



**CHESHIRE  
FIRE  
BRIGADES  
UNION**

**RESPONSE TO CFRS COMMUNITY RISK  
MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024-2028: A BLUEPRINT  
FOR A BETTER SERVICE AND BETTER FUTURE**

# **CHESHIRE**



## Overall public spending

<b>Central government expenditure as set out by the Treasury</b>	<b>£500bn</b>
<b>Central and local government spending on public services</b>	<b>£1tn</b>
<b>National income – Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the UK</b>	<b>£2.2tn</b>
<b>Costs of fire and rescue</b>	
<b>Cost of the UK fire and rescue service per person per year</b>	<b>£50</b>
<b>Cost of the UK fire and rescue service as proportion of central government spending</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
<b>Cost of the UK fire and rescue service as proportion of spending on public services</b>	<b>0.3%</b>



## Value of the fire and rescue service

**Value of the fire and rescue service in England (lives saved, property, protection)**

**£13bn**

**Value of the fire and rescue service relative to its cost**

**6 times**





Value of the Fire and Rescue Service	1
Table of Contents	3
Foreword	4
Response Modelling	6
<b>CFRS Proposals</b>	
Review of Prevention, Protection, initiatives and procurement	13
Proposal 1	19
Proposal 2	21
Proposal 3	22
Proposal 4	25
Proposal 5	29
<b>Fire Brigades Union Proposals</b>	
Proposal 1	32
Proposal 2	38
Proposal 3	39
Proposal 4	41
Summary recommendations	43



## **Foreword:**

The fire and rescue service is an essential public service and a national strategic asset. Firefighters tackle every kind of emergency, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Firefighters receive the first call people make when it matters most and are the first line of defence when things go wrong. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is proud to represent the vast majority of firefighters across the UK. The UK fire and rescue service can mobilise ten thousand firefighters in a matter of minutes to tackle almost every emergency imaginable. Specially trained firefighters are on duty at all times, ready for deployment to incidents, large and small. The arrival of professional firefighters, swiftly and with appropriate numbers and adequate resources, is of tremendous value, both to those immediate victims who need our help and politicians who are accountable when things go wrong.

*The FBU firmly believes in and supports the process of Risk Management Planning as described in all of the current national guidance documents. The FBU wants to work with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority and the service to implement and to further develop the CRMP process.*

*Fire and Rescue Services are fortunate in that the majority of their employees are members of a single representative body, the FBU. By involving the FBU in the CRMP planning cycle, CFRS has the opportunity to draw on the combined experiences of the majority of its workforce when considering the health and safety implications of potential systems of service delivery work.*

*It is with this collaborative approach that we have managed to work closely with the service recently on a number of areas of success:*

### **Emergency Medical Response:**

*The FBU worked alongside the service to successfully launch a pilot scheme, whereby our members respond to members of the community that suffer a Cardiac arrest (Red 1), and provide emergency intervention and basic life support. We jointly worked on creating the agreement with CFRS and NWAS, and on the Standard Operating Procedures.*

### **Operational Training Duty System:**

*We jointly designed a new duty system for Operational and Command Training Officers that have achieved efficiency savings whilst increasing the capacity to deliver more training to the workforce whilst negotiating acceptable terms and conditions that accompanied the changes to the delivery output our members provide.*



### **New Maternity Policy:**

*The FBU approached the service with policies from other FRS around the country that evidenced the need to overhaul our existing policies. Together we have worked hard to create a maternity policy which we believe is the one of the best of the country, and one that will help attract more female applicants, thus enabling our service to more diverse and representative of our communities.*

### **Changes to the Wholetime Shift Duty System:**

*The FBU recently provided proposals on changes to how leave was facilitated – these have been subject to a ‘pilot’ and the Service have undertaken a review which has evidenced that the service were able to better plan for staffing deficiencies, more leave was taken without impacting on the global establishment and more staff were able to get the annual leave they wanted.*

*The IRMP definition endorsed by the IRMP steering group is:*

*Integrated Risk Management Planning is a holistic, modern and flexible process, supported by legislation and guidance, to identify, measure and mitigate the social and economic impact that fire and other emergencies can be expected to have on individuals, communities, commerce, Industry, the environment and heritage. FRA’s when establishing local options for risk reduction and management within annual action plans, must take account of the duties and responsibilities outlined in the national framework, the emergency services order, the civil contingencies Act and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.*

*This places emphasis on flexibility and partnership, working on local, cross border and regional planning for prevention and intervention activities to save and protect life and reduce the economic and environmental impact of fire to the community. Through this partnership approach IRMP should deliver a proportionate response, that is evidenced based, which will ensure efficiency.*

**It is with this in mind that Cheshire Fire Brigades Union has produced its response to the services 2024-2028 Plan.**



## The Response Model

As a result of the loss of such large numbers of whole-time frontline fire fighters, the FBU strongly urges the Service to review each and every operating procedure and response standard to take into account the loss of that emergency frontline first response.

The review must take into account the revised safe working practises that would mitigate as best as is possible against increased risk resulting from the loss of immediate and adequate response to fire and other emergencies. It is one thing to declare that a fire appliance or appliances will be sent immediately to incidents it is another thing to apply that in practise. The low levels of retained availability compounds this issue.

The FBU have previously tabled a proposal which is a key risk and task analysis of all identified operational scenarios to the fire and rescue service, which sets out the minimum safe number of firefighters for a number of known operational scenarios (33 in total). It is referred to as the Critical Attendance Standard, more commonly known as the CAST methodology.

The CAST methodology allows for a tightly-controlled phased arrival of fire appliances at emergency incidents. It takes into account of the effect of this phased arrival on both the incident and on the ability of firefighters to carry out Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) without increasing the risk to themselves above a level which they would normally expect and facing situations which are themselves inherently risky. Determining what is an acceptable phased arrival – or **LAG** – in fire appliance attendance times i.e. the time between the arrival of the first fire appliance and the second fire appliance sent as part of the initial emergency response to an incident, is critical.

For example, one of the most commonly attended categories of incident for the Fire and Rescue Service is for a dwelling house fire and rescues are regularly and often successfully carried out in such incidents by crews. The risk and task analysis provided within the CAST scenario for such an incident identifies that a minimum of **9** firefighters are required to successfully resolve this type of incident safely. For clarity the CAST scenarios are wholly based on risk and task analyses undertaken by Government as part of the Pathfinder Review, it is effectively a Government scenario replicated and supported by the FBU.

The FBU have identified that one of the main issues of concern with the unprecedented loss of such significant emergency frontline fire cover is the amount of time it will now take for a second (or third) appliance to arrive on scene enabling the effective and safe working practises previously referred to. This LAG time not only informs how operational procedures can commence or continue, but it also is the very essence of the '*speed and weight of attack*' rationale often referred to by professional firefighters.



To underpin how important the speed and weight of attack is considered by Government as well as the professional firefighters the FBU refer the reader to the comments made by the former Prime Minister, Mr. D Cameron MP, in response to a question put to him in the House of Commons at Prime Ministers Question Time. Mr. Cameron stated at the time that ***'Hon. Members must recognise that the most important thing is the time it takes the emergency services to get to an incident. As constituency MPs, we are naturally focused on the bricks and mortar items—whether ambulance or fire stations, or other facilities—but what really matters for our constituents is how quickly the emergency services get to them and how good the service is when they do so.'***

The Fire Brigades Union agrees completely with this comment made by the former Prime Minister.

Therefore the speed and weight of attack is crucial for both firefighter and community safety with the timely and appropriate provision of adequate numbers of firefighters. In its absence, safe systems of work are compromised and alternative less desirable strategies must be considered and implemented.

**However, when someone is screaming at firefighters to act, to rescue their parent, their partner or their child, and you are there as part of the fire service response, it does not matter how *'self-disciplined to work within accepted systems of work'* you may be, as a firefighter coerced into responding.**

These are not individual decisions. Such is the frequency of this event that they have become accepted group decisions amongst firefighters throughout the service. In short - they are given no alternative.

The Review of Standards of Emergency Cover undertaken by Government in 1999 recognised this problem, and the 'Pathfinder' report is crystal clear on this point. In any planning decisions relating to **when** the required firefighters and equipment should arrive at an emergency incident, it warns against placing firefighters in a position where they have no option but to act – even when there are insufficient resources available:

***"... it is essential to avoid situations which could motivate or pressurise firefighters to act unsafely in the interests of saving life."***

(Review of Standards of Emergency Cover - Technical Paper C – Response & Resource Requirements)

This is the very situation the FBU are referring to and potentially the very real danger facing CF&RS personnel unless dealt with appropriately.

To delay the speed and weight of attack has known effects in relation to fatality rates. It is now a regrettable fact that response standards within the UK F&RS's, including Cheshire, have become slower.

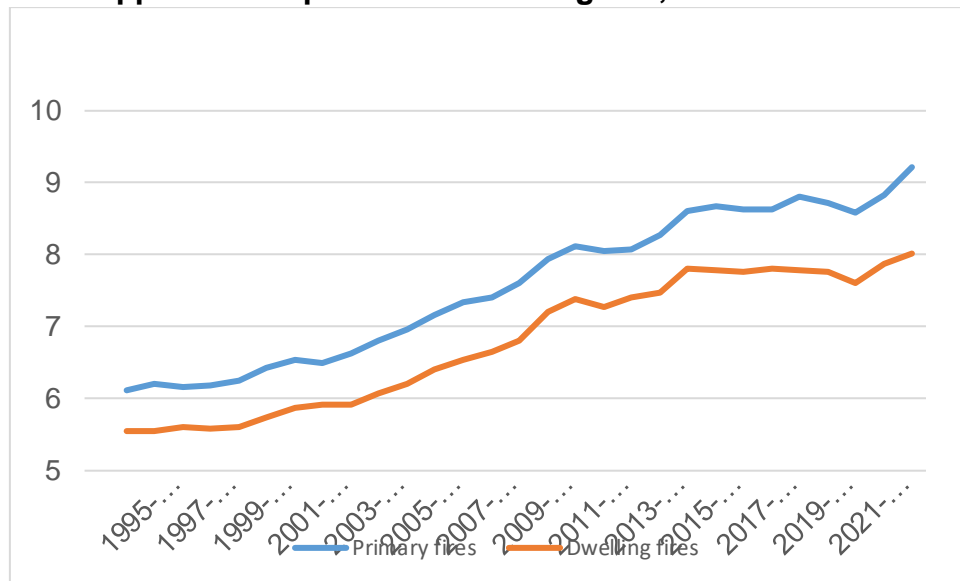
The following graph displays the rapid rise in attendance times, remembering that to safely conduct most operational activities a minimum of nine firefighters are required as demonstrated by the CAST scenarios. So a first attendance while useful does not





stop the clock ticking as the safe systems of work identified by CAST requires the full resource provision of 9 firefighters as a minimum.

### First appliance response times in England, 1994-95 to 2022-23



The current system does not record the arrival of **second or other appliances**. There is now a postcode lottery of attendance standards, meaning a slower response to emergencies than our communities are entitled to expect and firefighters want to deliver.

The Westminster devolved governments should increase UK-wide planning and cooperation, devise UK-wide response standards in consultation with fire sector stakeholders. These should include:

- a maximum response time standard of five minutes from the time of call to arrival of the first pumping appliance
- a maximum response time standard for the second pumping appliance
- a minimum of five riders on all pumping appliances
- permanently (primary) crewed aerial ladder appliances.

### A new approach to attendance planning

For the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the minimum level of fire service attendance at fires in the UK was defined by national standards of fire cover. These standards defined the number of appliances, the crew size and the attendance time.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, national standards of fire cover were abolished, and it was left up to each fire and rescue service to set its own standards. The type of fire appliances, the crew sizes and the attendance times could all be set locally.

It was believed that the old national standards of fire cover did not reflect the modern fire and rescue service and did not address the true risk within the community. Setting



attendance parameters at the local level was intended to deliver a better service to the public.

However a *method* was required that would analyse modern fire and rescue service capabilities so that the effect of changes to attendance standards could be examined and assessed prior to implementation.

The *method* that was developed by government scientists was called the Brigade Response Options System (BROS).

## Brigade Response Options System (BROS)

Although it is called a *system*, BROS is essentially a *process*. Computer software has been created to make the BROS process easier to put into practice, but it can just as easily be worked out on paper.

BROS is a timeline based task analysis process.

The available firefighters are listed down the left hand side of a table, and the passage of time is represented across the width of the table. See Figure 1.

	1 minute	2 minutes	3 minutes	
Officer in charge				
Firefighter 1				
Firefighter 2				
Firefighter 3				
Firefighter 4				

Figure 1. Task analysis table

The idea is that the activities undertaken by firefighters at an incident can be 'blocked in' to the table to show what each person is doing at any moment. This process is known as *task analysis*

This is not a process that produces results that are of 'engineering accuracy', but if the skill and judgement of a large number of professional firefighters is used to fill in the table, a realistic and justifiable outcome is obtained.

The BROS process is particularly useful for a number of reasons:

- BROS is not limited to attendance at fires. It can be used to assess the effect of attendance standards at any emergency incident.
- BROS can be applied to a 'typical' incident or it can be applied to a very specific case.



- BROS can be applied using 'typical' fire and rescue service resources or it can be applied using the known resources of a particular service or fire station.
- There are only as many rows on the table as there are firefighters. This avoids incorrect assumptions being made about the activities that can actually be carried out by the number of firefighters in attendance.
- The timeline encourages users to remember that certain activities cannot be started until other activities have been completed.
- The timeline makes it possible to work out the effect of actual attendance times of second and subsequent appliances just by adding more rows to the table at different times.

In very simple form, a table might look something like Figure 2 as it is completed:

	2 minute	4 minutes	6 minutes	
<b>First appliance:</b>				
Officer in charge	Risk assessment	Supervision	Briefing	Supervision
Firefighter 1	Pump operation			
Firefighter 2			BA rescue	
Firefighter 3			BA rescue	
Firefighter 4	Supplying water	Managing hose		1 <sup>st</sup> aid
<b>Second appliance:</b> (arrival time 5 minutes after 1 <sup>st</sup> appliance)				
Officer in charge			Briefing	Com support
Firefighter 1				Firefighting
Firefighter 2				Firefighting
Firefighter 3				1 <sup>st</sup> aid

Figure 2. Task analysis table being completed.  
Lag between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> appliance arrival is 5 minutes

A number of points must be considered at this stage:

- **Firefighter safety**

BROS enables an analysis of firefighter safety to be undertaken in the earliest planning stages of attendance planning.

As the rows in the table are filled in by professional firefighters, they will easily be able to identify issues of firefighter safety that place a demand on resources. For example, at a motorway incident, it may be necessary to allocate the activity of 'scene safety' to one person for the duration of the incident. This fills in one line of the table, and all of the other activities at the incident must be distributed amongst the remaining lines.



- **Firefighter physiology**

Firefighter physiology must be taken into account when using the timeline approach of BROS.

For example, if it is assumed that firefighters will be wearing breathing apparatus in arduous conditions, a period for recovery must be blocked into their timeline afterwards.

- **Resilience**

If the table shows every single firefighters to be engaged in risk critical activity and/or activity critical to firefighter safety, it must be realised that the task being described is 100% reliant on all equipment working, and on all firefighters being uninjured and not distracted.

If a hose needs replacing, or a firefighter is injured or forced to control bystanders, other important tasks will be delayed.

It is therefore not a bad thing that there will be periods of time when some firefighters will not be allocated tasks within the table. This provides built-in resilience to ensure that an incident can be concluded successfully even if unplanned events occur.

- **Starting position and incident development**

The initial scale of the incident and its growth or decline must constantly be kept in mind.

The BROS process does not consider the attendance time of the first appliance. (It would be possible to consider 'driving to the incident' as an activity, but attendance time should really be considered in a different way).

The important question is, exactly what will the first appliance in attendance be faced with?

If it is assumed that the attendance time of the first appliance will be 4 minutes, a fire will be a certain size. If it is assumed that the attendance time of the first appliance will be 8 minutes, a fire will be four times as big.

This is important because when considering tasks, a crew of five arriving at a fire after 4 minutes might be assumed to be enough to bring the fire under control. However a crew of five arriving at a fire after 8 minutes will have more tasks to perform – that will take longer – and they might NOT be able to bring the much larger fire under control.

In 2003/04, the FBU was concerned about the way in which fire and rescue services might apply the principles of task analysis and attendance planning.



The FBU therefore took a range of 'typical' emergency incidents and put them through the BROS process to identify the *critical* attendance standard that was required to deliver a satisfactory outcome.

The meaning of the word 'critical' is that fewer resources (firefighters) in the attendance standard would deliver a worse outcome, but additional resources (while beneficial) would not have a proportionately improved effect on the outcome.

For example, at a 'typical house fire', two appliances comprising 9 crew are able to safely commit two breathing apparatus teams to search for casualties and extinguish a fire. A single appliance crew would take twice as long to search a smoke filled house and would be unlikely to do so in compliance with a safe system of work. But equally, three crews and 13 or 14 firefighters would not be able to search a 'typical' house that much more quickly because – apart from anything else - three or four breathing apparatus teams in a 'typical' house fire could get in each other's way and slow each other down. Thus, the 'critical' attendance at a typical house fire is 9 firefighters.

Note: Not all houses are typical and not all fires are typical so in some circumstances more than 9 firefighters would be critical to delivering a satisfactory outcome at a house fire.

The FBU's *critical attendance standards* are therefore nothing more than the results of FBU members carrying out incident ground task analysis using BROS, the Brigade Response Options System.

Within an Integrated, or Community Risk Management Plan (IRMP), local fire & rescue authorities are required to set out how they intend to make adequate provision for prevention and emergency intervention to meet efficiently and safely all normal requirements.

The nationally circulated guide 'The Dynamic Management of Risk at Operational Incidents, A Fire Service Pamphlet' states:-

"Legal Fire Authorities, in common with other employers, have many legal duties in respect of safety. The most relevant to this document are those imposed by sections 2 and 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and regulations 3 and 4 of the Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations (MHSAW), 1992. These require employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees and others affected by their work activities.

In order to achieve this, they must carry out and record suitable and sufficient risk assessments, then implement the control measures necessary to ensure an acceptable level of safety. Both the risk assessments and the control measures must be regularly monitored and reviewed to confirm their continuing validity."

Ultimately the Service cannot consult the public on a matter that will potentially put the health and safety of firefighters at risk. Matters that potentially put firefighter's



safety at risk must be addressed and resolved through the health and safety committee. Just because the public do not raise any objections to a proposal that will put firefighters at risk, does not mean that the Service can implement that proposal.

The FBU propose that all single pump stations have a minimum ridership of 5 fire fighters as its response crew.

## **Cheshire Fire and Rescue 2024-2028 Proposals:**

### **What CFRS plan to do?**

Implement the recommendations from a review of our Prevention Department in 2023, ensuring all our community safety programmes continue to have the greatest possible impact in reducing harm, injuries and deaths.

Continue to improve the way we target our Safe and Well visits, ensuring we see the people who are most at risk of fire. Gradually increase the number of Safe and Visits we carry out year on year during the lifespan of this CRMP, so that as many people as possible benefit from this life-saving scheme.

Improve the way we work with our partners in health, social care, housing and the police so that people are safeguarded and get the support they need.

Train our prevention teams and firefighters in motivational interviewing techniques, which should help to increase the number of homes we get into and deliver safety messages effectively.

Include safety information about new and emerging technologies, such as lithium-ion batteries and battery energy storage systems (BESS), in our Safe and Well visits.



### **FBU position**

The FBU support the work we do in communities in raising awareness of fire in the home. The role of the modern day fire fighter is now much more varied however the core work is defined within the agreed national role map as detailed by the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.

Expanding work streams as pushed by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) often seeks to expand the role beyond what is agreed and this causes friction and opposition from the workforce and our members. Work that sits under the National Health Service, Social Services and the Police should not and cannot be put on to fire services simply because those critical agencies face similar funding pressures.



Cheshire fire fighters already undertake more safe and well visits than any other fire and rescue service, alongside juggling maintenance of competence of many operational disciplines – firefighting, the use and command of Breathing Apparatus, Road traffic collisions, swift water rescue, rescue from height, animal rescue, chemical incidents and flooding response. In addition fire fighters undertake thematic inspections of local businesses and provide safety awareness in local authority schools.

Further increasing safe and well targets without accepting that other areas of work will be impacted must be considered.

The proposal “*Train our prevention teams and firefighters in motivational interviewing techniques*” needs a major re-think – our members are not salespersons and this will be seen as more aggressive cold calling which leaves our members angry due to the negative reaction they have from the community when attempting to give advice to those that respond that they don’t want it. The recent blurring of the lines between the fire and rescue service and the police who are agents of law enforcement has in the eyes of fire fighters and Union, damaged the neutrality and reputation of the services which has always been crucial in getting the fire service in people’s homes as a result of mutual trust.

Interestingly, the pre CRMP consultation highlighted that the public we serve wanted the service to focus on training, response and fire protection and not the safe and well agenda. Here we have the workforce and the local community reporting the same opinion to the Authority.

### **What the service plan to do?**

Implement the new Road Safety Strategic Plan with our partners and increase the number of road safety events we deliver.

Expand our water safety programme to reduce the occurrence of accidental drowning.



### **The FBU Position**

The FBU support these initiatives

### **What Service plan to do?**

Review its Protection Department to ensure it remains efficient and effective. Evaluate the effectiveness of our RBIP to ensure we target inspection activity at the right premises.



Provide accredited training for operational managers, to improve their knowledge and understanding when inspecting premises.

Continue to campaign for the installation of sprinklers in new and existing commercial premises. We will work with the NFCC to improve the planning process for BESSs, to ensure planning authorities consider the implications of fire and firefighter safety when approving new installations. This will include the appointment of a specialist officer in Protection.



### **The FBU position**

The FBU support this work. Providing our members with the training and resources is crucial, as our response in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy laid bare.

High rise residential buildings across the UK are still clad with flammable materials, but still the fire and rescue service has yet to research and seek to develop an effective evacuation strategy, let alone implement such a strategy with training and equipment and embed it into firefighting practice. The FBU believes that the terrible loss of life at Grenfell Tower was ultimately caused by political decisions made at the highest level. For at least 40 years, policies relating to housing, local government, the fire and rescue service, research and other areas have been driven by the agenda of cuts, deregulation and privatisation with a devastating impact on our communities.

The FBU believes the fire and rescue service has been weakened in its ability to plan and prepare for the range of risks that it might need to address. In particular, there has been a reduction in the importance attached to planning and preparation for emergency incidents. Since 2003-04 the fire and rescue service has become increasingly fragmented. This has weakened the ability to identify, plan for and train for the variety of risks that might be faced at emergency incidents – which should be part of a collaborative work as required under the civil contingencies act.

In particular, we draw attention to the scrapping of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (CFBAC) and the abolition of most national standards within the fire and rescue service that previously informed strategic decision making in the service. This includes decisions about standards, the inspection and enforcement of fire safety, planning for operational incidents and the training that arises from such planning.

By way of illustration, residents and firefighters present on the night of Grenfell faced a severe multi-storey, multi-compartment fire in a building with manifest failures of fire protection measures, which meant fire and smoke penetrated the building at several levels. Expert reports identify numerous failures:





- The rainscreen cladding system covering the outside of the building
- The lining materials around the windows
- The fire resistance of flat fire doors
- Flat fire doors that did not self-close
- Lack of provision for people who needed assistance
- A lower standard of stair doors
- Heating system and gas pipes in the protected stair
- A single stair 1.04 metres wide
- Firefighting lifts not provided
- Dry fire main instead of a wet riser for water supplies [A dry fire main is an empty pipe that can be connected to a water source from outside a building by firefighters. In a wet riser system pipes are kept full of water for automatic or manual firefighting]
- Failure of the lobby smoke control system.

**When considering the general lack of capacity awareness and training of fire and rescue service personnel to highlight and report the above, it stresses the need to focus on these risk critical and statutory areas rather than spend time and money on 'motivational interviewing techniques' to further increase targets on safe and well visits to aid other agencies.**

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 was a significant legislative failure by the Westminster government. It ignored many warnings from a range of expert stakeholders when it introduced the Order. In particular, it scrapped the fire certification process, which gave fire authorities considerable leverage to bring about improved safety standards across a range of premises. The government introduced a self-compliance regime without providing the necessary safeguards for those carrying out risk assessments, particularly for complex buildings governed by multiple regulations – such as high-rise residential buildings.

The FBU raised these concerns with the ODPM, Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Home Office. Before the Fire Safety Order came into force, the union wrote to the fire minister Nick Raynsford on 1 March 2005, criticising the transitional arrangements for handling fire certificates and the advice provided by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) – now the NFCC.

The FBU repeated warnings about the consequences of scrapping national standards, the CFBAC and the inspectorate, the hands-off localist approach of central government, as well as the continued central funding cuts. Central



government and Chief Fire Officers ignored these warnings – we call on CFRS Authority to invest in the protection department and re-align its focus to provide protection and response staff with the tools it needs to carry out this vital work – that the FBU believe requires a review of some of its priorities within this Community Risk Management Plan

### **What Service plan to do?**

Continue to review its flood and water response provision across Cheshire to ensure that it meets emerging needs.

We will support national and local campaigns to raise awareness of staying safe outdoors and during periods of extreme weather

We will undertake a major programme to replace and upgrade breathing apparatus. We will continue to review our operational kit and equipment to ensure our staff have the appropriate resources to carry out their roles safely and effectively.

We will review our procedures for learning from operational incidents and ensure that it maximises the safety of our firefighters.

We will continue to work with representative bodies, partners such as the NFCC and others on any developments affecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our workforce.



### **What is the FBU Position?**

We support the review of the flood water response provision. We have already recommended previously that the plan to have a large number of staff trained in Swift Water response was unsuitable due to locations of water response teams being in the north of the county.

Instead we propose that all WT, DC1/Nucleus stations are trained to DEFRA MOD2 – this allows for crews to enter limited height still water to rescue people trapped in flooding, and crucially trained to self-rescue in the event of an unforeseen event with the correct equipment/PPE along with providing more resilient Yellow coverage.

*(CFRS currently trains all non-swift water staff a basic wading skill for entering non flowing water to knee height. Crews have been issued two piece wading suits but HAVE NOT been issued any thermal under suits. (( When these were previously issued a number of years ago they came with the under suits)). MOD 2 skilled teams can enter deeper water ((as long as they can touch the bottom)) and evacuate casualties by putting them on a rescue sledge and the crew wade the raft back to*



*safety along with being issued proper dry-suits, thermal under suits and correct water boots. This is a more realistic and likely scenario for Cheshire Crews to attend eg wide area flooding's requiring mass evacuations or searching))*

*Only 5 stations should be trained to Swift Water Technician level to provide rescue capability. (Warrington, Powey ((both boat)) Penketh, Chester & Crewe as MOD3 swift water then all WT DC1/Nucleus MOD 2, On Call wading with updated PPE)*

The above approach ensures compliance with the health and safety provisions directed on the service.

But again, the Authority and the service need to recognise that there is still no statutory duty – or funding for flooding or water rescue in England.

The Fire Brigades Union responded to the National Audit Office report into flooding resilience in England, calling for a statutory duty for fire and rescue services to respond to floods and the resources to match – as it is in Wales, Scotland and N Ireland.

The report finds that approximately 5.7 million properties at risk of flooding in England in 2022-23, and that key infrastructure is at risk, including up to:

- 77% of rail infrastructure
- 51% of water supply infrastructure
- 25% of gas infrastructure

The NAO highlights a lack of long-term planning, concluding that “the government wants to achieve greater resilience to flooding in the long term but has no measure for resilience and no target for the level of flood resilience it expects to achieve.”

*We urgently need a statutory duty on the fire and rescue service to respond to flooding in England, and resources to match – and we call on the service and the chair of the Authority to write to the Prime Minister and the Fire Minister to echo this call in light of this Community Risk Management Plan.*

Turning to the review and upgrade of the services Breathing Apparatus – this is supported by the FBU, and has been a core demand of the FBU since 2018. It is frankly shocking that after 20 years of telemetry technology being widely utilised by Fire and Rescue Services that Cheshire Fire and Rescue still doesn't have this capability. Instead the Authority had repeatedly extended the life span of the current sets, and we have seen an increasing number of set malfunctions prompting the Union to table a number of papers to the Joint Safety Committee.

*The Union should be fully involved in the decision to trial and purchase new Breathing Apparatus sets for our members to operate safely.*



## **CFRS PROPOSAL 1: change the way we measure response times**

1. Start measuring our response time from the moment a 999 call is answered in our control room, not from the time the control operator alerts the fire station.
2. Instead of measuring the response times to life-risk incidents, we would measure the response times to fires involving homes, businesses and vehicles (known as 'primary fires').
3. We would report our average response time rather than the percentage of incidents we respond to in 10 minutes.

### **What is the current experience with North West Fire Control?**

The provision for mobilising the fire appliances and resources rest with the individual Fire and Rescue Authorities, which is then contracted out to North West Fire Control Ltd, and arrangements made through service level agreements. But these arrangements are not subject to public scrutiny nor are they contained within the Cheshire CRMP, and North West Fire control Ltd do not produce an Integrated or Community Risk Management Plan. It would also appear that the scrutiny process applied to local authority fire and rescue services by His Majesty's Inspectorate does also not extend to North West Fire Control.

None of the arrangements are available to the FBU, there is no consultation nor are they available for public Scrutiny. For example, the arrangements for dealing with a critical loss of infrastructure, IT systems, flu pandemic or Industrial action have not been subject to this scrutiny process. This lack of transparency is a serious concern. Elected members should recall that the performance, capability and preparedness was recently robustly criticised as part of the Manchester Arena Inquiry, and similar concerns were expressed in part of phase 1 of the Grenfell Inquiry.

Let us remember that North West Fire Control Ltd is supposed to be a Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC).

As the mobilisation of appliances and resources is absolutely pivotal in terms of our statutory duty, response and safety, the process of examining the existing arrangements allowing for evaluation and a continuing cycle for improvement is clearly absent under the current constitutional and operating arrangements – and that is something the Authority should move to change.

Staffing issues within NWFC continues to impact on performance and wellbeing of our members with the control room regularly running under minimum staffing and critical IT software failures combining to make for a dangerous operation.

Additionally we believe that the people of Cheshire have a right to know that the Local Authority Controlled Company is financially viable or underwritten.

### **What is the position of the FBU?**



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.

As set out above, a change to the democratic governance model needs to be implemented to ensure accountability and transparency. Equally, access to information needs to be put in place.

We do however believe a national standard should be re-introduced for services.

There are, as set above however, some concerns with the ability of North West Fire Control to deliver what is essentially a contracted out service, where the Authority – and the public you serve, have little democratic oversight or say in this critical area of the services operations.

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.

During the winter of 2019 all four unitary councils in Cheshire – Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington all wrote to Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service calling for an improved Cheshire attendance standard including an expansion to include all life risk incidents, having passed resolutions and motions at full general meetings of the respective councils.

Why we wouldn't set our response and interventions to all categories of life risk – and measure and report on these is beyond our understanding, which would only serve to improve our service to communities and the chances of survival of those in need.



## **CFRS PROPOSAL 2: convert four on-call fire engines to full-time crewing during weekdays**

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 members 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 ones primary employment or utilises the skillset of a fire fighter.

### **CFRS PROPOSAL 3: convert Knutsford's fire engine from on-call to day crewing**

#### **What is the FBU position?**

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 a 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.**

Minimum requirements for a level 3 team like Lymm are 5 trained operators, one being a supervisor. This is nationally recognised and adopted for the techniques we use. The most common rescue the crew carries out is an embankment rescue, not necessarily very technical but requires a minimum of five operators to complete. Like an IC the supervisor shouldn't get hands on as they are responsible for the sector, as mentioned earlier, and should form part of a risk and task analysis.

A further requirement is confined space response.. This takes a minimum of 5 technical operators to manage the incident safely and that's using the HART teams and fire crews as well for other roles to meet the legislative requirements.

In Cheshire we aim to deploy from Lymm with a Animal rescue team of 5 to include an AR3 (Supervisor) and 4 AR2 operators., The response is generally supported by Bollington & Knutsford on-call if they are available. Our external training provider BARTA which covers most Fire & Rescue Services in the UK, delivers the training which uses the model of a team of 6 for the various roles and responsibilities.

Not only do the national pathfinder and Critical Attendance Standards support the FBU position of crewing the asset and response with a minimum of 5 fire fighters, but also the National Chief Fire Councils technical working group have issued the same



guidance:

<b>TEAM TYPE LEVEL 3 – ROPE RESCUE TEAM Capability</b>	<b>Logistics (Minimum requirements)</b>	<b>Team Structure (Minimum 5 persons)</b>	<b>Competencies of personnel (Minimum number required)</b>	<b>Incident Command System</b>
Knowledge skills & equipment to rig complex rope access and rescue systems, to include rope access work in suspension, lowering, descending, raising, ascending and traversing non-vertically by deviation / cableway.	Be available 24 hours a day Facility for financing supplies and consumables when mobile or on scene (e.g. credit card or Team Manager)	<b>5 team members including team leader</b>  1 Welfare and liaison officer** Welfare and liaison officer is for support and welfare considerations at protracted incidents not for tactical command as required by the agency.	SWelt - All Level 3 technician (All) First Aid Qualified (All)*  <i>Update of training – current and refreshed within the previous 3 year period. All skills practiced with in previous 3 Months</i>	All team members to be trained to the current ICS in operation for Rope incidents
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Communications</b> Handheld communications for all team members, spare batteries and charger. Waterproofed. Smart phone with team leader and manager	<b>Medical</b> Basic Life Support IEC Pack Oxygen cylinder x2 and resuscitation equipment Spinal long board/ scoop stretcher Blankets Basket stretcher	<b>Decontamination</b> Anti-bacterial hand gel Anti-bacterial Face wipes Anti-bacterial equipment spray Full cleaning facilities available at base station	<b>Navigation</b> Handheld GPS system with street mapping facility
<b>Equipment</b>  Ancillary equipment: lighting, marker boards, mapping, aide memoire. Scene lighting Search lighting		<b>PPE</b> Full PPE for all team members + redundancy  helmet, footwear, gloves, personal lighting.	<b>Technical Equipment</b> Low stretch Kernmantle rope minimum 100m x 5. Rope access equipment to allow access at height and work in suspension. This may require equipment including dynamic rope, Tripod / Quadpod / frame, Stretcher.	<b>Testing</b> All equipment should be suitably tested, maintained and certified in accordance with manufacturers' guidelines and relevant regulations

## NFCC NATIONAL SAFE WORK AT HEIGHT WORKING GROUP SAFE WORK AT HEIGHT / ROPE RESCUE TEAM TYPING & COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK GUIDANCE V2

### General

This guidance has been developed by Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) personnel and provides recommended minimum requirements for each identified level of operational response for working at height; from an individual's working safely at height through to teams conducting complex rescue operations. The overall objective of "team typing" and the work at height competency framework is to improve firefighter safety and enable better utilisation of scarce assets.

These documents are intended to:

- Provide a standard framework of competencies for operations at height to support integrated risk management
- Provide a framework against which assessment and assurance can be undertaken
- Create greater standardisation
- Improve responder safety
- Improve the time taken to resolve incidents
- Provide a framework of standards to support the ability to develop work at height assets as a national / regional resource
- Provide guidance for FRSs that wish to request a resource of this nature to assist in the resolution of an incident.





**It is believed that by classifying and declaring safe work at height / rope rescue “typed” assets then UK FRS resilience and cross border working can be improved.**

A national team typing system details standard resource packages according to their capabilities. Whilst not intended to be definitive, the following outlines the potential range of capabilities available for resolving operation incidents. It provides the basis for robust and safe systems of work across all FRSs.

## 1. Methodology

1.1 The NFCC National Safe Work at Height Group commissioned a task and finish group to develop safe work at height / rope rescue team typing guidance for FRS Incident Commanders on the capability of rope rescue teams to meet the specific needs of an incident.

<b>Level 3 Rope Rescue Technician</b>		
<b>Description</b> A rope team at this level of skill would be capable of meeting complex access, rescue and casualty movement requirements. With the rope capability the team can implement a safe system of work to access casualties for stabilisation, vertical and horizontal rescue in a wide range of environment's		
<b>Training</b>		
Level 3 - Rope Technician Course.	X	
Basic First Aid	X	
Advanced First Aid		X
Confined Space Awareness	X	
Confined Space Operator		X
Incident Command and Co-ordination Awareness	X	
Basic Health and Safety Awareness.	X	
<b>Medical Criteria</b>		
Individual FRS will determine the levels of fitness required for responders	X	
<b>Personal Protective Equipment</b>		
Work Positioning harness, work restraint system, fall arrest plus rope rescue equipment appropriate to the level of the operative.	X	
Clothing appropriate to the environment and task.	X	
<b>Personal lighting</b>		
Personal issue head torch	X	

We must ensure that our specialist rescue response is crewed with the minimum safe number of personnel.

Much like our animal response, which requires 6 responders.

The method of spreading the response over 2 or even 3 appliances is ineffective and inefficient – it takes appliances out of communities unnecessarily, reducing fire cover in those areas and increases attendance times.

Equally the method of training is ineffective and inefficient – rather than a dedicated rope and animal rescue crew able to prepare, train and respond together, alongside being assessed, instead we have multiple crews having to train, often in isolation.



## PROPOSAL 4:

**Reorganise daytime fire cover in Warrington. CFRS want to spread the daytime fire cover and prevention and protection activity across Birchwood and Stockton Heath, two of the five fire stations in the borough of Warrington. This would mean changes to the way the service operate both these fire stations.**

### **What is the situation at present?**

#### Birchwood

This is currently a nucleus fire station, which means it is crewed by full-time firefighters between 7am and 7pm every day and at night by on-call firefighters who live or work within five minutes of the fire station and respond by pager when on-call.

#### Stockton Heath

This is currently an on-call fire station, which means the fire engine is crewed solely by on-call firefighters who live or work within five minutes of the fire station and respond by pager when on-call.

The two unique and separate towns of Birchwood and Stockton Heath, located in within the unitary area of Warrington, Cheshire, presents a nuanced risk profile shaped by various factors including environmental risks, economic stability, local challenges, and crime statistics. Examining these aspects would offer a comprehensive understanding of the community's vulnerability and resilience and how these quite dramatic proposals for responding to fire and other emergencies are going to impact on the two towns and those communities – yet it does not appear from the Risk Management Plan that robust profiling has been undertaken.

Environmental risks in these towns are influenced by its geographical location, land use, and susceptibility to natural disasters. Coastal areas may face risks associated with flooding or erosion, while urban areas might contend with air and noise pollution. Additionally, climate change impacts could pose challenges like extreme weather events. Assessing these factors requires collaboration between local authorities, environmental agencies, and the community to develop sustainable practices and resilience measures.

Economic stability plays a crucial role in both towns risk landscape. Dependency on a single industry can make the community vulnerable to economic downturns. Conversely, economic diversification and a robust local business environment contribute to stability.

Local challenges, such as infrastructure development, transportation networks, and access to essential services, further shape the risk profile. Insufficient Infrastructure can impede emergency response and exacerbate the impact of disasters. Community engagement and strategic urban planning are essential to address these challenges and enhance the overall preparedness of the pan Warrington region.



Crime statistics are a key component of the risk profiles, reflecting the safety and security of the community. Analysing crime rates, types of offenses, and trends provides insights into areas that may require targeted interventions including from a fire prevention, protection and response. Community policing, neighbourhood watch programs, and collaboration between agencies and residents contribute to a safer environment.

The risk profile of these two distinct towns is multifaceted, encompassing environmental, economic, local, and crime-related factors.

### **Understanding the Risks and the impact of these CRMP proposals:**

Warrington lies at the Centre of the North West's communication network, with the M56, M6 and M62 motorways all intersecting here. Two significant waterways serve the urban area, the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal. The role as a crossing point of both river and canal is an essential part of the town's character. Warrington has historically enjoyed high levels of employment, growth and prosperity driven by a strong manufacturing base and its key location in the region. Recently a shift from manufacturing to a service based economy has resulted in financial services being the largest sector providing employment in Warrington followed by distribution.

Although Warrington/Cheshire does not have any main airports within its boundary, Manchester is on the border and Liverpool is also extremely close, both having flight paths over Cheshire.

Cheshire has one of the highest number of Chemical and Industrial sites that come under the COMAH regulations in the Country. These are mainly based around Ellesmere Port, Widnes and Runcorn, although there are several sites in other areas.

Cheshire Resilience Forum has identified the following as the top risks within Cheshire:

- Pandemic flu
- Flooding
- Severe Weather
- Loss of Critical National Infrastructure
- Animal Diseases
- Environmental Incidents
- Industrial Incidents
- Transport Incidents
- Terrorist Threats

Cheshire is at risk from tidal/coastal, river and surface water flooding. The River Dane and the River Bollin are rapid response catchments, these areas are expected to flood rapidly in response to extreme rainfall and there may be little or no warning due to the sudden onset of flooding. History



December 2013 saw some Flooding in Parkgate, Chester and Warrington, and in the summer of 2012 areas of Warrington suffered from both surface water and river flooding. In 1946, 2000 and 2012 Northwich was affected by flooding from the rivers Weaver and Dane.

As climate change proceeds, so we are likely to see an increasing threat from extreme weather events, be it disruptive rainfall/wind during the winter, or an increased frequency of intense rainfall events in the summer.

Despite its relatively low altitude, its exposure to winds from between west and northwest means that it can on occasion receive the full force of severe winter gales such as those which affected much of central and northern England on 18th January 2007. When combined with high astronomical tides this can result in significant coastal flooding. The high ground of the south Pennines in the eastern end of the county is often affected by disruptive snowfall during colder spells in winter.

Cheshire has one of the largest motorway networks in the country and we regularly deal with minor spillages of fuel and chemicals as a result of collisions. Occasionally there are larger spills. The emergency services, Environment Agency, Highways England and landowners all work together to minimise the impact of such incidents.

Cheshire has around 50 Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites, one of the highest in the country. COMAH regulations apply to businesses that have the potential to cause major accidents because they manufacture, store or use large quantities of dangerous substances such as oil products, natural gas, chemicals or explosives.

There are major rail hubs at Chester, Crewe, Warrington and Wilmslow with numerous Passenger Train Operating Companies and Freight Operating Companies operating within the County. There are also plans in the future for a major transport North development following the collapse of the HS2 project.

The UK faces a real threat from terrorism and crowded places remain an attractive target. There are a number of iconic targets within the county which could hold significance to a terrorist.

### **What is the Fire Brigades Union Position?**

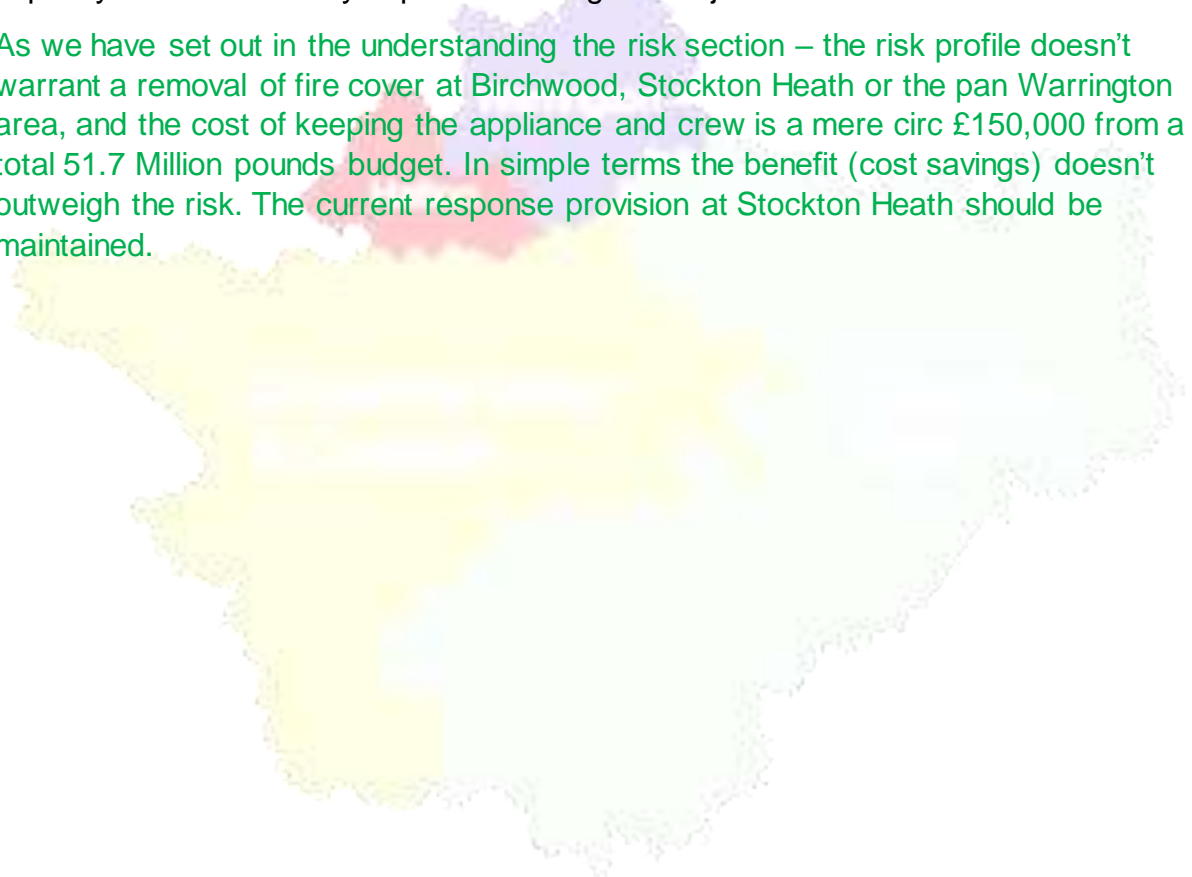
The FBU oppose this proposal to disband the Retained (On Call) team at Stockton Heath and have the cover at the station only guaranteed 50% of the time, provided for by the Birchwood team of fire fighters.



**Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority has a policy of ‘No Fire Station Closures’**, yet this proposal would see the Stockton Heath station closed for upto 50% of the time, and the fire service response to the communities of Stockton Heath potentially delayed, awaiting the arrival of the next nearest appliance, whilst at the same time, would see a reduction in the fire cover at Birchwood on the occasions they are sent to cover at Stockton Heath.

It must be stressed that whilst the proposal to create four new appliances is welcomed and supported by the FBU, these pumps are not proposed to be available at night or at weekends, and moreover, the overall total number of fire appliances available to respond will be reduced by four – this creates a lack of response capacity when the County experiences large or major incidents.

As we have set out in the understanding the risk section – 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 circ £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.





## **PROPOSAL 5: Strengthen the on-call system**

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.

In most cases they have fewer incidents to deal with compared with full-time firefighters. Fire engines operated by full-time firefighters are available 24/7 whereas our on-call firefighters undertake their role as a part-time job, often in addition to demanding full-time employment and juggling this with a personal and social life. 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.

### What is the national and local picture with the retained duty system?

The Retained Duty System of the Fire and Rescue Service, as we know it today, was created after World War II. The Fire Services Act of 1947 returned the Service to Local Authorities and created, through the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council and the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire Brigades, standard practices and Conditions of Service.

The part time fire fighter model (also known as the Retained Duty System or On call model)

Due largely to the changing nature of society, one of the main problems we encounter is that many people simply do not live and work in the same areas. Therefore many Retained Fire Stations are well crewed during the weekends and evenings, but not during the day.

Most people are probably unaware that their local Fire Station may be staffed by Firefighters who, most of their time, work as teachers, business people, factory workers, hospital porters or bricklayers. Self-employed and unemployed people are involved too. But all they see are Firefighters, in their uniforms, with their appliances, on their way to or from a fire or road traffic incident or perhaps at the school fete giving tips on fire safety.

Some may even have read of Firefighters on the Retained system as 'part-time' Firefighters. What they almost certainly won't know about is the chronic shortage of Firefighters working the Retained Duty System, the effect that has on the Service, public or the Firefighters themselves. They won't know that Retained Firefighters commit themselves to be 'on call' night and day for over 100 hours a week, or that they do it for a Retaining Fee of £2,700 per year or less plus pay for the hours that they actually attend and work.



The Government, Fire Authorities and Brigades know that there is a shortage of Retained staff – it's a long-standing problem, but yet the payment model has not changed in over 30 years, whilst the demand and expectation on the firefighters has grown exponentially over this period.

The Retained Duty System is a highly cost-effective component of our modern Fire and Rescue Service. It does not suffer from a lack of 'flexibility' – modern or otherwise. What it suffers from is a lack of investment. There is just not enough money going into the system to pay for adequate fees for Retained staff, advertising to attract new recruits and training those that are willing to 'put something in' for their community. The recruitment problem is – and must be – the focus of new national initiatives. Changes and 'modernisation' aimed simply at 'making do' with inadequate resources – trading on the good will of the existing over-stretched workforce – will only store up problems for the future.

If the Fire Service is to continue to benefit from the contribution of Retained Firefighters, substantial additional funding will be vital to overcome recruitment and retention problems. The idea, advanced recently by the Local Government Association (LGA) that some remedies to the problem can be at low or no cost – a view apparently shared by some other organisations involved in the debate about recruitment and retention – is a fantasy.

### **What is the FBU position on this proposal?**

Cheshire FBU fully support a 'strengthening' of the Retained/On call Duty system – it plays a vital part of the Cheshire team ethos and our response to communities. But we must be clear that part of the solution to solving the recruitment and retention problem is investment in the reward and recognition a retained fire fighter receives for investing such large parts of their lives to remain available and ready to respond.

The FBU believes strongly that without a long-term investment in funding, we will see the gradual demise of the Retained Duty System. Fire Authorities are and will be unable to protect the public, unable to meet the challenges and expectations of the communities we serve. There are a number of reasons for this. They include:

- 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.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has, for a number of years, committed large sums of money on various initiatives (OCARS, On call Crew and Station Manager support officers) that merely tinker around the edges, whilst at the same time failed to implement FBU recommendations for increases in terms and conditions linked to availability reward.

Not enough is being done to promote the Retained Duty System to the public in general, to employers and to employees, self-employed and unemployed as potential recruits. The FBU believes that national initiatives are needed to overcome this, and we offer to work with the service on this issue.

A lot of Retained Firefighters have the co-operation of their employers but more can and should be done to promote the Retained Duty System and Fire Service. It's ironic that the Government talks about community initiatives but when it comes to employers releasing Firefighters for the community there is no incentive for them to do it whatsoever. There will be costs involved in any promotion of the Service, but the long term cost of under-recruitment is greater.

We should consider offering inducements through financial incentives (tax/business rate benefits, insurance discounts) and/or local recognition for rendering service to the community. This could be either nationally through employers' organisations or on a more local basis, or both, to be conducted through the National Joint Council.

The development of career forums, as used in other branches of the public services (nurses, special constables, teachers and also the territorial army) would help the Service attract more employed applicants.

Another area that the service needs to address is the impact of 'migration' programmes. 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. The services





needs a proactive working strategy to workforce planning that replaces these hours when migrating on call staff – as the pressure and burden is simply transferred on to those On Call staff left to pick up the gaps in cover which in turn negatively impacts on the morale of the station.

Aside from the required investment in reward and recognition to move the system forward, changes to mobilising protocols such as skills based mobilising – utilising the on line staffing systems will result in more intelligence led mobilising, more appliances available to be called upon, more staff satisfaction from utilisation and it will improve safety at the same time.





## **FBU Proposal 1: Standard of Workplace Facilities and Personal Protective Equipment**

The FBU recognise that some constructive joint work has taken place to improve some facilities over the past 12 months since the last IRMP, such as implementing the FBU recommendation of providing sanitary products on fire engines, and clean area's on stations to reduce contamination exposure through the excellent contaminants group.

That being said however, the standard of workplace facilities for our members has over recent years become unacceptable and do not provide dignity in the workplace. Whether this be the outdated fire stations some of which are in a state of disrepair, the day crewing houses at Congleton, Northwich or Winsford, or even the new build fire stations - the needs of fire fighters are not being adequately and appropriately addressed.

Specific information regarding minimum welfare facilities for personnel, in particular sanitary conveniences, washing, showering, changing and resting, is contained in the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

The workplace health safety and welfare Approved Code of Practice supplies further advice and guidance regarding workplace provisions and has special legal status.

Regulation 20, 21 and 24 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations states that **facilities shall not be suitable unless they include separate facilities for men and women for reasons of propriety.**

Our members have opposed the creation of 'unisex pods' or unisex changing facilities since they were first proposed, and common issues have been found at each station where they have been installed. The service can no longer dismiss the views of its staff.

Therefore the FBU require the following to be implemented on all Fire Stations and service premises:

### **Toilet Facilities**

**All toilets must be situated within designated separate rooms for men and women.**

- Any toilets situated within or off a communal area (Not a corridor) are not appropriate and are not acceptable
- All toilets and the rooms containing them must be kept in a clean and orderly fashion
- All rooms containing toilets must be adequately ventilated and lit
- A machine providing hygienic sanitary provision with the choice of tampons and towels must be provided within each Women's toilet facility



- A sanitary disposal bin must be provided within each Women's toilet facility
- FRS' must contract the collection and cleaning of sanitary receptacles
- Bags and wipes for disposing sanitary wear must be provided within each Women's toilet facility
- All toilets must be fully enclosed with floor to ceiling walls and doors with a lock on the inside
- All windows must be obscured by frosted glass and blinds or curtains

### **Washing Facilities**

**All shower/washing facilities must be situated within designated separate rooms for men and women. Individual shower cubicles with floor to ceiling partitions and doors for privacy must be located within each designated room. The shower facility should include a wet and dry area to ensure that the wash area is in the vicinity of a changing room. Doors to be capable of being secured from the inside and the facilities in each such room are intended to be used by only one person at a time.**

#### **Wet area must include:**

- A supply of hot and cold running water
- Shower with a non slip tray and fully enclosed cubicle, not shower curtains.
- Non slip flooring
- Shelf to place personal toiletries on
- Shower gel dispenser with gel in it
- Sufficient lighting and ventilation
- All windows will be obscured by frosted glass and blinds or curtains
- Doors to be capable of being secured from the inside and the facilities in each such room are intended to be used by only one person at a time

#### **Dry area to include:**

- Sink, with a mirror and a shaving point provided for both genders
- Soap dispenser
- Hand dryer
- Non slip flooring
- Hooks for clothing, towel, underwear and wash bag
- Bench or pull down seat
- Hairdryer
- Windows must be obscured glass and include blinds
- Signage – clearly labelled women or men
- Bin for refuse
- Personal locker
- All windows will be obscured by frosted glass, blinds or windows
- Doors to be capable of being secured from the inside and the facilities in each such room are intended to be used by only one person at a time



## Lockers/personal storage areas

**All lockers/personal storage areas must be situated within designated separate rooms for men and women.**

Lockers can either be situated within washing/changing facilities or within rest facilities. It is not acceptable to situate lockers within communal areas.

## Fire and Rescue Service Training Venues

As detailed above under Permanent Workplace. It is vital that prior to any training exercise carried out within a Fire and Rescue Service Training venue that an assessment is carried out in terms of distances of travel required to ensure that sanitary facilities are located nearby and that no staff are disadvantaged by gender. Hot showers, toilets and changing facilities must be available to staff in addition to a suitable area for rest breaks.

## PPE

Personal Protective Equipment should be gender specific. Our female members are upset and angry that they continue to be expected to attend work in duty rig uniform or structural fire-kit that is designed for a man, this is undignified and unsafe.

Under the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations when health and safety risks cannot be adequately controlled by other means, employers must provide employees with suitable PPE. PPE is not suitable if it is badly fitted, uncomfortable, puts a strain on wearers or makes the work unnecessarily difficult.

This unisex approach to PPE can lead to significant problems. Items such as fall-arrest harnesses need to fit well but differences in chest hips and thighs can affect the way that the straps fit. Another example is safety boots as a typical women's foot is both shorter and narrower than a typical man's foot, so a smaller boot may be the right length but not the right width.

All staff must have size and gender specific clothing.

## Pregnancy and Nursing

***A private rest area designed for pregnant women and nursing mothers must be developed in every workplace.***

The area must be quiet, clean, and lockable from the inside, have a sink with hot and cold running water and should include a draining area. The cold water supply is to be drinking water and marked as such.

The area should be conveniently situated in relation to sanitary facilities and provide:

- A multi purpose chair that would include the facility for pregnant and nursing mothers to lie down
- A large paper towel dispenser
- Isolated bells that can be turned on and off
- Dimmer lighting



- A lockable refrigerator
- Baby changing facilities
- Wipes and disposal bags for Nappies
- Engaged sign when locked
- Drinking utensils
- Blinds on windows

**The room will hold a priority use for pregnancy and nursing mothers. At all other times the room could be used for quiet/prayer time.**

## Rest Facilities

Fire fighters should be afforded decent and fit for purpose resting facilities, as opposed to the current Calcott Chairs. This service and Authority made the political and ideological decision in 2008 to remove the resting facilities that cost nothing in maintenance and replaced them with the current resting chairs which are dirty and have the potential to cause musculoskeletal injuries to fire fighters - as highlighted in the services own health and safety report.

We have pointed the Service and Authority to the facilities or arrangements in neighbouring services such as Greater Manchester FRS, Merseyside FRS, Lancashire FRS, Staffordshire FRS and North Wales FRS which are new and bespoke.



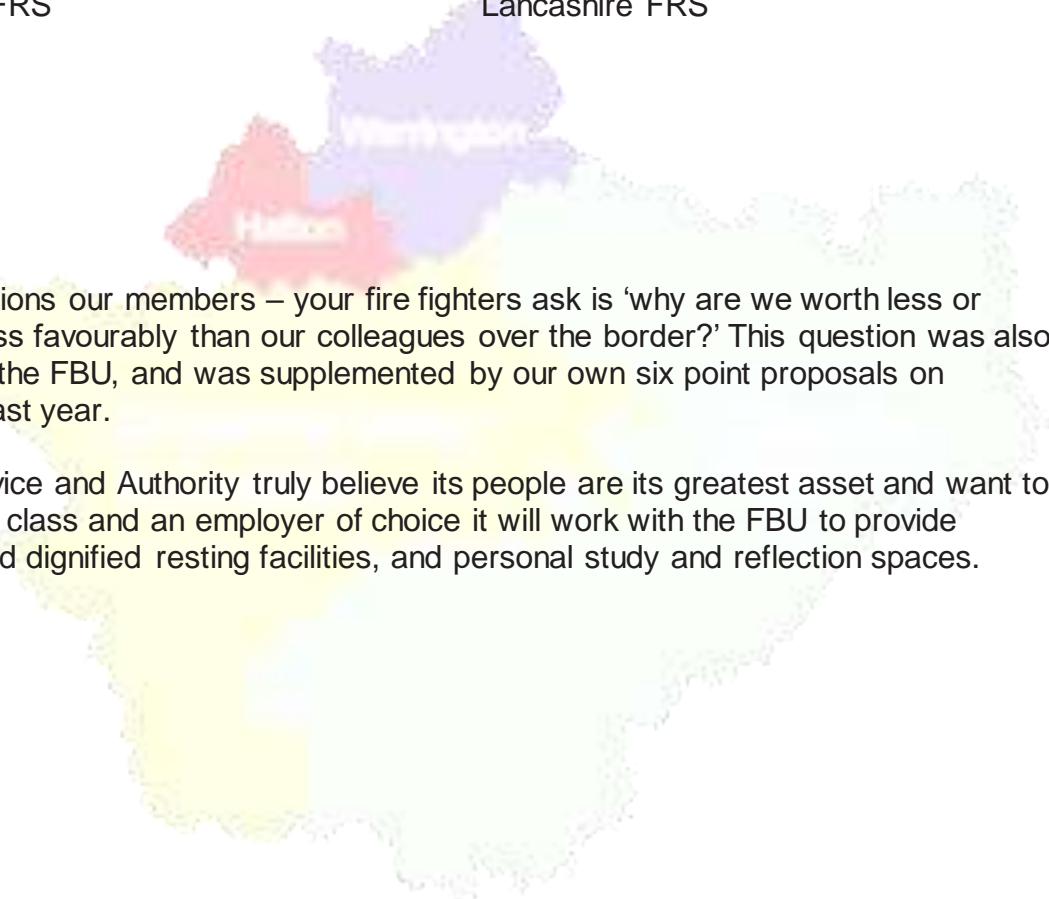
Greater Manchester FRS



N Wales FRS



Lancashire FRS



The questions our members – your fire fighters ask is ‘why are we worth less or treated less favourably than our colleagues over the border?’ This question was also asked by the FBU, and was supplemented by our own six point proposals on facilities last year.

If this service and Authority truly believe its people are its greatest asset and want to be best in class and an employer of choice it will work with the FBU to provide decent and dignified resting facilities, and personal study and reflection spaces.



## **FBU Proposal 2 Reward and Recognition**

Our members hear or read the positive comments from Authority members such as 'Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is the best service in the country', or 'highest performing Fire and Rescue Service', yet this Authority does not appropriately reward its staff – its greatest asset.

Other Fire and Rescue services have better terms, conditions and facilities and this Authority and service needs to address this fact if it wants to keep its staff and stem the numbers leaving Cheshire for other fire and rescue services.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Authority have both been on record as stating that 'Fire fighters need and deserve a pay rise' – yet this service does not even have in place duty system agreements that adhere to the basic national agreements on pay such as the nationally agreed rates for overtime for example, which leads our members to conclude this is not a genuine belief.

If the organisation wants to enact the transformative culture it seeks and to establish a team cheshire where all its staff are happy, motivated and working in the same direction, we believe it could achieve this by two simple acts – re-instating the time and a half payment for overtime on all operational duty systems, made explicit in the agreements, and providing decent and fit for purpose resting and welfare facilities.



## **FBU Proposal 3 Contaminants**

As firefighters, we all know of a colleague or former colleague that has been diagnosed with cancer or another serious illness – and many will have lost their lives. But here in the UK, there is a frightening lack of research into the effects of the firefighting job on the long term health of those on the front line.

That is what led the Fire Brigades Union to commission independent, ground-breaking research, led by Professor Anna Stec from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), into the link between firefighters' occupational exposure to toxic fire effluents, and cancer and other diseases.

Since the FBU approached the service we are pleased to say we have formed a collaborative approach to Contaminants, creating a working group and have delivered a number of recommendations arising from the groups work. However the FBU propose the following be approved and implemented going forward:

- Regular health screening and recording attendance at fire incidents over the course of a firefighter's career is strongly advised and will be key to the longer-term monitoring and management of health
- Soiled or contaminated clothing or PPE must not be transported in cars (or personally owned vehicles), it should be bagged or stored in an airtight container thus keeping the PPE gassing-off away from passengers.
- After exposure to fire debris or fire effluent, fire investigators must return to a FRS venue with showering facilities to have a shower as soon as is reasonably possible (this will allow them to remove contamination as well as stop spreading toxic chemicals in their vehicle and home, potentially exposing family members)
- Health screening should be provided to any staff who have or have previously had regular exposure to fire effluent.
- Getting an annual health screening and evaluation is essential, as early detection is the key to survival.





- Regular lung function screening should be provided for personnel who are regularly exposed to smoke, such as training instructors or personnel working within live fire training facilities.
- Training on the potential long-term health effects of exposure to fire debris and fire effluent should also be provided to all personnel on a regular basis.
- It is important that firefighters get an annual physical and make sure their healthcare provider is informed of their increased cancer risks.
- The installation and implementation of domestic washing machines on all fire stations. This was a key recommendation in the UCLan interim best practice report and means firefighters don't have to continue to contaminate their own washing machines. Fire fighters wouldn't wash their fire kit at home, so why should our members be expected to wash contaminated duty rig at home?
- The installation of diesel exhaust control systems at all Cheshire fire stations. Human studies suggest an association between occupational exposure to whole diesel exhaust emissions and lung cancer, whilst studies of rats and mice exposed to whole diesel exhaust (especially the particulate portion) confirm an association with lung tumours. In addition to the potential carcinogenic effects, eye irritation and reversible lung function have been experienced by workers exposed to diesel exhaust, which itself is a complex mixture of gases and particulate including carbon monoxide, nitrogen, sulphur and hydrocarbons. The majority of Fire and Rescue Services have installed exhaust extraction systems on all new build fire stations and Cheshire should follow suit. Cheshire Fire fighters should not be standing next to a HGV emitting diesel fumes whilst getting donned into their PPE ready to respond to emergencies.
- That the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer write to the Fire Minister to request that prescriptive legislation is laid to protect fire fighters and their families – similar to that already in place in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.



## **FBU Proposal 4 – Cheshire response to Marauding Terrorist Incidents**

The Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Standard Operating Procedure (SOP /JOINT EMERGENCY SERVICE RESPONSE- Response to a Marauding Terrorist or suspected Terrorist Attack (MTA)) states that:

'Responders within Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) may be deployed to MTA incidents but should normally only work in the Cold Zones. However, in order to rescue saveable life at an Incident the incident Commander (IC) may, subject to conducting a Joint Understanding of Risk (JUR) and an appropriate risk assessment, deploy non- specialist personnel into the Warm and Hot Zones.

Definitions at a declared MTA

Hot Zone: An area assessed to contain a credible and continuing threat to life, including the presence of attackers with weapons.

Warm Zone: An area where the attackers are not believed to be present at this time, but an identified threat remains.'

In light of the agreements reached under the auspices of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (NJC) in London Fire Brigade and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, the \*CFRS proposed response to MTA incidents, which was opposed locally by the Fire Brigades Union in Cheshire, needs to be withdrawn. It has now been established that a collective agreement is required for Level 1 and Level 2 MTA response capability.

The FBU does not accept that responding to declared MTA incidents, participating in MTA training other than an awareness of, and managing MTA operations is within the role of a firefighter (Firefighter to Area Manager). In the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), collective agreements have been reached between the employer and the FBU. These agreements extend the role of a firefighter (FF-AM) to the roles and responsibilities associated with an MTA response. These agreements have seen an uplift in pay as well as setting out conditions for training, a concept of operations, and protections for the financial rights of those who are killed or seriously injured whilst attending an MTA incident. The guiding principles of the concept of operations within the LFB and GMFRS collective agreements are built on the JOPs 2 model. Therefore, in only those two services has the FBU agreed to the implementation of JOPs 2.



The Authority may not be aware that as a result of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Services intended policy a live dispute has been registered between the service and the FBU.

We need to be clear – any attempts at requiring or requesting Cheshire Fire Fighters to operate in a warm or hot zone will be met with an urgent recall of Cheshire FBU members to consider Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act.

Section 44. provides workers with the means to contest the adequacy and/or suitability of safety arrangements without fear of recriminations (e.g. getting sacked or transferred) or suffering detriment (e.g. loss of wages) in terms of serious or imminent danger.

Section 44. provides workers with the 'right' to withdraw from and to refuse to return to a workplace that is unsafe. Workers are entitled to remain away from the workplace (e.g. stay at home) if – in their opinion – the prevailing circumstances represent a real risk of serious and imminent danger which they could not be expected to avert.

### **FBU Position**

The FBU require the Authority to either approach the National Joint Council with a request to be encompassed within the NJC agreement on Marauding Terrorism, or approach another service who does have the agreement in place to seek over the border assistance in order to provide a response to MTA incidents within the Cheshire borders. Failure to undertake either of these options will result in the Authority failing to have any provisions in place.



## Summary

It is recommended that members note the information presented in this response and request further detail on any matter if required.

This response proposes that:

### Recommendation 1

**That the Authority support the FBU requirement that all single pump stations have a ridership of 5 fire fighters as its response crew.**

### Recommendation 2

**That Considering the general lack of capacity, awareness and training of fire and rescue personnel in Fire Safety protection matters, to inspect, highlight and report issues there is a clear need to focus on these risk critical and statutory areas rather than focussing on safe and well visits to aid other agencies.**

### Recommendation 3

**That the Authority agree that we urgently need a statutory duty on the fire service to respond to flooding in England, and resources to match – and we call on the service and the chair of the Authority to write to the Prime Minister and the Fire Minister to echo this call in light of this Community Risk Management Plan.**

### Recommendation 4

**Fully involve the FBU in the decision to trial and purchase new Breathing Apparatus sets for our members to operate safely as required by the Health and Safety legislation.**



#### Recommendation 5

That the Authority agree to set our Cheshire response standard and interventions to all categories of life risk – a proposal supported by all four Cheshire Unitary Councils who have passed motions.

#### Recommendation 6

That the Authority Implement our core requirements in response to the proposal to convert four on-call fire engines to full-time crewing during weekdays

#### Recommendation 7

That the Authority commit to continue to ensure the Cheshire Level 3 Rope Rescue response in crewed with a minimum of 5 trained operators in accordance with the FBU and NFCC system of works.

#### Recommendation 8

That the Authority continue to provide a dedicated On Call watch and response at Stockton Heath Fire Station

#### Recommendation 9

That the Authority implement the FBU recommendations for the On Call Duty System



### Recommendation 10

That the Authority finally agree, after previous support, to implement the FBU recommendations on the Standard of Workplace Facilities and Personal Protective Equipment.

### Recommendation 11

That the Authority implement the FBU recommendations for Reward and Recognition.

### Recommendation 12

That the Authority implement the number of FBU recommendations on Contaminants to protect all members who serve Cheshire Fire and Rescue.

### Recommendation 13

That The FBU require the Authority to either approach the National Joint Council with a request to be encompassed within the NJC agreement on Marauding Terrorism, or approach another service who does have the agreement in place to seek over the border assistance in order to provide a response to MTA incidents within the Cheshire borders. Failure to undertake either of these options will result in the Authority failing to have any provisions in place.