefighter safety.
- Career progression and development, and organisational culture.
- Improving fire cover.

Response standard

The next section of the survey asked for views to help to develop a proposal around the future response standard i.e. our target for responding to incidents.

Measuring response times

Respondents were asked to what extent they would support the Service measuring its response times from the time the 999 call is received, rather than the current measurement from when the fire station is alerted. 69.4% of public and 52.2% of staff respondents supported measuring from the time of call compared to 17.4% of the public and 23.4% of staff who opposed this.
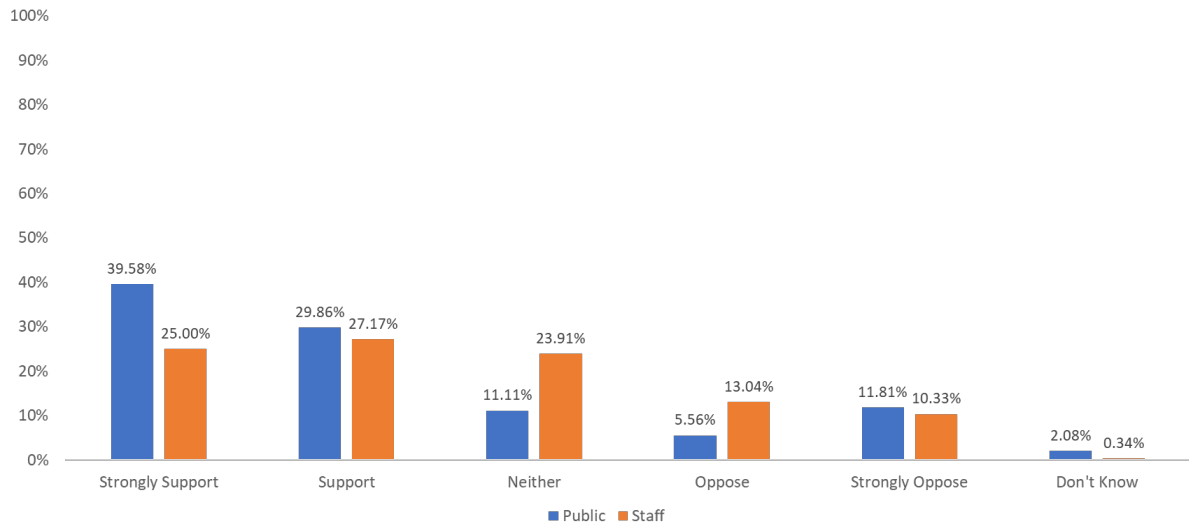
Narrative comments

Regarding the measuring of response from time of call, public comments reference the view that this was a more accurate reflection of their physical experience should they need to call 999. Staff comments were more nuanced, with some questioning how much control the Authority would have over improving response times given that call handling is undertaken by a third party (North West Fire Control). Other staff comments raised a concern that measuring response time from time of call could increase pressure on crews to ensure they meet the response time, particularly on-call firefighters (who once alerted have five minutes to arrive at the station to then respond).

Response standard reporting

Respondents were then asked if they would prefer to see the Service's response standard reported as a percentage pass rate (current method) or as an average response time. 59.3% of public and 61.1% of staff respondents stated a preference for an average response time compared to 32.4% public and 33.5% of staff respondents who preferred performance to be reported as a percentage pass rate.

Average response or percentage

	Public	Staff
Average	59.31%	61.08%
Percentage	32.41%	33.51%
Don't Know	8.28%	5.41%
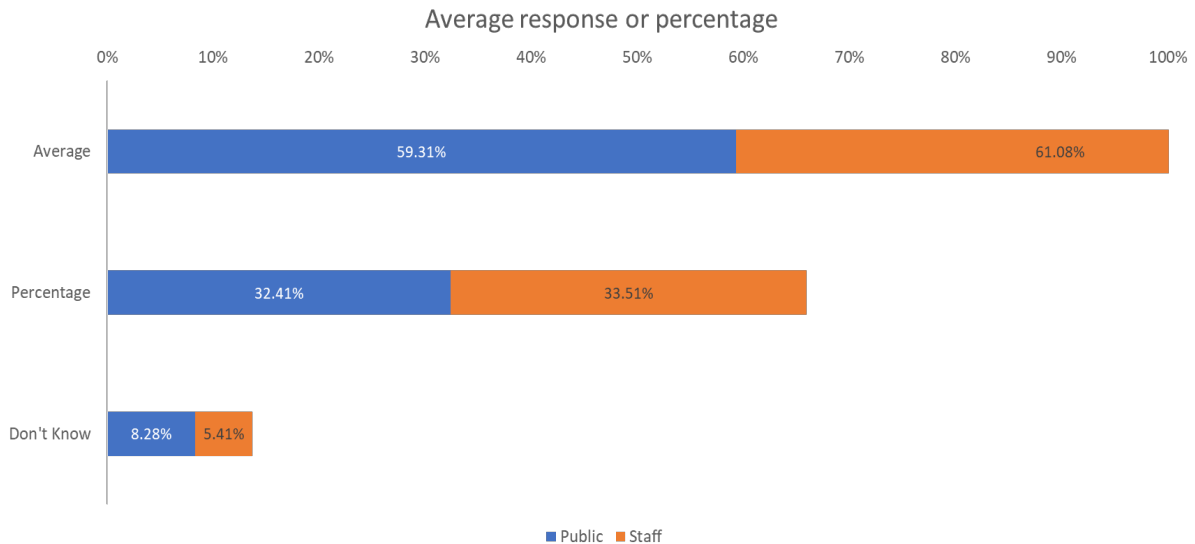
Single or variable response standard

The next question in this section asked for preferences over a single response standard for the whole county, or replacing this with a variable response standard which would lead to different response standards in different areas according to local risk factors. 56.9% of public and 64.5% of staff respondents stated a preference for a single response standard compared to 37.5% of public and 29.5% of staff who preferred a variable standard.

	Public	Staff
County wide	56.94%	64.48%
Variable	37.50%	29.51%
Don't Know	5.56%	6.01%
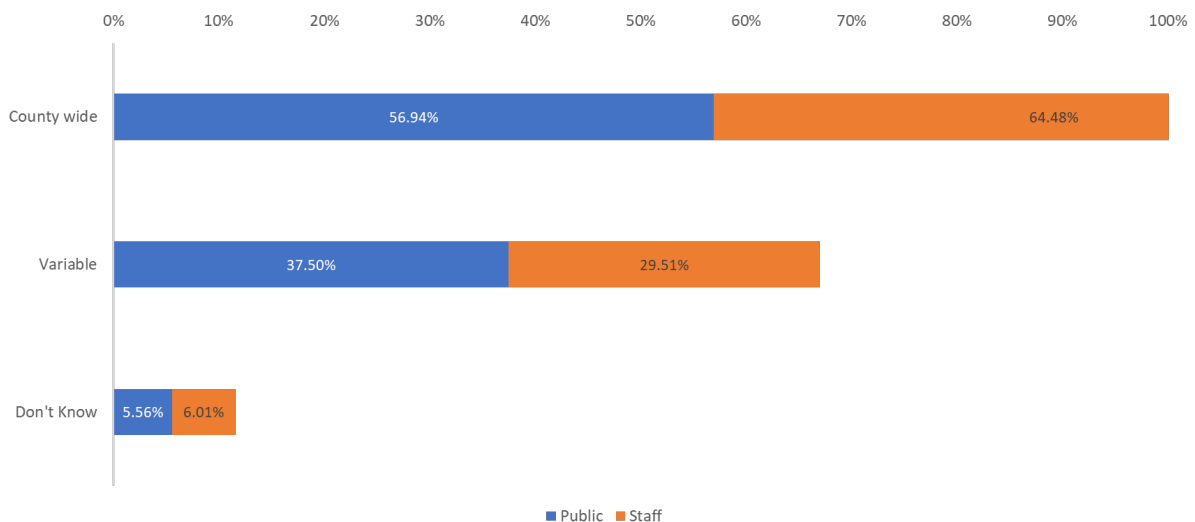
Narrative comments

Public and staff comments referred to the preference for using the same standard for all. Recurring themes highlighted include that a fire is a fire regardless of rural or urban areas, and that taxpayers in different areas still pay their precept so should be offered same level of service.

Some public and staff comments highlighted that increasing on-call availability will improve response times in rural areas.

A minority of staff comments supported the use of a different standard, as it was felt that this would better match resources to differing risks, as per rationale for CRMP. However, even where a variable standard was supported, there was an acknowledgement that public expectation would favour a single standard.

There was a general understanding within staff comments that in rural areas it can be challenging to meet the current standard, both because of geography and issues around the availability of fire engines at certain times.

Expected response times.

The final part of this section asked respondents to state how long they would consider it acceptable to wait for a fire engine to arrive in a range of different emergency scenarios.

Public and staff responses were broadly similar in these areas, with the expected response times to potential life risk incidents (house and commercial fires, road traffic collisions, water rescues) lower – under ten minutes – than other incidents such as grass fires or animal rescues.

Scenario	Public average (mins)	Staff average (mins)
House fire	9	8
Fire in a commercial premises	10	9
Small fire	14	12
Road traffic collision	9	9
Rescuing someone from water	8	8
To help paramedics gain entry to a property where someone needs medical attention	10	10
To rescue an animal	15	14

Review of the on-call system

Respondents were asked to what extent they would support the Authority reviewing the on-call duty system with the aim of making it more effective and sustainable. 90.9% of staff supported this, along with 91.3% of public respondents.

Strongly Support — Public 57.97%, Staff 55.11%
Support — Public 33.33%, Staff 35.80%
Neither — Public 3.62%, Staff 4.55%
Oppose — Public 0.72%, Staff 1.70%
Strongly Oppose — Public 3.62%, Staff 1.14%
Don't Know — Public 0.72%, Staff 1.70%

■ Public ■ Staff
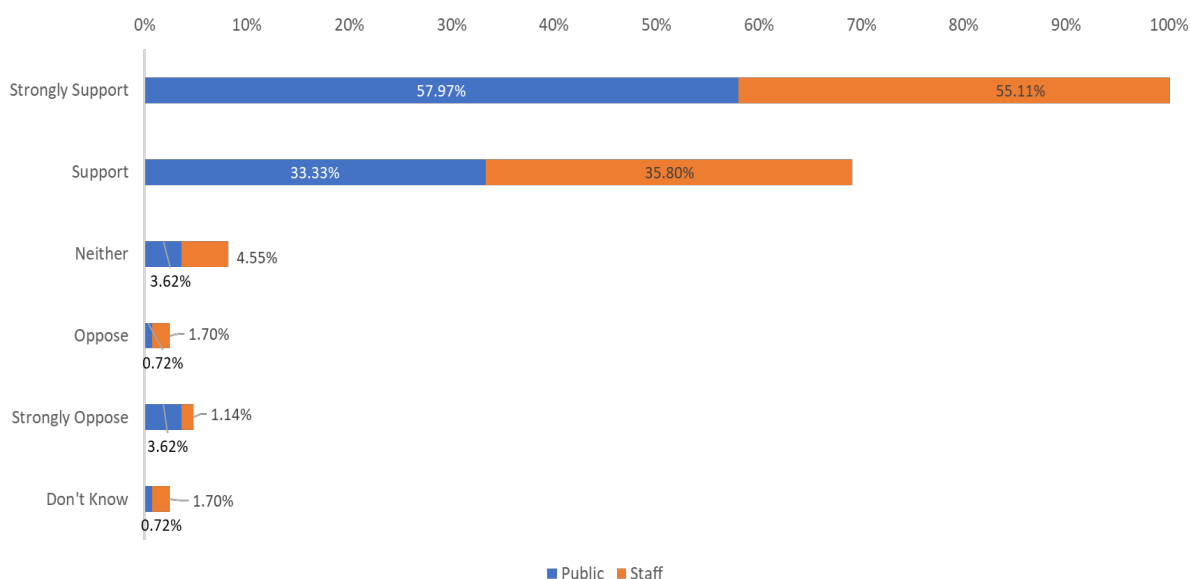
Staff were asked in more detail which areas should be the focus of any review. Key areas of focus were contractual arrangements (highlighted as important by 93.6% of dual-role staff and 77.3% of solely on-call staff), followed by the pathway to achieving operational competence (marked as a suggested area of focus by 40.9% of on-call staff and 32.3% of dual role staff) and then training commitments (22.6% of dual role staff and 40.9% of on-call staff suggested this as an area of focus).
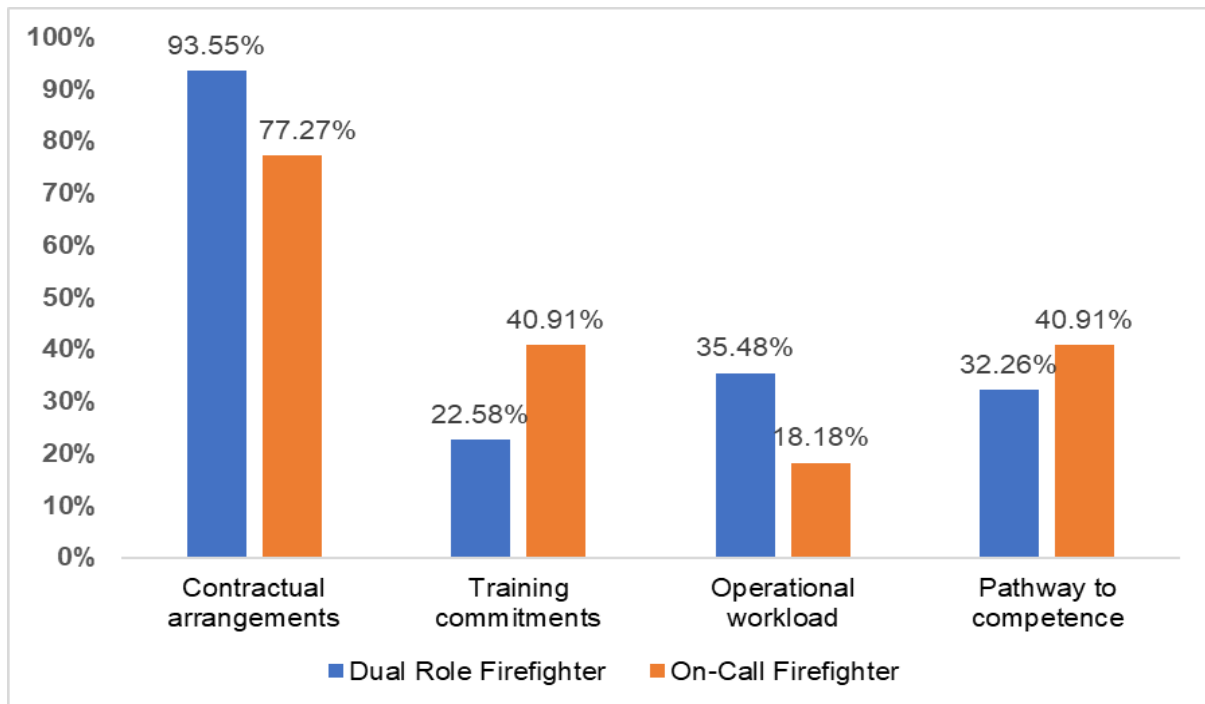
Regarding weekend cover, staff were asked to what extent a package of greater remuneration, coupled with a more structured approach to planning availability, would encourage them to provide more cover. 62.5% of solely on-call staff and 80.65% of dual-role staff said such a package either probably or definitely would encourage them to provide more cover.
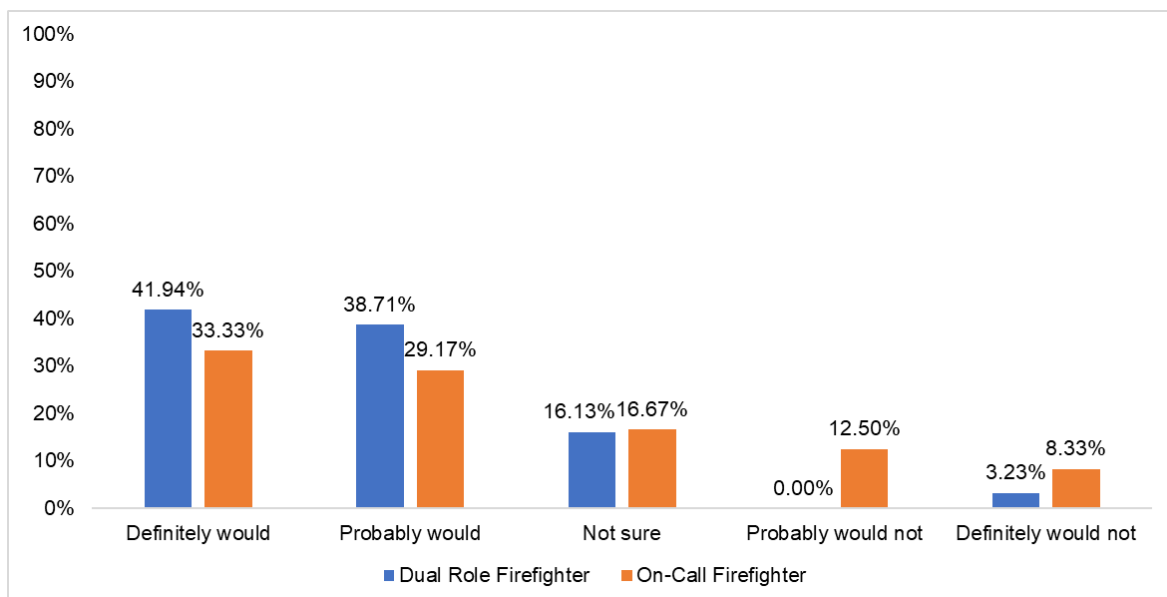
Duty systems

Operational staff were asked to what extent a daytime only shift system would appeal. 81.8% of solely on-call staff, 35.7% of wholetime staff and 38.7% of dual-role staff said such a system would appeal at least a moderate amount.13.6% of on-call staff, 54.8% of wholetime staff and 51.6% of dual-role staff said such a system would not appeal at all. Comments from those who said a system would appeal said that it would enable them to dedicate their weekends as family time and that it would be a route in to a fulltime position from an on-call role.

Staff who said the system would not appeal highlighted the balance that the current 2-2-4 system provides them and how shift work fits in with their individual circumstances.
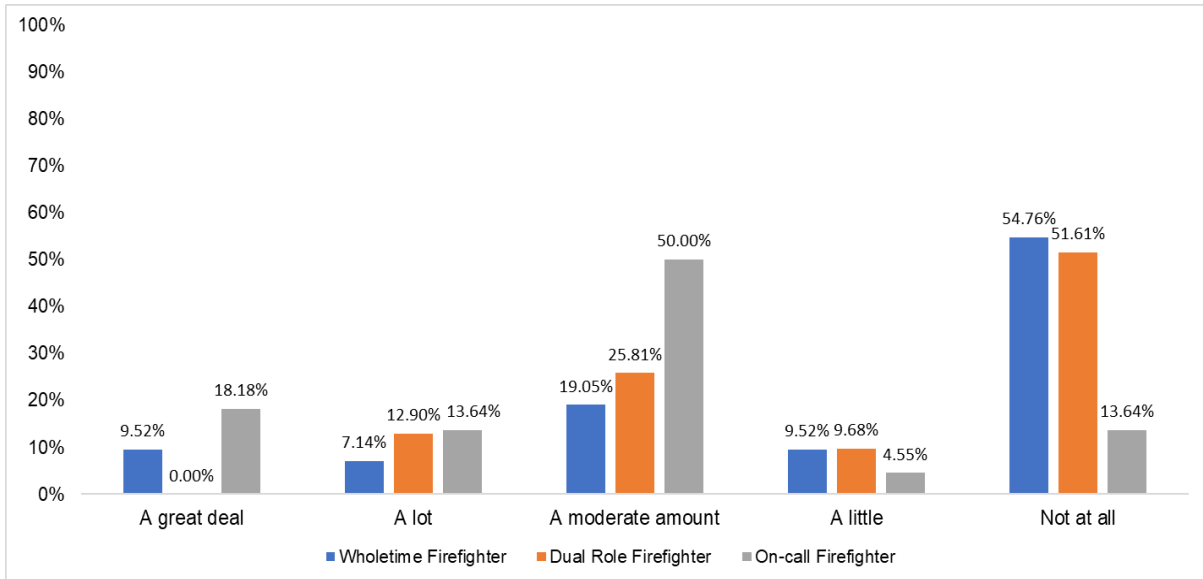
Wholetime staff were then asked whether they would prefer a more routine shift pattern or a shift pattern that was more flexibly determined on a monthly basis. 92.7% of wholetime and 68.8% of dual role respondents said they would either probably or definitely prefer a more routine shift pattern. Narrative comments provided indicate that a more rigid routine enables those who work it to plan their commitments in advance and the certainty provides a work-life balance though being able to forecast childcare and other needs.
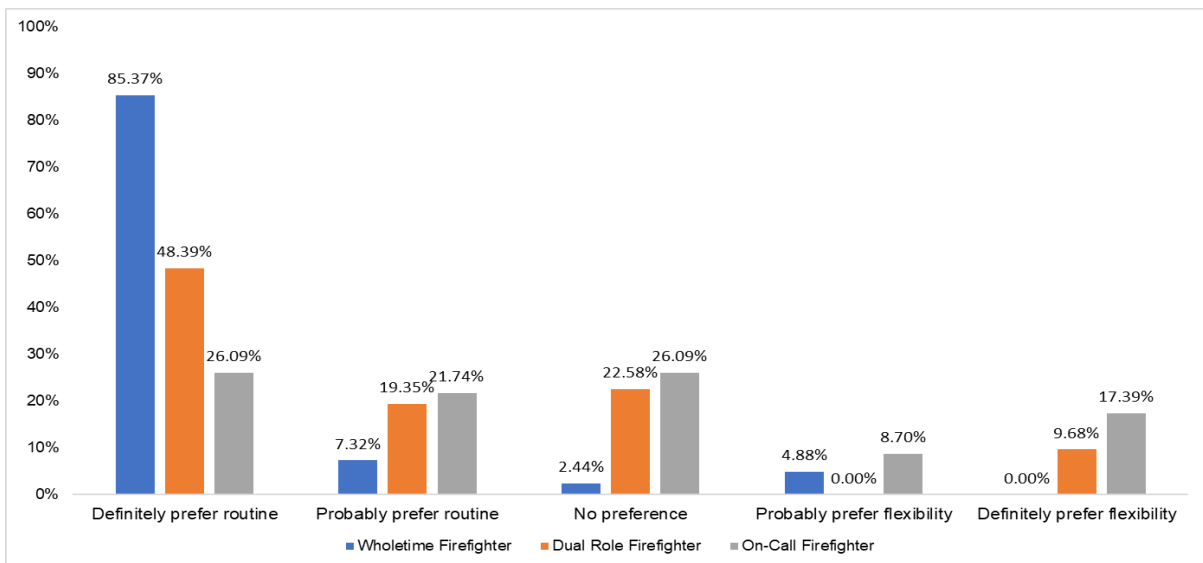
The importance of the 'local' fire engine

The question on the public survey regarding how important it was that the respondents local fire engine responds was designed to test perceptions around the response from the town or villages local fire engine. In reality, the quickest available fire engine is mobilised to respond; but it has been suggested that there is an attachment to having a local fire engine available within a community.

44.9% of respondents stated that it was extremely or very important that the local fire engine responds. 19.6% said it was somewhat important while 31.2% said it was either not very important or not important at all.
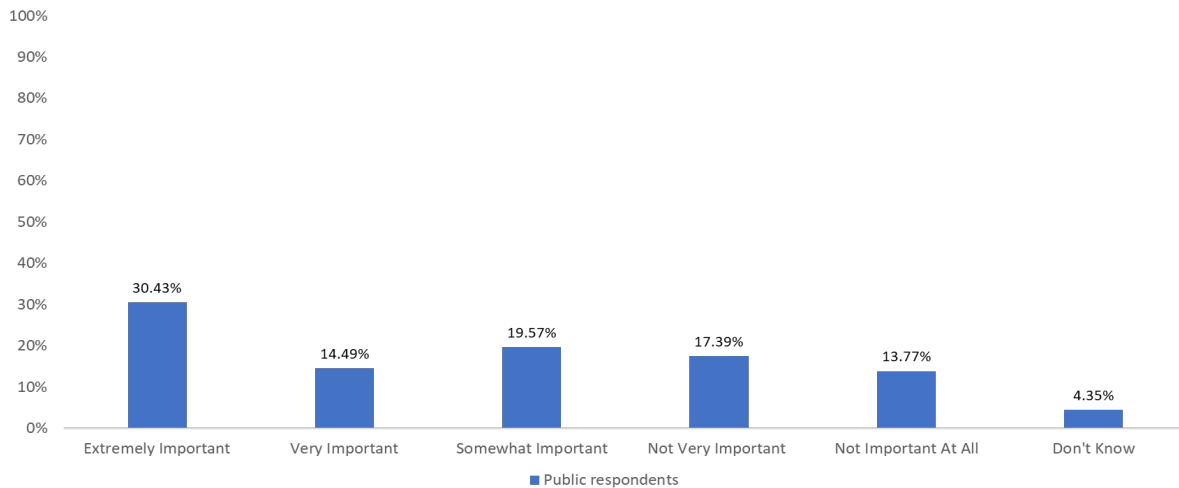
Narrative comments

Most comments in relation to the importance of the local fire engine suggest the main concern is the response time, with whichever location the fire engine is coming from being a secondary concern.

However, some comments reveal several potential reasons for preferring a local engine:

- Local knowledge (road network etc)

- Travel time from other locations

- Quicker response (suggesting a limited awareness of the 5 min delay with on-call)

- Reduces the need for a responding engine from outside area to be backfilled.

Additional comments also highlighted the need to strengthen the on-call duty system to improve the availability of fire engines; in particular the need to make the duty system more attractive to existing and prospective staff, and to promote it more and engage with local employers.

Overall number and availability of fire engines

This question was asked to gauge views on preferences over having a smaller overall number of fire engines but having better availability, or having the same number of fire engines but understanding that there are issues at times with availability.

54.6% of public and 47.2% of staff respondents preferred to maintain the current fleet size of fire engines, while 26.9% of public and 37.5% of staff respondents preferred to have fewer overall fire engines, but with better availability.
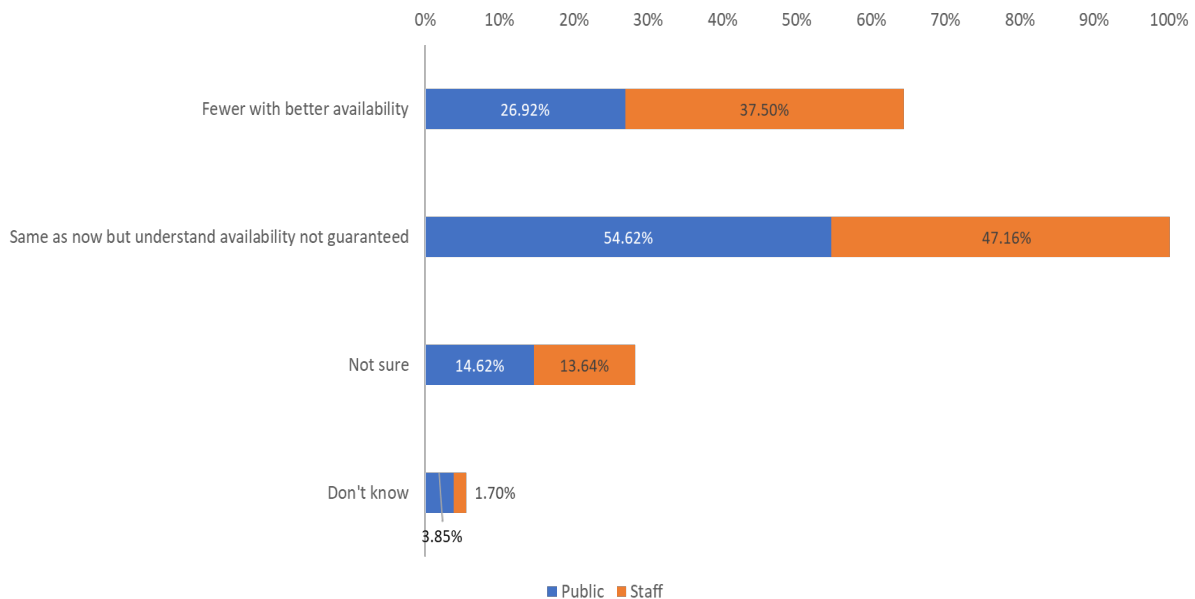
Narrative comments

Some comments from both staff and public respondents reference the wish for more resources and higher availability. Ultimately, this would require more financial resources than is currently available. More generally, a reduction in the number of fire engines was viewed as a reduction in overall resources.

Comments also alluded to the view that although engines may not always be available, the perception is that more engines equal more resilience. In essence, having them available some of the time is better than not having them at all.

Major incidents were one particular scenario where it was considered important to retain the current fleet size, for the ability to scale up resources and for resilience.

Some staff comments suggest that duty systems in some areas could be changed to increase cover, with others questioning the availability of on-call second fire engines.

- Some comments suggest the number of engines is not the material issue but the ability to meet response times/standards.

- Acknowledgement that on-call system needs to be reviewed made more attractive/sustainable to improve cover and availability.

  - Better pay

  - More flexibility around contracts

  - More utilisation

  - Impact of on-call migration and dual-role staff

Prioritising activities

Respondents (both public and staff) were asked to identify which of the Authority's functions they deemed as most important.

Public responses

Activity	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not At All Important	Don't Know
Responding to fires	96.2%	3.0%		0.8%		
Responding to RTCs	90.2%	9.9%				
Rescuing people from water	76.7%	18.8%	4.5%			
Rescuing trapped animals	21.8%	23.3%	37.6%	11.3%	6.0%	
Responding to some medical emergencies in certain locations	27.1%	35.3%	26.3%	4.5%	5.3%	1.5%
Major incident response	80.5%	13.5%	4.5%	0.8%		0.8%
Providing fire safety and health advice and fitting smoke alarms in the local community	22.0%	31.1%	33.3%	9.9%	3.8%	
Educating people on road safety	14.3%	23.3%	39.1%	15.8%	7.5%	
Running fire cadet units on fire stations for 11–17-year-olds	13.5%	25.6%	37.6%	18.1%	4.5%	0.8%
Working with the Prince's Trust to deliver its Team Programme for 16–24-year-olds	9.0%	24.1%	36.1%	21.1%	5.3%	4.5%
Working with young people to prevent fires and anti-social behaviour	26.3%	34.6%	25.6%	7.5%	4.5%	1.5%
Engaging schools through visits, our safety education centre, and tailored programmes for pupils at risk of exclusion	22.6%	37.6%	23.3%	13.5%	3.0%	
Providing volunteering opportunities	8.3%	29.3%	39.1%	12.0%	10.5%	0.8%
Delivering station open days within the community	10.6%	18.9%	48.5%	12.9%	8.3%	0.8%
Attending community events to engage people about safety	11.3%	27.1%	48.1%	9.8%	3.8%	
Providing fire safety advice to local businesses	17.3%	42.1%	30.8%	5.3%	3.8%	0.8%
Prosecuting businesses who don't comply with fire safety regulations	57.9%	29.3%	10.5%	0.8%		1.5%

Staff responses

Activity	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not At All Important	Don't Know
Responding to fires	99.39%		0.61%			
Responding to RTCs	98.78%	0.61%	0.61%			
Rescuing people from water	90.24%	6.71%	3.05%			
Rescuing trapped animals	38.41%	26.22%	29.27%	4.88%	1.22%	
Responding to some medical emergencies in certain locations	38.41%	28.66%	20.73%	6.71%	3.66%	1.83%
Major incident response	82.32%	13.41%	3.66%	0.61%		
Providing fire safety and health advice and fitting smoke alarms in the local community	32.32%	38.41%	23.17%	4.27%	1.83%	
Educating people on road safety	24.54%	40.49%	28.22%	6.75%		
Running fire cadet units on fire stations for 11–17-year-olds	10.98%	28.66%	37.80%	17.07%	3.66%	1.83%
Working with the Prince's Trust to deliver its Team Programme for 16–24-year-olds	8.59%	28.83%	37.42%	17.18%	5.52%	2.45%
Working with young people to prevent fires and anti-social behaviour	21.95%	46.95%	27.44%	2.44%	0.61%	0.61%
Engaging schools through visits, our safety education centre, and tailored programmes for pupils at risk of exclusion	21.34%	51.22%	21.34%	4.88%		1.22%
Providing volunteering opportunities	7.93%	28.66%	42.07%	14.63%	5.49%	1.22%
Delivering station open days within the community	19.75%	35.80%	27.16%	11.73%	4.94%	0.62%
Attending community events to engage people about safety	20.12%	40.24%	32.32%	6.71%	0.61%	
Providing fire safety advice to local businesses	25.00%	48.17%	23.17%	2.44%	1.22%	
Prosecuting businesses who don't comply with fire safety regulations	54.88%	35.98%	8.54%	0.61%		

An overwhelming majority of both staff and public respondents viewed the Authority's statutory functions as important (responding to fires and road traffic collisions, major incident response). Results and free text comments show a clear link and rationale for the Authority carrying out its statutory duties and most operational activity.

The carrying out of animal rescue is one area of operational activity which is viewed as having lower importance (45.1% of the public view it as very/extremely important compared to over 90% for other operational activity), along with responding to some medical emergencies in certain locations. This is reflected in some free text comments; suggesting the need to focus on the Authority's core role, highlighting cardiac response and medical

assistance (in particular the training and skills to perform the role versus paramedics/medical staff).

Amongst public respondents, the Authority's prevention work was, on average, viewed as extremely/very important by fewer people (between 33% and 60% of respondents viewing activity as extremely/very important depending on the specific activity). In contrast, views from staff on these issues were comparatively higher (in many cases over 10% higher). This suggests that the increased knowledge and awareness of these activities within the workforce has provided a higher awareness of the benefits they can bring.

Value for money and precept
Finally, public respondents were asked whether they considered that the authority provided value for money based on its current precept and for their views on increases/decreases to the precept in future.

A total of 66.9% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed the Authority provided value for money, against 6.2% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.
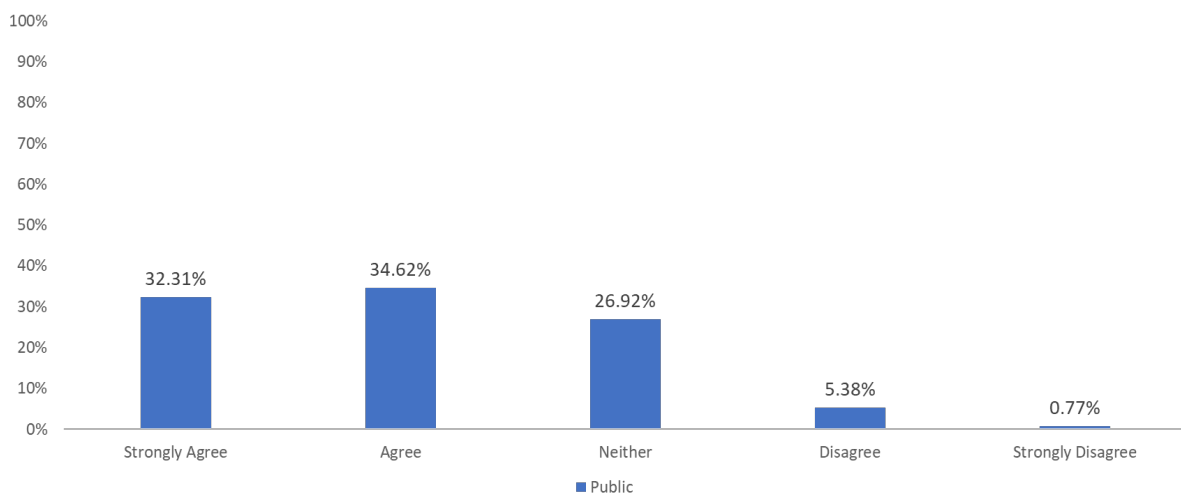
Future precept

Regarding any future precept, 63.4% of respondents said they would be willing to pay a higher precept to improve or maintain services compared to 16% who disagreed. Of those who were willing to pay a higher precept, the average annual increase they would increase the precept by was £6.90 on a Band D property.
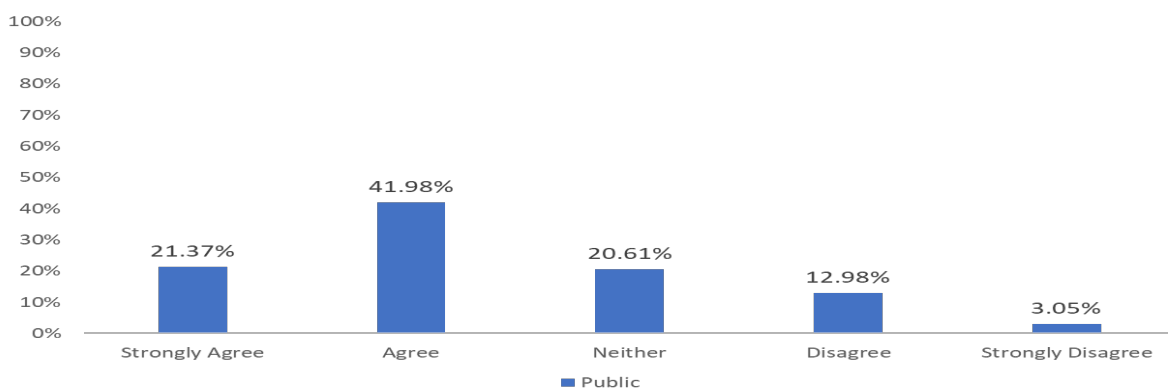
Conversely, 5.3% of respondents agreed that they would be willing to pay a lower precept on the understanding services would be reduced as a result. 75.6% of respondents disagreed to this. Of those who wanted the precept to reduce, the average amount that they would reduce it by would be £9.50 per year for a Band D property.
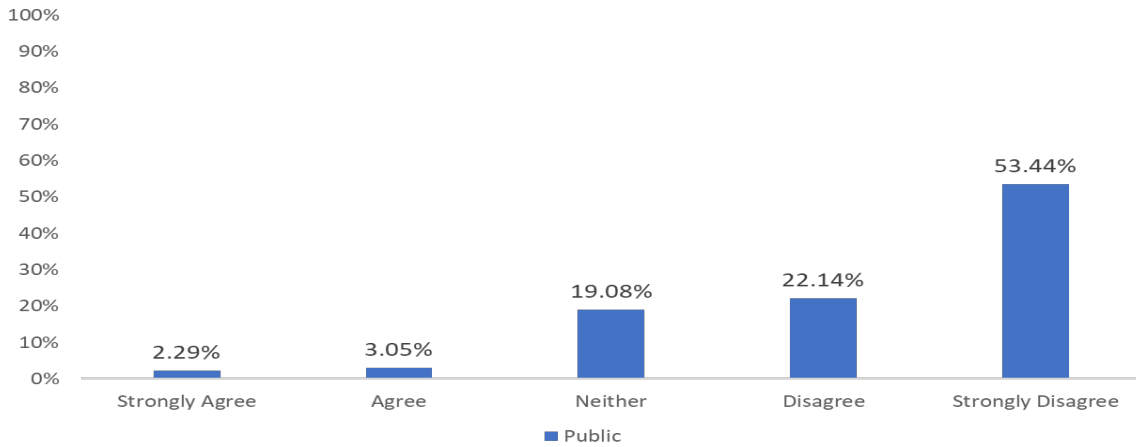
3.4 Influencing the Draft Community Risk Management Plan

The outcomes of the pre-consultation activity influenced the development of the draft CRMP in several areas. These are highlighted and summarised below:

Guiding principles

Although there was broad support for the guiding principles concerning the development of the CRMP and the fire cover review, feedback from the pre-consultation survey suggested that there was a preference to maintain the current operational fleet of 35 fire engines. This was further reinforced during the workshop sessions at Member Planning Days, where feedback from Fire Authority Members indicated a preference to maintain 35 fire engines and our current fire station footprint (28 fire stations).

This feedback was then used to develop and refine the options for the provision of fire cover, including in the development of the proposal within the draft CRMP. This is explained in more detail in the following section.

Wider feedback from staff centred on staff wellbeing and firefighter safety, as well as career progression, development, and culture. As a result, these issues have been addressed within the draft CRMP; firefighter safety is referenced as a specific risk to be addressed, while a section of the CRMP is dedicated to the organisation's cultural improvements.

Response standard

The feedback from the pre-consultation survey suggested that there was a preference to measure our response time from the time of call rather than the existing measure of from time of alert. The pre-consultation activity also highlighted a preference amongst respondents to have a single response standard for Cheshire, rather than a variable standard which would change according to local risks; as well as reporting this standard as an average response time.

In addition, the pre-consultation survey asked respondents to highlight how long they would expect a fire and rescue response to take in a variety of scenarios. The scenarios where human life was at risk all saw an expected response time of under ten minutes.

This feedback helped to influence the final proposal within the draft CRMP regarding the change to our response standard.

Fire and rescue risks

Several engagement mechanisms, including the survey and in staff, public and Member workshop sessions, asked participants to identify key fire and rescue related risks. It was notable that highlighted amongst emerging risks were the impact of climate change and the use of lithium-ion battery products such as electric vehicles and e-scooters/bikes.

This has then been referenced in the draft CRMP under the narrative for the respective risks and has influenced the development of the Authority's proposals to develop prevention advice relating to lithium-ion batteries.

Configuration of duty systems

Officers held workshop session with staff which considered the challenges facing the Authority regarding the provision of fire cover. During these sessions, staff were provided with information on the availability and demand of fire engines, as well as some overall costings. They were then asked to design their own duty systems using the same parameters as the fire cover review.

While each session resulted in different final outcomes, there was a general acknowledgement of the need to amend the existing configuration of fire cover arrangements if the desired improvement in daytime cover is to be achieved. Each workshop was also given the option to change the crewing at locations to a hypothetical new duty system if they so wished. This option was taken up by each group within the workshops and helped to inform the development of a new duty system through the fire cover review which could help to improve the availability of some fire engines in the weekday daytime.

4. Fire Cover Review and Options Development

The Authority undertakes a fire cover review periodically to ensure that it has the most effective configuration of emergency response resources in the right place to meet risks and demands.

These reviews are tied into the development of a CRMP given the lifespan of the respective plan. To inform the latest CRMP, officers carried out a fire cover review, using a range of data and intelligence sources and tools, as well as the feedback from the pre-consultation activities. More information on the work undertaken to carry out the fire cover review and develop and assess response options can be found via the following link:

https://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/downloads/documents/news_and_events/crmp_2024-28/draft_2024-2028_community_risk_management_plan_options_assessment_-_final.pdf

The outcomes of the review would then form the emergency response element of the CRMP and outline how these proposals would help to achieve the overarching guiding principles within the CRMP.

4.1 Fire Cover Review

The primary objective of the fire cover review was to assess whether our firefighters and fire engines operate in the right way, at the right time, in the right place. This helps us ensure that our resource provision is aligned most effectively to risks and demands in different parts of Cheshire, whilst providing value for money for the taxpayer.
The fire cover review includes a range of activities, such as:
- Analysing our historic incident data and performance against our targets.
- Carrying out a horizon scanning analysis to look for future risks and developments affecting fire and rescue services.
- Reviewing national reports and findings relating to the fire and rescue sector.
- Considering the response plans of our neighbouring fire and rescue services, and the plans of other agencies where appropriate.
- Using modelling software to predict the impact of any potential changes to the location or staffing of our resources on response times.

The fire cover review has also considered:

- Our emergency response standard. Determining whether our target for the time it takes to get to incidents remains fit for purpose.
- Fire engine requirement and crewing models. Determining the location and number of fire engines we need across Cheshire and the best way to crew these to meet risk, demand, and targets.
- Special appliances. Determining the type and capability requirements for specialist vehicles and resources, and the best location and crewing model for these.

4.2 Guiding Principles

To shape the review, a series of guiding principles to undertake the fire cover review were developed. These are slightly different to the principles used to develop the CRMP (referenced earlier in the document) but they do contribute towards their achievement.

Fire Authority Members agreed that any proposed changes to the fire cover model should:

- Improve response times.
- Reduce our reliance on On-Call fire engines, particularly during the day.

- Introduce more Wholetime fire engines in On-Call Station areas, resulting in increased capacity to deliver prevention and protection activity.
- Result in no fire station closures or building of new stations.
- Maintain the same cost base, whilst improving service, outputs, and value for money.

These principles were broadly supported through the pre-consultation engagement however during pre-consultation, it became apparent from Members, public and staff that there was a preference to maintain the current fleet of 35 frontline fire engines. Therefore, this criterion was included within the assessment.

As part of our Community Risk Management Model, officers also applied their professional judgement to reduce and mitigate risk. Officers also considered if the packages would provide viable and sustainable crewing arrangements.

Therefore, the criteria which packages were assessed against was extended to include:

- Satisfy the guiding principles of the fire cover review.
- Maintain 35 frontline fire engines.
- Be an appropriate level of fire cover to meet risks and demands; and
- Be viable and sustainable to operate.

For the package to be included within the draft CRMP 2024-28 for consultation it had to meet all the above assessment criteria.

4.3 Options Assessment

Through data analysis, officers developed a wide range of possible options. These were analysed using our Phoenix software to understand the impact they would have on our service provision. This allowed officers to discount a range of initial proposals based on them clearly not achieving improvements to response times or being cost prohibitive.

Four final options were developed for detailed consideration, with the option below being the only package meeting each of the respective guiding principles.

Package D		
Summary		
- Change Knutsford to Day Crewing - Convert four On-Call fire engines to full time crewing during weekdays (and remove On-Call cover outside these times); these would be the existing on-call fire engines at Runcorn, Macclesfield, Northwich and Winsford. - Reorganise the provision of full-time daytime cover within Warrington, sharing the wholetime fire engine cover between Birchwood and Stockton Heath (and remove the On-Call cover at Stockton Heath).		
Guiding Principle	**Meets / Achieves**	**Commentary**
Improve response times.	Yes	The overall package of proposals in this option would reduce our response time to primary fires.
Reduce our reliance on On-Call fire engines, particularly during the day	Yes	This option would reduce the number of on-call fire engines by 5, by changing

		them to wholetime weekday engines or day crewing.
More Wholetime fire engines in On Call Station areas, resulting in increased capacity to deliver prevention and protection activity	Yes	This option would provide flexible wholetime day cover across on-call areas throughout Cheshire.
No fire station closures or building of new stations.	Yes	Maintains existing station footprint.
Maintain the same cost base, whilst improving service, outputs, and value for money	Yes	This option is estimated to operate within a small increase (+£54k per year) to the current budget, this is achievable from within existing budgets. It is also predicted to increase capacity for firefighters to undertake community work and outputs. The introduction of a day crewing system at Knutsford is achievable as the Authority already owns housing adjacent to the station, removing the need to fund a capital spend on new housing.
Maintains frontline fleet of 35 fire engines	Yes	35 frontline fire engines are maintained.
Appropriate model to meet risks and demands	Yes	This option provides wholetime day cover across all on-call station areas and increases the capacity to meet risks and demands.
Operationally viable and sustainable	Yes	This option is deemed to be operationally viable and sustainable.

4.4 Preparing the Consultation Programme

As the above package of measures satisfied each of the guiding principles it was then presented to Members at a series of planning days in July 2023 for their consideration and feedback.

This then began a process of developing the draft Community Risk Management Plan and associated materials ready for the launch of a consultation process later in the year, subject to the formal approval by the Fire Authority in September 2023.

4.5 Consultation Governance

To provide assurance that the consultation process was carried out in accordance with established legislation and standard practices, the Authority contracted The Consultation Institute to provide a Quality Assurance (QA) assessment against the consultation programme.

The Consultation Institute is a leading not-for-profit best practice institute and membership body, promoting high-quality cross sector public and stakeholder consultation standards, workplace training and thought leadership.

Assessment against the Institute's QA criteria was carried out through the course of the consultation programme.

5. Summary of Consultation Programme

5.1 Overview of Consultation Programme

The consultation programme ran for 13 weeks between Monday 2 October 2023 and Tuesday 2 January 2024.

Consultation activity was split into three main strands to target distinct audiences, i.e. public consultation, staff consultation and consultation with partner agencies and other stakeholders.

5.2 Methodology

A range of methods were used to carry out the consultation programme. These were tailored to each strand of consultation and are listed below.

Public consultation

Website content

A dedicated microsite was created on the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service website www.cheshirefire.gov.uk, which could be accessed via the homepage of the website.

The microsite contained a range of information on the draft CRMP and the consultation programme, including:

- The draft CRMP and a summary.
- Equalities impact assessments.
- A summary of pre-consultation activity and feedback report.
- An assessment of options developed prior to consultation.

N.B. The options assessment was published after the launch of consultation and was placed on the website on 11 October. There was a total of 23 responses submitted prior to this date. Following publication, a prominent notice was placed on the website detailing that these respondents could submit a further response if required.

- Online animated videos, for each of the five emergency response proposals being consulted on.
- Contact details for consultees to respond to the consultation, including via the online survey, a dedicated consultation email address and by post. There were also details provided for anyone who required additional support or requests such as large print documents or alternative languages.
- A link to the online survey, hosted on the SurveyMonkey platform.

Consultation roadshows

A total of 32 roadshows were undertaken through the consultation period. These encompassed locations across the four unitary areas of Cheshire to ensure a wide range of residents could take part.

Each roadshow lasted for approximately two hours and was staffed by members of the consultation team, who engaged with members of the public and handed out paper copies of the CRMP Summary, survey, freepost return envelope and pen so that respondents could submit their surveys after considering the information.

Across the programme of roadshows, a total of 4,200 surveys were distributed.

A list of the roadshow events by date and location are provided below.

Date	Location	Unitary authority area
09/10/2023	Forge Shopping Centre, Stockton Heath	Warrington
10/10/2023	Sainsburys, Nantwich	Cheshire East
11/10/2023	ASDA, Birchwood	Warrington
17/10/2023	Booths, Knutsford	Cheshire East
18/10/2023	ASDA, Runcorn	Halton
23/10/2023	Tesco, Warrington	Warrington
24/10/2023	Tesco, Congleton	Cheshire East
25/10/2023	Tesco, Macclesfield	Cheshire East
30/10/2023	Halton Lea Library	Halton
30/10/2023	Knutsford Library	Cheshire East
31/10/2023	Frodsham Library	Cheshire West and Chester
01/11/2023	Nantwich Library	Cheshire East
01/11/2023	Winsford Library	Cheshire West and Chester
02/11/2023	Middlewich Library	Cheshire East
03/11/2023	Holmes Chapel Library	Cheshire East
06/11/2023	Winsford Library	Cheshire West and Chester
06/11/2023	Tarporley Library	Cheshire West and Chester
07/11/2023	Sainsburys, Chester	Cheshire West and Chester
08/11/2023	Bollington Library	Cheshire East
09/11/2023	Macclesfield Library	Cheshire East
14/11/2023	Audlem Village Hall	Cheshire East
21/11/2023	ASDA, Winsford	Cheshire West and Chester
21/11/2023	Sandbach Library	Cheshire East
22/11/2023	Tesco, Northwich	Cheshire West and Chester
23/11/2023	Poynton Library	Cheshire East
28/11/2023	Stockton Heath Library	Warrington
28/11/2023	Tesco, Helsby	Cheshire West and Chester
04/12/2023	ASDA, Crewe	Cheshire East
06/12/2023	ASDA, Widnes	Halton
11/12/2023	ASDA, Ellesmere Port	Cheshire West and Chester
11/12/2023	Birchwood Library	Warrington
13/12/2023	Alsager Library	Cheshire East

Social media channels

The Service utilised its own social media and online channels to promote the consultation and encourage those engaged with to have their say.

The primary channels used were the Service's Facebook account (41,000 followers) and X account (formerly Twitter, 51,000 followers). In addition to general posts encouraging people to have their say or promoting one of the public roadshows, a series of posts were issued which explained each of the five proposals in more detail and included the animated video for each respective proposal. As well as Facebook and Twitter, these posts were also published on the Service's LinkedIn account which has 6,450 followers.

Radio advertisement

For the first time during a consultation exercise, the Service made use of radio advertisement to raise awareness of the consultation programme and encourage participation. An advertising campaign was played on local Cheshire radio stations Silk FM and Dee FM, which has a combined audience of 37,000 listeners[2]. The campaign ran for two weeks from 13 – 27 November 2023. It featured regular advertisements across the broadcast programmes on each station (148 advertisements in total), as well as a link on the website of the stations themselves.

Press release

The Service issued a press release to mark the launch of the consultation programme on 2 October. The release provided some headline information on the consultation and encouraged readers to visit www.cheshirefire.gov.uk for more information and to respond.

The press release was issued to all mainstream print, online, radio and television outlets covering Cheshire using the Service's third-party media management platform PRInclusive.

Deliberative workshops

Two deliberative workshops were held with members of the public during the consultation period. The first was an online session on 14 December 2023 facilitated by CFRS officers and held via the Microsoft Teams platform.

The second was a physical workshop involving members of the Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre (CHAWREC) on 21 December 2023 at the offices of the Centre in Cuppin Street, Chester.

For both sessions, a standardised presentation was delivered which explained the proposals which were being consulted on and then sought views on each of the proposals.

CHAWREC BME Consultation Panel

CHAWREC maintains a 276-member consultation panel, consisting of minority ethnic individuals from across the four unitary authority areas in Cheshire. CHAWREC were contracted to provide their panel members with copies of the consultation material and a survey to complete and provide a response.

Neighbourhood Alert emails

The Service is a member of the Neighbourhood Alert email system, whereby interested parties can subscribe to receive emails about Service activities, campaigns, operational incidents etc. This system was also used to send information about the consultation and to encourage the 19,687 subscribers to respond.

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[2] www.media-info, Cheshire's Silk Radio - listening figures https://media.info/radio/stations/silk-1069/listening-figures, accessed 9 January 2024. Chester's Dee Radio - listening figures https://media.info/radio/stations/dee-radio/listening-figures, accessed 9 January 2024.

Staff consultation

Intranet content

A feature banner was created for the home page of the Service's intranet. The feature included details of the consultation process and proposals, as well as providing a link to the main page of the website where staff could read more information if required.

Management conference

A conference was held for managers across the Service on 12 October 2023. This was attended by 56 managers across a range of departments in the Service. The conference provided them with an opportunity to hear direct about the proposals, view the consultation presentation and materials and take part in providing their feedback.

Team and watch visits.

A total of 32 visits were carried out by senior officers to individual teams and watches across the organisation. Each visit involved a presentation which gave an overview of the consultation proposals, followed by a face-to-face discussion to seek feedback.

Staff focus group.

A staff focus group session was held on 18 December 2023. Participants were provided with a presentation explaining the proposals within the draft CRMP and their feedback against each of the proposals was sought. Attendees were representative of a range of departments and roles in the Service.

Internal newsletters

Articles were placed in The Green, the internal staff newsletter, throughout the period of consultation. The articles raised awareness of the consultation, provided details of the consultation proposals, and directed readers to the website to read more information and submit a response.

Email

All-user emails were issued to launch the consultation and as a final reminder before the close of consultation. The emails contained details of the proposals being consulted upon and directed readers to the website where they could read more information and submit a response via the online survey.

Partner consultation
Direct email

Partner organisations were sent a direct email to inform them of the content of the draft CRMP, raise awareness of the consultation and encourage a response.

- All Cheshire Members of Parliament.
- All unitary authorities and unitary councillors in Cheshire.
- All town and parish councils.

- Partners within the Cheshire Resilience Forum (this includes statutory partners such as Cheshire Constabulary, North West Ambulance Service and others such as the Environment Agency and Highways England).
- Cheshire and Warrington sub-regional partners
- Neighbouring fire and rescue services.

Face to face briefings

Face to face meetings and briefings were held with several partner agencies and stakeholders, concentrated on those who represented areas directly impacted by changes. These meetings were held throughout the course of the consultation programme and covered the following partners:

Members of Parliament

- Mike Amesbury MP
- Andy Carter MP
- Rt Hon Esther McVey MP
- Edward Timpson CBE MP
- David Rutley MP

Unitary authorities

- Cheshire East Health and Communities Committee
- Cheshire West and Chester Scrutiny Committee
- Halton Safer Policy and Performance Board
- Warrington Stronger Communities Committee

Town and Parish Councils

- Birchwood Town Council
- Bollington Town Council
- Frodsham Town Council
- Holmes Chapel Parish Council
- Knutsford Town Council
- Macclesfield Town Council
- Nantwich Town Council
- Northwich Town Council
- Poynton Town Council
- Stockton Heath Parish Council
- Winsford Town Council

5.3 Survey Response Rates

A total of 459 survey responses were received. Of these, 377 respondents identified as members of the public: 21 as members of staff and three as stakeholders:

- Knutsford Town Council,
- Chester Aid to the Homeless
- Cheshire West and Chester councillor (unnamed)

In addition to this, there was one email response from a member of the public. Four respondents stated they were 'none of the above' while 52 respondents chose not to answer the question.

Ten submissions from partners were received via email:

- Fire Brigades Union
- West Cheshire Trades Union Council
- Warrington and District Trades Union Council
- Chester Retired Firefighters
- Birchwood Town Council
- Bollington Town Council
- Holmes Chapel Parish Council
- Northwich Town Council
- Stockton Heath Parish Council
- Councillor Sam Naylor (Cheshire West and Chester councillor)

5.4 Analysis and Reporting

All survey responses were input into the online survey platform SurveyMonkey.

The consultation survey asked participants several open, free-text questions. Responses to each of these questions were coded into themes using tags based on the content of the specific comment.

All data analysis work has been conducted "in-house" by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service officers.

6. Identification and Management of Risk

6.1 Background and Proposals

As per the Fire and Rescue National Framework, the purpose of a Community Risk Management Plan is to identify and address fire and rescue related risks for the Authority.

The draft CRMP outlines several key risks facing Cheshire and a range of plans and/or proposals to address and mitigate them. These risks are also referred to in the summary CRMP document.

Therefore as part of the consultation, respondents were asked to what extent they considered that the draft CRMP identifies key fire and rescue risks; whether the proposals within the CRMP address the risks identified; and if there are any additional risks which respondents feel should be considered in the development of the final CRMP.

6.2 Identification of Risk

Summary of Survey Responses

Q1 To what extent do you think that our draft 2024-2028 CRMP sufficiently identifies the key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire?
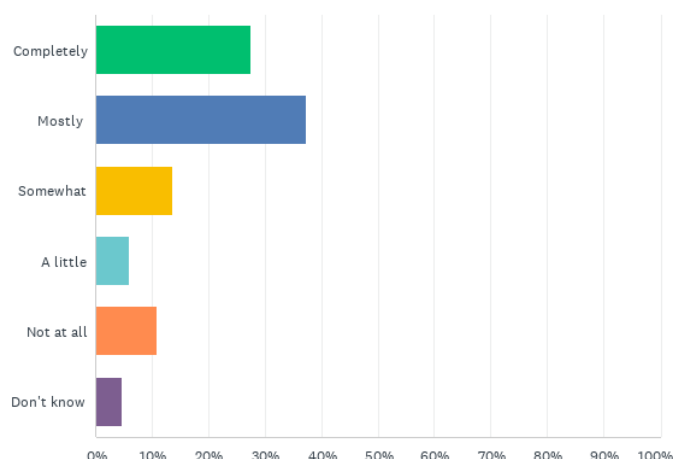
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Completely	27.45%	126
Mostly	37.25%	171
Somewhat	13.73%	63
A little	5.88%	27
Not at all	10.89%	50
Don't Know	4.79%	22
Total	**100.00%**	**459**

The chart above shows that 64.70% of respondents felt that the draft CRMP either completely or mostly identifies the key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire, compared to 16.77% of respondents who felt it identified only few or no risks.

Public responses
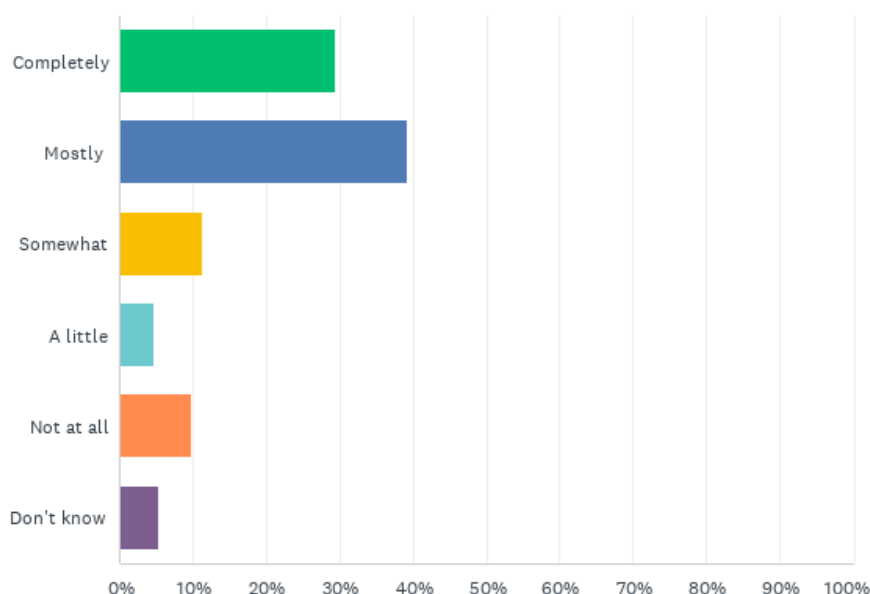
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Completely	29.44%	111
Mostly	39.26%	148
Somewhat	11.41%	43
A little	4.77%	18
Not at all	9.81%	37
Don't Know	5.31%	20
Total	**100.00%**	**377**

Of the 377 respondents who declared that they were a member of the public, a total of 68.70% considered that the draft CRMP either completely or mostly identified the key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire, compared to 14.58% who felt the draft CRMP identified either few risks or none at all. A further 11.41% of respondents stated they felt the draft CRMP somewhat identified the key fire and rescue risks, while 5.31% said they did not know.

Geographic analysis

The tables below provide an analysis of response by the specific locality in which the respondent lives. The analysis covers the unitary authority area of the respondent, their postcode/post-town (using the first part of a full postcode), and the nearest fire station to the respondent. It is important to note that not all respondents will have answered each of the questions in the survey, therefore totals for each category will vary.

The degree to which respondents feel the draft CRMP identifies key fire and rescue risks (from completely to not at all) are provided in each table.

Where levels of respondents in a specific locality are above the average overall figure (either completely or mostly agree the draft CRMP identifies key fire and rescue risks in the above chart, a combined 68.70%) they are colour coded green. Where levels of response in a specific locality are below the average overall figure (the draft CRMP either identifies a little or no risks in the above chart, a combined 14.58%) they are colour coded red.

This can help to highlight any localised issues regarding whether consultees consider the draft CRMP to have identified key fire and rescue risks, however caution should be used given low levels of response in some areas and it should not be treated as a definitive opinion.

Please note that respondents can answer individual questions regarding their unitary area, home postcode or nearest fire station therefore individual totals by each criterion may differ.

Response by unitary authority area

Total responses (inc. other and Prefer Not to Say (PNTS)): 376

Geography	No. of responses	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't Know
Cheshire East	154	26.62%	53.25%	11.69%	1.30%	1.30%	5.84%
Cheshire West and Chester	120	20.00%	28.33%	12.50%	10.00%	22.50%	6.67%
Halton	32	59.38%	34.38%	6.25%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Warrington	62	38.71%	30.65%	9.68%	4.84%	11.29%	4.84%

Response by Post Town/Postcode

Total responses: 383

Geography	No. of responses	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't Know
Cheshire East							
Alsager (ST7)	8	12.50%	87.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Audlem (CW3)	2	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Crewe (CW1, CW2)	60	25.00%	50.00%	16.67%	0.00%	3.33%	5.00%
Congleton (CW12)	18	27.78%	55.56%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Holmes Chapel (CW4)	7	28.57%	57.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%
Knutsford (WA16)	21	23.81%	57.14%	4.76%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%
Macclesfield (SK10, SK11)	28	28.57%	53.57%	14.29%	3.57%	0.00%	0.00%
Middlewich (CW10)	4	0.00%	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Nantwich (CW5)	8	37.50%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%
Poynton (SK12)	4	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sandbach (CW11)	11	27.27%	54.55%	9.09%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%
Wilmslow (SK9)	4	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Cheshire West and Chester							
Chester (CH1, CH2, CH3, CH4)	12	25.00%	66.67%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Ellesmere Port (CH65, CH66)	4	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Frodsham (WA6)	20	35.00%	45.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	15.00%
Malpas (SY14)	1	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Neston (CH64)	0	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Northwich (CW8, CW9)	52	11.54%	13.46%	19.23%	17.31%	30.77%	7.69%
Tarporley (CW6)	4	0.00%	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Winsford (CW7)	12	33.33%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	16.77%	0.00%
Halton							
Runcorn (WA7)	14	50.00%	35.71%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Widnes (WA8, L24)	11	63.64%	36.36%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Warrington							
Birchwood (WA3)	8	75.00%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Lymm (WA13)	1	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Geography	No. of responses						
Penketh (WA5)	6	33.33%	33.33%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%
Stockton Heath (WA4)	25	28.00%	36.00%	12.00%	4.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Warrington (WA1, WA2)	38	39.47%	47.37%	2.63%	0.00%	0.00%	10.53%

Response by Nearest Fire Station

Total responses: 286

Geography	No. of responses	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't Know
Nearest Fire Station							
Alsager	9	22.22%	77.78%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Audlem	2	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Birchwood	8	50.00%	12.50%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%
Bollington	5	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Chester	9	22.22%	66.67%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Congleton	16	25.00%	62.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Crewe	21	19.05%	47.62%	19.05%	0.00%	4.76%	9.52%
Ellesmere Port	4	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Frodsham	17	29.41%	52.94%	5.88%	0.00%	0.00%	11.76%
Holmes Chapel	6	33.33%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	16.67%
Knutsford	15	13.33%	73.33%	6.67%	0.00%	0.00%	6.67%
Lymm	4	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Macclesfield	16	18.75%	56.25%	18.75%	6.25%	0.00%	0.00%
Malpas	1	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Middlewich	4	0.00%	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Nantwich	5	40.00%	40.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%
Northwich	55	10.91%	14.55%	16.36%	14.55%	38.18%	5.45%
Penketh	5	40.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Powey Lane	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poynton	4	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Runcorn	14	57.14%	35.71%	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sandbach	8	37.50%	50.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Stockton Heath	17	29.41%	17.65%	17.65%	0.00%	35.29%	0.00%
Tarporley	4	0.00%	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Warrington	13	30.77%	46.15%	0.00%	7.69%	7.69%	7.69%
Widnes	5	60.00%	40.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Wilmslow	6	16.67%	83.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Winsford	13	15.38%	38.46%	7.69%	15.38%	15.38%	7.69%

Commentary

The analysis shows that across three of four unitary areas most respondents consider the draft CRMP to identify at least most key fire and rescue risks (with the exception of Cheshire West and Chester with 48.33% of respondents). Analysis at a more granular local level reveals that there are some localities where thought is more pronounced, in particular around Northwich. Analysing the additional comments provided by these residents reveals that the fire cover proposal at Northwich has been a factor in response, mentioned in over one third of additional comments from Northwich residents.

While fewer additional comments have been provided by Stockton Heath residents, over 40% of these relate to the fire cover proposals, which also suggests the planned changes to fire cover have factored into the consideration of Stockon Heath residents in their response to whether the draft CRMP identifies the key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire.

Demographic analysis

The table below provides an analysis of the extent to which the respondent considers the draft CRMP has identified key fire and rescue risks according to the demographic characteristics of the respondent.

Levels of opinion to the package of proposals are provided in each table. It is important to note that not all respondents will have answered each of the questions in the survey, therefore totals for each category will vary. Data is included for those who have preferred not to identify each demographic characteristic.

Where respondents in a specific demographic are above the average overall figure (those who consider the draft CRMP to completely or mostly identify key risks in the overall chart, a combined 68.70%) they are colour coded green. Where consultees in a specific locality are below the average overall figure (those stating the draft CRMP identifies little or no key risks in the overall chart, a combined 14.58%) they are colour coded red.

To protect the anonymity of respondents and enable reporting, some categories with a lower level of response such as non-majority religious beliefs or ethnicities have been grouped together and reported against those who form the majority religion/ethnicity or have not stated any option. As with the geographic analysis, caution should be used given low levels of response in some demographics and it should not be treated as a definitive opinion. Respondents can also answer all or some of the criteria questions.

Demographic	No. of responses	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't Know
Age							
Under 18	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
18-24	7	28.57%	42.86%	0.00%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%
25-34	13	30.77%	23.08%	23.08%	0.00%	15.38%	7.69%
35-44	40	15.00%	37.50%	12.50%	5.00%	30.00%	0.00%
45-54	41	17.07%	31.71%	14.63%	14.63%	17.07%	4.88%
55-64	58	25.86%	41.38%	12.07%	1.72%	17.24%	1.72%
65-74	111	39.64%	44.14%	8.11%	1.80%	0.90%	5.41%
75+	74	39.19%	47.30%	4.05%	0.00%	0.00%	9.46%
Prefer not to say (PNTS)	10	0.00%	40.00%	50.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Gender							
Male	165	28.48%	44.85%	12.12%	3.03%	6.67%	4.85%
Female	178	33.15%	37.64%	9.55%	4.49%	10.11%	5.06%
Other or PNTS	17	0.00%	29.41%	23.53%	17.65%	17.65%	11.76%
Trans Identity							
Yes	2	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%
No	262	26.34%	44.27%	11.07%	4.20%	10.31%	3.82%
PNTS	15	0.00%	26.67%	26.67%	20.00%	13.33%	13.33%
Ethnicity							
White British	319	33.23%	42.63%	8.46%	3.13%	7.21%	5.33%
Black and Minority Ethnic Group (BAME)	21	14.29%	28.57%	9.52%	9.52%	33.33%	4.76%
PNTS	9	0.00%	22.22%	55.56%	11.11%	0.00%	11.11%
Religion							
No religion	72	22.22%	43.06%	12.50%	4.17%	11.11%	6.94%
Christian	193	30.05%	45.60%	8.29%	3.63%	8.29%	4.15%
Other religion	6	33.33%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	16.67%	16.67%
PNTS	38	31.58%	34.21%	23.68%	5.26%	2.63%	2.63%
Disability Status							
Disabled	63	36.51%	31.75%	12.70%	3.17%	9.52%	6.35%
Not Disabled	263	28.90%	44.49%	9.13%	3.80%	8.75%	4.94%
PNTS	20	15.00%	40.00%	20.00%	10.00%	10.00%	5.00%

Sexual Orientation							
Heterosexual	284	32.39%	42.96%	9.15%	2.11%	8.45%	4.93%
Gay/Lesbian	6	33.33%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	16.67%
Bisexual	5	40.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Other or PNTS	38	10.53%	36.84%	23.68%	18.42%	7.89%	2.62%

Commentary

While low levels of response in some metrics mean caution should be applied to analysis, there are two demographic groups where there are more substantial levels of respondents and further analysis may provide insight as to specific response levels.

In relation to age, there are higher levels of those aged under 65 who do not consider the draft CRMP to sufficiently identify key risks. This is most pronounced in the 35-44 age cohort (where 35% do not consider the CRMP to identify risk). Additional comments from these age groups suggest that opposition to the proposed changes to fire cover, particularly in Northwich and Stockton Heath, have been a factor in the survey results.

Regarding gender, there is a higher level of women and those who prefer not to say who do not consider the draft CRMP to identify key risks. When free text comments from these respondents are considered, this also suggests that the fire cover proposals have been a factor in response, specifically the conversion of four on-call fire engines to weekday fire engines and the impact on overnight and weekend resilience.
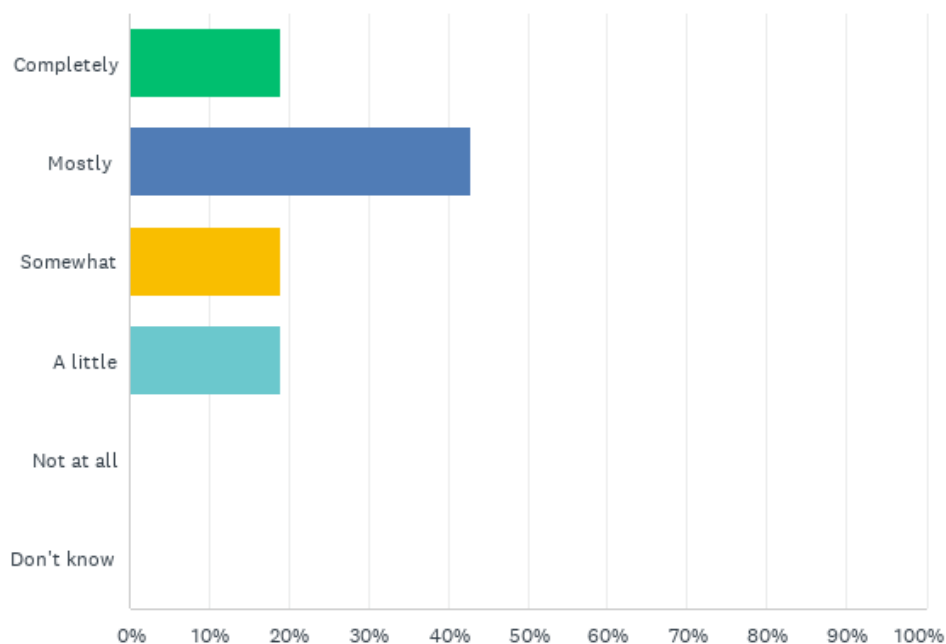
Staff responses

Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Completely	19.05%	4
Mostly	42.86%	9
Somewhat	19.05%	4
A little	19.05%	4
Not at all	0.00%	0
Don't Know	0.00%	0
Total	**100.00%**	**21**

Amongst responses from staff, 61.91% of respondents agreeing the draft CRMP completely or mostly identifies the key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire, compared to 19.05% of respondents who felt the draft CRMP identified few of the risks. A further 19.05% of respondents felt the draft CRMP somewhat identified key risks.

Partner responses

The three partner agencies who provided a survey response all stated the draft CRMP either completely or mostly identified key fire and rescue risks.

6.3 Summary of Free Text Responses

Respondents were asked to consider any additional risks that they feel the Authority should consider as part of the CRMP process. A total of 171 comments were provided. Of these, 61 comments (35.67%) stated that the respondent had no further comment to make.

Many of the comments related to issues which were already accounted for within the draft CRMP itself. There were 38 comments (22.22%) which concern the provision of fire cover within the county, including feedback which referred to the fire cover proposals within the consultation.

A further 14 comments (8.19%) were made in relation to risks from transport networks. Specific risks highlighted include the volume of incidents on the road network and the emerging risk of electric vehicles.

The number of motorway crashes daily on the m56 and m6, the increasing number of electric cars with fires, the increased flooding in all of cheshire.

As more battery powered cars, bicycles, trains etc come into use, the fire risk due to these high flammable batteries could significantly increase.

<div align="right">

Responses from Northwich residents

</div>

Other risks which were highlighted include the impact of climate change (10 comments, 5.85%); ensuring that the Authority has considered the impact of increasing occurrences of flooding and wildfires. The perceived risk from an increasing population and growth in housing (9 comments, 5.25%) was also mentioned by some respondents.

Projected ageing population and increased dwelling poses greater risk. Secondly, the increase in electric vehicles increase the chance of lithium fires. Much more difficult to put out and risks dwellings in immediate proximity. These risks are not adequately quantified.

<div align="right">

Response from a Cheshire West and Chester resident

</div>

Ageing population and many old people being part cared for at home present an increased fire risk. Where NHS send elderly patients home fire risk should be assessed and fire alarms/smoke alarms provided.

<div align="right">

Response from a Chester resident

</div>

6.4 Management of Risks
Summary of Survey Responses

Q3 To what extent do you think that the package of proposals within the draft CRMP address the fire and rescue risks that we have identified?
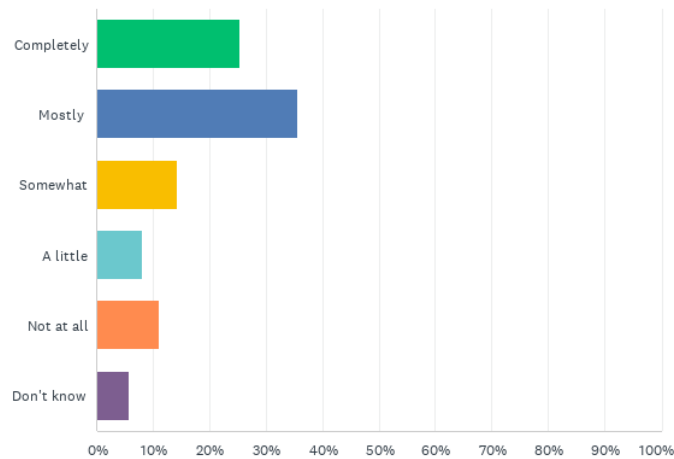
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Completely	25.27%	116
Mostly	35.51%	163
Somewhat	14.38%	66
A little	8.06%	37
Not at all	11.11%	51
Don't Know	5.66%	26
Total	**100.00%**	**459**

The chart above shows that 60.78% of respondents agreed that the draft CRMP either completely or mostly addresses the key fire and rescue risks that have been identified, compared to 19.17% of respondents who felt that the draft CRMP either did not address the risks or only addressed a few risks.

Public responses
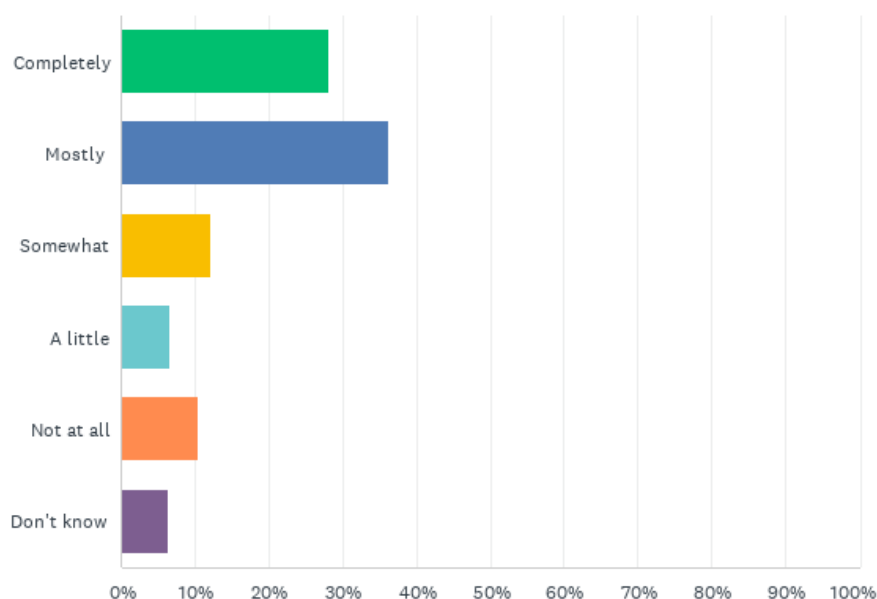
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Completely	28.12%	106
Mostly	36.34%	137
Somewhat	12.20%	46
A little	6.63%	25
Not at all	10.34%	39
Don't Know	6.37%	24
Total	**100.00%**	**377**

Of the 377 respondents who identified as being members of the public, 64.46% considered that the proposals within the draft CRMP either completely or mostly addressed the fire and rescue risks identified; whereas 16.97% felt that the draft CRMP either addressed few risks or none at all. A further 12.20% felt the draft CRMP somewhat addressed the key fire and rescue risks, while 6.37% of respondents did not know.

Geographic analysis

The tables below provide an analysis of response by the specific locality in which the respondent lives. The analysis covers the unitary authority area of the respondent, their postcode/post-town (using the first part of a full postcode), and the nearest fire station to the respondent. It is important to note that not all respondents will have answered each of the questions in the survey, therefore totals for each category will vary.

The degree to which respondents feel the draft CRMP identifies key fire and rescue risks (from completely to not at all) are provided in each table.

Where levels of respondents in a specific locality are above the average overall figure (either completely or mostly agree the draft CRMP addresses the identified fire and rescue risks in the above chart, a combined 64.46%) they are colour coded green. Where levels of response in a specific locality are below the average overall figure (the draft CRMP either addresses little or no risks in the above chart, a combined 16.97%) they are colour coded red.

This can help to highlight any localised issues regarding whether consultees consider the proposals within the draft CRMP to sufficiently address key fire and rescue risks; however caution should be used given low levels of response in some areas and it should not be treated as a definitive opinion. Respondents could answer all or some of the questions regarding unitary area, postcode and nearest fire station therefore individual totals will differ.

Response by unitary authority area

Total responses (inc. other and Prefer Not to Say (PNTS)): 376

Geography	No. of responses	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't Know
Cheshire East	154	26.62%	48.05%	14.29%	1.95%	1.30%	7.79%
Cheshire West and Chester	120	18.33%	29.17%	9.17%	13.33%	23.33%	6.67%
Halton	32	53.13%	31.25%	12.50%	0.00%	3.13%	0.00%
Warrington	52	37.10%	27.42%	11.29%	9.68%	8.06%	6.45%

Response by Post Town/Postcode

Total responses: 383

Geography	No. of responses	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't Know
Cheshire East							
Alsager (ST7)	8	37.50%	37.50%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Audlem (CW3)	2	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Crewe (CW1, CW2)	60	25.00%	50.00%	16.67%	0.00%	3.33%	5.00%
Congleton (CW12)	18	27.78%	55.56%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Holmes Chapel (CW4)	7	28.57%	57.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%
Knutsford (WA16)	21	23.81%	57.14%	4.76%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%
Macclesfield (SK10, SK11)	28	28.57%	53.57%	14.29%	3.57%	0.00%	0.00%
Middlewich (CW10)	4	0.00%	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Nantwich (CW5)	8	37.50%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%
Poynton (SK12)	4	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sandbach (CW11)	11	27.27%	54.55%	9.09%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%
Wilmslow (SK9)	4	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Cheshire West and Chester							
Chester (CH1, CH2, CH3, CH4)	12	25.00%	66.67%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Ellesmere Port (CH65, CH66)	4	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Frodsham (WA6)	20	25.00%	55.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	15.00%
Malpas (SY14)	1	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Neston (CH64)	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Northwich (CW8, CW9)	52	11.54%	9.62%	15.38%	26.92%	30.77%	5.77%
Tarporley (CW6)	4	0.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Winsford (CW7)	12	16.67%	50.00%	8.33%	0.00%	16.67%	8.33%
Halton							
Runcorn (WA7)	14	35.71%	35.71%	21.43%	0.00%	7.14%	0.00%
Widnes (WA8, L24)	11	63.64%	36.36%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Warrington							
Birchwood (WA3)	8	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Lymm (WA13)	1	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Penketh (WA5)	6	33.33%	33.33%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%

Geography	No. of responses	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't Know
Stockton Heath (WA4)	25	28.00%	28.00%	16.00%	12.00%	12.00%	4.00%
Warrington (WA1, WA2)	38	31.58%	47.37%	2.63%	2.63%	2.63%	13.16%

Response by Nearest Fire Station

Total responses: 286

Geography	No. of responses	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't Know
Nearest Fire Station							
Alsager	9	33.33%	55.56%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Audlem	2	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Birchwood	8	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%
Bollington	5	60.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%
Chester	9	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Congleton	16	37.50%	37.50%	18.75%	0.00%	0.00%	6.25%
Crewe	21	19.05%	38.10%	28.57%	9.52%	0.00%	4.76%
Ellesmere Port	4	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Frodsham	17	23.53%	58.82%	0.00%	0.00%	5.88%	11.76%
Holmes Chapel	6	16.67%	83.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Knutsford	15	20.00%	66.67%	0.00%	0.00%	6.67%	6.67%
Lymm	4	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%
Macclesfield	16	18.75%	50.00%	18.75%	0.00%	6.25%	6.25%
Malpas	1	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Middlewich	4	0.00%	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Nantwich	5	60.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%
Northwich	55	10.91%	10.91%	14.55%	25.45%	34.55%	3.64%
Penketh	5	40.00%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Powey Lane	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poynton	4	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Runcorn	14	42.86%	35.71%	21.43%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sandbach	8	37.50%	50.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Stockton Heath	17	29.41%	11.76%	17.65%	11.76%	23.53%	5.88%
Tarporley	4	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Warrington	13	38.46%	23.08%	7.69%	15.38%	7.69%	7.69%
Widnes	5	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Wilmslow	6	16.67%	83.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Winsford	13	15.38%	38.46%	15.38%	0.00%	30.77%	0.00%

Commentary

Across three of the four unitary areas (with the exception of Cheshire West and Chester), most respondents considered that the draft CRMP addresses key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire. When analysis is undertaken at a more local level, there are some locations where respondents are more inclined to consider the draft CRMP does not address key risks. The notable location is Northwich, which is the only location (by postcode and nearest fire station metrics) where there is a majority of respondents who do not consider the draft CRMP to address sufficient risks.

Cross-analysis of free text comments provided by these respondents shows that the proposed change to fire cover in Northwich is a material factor in response. This is also apparent, albeit to a lesser extent, in relation to the proposed change of fire cover involving Stockton Heath and the lower than average levels of local residents considering the draft CRMP addresses fire and rescue risks.

Demographic analysis

The table below provides an analysis of the extent to which the respondent considers the draft CRMP has identified key fire and rescue risks according to the demographic characteristics of the respondent.

Levels of opinion to the package of proposals are provided in each table. It is important to note that not all respondents will have answered each of the questions in the survey, therefore totals for each category will vary. Data is included for those who have preferred not to identify each demographic characteristic.

Where respondents in a specific demographic are above the average overall figure (those who consider the draft CRMP to completely or mostly address key risks in the overall chart, a combined 64.46%) they are colour coded green. Where consultees in a specific locality are below the average overall figure (those stating the draft CRMP addresses little or no key risks in the overall chart, a combined 16.97%) they are colour coded red.

To protect the anonymity of respondents and enable reporting, some categories with a lower level of response such as non-majority religious beliefs or ethnicities have been grouped together and reported against those who form the majority religion/ethnicity or have not stated any option. As with the geographic analysis, caution should be used given low levels of response in some areas and it should not be treated as a definitive opinion. As above, respondents could answer all or some of the demographic questions which may lead to different totals for different metrics.

Demographic	No. of responses	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Don't Know
Age							
Under 18	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
18-24	7	28.57%	42.86%	0.00%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%
25-34	13	30.77%	23.08%	23.08%	0.00%	15.38%	7.69%
35-44	40	15.00%	37.50%	12.50%	5.00%	30.00%	0.00%
45-54	41	17.07%	31.71%	14.63%	14.63%	17.07%	4.88%
55-64	58	25.86%	41.38%	12.07%	1.72%	17.24%	1.72%
65-74	111	39.64%	44.14%	8.11%	1.80%	0.90%	5.41%
75+	74	39.19%	47.30%	4.05%	0.00%	0.00%	9.46%
Prefer not to say (PNTS)	10	0.00%	40.00%	50.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Gender							
Male	165	27.27%	41.21%	11.52%	4.85%	7.88%	7.27%
Female	178	30.90%	35.96%	10.67%	7.30%	10.11%	5.06%
Other or PNTS	17	5.88%	17.65%	35.29%	17.65%	17.65%	5.88%
Trans Identity							
Yes	2	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%
No	262	26.34%	39.31%	11.45%	7.25%	11.45%	4.20%
PNTS	15	6.67%	20.00%	33.33%	13.33%	20.00%	6.67%
Ethnicity							
White British	319	31.35%	40.13%	9.09%	5.64%	7.21%	6.58%
Black and Minority Ethnic Group (BAME)	21	14.29%	19.05%	19.05%	9.52%	33.33%	4.76%
PNTS	9	11.11%	33.33%	44.44%	0.00%	11.11%	0.00%
Religion							
No religion	72	20.83%	36.11%	13.89%	6.94%	13.89%	8.33%
Christian	193	30.05%	43.01%	8.81%	6.22%	7.77%	4.15%
Other religion	6	50.00%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	16.67%	16.67%
PNTS	38	28.95%	31.58%	26.32%	7.89%	5.26%	0.00%
Disability Status							
Disabled	63	34.92%	34.92%	9.52%	1.59%	12.70%	6.35%

Not Disabled	263	27.76%	39.92%	9.89%	7.22%	8.75%	6.46%
PNTS	20	15.00%	30.00%	35.00%	10.00%	10.00%	0.00%
Sexual Orientation							
Heterosexual	284	30.63%	41.55%	8.45%	4.93%	9.15%	5.28%
Gay/Lesbian	6	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	16.67%
Bisexual	5	40.00%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Other or PNTS	38	10.53%	21.05%	34.21%	21.05%	7.89%	5.26%

Commentary

While low levels of response in some metrics mean caution should be applied to analysis, there are two demographic groups where there are more substantial levels of respondents and further analysis may provide insight as to specific response levels.

In relation to age, there are higher levels of those aged under 65 who do not consider the draft CRMP to sufficiently address key risks. This is most pronounced in the 35-44 age cohort (where 35% do not consider the CRMP to address risk). Additional comments from these age groups suggest that opposition to the proposed changes to fire cover, particularly in Northwich and Stockton Heath, have been a factor in the survey results.

Regarding gender, there is a higher level of women and those who have preferred not to say who do not consider the draft CRMP to address key risks. When free text comments from these respondents are analysed, this also suggests that the fire cover proposals have influenced responses, particularly in relation to the conversion of four on-call fire engines to weekday fire engines and the perceived impact on overnight and weekend resilience.
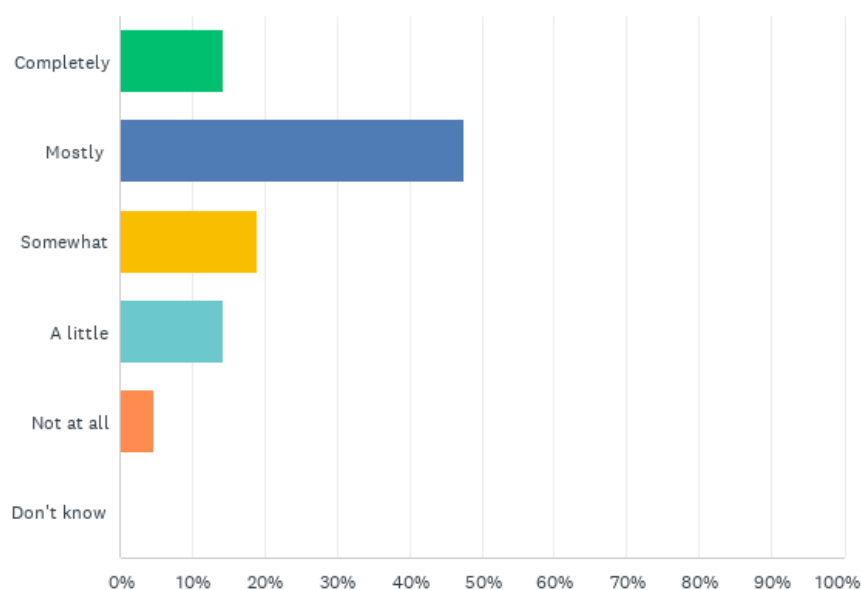
Staff responses

Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Completely	14.29%	3
Mostly	47.62%	10
Somewhat	19.05%	4
A little	14.29%	3
Not at all	4.76%	1
Don't Know	0.00%	0
Total	**100.00%**	**21**

Responses from staff were similar to the sentiment from the public responses; with 61.91% of staff respondents agreeing the draft CRMP completely or mostly addresses the key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire, compared to 19.05% of respondents who felt the draft CRMP addressed few or none of the risks.

Partner responses

The three partner agencies who provided a survey response all stated the proposals within the draft CRMP either completely or mostly addressed key risks which had been identified.

6.5 Summary of Free Text Responses

Public responses

There were 126 free text responses provided by public consultees. Of these, 44 (34.92% of comments) were where respondents had indicated they had no further comment to make.

The provision of fire cover was referenced in 36 (28.56%) comments. 19 of these were respondents highlighting their preference for increased levels of fire cover across the county, in particular calling for more use of full-time resources.

> *"Obviously, you need greater provision of 24/7 appliances and staff, but to do that you need more money! This seems to be a highly competent use of resource within the budget you have. I am surprised by the very low availability of part-time staff and equipment. You obviously need to understand the drivers around this very low availability."*
>
> *Response from a Runcorn resident*

Nine comments (7.14%) raised a concern over the fire cover proposals and the subsequent impact on overnight and weekend cover.

> *"Why are all the plans for increased firefighters in the week - what's going on at weekend. Surely it would be best that at some sites the full time fire fighter posts were Tuesday to Saturday and then at other sites Sunday to Thursday - so that there is cover into the weekends."*
>
> *Response from a Cheshire West resident*

There were eight comments (6.34%) which related directly to the proposals regarding Northwich and Stockton Heath Fire Stations. Comments regarding Northwich expressed concerns over the loss of the second fire engine, while the Stockton Heath comments queried the need for the selling of the housing stock and called for the current on-call provision to be maintained.

> *"Provide adequate cover for Northwich which means not losing the second fire engine based in the town".*
>
> *Response from a Northwich resident*

> *"I think it important that the on-call firefighters renting houses should only be moved out if it is clear they have realistic accommodation alternatives (Stockton Heath). Is selling Authority houses at Stockton Heath really necessary?"*
>
> *Response from a Macclesfield resident*

A further five comments (3.97%) were provided regarding on-call availability, with respondents suggesting that there should be increased focus on recruitment and retention with better pay structures, which may alleviate availability issues within the on-call system.

"More recruitment in the on-call with better pay and improved conditions. Speak to other local groups mountain rescue/lifeboats who manage to provide cover in these areas for very little reward."

<div align="right">Response from a Frodsham resident</div>

The prevention activities in the community were referenced in 17 comments (13.49%). Respondents expressed their preference for more education and awareness in the community around a range of existing risks (smoke alarms, road safety, evacuation plans, electrical safety) and new and emerging risks such as electric vehicles.

"I am not sure the risks from, and dangers faced, from lithium-ion batteries in their various forms and uses is addressed strongly enough. This is an emerging issue but has the potential to be a serious risk and challenge to the F&RS."

<div align="right">Response from a Holmes Chapel resident</div>

There were five comments provided by staff respondents, of which one stated they had no further comment to make. Three comments related to the fire cover proposals, specifically a concern over a perceived reduction in service levels in Stockton Heath and from the conversion of four on-call fire engines to weekday engines.

Staff feedback

Four staff comments were received. One states the respondent has no further comment to make, while two comments relate to the proposed changes to fire cover. A further comment highlights the need to ensure adequate water supplies to non-domestic premises (NDPs):

"The process for ensuring adequate water supplies for all new NDP's requires a review, specifically in relation to the provision of hydrants and their addition to Firecore. Liaison between building control and Protection need to be better to ensure that the required water supplies are actually provided."

<div align="right">Response from a member of staff within Service Delivery</div>

6.6 Additional Staff Feedback

Feedback from a staff focus group held on 18 December 2023 referred to some risks identified within the draft CRMP and the proposals to address them.

Vulnerable families and domestic violence were raised as risks that should be highlighted within the CRMP. A question was raised as to whether local unitary level multi-agency meetings between fire and other partners were still being regularly held. The participant felt that these were a useful forum for resolving local issues but that post-Covid they had not been held as regularly as before.

One participant suggested that the Service's Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP), used to prioritise the inspection of non-domestic premises, could be improved. They said that the list of properties to be inspected that is generated by the RBIP doesn't always match to the data captured in the Service's SAFFIRE system or that changes in the use of a premises are not reflected in the RBIP. Pop-up shops were highlighted as a specific example of where changes in use are not reflected.

6.7 Partner Feedback

There were no significant comments on this issue received from partners.

7. Safe Use of Lithium-Ion Battery Products

7.1 Background and Proposal

The growth of lithium-ion battery powered products is seen as a new and emerging risk for fire and rescue services; particularly given the growth of the electric vehicle market and increasing use of electric bikes and scooters.

The consultation sought feedback from respondents on what type of lithium-ion products they own in the home, as well as any key safety considerations they have regarding these products. This feedback is intended to help shape the development of fire prevention advice regarding the use of lithium-ion battery products.

7.2 Ownership of Lithium-Ion Products

Overall Response

Q5 Are there any of the following lithium-ion battery powered products in your household? (Tick all that apply)
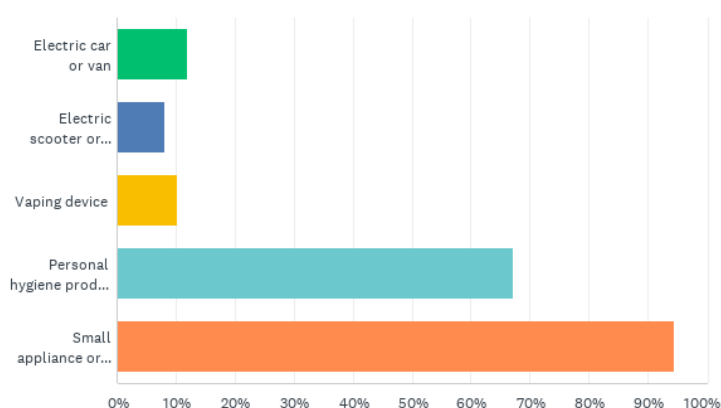
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Electric car or van	11.93%	50
Electric scooter or e-bike	8.11%	34
Vaping device	10.26%	43
Personal hygiene product	67.06%	281
Small appliance or toy	94.51%	396

N.B. The total number of respondents was 419. As respondents could select more than one answer, the number of responses for each option may not tally with the total number of respondents.

The chart above shows that amongst respondents the vast majority owned a small lithium-ion appliance such as a mobile phone, laptop, digital camera, or toy, while over two thirds of respondents owned a product such as a rechargeable toothbrush or other hygiene product.

Fewer respondents stated that they owned a vaping device, or a larger item such as electric bike or vehicle.

Public Survey
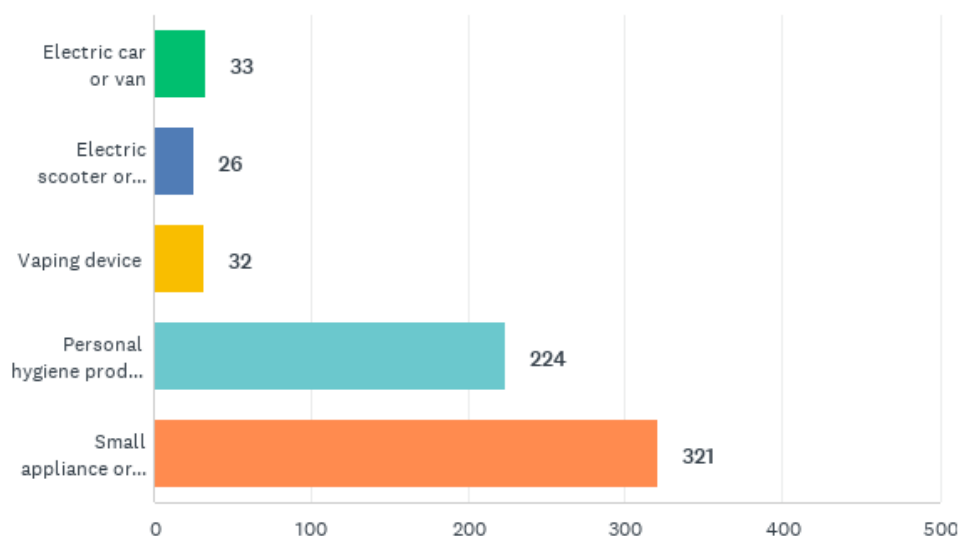
Option	Number of responses	Percentage
Electric car or van	33	9.62%
Electric scooter or e-bike	26	7.58%
Vaping device	32	9.33%
Personal hygiene product	224	65.31%
Small appliance or toy	321	93.59%

N.B. The total number of respondents was 343. Please note that respondents could select more than one option to the above question, therefore total responses may not correlate to the number of survey responses received.

Geographic analysis

Geography	No. of responses	Electric car or van	Electric scooter or bike	Vaping device	Personal hygiene product	Small appliance or toy
Cheshire East	141	9.22%	7.80%	7.09%	68.09%	95.74%
Cheshire West and Chester	108	9.26%	10.19%	11.11%	67.59%	92.59%
Halton	30	3.33%	3.33%	13.33%	50.00%	96.67%
Warrington	56	14.29%	5.36%	8.93%	64.29%	87.50%

N.B. The total number of respondents was 343. Please note that respondents could select more than one option to the above question, therefore total responses may not correlate to the number of survey responses received.

Analysis by unitary area reveals that there is near universal ownership of a small appliance (e.g. mobile phone, tablet) and a majority ownership of a hygiene product (e.g. electric toothbrush). Ownership of vaping devices are more prevalent in respondents from Halton, followed by Cheshire West and Chester, while ownership of an electric car or van is highest amongst respondents living in Warrington.

Demographic analysis

Demographic	No. of responses	Electric car or van	Electric scooter or bike	Vaping device	Personal hygiene product	Small appliance or toy
Age (Total respondents: 319)						
Under 18	0	-	-	-	-	-
18-24	7	14.29%	14.29%	28.57%	42.86%	100.00%

25-34	11	18.18%	18.18%	9.09%	81.82%	90.91%
35-44	39	7.69%	10.26%	12.82%	74.36%	94.87%
45-54	41	20.00%	2.86%	17.14%	80.00%	94.29%
55-64	56	5.36%	12.50%	16.07%	67.86%	91.07%
65-74	106	9.43%	5.66%	3.77%	64.15%	92.45%
75+	65	3.13%	4.69%	3.13%	54.69%	96.88%
Gender (Total respondents: 315)						
Male	148	10.81%	6.76%	7.43%	66.22%	92.57%
Female	167	8.98%	7.19%	11.38%	64.07%	94.01%

N.B. respondents could answer all, or some, of the demographic questions, which may lead to different totals for different metrics.

Commentary

When comparing data by the age of respondents, it can be seen there is near universal ownership of small appliances (smartphones, tablets etc) amongst all age groups. In most age groups (except 18-24) there are a majority of respondents who own a personal hygiene product (e.g. rechargeable toothbrush). Ownership of vaping devices is higher amongst those of working age, particularly the 18-24 age group.

Ownership of electric vehicles is highest amongst respondents aged 45-54, followed by the 25.34 age group (who also have the highest ownership of an electric scooter or bicycle).

Analysis by gender of respondents reveals little difference between male and female respondents regarding the ownership of different types of lithium-ion products, with ownership of vaping devices slightly more prevalent amongst female respondents.

Staff survey
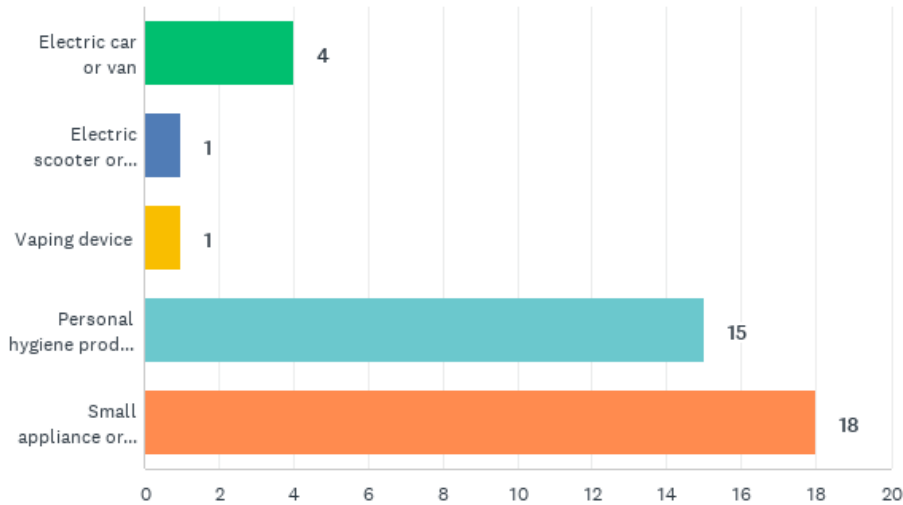
Option	Number of responses	Percentage
Electric car or van	4	22.22%
Electric scooter or e-bike	1	5.56%
Vaping device	1	5.56%
Personal hygiene product	15	83.33%
Small appliance or toy	18	100.00%

N.B. The total number of respondents was 18. Please note that respondents could select more than one option to the above question, therefore total responses may not correlate to the number of survey responses received.

Commentary

While response levels are lower, there is also universal ownership of a small lithium-ion product amongst staff, and a majority of respondents own a personal hygiene product like a rechargeable toothbrush. There were comparatively more owners of electric vehicles than public respondents.

Partner feedback

There were no significant comments on this issue received from partners.

7.3 Safety Advice
Overall Response

Q6 Regarding lithium-ion battery products, would you like to receive safety information on any of the following issues? (Tick all that apply)
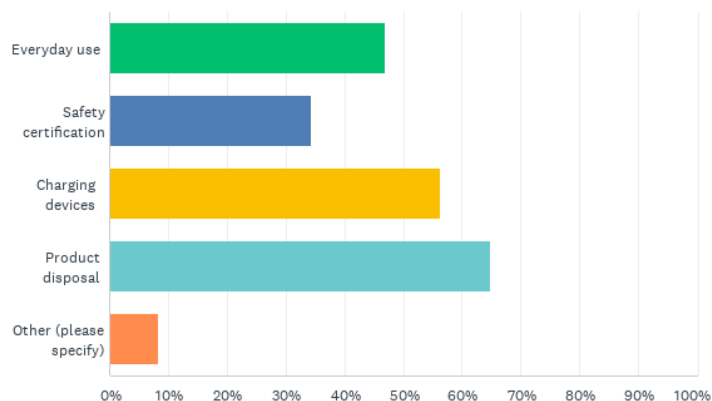
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Everyday use	46.98%	140
Safety certification	34.23%	102
Charging devices	56.38%	168
Product disposal	64.77%	193
Other	8.39%	25

N.B. The total number of respondents was 298. Please note that respondents could select more than one option to the above question, therefore total responses may not correlate to the number of survey responses received.

A total of 298 respondents answered this question. Responses indicate a broad spread in preferences regarding safety advice, albeit most respondents would prioritise information regarding the safe charging of devices (56.38%) and the safe disposal of products (64.77%). The spread of references suggests a need to provide a holistic approach to advice which covers several themes.

Of the 25 respondents who provided an "other" response, most of these stated that the individual had no further comment to make. A small number of comments highlighted that advice should also incorporate information related to electric vehicles and safety regarding domestic solar panels and accompanying battery installations.

Public survey
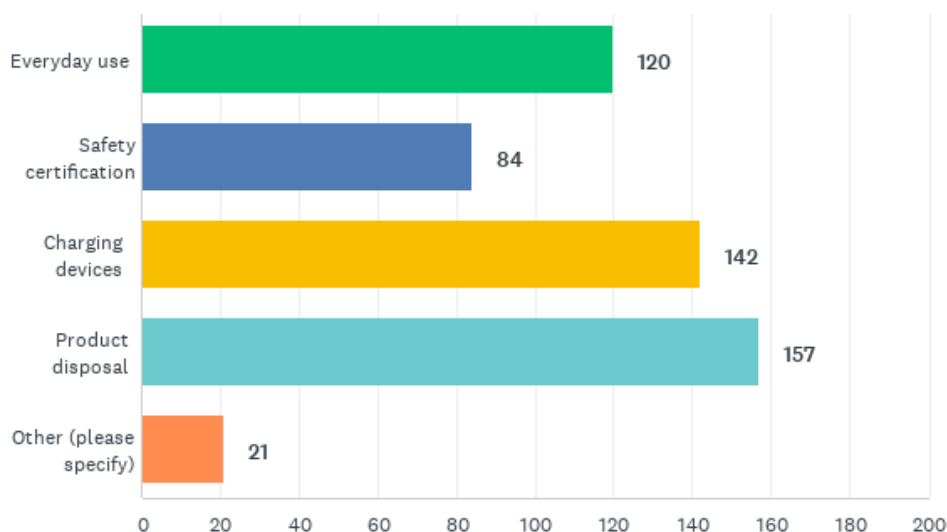
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Everyday use	48.98%	120
Safety certification	34.29%	84
Charging devices	57.96%	142
Product disposal	64.08%	157
Other	8.57%	21

N.B. The total number of respondents was 245. Please note that respondents could select more than one option to the above question, therefore total responses may not correlate to the number of survey responses received.

Commentary

Amongst public respondents, a majority would prefer to receive safety advice regarding safely disposing of a lithium-ion battery product, followed by advice on safe charging of devices. While under half would prefer advice on everyday use or safety certification of products, sufficient responses suggest that the safety advice developed in relation to lithium-ion needs to be holistic in nature, covering several different issues.

Staff survey
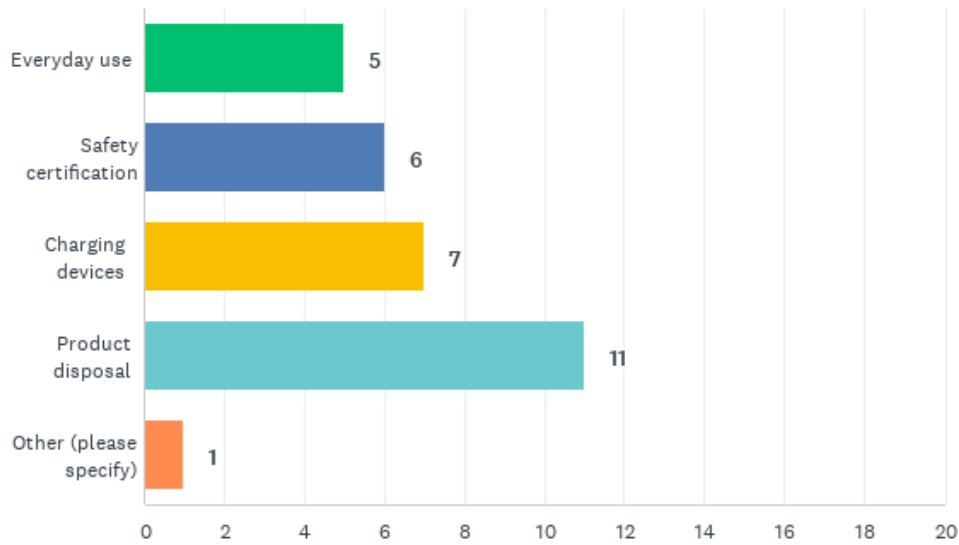
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Everyday use	33.33%	5
Safety certification	40.00%	6
Charging devices	46.67%	7
Product disposal	73.33%	11
Other	6.67%	1

N.B. The total number of respondents was 15. Please note that respondents could select more than one option to the above question, therefore total responses may not correlate to the number of survey responses received.

Commentary

Amongst staff respondents, although there is also a broad preference of safety advice, there is a higher concentration of respondents who would prefer to receive safety advice that provides information on how to safely dispose of lithium-ion battery products.

Partner feedback

There were no significant comments received on this issue from partners.

8. Changing How We Measure and Report Our Response Time

8.1 Background and Proposal

There is no national standard for measuring and reporting the response times of fire and rescue services. Each service has its own response standard according to its local risks and demands.

The Home Office measures the response times of each fire and rescue service using a standard methodology from the time a 999 call is answered. The incident data that it uses to report on this response time is compiled from primary fires i.e. fires involving buildings, vehicles, and other insurable property.

While this provides a consistent and more comparable set of data to use, it does not reflect the Service's current response standard of attending life risk incidents within ten minutes, with a target of meeting this on 80% of occasions.

This performance data is referred to by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) when they are conducting their inspection activity.

The draft CRMP therefore proposes:

Change our response standard from a response standard of ten minutes to life-risk incidents, with a target of meeting this on 80% of occasions, to an average response time to all primary fires within ten minutes.

Instead of starting the clock when the fire station is alerted, reporting would begin from when the 999 call is answered, before the control operator alerts the station. This is earlier in the 999-call process.

There are several reasons behind the proposed change. The proposed new standard is the same as that used by the Home Office and some other fire and rescue services. This makes comparison and benchmarking against peers more effective. The change to primary fires provides a considerably larger data set against which to measure the standard by than the cohort of life-risk incidents, providing a more robust gauge of performance.

Pre-consultation activity also revealed a preference for reporting from the time a 999 call is answered and highlighted that using an average response time is easier to understand.

8.2 Summary of Survey Responses
Overall response

Q7 To what extent do you support our proposed changes to how we measure our response times and how we report them?
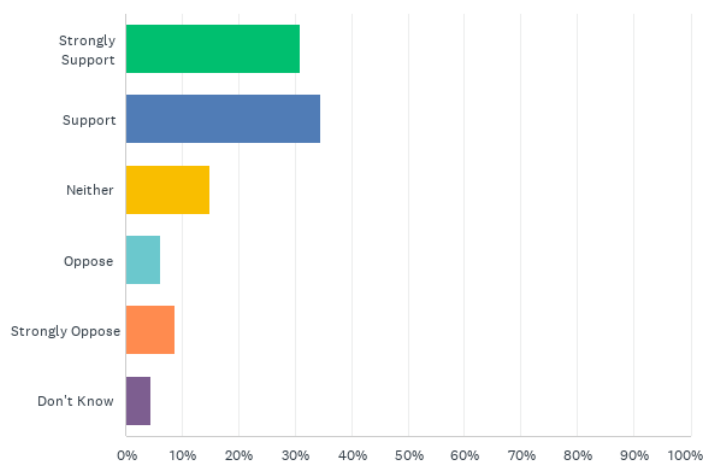
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Strongly Support	31.00%	137
Support	34.62%	153
Neither	14.93%	66
Oppose	6.11%	27
Strongly Oppose	8.82%	39
Don't Know	4.52%	20
Total	**100.00%**	**442**

The responses from the survey show that, overall, 65.62% of respondents expressed their support for the proposed change (those who answered strongly support or support), while 14.93% of respondents stated their opposition (oppose or strongly oppose) to the proposed change in measuring and reporting the response time. A further 14.93% stated they neither supported nor opposed the change. There were 20 respondents (4.52%) who stated they did not know.

Public Response
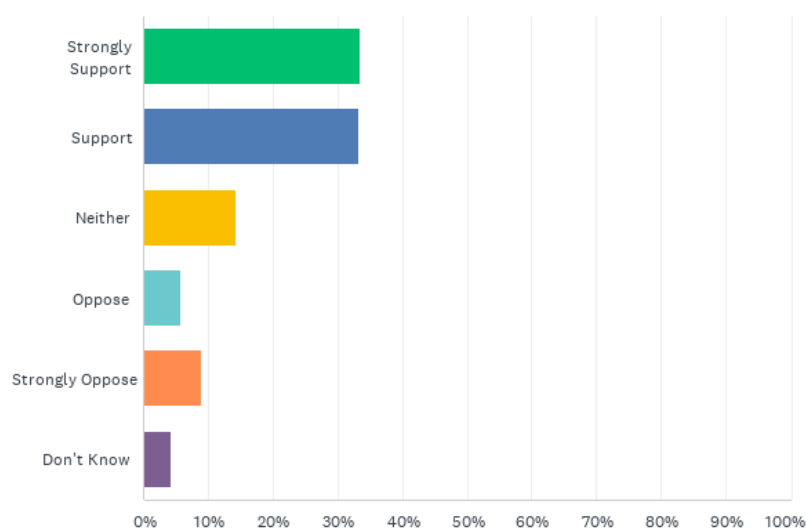
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Strongly Support	33.42%	126
Support	33.16%	125
Neither	14.32%	54
Oppose	5.84%	22
Strongly Oppose	9.02%	34
Don't Know	4.24%	16
Total	**100.00%**	**377**

Amongst the 377 respondents who identified themselves as members of the public, 66.58% expressed support for the proposed change in the measuring and reporting of response times, compared to 14.86% who opposed the change.

Geographic analysis

The tables below provide an analysis of response by the specific locality in which the respondent lives. The analysis covers the unitary authority area of the respondent, their postcode/post-town (using the first part of a full postcode), and the nearest fire station to the respondent. It is important to note that not all respondents will have answered each of the questions in the survey, therefore totals for each category will vary.

Levels of overall support and opposition to proposal is provided in each table.

Where levels of support in a specific locality are above the average overall figure (strongly support and support in the above chart, a combined 66.58%) they are colour coded green. Where levels of opposition in a specific locality are above the average overall figure (strongly oppose and oppose in the above chart, a combined 14.86%) they are colour coded red.

This can help to identify any localised areas of higher support or opposition to the proposal; however caution should be used given low levels of response in some areas and it should not be treated as a definitive opinion.

Respondents could also answer all, or some, demographic questions therefore the individual response totals for each question may differ.

Response by unitary authority area

Total responses (inc. other and Prefer Not to Say (PNTS)): 376

Geography	No. of responses	Strongly Support	Support	Neither	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
Cheshire East	154	31.82%	47.40%	12.34%	2.60%	1.30%	4.56%
Cheshire West and Chester	120	25.83%	20.83%	19.17%	10.83%	18.33%	5.00%
Halton	32	62.50%	25.00%	6.25%	6.25%	0.00%	0.00%
Warrington	62	38.71%	25.81%	16.13%	4.84%	9.68%	4.84%

Response by Post Town/Postcode

Total responses: 383

Geography	No. of responses	Strongly Support	Support	Neither	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
Cheshire East							
Alsager (ST7)	8	37.50%	62.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Audlem (CW3)	2	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Crewe (CW1, CW2)	60	26.67%	55.00%	10.00%	1.67%	3.33%	3.33%
Congleton (CW12)	18	22.22%	66.67%	5.56%	0.00%	5.56%	0.00%
Holmes Chapel (CW4)	7	57.14%	42.86%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Knutsford (WA16)	21	23.81%	38.10%	23.81%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%
Macclesfield (SK10, SK11)	28	28.57%	50.00%	14.29%	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%
Middlewich (CW10)	4	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Nantwich (CW5)	8	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Poynton (SK12)	4	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sandbach (CW11)	11	27.27%	72.73%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Wilmslow (SK9)	4	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Cheshire West and Chester							
Chester (CH1, CH2, CH3, CH4)	12	66.62%	25.00%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Ellesmere Port (CH65, CH66)	4	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Frodsham (WA6)	20	45.00%	50.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Malpas (SY14)	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Neston (CH64)	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Northwich (CW8, CW9)	52	13.46%	7.69%	30.77%	17.31%	21.15%	9.62%
Tarporley (CW6)	4	0.00%	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Winsford (CW7)	12	25.00%	25.00%	33.33%	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%
Halton							
Runcorn (WA7)	14	64.29%	21.43%	7.14%	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%
Widnes (WA8, L24)	11	72.73%	27.27%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Warrington							
Birchwood (WA3)	8	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Lymm (WA13)	1	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Penketh (WA5)	6	33.33%	16.67%	33.33%	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%
Stockton Heath (WA4)	25	32.00%	12.00%	24.00%	16.00%	12.00%	4.00%
Warrington (WA1, WA2)	38	34.21%	39.47%	15.79%	0.00%	0.00%	10.53%

Response by Nearest Fire Station

Total responses: 286

Geography	No. of responses	Strongly Support	Support	Neither	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
Nearest Fire Station							
Alsager	9	44.44%	55.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Audlem	2	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Birchwood	8	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%
Bollington	5	60.00%	20.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Chester	9	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Congleton	16	25.00%	62.50%	6.25%	0.00%	6.25%	0.00%
Crewe	21	28.57%	33.33%	19.05%	4.76%	4.76%	9.52%
Ellesmere Port	4	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Frodsham	17	41.18%	52.94%	0.00%	5.88%	0.00%	0.00%
Holmes Chapel	6	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Knutsford	15	13.33%	53.33%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	13.33%
Lymm	4	75.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Macclesfield	16	31.25%	43.75%	18.75%	6.25%	0.00%	0.00%
Malpas	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Middlewich	4	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Nantwich	5	60.00%	40.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Northwich	55	16.36%	5.45%	29.09%	14.55%	27.27%	7.27%
Penketh	5	40.00%	40.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Powey Lane	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poynton	4	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Runcorn	14	64.29%	28.57%	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sandbach	8	12.50%	87.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Stockton Heath	17	29.41%	0.00%	29.41%	11.76%	23.53%	5.88%
Tarporley	4	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Warrington	13	46.15%	30.77%	7.69%	0.00%	15.38%	0.00%
Widnes	5	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Wilmslow	6	33.33%	50.00%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Winsford	13	15.38%	38.46%	23.08%	0.00%	23.08%	0.00%

Commentary

In many areas of Cheshire, most respondents support the proposal; with no unitary or smaller geographies having most respondents who oppose the proposal.

Across three of the four unitary areas of Cheshire, most respondents expressed support for the proposal. The exception to this was across Cheshire West and Chester, where 46.66% of respondents supported the proposal. Cheshire West and Chester also has the highest proportion of respondents who oppose the proposal (19.16%).

When considering more local areas, the comparatively higher opposition in Cheshire West and Chester is because of higher than average levels of opposition amongst respondents in the Northwich area, and to a lesser extent, Tarporley and Winsford areas.

Cross analysis of additional comments from Cheshire West and Chester residents suggest opinion on the fire cover proposals could be impacting on the response to this proposal, with fire cover changes referenced in almost a quarter of comments. To a lesser degree, this trend is reflected in comments from Stockton Heath residents, suggesting that this may also be a factor in higher than average levels of local opposition in the Stockton Heath area.

Demographic analysis

The table below provides an analysis of levels of support/opposition to the proposal according to the demographic characteristics of the respondent.

Levels of overall support and opposition to the package of proposals are provided in each table. It is important to note that not all respondents will have answered each of the questions in the survey, therefore totals for each category will vary. Data is included for those who have preferred not to identify each demographic characteristic.

Where levels of support in a specific demographic are above the average overall figure (strongly support and support in the overall chart, a combined 66.58%) they are colour coded green. Where levels of opposition in a specific locality are above the average overall figure (strongly oppose and oppose in the overall chart, a combined 14.86%) they are colour coded red.

To protect the anonymity of respondents and enable reporting, some categories with a lower level of response such as non-majority religious beliefs or ethnicities have been grouped together and reported against those who form the majority religion/ethnicity or have not stated any option. Caution should be used given low levels of response in some metrics and it should not be treated as a definitive opinion. Respondents could also answer all, or some, demographic questions therefore the individual response totals for each question may differ.

Demographic	No. of responses	Strongly Support	Support	Neither	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
Age							
Under 18	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
18-24	7	28.54%	42.86%	14.29%	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%
25-34	13	23.08%	23.08%	23.08%	7.69%	23.08%	0.00%
35-44	40	20.00%	32.50%	22.50%	5.00%	20.00%	0.00%
45-54	41	14.63%	36.59%	14.63%	7.32%	21.95%	4.88%
55-64	58	32.76%	36.21%	6.90%	10.34%	10.34%	3.45%
65-74	111	38.74%	36.04%	18.02%	3.60%	0.90%	2.70%
75+	74	51.35%	31.08%	8.11%	1.35%	0.00%	8.11%
Prefer not to say (PNTS)	10	10.00%	60.00%	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%	0.00%
Gender							
Male	165	35.15%	32.73%	15.76%	6.06%	7.27%	3.03%
Female	178	33.71%	35.96%	15.17%	4.49%	6.74%	3.93%
Other or PNTS	17	11.76%	35.29%	5.88%	17.65%	23.53%	5.88%
Trans Identity							
Yes	2	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%
No	262	31.68%	35.11%	15.27%	6.11%	8.02%	3.82%
PNTS	15	13.33%	26.67%	13.33%	20.00%	20.00%	6.67%
Ethnicity							
White British	319	37.30%	35.74%	12.54%	4.39%	6.27%	3.76%
Black and Minority Ethnic Group (BAME)	21	14.29%	23.81%	33.33%	14.29%	9.52%	4.76%
PNTS	9	22.22%	44.44%	22.22%	11.11%	0.00%	0.00%
Religion							
No religion	72	23.61%	34.72%	18.06%	9.72%	8.33%	5.56%
Christian	193	38.86%	35.23%	12.44%	4.66%	5.70%	3.11%
Other religion	6	33.33%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%
PNTS	38	28.95%	36.84%	21.05%	5.26%	7.89%	0.00%
Disability Status							
Disabled	63	39.68%	26.98%	15.87%	1.59%	9.52%	6.35%
Not Disabled	263	33.84%	36.12%	14.07%	6.06%	6.08%	3.42%
PNTS	20	25.00%	40.00%	5.00%	10.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Sexual Orientation							

Heterosexual	284	37.68%	34.15%	12.68%	5.28%	6.34%	3.87%
Gay/Lesbian	6	33.33%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	16.67%
Bisexual	5	60.00%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Other or PNTS	38	10.53%	36.84%	28.95%	10.53%	13.16%	0.00%

Commentary

While caution is needed given low response in some demographics, there are some variances to highlight. Where respondents were recorded, all age groups showed a majority in support of the proposed change except for the 25-34 age group (46.16% support). This age group also had the highest level of opposition (30.77%). While narrative responses are limited, some feedback suggests a concern over the change in reporting metric from life-risk incidents to primary fires.

> *"Tracking the times of primary fires is a good idea, but in your draft it almost suggests that you will stop tracking response times to life-risk incidents. I think tracking response times to both types of incidents are really important, and one shouldn't take precedence over the other."*

> Response from Stockton Heath resident aged 25-34

Over two thirds of male and female respondents support the proposal. However, a higher than average level of opposition is recorded amongst those who preferred not to state their gender identity (41.80% oppose). Additional comments provided by these respondents outline a preference to retain a percentage pass as a reporting measure, rather than introducing an average, which is seen as being easier to conceal poor performance.

> *"Time from start of 999 call is good but don't like the switch to an average time."*

> Response from Cheshire West and Chester resident who preferred not to state their gender.

Staff response
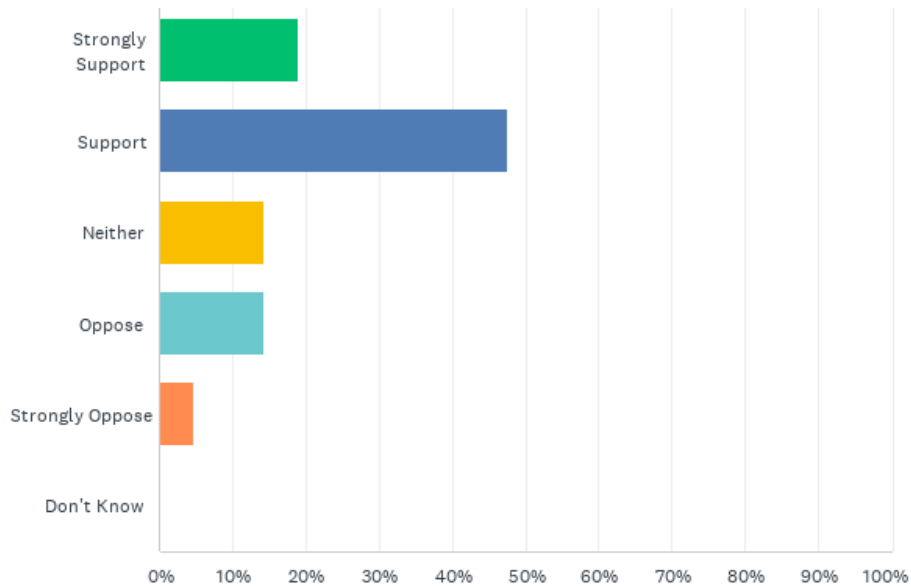
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Strongly Support	19.05%	4
Support	47.62%	10
Neither	14.29%	3
Oppose	14.29%	3

Strongly Oppose	4.76%	1
Don't Know	0.00%	0
Total	**100.00%**	**21**

While the response of staff to the consultation survey was more limited, the responses received show most respondents in support of the proposal (65.67%), against 19.05% who stated their opposition. A further three respondents (14.29%) stated they neither support nor oppose the proposed change.

Partner responses

The three partner agencies who provided a survey response all expressed support for the proposed change in measuring and reporting the response time.

8.3 Summary of Free Text Comments
A total of 136 free text survey comments were received in total as part of the consultation. 125 comments were from members of the public, 6 comments were provided from staff and 5 from those who did not state who they were responding on behalf of.

8.4 Public comments
There were 13 comments which expressed support for the proposed change, with reasons for this including the proposed measurement from time of call and the use of a ten-minute response standard.

Twelve comments were received regarding the proposed change in response standard from a percentage pass rate to the use of an average figure; suggesting that a move to an average figure could mask instances where there are significantly longer response times.

> *"While I understand the reasons for change (i.e. alignment with the Home Office reporting) the proposed change leaves more wriggle room and is less precise than the existing measure. Precise quantitative measures are far preferable to "average" measures, enabling better actions to be taken to improve things. Generally an "average" measure can hide many issues."*

<div align="right">

Response from a Knutsford resident

</div>

Comments were received from 11 respondents which acknowledged the benefit of being able to benchmark and compare response times more effectively, either with the Home Office figures or other fire and rescue services, under the proposed standard.

"I think it is important to standardise how response times are measured and a good decision to align this with the Home Office's approach to enable accurate benchmarking."

<div align="right">

Response from a Chester resident

</div>

Some respondents queried whether the change to measuring primary fires as opposed to life-risk incidents meant that the Service was either not prioritising or measuring performance against non-fire life risk incidents, such as road traffic collisions. Eight comments received referenced this issue. A further 20 comments were made which related to the proposals regarding the changes to fire cover, while 17 were comments of a general nature.

Additional Feedback

In a response received via email from a member of the public, the respondent expressed support for the proposal but highlighted that it should be more than just the average

response time, which is reported, to account for longer response times which may affect incidents in more rural areas:

"While I agree with the 'behind the scenes' proposals to change the way you measure and report performance, I think you need to report on more than the average (median? mean?) response times. Even the GCSE maths syllabus requires students to learn both measures of (1) central tendency and (2) spread. One technique for 'spread' that 80% of students are taught is the box and whisker plot. Or a sorted bar chart of response times could be a more visual option? There are other ways of showing 'spread' but the principle is important here, especially concerning outliers in (rural) areas."

<div align="right">Email response from public consultee</div>

8.5 Staff Feedback

Survey feedback reflected themes raised by public comments, such as an acknowledgement that the proposed change is a more accurate representation of a caller's experience and a query around how non-fire life risk incidents are accounted for, which was also raised by public respondents.

"The proposal you are suggesting means that life risk incidents are no longer taken into account for the figures produced. Why can't you keep the way that you measure life-risk incidents the same, but use this new method for all other incidents?"

<div align="right">Response from a Firefighter</div>

Some feedback from staff suggests that they feel the proposed change would be a more challenging target for the Service to achieve, which could lead to responding crews being more pressured to hit targets.

"It seems like it could add a delay to each call, resulting in your crews feeling they have to take further risks to respond quickly in order to meet targets".

<div align="right">Response from a Firefighter at Holmes Chapel</div>

8.6 Partner Feedback

The **Fire Brigades Union** offered support for the proposed change to include time of call within the response time. The response suggested that all life risk incidents should be incorporated within the standard and raised concerns about the level of scrutiny or control which the Fire Authority maintains over North West Fire Control, the entity which provides call handling services for Cheshire and three other fire and rescue services in North West England.

"The FBU fully support the proposal to change to standard to be met on 100% of occasions and one that commences from the time of call received. Indeed this is something we have campaigned for and recommended to the fire authority on the last 2 IRMP cycles… One area of this proposal where we differ is that the Union believes the 10 minutes standard should apply to all life critical incidents – Fire, Road, Water and Height".

<div align="right">Fire Brigades Union</div>

The response from the **Chester Retired Firefighters** welcomed the proposed change to include call handling, citing that it provides a true indication of the level of service being delivered. However, their response also echoes the Fire Brigades Union call for all life-risk incidents to be included within the standard and the concerns around oversight arrangements for North West Fire Control.

The **West Cheshire Trades Council** response states it is "largely agnostic" over the proposed change, suggesting that the response time measurement is a tool for comparison

rather than performance management and it would be more beneficial to provide narrative on instances where the response time is not met, to provide the Authority with better oversight. It also supports the FBU's call for inclusion of all life-risk incidents within the ten-minute standard.

The response from **Bollington Town Council** stated that the council understood that improvements to response times can only be assessed once the plan is put in place and that it would like to receive performance data on the new reporting regimes to provide reassurance to its residents of continued good performance.

9. Proposals to Change the Provision of Fire Cover Across Cheshire

9.1 Overview of Proposals

The proposals to improve fire cover across Cheshire consist of a package of proposed changes which, cumulatively, is predicted to lead to an improved provision of guaranteed fire cover across the county and provide capacity to undertake more fire safety work in the community.

Together, these proposals would enable the Service to meet its current and new proposed response standard while working within its current budget.

Converting four on-call fire engines at Runcorn, Macclesfield, Northwich and Winsford into full-time fire engines which would operate during weekday daytime hours.

This proposal would see the second fire engines at the above locations change from on-call to become full-time fire engines operating during the weekday daytimes, which is the period of highest operational activity. Primarily these engines would provide an element of guaranteed fire cover in on-call areas (where cover is not guaranteed and weekday daytimes are a challenge for maintaining availability), though they would also cover across Cheshire as required operationally, as other fire engines do.

For instance, the second fire engine at Runcorn could provide cover across Frodsham and Tarporley; the second fire engine at Macclesfield covering Bollington and Poynton; the second engine at Northwich covering Nantwich, Audlem and Malpas, while the second engine at Winsford could cover across Middlewich, Holmes Chapel, Sandbach and Alsager.

Changing the duty system at Knutsford Fire Station from On-Call to Day Crewing.

This would see the crewing at Knutsford change from on-call (where firefighters live or work near the station and respond to emergencies via a pager) to day crewing, staffed by fulltime firefighters who are on station during weekdays and provide guaranteed on-call cover overnight and at weekends.

This would introduce guaranteed fire cover in the Knutsford area.

Reorganising the provision of full-time fire cover in the daytime in Warrington.

This would result in the full-time crew at Birchwood Fire Station being split between Birchwood and Stockton Heath, with full time cover in the daytime alternating between the two locations. The current on-call system at Stockton Heath would be disestablished and the associated housing stock sold to fund the Service's capital programme.

This would keep the existing full-time establishment of four engines within Warrington, with the fourth alternating its location equally between Birchwood and Stockton Heath. This would increase capacity to provide community safety work in Stockton Heath. In addition, the on-call crew at Birchwood, who provide overnight cover, can now provide cover in the daytimes where the fulltime cover is being provided in Stockton Heath.

Reviewing the On-Call Duty System

The final proposal is to review the on-call duty system to make it more attractive to potential and existing staff, thus improving recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters and improving the availability of on-call fire engines overall.

It is important to highlight that the consultation asked for views and opinions on the overall package of fire cover proposals. This is because the package is interlinked, with savings in some specific areas offset by increased cost in others to provide an overall package that increases the number of guaranteed fire engines available over current provision while maintaining the Service's existing budget.

For the purposes of analysing the feedback, while the survey responses provide an indication of overall opinion on the package of fire cover proposals, free text comments and partner responses have been categorised according to each element e.g. weekday fire engines, day crewing at Knutsford, reorganising fire cover in Warrington.

9.2 Summary of Survey Responses

Overall Response

Q9 To what extent do you support the overall package of proposals regarding changes to how we provide our fire cover?
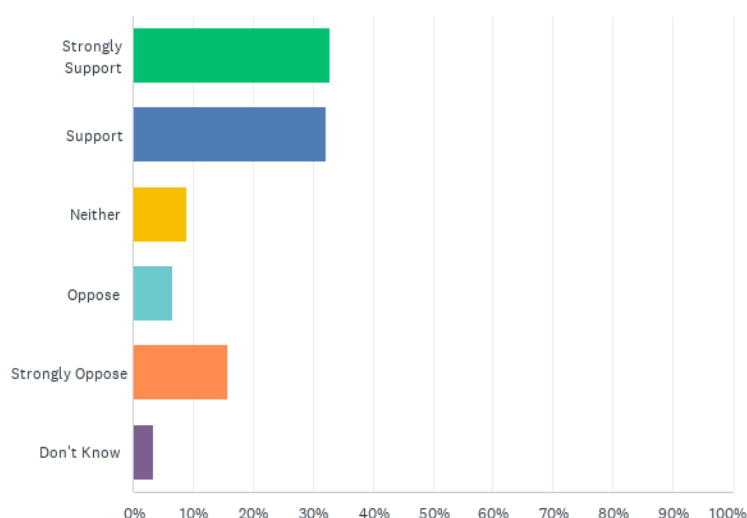
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Strongly Support	32.94%	139
Support	32.23%	136
Neither	9.00%	38
Oppose	6.64%	28
Strongly Oppose	15.88%	67
Don't Know	3.32%	14
Total	**100.00%**	**422**

The overall response shows that most respondents support the overall package of proposals to change fire cover across Cheshire. A total of 65.17% support the package of proposals compared to 22.52% who oppose them. Further comments were made about the proposals in a final 'additional comments' section of the survey and these are reported in section 12 of this report.

Public Response
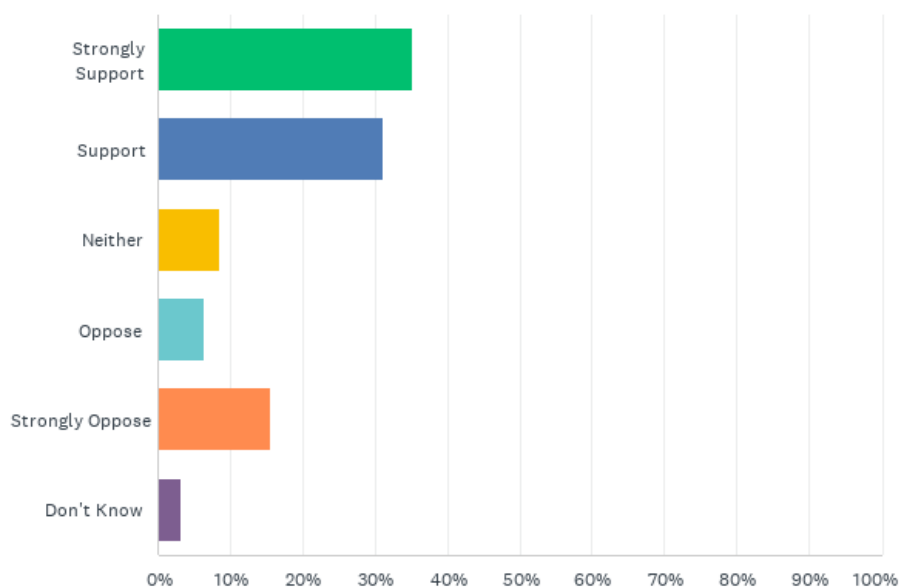
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Strongly Support	35.28%	133
Support	31.03%	117
Neither	8.49%	32
Oppose	6.37%	24
Strongly Oppose	15.65%	59
Don't Know	3.18%	12
Total	**100.00%**	**377**

Of the 377 respondents who responded as members of the public (there were respondents who did not identified), 66.31% expressed support for the proposals, while 22.02% stated their opposition to the package of proposals. There were 32 (8.49%) public respondents who neither supported nor opposed the proposals, while a further 12 (3.18%) stated that they did not know.

Geographic analysis

The tables below provide an analysis of public response by the specific locality in which the respondent lives. The analysis covers the unitary authority area of the respondent, their postcode/post-town (using the first part of a full postcode), and the nearest fire station to the respondent. It is important to note that not all respondents will have answered each of the questions in the survey, therefore totals for each category will vary.

Levels of overall support and opposition to the package of proposals are provided in each table.

Where levels of support in a specific locality are above the average overall figure (strongly support and support in the above chart, a combined 66.31% they are colour coded green. Where levels of opposition in a specific locality are above the average overall figure (strongly oppose and oppose in the above chart, a combined 22.02%) they are colour coded red.

This can help to identify any localised areas of higher support or opposition to the proposals; however caution should be used given low levels of response in some areas and it should not be treated as a definitive opinion.

Respondents could also answer all, or some, demographic questions therefore the individual response totals for each question may differ.

Response by unitary authority area

Total responses (inc. other and Prefer Not to Say (PNTS)): 376

Geography	No. of responses	Strongly Support	Support	Neither	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
Cheshire East	154	40.91%	41.56%	8.44%	1.95%	3.25%	3.90%
Cheshire West and Chester	120	26.67%	17.50%	8.33%	14.17%	30.83%	2.50%
Halton	32	43.75%	43.75%	9.38%	0.00%	3.13%	0.00%
Warrington	62	33.87%	27.42%	8.06%	4.84%	20.97%	4.84%

Response by Post Town/Postcode

Total responses: 331

Geography	No. of responses	Strongly Support	Support	Neither	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
Cheshire East							
Alsager (ST7)	8	62.50%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%
Audlem (CW3)	2	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Crewe (CW1, CW2)	60	33.33%	48.33%	10.00%	1.67%	5.00%	1.67%
Congleton (CW12)	18	38.89%	50.00%	0.00%	5.56%	5.56%	0.00%
Holmes Chapel (CW4)	7	57.14%	42.86%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Knutsford (WA16)	21	47.62%	33.33%	4.76%	4.76%	0.00%	9.52%
Macclesfield (SK10, SK11)	28	39.29%	39.29%	14.29%	3.57%	3.57%	0.00%
Middlewich (CW10)	4	0.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Nantwich (CW5)	8	50.00%	37.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%
Poynton (SK12)	4	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sandbach (CW11)	11	45.45%	54.55%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Wilmslow (SK9)	4	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Cheshire West and Chester							
Chester (CH1, CH2, CH3, CH4)	12	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Ellesmere Port (CH65, CH66)	4	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Frodsham (WA6)	20	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Malpas (SY14)	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Neston (CH64)	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Northwich (CW8, CW9)	52	13.46%	1.92%	13.46%	21.15%	48.08%	1.92%
Tarporley (CW6)	4	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Winsford (CW7)	12	25.00%	16.67%	16.67%	16.67%	16.67%	8.33%
Halton							
Runcorn (WA7)	14	35.71%	42.86%	14.29%	0.00%	7.14%	0.00%
Widnes (WA8, L24)	11	54.55%	45.45%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Warrington							

Birchwood (WA3)	8	50.00%	37.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Lymm (WA13)	1	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Penketh (WA5)	6	33.33%	16.67%	16.67%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%
Stockton Heath (WA4)	25	28.00%	24.00%	4.00%	4.00%	36.00%	4.00%
Warrington (WA1, WA2)	38	47.37%	34.21%	5.26%	5.26%	0.00%	7.89%

Response by Nearest Fire Station

Total responses: 286

Geography	No. of responses	Strongly Support	Support	Neither	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
Alsager	9	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Audlem	2	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Birchwood	8	25.00%	37.50%	12.50%	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%
Bollington	5	60.00%	20.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Chester	9	44.44%	55.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Congleton	16	37.50%	43.75%	0.00%	6.25%	12.50%	0.00%
Crewe	21	33.33%	28.57%	28.57%	0.00%	4.76%	4.76%
Ellesmere Port	4	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Frodsham	17	41.18%	58.82%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Holmes Chapel	6	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Knutsford	15	40.00%	40.00%	6.67%	6.67%	0.00%	6.67%
Lymm	4	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Macclesfield	16	37.50%	37.50%	18.75%	0.00%	6.25%	0.00%
Malpas	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Middlewich	4	0.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Nantwich	5	80.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%
Northwich	55	16.36%	0.00%	10.91%	20.00%	52.73%	0.00%
Penketh	5	40.00%	20.00%	20.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Powey Lane	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poynton	4	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Runcorn	14	28.57%	64.29%	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sandbach	8	37.50%	62.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Stockton Heath	17	23.53%	5.88%	5.88%	5.88%	52.94%	5.88%
Tarporley	4	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Warrington	13	38.46%	38.46%	0.00%	7.69%	15.38%	0.00%
Widnes	5	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Wilmslow	6	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Winsford	13	15.38%	15.38%	7.69%	30.77%	30.77%	0.00%

Commentary

The data shows that across three of the four unitary authority areas in Cheshire, most survey respondents expressed support for the package of proposals. There is a higher level of support for the proposals amongst respondents from Cheshire East and Halton compared to those who live in Cheshire West and Chester or Warrington (albeit most respondents from Warrington expressed support).

When analysing smaller geographic areas, in most areas across Cheshire – both at postcode level and by analysing the respondents nearest fire station – most respondents are in support of the overall package of proposals.

The difference in support at unitary level correlates to higher levels of opposition amongst respondents in the Northwich area (CW8 and CW9 postcode, those with Northwich as their nearest fire station); the Stockton Heath area (WA4 postcode, Stockton Heath as the nearest fire station) and in the Winsford area (WA7 postcode, Winsford as nearest station).

"I am concerned that Northwich is looking it's second engine and night time cover".

<div align="right">Response from Northwich resident</div>

"Stockton Heath needs more cover and should remain in a similar way as it is running."

<div align="right">Response from a Stockton Heath resident</div>

Higher than average levels of opposition are also documented to a lesser extent in Penketh (WA5 postcode), Middlewich (CW10 postcode), Tarporley (CW6 postcode, Tarporley nearest station) and Warrington (Warrington nearest station); though in each of these categories most respondents supported the proposals.

Demographic analysis

The table below provides an analysis of levels of public support/opposition to the proposal according to the demographic characteristics of the respondent. This can help to identify demographics where there is higher support or opposition to the proposals, however caution should be used given low levels of response in some metrics and it should not be treated as a definitive opinion.

Levels of overall support and opposition to the package of proposals are provided in each table. It is important to note that not all respondents will have answered each of the questions in the survey, therefore totals for each category will vary. Data is included for those who have preferred not to identify each demographic characteristic.

Where levels of support in a specific demographic are above the average overall figure (strongly support and support in the overall chart, a combined 66.31%) they are colour coded green. Where levels of opposition in a specific locality are above the average overall figure (strongly oppose and oppose in the overall chart, a combined 22.02%) they are colour coded red.

To protect the anonymity of respondents and enable reporting, some categories with a lower level of response such as non-majority religious beliefs or ethnicities have been grouped together and reported against those who form the majority religion/ethnicity or have not stated any option.

Demographic	No. of responses	Strongly Support	Support	Neither	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
Age							
Under 18	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
18-24	7	71.43%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	0.00%
25-34	13	46.15%	0.00%	0.00%	7.69%	46.15%	0.00%
35-44	40	20.00%	27.50%	5.00%	2.50%	45.00%	0.00%
45-54	41	17.07%	21.95%	7.32%	17.07%	36.59%	0.00%
55-64	58	27.59%	37.93%	6.90%	17.24%	10.34%	0.00%
65-74	111	44.14%	38.74%	10.81%	1.80%	1.80%	2.70%
75+	74	55.41%	25.68%	8.11%	0.00%	1.35%	9.46%
Prefer not to say (PNTS)	10	10.00%	50.00%	20.00%	10.00%	10.00%	0.00%
Gender							
Male	165	32.73%	38.18%	10.30%	2.42%	13.33%	3.03%
Female	178	40.45%	28.09%	4.49%	8.99%	15.17%	2.81%
Other or PNTS	17	5.88%	23.53%	29.41%	23.53%	17.65%	0.00%

Trans Identity							
Yes	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
No	16	12.50%	50.00%	18.75%	6.25%	12.50%	0.00%
PNTS	2	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Ethnicity							
White British	319	39.81%	33.86%	6.27%	5.02%	12.23%	2.82%
Black and Minority Ethnic Group (BAME)	21	14.29%	19.05%	19.05%	9.52%	33.33%	4.76%
PNTS	9	11.11%	33.33%	33.33%	22.22%	0.00%	0.00%
Religion							
No religion	72	25.00%	36.11%	9.72%	5.56%	20.83%	2.78%
Christian	193	38.86%	34.20%	6.22%	6.22%	11.92%	2.59%
Other religion	6	50.00%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%
PNTS	38	34.21%	26.32%	18.42%	10.53%	10.53%	0.00%
Disability Status							
Disabled	63	41.27%	20.63%	12.70%	7.94%	12.70%	4.76%
Not Disabled	263	36.50%	35.36%	6.08%	5.32%	14.07%	2.66%
PNTS	20	15.00%	25.00%	30.00%	15.00%	15.00%	0.00%
Sexual Orientation							
Heterosexual	284	39.79%	33.45%	7.04%	5.28%	11.97%	2.46%
Gay/Lesbian	6	33.33%	16.67%	16.67%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%
Bisexual	5	60.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Other or PNTS	38	7.89%	28.95%	21.05%	15.79%	26.32%	0.00%

Commentary

Analysis by demographic provides some noted variances in levels of support, though caution should be used given the low response in some areas and should not treat this as a definite reflection of local opinion.

Of age groups reported in the survey, the 25-34 and 45-54 age groups show more respondents in opposition to the proposals (the other age groups contain a majority of respondents in support). Amongst these two cohorts, narrative responses do acknowledge the increased provision of cover across Cheshire during weekdays and the more efficient use of resources; though there is a perception amongst a small number of comments that the conversion of the four on-call fire engines is a reduction in service rather than an improvement.

> *"Less of a service doesn't compute to more service whichever way you spin it - less people, less vehicles - can't possibly equate to more safety".*

> Response from a Northwich resident aged 45-54

There is also a higher than average level of opposition amongst BAME survey respondents (32.85%). Narrative responses highlight some concerns over perceived impact during night times and weekends should the proposals be implemented, particularly in regard to a major incident.

> *"Still concern if there is a major incident occurring at out of hours and involves chemical release e.g. chlorine."*

> Response from a Halton resident of Chinese ethnicity

Perceptions of the impact on night time and weekend cover are also referenced in narrative comments of respondents who preferred not to state their sexual orientation (42.11% opposed proposal).

Staff responses
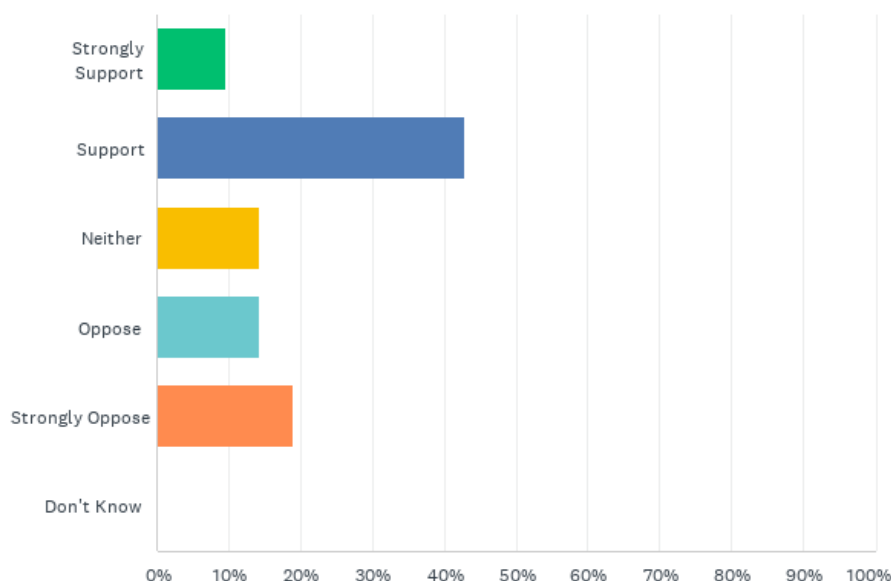
Option	Percentage	Number of responses
Strongly Support	9.52%	2
Support	42.86%	9
Neither	14.29%	3
Oppose	14.29%	3
Strongly Oppose	19.05%	4
Don't Know	0.00%	0
Total	**100.00%**	**21**

While staff responses to the survey were more limited, this also shows a majority of respondents (52.38%) in support of the proposals against 33.34% of staff respondents who oppose the proposals.

Partner responses

The three partner agencies who provided a survey response all expressed support for the package of proposals regarding fire cover.

9.3 Summary of Free Text Responses

Respondents to the survey were asked two free text questions in relation to the package of proposals; one which asked respondents to identify perceived benefits of the proposal and a following question which asked respondents to identify any perceived negative impacts from the proposal.

A total of 233 comments were provided regarding the positive impacts. Of these, 204 were provided from the public, 16 were from staff, 3 from partners and 6 from those who declined to state which category they belonged to. A further 4 comments were provided by individuals who skipped the question asking respondents to select who they were responding on behalf of.

In comparison, 232 comments were also provided regarding the negative impacts of the proposals. 205 were provided by the public, 15 were from staff, 3 from partners and 6 from those who declined to state which category they belonged to. A further 3 comments were provided by individuals who skipped the question asking respondents to select who they were responding on behalf of.

Public feedback is considered in section 9.4 and staff comments are considered in section 9.5.

9.4 Public Feedback

Overall commentary

Of the 204 public comments, the most frequently raised feedback was the benefit of having improved fire cover across Cheshire because of the proposals, which featured in 73 comments (35.78% of all comments). Responses highlighted the reassurance that this proposal would provide during weekdays and the increase in areas that are afforded with an element of guaranteed fire cover.

> *"The proposed changes would increase the geographical area of the county covered with guaranteed weekday provision."*

> *Response from a Chester resident*

A further 31 comments (15.2%) highlight the positive impact that the proposals are expected to have on response times.

> *"Hopefully a speedier response time from full day time crewing"*

> *Response from a Knutsford resident*

> *"More consistency in day time fire crews, including quicker response times."*

> *Response from a Congleton resident*

There were 28 (13.73%) comments which expressed either general support of, or overall benefits due to, the package of proposals; while there were an additional 16 responses (7.84%) which were a comment of a general nature.

There were 21 respondents (10.29%) who said they had no further comment to make.

Comments from respondents in the demographics highlighted in the previous section can provide some reasons for higher than average levels of opposition.

Changing four on-call fire engines to full-time weekday fire engines

Associated positive impacts from this proposal which were referred to include a wider area of Cheshire having guaranteed cover; more reassurance for more residents and more availability to meet periods of higher demand.

> *"What you have outlined will definitely improve weekday coverage in regards to fire engines being available during the week, between the mentioned given times. It's certainly reassuring to know that there will be fire service coverage during these times"*

> *Response from a Stockton Heath resident*

Nine respondents stated that they considered a benefit of the proposals to be a more effective and efficient use of existing resources.

"Better use of finite resources, improved use of manpower, and better handling of emerging threats from new sources such as batteries"

Response from a Knutsford resident

Introduction of Day Crewing at Knutsford

Three comments made specific reference to the proposed change at Knutsford, all of which considered the proposal to be a positive move.

"Better cover for Knutsford area which is increasing in domestic and business properties."

Response from a Knutsford resident

Reorganisation of daytime fire cover in Warrington

There were ten comments which referred to the proposed changes in Warrington. Nine of these relate to the change in fire cover and raise some concerns over what is felt to be a reduced level of cover in certain areas, while a further comment queried how the impact on staff would be managed with regards to the disposal of housing stock at Stockton Heath.

"Clearly there are issues about reducing some services especially at Birchwood and Stockton Heath (where the cuts could be construed as a way of releasing funds for Warrington's new fire station). In my opinion the idea of introducing full time cover 50% of the time in an 8-day cycle is a recipe for risking people's lives. Domestic fires can happen anytime in the week and equally when bad traffic prevents appliances from crossing the motorway or canal to cover."

Response from a Warrington resident

9.5 Staff Feedback

Changing four on-call fire engines to full-time weekday fire engines

Comments received from staff through the survey show most respondents agree that the proposals would lead to improved levels of guaranteed fire cover, particularly during periods of peak activity. Coupled with this is the increased capacity to undertake community safety work to reduce risk and demand.

This is mirrored in feedback from most team and watch visits through the consultation process.

"More guaranteed fire cover during weekdays is positive as is providing more capacity for community work."

Response from a member of fire staff

Staff concerns with the proposals centred on the effect on overnight and weekend cover, as well as the impact on affected staff. This includes both those directly impacted by the proposals but also the secondary impacts of on-call staff in other stations seeing reduced levels of activity due to the availability of a nearby full-time fire engine.

"Loss of activity for on call appliances due to extra day appliances will result in on call personnel leaving the service. This then will reduce the number of appliances available

overall and may lead to shortfall at weekends and in the evening, especially in spate conditions."

Response from an On-Call Crew Manager

"With the changes, on call shouts will decrease, there should therefore be a change to minimum contract hours for crews as people will be less likely to give up 50 hours on their days off if there is even less check they'll turn out, it's becoming less attractive as a result and more migration opportunities should be available."

Response from a Firefighter

Engagement with staff at locations directly affected by the proposals led to several comments and questions around the practical implementation of the proposals. This focused on the processes of redeployment of staff and the introduction of a new duty system, including recruitment of staff on to that system and the technical details such as start/finish times and base locations.

A suggestion was raised at the staff focus group on 18 December as to whether consideration had been given to expanding the on-call support model instead of proposing the changing of the four on-call fire engines.

Introduction of Day Crewing at Knutsford

Comments received from staff were largely supportive of the proposed introduction of day crewing at Knutsford, indicating that there was an understanding of the rationale behind the proposal and that it would enable better fire cover.

"There is a positive by bringing Knutsford fire station to a day crewing model."
Response from a Firefighter

"Knutsford changing to DC1 is a good move".
Response from a Watch Manager

However, there were some specific queries raised in relation to the element around the transfer of the technical rescue unit from its current base at Lymm to Knutsford. These centred on the staffing numbers of the unit and the compatibility of training requirements with a day crewing duty system. An alternative suggested was to use Knutsford as a specialist animal rescue capability and maintain technical rescue at Lymm.

Staff feedback from those based at Knutsford station focused on the issues around allocation of day crewing housing and transfer of staff on and off station, depending on whether they remained at Knutsford or transferred to another station.

Reorganisation of daytime fire cover in Warrington

Feedback from operational staff working at Stockton Heath raised questions around the release of the housing associated with the station and the support that could be offered by the Authority to help those individuals affected to navigate their change in circumstances.

9.6 Partner Feedback

Changing four on-call fire engines to full-time weekday fire engines

In its response to the consultation, **the FBU** offered its qualified support for the proposal to convert four on-call fire engines into full-time weekday engines.

"The FBU give qualified support to this proposal. Whilst we welcome the proposal to increase the number of full-time fire fighters and full-time pumps, we do have some concerns that need to be addressed.

1. A clear assessment of the anticipated lag times of a secondary appliance in the areas where the second retained (On Call) appliance is being removed, specifically on evenings and weekends. Given that on average, three of the six pumps affected are available at any one time on weekday evenings and weekends, the proposed removal will impact on the attendance time of the second appliance – which is fundamentally critical in providing safe systems of work to enable a rescue or intervention to the public, but also in implemented safety procedures for fire fighters.

2. A clear explanation on how the overall resilience of the service will be impacted on weekday evenings and weekends given that the service will have four less appliances to call upon. Put simply, where incidents require supplementary appliances (assistance make up) how will this impact the rest of the fire cover in the county based on risk modelling, and how will the service mitigate the impact on fire fighters required to attend these incidents that require periods of arduous work activity and manage the rest and welfare of the workforce.

3. The proposal of 'roaming pumps' needs further detail. The FBU require each team of fire fighters (pump crew) to start and finish their shift at the same station – to do otherwise would incur forced overtime which is unacceptable and a breach of our member's contract.

4. The facilities available to the crews should be the exact same as any other full-time station. If this requires capital investment to bring stations up to the same standard, then this needs to be costed and agreed within the CRMP. Retained staff should never be viewed as second class citizens.

5. For those members impacted by these proposals (removal of their On-call post), the FBU require that;

(i) The individual be offered a wholetime position within the service

(ii) Where the individual cannot be offered a full-time post (already full time in Cheshire or another FRS) or they decline the offer then a relocation support package to another Retained/On Call station be offered

(iii) Where relocation is not practical or declined then a severance package be put in place. The current position in the absence of a policy, of statutory minimum redundancy terms should be revised to provide enhanced exit payments that adequately and appropriately recognise the individuals service and commitment to the communities of Cheshire, and the loss of income where no other like for like position exists on the open labour market that works around one's primary employment or utilises the skillset of a firefighter".

<div align="right">

Fire Brigades Union

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Responses in support of the proposed weekday fire engines were also received from **Holmes Chapel Parish Council**, highlighting the additional benefit to the community within the existing financial envelope.

The Parish Council is supportive of the proposals and appreciate the additional benefit to our community at no extra budgetary cost.

<div align="right">

Holmes Chapel Parish Council

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Support was also received from **Bollington Town Council**, citing the improved response time and provision of community safety work in the local area. The response from Bollington Town Council also requested that performance data be shared once the changes are implemented to provide reassurance of continued good service.

> *"Bollington Town Council supports the Cheshire Fire Authority 2024-2028 Draft Community Risk Management Plan for the following reasons:*
>
> - *Improved incident response for Bollington by virtue of the Macclesfield roving appliance being based in Bollington at times when the Bollington service is depleted.*
> - *Better provision for community safety work in Bollington such as home fire safety assessments, fire protection visits and inspections of sites at risk such as larger businesses and hotels."*
>
> <div align="right">Bollington Town Council</div>

The submission from **Northwich Town Council** raised concerns over the element of the proposal to change the second fire engine at Northwich Fire Station from on-call to a full-time weekday fire engine. The Council highlights concerns over what it considers to be a reduction in service during night times and weekends, with reference to the delay in a second fire engine attending a fire in the local area – leading to potentially more damage.

> *"Residents and council members have serious concerns about the reduction in service, particularly during the night and weekends when most fatalities occur. Having another engine 20 minutes away is more likely to result in loss of life.*
>
> *The loss of the second fire engine is likely increase the likelihood of fires causing more damage as there may be delays in waiting for the second engine to arrive. This will result in an increased likelihood of more severe damage to properties and disruption to businesses and travel as the scale of the damage will be greater.*
>
> *It appears that the second engine is not manned due to ongoing recruitment freeze.*
>
> *The changes are going to result in redundancies and the loss experienced, dedicated, trained firefighters who are only able to work on an on-call basis due to having other work commitments.*
>
> *We are unable to offer our full support for the proposed changes, especially the withdrawal of the second engine in Northwich and the reduction in availability of services at nights and on weekends. We would hope that this aspect of the restructuring could be reconsidered."*
>
> <div align="right">Northwich Town Council</div>

Local Cheshire West and Chester councillor **Cllr Sam Naylor** (Labour, Witton), also reiterates these concerns in his response opposing the conversion of the second fire engine at Northwich.

> *"It is my view that the removal of the retained engine from Northwich could have a detrimental effect on both fire officers and the residents of Northwich, particularly at night and weekends and in a worst-case scenario could place lives at risk.*
>
> *I understand the poor performance in availability of the retained engine but consider that this is a direct result of a failure to attract and recruit enough retained officers."*
>
> <div align="right">Councillor Sam Naylor</div>

Introduction of Day Crewing in Knutsford

Following a briefing from officers to **Knutsford Town Council Community Committee**, the minutes of the meeting confirm Councillors support for the draft CRMP and the proposal for Knutsford Fire Station.

The consultation response of the **FBU** also outlines its support for this proposal but does raise an objection to the intention of transferring the technical rescue unit from its current base in Lymm to Knutsford:

> *"We support this proposal having opposed the downgrading of the station which was approved by the authority back in 2014.*
>
> *Given the lack of guaranteed Cheshire Fire cover in the corridor between the Cheshire and Greater Manchester border, this will ensure we meet our statutory obligations to keep the residents and properties of Cheshire safe without the over reliance on support from neighbouring Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.*
>
> *We should also see as a consequence greater prevention and protection activity.*
>
> *The CRMP proposes to revert Knutsford back to Day Crewing (which the FBU support), however with this is also an aspiration to move the Rope Rescue capabilities – currently based at Lymm Fire Station and mobilised with a crew of 5 – to Knutsford with a crew of 4. This would represent a reduction in safety standards and this element is opposed by the Fire Brigades Union."*

> Fire Brigades Union

Responses from the **Chester Retired Firefighters** reiterates the concern over crewing a technical rescue unit with four firefighters and not five.

Reorganisation of Daytime Fire Cover in Warrington

Responses were received from several stakeholders regarding this proposal.

In its response, the **FBU** state that the current on-call provision at Stockton Heath should be maintained; citing that the risk profile in the area requires the maintenance of current arrangements:

> *"The risk profile doesn't warrant a removal of fire cover at Birchwood, Stockton Heath or the pan Warrington area, and the cost of keeping the appliance and crew is a mere circa £150,000 from a total 51.7 million pounds budget. In simple terms the benefit (cost savings) doesn't outweigh the risk. The current response provision at Stockton Heath should be maintained."*

> Fire Brigades Union

Warrington District Trades Union Council also raised concerns over the proposed reorganisation of fire cover in Warrington, citing the risk profile in the Birchwood area and the impact on response times in Stockton Heath:

> *"Reducing Birchwood fulltime crews by 50% would have a significant risk not only for the local community but also for the wider area given the network of motorways, local industries, and potential environmental issues.*
>
> *The proposal to remove on call at Stockton Heath would be detrimental to the local community as they would have to wait for the arrival of the next available appliance."*

> Warrington District Trades Union Council

The response from **Stockton Heath Parish Council** outlines the Council's support for the plan and understood the rationale behind the proposed change:

> *"Specifically, in Stockton Heath, we understand the rationale to change the village fire station from on-call to full-time crews, to remedy the current poor response availability at this location, sharing response to emergencies with Birchwood. We recognise the difficulties in recruiting sufficient on-call firefighters.*
>
> *We were pleased that the Service understands the potential disruption to the individual lives of the current on-call employees and is committed to finding equitable solutions.*
>
> *We are also pleased that the new proposed arrangements will allow for a better distribution of the 'safe and well' visits, so that more will be available in our village."*
>
> Stockton Heath Parish Council

The response from **Birchwood Town Council** did not provide any further comment beyond seeking reassurance that additional prevention and protection work, which the proposals enable, will be carried out in the Birchwood area:

> *"One of the proposals set out in the CRMP is to reorganise daytime fire cover in Warrington, and to relocate a full-time fire engine from Birchwood to be used in Stockton Heath for four out of eight days, given the level of resource available. We have been assured that response time is still anticipated to be within 10 minutes and that we would still have the support of Warrington, Lymm and Stockton Heath Fire Stations when a full-time engine is not available in Birchwood.*
>
> *At the presentation, and in the CRMP document, it is highlighted that the proposed changes would see an increase in prevention and protection work such as 'Safe and Well Visits' and safety inspections. Birchwood Town Council see this as an added benefit to the local community.*
>
> *Councillors would appreciate assurances that the additional prevention and protection work will be carried out in all areas, including Birchwood.*
>
> *With all things noted above and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's operational constraints being considered, Birchwood Town Council does not have anything further to add."*
>
> Birchwood Town Council

Other Stakeholders

Officers held face to face briefings with several other stakeholders in relation to the proposed changes to emergency fire cover. These included:

Members of Parliament

- Rt Hon Esther McVey MP
- Mike Amesbury MP
- Andy Carter MP
- Edward Timpson CBE MP
- David Rutley MP

Unitary authorities

- Cheshire East Health and Communities Committee
- Cheshire West and Chester Scrutiny Committee
- Halton Safer Policy and Performance Board

- Warrington Stronger Communities Committee

Town and Parish Councils

- Frodsham Town Council
- Macclesfield Town Council
- Nantwich Town Council
- Poynton Town Council

While no official responses were received from the stakeholders listed, the briefings were generally well received, and no formal concerns were raised in respect of the proposed changes to fire cover during these briefings.

10. Reviewing Our On-Call Duty System

10.1 Background and Proposal

Fire engines that operate in the more rural and less populated areas of Cheshire are usually crewed by on-call firefighters. On-call firefighters live or work within five minutes of the fire station and are alerted by pager to respond to incidents. They have fewer incidents to deal with compared with full-time firefighters; fire engines operated by full-time firefighters are available 24/7.

On-call firefighters undertake their role as a part-time job, often in addition to demanding full-time employment and busy lives outside work. They are highly committed and work extremely hard to maintain the availability of the fire engine so they can respond to emergency incidents and support their communities.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the overall availability of on-call fire engines has declined; in some areas, quite significantly, especially during the day when we tend to be busiest. Despite the best efforts of our on-call firefighters and some initiatives that have been trialled, it has not been possible to reverse this decline.

The decline in on-call availability is a major challenge across the country, not just in Cheshire. Therefore, through this CRMP, we reaffirm our commitment to the on-call duty system and our on-call firefighters. The CRMP proposes to review the on-call duty system to make improvements to its effectiveness and efficiency, improving both recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters.

The consultation asked respondents to provide comments and suggestions to improve the on-call duty system and any specific themes or issues which should be considered.

10.2 Summary of Survey Free Text Responses

A total of 176 free text comments were received via the online survey and through consultation roadshows. Of these, 153 were provided by public respondents and 14 from staff.

There was a total of 57 comments where the respondent indicated that they had no further comment to make on this issue. Ten comments offered general support for carrying out a review, while an additional 24 comments were made which were general in nature and not directly related to the review of the on-call duty system.

10.3 Public Feedback

The most frequently raised theme, present in eighteen public comments (11.76% of total) is the need to ensure pay and recognition for on-call firefighters is improved. Some comments suggest that improving pay and recognition will in turn lead to increased recruitment and retention.

> *"Increase pay and performance-related incentives - currently (and I know this to be the case at a number of stations) the large majority of the regular work (i.e., not incidents) is performed by a small number of staff. Recognition for the people putting the effort in would be a big help."*

> Survey response from Middlewich resident

> *"Make the on-call role more attractive to prospective candidates perhaps include things such as free gym memberships in addition to wages providing added value and incentive."*

> Survey response from a Birchwood resident

There were 12 comments (7.84%) in which residents called for a further increase in full-time resources and reduction in the number of on-call resources across the county; citing the changes to work practices and the challenges around availability.

> *"Be careful not to throw good public money after a bad ill-conceived duty system that isn't fit for the modern work environment".*

Other main themes from public commentary include suggestions to make the recruitment process more effective/efficient (9 comments, 5.88%); raising awareness amongst the community and employers of the on-call duty system (9 comments) and considering ways to improve flexibility (including widening the catchment area) and work/life balance within the role (7 comments, 4.58%).

> *"Make it easier for people to become part time firefighters. Sometimes the health and safety aspect and form filling, box ticking discourages genuine willing candidates."*

> Survey response from a Frodsham resident

> *"Perhaps a higher profile with regards to recruiting, especially part time fire fighters. I wasn't even aware that the fire service had part time staff."*

> Survey response from a Birchwood resident

> *"Living or working 5 minutes from fire station is very restrictive - think should widen slightly to 6 or 7 minutes".*

> *"Please consider family / work life balance. In call is great until demand outweighs need and experience."*

> Survey responses from Northwich residents

10.4 Staff Feedback

There were 14 comments provided from staff as part of the survey. The most frequently raised issue was around improving pay and recognition, with 5 comments. This is followed by suggestions relating to improving the speed of the recruitment process and pathway to gaining operational competency (3 comments).

> *"As well as better pay for on-call firefighters, you should streamline the processes for both recruitment and qualification as competent. The current systems for both are too long winded and result in losing too many staff during the process."*

> Survey response from a Firefighter at Holmes Chapel Fire Station

> *"Need to pay more and maybe introduce a salary and have a weekly change cover banding to reflect the cover you actually did that week."*

> Survey response from a Watch Manager

Three comments were provided which relate to the impact of changes to fire cover on on-call firefighters, in particular the impact on morale and reduced ability to attend to emergencies if a full-time fire engine is in the vicinity of an on-call fire station.

There was also a suggestion to review over the border mobilising (where resources from neighbouring fire and rescue services are mobilised to attend), to provide more opportunities for on-call crews to attend incidents.

Two further comments provide suggestions for increasing flexibility, either by providing additional flexibility regarding contracted hours of on-call cover, or through introducing a medical response to provide additional opportunities for firefighters to respond.

A comment from the staff focus group questioned if there was any data available to suggest the reasons behind a reduction in on-call availability, while it was acknowledged that those currently working the system i.e. on-call firefighters, would need to be involved and engaged in the review process to make improvements.

10.5 Partner Feedback

The FBU provided detailed commentary in their consultation response. While agreeing with the proposal to strengthen the on-call system, it highlights what it sees as several key issues which are impacting upon the duty system, which are outlined below:

- *Public and employers' lack of awareness of the Retained Duty System. Most people are aware of the presence of a Fire Station in their community, but few appreciate how it is staffed.*
- *An increasing reluctance by primary employers to release employees from their place of work to attend incidents, due to economic pressure.*
- *Changing patterns of employment requiring more and more people to travel further to places of work and therefore away from the locality of their Fire Station.*
- *Fewer self-employed people seem to be available to work as Retained Firefighters, again due to economic pressures and low levels of remuneration in the Fire and Rescue Service.*
- *The need to make the Duty system more 'family friendly' and reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.*
- *Lack of investment in Retained Station buildings/facilities.*
- *Poor remuneration for commitment to availability.*
- *Lack of management training of Station personnel on all levels/roles: 'people management' skills, public relations, fairness at work, diversity.*
- *Very limited scope for personal and career development within the Retained Duty System of the Fire and Rescue Service.*
- *The perception of the work of Firefighters on the Retained Duty System is not always matched by the reality.*

Fire Brigades Union

The FBU submission suggests that there should be a focus on improving pay and financial recognition and that awareness of the on-call system (which should be a local and national initiative) should be improved. It is also suggested that acknowledgement should be given to the impact on on-call availability of the Service's migration policy, whereby competent on-call firefighters are able to apply to become wholetime (full-time) firefighters.

> *"The FBU support the pathway into the full-time service for those who have the skills and reward for those who have spent years protecting their local communities as a part time firefighter, however every time the service 'migrates' 10 On Call staff, 500 hours of availability is removed from the system."*

Fire Brigades Union

The response from the **Chester Retired Firefighters** also highlights societal changes and an evolution in employment trends and practices, which they consider the fire and rescue service has not kept up with and adapted to effectively. They also refer to the Service's on-call migration policy, stating this has been a factor in recruitment and retention issues.

"I find it difficult to understand how the Migration process from PT (part-time, or on-call) to WT (wholetime, or full-time) has not raised alarm bells before, given the obvious difficulty in PT recruitment. It's like robbing Peter to pay Paul."

<div align="right">Chester Retired Firefighters</div>

The **West Cheshire Trades Union Council** reiterates the importance of improving pay in strengthening the on-call system and suggests that what is sees as the current low level of remuneration is a factor in retention problems.

11. Equality Impact Assessments

To support the development of the proposals within the draft CRMP, a suite of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) were developed to ensure that equality considerations are considered in the development of proposed changes to services. They can be accessed via the following link: https://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/news-events/latest-news/have-your-say-on-our-draft-community-risk-management-plan-2024-28/

Consultees were asked if they had any comments to make regarding the EIAs, or if there were any other equalities issues which the Authority should consider in developing the CRMP.

11.1 Equalities Considerations

Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments in relation to the EIAs which had been produced. 124 comments were received in total, of which 115 were from the public, 6 were from staff and 3 were from stakeholders.

A further 14 comments (11.29%) were comments of a general nature which were not related to the EIAs. There were 11 comments (8.87%) which questioned the relevance of producing EIAs and the asking of equality related questions within the consultation survey.

There were 12 comments (9.68%) which reflected some feedback on either a protected characteristic or the EIA process. Four comments referred to age, suggesting it should be a key consideration for both the service provided to the community and within the organisation itself, given the demographic changes within the county.

> *"As the demographics of the county is changing (ageing) you need to consider that re: kit (mobility issues, confusion etc)"*
>
> Survey response from a Northwich resident

> *"Ageism is a huge issue and often overlooked especially in regard to frontline staff".*
>
> Response from a Winsford resident

One comment received felt that it was important that rural populations are considered as equally as urban populations.

> *"Surely everyone should be treated equally - this is a rural area, so don't just concentrate on Urban populations please."*
>
> Survey response from a Holmes Chapel resident

Another comment recommended that staff needed to have a good level of English-speaking skills to relay safety advice or information.

> *"You need to ensure that all applicants can speak English fluently as officers may be dealing with people in a very heightened and frightening situation, not being able to understand the officer could impact on safety."*
>
> Survey response from a Knutsford resident

Three comments referenced the recent developments in the news regarding cultural issues within the fire and rescue service; with respondents calling for assurance that there are robust procedures in place to deal with instances of such behaviour or ensure that equality actions are delivered.

"Clearly the serious sexual harassment issues that have arisen in other brigades need to be considered to ensure that members of a diverse workforce are adequately protected by appropriate whistle-blowing policies being in place and implemented."

<div align="right">Survey response from a Warrington resident</div>

"Challenge and show that the stereotypical view of the fire service in Cheshire is totally incorrect given the stories that have been published in the media about other fire services across the country. Encourage monitoring from external lay bodies to ensure the equalities impact assessments are being delivered."

<div align="right">Survey response from a Stockton Heath resident</div>

Two staff comments reflected on the need for better facilities for women within the Service, and that the organisation should assure itself that its internal promotion processes take due regard to equality requirements.

12. Additional Comments

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any other comments they wished to make. A total of 142 comments were provided in total. Of these, 48 (33.8%) were the consultee stating they had no further comment to make. This left 87 public comments and 7 staff comments of substance.

12.1 Public Comments

There were 29 public comments which expressed support for the proposals within the draft CRMP. Consultees acknowledged the depth and detail of the draft CRMP, and the proposals were viewed as a positive step forward for the Service and community.

> *"The proposal table shows an increase on every provision you plan to change. This is a definite positive move for Cheshire. It's nice to see no cutbacks."*
>
> Survey response from a Runcorn resident

> *"The report appears to be very inclusive and takes a strong proactive approach."*
>
> Survey response from an Alsager resident

> "Within the realistic financial options, it is a good plan."
>
> Survey response from a Poynton resident

There were 14 comments which expressed concern or opposition to the proposals within the draft CRMP. The majority of these centred around the proposed removal of the second fire engine in Northwich and the perceived impact that this would have on the community.

> *"Please don't reduce engines and staffing covering of the Northwich area which has had massive development of extra housing in the area."*
>
> *"What will happen to the fire engines at night when there's no cover? Just sit there when they could be saving lives?"*
>
> Survey responses from Northwich residents

Three comments expressing concerns related to the proposed change at Stockton Heath and the associated removal of Authority housing, citing the impact on staff within the houses.

> *"Consider the optics of displacing families that have served Cheshire as On Call firefighters for years."*
>
> Survey response from a Warrington resident

Two responses highlighted the need to resolve pension issues for retired staff following the McCloud ruling on public sector pensions.

Eight comments related to prevention and protection activities in the community, with calls for more awareness of fire safety and education of the community at all age levels.

Seven comments were provided which referred to the importance of positive industrial relations and questioned if recent industrial relations within the service had worsened.

There were 19 comments which were general in nature and provided a mix of response which was not necessarily related to the draft CRMP. This included general thanks to staff for the work they do.

Three comments were received in relation to the consultation process. One comment expressed their appreciation for the information provided and the opportunity to be involved

in the consultation. A further comment appreciated that the proposals were out to consultation but felt that they were not adequately qualified to provide a comment. One additional comment called for more visibility of the consultation process.

12.2 Staff Comments

Three comments were general in nature, with one comment reiterating the public comments regarding the need to resolve the pension issue for retired members. Regarding the CRMP, one comment highlighted a concern around the proposed change within Warrington.

> *"The fire cover provision for Warrington is far too political rather than covering risk, why accept 10 + response time for Stockton Heath responding from a station surrounded by fields when there's a station in the middle of a residential area that will be crewed for 28% of the time".*

<div align="right">Survey response from a Firefighter at Stockton Heath Fire Station</div>

A further comment from a member of staff outlined the perceived overall benefit of the proposals within the CRMP.

> *"Overall a positive package of proposals for Cheshire."*

<div align="right">Survey response from a member of fire staff at Sadler Road</div>