



East Sussex Fire Authority

Planning for a Safer Future (IRMP 2020-2025)

Report of Consultation Findings



Opinion Research Services

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Contents

1. Summary of Findings	7
Background and commission.....	7
Nature of consultation and accountability	7
Key findings.....	8
Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan	8
Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed fire stations	9
Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines.....	11
Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings.....	13
Proposal 5a: Changes to the provision and crewing of aerial appliances	14
Proposal 5b: Changes to the provision and crewing of other specialist appliances	14
Proposal 6: Demand management.....	15
Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system	17
Other issues: Building and home inspections.....	19
Other issues: Finances and investment.....	20
Other issues: ESFRS' purpose and commitments.....	22
Other issues: Hearing about the consultation.....	23
Other issues: Equalities impacts.....	23
2. Consultation Overview	24
Background and commission.....	24
The Consultation Process	25
Commission	25
Methodology	25
Quantitative Engagement.....	25
Open questionnaire	25
Telephone Residents' Survey.....	26
Interpretation of the data	27
Qualitative Engagement	28
Online public focus groups/depth interviews	28
Attendance and Representation	28
Stakeholder webinar.....	29
Submissions	29
Nature of consultation.....	29
Interpreting the outcomes	29
The report	30
A note on Covid-19	30
3. Open Consultation Questionnaire	31
Introduction.....	31
Duplicate and Co-ordinated Responses.....	31

Profile Tables	31
Interpretation of the data.....	33
Individual responses to the consultation questionnaire: main findings	33
Proposal 1: Operational Response Review (ORR)	33
Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed fire stations	35
Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines.....	37
Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings.....	39
Proposal 6: Demand Management.....	41
Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system	44
Other issues: Building and home inspections.....	47
Other issues: Finances and investment.....	48
Other issues: ESFRS' purpose and commitments.....	55
Other issues: Hearing about the consultation.....	56
Any other comments	57
Equalities impacts.....	61
Organisations in the consultation questionnaire	62
Proposal 1: Operational Response Review (ORR)	62
Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed fire stations	62
Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines.....	62
Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings.....	63
Proposal 6: Demand management.....	63
Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system	63
Other issues: Building and home inspections.....	63
Other issues: Finances and investment.....	63
Other issues: ESFRS' purpose and commitments.....	63
Text comments made by organisations.....	64
4. Telephone Residents' Survey.....	65
Introduction	65
Respondent profile	65
Main Findings.....	67
Proposal 1: Operational Response Review (ORR)	67
Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed fire stations	68
Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines.....	70
Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings.....	71
Proposal 6: Demand Management.....	73
Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system	75
Other issues: Building and home inspections.....	77
Other issues: Finances and investment.....	78
Further comments.....	81
5. Focus Groups and Stakeholder Webinar.....	82
Introduction.....	82

Main findings	82
Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP).....	82
Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed duty stations	87
Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines.....	94
Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings.....	99
Proposal 6: Demand Management.....	102
Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system	111
Other issues: Building and home inspections.....	115
Other issues: Finances and Investment.....	117
Other issues: General	121
6. Submissions	125
Introduction	125
Summary tables of themes from written submissions.....	126
Views on the Planning for a Safer Future proposals	127
Views on ESFRS and resourcing more generally.....	131
Views on the consultation process.....	132
Summaries of detailed and/or ‘representative’ submissions.....	132
Standardised submissions	132
Additional comments	133
Petition	134
List of Tables	136
List of Figures	137

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1. Summary of Findings

Background and commission

- 1.1 East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) is required to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to describe how it will keep its residents, and those who work or travel through its area, safe over the coming years. The plan - called Planning for a Safer Future (IRMP 2020-25) - describes the main risks to East Sussex and Brighton & Hove's communities and how ESFRS plans to use its resources efficiently to reduce those risks.
- 1.2 In order to understand views on the proposals included in the IRMP, a formal consultation was undertaken by the East Sussex Fire Authority (ESFA) between 24th April and 19th June 2020. ESFRS commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open consultation questionnaire, a telephone residents' survey, six online focus groups and seven depth interviews with members of the public and a stakeholder webinar. Moreover, ESFRS received submissions via email, letter and telephone from residents, staff, organisations and stakeholders, the themes from which were categorised and by ESFRS staff - and have been tabulated and summarised by ORS in this report.
- 1.3 In total:
 - 836 questionnaire responses were received;
 - 620 telephone surveys were completed;
 - 40 residents attended the focus groups or undertook a depth interview;
 - 38 stakeholders attended the webinar; and
 - 360 unique submissions, 152 standardised submissions¹ and one petition were received.
- 1.4 It should be noted here that the two quantitative strands of the consultation differ in methodology. The self-completion consultation questionnaire is intentionally made widely available for anyone with an interest in the ESFRS' proposals and therefore tends to attract participation from those with particularly strong views. The interviewer-administered telephone (residents') survey, on the other hand, is intended to target a broad cross-section of the general public to obtain results that are representative of residents of East Sussex and Brighton & Hove. Therefore, the two strands cannot simply be amalgamated, but rather ought to be considered side-by-side in these contexts.

Nature of consultation and accountability

- 1.5 The key good practice requirements for consultation programmes are that they should: be conducted at a formative stage, before decisions are taken; allow sufficient time for people to participate and respond; provide the public and stakeholders with enough background information to allow them to consider the

¹This was essentially a pre-populated questionnaire response.

issues and any proposals intelligently and critically; and be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken. The consultation reported here meets all these requirements.

- 1.6 Accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account people's views. They should conduct fair and accessible engagement whilst reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully.
- 1.7 This does not mean that the majority views should automatically decide public policy; and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the right or best decision in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are very important, but are considerations to be taken into account, not as factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions. Above all, public bodies have to consider the relevance and cogency of the arguments put forward during public engagement processes, not just counting the number of people.

Key findings

- 1.8 The following sections summarise the main consultation findings. However, readers are referred to the detailed chapters that follow for a full account of people's views.

Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan

ESFRS plans to increase the number of immediate response (or 'core') fire engines available at the start of the day from 15 to 18

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.9 Overall, more than two thirds (71%) of respondents to the consultation questionnaire agreed with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day, whilst around 1 in 5 (21%) disagreed, and less than 1 in 10 (8%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Residents' Survey

- 1.10 The vast majority (93%) of residents agreed with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has at the start of the day from 15 to 18. Less than 1 in 20 (3%) disagreed, with also less than 1 in 20 (4%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.11 When polled², 24 of the 40 public focus group attendees and depth interviewees strongly agreed with the proposed ORP, 14 tended to agree and two neither agreed nor disagreed. No-one opposed the Plan.

²A series of 'polls' were run during the sessions and due to the interdependencies between Proposals 1 and 2 (that is, the former cannot be achieved without implementing the latter), participants were asked to cast their 'votes' after being given the background information on both, rather than take them in isolation. This ensured they were fully informed that increasing the number of 'core' fire engines available at the start of each day would only be possible by making changes elsewhere in the Service.

- 1.12 In discussion, the ORP was considered on its own merit and generally supported as a means of increasing the number of fire engines guaranteed to be available at the start of each day, of improving coverage across the city and county, and of introducing a necessary degree of flexibility to the Service overall through the introduction of resilience appliances. People were also pleased to see the commitment of on-call firefighters being better recognised and “valued” through salaried contracts, which they also suggested would aid both recruitment and retention in light of reduced incidents and thus (under the current system) reduced pay.
- 1.13 Despite the general positivity about the ORP, there were concerns around: potential on-call recruitment difficulties and whether the proposed salaried contracts would be sufficiently attractive to overcome these; the potentially detrimental impact of the more ad-hoc ‘flexible crewing pool’ on team cohesion; and whether the delayed turn-out time for the resilience appliances will work in practice given the reductions being made in some areas of the Service.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.14 Of the 17 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 11 agreed with the proposal, two disagreed and two neither agreed nor disagreed. There were also two ‘don’t knows’.
- 1.15 In discussion, a number of clarification questions were asked around the specifics of the ORP, particularly in relation to the recruitment of on-call staff (and the reasons why it might be problematic), the proposed new on-call contracts, and attendance times.
- 1.16 The main issues raised in relation to this proposal were around: how a “guaranteed service” can be provided in view of the difficulties involved in recruiting and retaining on-call staff; whether the proposed new on-call contract will be as effective as ESFRS hopes; service-wide resilience in the event of a large and/or protracted incident and to ensure adequate cover for ‘non-core’ stations; and ensuring team cohesion within the flexible crewing team.

Submissions

- 1.17 The ORR was supported in some submissions as an attempt to improve county-wide FRS coverage, but opposed in others as disingenuous. Indeed, it was said that the promise of 18 immediate response fire engines at the start of each day under is “misleading” as only 14 will be crewed by on-station firefighters responding to an incident within a minute. The remaining would be either be available on a five-minute turnout or share/jump crewed with an aerial ladder platform and so potentially unavailable.

Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed fire stations

ESFRS is proposing to change to ‘day-only’ crewing at its current ‘day-crewed’ fire stations: Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.18 Overall, around a quarter (24%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to change the crewing system from ‘day-crewed’ to ‘day-only’ at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield, whilst 7 in 10 (70%) disagreed and just over 1 in 20 (6%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Residents' Survey

- 1.19 Overall, three fifths (60%) of residents agreed with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield, whilst 3 in 10 (30%) disagreed, and 1 in 10 (10%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.20 Residents living in Rother were significantly less likely to agree with changing the crewing system, compared to the average.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.21 Eight of the 40 public focus group attendees and depth interviewees strongly agreed with Proposal 2, and a further 24 tended to agree. Four neither agreed nor disagreed, three tended to disagree and there was one 'don't know'.
- 1.22 There was widespread agreement that the proposed crewing change is acceptable to facilitate the coverage improvements identified in Proposal 1 – the transfer of resources to prevention and protection and the 'flexible crewing pool' in particular. It was also said, though, that this proposal will be difficult to 'sell' to the wider public if taken in isolation without understanding its potential benefits.
- 1.23 As for concerns, longer response times were an inevitable worry for many, and several sought clarification on what exactly 'slightly longer' means in this context and about the exact implications of additional minutes on fire spread. Other worries were around: the loss of experienced full-time firefighters from local areas to the 'flexible crewing pool'; the potential for difficulties as a result of separating day- and night-time crews; and the impact of population growth on future incident numbers.
- 1.24 In terms of the impact on staff and staffing, there was some debate as to whether the proposed change would be beneficial or detrimental. A few people considered the day-only system to be a marked improvement on day-crewing inasmuch as the latter appears over-burdensome in terms of hours worked, whereas others foresaw some "push-back" from existing day-crew firefighters who might be reluctant or unable to change from a system they are familiar with and have built their lives around – particularly considering they would eventually lose a significant proportion of their income (£6,000) through no longer being eligible for a housing allowance.
- 1.25 Furthermore, there was disagreement as to whether day-only staffing would be better for recruitment purposes: some felt it would assist in attracting a more diverse workforce to the full-time Service (mothers of school-age children for example), whereas others worried that on-call recruitment may be more difficult if asking for evening and weekend cover only.
- 1.26 Finally, the importance of regularly monitoring the impact of any change such as this was stressed.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.27 Of the 19 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, five agreed with the proposal, 10 disagreed (seven strongly) and there were four 'don't knows'.
- 1.28 In their questions and comments, several stakeholders referred to both proposals 2 and 3 together. For example, there was significant concern about the proposed change to crewing arrangements at, and the loss of the second fire engine from Crowborough Fire Station – primarily due to its location at the extremity of the county, its proximity to Ashdown Forest and the A26, and the town's significant population and development increases.

- 1.29 With specific regard to changing crewing systems from day-crewed to day-only, a few stakeholders sought clarification as to exactly what ‘slightly longer’ response times will entail, as well as why they are justifiable during the daytime on weekends. There was also some concern about low on-call firefighter numbers and availability; and the loss of full-time firefighter posts locally.

Submissions

- 1.30 There was significant opposition to this proposal in the submissions. The most common reasons for rejecting the proposed change from day-crewed to day-only duty systems at the six relevant fire stations were: the prospect of longer response times during the evening, overnight and on weekends; the difficulties likely to be involved in recruiting sufficient on-call staff to cover those periods; and the possible impact on wholetime shift stations if having to travel into day-crewed areas (and indeed to the on-call areas currently covered by day-crewed stations) when there is no immediate response available. It was also said that the current day-crewed stations house most of ESFRS’ special vehicles, and that it will be difficult to ensure on-call firefighters’ competencies on all of them due to their availability and capacity.

ESFRS proposes the following two options for change:

Option A (6 staff with 8.5 hours of fire engine availability, with a reduction of 33 posts)

Option B (7 staff with 10.5 hours of fire engine availability, with a reduction of 27 posts)³

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.31 The vast majority (91%) of respondents, overall, preferred Option B (seven staff with 10.5 hours of fire engine availability, with a reduction of 27 posts), whilst less than 1 in 10 (9%) respondents preferred Option A (6 staff with 8.5 hours of fire engine availability, with a reduction of 33 posts).

Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

ESFRS is proposing to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations, and re-classify the three “maxi-cab” stations at Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations⁴

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.32 Overall, just under 1 in 5 respondents (19%) agreed with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations, whilst more than three quarters (77%) disagreed with the proposal, and 4% neither agreed nor disagreed.

³Please note that due to time constraints, these options were not discussed in the telephone residents’ survey or at any of the deliberative events (the focus groups and webinar).

⁴Please note that due to time constraints, the latter proposal was not discussed in the telephone residents’ survey or at any of the deliberative events (the focus groups and webinar).

- 1.33 Over a quarter of respondents (28%) agreed with the proposal to re-classify the three “maxi-cab” stations at Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations, whilst just under three fifths (58%) disagreed with the proposal, and more than 1 in 8 (14%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Residents’ Survey

- 1.34 Overall, just less than a third (27%) of residents agreed with the proposal to remove the second fire engine from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations, whilst three fifths (60%) disagreed, and around 1 in 10 (11%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.35 29 of the 40 public focus group participants and depth interviewees agreed with removing the second fire engines from the seven affected stations: 14 strongly agreed and 15 tended to agree. Six people neither agreed nor disagreed, four tended to disagree and one strongly disagreed.
- 1.36 The proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations was supported by a majority of participants across all six focus groups as a sensible redistribution of under-used resources. In particular, people were seemingly convinced by the statistics around critical incidents, low appliance availability and the fact that currently, 74% of incidents in these areas are dealt with by one fire engine (though there was a minority view that the latter figure is unacceptably low).
- 1.37 This is not to say, though, that there were no concerns or anxieties, for there were several – most notably in relation to second engine response times, particularly to the more rural areas served by the seven affected stations. Indeed, this was the main reason why some people opposed this proposal. The other main concern was a potential lack of resilience as a result of removing the seven fire engines, both in terms of attendance at incidents and for stand-by moves to cover ‘gaps’ across the area.
- 1.38 Other worries were that: it will be difficult to reintroduce the “*capital equipment*” once it has been disposed of, even in the event of rising incidents; increased use of back-up appliances from other areas could mean a lack of local knowledge among those attending incidents; and that future demographic changes may not have been sufficiently considered.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.39 Of the 19 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, only one agreed with the proposal, two neither agreed nor disagreed and 14 disagreed (12 strongly). There were a further two ‘don’t knows’.
- 1.40 Some of the issues raised in relation to Proposal 3 have been reported above for the reasons explained, but there was some worry about the loss of second appliances in isolation. Longer second engine response times from neighbouring stations were a concern, as was the fact the second engines under threat themselves provide back up to other areas (Crowborough to Forest Row for example).
- 1.41 While it was recognised that 74% of incidents in the affected areas are dealt with by one fire engine, this was considered too low a figure to justify removing resources that are required over a quarter of the time. It was also again suggested that the figures being used to justify the proposal are “*out of date*” – and that they may be somewhat misleading if they relate to incidents as opposed to mobilisations.

Submissions

- 1.42 There was significant opposition to this proposal in the submissions, largely on the grounds that the second appliances offer significant county-wide resilience and allow swift safe systems of work at serious incidents. It was said that whenever these resources are available, residents in their areas get a faster two pump attendance and fire cover within five minutes if the primary appliance is unavailable. Furthermore, ESFRS is not required to make standby moves, thus maintaining cover on other station grounds that would otherwise be negatively impacted.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

ESFRS is proposing to change the way it crews its stations in Hastings, and to introduce an additional fire engine to the town

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.43 Overall, around half (49%) of respondents agreed that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road, whilst around 1 in 3 (31%) respondents disagreed, and 1 in 5 (20%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.44 Just over half (52%) of respondents living Hastings agreed with the proposal, whilst a third (33%) disagreed, and 15% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Residents' Survey

- 1.45 Overall, nearly 9 in 10 (87%) residents agreed that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road. Around 1 in 20 (6%) disagreed, with the same proportion (6%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
- 1.46 Around one eighth (13%) of residents in Hastings disagreed with the proposal, which is significantly more than the overall average.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.47 Over 8 in 10 (33) of the 40 public focus group participants strongly agreed with the proposed changes at Hastings. A further five tended to agree, one neither agreed nor disagreed and one tended to disagree.
- 1.48 In discussion, it was clear that there was very little disagreement with this proposal: the vast majority of participants considered it something of a “no-brainer” in ensuring the right resources are in the right place. People were also reassured that both Hastings stations would continue to support each other and that, overall, the town would be adequately (some felt better) resourced.
- 1.49 There was some negative opinion in the Hastings and Rother groups, mainly around cover for areas to the east of Hastings (out towards Rye) during the evening and on weekends. With regard to Rye itself, it was said that the proposed removal of the second fire engine from the area would mean The Ridge having to travel there more frequently, which again led to concern about longer response times outside daytime hours.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.50 Of the 17 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, seven agreed with the proposal, two neither agreed nor disagreed and 2 disagreed (1 strongly). There were a further six ‘don’t knows’.

Submissions

- ^{1.51} The proposals for Hastings were mentioned 38 times in the submissions, with 21 respondents opposing the proposed crewing change at The Ridge (from wholetime to day-crewed) again on the general grounds of longer response times meaning greater risk to life – and more specifically as the station covers Hastings Old Town with its many listed buildings and “back to back” layout. The potential for longer response times was an issue not only for respondents from Hastings itself, but also for those from the more rural areas out towards Rye to which The Ridge responds currently.

Proposal 5a: Changes to the provision and crewing of aerial appliances⁵

Submissions

- ^{1.52} Many staff members and the representative bodies objected to the proposals for Aerial Ladder Appliances (ALPs), particularly that those at Eastbourne and Hastings would, in future, be share crewed with a fire engine at those stations. Their primary objection was that the use of either vehicle would put the other out of action, resulting either in potentially unsafe practices at high-rise incidents (if the fire engine is out and the ALP is unavailable) or delays at incidents requiring a standard appliance (if the ALP is out and the fire engine is unavailable). In light of this, many demands for ALPs to be single crewed were made.
- ^{1.53} In this context, there was particular concern around share crewing the Hastings ALP with the proposed second appliance at Bohemia Road in light of the fact the latter would likely be more frequently mobilised on evenings and weekends if The Ridge becomes a day-crewed station (thus incapacitating the ALP).

Proposal 5b: Changes to the provision and crewing of other specialist appliances

Submissions

- ^{1.54} There was worry among some respondents about losing 4x4 off-road vehicles from service, particularly that at Wadhurst Fire Station. Its removal was considered unacceptable, primarily due to the wildfire risk posed by Ashdown Forest and the rurality of the area and its difficult terrain. The retention of the swift water rescue team in light of climate change and more frequent flooding events was also strongly advocated in several submissions.

⁵Proposals 5a and 5b were not formally consulted on as they relate to internal operational matters and therefore there were no resulting questions. However, they were frequently referenced in the submissions.

Proposal 6: Demand management

ESFRS is aiming to manage demand for its services in three low-risk areas (automatic fire alarms, lift rescues and trapped birds) to reduce the impact on its other work

Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs)

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.55 Overall, over 2 in 5 (43%) respondents agreed that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises, whilst 2 in 5 (46%) respondents disagreed, and around 1 in 10 (11%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.56 29 of the 40 members of the public strongly agreed with ESFRS' proposals in relation to AFA activations. A further seven tended to agree, two neither agreed nor disagreed and two tended to disagree.
- 1.57 Most participants recognised (some through first-hand experience) that AFA activations are a significant drain on ESFRS' resources and so supported the proposal not to automatically attend those in low-risk commercial premises.
- 1.58 There was, though, some associated worry about non-attendance at activations outside "office hours" when there may be no-one around to make a confirmation call, and about the 4% of calls that turn out to be actual fires. Moreover, reassurance was sought that 'person risk' would be fully considered at locations such as nightclubs and shops with residential accommodation attached – and that the importance of 'heritage risk' would be recognised.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.59 Of the 21 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 12 agreed with the proposal and seven disagreed. There were a further two 'don't knows'.
- 1.60 Despite the majority agreement, there were concerns around: the 4% of "real incidents"; fire spread in dense commercial/residential areas; and how operators of commercial premises will be informed about any change in procedure.

Lift rescues

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.61 Overall, just over 2 in 5 (42%) respondents agreed that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners time to resolve the issue in the first instance, whilst just less than half (48%) disagreed, and less than 1 in 10 (9%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.62 33 members of the public agreed with ESFRS delaying responses to lift releases in certain circumstances, 24 strongly. Two people neither agreed nor disagreed, three tended to disagree and two strongly disagreed.
- 1.63 Those in agreement with the proposal considered it wholly appropriate that building owners/managers should attempt to resolve issues with broken lifts themselves in the first instance, instead of immediately

defaulting to FRS response. There was also a feeling that implementing a delayed response policy may encourage better equipment maintenance on the part of those responsible for it.

- 1.64 Those who disagreed or had worries about the proposed change were primarily concerned about the wellbeing of those trapped in lifts, even if they are not vulnerable or in significant distress. As such, they sought clarification around exactly how delayed the response would be given contractors are not often on-scene very quickly – and that some owners/managers apparently do not have any procedures in place at all.
- 1.65 Whatever is ultimately decided, it was considered imperative that any changes are widely communicated so that people know what to do and who to contact in the event of becoming trapped in a lift – and to ensure that building owners/managers can make alternative (or improved) arrangements if necessary.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.66 Of the 20 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 10 agreed with the proposal, one neither agreed nor disagreed and seven disagreed. There were a further two ‘don’t knows’.

Trapped birds

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.67 Overall, exactly half (50%) of respondents agreed with the proposal that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting, whilst just under 2 in 5 (39%) disagreed, and around 1 in 10 (11%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.68 34 of the 40 public participants agreed with the proposal (24 strongly), two neither agreed nor disagreed and four disagreed.
- 1.69 There was strong agreement that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting: several participants commented that this should not be its responsibility, but rather that of animal rescue charities.
- 1.70 Some, though, caveated their agreement, stating that their support was conditional on animal rescue charities having the capacity to take sole responsibility for bird rescues. If they do not, then a delayed response approach such as that proposed for lift rescues was suggested – or at least some training and/or investment to increase other organisations’ ability to deal with such incidents. Indeed, those who disagreed with this proposal did so on the grounds that animal rescue charities almost certainly do not have the resources or capacity to respond to calls to trapped birds that would ordinarily have attracted an ESFRS response, particularly since the advent of the Covid-19 crisis.
- 1.71 Informing the public about what they should do in the event of finding a trapped bird was also considered essential if a policy change is implemented.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.72 Of the 20 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 14 agreed with the proposal (eight strongly), two neither agreed nor disagreed and three disagreed. There were a further one ‘don’t know’.
- 1.73 Although there was a high degree of support for this proposal, there was some worry that members of the public or wildlife organisations may attempt risky bird rescues themselves in lieu of FRS attendance.

Residents' Survey⁶

- 1.74 Overall, more than two thirds (69%) of residents agreed that ESFRS should stop attending to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises, delay responding to releasing people from lifts if the people are not vulnerable or in distress and no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting. Around one fifth (21%) of residents disagreed that ESFRS should stop attending these types of calls, whilst 1 in 10 (10%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.75 Residents living in Brighton & Hove were significantly more likely to agree that the ESFRS should stop attending certain calls in order to release capacity, compared to the average.

Submissions

- 1.76 While there was some support for ESFRS no longer routinely attending AFA activations and incidents involving trapped birds and delaying its response to lift rescues in the submissions – many staff members, representative bodies and other stakeholders advocated a continuance of current policy. Their main reasoning was that: it can never be known at the outset whether an AFA activation is an actual fire and fire spread in dense commercial areas can be swift; confinement in a lift can be traumatic and so a swift response should be seen as a humanitarian gesture; and knowing the FRS will not be attending to a trapped bird might result in members of the public and animal charities putting themselves in danger while attempting a rescue.
- 1.77 It was also often said that these types of incidents enable firefighters to familiarise themselves with their built environments and interact with businesses, organisations and communities – and that bird rescues in particular are a positive means of real-life training with the ALP outside the 'emergency' environment.

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system

ESFRS is proposing to make changes to the duty system at five of the six fire stations that are currently crewed on the traditional 4-watch system

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.78 Overall, less than a third (29%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to change crewing arrangements at Preston Circus and Roedean (both in Brighton), Bohemia Road (in Hastings), Eastbourne and Hove. Just under half (48%) of respondents disagreed with the proposal, while more than 1 in 5 (23%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.79 Of the respondents from Brighton & Hove, less than a third (29%) agreed with the proposal, while almost two thirds (65%) disagreed, and around 1 in 20 (6%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.80 Of the respondents from Eastbourne, over half (56%) agreed with the proposal, while less than a third (31%) disagreed, and around 1 in 8 (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Residents' Survey

- 1.81 Overall, just under two thirds (64%) of residents agreed with the proposal for ESFRS to look at ways to change its 24/7 crewing arrangements, whilst more than 1 in 5 (23%) disagreed, and around 1 in 8 (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

⁶Residents were asked about the three areas of demand management as part of one question.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.82 Members of the public were asked whether, in principle, they agreed or disagreed with ESFRS reviewing crewing changes at five of its wholetime shift fire stations. 18 strongly agreed, 14 tended to agree and eight neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.83 For several participants, this proposal represents an internal matter on which that felt they could not, or indeed should not, comment. Others did venture an opinion however, with some suggesting that the current system seems somewhat outdated and inefficient (both financially and in terms of firefighters being able to work to the best of their ability by the end of their last night shift). As such, they supported at least a review of the system to look at more flexible alternatives.
- 1.84 If the decision is taken to make changes to the four-watch duty system, it was considered imperative that ESFRS fully engage its staff in the process at all stages – and that the Service continuously monitors the effectiveness or otherwise of any new arrangements.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.85 Of the 21 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, eight agreed with the proposal, four neither agreed nor disagreed and five strongly disagreed. There were a further four ‘don’t knows’.

If the crewing arrangements are changed, ESFRS has offered two options:

Option A - a “Flexible rostering Duty System” at all five fire stations

Option B - a “Group Crewing System” at the three city stations⁷

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.86 Just under 3 in 5 (57%) respondents preferred Option A, a ‘Flexible Rostering Duty System’ at all five fire stations, whilst just over 2 in 5 (43%) preferred Option B – a ‘Group Crewing System’ at the three city stations.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.87 There was some disagreement as to the benefits or otherwise of a flexible duty system to firefighters themselves. Some felt that being able to plan shifts between themselves could result in a better work-life balance for staff, and that offering more flexibility may be what is required to attract a more diverse workforce to ESFRS. Others, though, could foresee difficulties in implementing changes to a system that has been in place for a long time – and which wholetime firefighters have based their lives around in terms of, for example, childcare and possible secondary employment.
- 1.88 There were also some worries around the mechanics of the flexible crewing system in particular: a few people suggested that without strong management it could lead to unfairness if the more desirable shifts are ‘cherry-picked’ by more senior or forthright staff members. Moreover, a loss of crew cohesion as a result of no longer operating a watch-based system was a concern for one participant.

⁷Please note that due to time constraints, these options were not discussed in the telephone residents’ survey.

Submissions

- 1.89 Staff and representative bodies in particular criticised the proposed move away from the four-watch duty system toward a ‘less family friendly’ flexible rostering system, which they said would also result in the ‘destruction’ of the watch system that *“is the bedrock of the fire service and contributes enormously to our effectiveness”* (staff member).

Other issues: Building and home inspections

ESFRS is proposing to review its response models (as above) to release resources for more prevention and protection work, and to have capacity for more inspections and visits

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.90 Overall, around 4 in 5 (79%) respondents agreed that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety, whilst around 1 in 10 (11%) respondents disagreed, and 1 in 10 (10%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Residents’ Survey

- 1.91 Overall, around 9 in 10 (88%) residents agreed that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety, whilst 1 in 20 (5%) disagreed, and just less than 1 in 10 (8%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 1.92 Residents living in Rother were significantly less likely to agree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety, when compared to the districts and city overall.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.93 All public participants agreed that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety – 36 strongly.
- 1.94 The old adage ‘prevention is better than cure’ was frequently raised across all discussions. Indeed, the overwhelming opinion was that it is better to prevent incidents before they occur to improve both public and firefighter safety and economic efficiency – and the Grenfell disaster was noted several times as a reason for more building inspections in particular.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.95 Of the 21 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 18 agreed, two neither agreed nor disagreed and one strongly disagreed that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety.
- 1.96 It would seem that only those with reservations around more building and home inspections commented at this juncture though, primarily suggesting that any increase in prevention and protection should not be made at the expense of front-line response.

Submissions

- 1.97 Home and building inspections were supported as an important means of prevention and protection in the submissions, though there were some comments that they should not be increased at the expense of front-line response services.

Other issues: Finances and investment

ESFRS is considering options for future council tax rises in light of funding uncertainties beyond 2020/21

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.98 More than 4 in 5 (83%) respondents would be willing to pay more in council tax for their local fire and rescue service (ESFRS) next year, whilst 17% would not be willing.

Residents' Survey

- 1.99 Around 4 in 5 (81%) residents would be willing to pay more in council tax for their local fire and rescue service next year, whilst around 1 in 5 (21%) residents would not.
- 1.100 Residents living in Eastbourne were significantly more likely to be willing to pay more in council tax for their local fire and rescue service next year, when compared to the districts overall.

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 1.101 All but three public participants said they would be willing to pay more for ESFRS next year (one said they were not prepared to and there were two 'don't knows').
- 1.102 The few who objected to a rise did so on the grounds that they already pay a significant amount of council tax – and even a few of those who would be prepared and able to pay more acknowledged that others would not be. There was also concern that other local services would request similar precept rises, further increasing affordability.
- 1.103 Many participants across the spectrum of views felt strongly that more money should be forthcoming from central government – and several urged ESFRS and ESFA to lobby for this. It was, though, acknowledged that the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the public purse makes it highly unlikely that further funds will be available in the near future.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.104 Of the 19 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, eight agreed (seven strongly) that they would be willing to pay more in council tax for ESFRS next year, five neither agreed nor disagreed and two disagreed. There were four 'don't knows'.

If you are willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire service next year, what level of increase would you accept?

Option A - an increase up to 3% depending on what the Government allows

Option B - an increase more than a 3%⁸

Open consultation questionnaire

1.105 Of the respondents who would be willing to pay more in council tax for their local fire and rescue service next year, just over half (55%) preferred Option A (an increase of up to 3% depending on what the Government allows), whilst just under half (45%) preferred Option B (an increase of more than 3%).

Public focus groups/depth interviews

1.106 Among the 37 public participants who were prepared to bear an increase, opinion was almost equally split between those who would tolerate an up to 3% rise (18) and those who would tolerate an over 3% rise (19).

1.107 Those who supported a more than 3% rise typically commented that the weekly increase would be 'less than a cup of coffee' and considered it a more than reasonable price to pay for an "essential" public service.

1.108 Those who supported a less than 3% increase did so on the grounds of affordability, for themselves and for others – and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on people's finances was raised in the context of keeping increases to a minimum currently.

Stakeholder webinar

1.109 16 of the 19 stakeholders offered a view as to the level of increase they would be prepared to tolerate: five opted for an up to 3% rise; four for more than 3%; and there were seven 'don't knows'.

The extent to which ESFRS offers value for money

Open consultation questionnaire

1.110 Around three quarters (74%) of respondents agreed that ESFRS offers value for money, whilst less than 1 in 10 (7%) disagreed, and around 1 in 5 (19%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Residents' Survey

1.111 Almost 9 in 10 (88%) residents agreed that ESFRS offers value for money, whilst only 2% disagreed, and 1 in 10 (10%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

1.112 Residents living in Wealden were significantly more likely than average to agree that ESFRS offers value for money, compared to overall.

⁸Please note that due to time constraints, these options were not discussed in the telephone residents' survey.

Stakeholder webinar

- 1.113 Of the 19 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 12 agreed (seven strongly) that ESFRS offers value for money, four neither agreed nor disagreed and one disagreed. There were two ‘don’t knows’.
- 1.114 In discussion, there were questions and comments around the level of “back-office” and other non-operational savings considered, and the need to lobby central government for more funding.

Submissions

- 1.115 Those who commented in the submissions generally felt that ESFRS does currently provide value for money, but some said that perceptions might change in future if the Planning for a Safer Future proposals are implemented.

Ways ESFRS could make savings and be more efficient in the future⁹

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.116 Overall, the most common suggestions respondents made for ways ESFRS can make savings were: focusing on preventative measures through education and home safety visits; reducing its management roles; and promoting voluntary work.

Other issues: ESFRS’ purpose and commitments¹⁰

ESFRS has a strong purpose and clear commitments to help make East Sussex safer by:

Delivering high performing services by using its resources to achieve the best level of safety for people and business.

Engaging with its communities by using its trusted reputation to deliver educational initiatives and campaigns.

Having a safe and valued workforce by ensuring the people of East Sussex are safe and are provided with the right equipment, training and skills.

Making effective use of its resources by ensuring all its resources are managed effectively, improving its productivity and seeking new sources of income and funding.

Open consultation questionnaire

- 1.117 Overall, more than two thirds (69%) of respondents agreed that ESFRS’ purpose and commitments are appropriate, whilst just over 1 in 8 (15%) respondents disagreed, and 16% neither agreed nor disagreed.

⁹ Please note that due to time constraints, this was not discussed in the telephone residents’ survey or at any of the deliberative events (the focus groups and webinar).

¹⁰ Please note that due to time constraints, this was not discussed in the telephone residents’ survey or at any of the deliberative events (the focus groups and webinar).

Other issues: Hearing about the consultation¹¹

Open consultation questionnaire

^{1.118}Overall, most respondents (44%) had heard about the consultation through social media. Around 1 in 6 (17%) heard about it via a letter from ESFRS. Slightly fewer (14%) found out through ESFRS staff, whilst around 1 in 8 (12%) heard via a local councillor or through the ESFRS website.

Other issues: Equalities impacts¹²

Open consultation questionnaire

^{1.119}An occasional response to the consultation questionnaire touched upon equalities matters: for example, one respondent felt that rural communities, whose populations are generally older, were being treated unfairly compared to the towns. Another comment referenced the importance of considering school safety, with the implication that ESFRS might need to consider the potential impacts on younger people. One respondent also stated that ESFRS already provides “*wonderful*” support to elderly and vulnerable people, and therefore should not be “*meddled with*”.

¹¹As above.

¹²As above.

2. Consultation Overview

Background and commission

- 2.1 East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) is required to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to describe how it will keep its residents, and those who work or travel through its area, safe over the coming years. The plan - called Planning for a Safer Future (IRMP 2020-25) - describes the main risks to East the area's communities, and how ESFRS plans to use its resources efficiently to reduce those risks.
- 2.2 The IRMP includes several proposals that will change the way ESFRS provides its services. In order to understand views on these proposals, a formal consultation was undertaken by the East Sussex Fire Authority (ESFA) between 24th April and 19th June 2020. ESFRS commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a programme of key consultation activities and to report respondents' views, gathered through an open consultation questionnaire, a telephone residents' survey, six online focus groups and depth interviews with members of the public and a stakeholder webinar. The following proposals and issues were discussed¹³ across the various strands:
- Proposal 1: increasing the number of immediate response fire engines available at the start of the day from 15 to 18;
 - Proposal 2: changing the six current 'day-crewed' fire stations (Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield) to a 'day-only duty system';
 - Proposal 3: removing the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations, and re-classifying the three "maxi-cab" stations at Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations;
 - Proposal 4: changing the way the two Hastings fire stations (Bohemia Road and The Ridge) are crewed, and introducing an additional fire engine to the town;
 - Proposal 6¹⁴: managing demand for services in three low-risk areas (automatic fire alarms, lift rescues and trapped birds) to reduce the impact on ESFRS' other work;
 - Proposal 7: making changes to the duty system at five of the six fire stations that are currently crewed on the traditional 4-watch system;
 - Building and home inspections: reviewing response models to release resources for more prevention and protection work, and to have capacity for more inspections and visits;
 - Finances and investment: examining options for council tax increases;
 - ESFRS' purpose and commitments;
 - Hearing about the consultation; and
 - Equalities impacts.

¹³These proposals are outlined in more detail in the relevant chapters.

¹⁴Proposal 5 was not consulted on as it relates to internal operational matters and therefore there were no resulting questions.

The Consultation Process

Commission

Methodology

- 2.3 The consultation period ran from 24th April to 19th June 2020. Key elements of the consultation were undertaken by ORS as an independent organisation - for example, designing the consultation questionnaire, telephone residents' survey and presentation material for the focus groups (in conjunction with ESFRS); recruiting and facilitating/undertaking six deliberative online focus groups and seven depth telephone interviews; facilitating a stakeholder webinar; and analysing and reporting all responses to these consultation elements.
- 2.4 The eight-week formal consultation period gave the public, staff and stakeholders sufficient time to participate, and through its consultation documents and website information, ESFRS sought to provide people with sufficient information to understand their proposals and to make informed judgements about them.

Quantitative Engagement

- 2.5 A consultation document outlining the issues and proposals under consideration was produced by ESFRS. Using this as a basis, ORS and ESFRS designed two questionnaires tailored toward different groups of people: an open consultation questionnaire and a telephone survey. Each questionnaire included the same core questions, as well as sections inviting respondents to make further comments and demographic profiling questions.

Open questionnaire

- 2.6 The open consultation questionnaire was available online and in paper format between 24th April to 19th June 2020. The survey was available to residents, representatives from business, public and voluntary organisations and employees of ESFRS. In total, 836 questionnaires were completed, 819 of which were submitted online and 17 on paper (through the post). Most responses (826) were from individuals, but 10 valid responses were received from the following organisations:

- Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism
- Conservators of Ashdown Forest.
- Ewhurst Parish Council.
- Laughton Parish Council.
- Lewes Town Council.
- Newhaven Town Council.
- Transport Futures East Sussex (NGO)
- WE Clark and Son: Jewellers – Lewes Ltd and Uckfield Ltd
- Wealden Liberal Democrats
- Wightman and Parrish Ltd

- 2.7 It should be noted that while open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, they are not ‘surveys’ of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically or adventitiously, and are more likely to be completed by motivated people while also being subject to influence by local campaigns. As such, because the respondent profile (as outlined in the full report) is an imperfect reflection of the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove populations, its results must be interpreted carefully. This does not mean that the open questionnaire findings should be discounted: they are analysed in detail in this report and must be taken into account as a demonstration of the strength of feeling of residents who were motivated to put forward their views.

Telephone Residents’ Survey

- 2.8 The second form of quantitative engagement was the telephone survey, undertaken with residents aged 18 and over. The purpose of the survey was to achieve a representative profile of opinions across East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove using broadly the same core questions as in the open consultation questionnaire. A short summary of the proposals was included to be ‘read out’ within the survey for the benefit of respondents who had not had the opportunity to read the consultation document or to otherwise find out about the proposals.
- 2.9 ORS social research telephone unit staff undertook 620 structured telephone interviews over a period of nearly 5 weeks beginning on 19th May 2020, using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (‘CATI’) technology. The survey was conducted using a quota-controlled sampling approach, to ensure a broadly representative sample of residents aged 18 or over across the FRS area.

Weighting in the telephone residents’ survey

- 2.10 The telephone survey was designed to provide an estimate of the views one would obtain if it were possible to survey all residents in the relevant population (in this case, the five East Sussex districts plus the city of Brighton & Hove). However, this relies on achieving a sample that properly reflects the population. In practice, due to imperfections in the practical application of any survey and sometimes by the design of the sample, there are usually a number of inherent biases that need to be addressed and corrections that need to be made to the sample design.
- 2.11 For this survey a decision was made that the sample should be designed so that the target number of interviews for the 6 districts should be large enough to allow for a reasonably robust comparison of views (approx. 100 interviews in each).
- 2.12 Subsequently, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were compared with data for the whole adult (18+) population. Statistical weighting was applied in order to identify and correct any under (or over) representation of any particular demographic groups due to ‘response bias’. The statistical weighting was applied to the results using data from the 2011 census for the profile groups Working Status and Ethnic Group, and 2017 Population Estimates, for Gender, Age and District populations.
- 2.13 After taking account of the weighting process, one can be 95% confident that the telephone survey results (at overall level) will be within +/- 5 percentage points (depending on the exact sample sizes and opinion splits on particular questions).

The results in the consultation questionnaire remain unweighted as it is not a random sample survey of a given population. Consequently, they cannot normally be expected to be representative of the general

population, as they indicate the views of those who choose to respond, rather than acting as a statistically reliable guide to the general population's views.

Interpretation of the data

- 2.14 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' categories, or multiple answers. An asterisk (*) in the profile tables denotes a figure that is less than 0.05.
- 2.15 Where differences between demographic groups have been highlighted as significant there is a 95% probability that the difference is significant and not due to chance. Differences that are not said to be 'significant' or 'statistically significant' are indicative only. When comparing results between demographic sub-groups, overall, only results which are significantly different are highlighted in the text.
- 2.16 The example comments shown throughout the report have been selected as being typical of those received in relation to each proposal.
- 2.17 Charts are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The charts show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with:
- Purple/yellow shades to represent neutral responses (neither positive nor negative)
 - Green shades to represent positive responses (E.g. agreement)
 - Red shades to represent negative responses (E.g. disagreement)
 - Grey shades to represent 'other' and/or 'don't know' responses
- 2.18 The numbers on charts are percentages indicating the proportions of residents or respondents who gave a particular response on a given question.
- 2.19 The number of valid responses recorded for each question (base size) are reported throughout in parentheses. As not all respondents answered every question, the valid responses vary between questions. 'Don't know' responses have been treated as invalid when calculating percentages.
- 2.20 In cases where the base size is less than 50, an unweighted count has been used to show the number of responses, rather than a percentage.

Table 1: Breakdown of target interviews and achieved number of interviews by district (count and %)

District	Target number of interviews	Achieved number of interviews		Population (18+)		Weighted sample
		Unweighted Count	%	Count	%	
Brighton and Hove		110	18			
Lewes		101	16			
Eastbourne		101	16			
Wealden		108	17			
Hastings		100	16			
Rother		100	16			
Total		620				

Qualitative Engagement

Online public focus groups/depth interviews

- 2.21 A programme of six deliberative online focus groups was undertaken with a diverse and broadly representative cross-section of residents across East Sussex and Brighton & Hove. ORS worked in collaboration with ESFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the groups before facilitating the discussions and preparing an independent report of findings.

Attendance and Representation

- 2.22 The focus groups were designed to inform and ‘engage’ participants with the issues set out in the IRMP. This was done by using a ‘deliberative’ approach to encourage people to question and reflect on the proposals in detail. The meetings lasted for two hours and were attended as below in Table 2.

Table 2: Focus groups (area, time and date and number of attendees)

Area	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
Brighton & Hove	Tuesday 2 nd June 2020 6:15pm - 8:15pm	3 (+ 4 depth interviews)
Lewes	Wednesday 3 rd June 2020 6:15pm - 8:15pm	7
Eastbourne	Thursday 4 th June 2020 6:15pm - 8:15pm	5 (+ 2 depth interviews)
Wealden	Tuesday 9 th June 2020 6:15pm - 8:15pm	6
Hastings	Wednesday 10 th June 2020 6:15pm - 8:15pm	5 (+1 depth interview)
Rother	Thursday 11 th June 2020 6:15pm - 8:15pm	7
TOTAL		40

- 2.23 The attendance target for the focus groups was around 6-8 people, which was evidently not achieved in some areas. In order to boost the numbers, ORS undertook a series of depth interviews (four in Brighton & Hove, two in Eastbourne and one in Hastings) using exactly the same discussion guide as at the focus groups. Overall, the 40 participants who took part represented a broad cross-section of residents from the local areas, and particular care was also taken to ensure that people were recruited from the areas most affected by the proposals.
- 2.24 Participants were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS’ Social Research Telephone Unit (working from home as per the Government guidelines). Once participants been initially contacted by phone, all participants were then written to - to confirm the invitation and the arrangements; and those who agreed to come then received telephone or written reminders shortly before each meeting. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent and broadly representative of the wider community. As standard good practice, people were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part.
- 2.25 Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from

East Sussex and Brighton & Hove the opportunity to participate. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meeting (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline based on similar discussions.

Stakeholder webinar

- 2.26 48 ESFRS stakeholders registered for an online webinar between 2pm and 4pm on Thursday 4th June 2020: 38 attended on the day, with some of those who were unable to do so submitting questions or comments via email following the event. Attendees included an MP and local councillors, representatives of partner organisations (such as local councils, Sussex Police, SECAMB and Southern Water) and other fire and rescue services, and representatives of other local organisations (such as the University of Brighton, Ashdown Forest Conservators, Brighton and Hove Speak Out, the Chinese Association and Optivo).
- 2.27 ORS gave a presentation outlining the IRMP proposals and participants were encouraged to ask questions for clarification, both in advance and throughout the meeting itself. They were also encouraged to give their views via the online chat and Q&A functions, as well as via online polls that were designed to gather a sense of the balance of opinion among attendees on the proposals.

Submissions

- 2.28 In addition to the formal consultation elements outlined above, ESFRS received 360 unique submissions, 152 standardised submissions¹⁵ and one petition via email, letter and telephone from residents, staff, organisations and stakeholders, the themes from which were categorised and by ESFRS staff - and have been tabulated and summarised by ORS in this report.

Nature of consultation

- 2.29 Accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and to take the public's into consideration. This should involve fair and accessible engagement whilst reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully. This does not mean that the majority views should automatically decide policy; and that the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what is the correct decision in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are of high importance, but are as considerations to be taken into account, as opposed to factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions.
- 2.30 Above all, public bodies have to consider the relevance and cogency of the arguments put forward during public engagement processes; and not only count the numbers of people. In this context, it was helpful that the consultation programme included both 'open' and deliberative elements, to allow many people to take part via the open questionnaire, and whilst promoting informed engagement through the deliberative focus groups and telephone survey.

Interpreting the outcomes

- 2.31 Importantly, the different consultation methods cannot just be combined to yield a single point of view that reconciles everyone's differences. There are two main reasons why this is not possible. First, the engagement methods differ in type: they are qualitatively different, and their outcomes cannot be just aggregated into a

¹⁵This was essentially a pre-populated questionnaire response.

single result. Second, different areas and sub-groups will inevitably have their own perspectives on the proposals, and that there is no formula in the consultation process that can reconcile everyone's differences in a single way.

- 2.32 It is also important to recognise that the outcomes of the consultation process will need to be considered alongside other available information and professional judgement. Whilst the process highlights aspects of this information that people consider to be important, appropriate emphasis should be placed on each element.
- 2.33 Furthermore, the level of response to any consultation questionnaire always depends on many factors, such as how widely it was publicised, and how strongly people feel about the proposals. In this sense there can be no single 'right' interpretation of all the consultation elements and other information in the decision-making process.

The report

- 2.34 This report summarises the feedback on the Planning for a Safer Future consultation proposals. In order to differentiate verbatim quotations from other information, they are in indented italics within text boxes. ORS does not endorse any opinions, but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly.
- 2.35 ORS is clear that its role is to analyse and explain the opinions and arguments of the many different interests participating in the consultation, but not to 'make a case' for any proposal. In this report, we seek to profile the opinions, views and arguments of those who have responded, but not to make any recommendations as to how the reported results should be used. Whilst this report brings together a wide range of evidence for ESFRS and ESFA to consider, decisions must be taken based on all the evidence available.

A note on Covid-19

- 2.36 ESFRS recognises that undertaking a consultation during the Covid-19 pandemic may have felt challenging for some. However, this was fully considered by ESFA in taking its decision to do so, and additional funding was invested to ensure the programme of work was robust, comprehensive and meaningful.
- 2.37 ESFA has a legal requirement to produce an IRMP, and its current plan only covers 2017 to 2020. Essentially, a new plan is required now, and the Planning for the Future proposals reported here (if agreed by the Fire Authority in September) will form the basis of the new Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020 – 2025. Also, a recent external inspection report highlighted the need for ESFRS to balance risk and resources, and better demonstrate how the IRMP influences its prevention, protection and response activity.

Moreover, the Fire Authority was made aware that postponing the consultation would mean significant delay to the Service's ability to meet its potential future financial challenges. There is significant uncertainty around funding beyond 2020/21 since the Government is planning to review how much it spends on public services, particularly around how much of this goes to the fire and rescue service and how it is divided between each fire authority.

3. Open Consultation Questionnaire

Introduction

- 3.1 The open consultation questionnaire (with an accompanying Consultation Document) was available online between 24th April and 19th June 2020, and as a hard copy that was available on request.
- 3.2 836 questionnaires were completed; 819 were submitted online and 17 on paper.
- 3.3 826 questionnaires were completed by personal respondents whilst 10 were completed by organisations.

Duplicate and Co-ordinated Responses

- 3.4 It is important that engagement questionnaires are open and accessible to all, whilst being alert to the possibility of multiple completions (by the same people) distorting the analysis. Therefore, while making it easy to complete the questionnaire online, ORS monitors the IP addresses through which questionnaires are completed. A similar analysis of 'cookies' was also undertaken – where responses originated from users on the same computer using the same browser and the same credentials (e.g. user account).

Profile Tables

- 3.5 The tables that appear without commentary below and on the following page show the unweighted profiles of the responses to the survey provided by personal respondents (please note that the figures may not always sum to 100% due to rounding).

Table 2: Age – All Respondents

Age	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Under 25	18	2
25-34	64	8
35-44	121	16
45-54	154	20
55-64	143	18
65-74	178	23
75-84	90	12
85+	8	1
Not Known	50	-
Total	826	100

Table 3: Gender – All Respondents

Gender	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Male	426	57
Female	325	43
Not Known	75	-
Total	826	100

Table 4: Disability – All Respondents

Disability	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Disabled	87	12
Not disabled	665	88
Not Known	74	-
Total	826	100

Table 5: Ethnic Group – All Respondents

Ethnic group	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
White British	701	97
Not white British	20	3
Not Known	105	-
Total	826	100

Table 6: Working for ESFRS – All Respondents

Do you work for East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service?	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Works for ESFRS	48	6
Doesn't work for ESFRS	711	94
Not Known	67	-
Total	826	100

Table 7: Districts– All Respondents

District	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Brighton and Hove	66	9
Eastbourne	40	6
Hastings	29	4
Lewes	205	29
Rother	72	10
Wealden	283	40
Elsewhere	12	2
Not Known	119	-
Total	826	100

Table 8: Respondent type– All respondents

Respondent type	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Personal	826	99
On behalf of an Organisation	10	1
Total	836	100

3.6 The following 10 organisations (including businesses) identified themselves as part of their responses to the questionnaire:

Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism

Conservators of Ashdown Forest.

Ewhurst Parish Council.

Laughton Parish Council.

Lewes Town Council.

Newhaven Town Council.

Transport Futures East Sussex (NGO)

WE Clark and Son: Jewellers – Lewes Ltd and Uckfield Ltd

Wealden Liberal Democrats

Wightman and Parrish Ltd

3.7 Responses submitted on behalf of organisations can differ in nature to those submitted by individual members of the public if, for example, they represent the collective views of a number of different people or raise very specific issues. For this reason, ORS typically reports the consultation responses from organisations separately to those of individuals.

3.8 The main body of this chapter therefore focuses *only* on individual respondents' views; the views of organisations are covered in a separate section at the end of the chapter.

Interpretation of the data

3.9 The numbers on charts are percentages indicating the proportions of respondents who gave a particular response on a given question.

3.10 The number of valid responses recorded for each question (base size) are reported throughout. As not all respondents answered every question, the number of valid responses varies between questions ('don't know' responses have been treated as invalid).

3.11 In cases where the base size is less than 50, an unweighted count has been used to describe the number of responses, rather than a percentage, in order to avoid a misleading interpretation.

Individual responses to the consultation questionnaire: main findings¹⁶

Proposal 1: Operational Response Review (ORR)

ESFRS plans to improve its operational resilience by increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of each day from 15 to 18.

¹⁶The preambles included in the questionnaire to describe the proposals have been included ahead of the questionnaire results.

The Service will plan for:

18 immediate response fire engines - these have the biggest impact when looking at community risk, population and density, overall activity, response to critical incidents etc.; and

A further 6 fire engines for added resilience - these will also respond to incidents, but will be allowed a longer amount of time to respond if needed. This will enable the Service to draw in additional firefighters (including on-call firefighters) to crew fire engines when required.

The data shows that this change would result in improvements to the number of people, households and incidents reached within ESFRS' attendance standards.

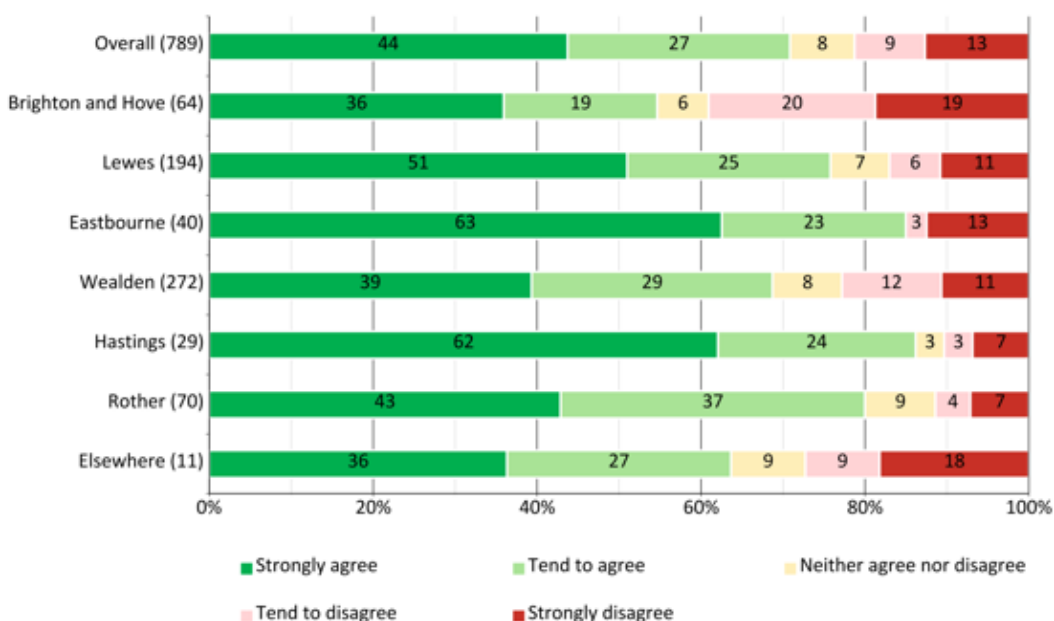
In order to support and assist the delivery of these new arrangements, ESFRS is proposing two new approaches:

A **'flexible crewing pool'**, made up of firefighters who will be posted to stations as needed to cover for staff absences, which will be resourced by further changes we are proposing to make; notably through the new duty system proposals (see proposals 2 and 7). This concept is widely used across the UK Fire and Rescue Service; and

New **salaried contracts for on-call firefighters** to improve their availability. On-call firefighters are currently paid a small retaining fee, but most of their pay comes from attending calls. These have reduced significantly in number, which has led to problems finding enough on-call staff to keep fire engines available to respond. The new contracts would offer a guaranteed monthly salary.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines?

Figure 1: To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines?



Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.12 Figure 1 shows that, overall, more than two thirds (71%) of respondents to the consultation questionnaire agreed with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day, with more than 2 in 5 (44%) respondents strongly agreeing.
- 3.13 Four fifths or more of respondents living in Hastings (86%) Eastbourne (85%) and Rother (80%) agreed with the proposal, whilst around three quarters of respondents in Lewes (76%), and just over two thirds (69%) of respondents in Wealden agreed. Just over half (55%) of respondents in Brighton & Hove agreed with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines.
- 3.14 Overall, around 1 in 5 (21%) respondents disagreed with the proposal, whilst around 1 in 8 (13%) strongly disagreed. The district with the highest levels of disagreement with the proposal was Brighton and Hove (39%). More than 1 in 5 (23%) respondents living in Wealden disagreed, whilst over an eighth of respondents in Lewes (17%) and Eastbourne (15%) did so. Around one in ten respondents in Rother (11%) and Hastings (10%) disagreed with the proposal.
- 3.15 Of the 11 respondents to the proposal living outside East Sussex, seven agreed with the proposal, whilst three disagreed.

Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed fire stations

ESFRS currently has six “day-crewed” fire stations: Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield. On these stations, firefighters work a combination of “positive” and “standby” hours over a 24-hour period. Positive hours are worked on the fire station and standby hours are worked on-call from a location within five minutes of the station.

*ESFRS proposes to introduce “**day-only**” crewing at these stations, whereby full-time firefighters would be on-station during the daytime Monday to Friday, with on-call firefighters providing cover during the evening and at weekends. The key difference between the existing system and the day-only system is that the latter does not require full-time staff to provide extra on-call cover during the evening and weekends. This cover is provided by existing and new on-call staff.*

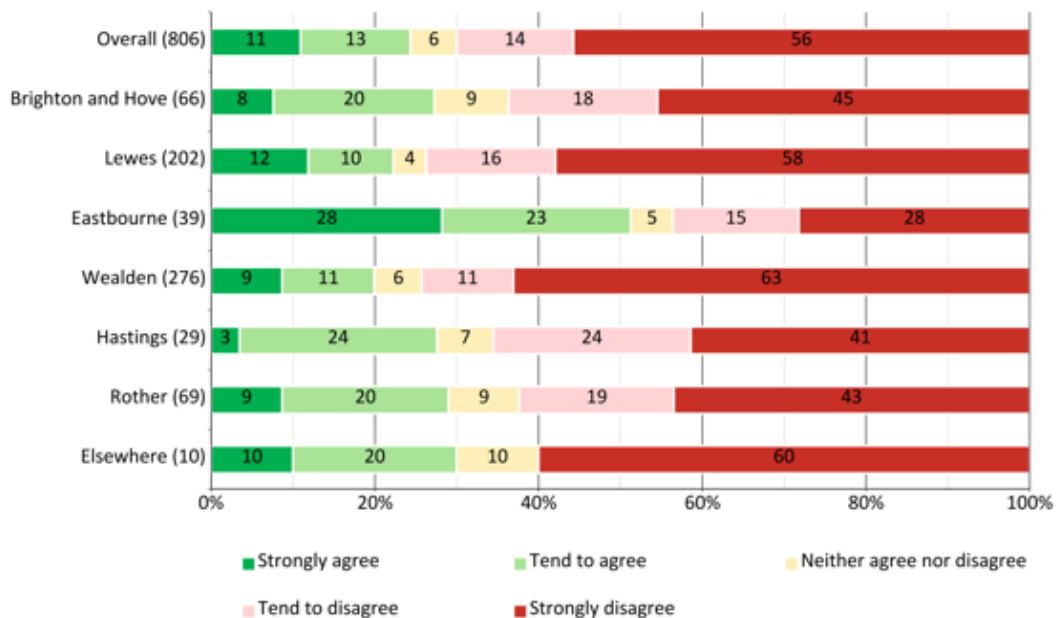
Two alternative options to resource this duty system have been identified:

Option A - one team of 6 staff guaranteeing the immediate availability of the fire engine for 8.5 hours of every weekday, with each firefighter working 5 days per week. This option results in a net reduction of 33 posts, providing the opportunity to reinvest staff into the “flexible crewing pool” (see Proposal 1), training and prevention and protection teams.

Option B - one team of 7 staff guaranteeing the immediate availability of the fire engine for 10.5 hours of every weekday, with each firefighter working 4 days per week. This option results in a net reduction of 27 posts, providing the opportunity (albeit reduced) to reinvest staff into the “flexible crewing pool” (see Proposal 1), training and prevention and protection teams.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in training and prevention and protection teams?

Figure 2: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield?

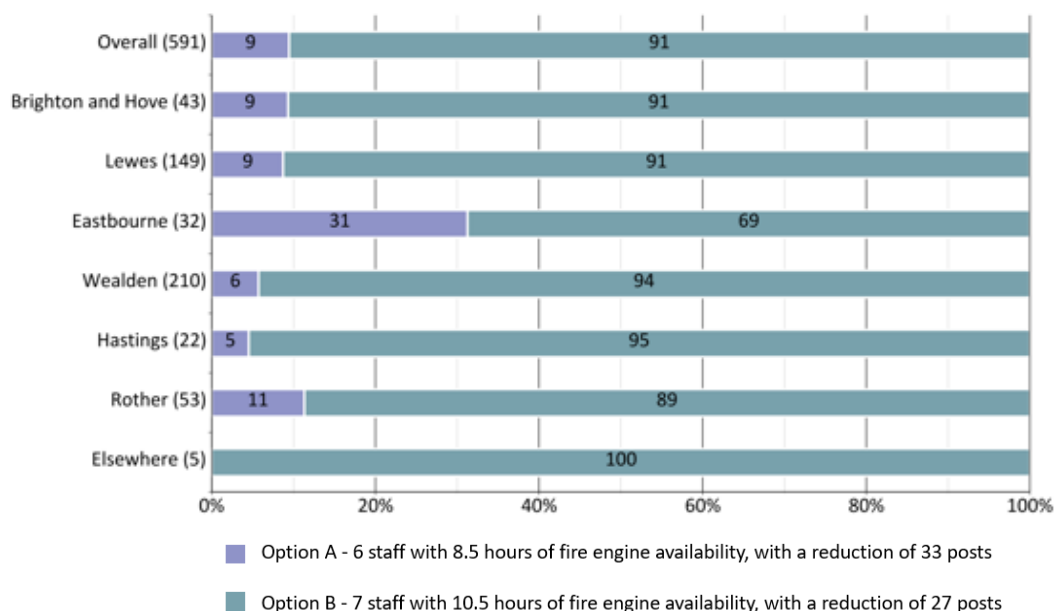


Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.16 Figure 2 shows that, overall, around a quarter (24%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield.
- 3.17 Around half (51%) of respondents in Eastbourne agreed with the proposal to change the crewing system, whilst over a quarter of respondents in Rother (29%), Hastings (28%), and Brighton and Hove agreed (27%). Around 1 in 5 respondents in Lewes (22%) and Wealden (20%) agreed.
- 3.18 Figure 2 also shows that, overall, around 7 in 10 respondents (70%) disagreed with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield, with more than half (56%) of respondents strongly disagreeing.
- 3.19 Around three quarters of respondents in Lewes (74%) and Wealden (74%) disagreed with the proposal, whilst two thirds of respondents living in Hastings (66%), and just under two thirds (64%) living in Brighton & Hove did so. Around 3 in 5 (62%) respondents living in Rother disagreed, while less than half (44%) of respondents living in Eastbourne did so. Of the 10 respondents to the proposal who live outside East Sussex, three agreed with the proposal, whilst six disagreed.

Whether or not you agree with the proposal to change the crewing system from ‘day-crewed’ to ‘day-only’ at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield, if the crewing change is agreed by ESFRS, which of the two options (A or B) do you prefer?

Figure 3: Which of the two options (A or B) do you prefer?



Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.20 Figure 3 shows that, whether or not respondents agreed with the proposal to change the crewing system, the vast majority (91%), overall, preferred Option B (seven staff with 10.5 hours of fire engine availability, with a reduction of 27 posts), whilst less than 1 in 10 (9%) preferred Option A (six staff with 8.5 hours of fire engine availability, with a reduction of 33 posts).
- 3.21 At least 9 in 10 respondents who live in Hastings (95%), Wealden (94%), Brighton & Hove (91%), and Lewes (91%) preferred Option B; and just under 9 in 10 (89%) respondents who live in Rother preferred Option B. More than two thirds (69%) of respondents living in Eastbourne preferred Option B (7 staff with 10.5 hours of fire engine availability, with a reduction of 27 posts), as did all five of the respondents to this proposal living outside East Sussex.

Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

Nine of ESFRS' 24 fire stations have two fire engines, and a further three (in Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst) have a "maxi-cab" fire engine that have a larger cab size. The latter are also considered to be 2-fire engine stations.

Data shows that the second fire engines at day-crewed and on-call stations are not warranted: three-quarters of all calls in these fire station areas are dealt with by one fire engine.

ESFRS thus proposes to:

Remove the second fire engines from the following stations: Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield. On-call staff would be used to crew the remaining fire engines in the evenings, overnight and at weekends; and

Re-classify the three “maxi-cab” stations (Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst) as single fire engine stations.

The public would still have a 24/7 response from these stations but if a second fire engine were required at an incident, it would come from a different fire station. However, this often happens already, particularly during the daytime when low on-call availability means these fire engines are only available between 10-50% of the time.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations?

Figure 4: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations?

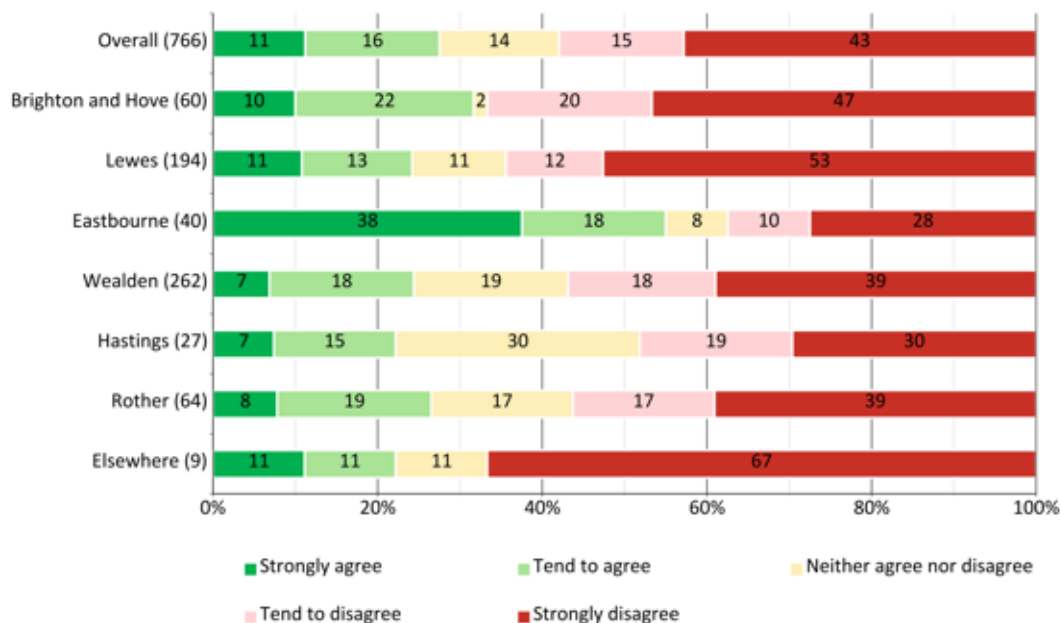


Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.22 Figure 4 shows that, overall, just under 1 in 5 respondents (19%) agreed with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations.
- 3.23 Nearly half (48%) of respondents who live in Eastbourne agreed with the proposal, whilst over a quarter (28%) of respondents in Hastings agreed. Around 1 in 5 of respondents in Brighton & Hove (22%) and in Rother (21%) agreed with the change, as did just less than 1 in 5 (18%) respondents in Lewes and an eighth (14%) of respondents in Wealden.
- 3.24 Overall, more than three quarters (77%) of respondents disagreed with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations, whilst around two thirds (66%) of respondents strongly disagreed. Of the nine respondents living outside East Sussex, three agreed and six disagreed.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to re-classify the three “maxi-cab” stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst, as single fire engine stations?

Figure 5: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to re-classify the three “maxi-cab” stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst, as single fire engine stations?



Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.25 Figure 5 shows that, overall, over a quarter (28%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to re-classify the three “maxi-cab” stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations.
- 3.26 More than half (55%) of respondents living in Eastbourne agreed with the proposal, whilst around a third (32%) of respondents living in Brighton & Hove did so. More than a quarter (27%) of respondents living in Rother agreed with the proposal, as did just under a quarter of respondents living in Wealden (24%) and Lewes (24%). Around 1 in 5 (22%) respondents living in Hastings agreed with the proposal.
- 3.27 Overall, just under 3 in 5 (58%) respondents disagreed with the proposal to re-classify the three “maxi-cab” stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations. More than 2 in 5 (43%) strongly disagreed.
- 3.28 Around two thirds (67%) of respondents living in Brighton & Hove disagree with the proposal, whilst slightly less than two thirds (64%) of respondents living in Lewes disagreed. Less than 3 in 5 respondents (57%) in Wealden disagreed, as did a similar proportion in Rother (56%). Just under half (48%) of respondents in Hastings disagreed, whilst less than 2 in 5 respondents (38%) in Eastbourne did so.
- 3.29 Of the nine respondents living outside East Sussex, two agreed and six disagreed.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

Currently, both of Hastings’ fire stations (Bohemia Road and The Ridge) have one immediate response fire engine, which is available 24-hours a day.

However, data shows that Bohemia Road has a significantly higher risk profile than The Ridge. For example, the Bohemia Road station has the second highest number of critical incidents across the ESFRS area, and has had the most life-risk fire incidents over the last 9 years. Moreover, The Ridge fire engine attends more incidents in Bohemia Road than it does in its own area.

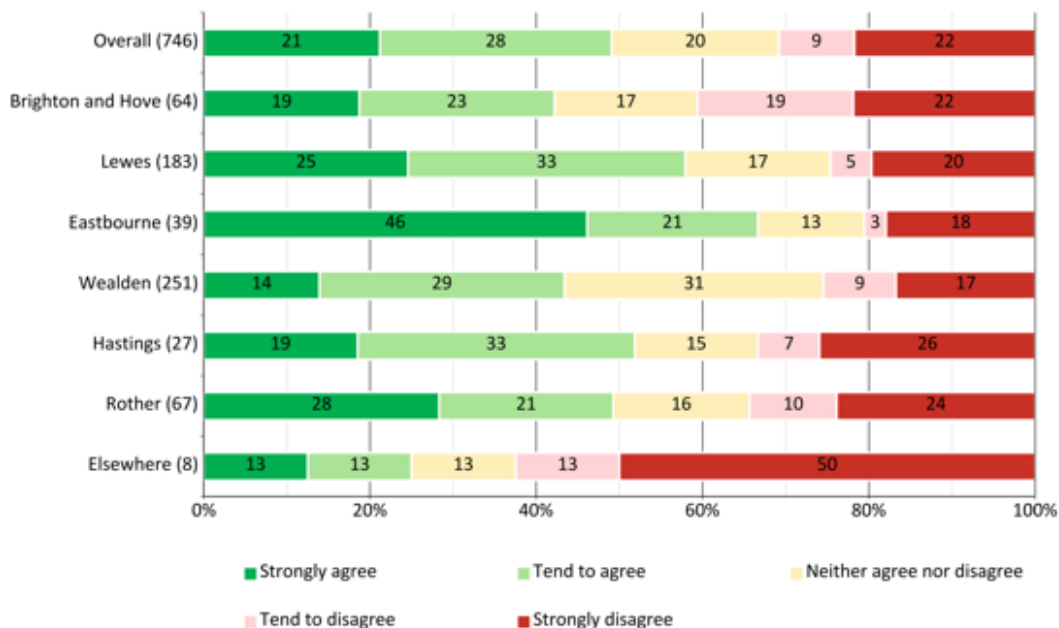
In light of this, the proposal aims to improve fire cover across both station areas and build more resilience in Hastings by:

Introducing a day-crewed system at The Ridge, whereby a fire engine would be immediately available during the day, and on-call during the evening and overnight; and

Introducing a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road?

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road?



Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.30 Figure 6 shows that, overall, around half (49%) of respondents agreed that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road, with around 1 in 5 (21%) strongly agreeing.
- 3.31 Around two thirds (67%) of respondents living in Eastbourne agreed with the proposal, whilst just under three fifths (58%) of respondents living in Lewes agreed. Around half of respondents in Hastings (52%) and Rother (49%) agreed, whilst around 2 in 5 respondents living in Wealden (43%), and in Brighton and Hove (42%) did so.
- 3.32 Overall, just under a third (31%) of respondents disagreed that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road, with more than 1 in 5 (22%) respondents strongly disagreeing.

3.33 Just over 2 in 5 (41%) respondents in Brighton & Hove disagreed with the proposal, whilst around one third of respondents in Rother (34%) and Hastings (33%) disagreed. A quarter of respondents (25%) in both Wealden and in Lewes disagreed, whilst around 1 in 5 (21%) respondents in Eastbourne did so.

3.34 Of the eight respondents living outside East Sussex, two agreed and 5 disagreed.

Proposal 6: Demand Management¹⁷

Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs)

ESFRS attends, on average, 9,200 incidents each year. Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) account for 34% of all these calls – and 96% of the calls initially categorised as AFAs turn out to be false alarms.

*ESFRS proposes to **no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises.***

To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises?

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises?



Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

3.35 Figure 7 shows that, overall, over 2 in 5 (43%) respondents agreed that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises. 1 in 6 (16%) respondents strongly agreed.

3.36 Eastbourne had the highest proportion (60%) of respondents who agreed with the proposal, and just over half of respondents (52%) in Hastings agreed. A slightly lower proportion of respondents in Rother (46%) and

¹⁷Proposal 5 was not consulted on as it relates to internal operational matters and therefore there were no resulting questions.

Wealden (44%) agree with the proposal; two in five (40%) respondents in Lewes agreed, whilst one third (33%) of respondents in Brighton & Hove agreed.

3.37 Overall, more than 2 in 5 (46%) respondents disagreed with the proposal that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises, whilst around a quarter (26%) of respondents strongly disagreed. Of the nine respondents living outside East Sussex, four agreed and four disagree.

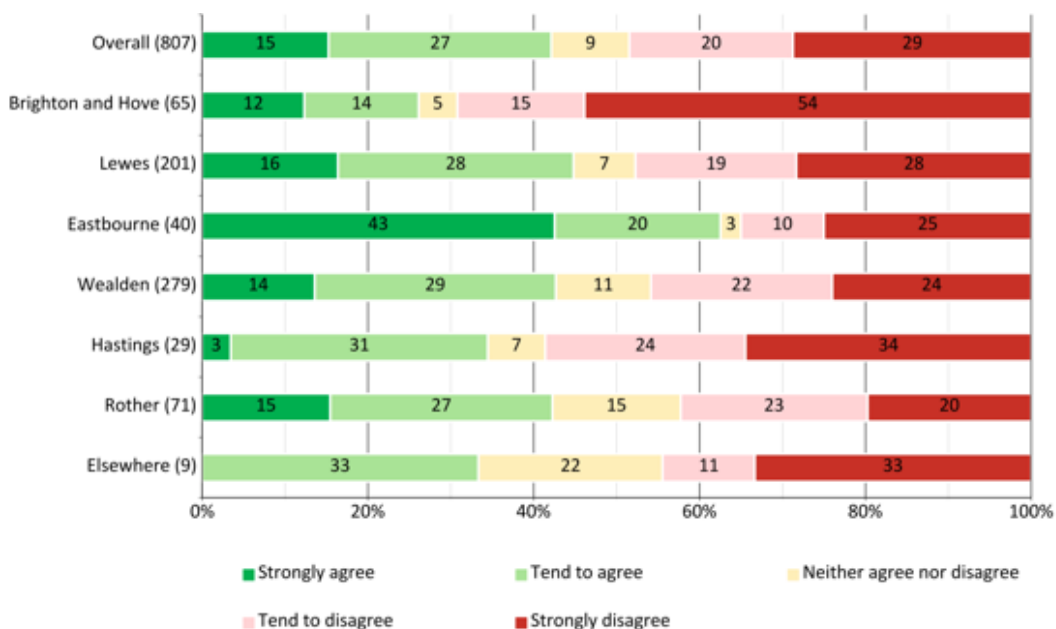
3.38 Three fifths (60%) of respondents in Brighton & Hove disagreed with the proposal and just less than half (46%) of respondents living in Lewes disagreed. Over 2 in 5 respondents in Wealden (43%), Rother (43%), and Hastings (41%), as well as 1 in 5 (38%) of respondents in Eastbourne disagreed with the proposal.

Lift rescues

*ESFRS is regularly called to release people from lifts that have malfunctioned. The Service wants to **engage with building owners** to ensure they are improving lift maintenance and have other arrangements in place to release people. It may also consider a delay in responding to some incidents where people are not vulnerable/in distress to give building owners time to resolve the issue.*

To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners (who are responsible for broken lifts) time to resolve the issue in the first instance?

Figure 8: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners (who are responsible for broken lifts) time to resolve the issue in the first instance?



Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

3.39 Figure 8 shows that, overall, just over 2 in 5 (42%) respondents agreed that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners time to resolve the issue in the first instance. 15% strongly agreed.

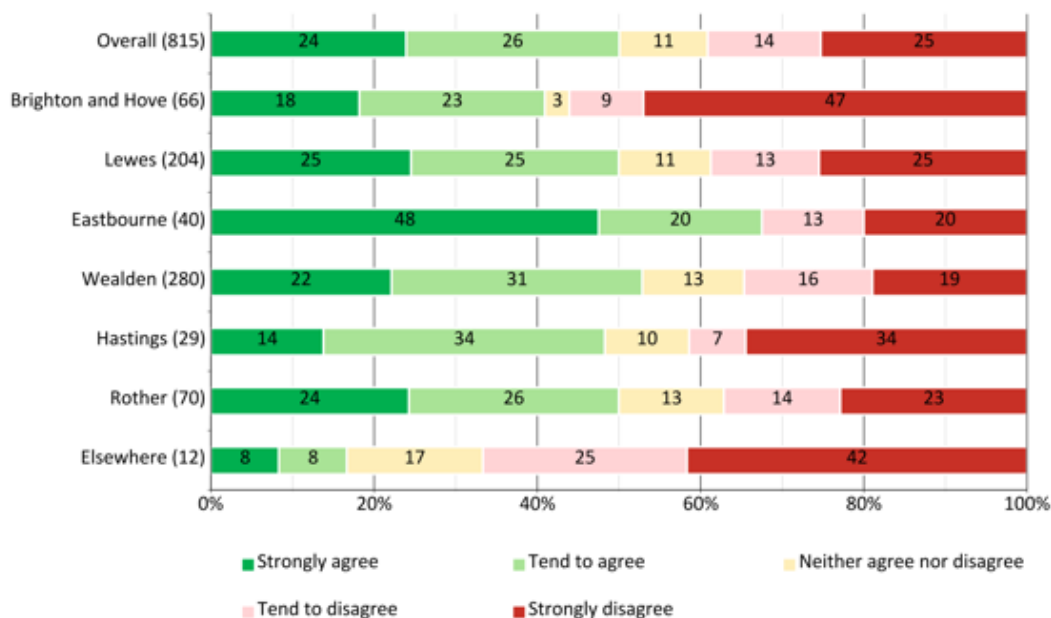
- 3.40 More than three fifths (63%) of respondents living in Eastbourne agreed with the proposal, whilst less than a half (45%) agreed in Lewes. Just over 2 in 5 respondents living in Wealden (43%) and Rother (42%) agreed, and around one third (34%) in Hastings and around a quarter (26%) in Brighton & Hove agreed.
- 3.41 Overall, just under half (48%) of respondents disagreed with the proposal that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners time to resolve the issue. More than a quarter (29%) of respondents strongly disagreed. Of the nine respondents living outside East Sussex, three agreed and four disagreed.
- 3.42 The highest level of disagreement with the proposals (69%) was in Brighton and Hove, followed by Hastings (59%). Less than half of respondents living in Lewes (48%) and in Wealden (46%) disagreed with the proposal, whilst just over 2 in 5 (42%) respondents from Rother disagreed. Just over a third (35%) of respondents in Eastbourne disagreed with the proposal.

Trapped birds

*ESFRS works alongside animal charities to reduce the number of calls it gets about birds trapped in netting, though it still attends a small number of calls. These calls tie-up resources and restrict ESFRS' ability to attend incidents involving risk to human life, and it is often necessary to use specialist equipment, making this service disproportionately expensive. Therefore, the Service is proposing that it should **no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting.***

To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting?

Figure 9: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting?



Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.43 Figure 9 shows that, overall, exactly half (50%) of respondents agreed with the proposal that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting: around a quarter (24%) strongly agreed.

- 3.44 Eastbourne had the highest levels of agreement with the proposal (68%), followed by just over half (53%) of respondents in Wealden, and exactly half (50%) of respondents in Lewes, and in Rother (50%). Just under half (48%) of respondents in Hastings agreed with the proposal, whilst around 2 in 5 (41%) respondents living in Brighton & Hove did so.
- 3.45 Overall, just under 2 in 5 (39%) respondents disagreed with the proposal that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting, whilst a quarter (25%) strongly disagreed.
- 3.46 The highest level of disagreement was found in Brighton and Hove (56%), followed Hastings (41%). Just under 2 in 5 (39%) of respondents living in Lewes disagreed with the proposal, with a similar level of disagreement (37%) in Rother. More than one third (35%) of respondents in Wealden agreed, and exactly one third (33%) of respondents in Eastbourne disagree that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting. Of the 12 respondents who live outside East Sussex, two agreed and eight disagreed.

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system

*This proposal is about **changing the way ESFRS' stations at Bohemia Road (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus (Brighton) and Roedean (Brighton) provide a 24/7 on-station response, through contractual and crewing arrangements of the firefighters who work at these stations.***

The current full-time duty system requires a firefighter to work 2 day shifts, followed by 2 night shifts, followed by 4 days off. Although it has been in place for many years, there are now alternatives for delivering services in a more efficient way, without detriment to response levels.

Two options for change have been identified.

Option A: a "Flexible Rostering Duty System" at all 5 fire stations

One team of firefighters plan their shifts between them a minimum of 6 weeks in advance, to ensure the fire engine(s) at their stations are always available.

This system would: improve the release of firefighters for training without affecting fire engine availability; reduce overtime and staff employed on fixed-term contracts; give the firefighters more flexibility and introduce a more family-friendly work pattern; result in a net reduction of 5 posts, which could be used for prevention, protection, training or resourcing the flexible crewing pool.

Option B: a "Group Crewing Duty System" at Preston Circus, Hove and Roedean (the 3 City stations)

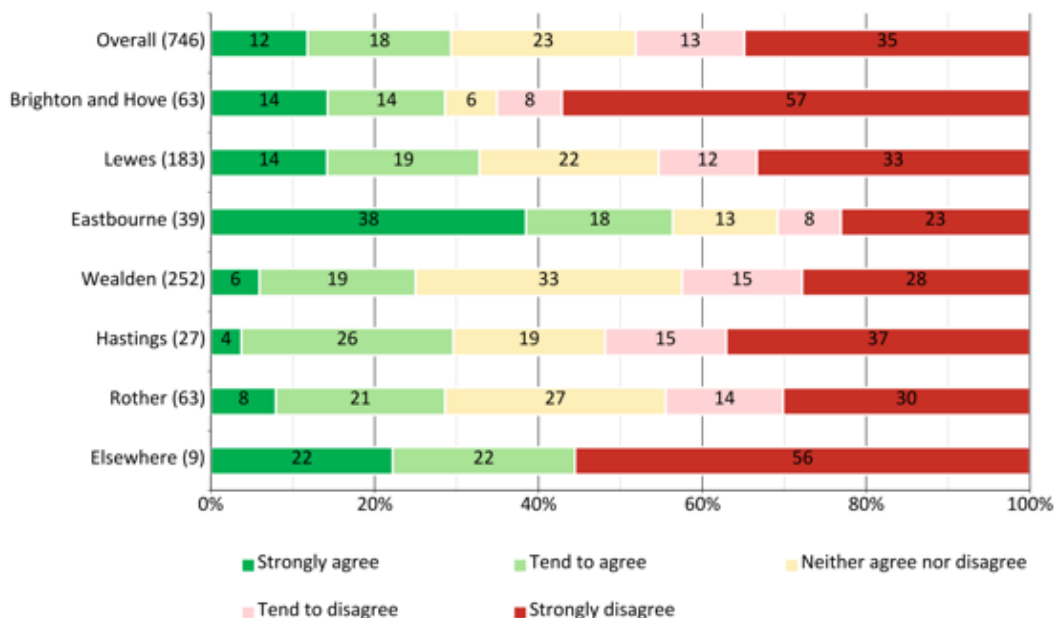
"Group crewing" means that resources are used flexibly within a "group" of stations. Crews would continue to use the existing shift pattern (2 day shifts, 2 night shifts, 4 days off) – and depending on sickness or other absence levels, one or more stations would support the others in the "group".

This option would result in a net reduction of 4 posts, which could be used for prevention, protection, training, resourcing the flexible crewing pool or taken as savings.

Both options allow the Service to maintain its 24/7 immediate response and attendance standards.

Do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change crewing arrangements at the following ESFRS fire stations: Bohemia Road (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus (Brighton) and Roedean (Brighton)?

Figure 10: Do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change crewing arrangements at the following ESFRS fire stations: Bohemia Road (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus (Brighton) and Roedean (Brighton)?

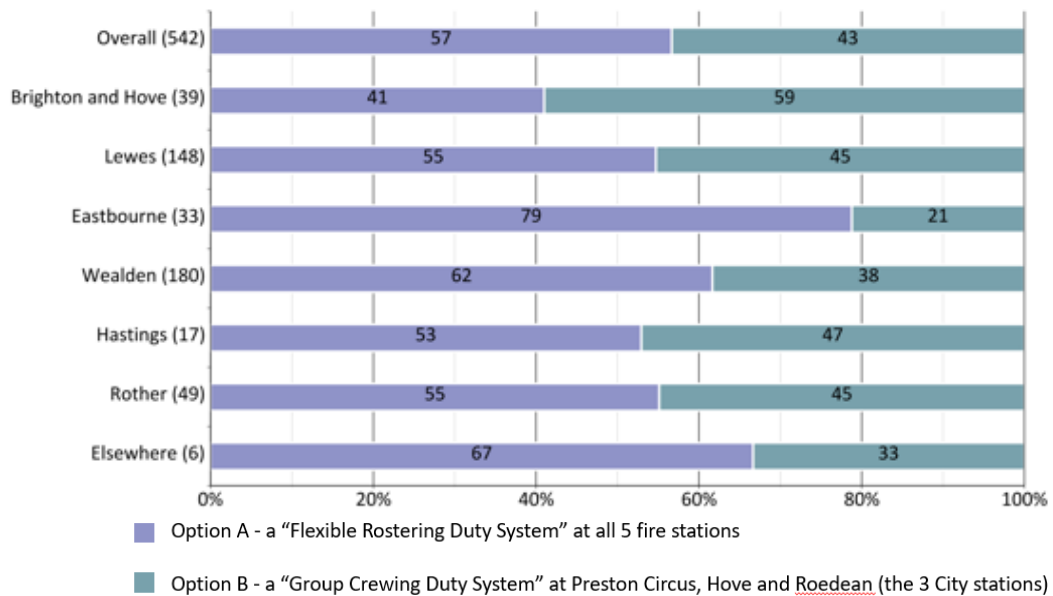


Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.47 Figure 10 shows that, overall, less than a third (29%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to change crewing arrangements at Bohemia Road in Hastings, Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus in Brighton and Roedean (also in Brighton). Around 1 in 8 (12%) respondents strongly agreed.
- 3.48 The highest levels of agreement (56%) with the proposal can be found among respondents living in Eastbourne. A third (33%) of respondents living in Lewes agreed with the proposal, followed by 30% of respondents living in Hastings, with a similar proportion (29%) who agreed in both Brighton and Hove and in Rother. Exactly a quarter (25%) of respondents in Wealden agreed with the proposal.
- 3.49 Overall, just under half (48%) of respondents disagreed with the proposal to change crewing arrangements at the stated stations, the majority of whom (35%) strongly disagreed.
- 3.50 Almost two thirds (65%) of respondents who live in Brighton and Hove disagreed with the proposal to change crewing arrangements, as did just over half (52%) of respondents in Hastings. Less than half of respondents who live in Lewes (45%) and Rother (44%) disagreed, whilst just over 2 in 5 (42%) of respondents in Wealden did so. Less than a third (31%) of respondents from Eastbourne disagreed to changing the crewing arrangements at the respective fire stations. Of the nine respondents who live outside East Sussex, four agreed and five disagreed.

Whether or not you agree with the proposal to change the crewing arrangements at the 5 ESFRS fire stations listed above, if the crewing arrangements are changed, which of the two options (A or B) do you prefer?

Figure 11: Whether or not you agree with the proposal to change the crewing arrangements at the 5 ESFRS fire stations listed above, if the crewing arrangements are changed, which of the two options (A or B) do you prefer?



Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.51 Figure 11 shows that, overall, just under 3 in 5 (57%) respondents would prefer Option A, a "Flexible Rostering Duty System" at all 5 fire stations., whilst just over 2 in 5 (43%) would prefer Option B – a "Group Crewing System" at the 3 city stations.
- 3.52 Preferences for each of the 2 options varies considerably between each district. In Eastbourne, almost 4 in 5 (79%) respondents would prefer Option A, followed by just over 3 in 5 (62%) respondents in Wealden. More than half (55%) of respondents in both Lewes and Rother preferred Option A, whilst around 2 in 5 (41%) respondents living in Brighton & Hove and nine out of the 17 respondents from Hastings did so.
- 3.53 Inversely, around 1 in 5 (21%) respondents in Eastbourne preferred Option B, and just under 2 in 5 (38%) respondents in Wealden preferred Option B. Less than half (45%) of respondents who live in Lewes and Rother preferred Option B, whilst around 3 in 5 (59%) respondents from Brighton & Hove did so. Of the 17 respondents who live in Hastings, eight said that they prefer Option B.
- 3.54 Of the six respondents living outside East Sussex, four preferred Option A, while two preferred Option B.

Other issues: Building and home inspections

One of the key areas of focus for ESFRS is to ensure buildings are safe and that fires are prevented. By reviewing its response models ESFRS will release resources to do more of this prevention and protection work, and to have capacity for more inspections and visits.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety?

Figure 12: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety?



Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.55 Figure 12 shows that, overall, around 4 in 5 (79%) respondents agreed that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety. 2 in 5 (40%) respondents strongly agreed.
- 3.56 More than 4 in 5 respondents who live in Rother (87%), Eastbourne (85%), Hastings (83%) and Lewes (82%) agreed that more inspections and visits would help to reduce risk and offer the public assurance about fire safety. Just under 4 in 5 (78%) respondents in Wealden agreed, while exactly three quarters (75%) of respondents who live in Brighton and Hove agreed.
- 3.57 Overall, around 1 in 10 (11%) respondents disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety.
- 3.58 The district with highest proportion of respondents who disagreed with having more building and home inspections was Brighton & Hove (15%), followed by Eastbourne (13%) and Wealden (11%). One in ten (10%) respondents in Hastings disagreed, as did a similar proportion (9%) in Lewes. Less than 1 in 20 (4%) respondents in Rother disagreed with having more building and home inspections.
- 3.59 Of the 10 respondents who live outside East Sussex, 9 agreed, whilst one neither agreed nor disagreed.

Other issues: Finances and investment

The average household in East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove currently pays £95.53 per year for their fire service — that is just £1.84 per week for a Band D property.

ESFRS’ revenue budget for 2020/21 is £39.7m and is funded from a government grant (8%), business rates (22%) and council tax (70%). Over 75% of our spending is on employees, and the vast majority of this is on our firefighters.

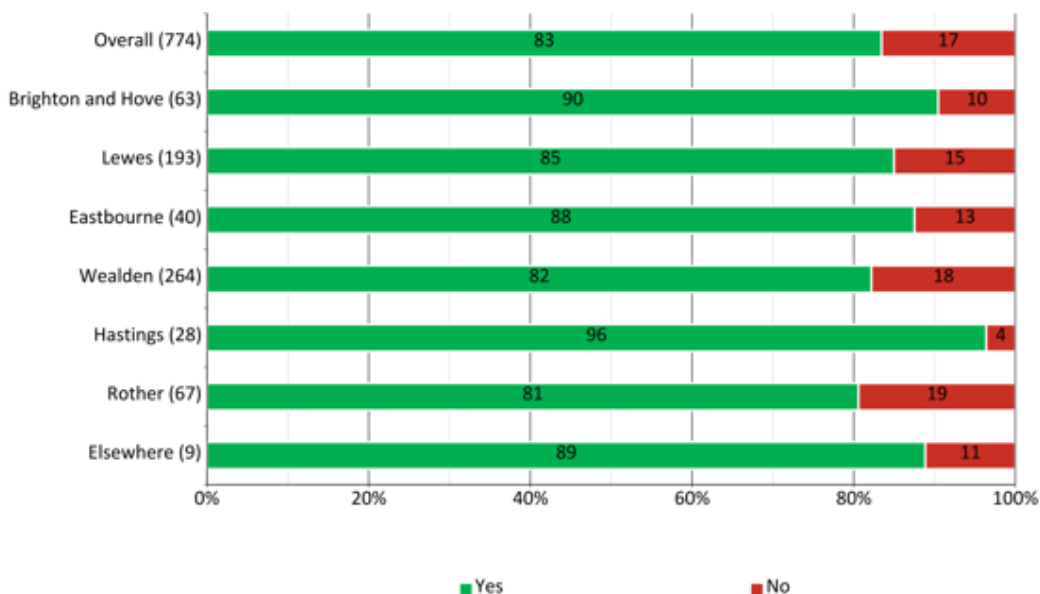
Due to significant uncertainty about ESFRS’ funding beyond 2020/21 (due to the Government planning to review how much it spends on public services) ESFRS have modelled a range of scenarios. These scenarios suggest that we may need to make new savings of between £0.7m and £3.5m by 2024/25 (in addition to savings of £9.8m made since 2010/11 and already planned for the period to 2024/25), in order to balance our budget.

ESFRS will also make further savings through its Efficiency Strategy, which will focus on a range of areas including: improving the way ESFRS procures goods and services; using investment in IT and estate to reduce running costs; reviewing all ESFRS’ support services; working in collaboration with other emergency services and public sector bodies where that can make its services more effective and efficient; and looking for new sources of funding, including different ways of delivering services, for example through a charity.

However, since 2010/11, ESFRS has also become much more dependent on the income it receives from council tax, and we have increased the amount we charge households by just under the maximum amount allowed by Government in each of the last four years (between 1.94% – 2.94%).

Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22)?

Figure 13: Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22)?

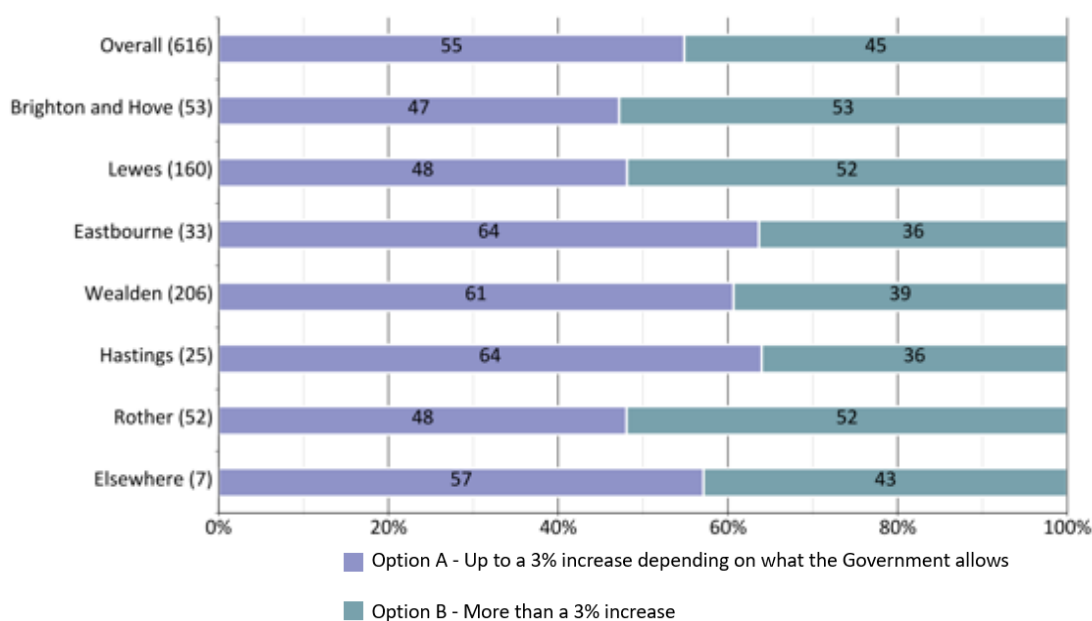


Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.60 Figure 13 shows that, overall, more than 4 in 5 (83%) respondents would be willing to pay more in council tax for their local fire and rescue service (ESFRS) next year.
- 3.61 The district with the highest proportion (96%) of respondents who would be willing to pay more in council tax was Hastings, followed by Brighton and Hove, where 9 in 10 (90%) respondents would be willing to pay more. Just under 9 in 10 (88%) respondents in Eastbourne would be willing to pay more in council tax, as would more than 4 in 5 respondents living in Lewes (85%), Wealden (82%), and Rother (81%).
- 3.62 Inversely, less than 1 in 5 (17%) of respondents, overall, would not be willing to pay more in council tax to their local fire and rescue service next year.
- 3.63 Just under 1 in 5 respondents who live in Rother (19%) and Wealden (18%) would not be willing to pay more in council tax, whilst 15% of respondents who live in Lewes would not be, nor would 13% of respondents living in Eastbourne. Exactly 1 in 10 respondents who live in Brighton & Hove would be willing to pay, whilst just less than 1 in 20 (4%) respondents in Hastings would be.

If you would be willing to pay more council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22), what level of increase would you accept?

Figure 14: If you would be willing to pay more council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22), what level of increase would you accept?



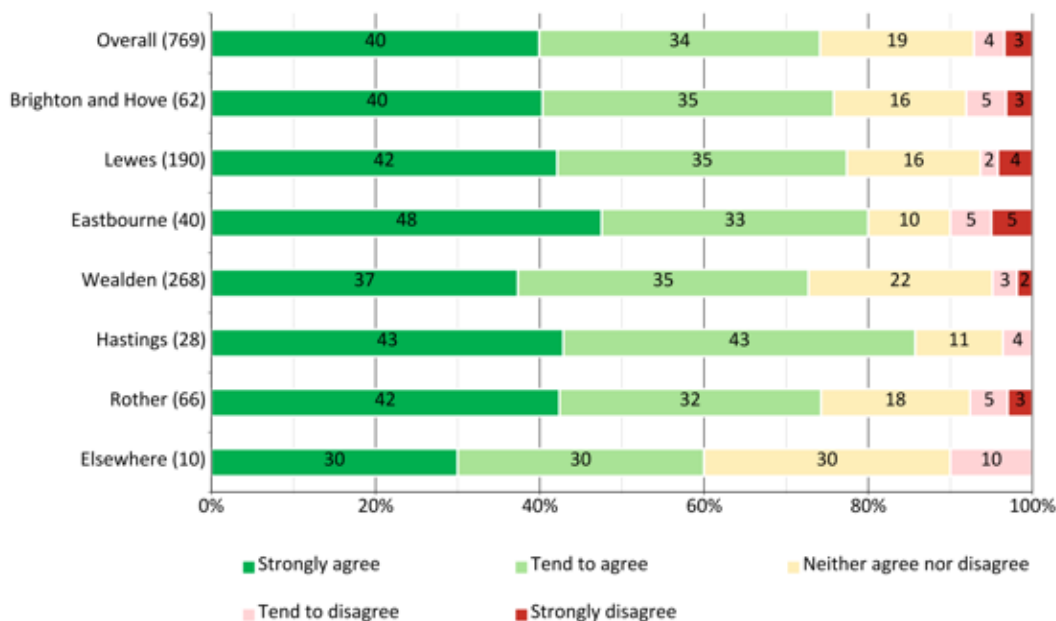
Base: (Number of respondents willing to pay more in council tax shown in brackets)

- 3.64 Figure 14 shows that, of the respondents who would be willing to pay more in council tax for their local fire and rescue service next year, overall, just over half (55%) preferred Option A (an increase up to 3% depending on what the Government allows), whilst just under half (45%) would preferred Option B (an increase of more than 3%).
- 3.65 Eastbourne and Hastings have the highest level of respondents who preferred Option A (both 64%), followed by Wealden (61%). Less than half (48%) of respondents in Lewes and in Rother preferred Option A, whilst a similar proportion of respondents living in Brighton and Hove (47%) did so.
- 3.66 Inversely, Brighton & Hove has the highest proportion (53%) of respondents who preferred Option B (more than a 3% increase), closely followed by Rother and Lewes (both 52%). Just under 2 in 5 (39%) of respondents

in Wealden preferred Option B, whilst over a third (36%) of respondents in Hastings, and in Eastbourne, would prefer Option B.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service offers value for money?

Figure 15: To what extent do you agree or disagree that East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service offers value for money?

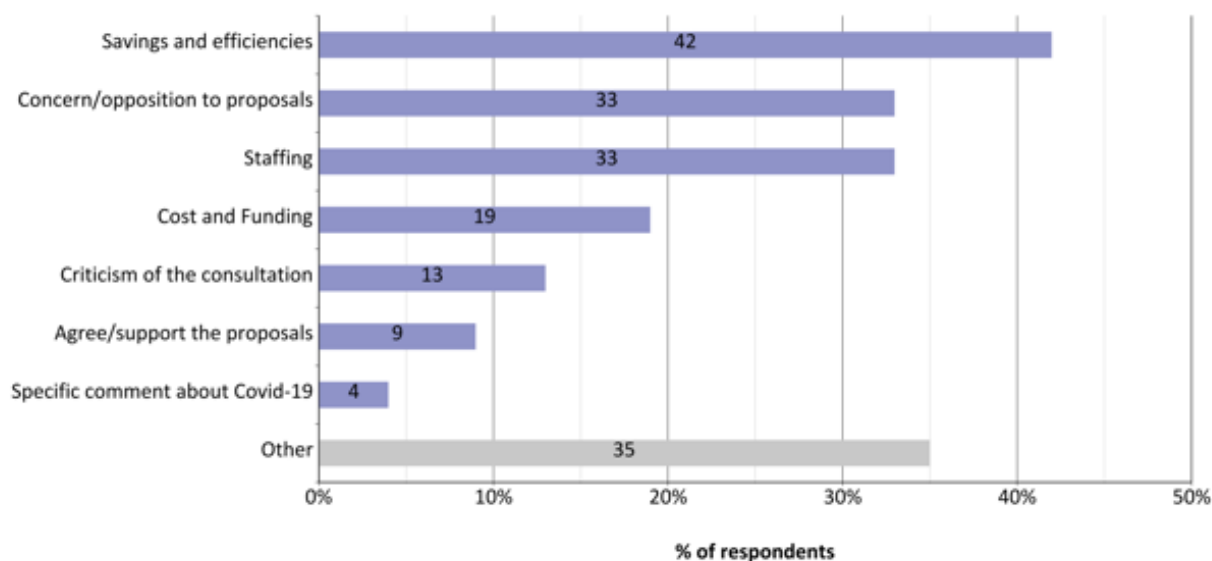


Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.67 Figure 15 shows that, overall, around three quarters (74%) of respondents agreed that East Sussex Fire and Rescue service offers value for money. 2 in 5 (40%) strongly agreed.
- 3.68 More than 4 in 5 (86%) of respondents who live in Hastings agreed that ESFRS offers value for money, whilst exactly 4 in 5 (80%) of respondents who live in Eastbourne agreed. Around three quarters of respondents in the districts of Lewes (77%), Brighton and Hove (76%), Rother (74%), in Wealden (73%) agreed that ESFRS offers value for money.
- 3.69 Less than 1 in 10 (7%) respondents, overall, disagreed that ESFRS offers value for money.
- 3.70 Exactly 1 in 10 (10%) respondents who live in Eastbourne disagreed that ESFRS offers value for money, whilst less than 1 in 10 respondents in the districts of Rother (8%), Brighton and Hove (8%), and in Lewes (6%) disagreed. One in twenty respondents (5%) who live in Wealden disagreed whilst 4% in Hastings did so.

In what ways do you think that ESFRS could make savings and be more efficient in the future?

Figure 16: In what ways do you think that ESFRS could make savings and be more efficient in the future?



Base: (401 - Respondents who provided comments)

3.71 Figure 16 shows that, when respondents were asked about ways in which ESFRS could make savings and be more efficient in the future, just over two fifths (42%) of respondents made comments that mentioned potential savings and efficiencies, for example:

General measures to reduce waste and inefficient practices, and to increase efficiency in general (15%);

Having more emphasis on prevention, education and providing information e.g. through safety talks and visits to homes and schools (9%);

Increasing or introducing charges, for example: charging the public generally for any inspections, training or consultancy provided (3%); and/or introducing charges for specific types of callouts or incidents e.g. repeated false alarms or calls resulting from negligence (7%), lift releases (4%) and wildlife inspections (2%);

More joined-up working with other agencies e.g. Police and health (5%) and with other Fire and Rescue Services (5%);

Making better use of technology e.g. improved IT systems, green energy and social media messaging (5%);

Better procurement processes e.g. to secure better-quality equipment (4%);

Involving firefighters in an increased range of tasks e.g. administrative work (3%);

Consideration of a merger with West Sussex FRS (2%);

Regular ongoing efficiency reviews e.g. on an annual basis (1%); and

Recovering costs from insurance companies after road accidents etc (1%).

“Continue home safety visits and link with services that can spread the word. I work for a housing support services for over 65's [...] the home safety visits are a really useful tool and resource to tap in to”

“With regard to increasing efficiency, I believe that preventative measures are important, such as carrying out more building and home inspections, fitting fire alarms in all homes, and alerting and assuring residents on fire safety and ways of reducing risk, both face to face and through marketing campaigns”

3.72 A third of respondents (33%) did not make suggestions about how to increase efficiency and savings as such, but rather expressed their wider concerns about the impact the proposals might have. Their comments typically covered:

General expressions of disagreement with the proposals (17%) or a view that services should remain as they are and/or be maintained at the current level (15%);

Concerns about increased risks and dangers resulting from crewing reductions (8%) and longer response times e.g. in remote areas (5%);

A view that the proposals should not be about money, or that the primary focus of the FRS should be on saving lives rather than increasing efficiencies (7%);

Concerns about population growth generally or particular areas with a high-density population (5%); and

There were various other, more specific concerns about a particular aspect of the proposals, raised by smaller proportions of respondents.

“It’s difficult to see how any savings could be made without impacting on the service delivered, assuming these proposals happen”

3.73 A third (33%) of respondents suggested making savings through changes to staffing, for example:

Generally reducing particular job roles (e.g. ‘management’) or ‘unnecessary’ staff numbers where possible (19%);

Reducing the number of higher earners in the FRS and/or reviewing their salaries (10%); and

Addressing the perception that there are currently ‘too many chiefs’ and not enough frontline staff (6%);

3.74 In addition, a number of respondents made generally positive comments about firefighters locally (6%). There were also some comments encouraging a greater use of volunteers.

“Increase volunteer numbers especially that of fire awareness/prevention teams ... A new volunteer team for animal rescues similar to community first responders”

“Increase or decrease staffing levels dependent on actual need ascertained by incidents and accidents, population and likelihood”

3.75 Around 1 in 5 (19%) of respondents mentioned specifically making savings relating to cost and/or funding. Many of them commented that the FRS should receive more funding, for example from central government, or that ESFRS should lobby for more funding (13%).

3.76 Smaller numbers commented on proposed changes to council tax: while a few were willing to pay more to support the FRS, others felt that council tax is already too high to justify any reduction in the service.

“We should be lobbying central Government to make sure we have the funding we need to run the most effective service possible, without cutting corners and reducing staff and vehicles/equipment”

“Lobby the government, our MP and councillors to make changes to central government funding [...] The changes have to come from central government”

- 3.77 Around 1 in 8 (13%) of the respondents who expressed a view on savings for the future, criticised the consultation, claiming for example: that more information is needed, that misleading or inaccurate statistics have been used, that the consultation is a veneer for a cost-cutting exercise, or that the timing should have been reconsidered in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It is a disturbing that this is being chosen as the time to try to make cuts to their provision”

“Now is not the time to talk about making savings. It’s smokescreen for just making more cuts to local amenities”

- 3.78 Just under 1 in 10 (9%) of respondents generally agreed that the proposals will help with savings and efficiencies.

“Certainly, by some of the proposals in this document. I think the current rostering system is outdated and inefficient, so would agree that needs to be modernised”

“I think ESFRS has done an excellent job in identifying ways of making savings and increasing efficiency in this consultation document”

- 3.79 Of the ‘other’ comments that were made by just over a third (35%) of respondents, these include respondents not being confident enough to make additional suggestions, as well as simply expressing general doubt about the future finances of ESFRS:

“This is difficult to gauge when I am not really conversant with the day to day operation of the fire service. I am dismayed at the pessimistic look at future finance and feel that the ESFRS should be working with other Fire Services to argue for a budget which does not force them into constant cost-cutting. Yes we want efficiency, but we also want our firefighters properly paid and working in tolerable conditions”

- 3.80 The ‘other’ comments also included a range of suggestions made by fewer respondents, for example:

Selling Wadhurst Fire Station (which currently occupies a strategic development site for future community facilities and elderly/affordable housing) for a substantial profit, and re-siting the station in a different location e.g. Wadhurst refuse site;

Maintaining one large (for major incidents) and one small vehicle in lieu of having two fully equipped fire engines, or using smaller vehicles in general (e.g. as a first response);

Use of public fundraising events to engage with the public;

Providing training to local wildlife groups and offering them equipment so that they can safely respond to some incidents themselves;

Addressing 'derelict' or 'redundant' stations such as that at Newhaven;

Concentrating on the FRS's statutory role to reduce expenses incurred fulfilling specialist roles that aren't required;

Better auditing of overtime claims e.g. to address concerns that firefighters are being paid at an enhanced rate to fulfil tasks that can be carried out more cheaply by support staff on lower pay;

Use of on-call staff for prevention work and the extra crewing pool;

Creating a charitable arm for ESFRS so the public can make donations to the service;

Investing in the 'fire fighters of the future' by better engaging with and involving young people e.g. via a cadet service;

Changing the rules that currently allow many fire officers to retire early on a full pension, when many are still capable of carrying out manual jobs;

Focus on recruiting retained firefighters to become wholetime, to save on training and recruitment costs;

Extend the current proposal on AFAs i.e. only respond to AFAs at the most high-risk domestic premises;

Increase the council tax precept for higher risk areas and increase controls where possible e.g. for higher risk properties such as HMOs, of which there are many in Brighton (for example);

Having in-house workshops for vehicles, and changing the turnover period for vehicles;

Specific changes to staffing requirements e.g. removing the requirement for strategic managers to attend operational incidents and reducing pay accordingly; having a small group of specialists to act as 'gold commanders' at multi-agency events; having more distinct career paths so that those trained as fire safety officers cannot 'jump ship' into operational roles before the ESFRS has seen a return on its training investment;

Eradicating 'expensive mistakes' such as the mobilising move to West Sussex;

Consolidating stations that are close together and/or changing some stations to on-call only; and

Using the planning system (e.g. Community Infrastructure Levy) to support the FRS by charging for new developments or changes of use.

Other issues: ESFRS’ purpose and commitments

ESFRS has a strong purpose and clear commitments to help make East Sussex safer by:

Delivering high performing services by using its resources to achieve the best level of safety for people and business;

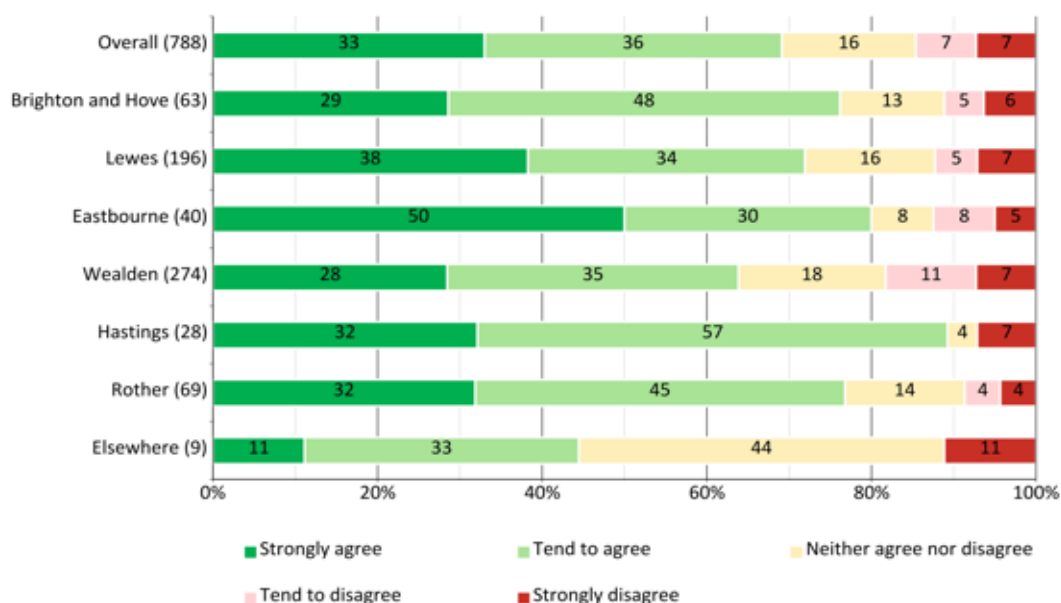
Engaging with its communities by using its trusted reputation to deliver educational initiatives and campaigns;

Having a safe and valued workforce by ensuring the people of East Sussex are safe and are provided with the right equipment, training and skills; and

Making effective use of its resources by ensuring all its resources are managed effectively, improving its productivity and seeking new sources of income and funding.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that the purpose and commitments of ESFRS are appropriate?

Figure 17: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the purpose and commitments of ESFRS are appropriate?



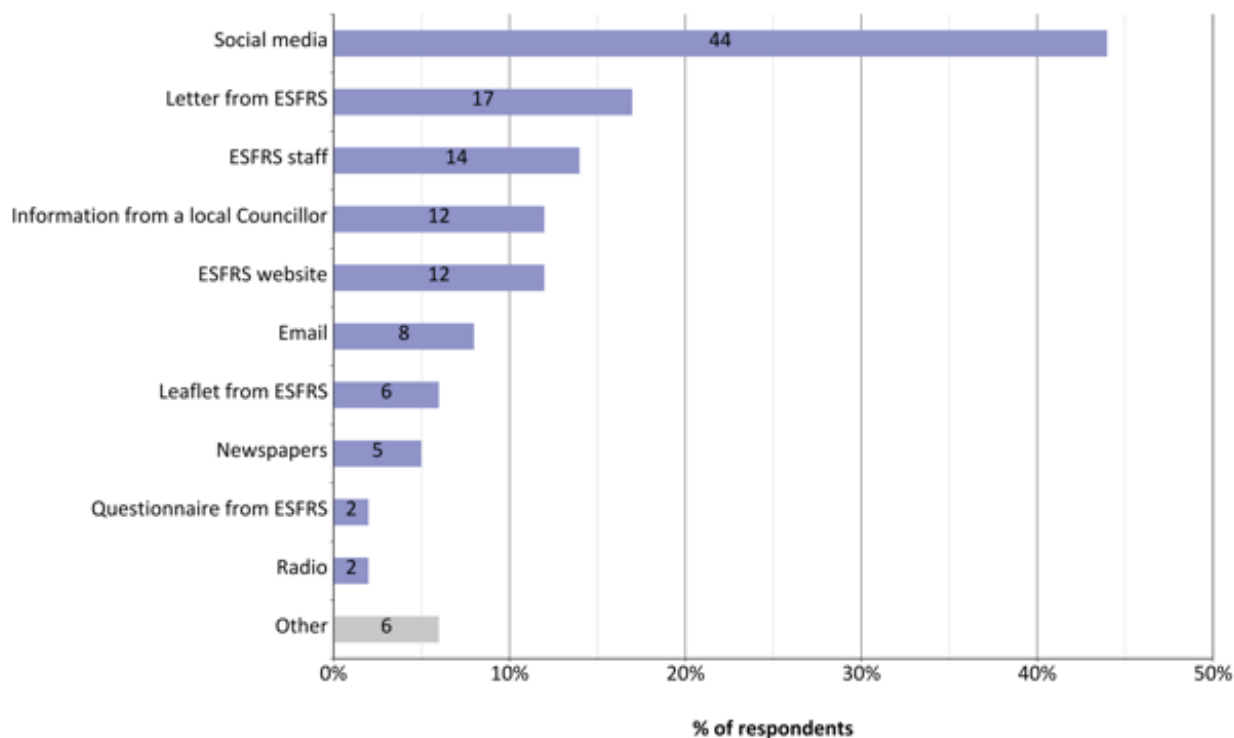
Base: (Number of respondents shown in brackets)

- 3.81 Figure 17 shows that, overall, more than two thirds (69%) of respondents agreed that ESFRS’ purpose and commitments are appropriate, whilst one third (33%) strongly agreed.
- 3.82 Hastings has the highest proportion of respondents who agreed (89%), followed by 4 in 5 (80%) respondents in Eastbourne. Just over three quarters of respondents in Rother (77%), and in Brighton and Hove (76%) agreed, whilst around 5 in 7 (72%) respondents in Lewes and just under two thirds (64%) of respondents in Wealden did so.
- 3.83 Overall, just over 1 in 8 (15%) respondents disagreed that ESFRS’ purpose and commitments are appropriate.
- 3.84 Wealden has the highest proportion of respondents who disagreed, followed by around 1 in 8 respondents in Eastbourne (13%), Lewes (12%), and Brighton & Hove (11%). Less than 1 in 10 respondents who live in Rother (9%), and Hastings (7%) disagreed. Of the nine respondents who live outside East Sussex, four agreed and 1 disagreed.

Other issues: Hearing about the consultation

How did you hear about this consultation?

Figure 18: How did you hear about this consultation?

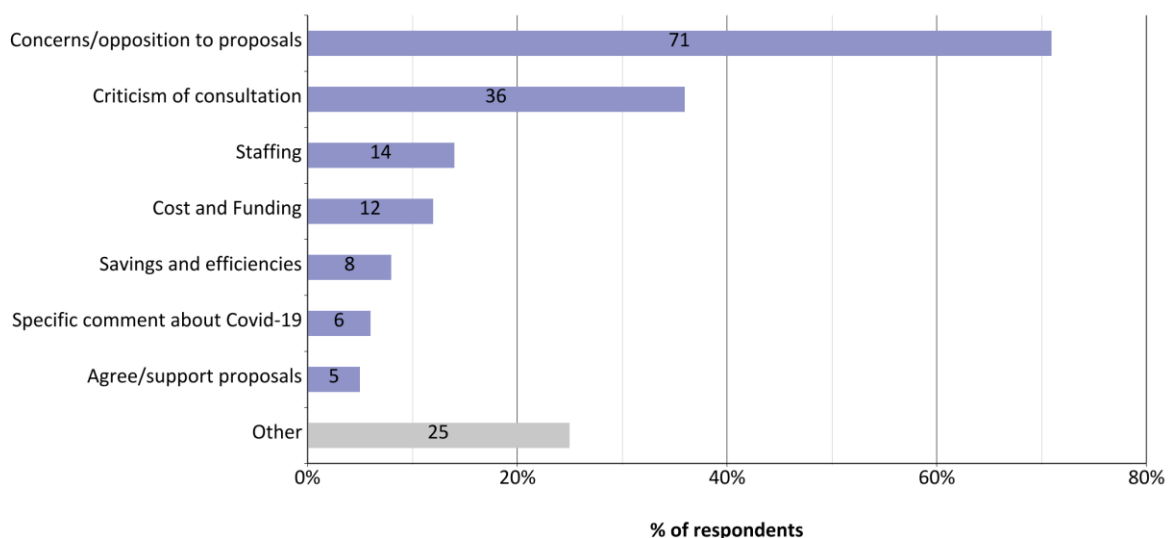


Base (812)

- ^{3.85} Figure 18 shows that, overall, most respondents (44%) heard about the consultation through social media. Around 1 in 6 (17%) respondents heard about it via a letter from ESFRS. Slightly fewer (14%) found out through ESFRS staff, whilst around 1 in 8 (12%) heard via a local councillor or through the ESFRS website.
- ^{3.86} Less than 1 in 10 found out via email (8%), or a leaflet from ESFRS (6%).
- ^{3.87} Around 1 in 20 (5%) respondents found out by reading the newspapers, whilst less than 1 in 20 found out because they had completed a questionnaire from ESFRS (2%) or had heard about it on the radio (2%).
- ^{3.88} Other ways respondents heard about the consultation were through a friend, a neighbour or a local shopkeeper.

Any other comments

Figure 19: Further comments you would like to make about any of the proposals in the consultation



Base (353 – Respondents who gave a further comment)

^{3.89} In addition to the proposals, respondents were asked whether they had any further comments to make. Figure 19 shows that, of the respondents who made a further comment about the consultation, around 7 in 10 (71%) expressed concerns or opposition about the proposal, with their comments most frequently falling under the following themes:

General expressions of disagreement with the proposals (35%) or a view that services should remain as they are and/or be maintained at the current level (20%);

Concerns about increased risks and dangers to both firefighters and the public resulting from crewing reductions (26%);

Specific concerns about Proposal 3 (the removal of second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield) (21%);

Concerns about population growth, either generally or particular areas with a high-density population (16%);

Concerns about longer response times, particularly in remote or rural areas (10%);

Comments emphasising that fires can occur at any time, including night-time when people are more vulnerable, and/or that small fires can escalate quickly (9%);

Concerns about increased demands on the FRS in future as a result of more extreme weather events from climate change such as droughts causing more forest fires (8%); and

A view that the proposals should not be about money, or that the primary focus of the FRS should be on saving lives rather than increasing efficiencies (7%);

^{3.90} Plus, there were various other, more specific concerns about a particular aspect of the proposals, raised by smaller proportions of respondents.

“We live in a small village, some miles from any large town and thus vulnerable to any reduction in manpower and engines [...] the consequences of an extra 10 mins arrival time can be deadly”

“I think reducing the number of fire appliances available and number of firefighters in any capacity is asking for trouble, who knows what may happen in the future [...] I work in a GP surgery and I struggle to find risk assessors, to have one at each local fire station makes absolute sense”

“As a former senior fire officer, I am concerned to see proposals that reduce the level of fire cover which would result in first attending crews being put at greater risk. There is a minimum number of firefighters required to implement safe systems of work and this appears to have been overlooked. It is not good enough to state that IC's should carry out a DRA to determine if they have the requisite number of personnel to safely commit and effectively carry out a rescue, ignoring moral pressure”

“Having worked as a pre-hospital emergency care doctor in Heathfield, I strongly disagree with the plan to reduce from 2 to 1 vehicle at any station. 2 vehicles allows a rapid 1st vehicle response to provide safety at RTC's, lighting, risk of fire, stabilisation of vehicles tarpaulins etc then 2nd full crew to enable extrication. No analytical programme allows for the practical dangers of single vehicle availability at any town station. This review & proposals causes me great concern”

“As a port town with many industrial areas and a growing number of new dwellings being built in the Newhaven/Peacehaven area, we need the same level of staff, engines and working hours for adequate protection. Downgrading this station is going to be detrimental to an area that is expanding”

- ^{3.91} More than a third (36%) of the respondents criticised the consultation itself, most frequently in terms of the timing of the consultation (i.e. in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic) (11%), wanting more information in order to give a fully informed view (8%) and concerns about the accuracy of statistics used in the consultation material (5%).

“Information provided by ESFRS appears to be contradictory and lacks sufficient information and detail, making it difficult/near impossible to form an informed opinion”

“[I] need clearer explanation of what the flexible rota system would be for wholtime stations. Doesn't go into enough detail of how this would work in practice, in terms of Firefighters planning their own working pattern 6 weeks in advance”

“Strangely at a time of a Pandemic this[consultation] is still going ahead, whereas the Government has itself postponed many reviews due to the pandemic. This will surely be irrelevant or even obsolete once the impact of Covid-19 is understood”

“The consultation has taken place through a period of national lockdown during an unprecedented pandemic. Whilst I'm sure the Fire Service is fully cognisant of the potential impact, it will also need to remember to assess the proposals in light of this and assure itself that the proposals still stand”

- 3.92 More than 1 in 18 (14%) commented specifically on staffing in relation to the consultation, mostly praising firefighters, but also with many suggesting a reduction in managers and non-frontline staff where feasible to achieve savings.

“ESFRS currently provide an excellent service by a team of dedicated and committed knowledgeable staff whose objective is to prevent fire, protect life and property, an extremely valuable 24-hour service. I'm proud of the team at ESFRS nothing is too much trouble, extremely professional, cooperative, dedicated and helpful team all the time. Their community engagement is outstanding, their community care is excellent. The whole of ESFRS needs to be commended for their work”

“I think that everything you're doing is great in terms of overall progress for the county. I think it was super useful to attend the training last night and learn much more about the service and be a part of the wider consultation process. I feel really proud of the way this consultation has been handled and that they really do seem to have done in-depth statistical research and carefully planned the way to increase coverage, help make the service more flexible for the staff whilst keeping as many people employed as possible. Of course, there are inevitable cutbacks and negative changes, but these are often needed to facilitate the greater good”

“It's an incredible service that I deeply feel needs protection and more investment”

- 3.93 A similar proportion (12%) expressed concerns about the cost and funding, and that ESFRS funding should be increased, with more investment needed from the UK government.

“I'm concerned that the cuts you are having to make will unavoidably affect the service you are able to offer despite the remarkable efforts of crews. [...] pursue sources of additional funding more than efficiency”

“Apply pressures onto government requesting funding increases post-Coronavirus”

- 3.94 Just under 1 in 10 (8%) of the respondents commented about savings and efficiencies, with respondents particularly expressing their agreement with better prevention, education, and information, relating to safety talks and visits to houses and schools.

“I feel the fire department do an excellent job. I think the only way this can be improved would be if there was a mandatory fire and safety class given to everyone, which shows the importance and basics of how to deal with a fire – not just displays, but something the public and everyone takes part in and learns about”

“I am of the firm opinion that prevention is better than cure. This applies to precautions that can be taken in the home/business as well as statutory input into planning applications/building design. Instead of home visits, the ESFRS should consider holding public forums, for example, in Town Halls etc to get the message across. This has a twin benefit of building trust and confidence with the local community too”

- 3.95 A small proportion (5%) of respondents made supportive comments about the proposals:

“With less calls attended by the Fire Service year-on-year, vehicles are safer, building regs [are] stricter, and most homes [are] being fitted with smoke detection, these proposals do make sense”

“Ideally I would like to see funding increased, but given the political realities the proposals make sense”

“I support the proposals in principle and feel that they will provide a more efficient service”

3.96 There were also a range of ‘other’ comments that covered a diverse range of issues, and therefore are difficult to summarise. However, many referenced particular localities e.g. in terms of

The age of towns (with older towns like Rye and Hastings said to be at higher risk due to having narrower streets and more timber framed buildings),

The accident rates on local roads (e.g. A26 and A259),

Demographic considerations such as population growth (e.g. due to housebuilding) and the proportion of elderly people living locally in towns like Bexhill; and

Other factors such as the presence of the harbour, incinerator and swing bridge at Newhaven.

3.97 In relation to raising council tax, one respondent was sceptical as they thought any increase would mainly benefit the bigger towns (e.g. Brighton and Hastings) and not their local area (Seaford).

3.98 A few suggestions were made; for example, one respondent was broadly supportive of the proposals, but felt some further thought might be given to how they could be implemented:

“I support the proposals in principle and feel that they will provide a more efficient service, however I would urge the fire authority to consider slowing the introduction in day only and the removal of second appliances. The reason I request this is due to the difference of [the] impact from each individual station or appliance across the proposal, if a station such as Bexhill were to remain day crewed and keep the second appliance this would provide a lower impact on risk in that area”

3.99 Another respondent (a retired architect) felt the fire service should have a clearer role in approving new developments. Another wondered if ESFRS had taken enough account of the risk from arson, feeling this was by nature difficult to account for in the FRS’s planning and statistical modelling.

3.100 One retired firefighter who responded recalled attending numerous AFAs which had turned out to be genuine emergencies (including one case of an elderly man on fire) and expressed serious misgivings about ESFRS reducing attendance at these kinds of incident.

3.101 There were some differing points of view in relation to proposed changes to the wholetime duty system:

“The proposed changes to the wholetime duty system to a flexible rostering duty system is incredibly dangerous and absurd for a net release of just 5 posts. Dangerous because a watch who work together regularly will be a well-oiled, efficient and safer team on the fire ground”

“Changing WT duty system [is] seen as massively negative for firefighters & touted as not ‘family-friendly’. The reality is that many staff working the 2,2,4 system have second jobs, and the ‘family friendly’ bit is simply to disguise the fact that earnings from second jobs (which may be their main source of income) would clearly take a big hit... Current 2,2,4 too insular, stifles innovation and breeds all manner of ridiculousness”

3.102 It was also suggested that ESFRS consult with and learn from the experiences of Kent Fire and Rescue Service before making any changes to the retained system:

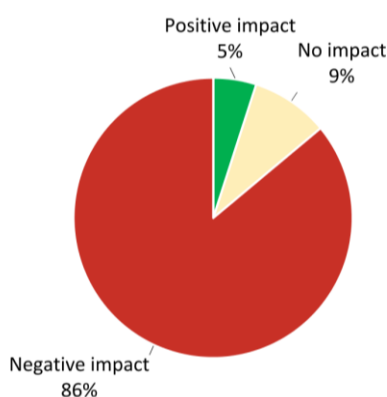
“Kent altered their retained system to the model East Sussex are proposing, this change had a massive negative effect on retained availability county wide. This was due to a mass exodus of retained personnel, I strongly suggest that East Sussex consult fully with KFRS and fully examine their retained appliance availability. It certainly doesn't make comfortable reading”

Equalities impacts

As public bodies, ESFRS have a duty to take into account the impact of their decisions on human rights, under the Human Rights Act 1998, and also on people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation).

Are there any positive or negative impacts from ESFRS that you believe should be taken into account? If so, are you able to provide any supporting evidence and suggest any ways to reduce or remove any potential negative impact and increase any positive impact?

Figure 20: Are there any positive or negative impacts from ESFRS that you believe should be taken into account?



Base (129 – Respondents who gave a suggestion)

3.103 When respondents were asked to offer any positive or negative impacts they believed should be taken into account, those who did simply used it as an opportunity to reiterate their views as previously expressed in other parts of the consultation. As a result, it is important to stress that the majority of the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ impacts shown in Figure 20 generally did not refer explicitly to human rights or any area of equality, but more often reflected respondents’ general views about the proposals.

3.104 Nonetheless, the occasional response did touch more upon equalities matters: for example, one respondent felt that rural communities, whose populations are generally older, were being treated unfairly compared to the towns. Another comment referenced the importance of considering school safety, with the implication that ESFRS might need to consider the potential impacts on younger people. One respondent also stated that ESFRS already provides ‘wonderful’ support to elderly and vulnerable people, and therefore should not be ‘meddled with’.

^{3.105}In addition, just under a tenth of those who commented did not feel the proposals would impact any particular groups.

Organisations in the consultation questionnaire

^{3.106}As outlined above, the response to the consultation included 10 questionnaires submitted on behalf of the following organisations:

Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism

Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Ewhurst Parish Council

Laughton Parish Council

Lewes Town Council

Newhaven Town Council

Transport Futures East Sussex (NGO)

WE Clark and Son: Jewellers – Lewes Ltd and Uckfield Ltd

Wealden Liberal Democrats

Wightman and Parrish Ltd

^{3.107}These responses are summarised below. Counts have been quoted rather than percentages due to the low number of submissions (i.e. 10 responses). Where the counts sum to fewer than 10, this is most likely due to the exclusion of 'don't know' responses, or to reflect where a question may have been left unanswered.

Proposal 1: Operational Response Review (ORR)

^{3.108}Of the 10 organisations responding to the questionnaire, 7 agreed with the proposal for ESFRS to increase the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day (from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines). No organisations disagreed, although there were 2 who expressed a neutral view (i.e. who neither agreed nor disagreed).

Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed fire stations

^{3.109}Only 1 organisation agreed with the proposal to change the crewing system from day-crewed to day-only at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield; however, 8 organisations disagreed. The remaining response was neutral.

^{3.110}In the event of the crewing system being changed at these stations, none of the organisations expressed a preference for Option A, while 7 stated a preference for Option B.

Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

^{3.111}The proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield stations was not supported by any of the organisations who responded to the questionnaire, with all 10 organisations disagreeing.

^{3.112}The proposal to re-classify the three "maxi-cab" stations (Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst) as single fire engine stations was agreed with by only 1 organisation, while 6 disagreed and 1 neither agreed nor disagreed.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

3.113 The proposal that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at the Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road was fairly widely supported by organisations: with 6 respondents agreeing and only 1 disagreeing with this suggestion, plus 1 who neither agreed nor disagreed.

Proposal 6: Demand management

3.114 The organisations who responded were split on the issue of whether ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial properties: 3 agreed, 3 disagreed and the remaining 4 were neutral (i.e. neither agreed nor disagreed).

3.115 In terms of whether ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts, 5 organisations agreed while 2 disagreed. 3 organisations neither agreed nor disagreed.

3.116 The proposal that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting prompted another split in opinion: 4 organisations agreed, while 4 disagreed and 2 were neutral.

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system

3.117 The proposal to change crewing arrangements at Bohemia Road, Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus and Roedean was supported by 4 organisations, while 2 disagreed, and 3 stated that they either neither agreed nor disagreed.

3.118 There was no real consensus among the organisations as to what the most appropriate crewing arrangements should be at these stations (in the event of them being changed): 3 organisations preferred Option A while another 3 organisations preferred Option B (with the remaining 4 answering 'don't know').

Other issues: Building and home inspections

3.119 The suggestion that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety was widely supported, with 8 organisations agreeing and none of them disagreeing (the remaining 2 organisations were neutral).

Other issues: Finances and investment

3.120 In relation to council tax, 7 of the 10 organisations indicated they would support some form of increase to support the fire and rescue service, while 2 disagreed.

3.121 Of the 7 organisations who indicated they would support an increase, 3 would support an increase of up to 3% while 2 would support a larger increase of more than 3%.

3.122 When asked to provide a view on whether ESFRS provides value for money, 5 organisations agreed that it does, while a further 4 were neutral. None of the organisations disagreed.

Other issues: ESFRS' purpose and commitments

3.123 Almost all of the organisations (9 out of 10) agreed that ESFRS's purpose and commitments are appropriate, with the remaining organisation stating that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Text comments made by organisations

- 3.124 Many of the comments submitted on behalf of organisations echoed points made by individual respondents. For example, some expressed concerns about one or more aspects of the proposals, or a view that current service levels need to be maintained in general.
- 3.125 In relation to how ESFRS could make savings and be more efficient in the future, many of the suggestions were again similar to those made elsewhere, and included:
- Increased prevention and education work e.g. safety talks and home and school visits;
 - Improved use of technology;
 - More joined up working with other agencies e.g. the Police, health, etc;
 - Increasing or introducing charges for certain types of callouts or inspections;
 - General efficiencies in terms of staffing levels, streamlining management etc;
 - Consideration of a merger with West Sussex FRS.
- 3.126 In the context of joined-up working, one respondent suggested expanding the role of ESFRS to take on some aspects of the paramedic role, as well as merging fire and ambulance services from Bexhill and Hastings into one 'super centre'.
- 3.127 Another respondent suggested that ESFRS could improve its efficiency by adapting its first response to make better use of smaller, quicker vehicles based on 4x4s as opposed to traditional fire engines, on the basis that: *"sending eight crew and a thousand gallons of water to every incident is not cost effective nor the appropriate response to every incident"*.
- 3.128 One organisation was concerned about the proposal that ESFRS should stop responding to birds trapped in netting, on two specific grounds: firstly, that failure to attend bird and animal rescues would contravene the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and secondly, that it would increase the likelihood of accidents resulting from people trying to rescue the birds themselves.
- 3.129 Another organisation suggested that ESFRS support local authority proposals to install bus lanes and promote sustainable forms of transport, in order to reduce traffic congestion and improve emergency response times. Other comments included suggestions to give ESFRS greater input into planning applications and increasing the use of barbecue disposal bins.

4. Telephone Residents' Survey

Introduction

- 4.1 The purpose of the telephone survey was to achieve a broadly representative sample of telephone interviews with residents of East Sussex and Brighton & Hove aged 16 and over. The survey was conducted using a quota sampling approach with targets set on the numbers of interviews required by age, gender, working status and district.
- 4.2 In total, ORS conducted 620 interviews with residents between 24th May and 19th June 2020, using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) methodology, with interviews conducted from ORS's social research call centre (interviewers were working from home as per the government guidelines). A short summary of the proposals was included to be 'read out' for each question within the survey, for the benefit of respondents who had not had the opportunity to read the consultation document or to otherwise find out about the proposals¹⁸.

Respondent profile

- 4.3 The extent to which results can be generalised from a sample depends on how well the sample represents the population from which it is drawn, as different types of people may be more or less likely to take part. As previously mentioned, such 'response bias' is corrected by statistical weighting based on a comparison of the demographic characteristics of the respondents with data for the whole population.
- 4.4 In order to better understand how views differ between areas, equal numbers of interviews were targeted in each of the six districts; this was then taken into account in the weighting process, to give each district a proportional influence on the overall result relative to the size of its population. The remaining quotas (i.e. those for age, gender and working status) were designed to be representative of the overall population of East Sussex and Brighton & Hove, based on the most recent available secondary data.
- 4.5 Once weighted, the survey results at an overall level are broadly representative of the overall population of the six districts of East Sussex, and they provide a statistically reliable guide to opinions on the proposals to within around +/- 5 percentage points at the overall level (depending on the exact sample sizes and opinion splits on particular questions).
- 4.6 Tables on the following page show the weighted and unweighted profiles of respondents to the survey.

¹⁸These summaries have been included in this chapter ahead of the survey results.

Table 9: Telephone survey responses by area (unweighted and weighted)

District	Total responses (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (weighted valid)
Brighton and Hove	110	18	35
Lewes	101	16	12
Eastbourne	101	16	12
Wealden	108	17	19
Hastings	100	16	11
Rother	100	16	12
Total	620	100	100

Table 10: Telephone survey responses by age (unweighted and weighted)

Age	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)	% of respondents (weighted valid)
16-24	69	11	14
25-34	106	17	15
35-54	168	27	30
55-64	106	17	16
65-74	105	17	13
75+	66	11	12
Total	620	100	100

Table 11: Telephone survey responses by gender (unweighted and weighted)

Gender	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)	% of respondents (weighted valid)
Male	283	46	48
Female	337	54	52
Total	620	100	100

Table 12: Telephone responses by working status (unweighted and weighted)

Working status	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)	% of respondents (weighted valid)
Working	354	57	58
Retired	166	27	27
Otherwise not working	100	16	15
Total	620	100	100

Table 13: Telephone responses by ethnicity (unweighted and weighted)

Ethnic group	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)	% of respondents (weighted valid)
White British	563	94	88
Not white British	35	6	12
Not Known	22	-	-
Total	620	100	100

Table 14: Telephone responses by disability (unweighted and weighted)

Disability	Number of respondents (unweighted count)	% of respondents (unweighted valid)	% of respondents (weighted valid)
Yes	88	14	14
No	522	86	86
Not Known	10	-	-
Total	620	100	100

Main Findings

Proposal 1: Operational Response Review (ORR)

For proposal 1, ESFRS – East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service – plans to improve its resilience by:

Increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of each day from 15 to 18 – these are fire engines that are immediately available 24/7; and

Providing a further 6 fire engines for added resilience, though these may not be immediately available.

The data shows that this change would increase the number of incidents reached within ESFRS' attendance standards.

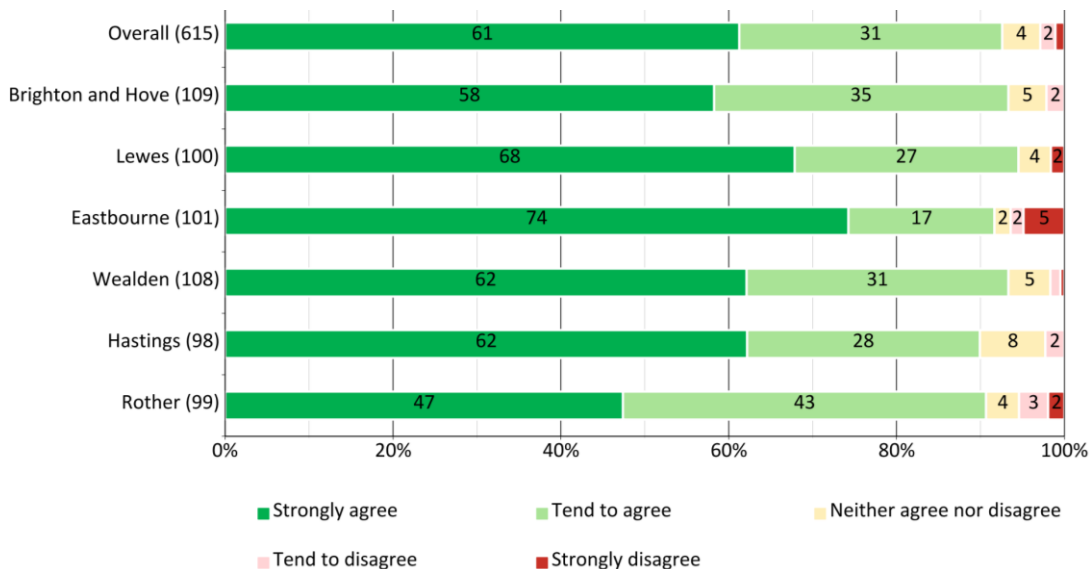
To support these new arrangements, the Fire Service is proposing two new approaches:

1. A 'flexible crewing pool', which is made up of firefighters who will be posted to stations as needed, in order to cover for staff absences; and

2. A guaranteed monthly salary for on-call firefighters to improve their availability – they are currently paid a small retaining fee, but most of their pay comes from attending calls. These have reduced a lot, which has led to problems finding enough people to keep fire engines available.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines?

Figure 21 :To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines?



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.7 Figure 21 shows that, overall, the vast majority (93%) of residents agreed with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has at the start of the day from 15 to 18. Around three fifths (61%) strongly agreed.
- 4.8 In all districts, the vast majority of residents were in favour of increasing the number of fire engines available at the start of each day. The highest proportion of residents in agreement was in Lewes (95%), followed by Brighton & Hove and Wealden (both 93%). There were similar proportions of agreement in Eastbourne (92%), Rother (91%) and Hastings (90%).
- 4.9 Overall, less than 1 in 20 (3%) residents disagreed with increasing the number of immediate fire engines.
- 4.10 In Eastbourne, around 1 in 20 (6%) residents disagreed with the proposal, as did a similar proportion in Rother (5%). Only 1 in every 50 (2%) residents in Brighton & Hove, Lewes, Wealden, and Hastings disagreed with the proposal.
- 4.11 There were no significant differences in levels of agreement nor disagreement in any district for this proposal.

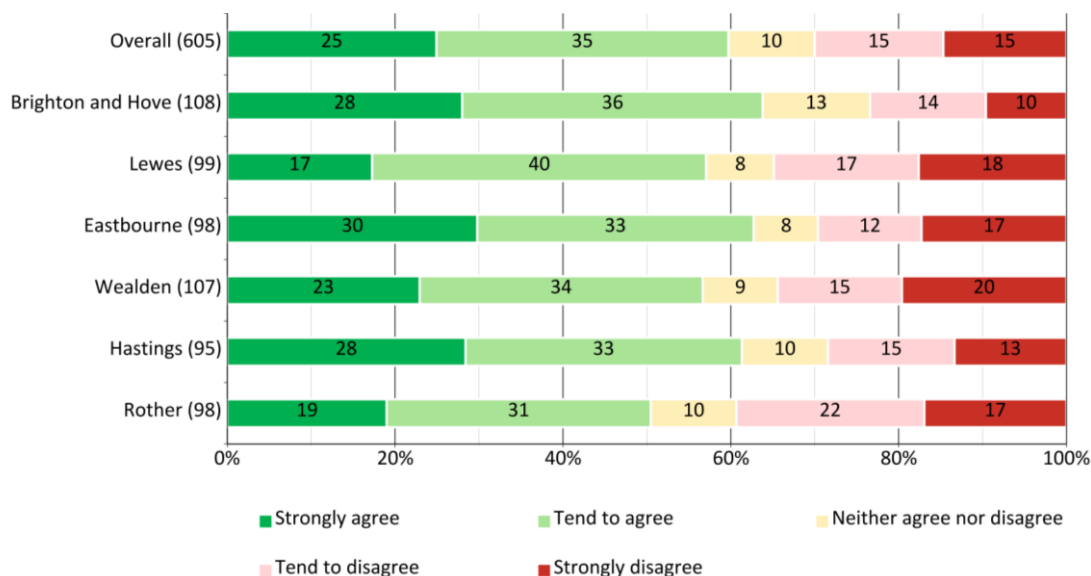
Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed fire stations

*For proposal 2, the Fire Service proposes to **introduce “day-only” crewing** at the stations in Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield which are currently “day-crewed”.*

This would mean that full-time firefighters would be on-station during the daytime from Monday to Friday, with on-call firefighters providing cover during the evening, overnight and at weekends. The key change is that full-time staff are not required to provide extra on-call cover during the evening, overnight and at weekends as they were previously. This cover would be provided by dedicated on-call staff only.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in training and prevention and protection teams?

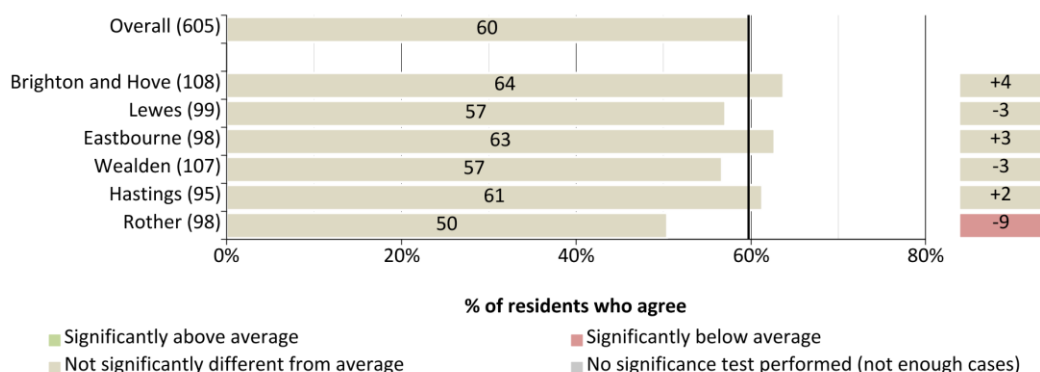
Figure 22: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in training and prevention and protection work?



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.12 Figure 22 shows that, overall, three fifths (60%) of residents agreed with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield. A quarter (25%) strongly agreed.
- 4.13 The districts with the highest proportion of agreement – with more than two thirds of residents agreeing – were Brighton and Hove with 64%, Eastbourne with 63% and Hastings with 61%.
- 4.14 Less than two thirds (57%) of residents in both Lewes and Wealden agreed with proposal 2, and only half of residents in Rother did so.
- 4.15 Overall, less than a third (30%) of residents disagreed with proposal 2, with only (15%) strongly disagreeing.
- 4.16 The highest level of disagreement was in Rother at 39%, which is significantly more than average. Over a third of residents in Lewes (35%) and Wealden (34%) disagreed with the proposal, whilst less than one third of residents living in Eastbourne (30%), and in Hastings (28%) did so. Less than a quarter of residents living in Brighton & Hove (23%) disagreed.

Figure 23: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

4.17 Figure 23 shows that residents living in Rother are significantly less likely to agree with changing the crewing system from ‘day-crewed’ to ‘day-only’ at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield, when compared to the districts overall.

Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

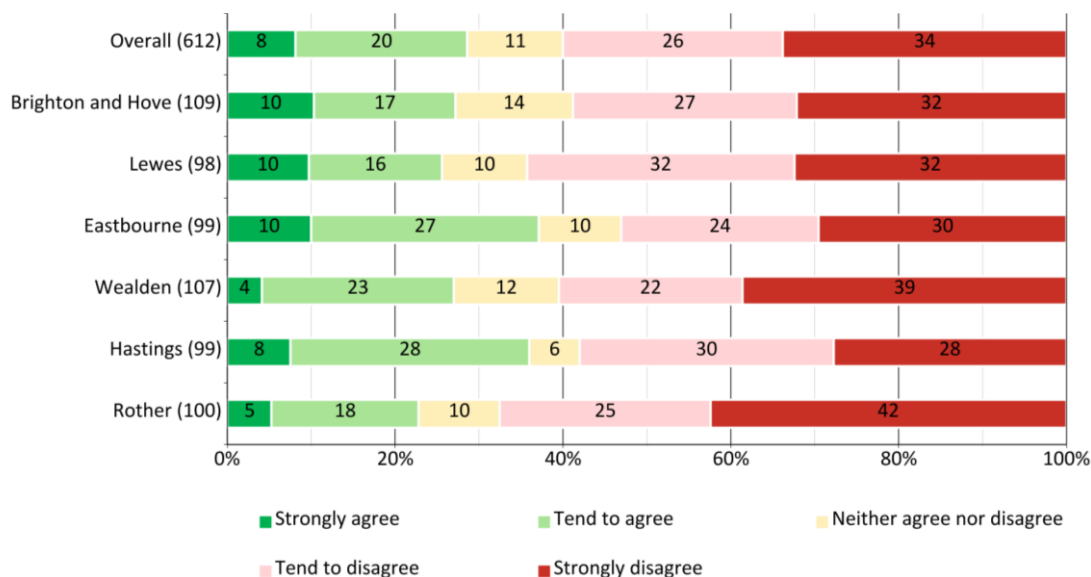
Proposal 3 is about changing the number of Fire Stations that currently have 2 fire engines.

Currently, 9 of the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service’s 24 fire stations have two fire engines. Data shows that the second fire engines at day-crewed and on-call stations are not needed, as three-quarters (75%) of all calls in these fire station areas are dealt with by one fire engine.

*So, ESFRS proposes to **remove the second fire engines** from the following stations: Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield. The on-call crews of these engines would be used to crew the remaining fire engine at these stations in the evenings, overnight and at weekends.*

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations?

Figure 24: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations?



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.18 Figure 24 shows that, overall, just less than a third (27%) of residents agreed with the proposal to remove the second fire engine from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations.
- 4.19 The districts of Eastbourne and Hastings had the highest levels of agreement with proposal 3, at 36% and 37%, respectively. Just over a quarter of residents living in Brighton & Hove (27%), Lewes (26%) and Wealden (27%) agreed, whilst less than a quarter (23%) in Rother did so.
- 4.20 Overall, three fifths (60%) of residents disagreed with the proposal to remove the second fire engine from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations, whilst around one third (34%) strongly disagreed.
- 4.21 More than two thirds of residents in Rother (68%), and three fifths in Lewes (64%) disagreed with proposal 3. Just under two thirds of residents in Wealden (60%), Brighton & Hove (59%) and Hastings (58%) disagreed, whilst 53% of residents in Eastbourne did so.
- 4.22 There were no significant differences in levels of agreement or disagreement in any district.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

Proposal 4 is about crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings.

Currently, both of Hastings' fire stations, which are at Bohemia Road and The Ridge, have one immediate response fire engine, which is available 24/7. However, data shows that Bohemia Road has a much higher risk profile than The Ridge – and that The Ridge's fire engine attends more incidents in Bohemia Road than it does in its own area.

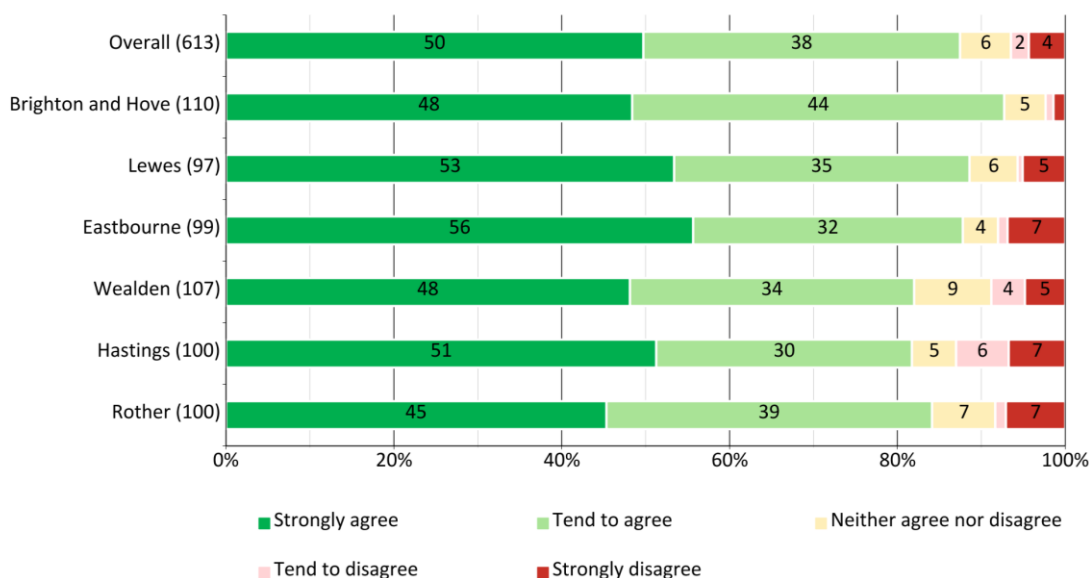
Therefore, the proposal aims to rebalance fire cover across both station areas by:

Introducing day-crewing at The Ridge, so a fire engine would be immediately available during the day, and on-call during the evening and overnight; and

Introducing a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road?

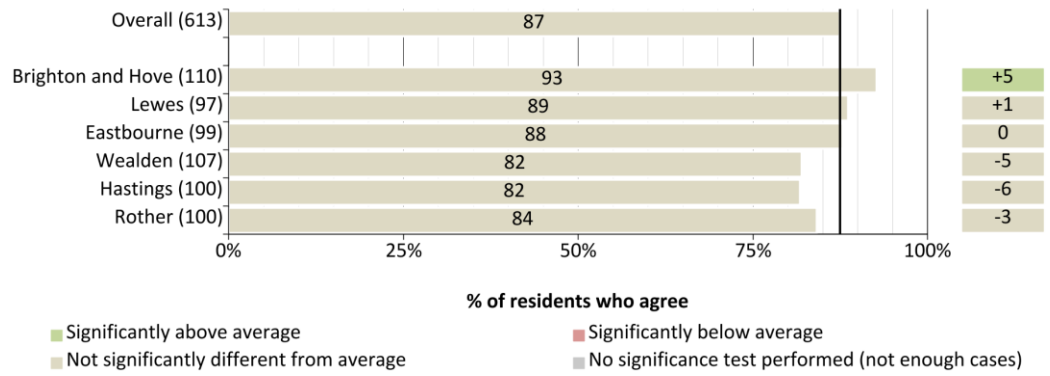
Figure 25: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road?



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.23 Figure 25 shows that, overall, nearly 9 in 10 (87%) residents agreed with the proposal to introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road. Exactly half (50%) strongly agreed.
- 4.24 Brighton & Hove had the highest proportion of residents in agreement (93%) with proposal 3. Almost 9 in 10 of residents in Lewes (89%) and Eastbourne (88%) agreed with the proposal, whilst more than four fifths of residents in Rother (84%), Wealden (82%), and Hastings (82%) did so.
- 4.25 Overall, less than 1 in 10 (6%) of residents disagreed with the proposal to introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road.
- 4.26 Around one eighth (13%) of residents in Hastings disagreed with the proposal, which is significantly more than the overall average. Less than one in 10 residents in Wealden (9%), Eastbourne (8%), Rother (8%) and Lewes (6%) disagreed – as did less than 1 in 20 (2%) residents in Brighton & Hove, which is significantly less than the average.

Figure 26: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road? (Grouped Responses by district)



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

4.27 Figure 26 shows that residents living in Brighton & Hove were significantly more likely to agree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road, when compared to the districts overall.

Proposal 6: Demand Management¹⁹

For proposal 6, the Fire and Rescue Service is aiming to manage demand for its services in three ways to reduce the impact on its other work. It proposes to:

No longer automatically attend calls to Automatic Fire Alarms in low-risk commercial premises.
These account for one third (32%) of all incidents, but 96% are false alarms;

Delay responding to release people from lifts, if the people are not vulnerable or in distress. *This is to give building owners – who are responsible for broken lifts – time to resolve the issue; and*

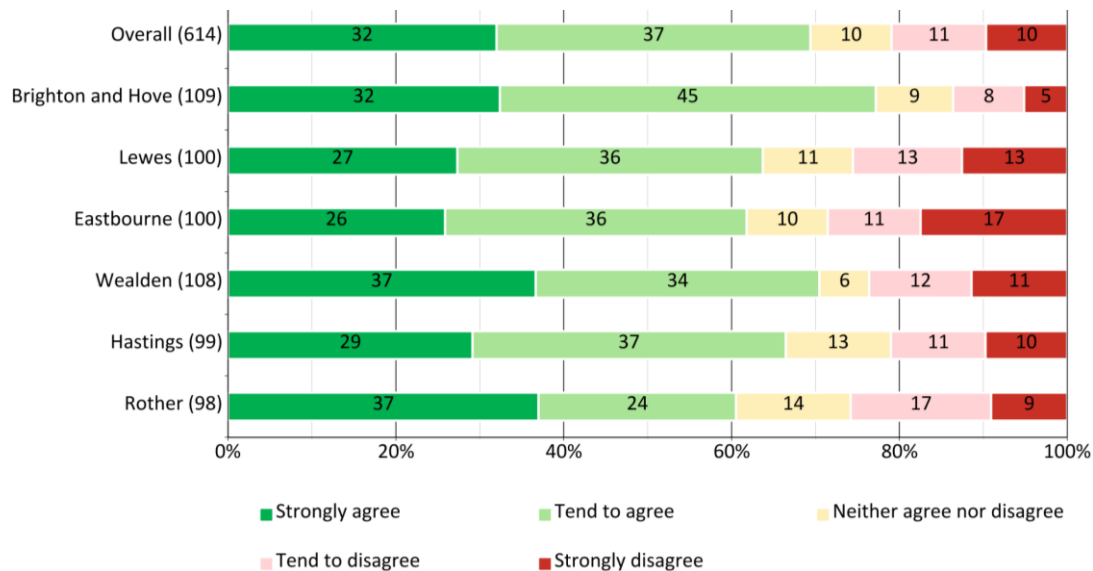
No longer attend to birds trapped in netting, *as this can tie-up resources and often needs expensive specialist equipment.*

These three types of incidents are low-risk, and these proposed changes would release capacity into fire prevention, protection and training.

¹⁹Proposal 5 was not consulted on as it relates to internal operational matters and therefore there were no resulting questions.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should stop attending these calls in order to release capacity for fire prevention, protection and training?

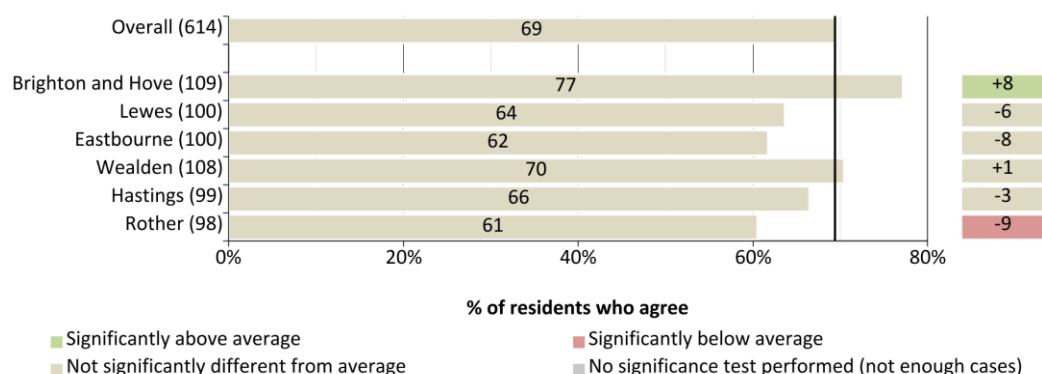
Figure 27: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should stop attending to certain calls in order to release capacity for fire prevention, protection and training?



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.28 Figure 5 shows that, overall, more than two thirds (69%) of residents agreed that ESFRS should stop attending Automatic Fire Alarm activations in low-risk commercial premises, delay responding to release people from lifts if the people are not vulnerable or in distress, and no longer attend to birds trapped in netting. Around one third (32%) of residents strongly agreed with the proposal.
- 4.29 More than three quarters (77%) of residents in Brighton & Hove agreed with the proposal to stop attending certain calls, whilst 70% of residents in Wealden agreed. Two thirds (66%) of residents in Hastings agreed with the proposal, whilst less than two thirds of residents in Lewes (64%), Eastbourne (62%) and Rother (61%) did so.
- 4.30 Overall, around one fifth (21%) of residents disagreed that ESFRS should stop attending certain types of calls, with 1 in 10 (10%) strongly disagreeing.
- 4.31 More than a quarter of residents in Eastbourne (29%), Lewes (26%) and Rother (26%) disagreed that ESFRS should stop attending certain types of calls, whilst just under a quarter (24%) of residents in Wealden did so. Around 1 in 5 (21%) of residents in Hastings disagreed, along with just over 1 in 8 (14%) residents in Brighton & Hove, which is significantly less than the average.

Figure 28: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should stop attending to these calls in order to release capacity for fire prevention, protection and training? (Grouped Responses by district)



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.32 Figure 28 shows that residents living in Brighton & Hove are significantly more likely to agree that the ESFRS should stop attending certain calls in order to release capacity for fire prevention, protection and training, whilst residents living in Rother are significantly less likely to agree with this proposal, when compared to the districts overall.

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system

*Proposal 7 is about **changing the way the Fire Stations at Bohemia Road, which is in Hastings, Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus, which is in Brighton, and Roedean, also in Brighton, provide a 24/7 response.***

The current full-time duty system requires a firefighter to work 2 day-shifts, followed by 2 night-shifts, then followed by 4 days off. ESFRS believes there are more efficient alternatives now available that do not affect response levels.

Two options are:

Option A: a “Flexible Rostering Duty System” at all 5 fire stations just mentioned.

In this option, one team of firefighters plan their shifts between them in advance, to ensure the fire engines at their stations are always available. This system would result in a reduction of 5 posts, which could be used for prevention, protection, training or the flexible crewing pool.

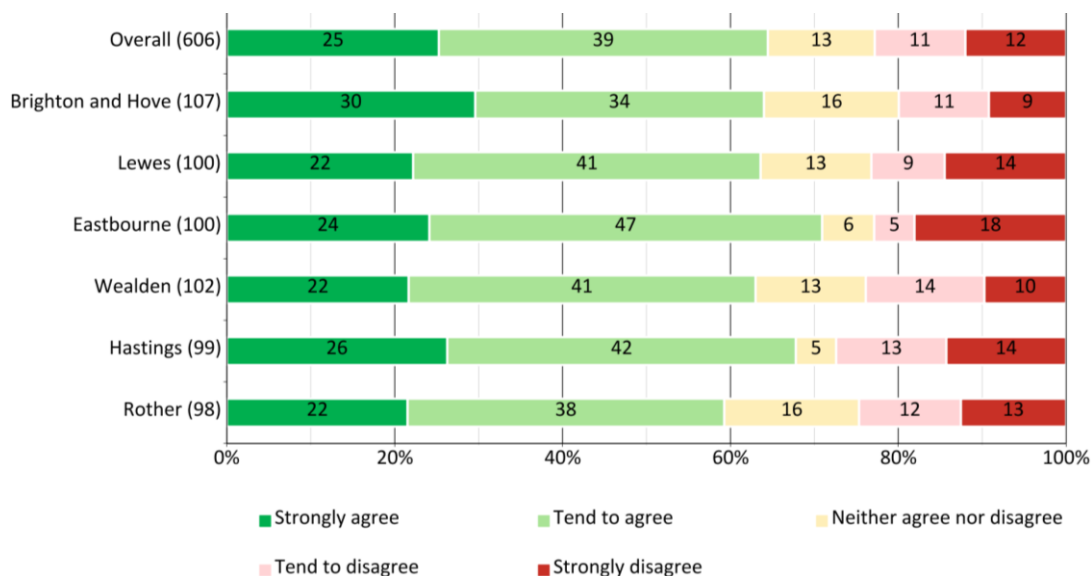
Option B: a “Group Crewing Duty System” ONLY at Preston Circus, Hove and Roedean

“Group crewing” means that resources are used flexibly between a “group” of stations – with one or more stations supporting the others in the “group” to cover sickness, holiday and other absence. This option would result in a net reduction of 4 posts, which could be used for prevention, protection, training, or the flexible crewing pool.

Both options allow the Service to maintain its 24/7 immediate response and attendance standards.

In principle, do you agree/disagree with ESFRS looking at ways to change its 24/7 crewing arrangements – either through “flexible rostering” at Bohemia Road, Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus and Roedean, or “group crewing” at Preston Circus, Hove and Roedean?

Figure 29: In principle, do you agree/disagree with ESFRS looking at ways to change its 24/7 crewing arrangements – either through “flexible rostering” at Bohemia Road, Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus and Roedean, or “group crewing” at Preston Circus, Hove and Roedean?



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

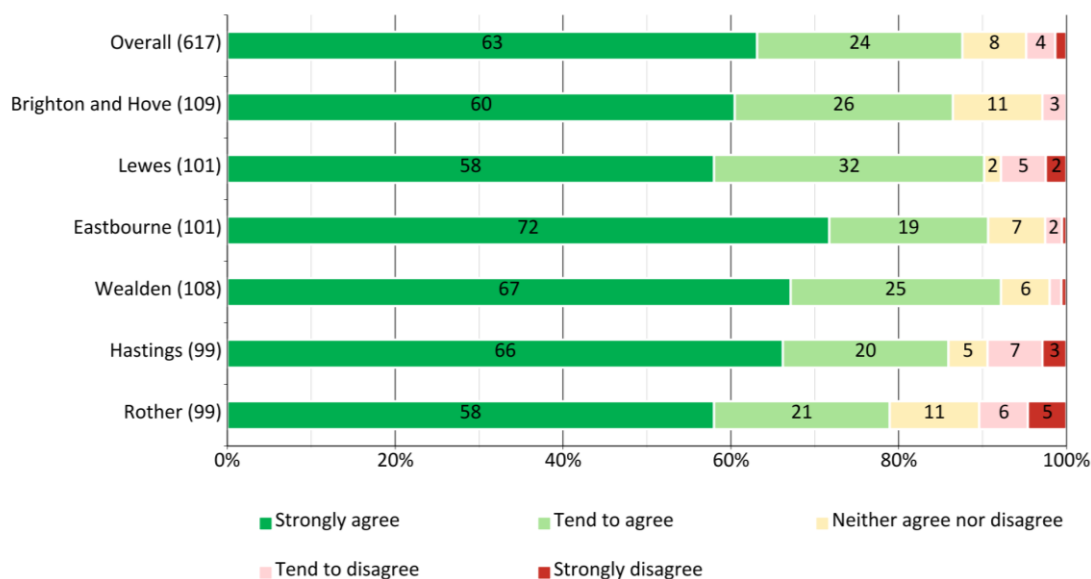
- 4.33 Figure 29 shows that, overall, just under two thirds (64%) of residents agreed with the proposal for ESFRS to look at ways to change its 24/7 crewing arrangements – either through “flexible rostering” at Bohemia Road, Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus and Roedean, or “group crewing” at Preston Circus, Hove and Roedean. One quarter (25%) of residents strongly agreed.
- 4.34 Around 5 in 7 (71%) residents in Eastbourne agreed with the proposal to look at ways for ESFRS to change its 24/7 crewing arrangements, as did more than two thirds (68%) of Hastings residents.
- 4.35 Overall, more than 1 in 5 (23%) residents disagreed with the proposal for ESFRS to look at ways to change its 24/7 crewing arrangements, whilst around one eighth (12%) of residents strongly disagreed.
- 4.36 More than a quarter (27%) of residents in Hastings disagreed, as did exactly a quarter (25%) of residents in Rother. Less than a quarter of residents living in Wealden (24%), Eastbourne (23%) and Lewes (23%) disagreed, whilst exactly 1 in 5 (20%) of residents in Brighton and Hove did so.
- 4.37 There were no significant differences in levels of agreement or disagreement in any district.

Other issues: Building and home inspections

The Fire and Rescue Service wants to ensure buildings are safe and fires are prevented. By reviewing its response models, the Fire and Rescue Service will release resources for more prevention work, and more building inspections and visits.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety?

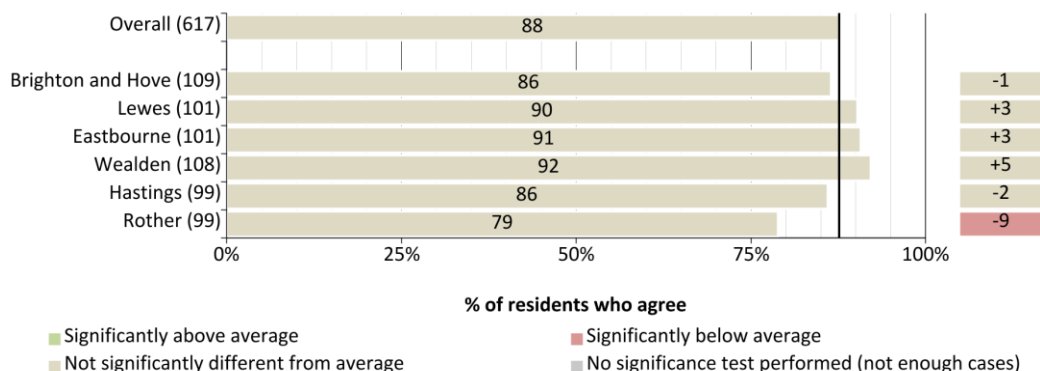
Figure 30: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety?



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.38 Figure 30 shows that, overall, around 9 in 10 (88%) residents agreed that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety. More than three fifths (63%) strongly agreed.
- 4.39 Around 9 in 10 residents in Wealden (92%), Eastbourne (91%) and Lewes (90%) agreed with more building and home inspections to help reduce fire risk. More than 4 in 5 (86%) residents in both Brighton & Hove and in Hastings agreed, whilst just under 4 in 5 (79%) residents in Rother did so.
- 4.40 Overall, just 1 in 20 (5%) residents disagreed that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety.
- 4.41 In Rother, 1 in 10 (10%) residents disagreed that more building and home inspections would be a positive way to help reduce fire risk, which is significantly more than the average. Less than 1 in 10 residents in Hastings (9%) and Lewes (8%) disagreed – as did very low numbers in Brighton & Hove (3%), Eastbourne (3%) and Wealden (2%).

Figure 31: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety? (Grouped Responses by district)



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

4.42 Figure 31 shows that residents living in Rother are significantly less likely to agree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety, when compared to the districts overall.

Other issues: Finances and investment

Another key area of focus for the Fire Service is its finances in the future.

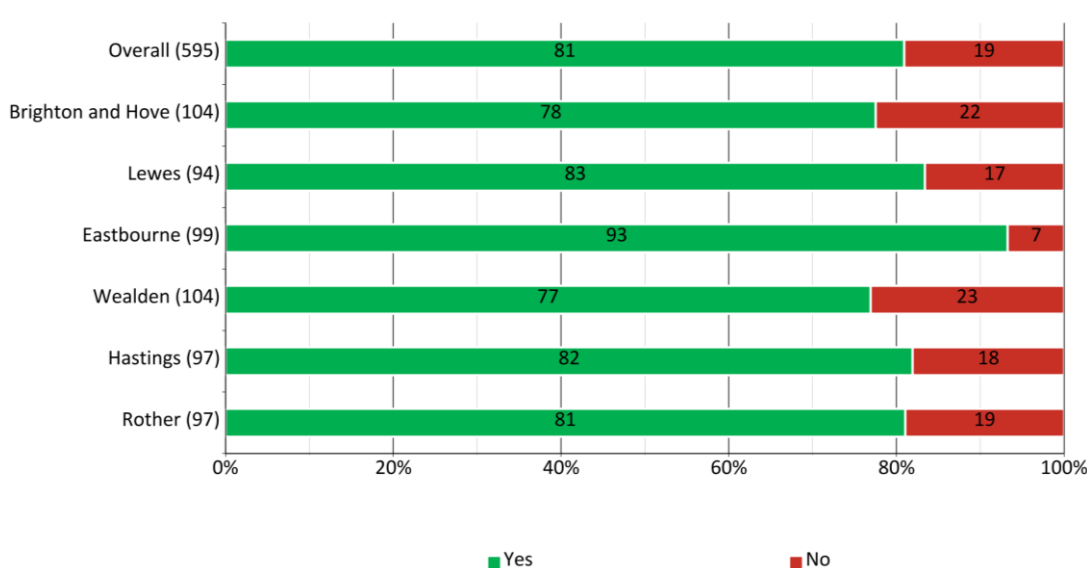
The Service’s revenue budget for 2020/21 is £39.7m. Over three-quarters of the budget is spent on employees, mainly firefighters.

Due to expected funding cuts, the Fire Service believes new savings of between £0.7m and £3.5m will be needed in the next 5 years, on top of already planned savings (of £9.8m), to balance its budget.

Since 2010/11, the Service has become much more dependent on the income it receives from council tax as government grants have reduced. Currently, the average household in the area pays £95.53 per year for their fire service, which is £1.84 per week for a Band D property.

Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22)?

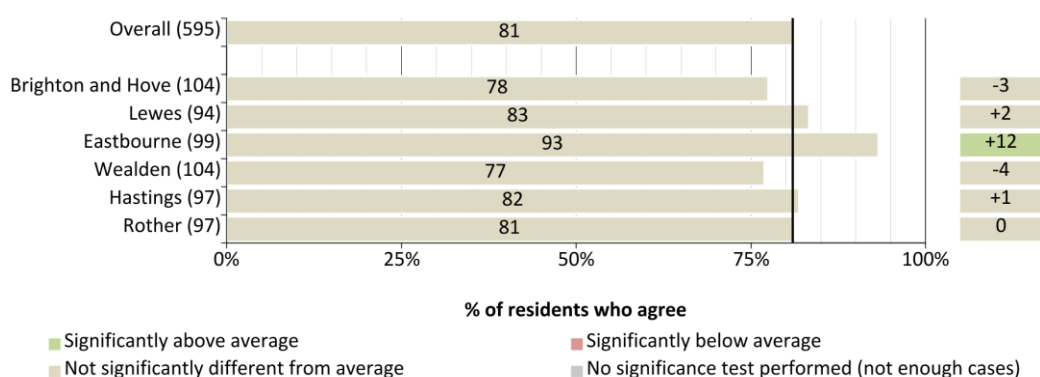
Figure 32: Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year – 2021/22?



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.43 Figure 32 shows that, overall, around 4 in 5 (81%) residents would be willing to pay more in council tax for their local fire and rescue service next year.
- 4.44 The district with highest levels of agreement – with more than 9 in 10 (93%) in favour of paying more council tax – was Eastbourne. Just over four fifths of residents in Lewes (83%), Hastings (82%) and Rother (81%) were prepared to pay more, while less than four fifths of residents in Brighton & Hove (78%) and Wealden (77%) were.

Figure 33: Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year - 2021/22?

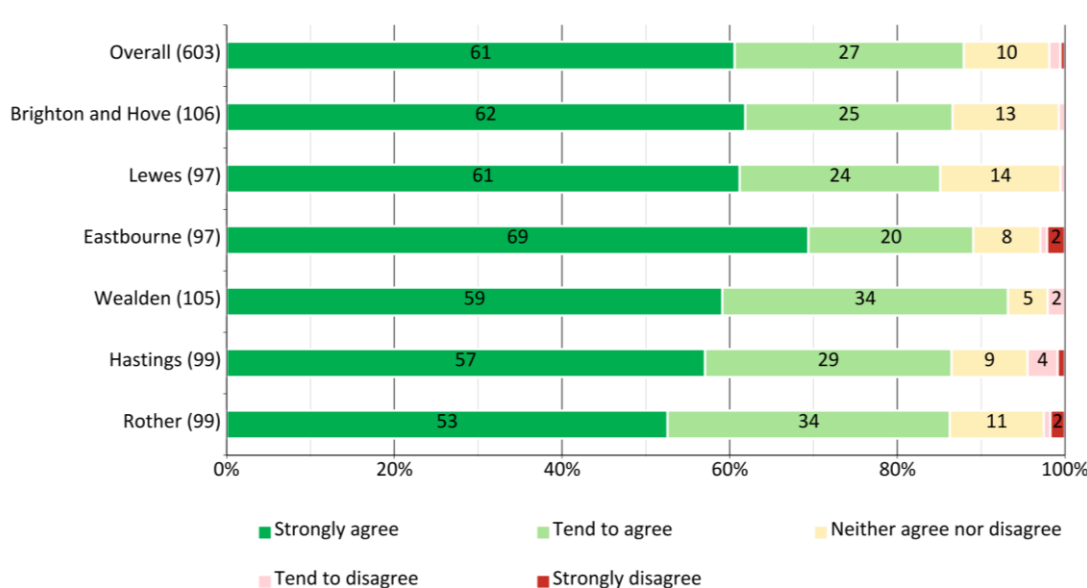


Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.45 Figure 33 shows that residents living in Eastbourne were significantly more likely to be willing to pay more in council tax for their local fire and rescue service next year, when compared to the districts overall.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service offers value for money?

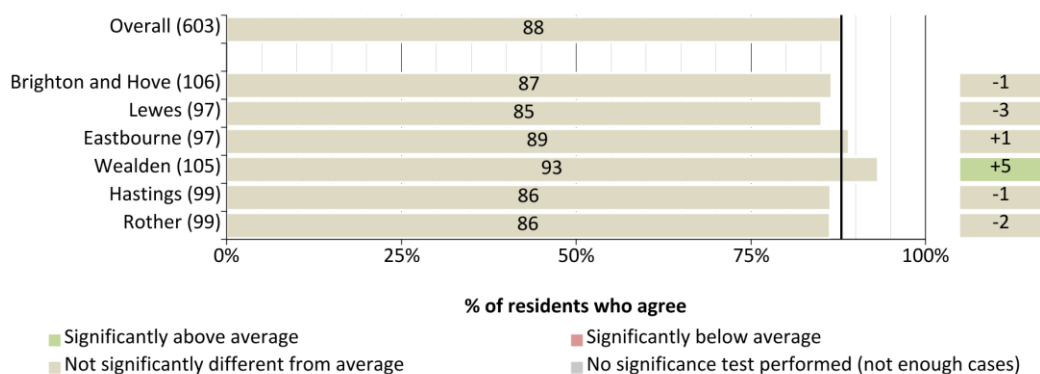
Figure 34: To what extent do you agree or disagree that ESFRS offers value for money?



Base: (Number shown in brackets)

- 4.46 Figure 34 shows that, overall, almost 9 in 10 (88%) residents agreed that ESFRS offers value for money, with around three fifths (61%) strongly agreeing.
- 4.47 The district with the highest proportion of residents (93%) who agreed that ESFRS offers value for money was Wealden, whilst just under 9 in 10 residents in both Eastbourne (89%) and Brighton & Hove (87%) did so. More than 4 in 5 residents in Hastings (86%), Rother (86%) and Lewes (85%) agreed that the ESFRS offers value for money.
- 4.48 Overall, only 1 in 50 (2%) residents disagreed that ESFRS offers value for money.
- 4.49 Less than 1 in 20 residents living in Hastings (4%), Eastbourne (3%) and Rother (3%) disagreed that ESFRS offers value for money, whilst 1 in 50 or fewer residents living in Wealden (2%), Brighton and Hove and Lewes (2%) disagreed.

Figure 35: To what extent do you agree or disagree that ESFRS offers value for money? (Grouped Responses by district)

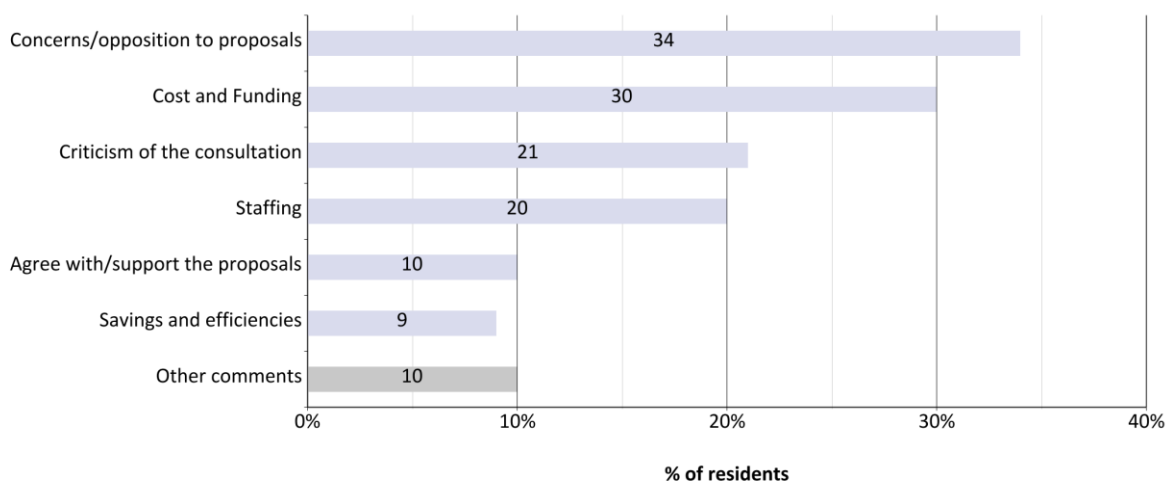


Base: (Number shown in brackets)

4.50 Figure 35 shows that residents living in Wealden are significantly more likely than average to agree that ESFRS offers value for money, compared to residents overall.

Further comments

Figure 36: Do you have any further comments you would like to make about any of the proposals we've just talked about?



Base: (195 – Residents who gave an additional comment (195))

- 4.51 Figure 36 shows that, of the 195 residents who gave a further comment, around one third (34%) expressed concerns about or opposed the proposals – saying, for example, that they would prefer to keep things as they are and maintain the current provision of ESFRS services.
- 4.52 Just under a third (30%) expressed concerns directly relating to the future cost and funding of ESFRS. For example, some felt they already pay high amounts of council tax, or that the future service should be provided at the same rate of tax. Other residents stressed the importance of funding for ESFRS being increased by central government.
- 4.53 Around 1 in 5 (21%) residents who made a further comment criticised the consultation process. For instance, some residents felt that not enough information was available to them to make an informed decision, whilst others felt that the decisions to implement the proposals had, effectively, already been made and that the consultation was simply a “tick-box” exercise.
- 4.54 One fifth (20%) of residents who gave a further comment mentioned staffing. Frequent comments praised firefighters for doing a “great job”, whilst some suggested the need for a better recruitment process, as well as better pay and conditions for on-call staff.
- 4.55 One in ten (10%) of the residents who gave an additional comment expressed general agreement with the proposals, whilst just under 1 in 10 (9%) made suggestions about savings and efficiencies, such as having continuous and regular reviews of working practices.
- 4.56 Other comments (10%) included residents feeling that they were not well versed enough about ESFRS and fire and rescue services generally, and that the proposals were too technical to understand as a layperson.






5. Focus Groups and Stakeholder Webinar

Introduction

- 5.1 This chapter reports the views from the six online focus groups and depth interviews with members of the public and the stakeholder webinar²⁰ (and includes the slides used during all sessions to outline the proposals).
- 5.2 The report has been structured to address each of the areas of discussion in some detail. The views of the six meetings and interviews with 40 members of the public have been merged to give an overall report of findings, rather than six separate and potentially repetitive mini-reports - but significant differences in views have been drawn out where appropriate. A number of polls were undertaken during the sessions whereby people were invited to give their views on the main consultation questions: these have been reported first, followed by the questions and comments raised in discussion
- 5.3 The stakeholder webinar has been reported separately. As at the public groups, a number of polls were undertaken during the session whereby the 38 attendees were invited to give their views on the main consultation questions: these have been reported first, followed by the questions and comments raised in the online chat and Q&A functions.
- 5.4 All participants were encouraged to express their opinions freely and to ask questions throughout, and all the meetings were successful in stimulating wide-ranging and informed debate on the issues under consideration.

Main findings

Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP)

Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP)	Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP)
<p><i>ESFRS plans to increase the number of core fire engines available at the start of the day from 15 to 18</i></p>	<p><i>ESFRS plans to increase the number of core fire engines available at the start of the day from 15 to 18</i></p>
<p>Current</p> <p> 15 x core fire engines available at start of day</p> <p>Planned</p> <p> 18 x core fire engines available at start of day</p> <p>+ a further 6 fire engines for resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not as busy/don't cover such high-risk areas - Will respond to incidents (to support high demand and at longer incidents), but allowed longer to do so if needed → more flexibility for on-call staff 	<p>Benefits to the community if ORP successfully implemented...</p> <p> 99% of high-risk dwellings covered (up from 93%)</p> <p> 93% of all incidents within attendance standards (up from 81%)</p> <p><small>*Attendance standards are the time between when a call is received to the first fire engine arriving at the incident: an 'on-station' response should be within 10 minutes 70% of the time; an 'on-call' response should be within 15 minutes 70% of the time</small></p> <p> 92% of all households covered (up from 80%)</p> <p>92% of population + 92% of over 80s population covered (both up from 75%)</p>

²⁰The full list of questions, answers and comments from the stakeholder webinar can be found in Appendix 1. Answers were supplied by ESFRS both during and after the session.

Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP)

2 new approaches to support this...

'Flexible crewing pool' to improve workforce flexibility/availability

- Firefighters posted to stations as necessary to cover for absences due to sickness, training etc.
- Widely used across other UK FRSs

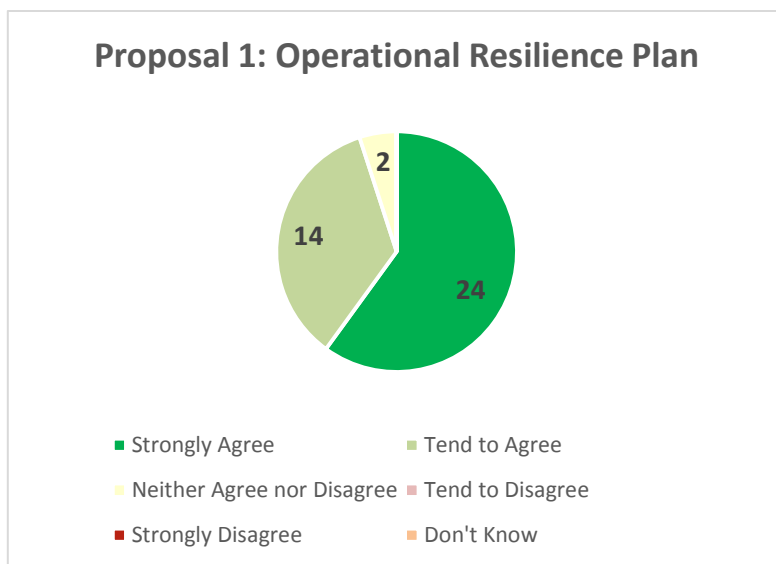
New contracts for on-call firefighters to enhance their availability

- On-call firefighters are currently paid a small retaining fee...
- ...but the majority of their pay comes from attending emergency calls
- Number of calls is much reduced → firefighters provide cover for long periods of time but with less financial reward
- Has led to problems finding and retaining enough on-call staff to keep fire engines available to respond
- New contracts would guarantee monthly income and ensure cover is given when needed to keep fire engines available

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 5.5 24 of the 40 public focus group attendees strongly agreed with the proposed ORP, 14 tended to agree and two neither agreed nor disagreed. No-one opposed the Plan.
- 5.6 It is worth noting here that due to the interdependencies between Proposal's 1 and 2 (that is, the former cannot be achieved without implementing the latter), participants were asked to cast their 'votes' after being given the background information on both, rather than take them in isolation. This ensured they were fully informed that increasing the number of 'core' fire engines available at the start of each day would only be possible by making changes elsewhere in the Service, and primarily by introducing a day-only duty system at ESFRS' current day-crewed stations.

Figure 37: To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines? Public focus group/depth interview result²¹



- 5.7 In discussion, the ORP was considered on its own merit and generally supported as a means of increasing the number of fire engines guaranteed to be available at the start of each day, of improving coverage across the

²¹Due to the low numbers, the figures used in this chart and all others that follow in this chapter use counts rather than percentages.

city and county, and of introducing a necessary degree of flexibility to the Service overall through the introduction of the resilience appliances.

“You are hitting 90’s and high 90’s with it so it’s obviously good for coverage. In terms of someone who you might not have been able to get to before, they can feel a bit more rest assured that they will be attended to” (Brighton & Hove)

“I think it does seem like a very efficient and effective way of dealing with operational things ... and the percentage increase I thought it was very impressive” (Rother)

“I know you say that for a fire engine to go out it needs four of the crew, but sometimes it needs more; bigger fires more crew. So, I think that if we can have more definitely available for the safety of everyone that’d be a massive benefit” (Wealden)

“Seems to me like, on a simple level, a good thing to have more fire engines available” (Lewes)

“I think the proposal is a great proposal, with adding on more fire engines ... going from having only 15 to 18 and having four of those on call, obviously that’s going to help with keeping different people and environments safe” (Hastings)

“I like the idea of having these resilience engines as back-up ... So, the initial appliance can start taking control of the incident, and yet they’ve got a support coming even though it’s a little bit late. I thought that was a really good, sensible idea” (Lewes)

- 5.8 People were also pleased to see the commitment of on-call firefighters being better recognised and “valued” through salaried contracts, which they also suggested would aid both recruitment and retention in light of reduced incidents and thus (under the current system) reduced pay.

“Firefighters need to be contracted. They need to be on a PAYE format which this new proposal seems to seek which is good. I don’t agree with how that’s set up currently; I don’t agree with that sort of format and to only pay a small retaining fee is absolutely awful ... The proposal is a lot more fitting for today’s society, I think allowing them to be contracted is a positive step” (Brighton & Hove)

“I think looking at the new proposals potentially firefighters are being valued a lot more because certainly by the old contract they weren’t valued at all” (Brighton & Hove)

“I think that retaining the firefighters with a better income is a good idea because it would be very difficult for people to remain committed if they don’t have a steady income stream” (Eastbourne)

“It could be quite hard to recruit people on the current standpoint because they don’t get paid that much; they’re just on-call” (Wealden)

“In Mayfield they don’t have many fire calls, they have a reduced rate as it stands, and they want to change that to make it across the board it’s the same rate. Well that seems a lot fairer” (Eastbourne)

- 5.9 Despite the general positivity about the ORP, there were concerns around: potential on-call recruitment difficulties and whether the proposed salaried contracts would be sufficiently attractive to overcome these; the potentially detrimental impact of the more ad-hoc ‘flexible crewing pool’ on team cohesion; and whether

the delayed turn-out time for the resilience appliances will work in practice given the reductions being made in some areas of the Service.

"I'm just wondering how confident you are that the new contracts you offer will be enticing enough to bring more people forward. And what happens if it doesn't?" (Lewes)

"My thoughts about the flexible crewing ... how does it affect crew cohesion? I'm from a military background myself and one of the things we try to work on is if you're mates within a team you can work properly; you can predict each other's moves; you can work in a cohesive manner. If you're in the case of flexible crewing and you have a crew that has been put together from various different people from all over the place, how is that going to affect the efficiency of how they're going to work on a call?" (Rother)

"When we go to the other proposals for day-only stations and you see what is being proposed at The Ridge, I'm not sure that another 30 minutes then would actually work" (Rother)

- ^{5.10} With regard to the recruitment issue, there was some suggestion that having a 30-minute turn-out time for the resilience engines may allow ESFRS to slightly widen its recruitment pool in certain areas – especially those where it will remain difficult to attract sufficient on-call firefighters, even with more advantageous contracts in place.

"Finding people who live five minutes away or can get there in the five minutes is still going to be tough. I think it would put a lot of people off" (Brighton & Hove)

"In the area where I live it would be difficult to recruit people under the five-minute rule. Having a bit more time would be good" (Rother)

"I definitely think that the extension to the time period to respond for the crew switch is a sensible idea. At a lot of the stations it's going to be really difficult if you just basically got a five-minute circle round the station where you can recruit from and it really would make recruiting a lot easier, I think" (Brighton & Hove)

Stakeholder webinar

- 5.11 Of the 17 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 11 agreed with the proposal, two disagreed and two neither agreed nor disagreed. There were also two 'don't knows'.

Figure 38: To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines? Stakeholder webinar result



- 5.12 In discussion, a number of clarification questions were asked around the specifics of the ORP, particularly in relation to the recruitment of on-call staff (and the reasons why it might be problematic) and the proposed new on-call contracts attendance times.

“How are you planning on improving at Heathfield?”

“What contractual requirements do you require of on-call employees for your normal on-call model (5 minutes) and your 30 minutes model in terms of availability and remuneration?”

“How much will the new on-call contracts pay?”

“Do you think the reason for your struggles to employ persons is because the police are recruiting as well. From having friends and family in both services it takes a special person to take on these roles and surely that limits the numbers applying to each service? Surely it's not just down to wages!”

“If an incident occurs where a "30 minute" response pump is the geographical nearest resource, is there a way of speeding up the response?”

- 5.13 The main issues raised around this proposal around: how a “guaranteed service” can be provided in view of the difficulties involved in recruiting and retaining on-call staff; whether the proposed new on-call contract will be as effective as ESFRS hopes; service-wide resilience in the event of a large and/or protracted incident and to ensure adequate cover for ‘non-core’ stations; and ensuring team cohesion within the flexible crewing team.

“As you are struggling to recruit and retain retained personnel, how can you guarantee service?”

“You are confident, but the confidence is based on an assumption that the new contract will be effective in attracting and retaining staff. A big assumption”

“The hours for on-call firefighters (on call nights and at weekends) are about as family-unfriendly as it’s possible to be. So, I imagine that you will find it hard to recruit so many on-call staff”

“Of course, more engines are good. The problem is the lack of personnel to man them”

“East Sussex [is] struggling to recruit on-call firefighters. But these proposals seem to depend far more heavily on on-call firefighters. Isn’t it dangerously risky to rely so heavily on a model that is not working / is not proven?”

“The recent (May 2020) Ashdown forest fire required the attendance of 8 fire engines. If the total number of fire engines is cut to 24 as in these proposals, how would cover be provided at the 18 core stations during future wildfires?”

“Increasing the number of ‘core’ stations while reducing the number of engines in East Sussex will increase the occasions on which there is no cover at all in some of the ‘non-core’ stations, such as Barcombe. What is your assessment of the number of occasions in which ‘non-core’ stations will have no cover?”

“[What about] the skill sets that individuals acquire and how they fit in to a team and resourcing into other teams should dynamic responses be required into out of area events?”

Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed duty stations

Proposal 2: Changes to Day-Crewed Stations



ESFRS is proposing to change to ‘day-only’ crewing at its current ‘day-crewed’ fire stations: Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield

Day-crewing (24/7)

- Used where risk levels are lower
- Some day-crewed stations have a relatively low level of activity (can be quieter than some on-call stations)



“Positive” hours worked on-station (daytime)
 “Standby” hours worked on-call from a location within 5 minutes from the station (evening + overnight)
 Same firefighters work positive and standby hours

Day-only (24/7)

- Difference = full-time staff do not provide evening, overnight + weekend on-call cover...
- ...provided by existing + newly recruited on-call staff



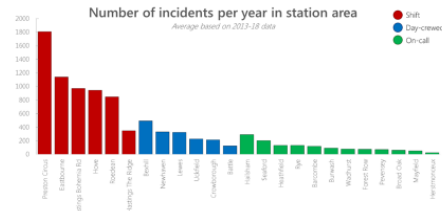
Full-time firefighters on-station Monday-Friday daytime



Different sets of on-call firefighters provide evening/overnight/weekend cover

The change results in a reduction of between 27 and 33 posts, to be reinvested into the “flexible crewing pool” training and prevention and protection teams

Proposal 2: Changes to Day-Crewed Stations



Some day-crewed stations → less demand than some “on call” stations
 Incidents in Hailsham similar to Newhaven + Lewes (+ The Ridge)
 Incidents in Seaford similar to Uckfield and Crowborough
 More incidents in 4 busiest on-call areas than in Battle

Appliance	Daytime weekend mobilisations per year	
	All Incident Types	Critical Incident
Battle P1 (9-4 only)	32	4
Bexhill P1	84	7
Crowborough P1	47	4
Lewes P1	58	9
Newhaven P1	61	6
Uckfield P1	54	6

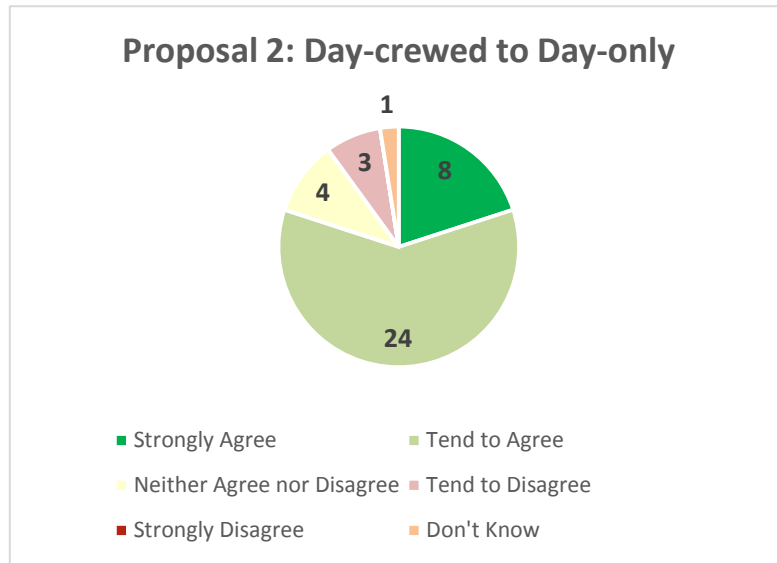
Average no. of incidents per year that would potentially receive a longer response time
 Very few critical incidents (e.g. dwelling fire, RTC)

Data → change has very low impact on fatality rates, demand and performance

Public focus groups/depth interviews

5.14 Eight of the 40 public focus group attendees strongly agreed with Proposal 2, and a further 24 tended to agree. Four neither agreed nor disagreed, three tended to disagree and there was one ‘don’t know’.

Figure 39: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in training and prevention and protection work? Public focus group/depth interview result



- 5.15 There was widespread agreement that the proposed crewing change is acceptable to facilitate the coverage improvements identified in Proposal 1 – the transfer of resources to prevention and protection and the 'flexible crewing pool' in particular.

"I thought it was a good idea because I think it goes hand in hand with your Proposal 1 [and] I feel like Proposal 1, there is a lot more advantages. And I feel like the changes that Proposal 2 bring would be okay to allow the Proposal 1 to work. I'd rather Proposal 1 happen than it not happen and for Proposal 2 to just stay the same" (Lewes)

"That's a good rationalisation actually, and getting the best use of the resources" (Eastbourne)

"Proposal 1 looks very good. I can see where they come from. Proposal 2 could have a slight effect on response times ... but if you can make things easier as far as having more people to choose from and things like that then I feel that it could be beneficial thing to do" (Rother)

"I can see the logic in doing that. Obviously, the data speaks for itself and ... the reduction in those posts means that they can reinvest into the flexible crewing pool..." (Brighton & Hove)

"I'm thinking about important rationalisations and quality service delivery in the 21st century with references to this flexibility, training and development and prevention and protection" (Eastbourne)

- 5.16 It was also said, though, that this proposal will be difficult to 'sell' to the wider public if people take it in isolation without understanding its potential benefits.

"I agree with the first proposal ... But if you just put the second proposal to me without thinking about the first one, I think most people probably say 'no' because it is effectively a cut. People will be naturally less enthusiastic about the second proposal because of the longer waiting time ... You wonder what could happen in those extra three minutes even though it's only three minutes. I can see why the public wouldn't actually hear that and all they were compute is. 'What, I have to wait three more minutes for you to get to me' and just instinctively, that doesn't feel great ... I agree the trade-off is worth it, but it's just a hard thing to really feel warm about, I guess" (Lewes)

- 5.17 As for concerns, longer response times were an inevitable worry for many, and several sought clarifications on what exactly 'slightly longer' means in this context and about the exact implications of additional minutes on fire spread.

"If they did change it to the day-only then what would be the wait on the weekend? Would it be particularly long if people had a fire?" (Eastbourne)

"When you talk about the response times, I know it's very elusive ... People won't know what the actual specific longer response times will mean, but is there an average of how much longer it will take to get to them areas, especially in the critical emergencies? So, what does that 'slightly longer' mean?" (Lewes)

"How many minutes would that be typically, on average? So, in Battle there were four critical incidents that would have a longer time, are there any estimates of how much longer that would be and what the impact of that might be?" (Rother)

"When you say, on average, it's going to take three minutes longer, I know it's difficult, but in your average house fire, how much difference does that make to the fire?" (Lewes)

"I think this one is much harder to manage, and the extended attendance time is going to go down very badly" (Eastbourne)

- 5.18 Other worries were around: the loss of experienced full-time firefighters from local areas to the 'flexible crewing pool'; the potential for difficulties as a result of separating daytime and night-time crews; and the impact of population growth on future incident numbers. There were also some specific local concerns, such as the need to be mindful of the number of firework-based organisations around Lewes.

"With regards to the dispersal of firefighters. Are they the full-time firefighters, the ones with the most experience or the on-call? No-one would actually want to lose the most experienced people in favour of part-timer ... who probably hasn't quite had as much training or on-site management of a disaster" (Wealden)

"I'm not convinced that the weekend and night-time cover, separating it out like that, is the best way forward ... any incident that could crossover the handover of teams will be tricky because of the different crews" (Rother)

"Has this taken into account the growth of these areas? Because if you take Hailsham, Hailsham has grown tremendously in the last 10 years and it seems to Joe Citizen that all the services are reducing but ... the development is extensive, and the quality of the building isn't great, so the density is increasing" (Eastbourne)

"Looking particularly at Lewes ... we're not a normal town given the number of fireworks that are stored around Lewes, and we have seen in the past dreadful incidents with fireworks. With incidents like that, it's very important that fire crews get there quickly" (Lewes)

- 5.19 In terms of the impact on staff and staffing, there was some debate as to whether the proposed change would be beneficial or detrimental. A few people considered the day-only system to be a marked improvement on day-crewing inasmuch as the latter appears over-burdensome in terms of hours worked, whereas others foresaw some "push-back" from existing day-crew firefighters who might be reluctant or unable to change from a system they are familiar with and have built their lives around – particularly

considering they would eventually lose a significant proportion of their income (£6,000) through no longer being eligible for a housing allowance.

"I think that day-crewing 24/7 is absolutely horrendous. You have people working day shifts and night shifts; that shouldn't be happening ... the day only proposal, well it looks an awful lot better on paper" (Brighton & Hove)

"I actually kind of assumed that the new option was how it already worked otherwise you must have quite a lot of crew who must end up working long hours, whereas it's probably quite beneficial to have a whole different set of crew who do these out of hours, weekends and things" (Brighton & Hove)

"If I was one of the frontline firefighters that's going to lose that particular job and have another job found for them, I might argue about it..." (Eastbourne)

"The only thing that's stopping it being full agreement is there will always be that push back from people saying, 'I don't want to change my role'" (Brighton & Hove)

"My worry is that if you are reducing their wage by £6,000, actually how many of them can afford to realistically stay? It's a bit of a worry that you are kind of almost cutting some people out by saying ... you've got to accept this. Even though you'll get your same pay for three years, we are going to take £6,000 less. It's whether they can continue to do that role" (Brighton & Hove)

- 5.20 Furthermore, there was disagreement as to whether day-only staffing would be better for recruitment purposes: some felt it would assist in attracting a more diverse workforce to the full-time Service (mothers of school-age children for example), whereas others worried that on-call recruitment may be more difficult if asking for evening and weekend cover only.

"Making it day-only will make it easier to hire people. My sister is a single mum and so she's struggling to find things that will fit in with her child school regimen and so having weekends off would be easier and take less pressure off people who are parents wanting to go into the FRS" (Wealden)

"In terms of the on-call staff ... would that not actually make it more difficult to hire people if they are only hired for evenings and weekends. Obviously, that can go around an office job, but we've said already that some people get home from their 9-5 and don't want to sign on so would it not make it a bit more difficult?" (Brighton & Hove)

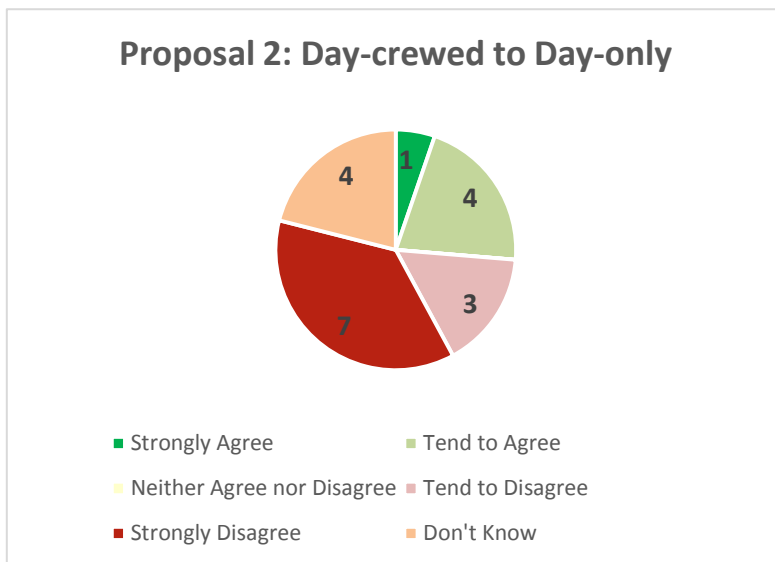
- 5.21 Finally, the importance of regularly monitoring the impact of any change such as this was stressed.

"Anything that cuts firemen that are out there to respond, people will be concerned that the risk assessment is correct. So, I would support it as long as I knew that it was being kept under review and being monitored and it would be reported on to see what the impact of the change has been ... I trust the experts, but I want them to continue to engage afterwards. I would like them to report back on the real-world result" (Brighton & Hove)

Stakeholder webinar

5.22 Of the 19 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, five agreed with the proposal, 10 disagreed (seven strongly) and there were four ‘don’t knows’.

Figure 40: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in training and prevention and protection work? Stakeholder webinar result



5.23 In their questions and comments, several stakeholders referred to both proposals 2 and 3 together. For example, there was significant concern about the proposed change to crewing arrangements at, and the loss of the second fire engine from Crowborough Fire Station – primarily due to its location at the extremity of the county, its proximity to Ashdown Forest and the A26, and the town’s significant population and development increases.

“With Crowborough being on the northern extremity, what will happen to response times?”

“With Ashdown Forest on our doorstep, what will happen with large forest fires. One recent fire took about seven hours to extinguish and damping down was still going on next day?”

“With all the proposed development in Crowborough, nearly 600 houses in Walshes Road if approved alone with 197 already being built, surely these cuts to the service and vehicles will be disastrous? With the main A26 running right through Crowborough and beyond what will happen to response and attendance at serious and fatal road traffic crashes?”

5.24 In terms of other areas, the following lengthy response was submitted in advance of the webinar in relation to the proposals for Newhaven Fire Station. The respondent was mainly concerned about: the “misleading” and “loaded” consultation document and questionnaire, which are based on “out of date” data; losing the frequent standby cover given by the second fire engine when the first is out; longer response times; longer second engine response times compromising firefighter safety; low on-call firefighter numbers and availability; and the loss of full-time firefighter posts locally.

I would like to raise the following points relating to the proposals listed below, in relation to our Newhaven Fire Station. The proposals for Newhaven are:

- Cut one fire engine from the station*
- Downgrade fire station from Day-crewed to Day-staffing*
- Cut Foam Tender from the station*
- Cut 50% of the full-time firefighting staff*
- Introduce a Command Unit and an Operational support unit (OSU)*

It appears that the public consultation IRMP document is very misleading and full of loaded questions based on out of date data (only includes figure up to 2018 – there have been operational changes since, including an increase in the number of calls of around 12.5% in 2019 and the introduction of a close working relationship with SECAMB). It would seem that unfortunately, the Fire Authority has been briefed on this out of date data for many months now and it is hard for them to listen to up to date facts. However, there are some key issues pertaining to Newhaven fire station I would like to point out. I appreciate that we are not alone in these cuts proposals - this is county wide. Those key issues are:

Cut a fire engine (87P4) - This engine was used 51 times in 2019, but what is not brought to the attention of the Fire authority is that every time our first fire engine goes out (87P1), the second engine remains on station - giving cover to the community, when the first (87P1) is busy. Thus: no break in cover and consequently, a safer community.

When attending an incident, 87P1 will turn up with a crew of 4 - made up of an officer in charge (OIC), driver/pump operator/breathing apparatus, board controller and a Breathing apparatus (BA) team (2 x firefighters). Before the OIC can commit a BA into a burning building and to conform to Health and safety and fire service national risk assessments, the OIC must wait for another BA team to be available before committing the first. This is a national H&S standard and can only be breached in the most extreme circumstances. For Newhaven the second BA team is on the second engine (87P4) - the engine they want to cut. So 87P1 will have to wait for an engine from either Roedean or Seaford. That's an extra 10/15 minutes and often that's the difference between life and death or losing your property or business.

Downgrading of Newhaven Fire Station - This would reduce the community's fire cover greatly. The proposal states it wants full time firefighters to man the station - possibly 9 till 5 and no weekend cover. Times outside these hours would be covered by on-call firefighters, responding from their homes. As it stands at the moment, the full-time firefighters are split into 2 watches of 6 - doing a 'four days on, four days off' on a rota system. They cover a total of 96 hours per watch, being bolstered by on-call firefighters.

The trouble with relying on the on-call firefighters, is there is not enough of them to cover all the hours required. There have been some problems with on-call firefighters not turning into station for a call, for up to 10 minutes. Then having to get ready to go out. That results in a delay of 12/15 minutes from time of call. There is problem getting on-call firefighters to be available at crucial times of the day (i.e. 6am to 9am and 5pm to 7pm), because of their primary employment and having to get to and from work. Also, most on-call firefighters, can be full time firefighters from shift stations and so are hampered by the working time directive.

Introduction of command unit and OSU - This on the surface, appears to not be a bad thing, if the station is not downgraded. However, if it is and you have a call for one of these vehicles outside of 9am to 5pm, it causes a problem. Out of office hours, they will only have 4/5 on-call firefighters on duty. If they get a call for one of the new vehicles, that would mean the main fire engine (87P1), would no longer have a full crew and so would not be available and therefore no fire cover for the community.

50% full time firefighter posts lost - Loss of skills and experience, that would be detrimental and feasibly would have serious consequences for the service and the communities it serves.

Cut Foam Tender from the station - This is not of too much concern to the station, as I understand it was originally introduced to assist with potential refrigeration fires, etc. at the port. With the lessening of freight traffic over recent years in that vicinity, its requirement has similarly reduced. However, there are a number of small rural-based airfields locally and redeploying this to say, Lewes Fire Station, may be a prudent measure.

I would be grateful for a response to the above concerns that have been raised with me, by Fire Officers and local people. We cannot compromise on Health and Safety of our residents and businesses, when considering financial cuts. There is no price on life and property and our Fire Services have a duty of care, to the public and businesses it serves, as well as the brave firefighters and staff, that it calls upon to take on this responsibility within our communities.

- 5.25 With specific regard to changing crewing systems from day-crewed to day-only, a few stakeholders sought clarification as to exactly what 'slightly longer' response times will entail, as well as why they are justifiable during the daytime on weekends.

"This was a question I received from a constituent: The service has stated that there will be a delay to the second appliance but have only stated this will take 'slightly' longer.' Exactly how long would this be for any given area in Newhaven and Peacehaven's area and at the busiest times of the day? Thanks in advance"

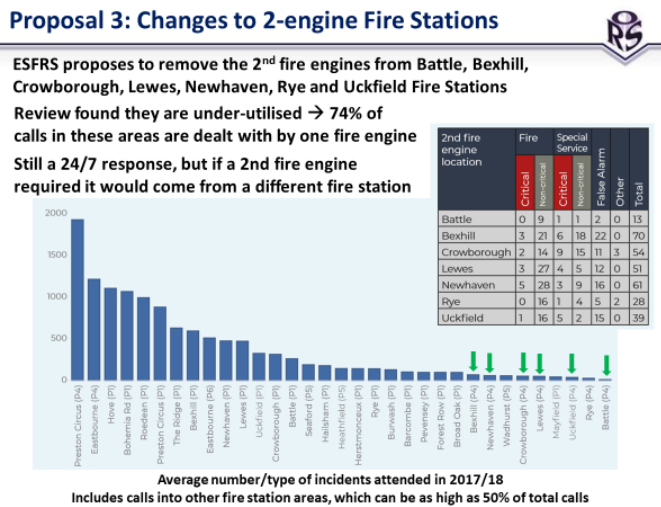
"Can you give me a definition for how long 'slightly longer' would be and how much impact 'negligible impact' would be. What was this data based on as the definition of slightly and negligible would vary between different people?"

"A slide says about taking slightly longer to get to incidents due to day-only crews and reduced number of pumps at some RDS stations. How long is slightly longer and what is the impact of that?"

"If IRMP is based on risk, where is the reduced risk of crews taking longer to get to incidents just because it is a weekend?"

- 5.26 Furthermore, another sought to understand the "the impact on service provision of specialist equipment and depth of cover for Ashdown Forest? The speed of development and recent history of fires on Ashdown Forest will potentially be significantly be impacted by reduction in service to daytime and weekday which are not our peak fire times. This leaves the environment at greater risk and properties, so scale and speed are important".

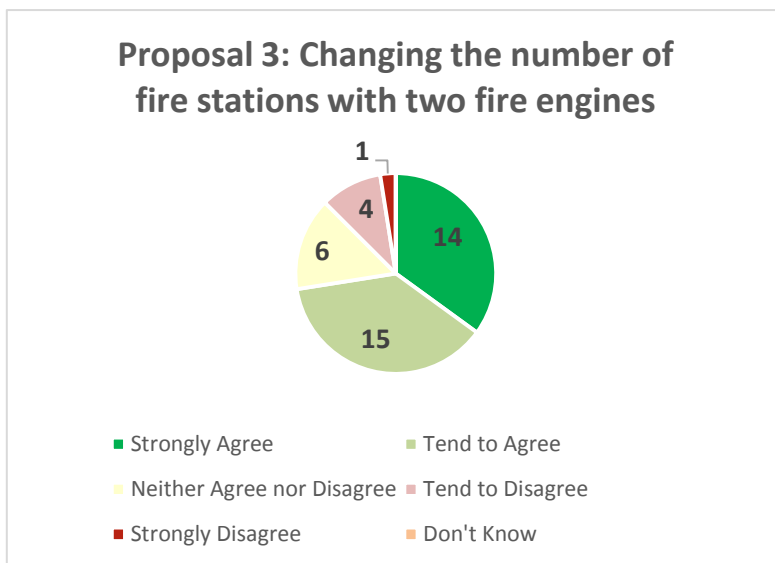
Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines



Public focus groups/depth interviews

5.27 29 of the 40 public focus group participants agreed with removing the second fire engines from the seven affected stations: 14 strongly agreed and 15 tended to agree. Six people neither agreed nor disagreed, four tended to disagree and one strongly disagreed.

Figure 41: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations? Public focus group/depth interview result



5.28 The proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations was supported by a majority of participants across all six focus groups as a sensible redistribution of under-used resources. Some typical comments are below and overleaf.

“It seems to make complete sense ... if they’re just going to be sat there effectively not used and it’s not really going to change the stats then why have them? Especially if you know it’s costing a lot of money to the service which could be reinvested in better ways ... And then like you say if on the chance they do need a second one they come from elsewhere anyway...” (Brighton & Hove)

“I think that’s perfectly sensible ... to have the two appliances, you’ve got the crew for the two appliances and if you haven’t got the number of call outs that’s a waste of manpower. So, I think redistributing is a very good idea” (Eastbourne)

“I think that one does make sense ... it’s basically saying that the second fire engine is not always in use so therefore it’s not always needed ... if it’s not really been in use and you’re already getting another fire engine from another area anyway and that’s pretty much how its already working I don’t think it will make too much of a change” (Hastings)

“That sounds really sensible and it’s evidenced in the fact that you either can’t use it or it doesn’t have a use and the fact that money could be spent a lot better elsewhere in the Service ... it definitely sounds like it will be a better idea than having all these things you can’t use” (Wealden)

“Given the usage of these fire engines, they must be better off saving money by not being there or being redeployed to where they’re most effective” (Lewes)

“I did look through the detailed proposals and it makes eminent sense to me; I think it’s one of the best ones of all” (Rother)

^{5.29} In particular, people were seemingly convinced by the statistics around critical incidents, low appliance availability and the fact that currently, 74% of incidents in these areas are dealt with by one fire engine (though, as the last quotation below demonstrates) there was a minority view that the latter figure is unacceptably low).

“Presented with the facts, it seems exceptionally reasonable” (Lewes)

“The critical incident stats are persuasive for me” (Hastings)

“I tend to agree now after looking at the statistics ... And along with being unable to crew the actual second fire engine from a local vicinity; there’s no point having an engine that can’t be used anyway. So, the whole thing makes sense” (Wealden)

“It’s the facts as well; 74% don’t require a second engine so you obviously have facts that prove that. It’s black and white and not grey and I like that ... I think if the facts are telling you that you’ve got 74%, that’s quite a high percentage. I think if it had been lower then it would really bad idea to take it away but ... those areas are sort of low risk ... because they are quite rural aren’t they?” (Eastbourne)

“If the secondary engine is clearing the other 26% then it’s needed in my opinion ... If it was 1% or 2% then maybe ... but it’s not. It’s nearly 30%; that’s quite a large percentage...” (Brighton & Hove)

^{5.30} This is not to say, though, that there were no concerns or anxieties, for there were several – most notably in relation to second engine response times, particularly to the more rural areas served by the seven affected stations. Indeed, this was the main reason why some people opposed this proposal.

“How much longer would it extend the set response time for a second unit to attend a critical incident by not having one on site? I take your point that it may not be available anyway but generally at the current moment in time, how much longer does it extend the response time for the second vehicle?” (Hastings)

“I’m concerned about the geographical aspect ... if you were getting a Hastings crew to, say, a Bexhill incident, knowing what the link road is like I think there could be a delay on response times” (Rother)

“It’s the rural area. I live in a village and luckily, we have two fire stations near us; one in Mayfield and one in Crowborough. It’s having that cover ... If there is a big fire and we need more than one fire engine from Crowborough, how quickly are we going to get back-up for a major fire if it has to come from another area?” (Wealden)

“If we remove it from Rye, if you are coming from Hastings it’s probably a good 15 minutes journey for the second engine ... and there are historical buildings there and they are more prone to fire ... The George Hotel and stuff like that. It obviously comes down to the prevention that you do with older buildings but what about that sort of situation?” (Hastings)

“If I’ve paid my council tax and I’ve called at the wrong time because there is a fire in my home and they’ve had to get a secondary fire engine from a different place, which has added another five minutes ... I would fundamentally disagree. The two fire engine stations should remain as two fire engine stations” (Brighton & Hove)

- 5.31 The other main concern was a potential lack of resilience as a result of removing the seven fire engines, both in terms of attendance at incidents and for stand-by moves to cover ‘gaps’ across the area.

“I think that reduction in the total number of fire engines might adversely impact the Service’s resilience” (Eastbourne)

“Are all those stations in close proximity to a station that has two trucks available or are they all sort 1-1-1-1 in a small group and there’s a two in the middle and actually you’ve got quite a big space with only one truck per station?” (Brighton & Hove)

“It makes sense, but you don’t want to leave one station in a large area ... without any engines at all for an extended time because they are out on call” (Brighton & Hove)

“I do know that if Hove have a call out, usually a fire truck from Brighton will go and sit at Hove. I’m assuming that’s going to be the same sort of situation with these other places as well, once their primary goes out, their secondary will go to them?” (Brighton & Hove)

- 5.32 Other worries were that: it will be difficult to reintroduce the “capital equipment” once it has been disposed of, even in the event of rising incidents; increased use of back-up appliances from other areas could mean a lack of local knowledge among those attending; and that future demographic changes may not have been sufficiently considered.

“The problem is once you get rid of engines it’s difficult to step back from that, so I tend to disagree with this ... You can change rostering and crewing ... but once you’ve got rid of a bit of capital equipment then it’s harder to roll back. If it’s found in the real world that it does cause problems, then once you’ve lost an engine finding the budget to get it back is lot harder than it is to simply re-write your rostering rules” (Brighton & Hove)

“I think if this is implemented there will very quickly be a scenario where we think ‘oh crap, we needed that; if we’d had the other appliance, we would have been alright here...’” (Rother)

“You will have different firefighters in those engines going to different towns that they are not very sure about ... a Brighton fire engine will know all around Brighton but might not know all around Lewes or Bexhill etc.” (Brighton & Hove)

“The thing I’m not totally convinced about is how much the changing demographic, particularly in this part of the woods, has influenced the decision to take away the second appliances. The figures that were given in the plan reflect some change in the number of households and people that are in East Sussex and what that looks like across the age range but I’m still not sure it’s been extrapolated out long enough...” (Rother)

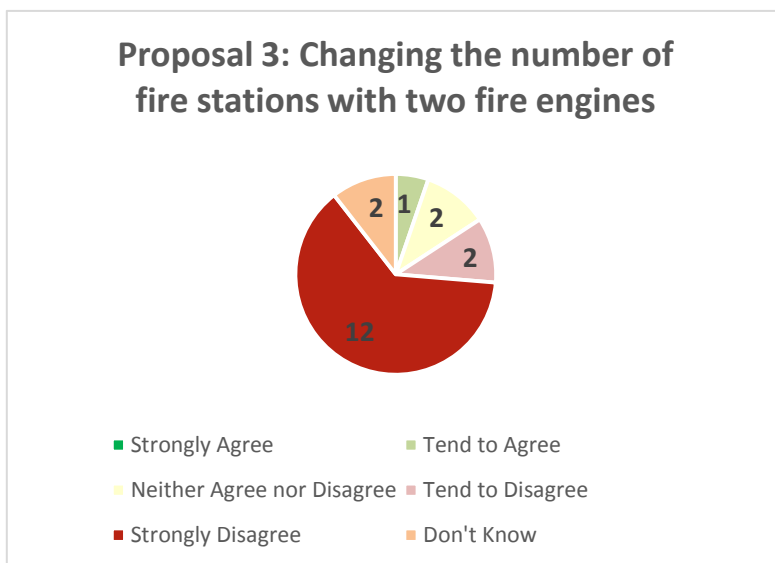
- ^{5.33} One Brighton & Hove participant suggested a phased approach to the proposed second fire engine removals, starting with the stations with the fewest incidents. This, they felt, will allow ESFRS to monitor incident levels at the busier locations to ensure they remain low prior to making changes there.

“Would they not do better just removing the second engine from the ones that you can clearly see it’s not needed like Battle, Uckfield, Rye, possibly Crowborough. So Bexhill, I would probably say keep it there for the time being just to see if it is needed and if it’s not needed after a certain time, be that after 6 months or 12 months, if it’s clear that they don’t need it then remove it ... We’re looking at seven fire stations where they’re looking at removing the second engine, so that’s quite a lot really ... I would probably say Bexhill, Lewes and Newhaven ... in my view it would probably be keep at least two out of those seven. Test it out on Battle, Crowborough, Rye and Uckfield but keep the three with the highest rates on there. If it works and if it’s doable then yeah, get rid of those as well ... Probably trial and error first. If you take away everything and realise ‘oh we’ve made a mistake’ it could be quite fatal but if you trial and error and remove it from half of them first, then you can see where you go” (Brighton & Hove)

Stakeholder webinar

- ^{5.34} Of the 19 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, only one agreed with the proposal, two neither agreed nor disagreed and 14 disagreed (12 strongly). There were a further two ‘don’t knows’.

Figure 42: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations? Stakeholder webinar result



5.35 Some of the issues raised in relation to Proposal 3 have been reported above for the reasons explained, but there was some worry about the loss of second appliances in isolation. Longer second engine response times from neighbouring stations were a concern, as was the fact the second engines under threat themselves provide back up to other areas (Crowborough to Forest Row for example).

“The main issue that I have had from constituents so far including firefighters at our station, is that we are losing a pump. Bearing in mind our station is practically brand new this seems to people to be a waste. Their worry is that a loss of an appliance on site will surely result in an overall delay in response? I appreciate people do not always read all the information available, but people are afraid”

“Forest Row is struggling to respond. Crowborough provides back-up to Forest Row, but would not be able to assist with only one fire engine?”

5.36 While it was recognised that 74% of incidents in the affected areas are dealt with by one fire engine, this was considered too low a figure to justify removing resources that are required over a quarter of the time. It was also again suggested that the figures being used to justify the proposal are “out of date” – and that they may be somewhat misleading if they relate to incidents as opposed to mobilisations.

“If 74% are attended by one engine, that means 26% are attended by more than one. Surely this is still too a high percentage of requirement to consider the reduction unless the issue is with not being able to man the second engine?”

“Some of my constituents are concerned that the data used for this is out of date and is actually not reflective of the 2nd appliances use. I have had feedback from people who work in the fire service who have suggested this is the case. What if it turns out that there was an increase in use for this past year? Or next year? Newhaven has a projected increase in population for the next decade. My constituents are concerned that this cover will not be sufficient”

“Does the 74% relate to incidents or call-outs? Call out figures should be being used otherwise they give a false picture as a vehicle is being used whilst they are out on the road whether it ends up as a true incident or not. What about where there is a callout which is cancelled on the way to what is thought to be an incident? Also, with the standby movements it still means that the firefighters are having to respond elsewhere”

5.37 A further response submitted post-webinar noted the *“impractical and dangerous”* assumption that Seaford Fire Station can, in future, provide a degree of cover for Newhaven give the two towns are separated by a swing bridge that is *“expected to have more openings in the near future”*.

“The swing bridge at Newhaven is expected to have more openings in the near future, as there is a new tarmac plant that is soon to open on the North Quay – receiving materials by boat. If the bridge is open when the Seaford engine is required to cover west of the bridge, there would be a minimum delay of 10mins., whilst the bridge is open and a further delay through traffic jams caused as a result. This is even more an issue at peak times. It is impractical and dangerous, to rely on the cover for Newhaven, by a station or stations separated by the navigable river and its associated swing bridge on the A259 at Newhaven.”

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

Proposal 4: Crewing + Fire Engine Changes at Hastings

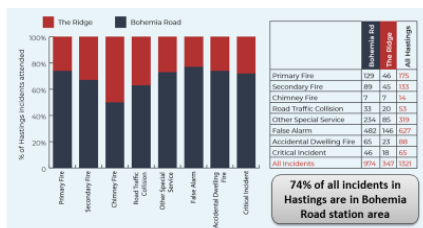
ESFRS is proposing to change the way it crews stations in Hastings and introduce an additional fire engine

Bohemia Road + The Ridge Fire Stations have one 24/7 immediate response fire engine each

Data shows that...

Bohemia Road → far higher risk profile than The Ridge
E.g. Bohemia Road area is 2nd across ESFRS for critical incidents + 1st for life-risk fire incidents

The Ridge fire engine attends more incidents in Bohemia Road than on its own ground
Incident numbers at The Ridge are similar to typical day-crewed areas



74% of all incidents in Hastings are in Bohemia Road station area

Proposal 4: Crewing + Fire Engine Changes at Hastings

ESFRS is proposing to change the way it crews stations in Hastings and introduce an additional fire engine

ESFRS wants to introduce...

- A day-crewed system at The Ridge
- A second (additional) 24/7 immediate response fire engine at Bohemia Road



1 x 24/7 immediate response fire engine at each station



2 x 24/7 immediate response fire engines at Bohemia Road



1 x 'day-crewed' fire engine at The Ridge

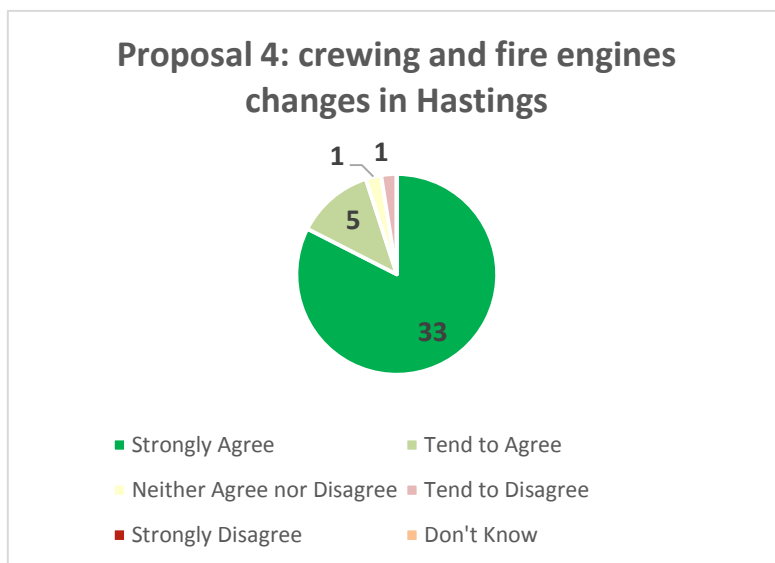
ESFRS feels this will...

- Improve risk/fire cover for both Hastings station grounds
- Building more resilience in Hastings
- Improve firefighter safety

Public focus groups/depth interviews

5.38 Over 8 in 10 (33) of the 40 public focus group participants strongly agreed with the proposed changes at Hastings. A further five tended to agree, one neither agreed nor disagreed and one tended to disagree.

Figure 43: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road? Public focus group/depth interview result



^{5.39} In discussion, it was clear that there was very little disagreement with this proposal: the vast majority of participants considered it something of a “no-brainer” in ensuring the right resources are in the right place.

“The whole system obviously makes good sense; the statistics speak for themselves. If 74% or 75% of the fires are in Bohemia Road, it just makes sense to do that” (Wealden)

“From a purely pragmatic point of view, it makes sense to have one have more capacity than the other because that’s where the incidents are. This just feels like a no brainer” (Rother)

“I think it’s second highest for critical incidents ... Just that alone kind of highlights for me that you need more services or resources to try and overcome incidents” (Eastbourne)

“I like this one ... having the extra immediate response engine at Bohemia Road is a good idea considering were using The Ridge response team ... I think it would mean better response times for the public. That one is a very well thought out plan” (Hastings)

“To me this makes absolute sense. I think that’s a very good idea because you are putting the emphasis where most of the problems occur but still covering the other sites. I sort of know Hastings and so to me, it makes sense to have the support where you are currently having the highest number of calls. And it will also cut costs in a way because that Ridge area is being better utilised” (Eastbourne)

^{5.40} People were also reassured that both Hastings stations would continue to support each other and that, overall, the town would be adequately (some felt better) resourced.

“It sounds like it really makes sense because these areas aren’t massively far apart, so even if you’ve got this day crew in the evening or whenever, if they can’t get to things Bohemia Road has been helping out with some of their calls anyway ... and they’ll be able to reach more calls quickly in the areas that actually need it” (Brighton & Hove)

“As it’s working right now, The Ridge also goes over and covers areas in Bohemia Road as well. So, if there really needed to be a crossover, it would just come from the other side. And so, I feel like even if there was major critical things happening, it would still be shared” (Lewes)

"They're not actually reducing it really ... and that actually puts an extra fire engine in there so I would very much agree to that ... essentially they are just sharing a workload and they are adding a new fire engine, so I think that's a positive move" (Brighton & Hove)

"I think it sounds like a good proposal; it overall increases the availability of resources in the area ... and distributes it based on whether the data shows they are actually needed" (Eastbourne)

- 5.41 There was some negative opinion in the Hastings and Rother groups, mainly around cover for areas between Hastings and Rye during the evening and on weekends. With regard to Rye itself, it was said that the proposed removal of the second fire engine from the area would mean The Ridge having to travel there more frequently, which again led to concern about longer response times outside daytime hours.

"The Ridge covers Westfield, Fairlight, Icklesham and Three Oaks ... would the Bohemia Road crew would be able to attend those if needed... what is the resilience into the hinterland of The Ridge?" (Rother)

"If there was a problem past The Ridge over towards Rye, obviously they would have to come from Bohemia Road and that's a lot longer" (Hastings)

"If you're going to take away the second fire engine at Rye, the closest fire engine to Rye would be The Ridge. If you are on a very busy bank holiday weekend, you would find it difficult to get a Bohemia Road engine up to The Ridge and out to Rye in anything like the time you would be able to get something from The Ridge out to Rye" (Hastings)

- 5.42 One participant - who disagreed with the proposal - criticised the statistics used to justify it, and also sought clarification around possible redevelopment plans for Bohemia Road.

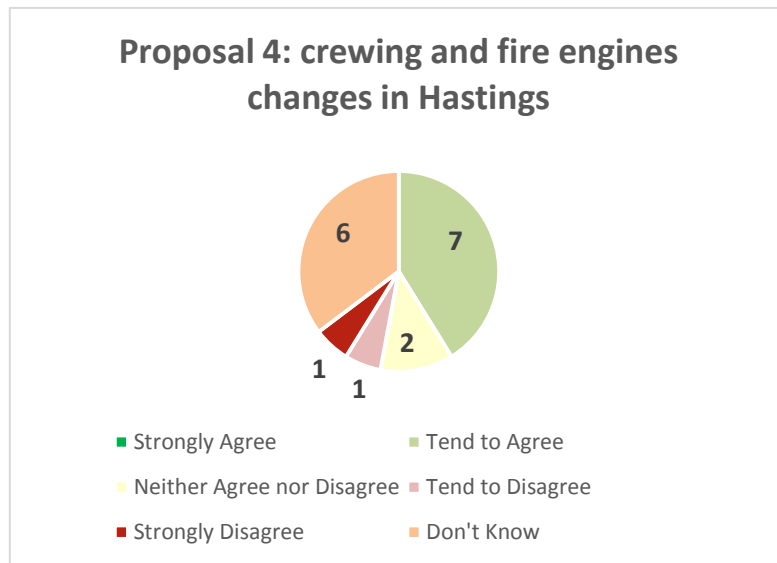
"If you have a look, over half the difference between Bohemia Road and The Ridge is actually false alarms. The false alarms for Bohemia Road is 482, the false alarms for The Ridge is 146 so over 300 of those 'all incidents' that you've got there are actually false alarms. If you actually discounted the false alarms, the difference between the incidents wouldn't be anywhere near as great as you are making out ... You are presenting these figures with something in mind rather than actually something that's realistic because the false alarms are quick. You are laying it on a bit thick I think with those statistics" (Hastings)

"The timescale of this seems to be a bit odd because the Bohemia Road Fire station is in the Summerfield development area and under the plans from Hastings Borough Council in about three years' time, it is quite likely that you are going to move the Bohemia Road station. So, I find it a bit unusual that you are building up that station and running down The Ridge whereas the Bohemia Road one is probably the one that you are going to have to vacate" (Hastings)

Stakeholder webinar

- 5.43 Of the 17 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, seven agreed with the proposal, two neither agreed nor disagreed and two disagreed (one strongly). There were a further six 'don't knows'.

Figure 44: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road? Stakeholder webinar result



^{5.44} Only one comment was made on this proposal: “it’s a shame Q4 isn’t in two parts as I would agree with the increase to 2 vehicles at 1 site but not a reduced service at the other site”.

Proposal 6: Demand Management²²

Proposal 6: Demand Management



ESFRS is aiming to manage demand for its services in 3 low-risk areas to reduce the impact on its other work

Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs)

- Account for 34% of ESFRS’ c.9,200 annual incident responses (c.3,130)
- 96% turn out to be false alarms – and of those that are fires, very few require ‘firefighter action’ as fires are already out when crews arrive
- Significant drain on resources
- Proposal → no longer automatically attend AFAs in low-risk commercial premises

Lift Releases

- Proposal → delay responding to lift releases, if the people are not vulnerable or in distress
- Give building owners – who are responsible for broken lifts – time to resolve issues

Birds trapped in netting

- ESFRS works alongside animal charities to reduce this type of call
- Still attends some → tie up resources/often need expensive specialist equipment
- Proposal → no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting

These changes will release capacity into prevention, protection and training

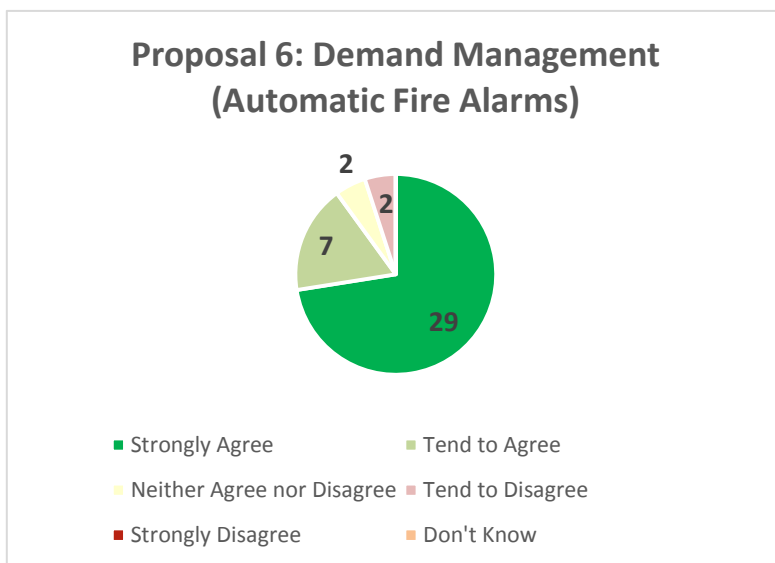
Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs)

Public focus groups/depth interviews

^{5.45} 29 of the 40 members of the public strongly agreed with ESFRS’ proposals in relation to AFA activations. A further seven tended to agree, two neither agreed nor disagreed and two tended to disagree.

²²Proposal 5 was not consulted on as it relates to internal operational matters and therefore there were no resulting questions.

Figure 45: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises? Public focus group/depth interview result



5.46 Most participants recognised (some through first-hand experience) that AFA activations are a significant drain on ESFRS’ resources and so supported the proposal not to automatically attend those in low-risk commercial premises.

“I think that’s sensible ... because people have got an avenue to make that call and get the assistance that they need so that’s fine for me. I’ve experienced it myself and I know that when the fire alarm goes off, it’s normally some error or it’s got nothing to do with a fire...” (Eastbourne)

“I think it would definitely make sense for them not to waste their time going. I know I’ve been in buildings before when they’ve gone off and you know there’s no fire there, but the fire engine still has to come, and it seems like a massive waste of resources” (Brighton & Hove)

“I agree with that ... we’ve got them at work and a lot of the time it could be one of our machines just overheating and you don’t need the fire service to attend. Obviously if it goes off and you do need the crew then you make a phone call, usually there’s more than enough people around in commercial premises for somebody to be able to ring 999” (Brighton & Hove)

“My company is actually quite guilty of that. Whenever we used the toaster in the kitchen it set the fire alarm off and the Service had to attend, which was rather embarrassing and a waste of their time. I didn’t even know that they automatically attend; I assumed that they waited until you called them” (Wealden)

5.47 There was, though, some associated worry about non-attendance at activations outside “office hours” when there may be no-one around to make a confirmation call, and about the 4% of calls that turn out to be actual fires.

“My concern would just be if it’s a false alarm during the day, the people in the premises would be just able to turn the alarm off and let you guys know so I wouldn’t consider it to be a problem then. But outside of the working hours of wherever the fire alarm is, it could be that there is an actual fire and if you don’t attend you’ve got to wait until somebody nearby notices ... when you could have attended sooner and prevented it from getting that far” (Eastbourne)

“If you have a commercial property and the AFA goes off and there is no-one to raise the alarm and the building burns down and a lot of businesses are lost ... it’s going to be a huge amount of damage to life there, loss of jobs, things like that” (Eastbourne)

“I’m a bit conflicted really. If it’s 34%, at an incident rate of 3,100 and 96% turn out to be a false alarm, that’s about 124 fires that are not false alarms in that year ... but then it would save thousands of call outs” (Brighton & Hove)

“It’s hard because although 96% turn out to be false alarms there could always be that chance that there is one that is an alarm for someone to attend. But I know that it can take up a huge amount of resource, so I think I’m a little bit in the middle on that one ...” (Hastings)

- 5.48 Moreover, reassurance was sought that ‘person risk’ would be fully considered at locations such as nightclubs and shops with residential accommodation attached – and that the importance of ‘heritage risk’ would be recognised.

“My concern is who chooses which AFAs in which type of building you won’t respond to? I would have suggested that clubs where there are a hell of a lot of people ... the volume of people inside a building, an AFA goes off, the experts of the fire service should attend” (Wealden)

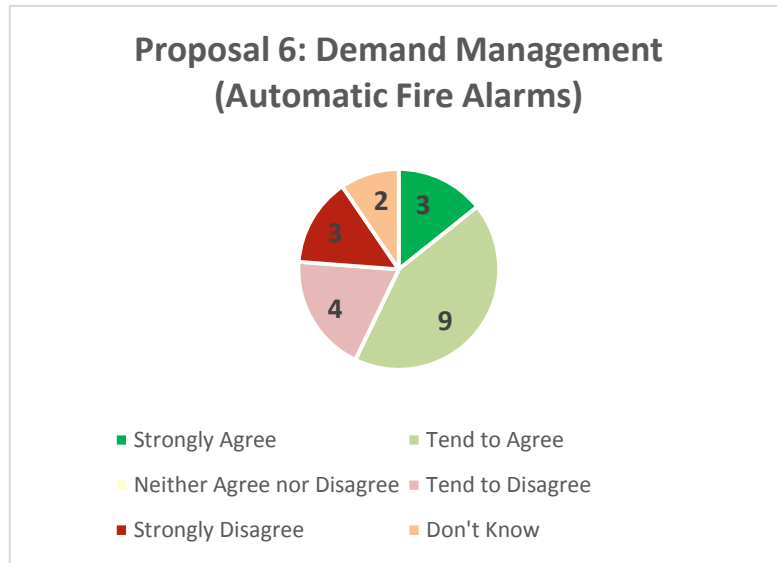
“I think in principle, it’s a good idea. My one worry is ... there are a number of shops which have people living above the shop. So, with that, are you not coming to those? Because it could well be somebody asleep above a shop and the shop is on fire, and they wouldn’t know” (Lewes)

“In the area you cover there must be a lot of historic or old buildings, old town Rye, out in Battle. They won’t have someone living there but would they be included? You probably would be able to tier those calls and so if it was just a suite of offices in a portacabin on the edge of town that’s one thing but if it’s an old church in the middle of Rye or the middle of Hastings, I think that’s something completely different” (Hastings)

Stakeholder webinar

- 5.49 Of the 21 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 12 agreed with the proposal and seven disagreed. There were a further two ‘don’t knows’.

Figure 46: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises? Stakeholder webinar result



^{5.50} Despite the majority agreement, there were concerns around: the 4% of “real incidents”; fire spread in dense commercial/residential areas; and how operators of commercial premises will be informed about any change in procedure.

“If 96% of automated fire alarm call outs are false alarms, 4% are real incidents. How many real incidents are there each year that you would no longer attend with these new proposals? In the dense commercial/residential centres of Lewes, Newhaven and Seaford, what do you consider to be the increased risk to life and of the fire spreading to adjacent properties?”

“How will operators be notified that the fire service will no longer automatically attend if there is an automated fire alarm call out?”

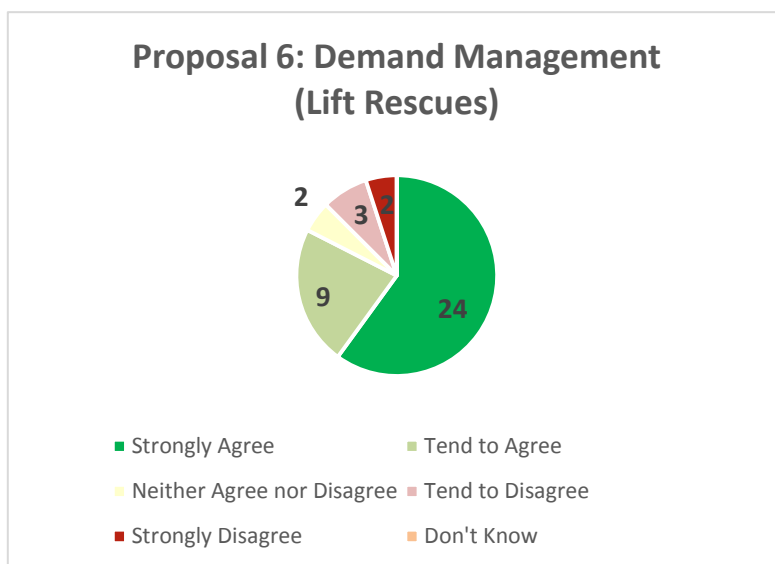
^{5.51} One stakeholder commented that: “as a general comment, larger fines for false alarms might be better rather than to ignore it”.

Lift rescues

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 5.52 33 members of the public agreed with ESFRS delaying responses to lift releases in certain circumstances, 24 strongly. Two people neither agreed nor disagreed, three tended to disagree and two strongly disagreed.

Figure 47: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners (who are responsible for broken lifts) time to resolve the issue in the first instance? Public focus group/depth interview result



- 5.53 Those in agreement with the proposal considered it wholly appropriate that building owners/managers should attempt to resolve issues with broken lifts themselves in the first instance, instead of immediately defaulting to FRS response. There was also a feeling that implementing a delayed response policy may encourage better equipment maintenance on the part of those responsible for it.

"I think that sounds good ... the building owners have responsibility for it in the first place and I think at least giving them the opportunity to resolve the situation themselves is probably good and would reduce the strain on the fire service appliances ... allowing them to better use their resources on what is their responsibility rather than picking up the burden from building owners" (Eastbourne)

"I think it's a good idea to put more emphasis on the owners of the buildings because it's an easy call isn't, you just say 'Oh, someone is stuck in the lift, just call the fire brigade, they'll help' instead of taking the ownership yourself" (Eastbourne)

"I definitely think that the responsibility should be pressed onto them and they should be responsible in the first instance so I am very strongly in favour of this" (Brighton & Hove)

"It encourages landlords to have good maintenance; they will maintain their equipment better if they know there are policies in place" (Wealden)

- 5.54 Those who disagreed or had worries about the proposed change were primarily concerned about the wellbeing of those trapped in lifts, even if they are not vulnerable or in significant distress. As such, they sought clarification around exactly how delayed the response would be given contractors are not often on-scene very quickly – and that some owners/managers apparently do not have any procedures in place at all.

“I was once stuck in a lift in a tower block and I was never so pleased to see the fire brigade after four hours in my entire life ... how many hours would I have to be stuck in the lift before you decided I was in distress?” (Hastings)

“How long are you not going to attend because you can't always rely on the owners of the buildings to actually get the lift people there in a specific time, whereas the fire service is more reliable” (Wealden)

“I'm not entirely happy with that one. I just think if you were stuck in a lift and its dependent on what's considered a reasonable time for the building owner to sort it out, that depends on how responsible that building owner is” (Rother)

“I'm a little worried about vulnerable/non-vulnerable people in lifts trapped and delaying response. Can you give me some indication of what you mean here? Instead of everybody dropping everything and rushing round, do you wait five minutes or ten minutes or an hour and a half?” (Eastbourne)

5.55 It was also suggested that charging for lift rescue callouts may be more appropriate than delayed response.

“If the police are called as an emergency to a lift then the company owner should be charged a fee to cover that cost ... it gives the company an excuse to be crap and not comply with their responsibility” (Brighton & Hove)

“Would it be worth investigating taxing companies directly ... if you're having to go to the same building four times a month to go and get people out of lifts, maybe they should foot the bill?” (Rother)

“Just say if you go out there once for instance, you can say ‘We've been out here once, you've had your one free, get your lifts up to scratch, the next time I'm afraid it's going to cost you money’” (Eastbourne)

5.56 Whatever is ultimately decided, it was considered imperative that any changes are widely communicated so that people know what to do and who to contact in the event of becoming trapped in a lift – and to ensure that building owners/managers can make alternative (or improved) arrangements if necessary.

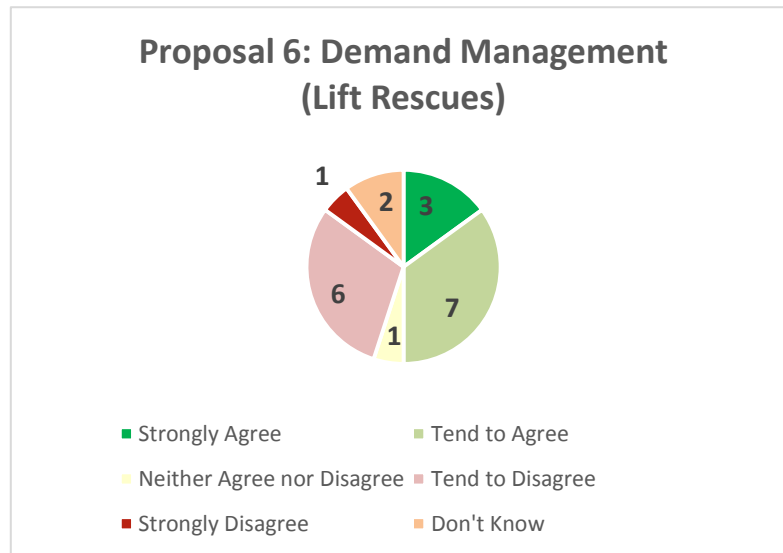
“If I live in a block of flats for example and the lift had broken down ... do I call my landlord, or do I call a professional who I know can help me? Rather than call my landlord who I may not be able to get hold of, I would much rather call a professional who I know would be able to help me and would be able to get me out of the lift safely” (Hastings)

“I think it's something which has to be really circulated among businesses that they'd have to tighten up their response times for their particular lift contractors” (Rother)

Stakeholder webinar

- 5.57 Of the 20 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 10 agreed with the proposal, one neither agreed nor disagreed and seven disagreed. There were a further two 'don't knows'.

Figure 48: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners (who are responsible for broken lifts) time to resolve the issue in the first instance? Stakeholder webinar result

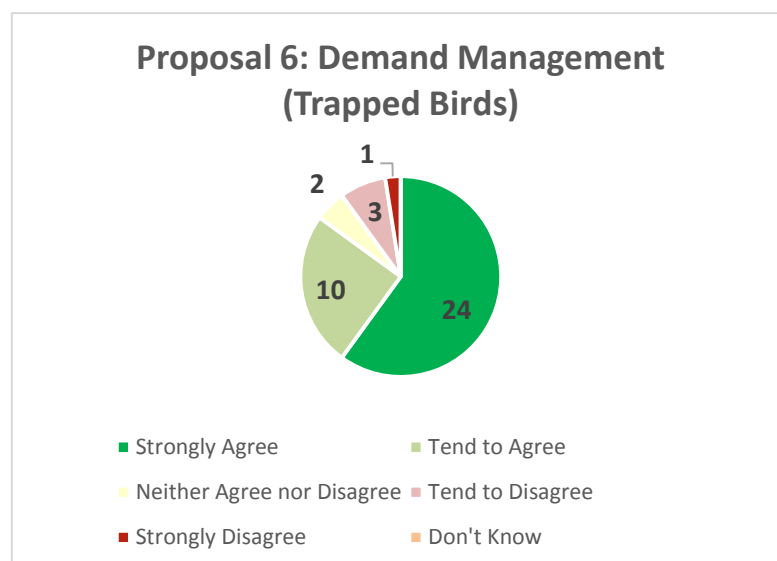


Public focus groups/depth interviews

Trapped birds

- 5.58 34 of the 40 public participants agreed with the proposal (24 strongly), two neither agreed nor disagreed and four disagreed.

Figure 49: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting? Public focus group/depth interview result



- 5.59 There was strong agreement that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting: several participants commented that this should not be its responsibility, but rather that of animal rescue charities.

“That’s not a firefighter’s job ... that sounds really harsh but there are the RSPCA and all of that who will attend these sorts of emergencies ... if they are trapped in nets then there are government-funded pet charities that should respond” (Brighton & Hove)

“I don’t really think that it should be up to the fire service anyway ... they shouldn’t be the first point of call. Again, if there is an animal in severe distress and there’s no other specialist equipment then that’s fine...” (Brighton & Hove)

“As for rescuing birds, I can see why the fire brigade are called, they have nice long ladders and they are not scared of climbing those ladders but then you will get the situation where if they are stuck at rescuing a stuck pigeon in a roof then some poor soul is stuck in a car and can’t be released so I do very much agree with Proposal 6. I think that will put the resources more where they are required when they are required” (Rother)

- ^{5.60} Some, though, caveated their agreement, stating that their support was conditional on animal rescue charities having the capacity to take sole responsibility for bird rescues. If they do not, then a delayed response approach such as that proposed for lift rescues was suggested – or at least some training and/or investment to increase other organisations’ ability to deal with such incidents.

“I think if I were to know that charities would have the equipment or there would be some way of them being able to help with any of the trapped animals, I would be fine with that” (Hastings)

“If the charities have the capacity to pick this burden up ... then I think it’s good but if the charities don’t then I think the fire service should still be prepared to step in if needs be. But I can understand them not taking the lead on these anymore ... rather than a complete stop, closer to the lift releases where you just don’t respond straight away and see if it can resolve itself or the charities can take care of it but if no one else is going to then stepping in at that point” (Eastbourne)

“I’m an avid animal lover. So, I’m afraid my response to this isn’t very positive, but I’m trying to be as objective as possible. I completely agree that the fire brigade shouldn’t be the first port of call, but I’d be interested to know whether you’re going to invest time and money in liaising with animal charities to let them know how to deal with those situations” (Lewes)

- ^{5.61} Indeed, those who disagreed with this proposal did so on the grounds that animal rescue charities almost certainly do not have the resources or capacity to respond to calls to trapped birds that would ordinarily have attracted an ESFRS response, particularly since the advent of the Covid-19 crisis.

“That’s a difficult one ... I wouldn’t want to see a bird struggling. I’ve tried to save a wild bird before and to try to get anyone to come out and assist you is virtually impossible ... I can see why they are proposing it because they are trying to save money but at the end of the day, it’s a life isn’t it. So, I don’t support that one” (Eastbourne)

“If you’re going to put this on to animal charities solely as a responsibility, there needs to be some kind of help for them doing that. I think it’ll really stress them out quite a lot during this current financial climate where a lot of charities like that will be receiving no donations ... I think that their resources will be really stretched ... it will probably be quite a difficult time to sort that out with them” (Lewes)

“I’ve worked with the RSPCA; I know they have very limited funds and really do struggle to attend birds trapped. I’ve also witnessed birds trapped which a response officer would struggle to get to so I’m not entirely happy with that one” (Rother)

- 5.62 Finally, informing the public about what they should do in the event of finding a trapped bird was also considered essential if a policy change is implemented.

“I feel like a lot of people do call the fire and rescue service because they’re not sure who to call. So, is it going to be emphasised that they should call the RSPCA first?” (Wealden)

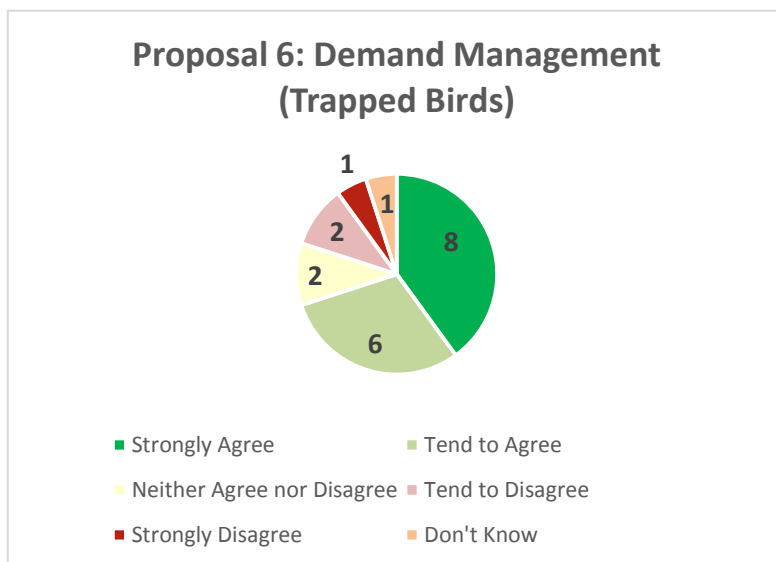
“My only question with the bird thing ...it’s not for them to do but in terms of animal welfare and things like that, there’s not really awareness of who to call ... there’s no emergency response for things like that so obviously the wildlife charities or the fire service will have to put that forward” (Brighton & Hove)

Maybe if you were to get a call about a bird, you could say, ‘I’m sorry, we’re not responding to this in a minute, but could you please call this number?’ I’d just like to make sure that I would, if I saw it, be able to reach someone who could do something positive about it” (Lewes)

Stakeholder webinar

- 5.63 Of the 20 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 14 agreed with the proposal (eight strongly), two neither agreed nor disagreed and three disagreed. There was a further one ‘don’t know’.

Figure 50: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting?
Stakeholder webinar result



- 5.64 Although there was a high degree of support for this proposal, there was some worry that members of the public or wildlife organisations may attempt risky bird rescues themselves in lieu of FRS attendance.

“I understand from local firefighters that animal rescues are normally only attended if/when a wildlife charity has requested FRS attendance because other people cannot reach it. If the FRS don't attend, what is the risk to people attempting to rescue the animals themselves without proper equipment?”

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system

Proposal 7: Changes to 4-watch duty system



ESFRS proposes to make changes to the duty system at its 24/7 fire stations that are crewed on the traditional 4-watch system

Current 'wholetime shift' duty system → 2 days, 2 nights, 4 days off

- Worked at Bohemia Road + The Ridge (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, and Preston Circus + Roedean (Brighton)

ESFRS → more efficient alternatives available that do not affect 24/7 immediate response or attendance standards e.g.

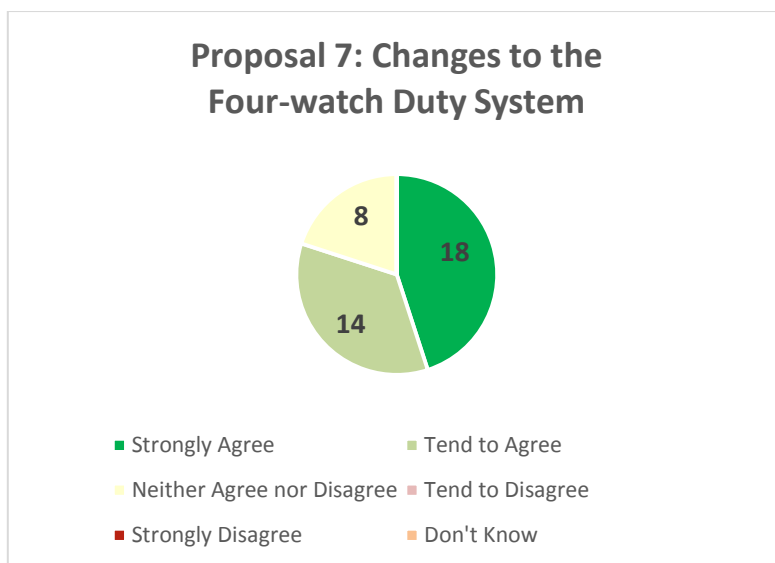
- 'Flexible Rostering Duty System' (at all above stations except The Ridge)
 - A team of firefighters plan their shifts between them in advance, to ensure their fire engines are always available
- 'Group Crewing Duty System' (ONLY at Preston Circus, Hove and Roedean)
 - Resources used flexibly between a "group" of stations – one or more stations supports the others in the "group" to cover sickness, holiday and other absence

Both options release a small number of posts for prevention, protection, training, flexible crewing pool

Public focus groups/depth interviews

5.65 Members of the public were asked whether, in principle, they agreed or disagreed with ESFRS reviewing crewing changes at five of its wholetime shift fire stations. 18 strongly agreed, 14 tended to agree and eight neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 51: Do you agree/disagree with a review of arrangements at the following ESFRS fire stations: Bohemia Road (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus (Brighton) and Roedean (Brighton)? Public focus group/depth interview result



5.66 For several participants (typically those who neither agreed nor disagreed), this proposal represents an internal matter on which that felt they could not, or indeed should not, comment.

"If it works for the firefighters ... it should be down to them and the fire brigade to discuss with the staff what's best suited to them ... I don't feel it's my place to decide or have an input on what a station should be working" (Hastings)

"I didn't know whether I agreed or disagreed really because it goes down to personal preference ... it's what works for them" (Eastbourne)

"It's a very personal thing. I'm not a firefighter. I don't know how much it's going to affect them" (Lewes)

"It's an internal system and I think the crews should sort this one out for themselves ... as it doesn't impair the safety of the public it's all okay with me" (Wealden)

- 5.67 Others did venture an opinion however, with some suggesting that the current system seems somewhat outdated and inefficient (both financially and in terms of firefighters being able to work to the best of their ability by the end of their last night shift).

"I've always thought that the two days and two nights on and then four off is very uneconomical. The rest of the world doesn't live like that ... I think the days of the old shift patterns are over" (Eastbourne)

"I have done two nights and two days in my job and ... it does become extremely exhausting after a while. It would be a personal opinion, but I think for anyone that shift pattern is tiring and I think to be on nights or to be on days is a much better option... It's extremely difficult and it's harder to work to your 100% if you are doing nights and days together; it's not a good match" (Eastbourne)

- 5.68 As such, they supported at least a review of the system to look at more flexible alternatives.

"It's good that they are realising that there should be a flexible approach..." (Brighton & Hove)

"It's good to look at different ways to cover the other stations because with the shift pattern they're doing at the moment, you can't plan very much" (Hastings)

"I can understand from my work though that the working practices from when I started to now have changed. I can understand wanting to modernise" (Hastings)

- 5.69 There was some disagreement as to the benefits or otherwise of duty system changes to firefighters themselves. Some felt that being able to plan shifts between themselves could result in a better work-life balance for staff, and that offering more flexibility may be what is required to attract a more diverse workforce to ESFRS.

"I think this is better as it allows the teams to plan life better off-duty" (Hastings)

"If the staff were able to plan between them and not have this strict shift pattern ... they can pick and choose the shifts that fit them and their family life as well as the needs of the station. And it frees them up a bit more to go off and cover another station. So, I do totally agree with that; I think that is the way forward" (Brighton & Hove)

“I’m not in favour of this shift work thing because different staff have different needs and when it comes to our families and things like that some people might prefer working nights, people might prefer doing days, some people might not mind what they do... It will either work or it won’t work but I think it opens it up more the interest to potential new firefighters joining knowing that you haven’t got this 2 days, 2 nights then 4 off ... there is more variety there for the staff to choose” (Brighton & Hove)

- 5.70 Others, though, could foresee difficulties in implementing changes to a system that has been in place for a long time – and which wholetime firefighters have based their lives around in terms of, for example, childcare and possible secondary employment.

“How do the firefighters feel about it? I assume the current system works at the moment, is it more beneficial to them doing two days, two nights and four days off? Firefighters might have childcare issues” (Eastbourne)

“I know people on the four-on, four-off. It works with childcare” (Wealden)

“That sort of system where they have a certain amount of set days off, does that allow them to have other occupations which now they’ll have to stop? And will there be some reluctance to change for that reason?” (Lewes)

- 5.71 There were also some worries around the mechanics of the flexible crewing system in particular: a few people (at Eastbourne especially) suggested that without strong management it could lead to unfairness if the more desirable shifts are ‘cherry-picked’ by more senior or forthright staff members. Moreover, a loss of crew cohesion as a result of no longer operating a watch-based system was a concern for one participant.

“It sounds like they would both work. But on the ‘Flexible Rostering Duty System’, if it’s just left up to them firefighters I assume there would be a way of somebody higher up double-checking and ensuring that they are always available and that it’s not being unfairly slanted in favour of one or two employees who happen to be bigger personalities and able to push through the shifts that they want against some of the maybe less strong personalities that are just getting side-lined into the less desirable shifts?” (Eastbourne)

“I’m in two minds ... could this potentially start squabbling with people who are slightly higher than others saying, ‘I want to have the better hours as opposed to the worst hours’. Would this not cause conflict or friction?” (Eastbourne)

“If all the firefighters buy into it and act in a fair and responsible manner then I don’t see any reason why it wouldn’t work. In the companies I’ve worked for when they’ve tried implementing systems that rely on us all behaving ourselves, there’s always one or two people who do take the mickey and push things entirely in their favour at everyone else cost. As long as there is some way of countering that and making sure it is actually being applied in a fair manner then I don’t see any reason why that’s not a good idea” (Eastbourne)

“With flexible shifts, I feel like the more desirable shifts would be quite fought over” (Wealden)

“The watch system, it’s a bit like the military ... would you want to be in a battle with this man sort of situation. If people grow up together then would you like to ‘have that man behind you in the fire’. There must be a lot of that feeling because it’s that kind of job. We are talking about frontline here ... people who actually have to go in and rely on their mates so I can see that there could be a problem” (Eastbourne)

5.72 If the decision is taken to make changes to the four-watch duty system, it was considered imperative that ESFRS fully engage its staff in the process at all stages – and that the Service continuously monitors the effectiveness or otherwise of any new arrangements.

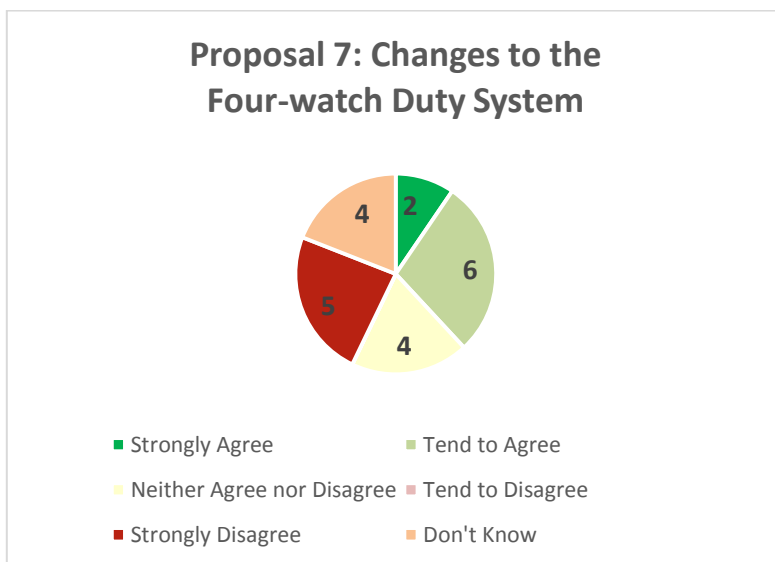
“It’s very important to take your staff with you in these things, I’ve managed changes myself and if you don’t take your staff, it tends to take longer to bed in” (Hastings)

“I think this is another one I support with the caveat there should be continued engagement and the results of the changes should be monitored and disclosed. I’m prepared to trust the expertise of the planner, but I want it authenticated by what actually happens in the real world” (Brighton & Hove)

Stakeholder webinar

5.73 Of the 21 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, eight agreed with the proposal, four neither agreed nor disagreed and five strongly disagreed. There were a further four ‘don’t knows’.

Figure 52: Do you agree/disagree with a review of crewing arrangements at the following ESFRS fire stations: Bohemia Road (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus (Brighton) and Roedean (Brighton)? Stakeholder webinar result



Other issues: Building and home inspections

Building and Home Inspections



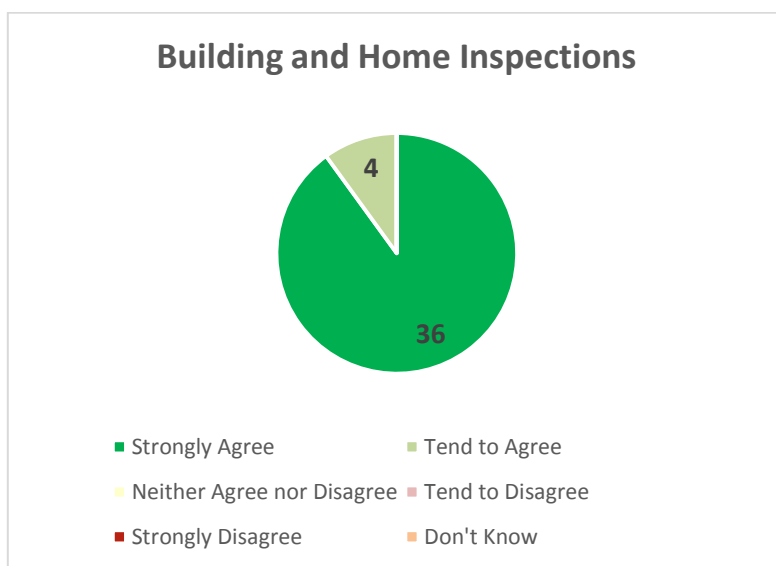
**One of ESFRS' key areas of focus is to ensure fires are prevented and buildings are safe (prevention + protection)
By reviewing its response models ESFRS will release resources to...**

- Do more prevention + protection work
- Have capacity for more building inspections/visits to offer advice and ensure compliance with legislation

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 5.74 All public participants agreed that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety – 36 strongly.

Figure 53: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety? Public focus group/depth interview result



- 5.75 The old adage 'prevention is better than cure' was frequently raised across all discussions. Indeed, the overwhelming opinion was that it is better to prevent incidents before they occur to improve both public and firefighter safety and economic efficiency – and the Grenfell disaster was noted several times as a reason for more building inspections in particular.

"It sounds like a very efficient use of resources and certainly would help to prevent some of the more serious incidents from happening in the first place. That can only be good so I'm very satisfied with that" (Eastbourne)

"They are in a position where they should focus more on prevention and give it a bit more resource ... I think in the long run it is going to be better for everyone" (Wealden)

"I think it's really very important that you are talking about prevention and protection, which is absolutely essential ... Just to sit there and wait to run down your pole is not really the answer!" (Eastbourne)

“I work in a primary school and one of the topics we have is the fire of London. We’ve had Hastings fire crew come down and the children love it and they do remember what they are taught” (Rother)

“I think prevention is always better for everything anyway. It’s probably going to be more cost effective than having to send loads of people out” (Brighton & Hove)

“Absolutely agree ... Grenfell has brought this to the fore; all the things that happened there that should never have happened. There’s a need to review all the safety procedures all the time, it’s an ongoing situation; you don’t wait four or five years until the next building regulations are looked at again. If you see something that is going on, bring it up and change it ... do not wait for the disasters to happen before you do anything” (Wealden)

5.76 An interesting perspective was offered by one Eastbourne participant, who said that:

“In Eastbourne ... we’ve got a lot of hotels here and some of them will be struggling after Covid to pay for anything, let alone improvements to their fire safety. If somebody can go along and say, ‘Look you are doing a good job but if you did this, this and this, that might help a bit’, I think that’s really very important” (Eastbourne)

5.77 One Rother participant stressed the importance of ensuring a good balance between prevention, protection and response activity – and a couple of others wanted to see evidence of the contribution the former in particular has made to reducing incident levels prior to endorsing any expansion.

“I suppose it’s getting the balance between the two at the right level and also those resources to be released, what will be the training necessary to convert them from firefighters to fire preventers?” (Rother)

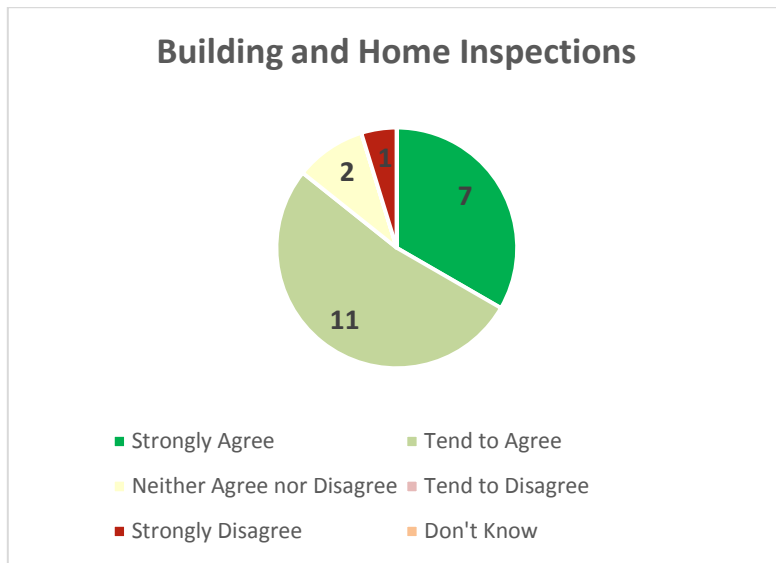
“Presumably there’s been an increase in that over previous years ... has it had a measurable impact on reducing the number of fires say?” (Rother)

“If you are rebalancing the budget to increase the amount of money that you are spending on prevention, I’d like to see some correlated figures so that there is a correlation between the amount spent and the decrease in number of fires. Because I don’t know whether building regulations have changed and that it’s harder to start a fire or there could be a number of other factors that could lead to a reduction in fires ... not just that ‘we are putting more staff into it because we think it’s a good thing to prevent more fires and here’s the figures to show the fires have gone down’. I think you’ve got to show that fires have gone down and one of the reasons is the fire prevention officers roles and not just better building regulations” (Hastings)

Stakeholder webinar

5.78 Of the 21 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 18 agreed, two neither agreed nor disagreed and one strongly disagreed that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety.

Figure 54: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety? Stakeholder webinar result



5.79 It would seem that only those with reservations around more building and home inspections commented at this juncture, primarily suggesting that any increase in prevention and protection should not be made at the expense of front-line response.

“Isn't this just about cutting the front line to increase prevention and protection? These proposals will fundamentally affect the North Wealden safety”

“How does money switched from the front line to admin help safety? Ultimately, when we dial 999 we expect a fire engine, not a man with a clipboard to advise how we could have avoided the call”

“I responded that I tend to agree with increasing inspections etc, but that should not be read to mean that I agree with cuts in front-line services to fund”

“Yes is the answer but not at the cost of front line services”

Other issues: Finances and Investment

Finances and Investment



ESFRS' budget for 2020/21 = £39.7m

–Over 75% of spending is on employees (vast majority on firefighters)

Uncertainty about funding beyond 2020/21

–Modelling → need for new savings of between £0.7m and £3.5m by 2024/25 to balance budget
 –In addition to savings of £9.8m made since 2010/11 and already planned for period to 2024/25

	2019/2020	2020/2021	%
Employees	301	301	76%
Burning Expenses	100	101	25%
Capital Financing	0.9	0.8	2%
Gross Service Expenditure	410	410	103%
Income and Specific Grants	-37	-2.4	-6%
Net Contribution to Reserves	17	11	3%
Net Budget Requirement	390	397	100%

Finances and Investment



» Since 2010/11, ESFRS is much more dependent on council tax income
 » Has increased its charge by just under the maximum amount allowed by Govt. in each of the last 4 years (between 1.94% – 2.94%)

- Average (Band D) household across County + City now pays £95.53 per year for ESFRS - £1.84 a week

» Considering the funding uncertainties, ESFRS has identified 2 options to increase funding through council tax in 2021/22

- Option A
 - Small increase of up to 3%
 - Average amount paid (Band D) would increase by up to £2.87 per year - just under 6p a week
- Option B
 - More than 3% increase
 - Each 1% increase → Average amount paid (Band D) would rise by 96p per year (under 2p a week)

	2019/2020	2020/2021	%
Government Grants	0.0	0.2	0%
Business rates	116	85	22%
Council tax	272	279	70%
Total Funding	390	397	100%

? Any questions?
 Would you be willing to pay more for ESFRS next year?
 If so, what level of increase?

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 5.80 All but three public participants said they would be willing to pay more for ESFRS next year (one said they were not prepared to and there were two 'don't knows'). Among the 37 who were prepared to bear an increase, opinion was almost equally split between those who would tolerate an up to 3% rise (18) and those who would tolerate an over 3% rise (19).
- 5.81 Those who supported a more than 3% rise typically commented that the weekly increase would be 'less than a cup of coffee' and considered it a more than reasonable price to pay for an "essential" public service.

"I think that it's absolutely right that we are the beneficiaries of the fire service and we should pay for it; local people should pay for a vital local service. Nobody likes paying council tax but its inarguable it's a public good" (Brighton & Hove)

"I think it's an essential service that needs the investment to enable it to maintain the levels we need and expect" (Lewes)

"Less than a cup of coffee. To me, it's a bit of a no brainer to know that this work is going on, particularly the prevention side which is showing such great results" (Rother)

"Of course, I'd pay more. Crikey, a pint of beer is three quid for goodness sake. It's peanuts isn't it? I would pay considerably more to have a fire service which is not constrained in any way" (Wealden)

- 5.82 Those who supported a less than 3% increase did so on the grounds of affordability, for themselves and for others – and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on people's finances was also raised in the context of keeping increases to a minimum currently.

"I think the council tax is exorbitant and I can see the point of needing to increase it to fund the service but ... I think to have an increase of more than 3% is completely unacceptable..." (Eastbourne)

"I'd be persuaded to pay a little bit more but not everybody will be in that position" (Lewes)

"I agree with option A. I think it's good to increase money towards the fire and rescue service and yes, it's a small amount of money, but there are so many households where every penny counts, and it does add up to be more than that small amount. Council tax can be a lot to some people ... and I think increasing it by a lot isn't the best idea" (Hastings)

"I work in the hospitality industry; I'd be lucky if I have a job by next year so I'm not for any council tax increases beyond what is absolutely necessary ... I don't agree with a more than 3% increase; I think I'm paying absolutely at the maximum because I can't afford it... You'll end up with a whole load of Band D people where I sit in life who can't actually afford to pay... It looks so little doesn't it, when you look at it, and I think to myself, 'Why am I even talking about this, what's £2.87 a year, it's nothing?' But council tax, you can't look at it in terms of one service because I know it's broken out into social care and the policing and the fire service and all of these things are really important, but I think they are pushing the boundaries a bit" (Eastbourne)

“Obviously the funding is needed, but what with everything that’s going on with Covid a lot of people will probably struggle because no one knows what’s going to happen next year... I would definitely opt for option A at the moment ... maybe for the following year review it but maybe start off with 3% ...and then in 2021-22 review it again and then maybe 4% ... At the end of the day everybody’s going to benefit ... but because of the situation financially at the moment everybody’s been hit by it... Now is not the right time to say, ‘We’re whacking up your bills’” (Brighton & Hove)

- 5.83 The few who objected to or were unsure about any rise at all did so on the grounds that they already pay a significant amount of council tax – and even a few of those who would be prepared and able to pay more acknowledged that others would not be. There was also concern that other local services would also request similar precept rises, further increasing affordability.

“I don’t agree with either of them. In Brighton specifically, we pay a huge amount in council tax already; it was raised 6% last year or the year before and we are constantly charged through council tax ... I’m around a lot of people that can’t make ends meet at the best of times ... although it might only be £2.87 per year increase, for a family that’s a dinner ... I understand that things need to be changed ... but I think it’s fundamentally unfair that all these services keep on just applying to council tax, council tax, council tax” (Brighton & Hove)

“An increase of that amount is not worth worrying about, but it is if everyone else is asking for that increase...” (Hastings)

“I think if you, say, had 5% for the fire service, there might be pressure on ... why shouldn’t the mainstream East Sussex and local district councils have the same...” (Rother)

- 5.84 Many participants across the spectrum of views felt strongly that more money should be forthcoming from central government – and several urged ESFRS and ESFA to lobby for this. It was, though, acknowledged that the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the public purse makes it highly unlikely that further funds will be available in the near future.

“They should be sorting funding and lobbying government to actually redistribute their funds fairly...” (Brighton & Hove)

“I realise that money is a problem, but the other thing is central government should be providing some of this as well ... I don’t earn a huge salary ... so anything to do with council tax increases for me are an affordability issue” (Eastbourne)

“To make a potentially very reductive and simple point ... if the government just gave them more funding, we wouldn’t have this issue of having to make reductions” (Lewes)

“I find it distressing that government is putting this onto the public rather than themselves” (Lewes)

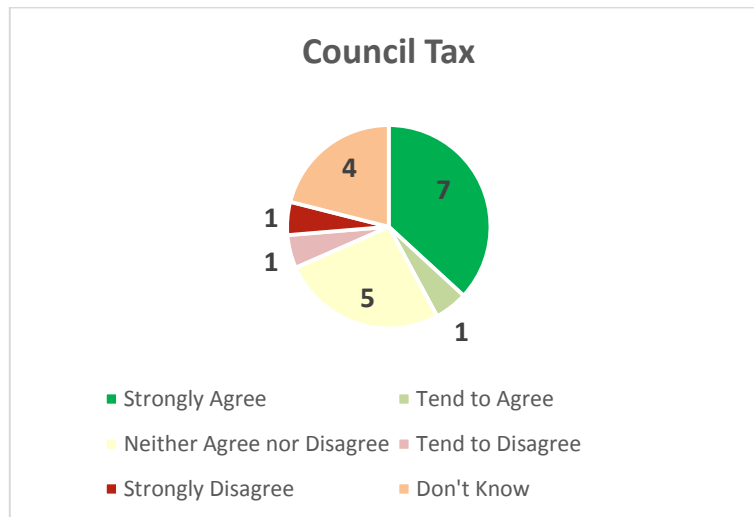
“We are in such a terrible, dire situation now with this pandemic and the billions of pounds that have been spent on supporting people’s salaries and so on. What’s going to happen in the future? What we are talking about now may be academic frankly because they’ve got billions of pounds to find. It’s not a question of asking the Government to give you a bit more, there isn’t any more anywhere, maybe tax really has to go up as well as higher council tax” (Eastbourne)

Stakeholder webinar

Council tax

- 5.85 Of the 19 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, eight agreed (seven strongly) that they would be willing to pay more in council tax for ESFRS next year, five neither agreed nor disagreed and two disagreed. There were four 'don't knows'.

Figure 55: Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22)? Stakeholder webinar result

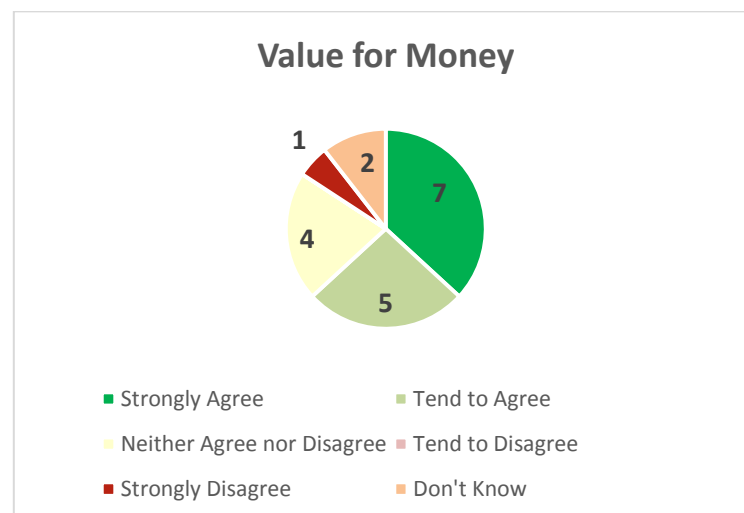


- 5.86 16 of the 19 stakeholders offered a view as to the level of increase they would be prepared to tolerate: five opted for an up to 3% rise; four for more than 4%; and there were seven 'don't knows'.

Value for money²³

- 5.87 Of the 19 stakeholders who elected to answer this question, 12 agreed (seven strongly) that ESFRS offers value for money, four neither agreed nor disagreed and one disagreed. There were two 'don't knows'.

Figure 56: To what extent do you agree or disagree that ESFRS offers value for money? Stakeholder webinar result



²³Due to time constraints, this was not discussed at the public focus groups/depth interviews.

- 5.88 In discussion, there were questions and comments around the level of “back-office” and other non-operational savings considered, and the need to lobby central government for more funding;

“What ‘back office’ savings have been considered to reduce the impact on front-line services (e.g. reducing salaries of a few very highly paid staff, reducing use of expensive consultants, simplifying service reporting, bring the call centre back to East Sussex)?”

“Why are efficiency savings all made at operational end, which the fire service inspectorate reported were of a good standard, and not including other areas of the service?”

“Since the shortfall has been caused by the reduction in central government grants, why isn’t increased central government funding being considered as another option? As a Councillor, I would certainly support any lobbying of central government for proper funding of such a critical service”

Other issues: General

Public focus groups/depth interviews

- 5.89 Several public participants commented positively on the overall ‘Planning for a Safer Future’ agenda, feeling that ESFRS is trying to do the best it can with the resources it has.

“Every proposal makes sense to me ... the idea seems to be making things more efficient but not necessarily reducing the service. Improving it by making small changes that actually will make quite a big impact. So, they also seem really logical and sensible to me” (Brighton & Hove)

“The story, if I can call it that, is being delivered to us by people who have been looking at this for a long time and understand it fully. And they’re coming at it from exactly the right direction. So, it all sounds very reasonable and sensible and the right thing to do” (Lewes)

“Overall I can see that you have to make the best of what you’ve got” (Lewes)

- 5.90 However, while they were generally positive, there was interest among participants in the views of firefighters and their representative bodies, with many questions and comments along the lines of:

“What have they said about the proposals? The Union; have you run it past them yet?” (Brighton & Hove)

“How do the Unions find these proposals?” (Eastbourne)

“What do the Unions have to say about these proposals? Because they know more about it than we do” (Lewes)

“Have the actual firefighters been asked these questions and how do they feel about all the changes?” (Rother)

“We’ve had the side of the story of the people in charge, as it were, we haven’t heard the side of the story of the average firefighter. So, I tend to be more cautious. I don’t know both sides of the story. So, I could give more valid opinion if I had both” (Lewes)

- 5.91 Other general concerns and anxieties were around the future impacts of climate change and local development on ESFRS' resources.

"It worries me that with climate change, extreme weather, we're going to have terrible floods, wildfires. So, having less at a time when we seem to have unknown changes..." (Lewes)

"The statistics are based upon what has happened in the past and we've got these environmental climatic changes that are quite extraordinary now. I'm thinking about things like forest fires as well; does that mean that the crew need a different type of kit for dealing with those things than they would be dealing with building fires?" (Eastbourne)

"The developments are going to put presumably additional pressure on the fire service so it's something that we've got to bear in mind while we are talking about cutting and making all these cuts. With all the building that's going on, there's going to be more demand" (Rother)

- 5.92 It should be noted here that a couple of participants at the Wealden and Rother groups had received leaflets through their door in opposition to ESFRS' proposals, which they felt were in contradiction to the information given during the focus group session. The main concern was that the conflicting information will cause confusion, and that if people read the leaflet only (and not the Service's background consultation documents) they may have a wholly negative and uncomprehensive perspective on the proposals.

"I know they sent leaflets through our door saying they are losing some of their staff because of your changes and from what you tell me ... they are not losing staff. So that's why I sit on the fence a little bit. The leaflet you get through is just they are losing an engine and they are cutting all staff and then when actually when you look at what you are proposing, it doesn't marry up but that doesn't mean to say that they are wrong/you are right or you are right/they are wrong" (Wealden)

"Through my door yesterday came a leaflet from the FBU and it's quite a worrying document when you read it without going through the process of actually looking at the documents that the fire brigade have put together. It concerns me that if this has gone through everyone's door ... they will have a totally different understanding than others that have looked at the full document. It's quite concerning when you look at it because it talks about cuts, cuts, cuts rather than about the progress that's been made..." (Rother)

- 5.93 Finally, it was said that: *"There needs to be continued engagement with the public so that we can be reassured that the delivery of the plans has been successful and has the way in which it is hoped and expected".* (Brighton & Hove)

Stakeholder webinar

- 5.94 Other, more general, issues raised at the stakeholder webinar were around:

"Flawed" and "out of date" data

"Why is the data two years out of date?"

"Your Station Risk Profiles do not add up. Coverage percentages are out by up to 10%. How can you risk the lives of residents on flawed data?"

“It took 4 years for Wealden to fail to provide a viable Local Plan. Your data as seen in the Station Risk Profiles is error prone at best”

“Incident figures don't relate to callout figures, why aren't these included? This gives a false picture”

The consideration given to current and future population and development increases

“With all the new developments that's are planned for Wealden, i.e. the 1000 houses in Uckfield so a possible increase of 3-4000 car movements and many more from Hailsham and other areas, how do ESFRS foresee managing response times around this?”

“With the substantial increase in development of new homes in East Sussex over the next 10 years are the panel confident in their new proposals will be adequate?”

Undertaking the Planning for a Safer Future consultation during the Covid-19 pandemic – and the need to revisit the proposals to account for its impacts

“Covid-19 has shown the foolishness of cutting frontline staff until the services fail. Will these proposals be revisited in the light of the Covid-19 experience?”

“Why no review of IRMP due to impact of Covid?”

The views of ESFRS' staff and representative bodies, and the implications of the consultation proposals being rejected

“How much of the proposed changes are voluntary and have employees been consulted?”

“Are you concerned with the unions already rejecting these proposals that future strikes may be a direct result of some of these proposed cuts?”

“What happens if these proposals are not agreed? You said these have taken years to build? Would it be back to the drawing board completely or would it be tweaking?”

The potential future impact of climate change on ESFRS' resources

“How have you assessed the additional flooding risk that will result from climate change?”

“How have you assessed the increase in wildfires that will result from climate change? How many more call outs do you anticipate? How many engines does a 'typical' wildfire require?”

The negative impact of similar past changes made by West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service

“West Sussex FRS implemented similar changes 4-5 years ago. Their most recent inspection report rated it as one of the worst Fire Services in the country (inadequate in its protection of the public and looking after its staff; and requiring improvement in the way that it keeps people safe and secure and the way it uses its resources). How will you ensure that these similar proposals in East Sussex do not lead to the same outcome?”

“Significant additional funding (£34m) has had to be allocated to address the shortfalls in West Sussex (far outweighing the range of savings anticipated by this consultation document). How have potential downside costs been factored into the calculation of savings?”

The 'too narrow' focus of the consultation

“I would also note that for an exercise aimed at addressing infrastructure and front line resourcing the discussion was overly almost exclusively around personnel and freeing up people to become more flexible. As an organisation, tasked with dealing with a wide range of situations and requiring a wide range of solutions, the tools and systems needed are wide and varied, including IT support, communications, training, mechanics and HR. I believe that very little of these were considered or presented”

Equalities issues

“A general question regarding your Equality Impact assessment in the info you previously sent out via email link. If I read it correctly, your EIA seemed to be saying that people with disabilities would be at greater risk because of these plans, however, it was not clear to me what the increased risks to disabled people would be. It would be helpful to understand this more clearly”

6. Submissions

Introduction

- 6.1 During the formal consultation process, 360 submissions were received via email, letter and telephone from residents, staff, organisations and stakeholders. The table overleaf shows the breakdown of contributors by type.
- 6.2 All submissions have been read and reported in this chapter. Most have been reviewed in a thematic, summary format in order to identify the range of views and issues as well as common themes, though some that have presented unique or distinctive arguments, that refer to different evidence or were submitted on behalf of organisations and individuals representing groups of people, have been summarised individually for accessibility and to highlight their main arguments and any alternative proposals.

It is also important to note that the following section is a report of the views expressed by submission contributors.

In some cases, these views may not be supported by the available evidence - and while ORS has not sought to highlight or correct those that make incorrect statements or assumptions, this should be borne in mind when considering the responses.

Table 15: Summary of submission contributors by type

STAFF GROUPS AND STAFF MEMBERS (40)			
'Blue Brighton' staff Red Watch, Station 83 (Crowborough) Station 85 (Forest Row)		Swift Water Rescue Team, Crowborough Fire Station Wadhurst Fire Station 35 individual staff members	
REPRESENTATIVE BODIES (6)			
Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Fire Brigades Union (FBU): Women's and LGBT+ Sections Fire Officers Association (FOA)		Fire & Rescue Services Association (FRSA) 2 x individual FBU representatives	
PARTNER ORGANISATIONS (3)			
Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service	Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service	Sussex Police	
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, COUNCILS AND COUNCILLORS (15)			
Cllr Steve Bell (Leader of the Conservative Group at Brighton & Hove City Council) Brighton & Hove Labour Group	Green Councillors of Brighton & Hove Green Party in Lewes Hastings Borough Council Hastings & Rye Liberal Democrats	Lewes District Council Huw Merriman MP Cllr Andrew Mier Lloyd Russell Moyle MP & Cllr Imogen Makepeace	Maria Caulfield MP Cllr Adrian Ross Cllr Bob Stadley Wealden District Council Wealden Green Party
TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS (22)			
Battle Town Council Berwick Parish Council Camberhurst Parish Council Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council Chiddingly Parish Council Crowborough Town Council Crowhurst Parish Council Fairlight Parish Council	Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council Lewes Town Council Newhaven Town Council Peacehaven Town Council Pett Parish Council Plumpton, East Chilmington, Streat & St John Without Parish Council Rotherfield Parish Council	Rye Town Council Seaford Town Council South Heighton Parish Council Telscombe Parish Council Uckfield Town Council Wadhurst Parish Council Withyham Parish Council	
OTHER SPECIAL INTEREST/COMMUNITY GROUPS (7)			
Crowborough & District Chamber of Commerce Country Carers Forestry Commission Hastings Old Town Residents' Association		Nettleton & Dudeney Residents' Association Sussex & Surrey National Farmers' Union West Sussex Wildlife Protection	
INDIVIDUAL RESIDENTS (267)			

Summary tables of themes from written submissions

- 6.3 Below and overleaf are summary tables of the main themes emerging from the written submissions received²⁴. If making similar points, the submissions made by individuals, stakeholders and organisations have been reported thematically in the tables only - whereas any that are significantly different or more detailed are also included in a fuller format later in this chapter in an attempt to make these often-lengthy documents as accessible as possible.

²⁴All submissions were read and classified by EFRS.

Views on the Planning for a Safer Future proposals

- 6.4 The table below shows that Proposal's 2 (changes to day-crewed duty stations) and 3 (changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines) attracted the most attention. The former was referenced by 103 respondents, most in opposition. Similarly, 107 respondents offered their views on Proposal 3, again with the majority opposing it.

Table 16: Comments received on the Planning for a Safer Future proposals – by proposal

PROPOSAL	GENERAL COMMENT	AGREEMENT	DISAGREEMENT	TOTAL COMMENTS
1: Operational Response Plan (ORP)	20	6	6	32
2: Changes to day-crewed duty stations	27	5	71	103
3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines	26	5	76	107
4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings	11	6	21	38
5a: Changes to the provision and crewing of aerial appliances	11	4	13	28
5b: Changes to the provision and crewing of other specialist appliances	5	4	12	21
6a: Demand Management: Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs)	8	6	7	21
6b: Demand Management: Lift Releases	7	6	6	20
6c: Demand Management: Trapped birds	7	10	11	28
7: Changes to the four-watch duty system	10	4	12	26
Building and home inspections	4	13	0	17
Council tax	10	7	1	18

Proposal 1: Operational Response Plan (ORP)

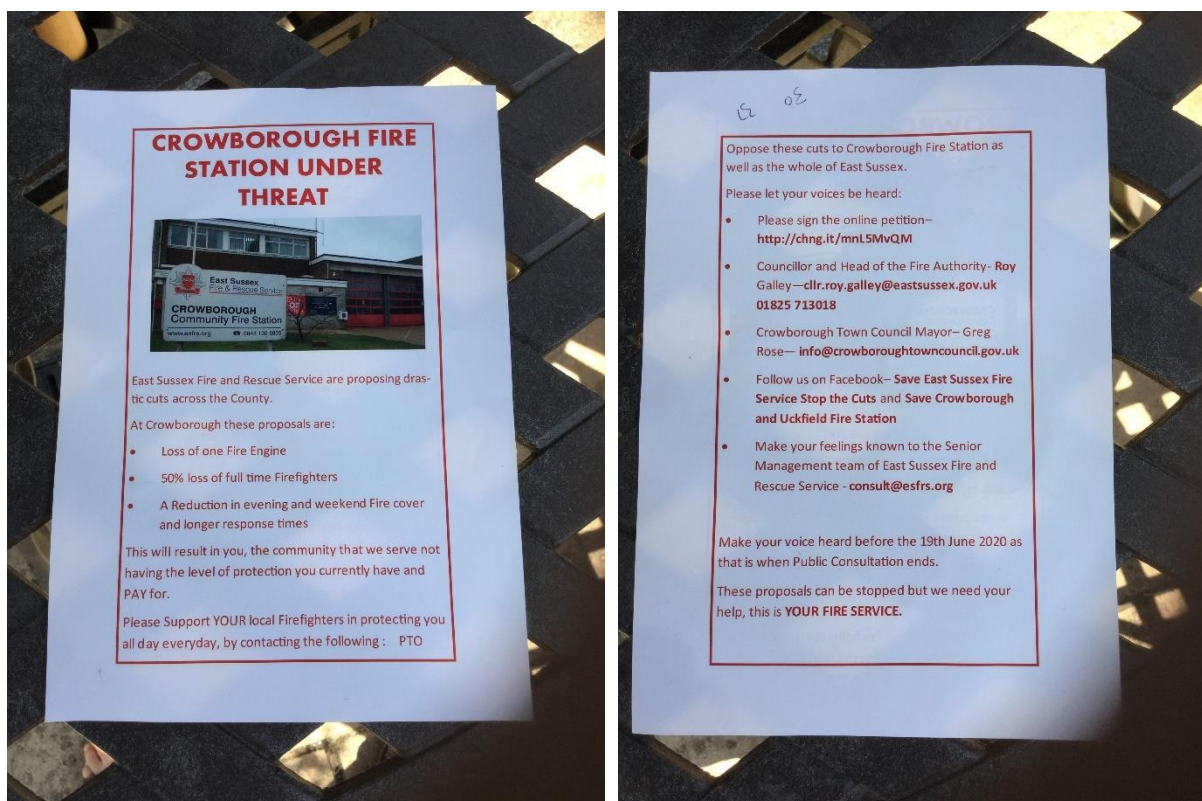
- 6.5 The ORR was supported by some as an attempt to improve county-wide FRS coverage, but opposed by others as disingenuous. Indeed, it was said that the promise of 18 immediate response fire engines at the start of each day under is “*misleading*” as only 14 will be crewed by on-station firefighters responding to an incident within a minute. The remaining would be either be available on a five-minute turnout or jump crewed and so potentially unavailable.

Proposals 2 and 3: Changes to day-crewed duty stations and changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

- 6.6 The most common reasons for opposing changing from day-crewed to day-only duty systems at the six relevant fire stations were: the prospect of longer response times during the evening, overnight and on weekends; the difficulties likely to be involved in recruiting sufficient on-call staff to cover those periods; and the possible impact on wholtime shift stations if having to travel into day-crewed areas (and indeed to the on-call areas currently covered by day-crewed stations) when there is no immediate response there. It was

also said that the current day-crewed stations house most of ESFRS' special vehicles, and that it will be difficult to ensure on-call firefighters' competencies on all of them due to their availability and capacity.

- 6.7 Opposition to removing the second fire engines on seven fire stations was largely on the grounds that these appliances offer significant county-wide resilience and allow swift safe systems of work at serious incidents. It was said that whenever these resources are available, residents in their areas get a faster two pump attendance and fire cover within five minutes if the primary appliance is unavailable. Furthermore, ESFRS is not required to make standby moves, thus maintaining cover on other station grounds that would otherwise be negatively impacted by this.
- 6.8 In terms of specific station areas, Crowborough was by far the most mentioned in the submissions, with respondents opposing the proposed crewing changes and the loss of the second fire engine there chiefly on the grounds that: response times will be longer in the evenings, overnight and at weekends resulting in increased risk to life, property and land; the station is in close proximity to Ashdown Forest and the A26; the town is the *"largest inland town in East Sussex"* and still growing; and is *"out on a limb"* and some distance away from neighbouring stations.
- 6.9 On a related note, there was also significant concern around the same proposals for Uckfield – both from Uckfield residents (again largely in terms of population and housing increases and proximity to Ashdown Forest) and from Crowborough residents worried about resilience levels in the north of the county.
- 6.10 It should be noted that many of the responses relating to Crowborough (and to a lesser extent Uckfield) seemed to have been submitted by residents following receipt of the following flyer, who referenced its exact text in their submissions. This may account for some mistaken perceptions that the station is earmarked for closure.



- 6.11 Newhaven and Seaford were frequently mentioned in the context that the proposed changes there are unjustified in terms of levels of industry and industrial development (in Newhaven specifically), growing populations and residential development and tourist risk (in Seaford specifically). Several submissions also

noted a 12.5% increase in calls at both stations, information residents again seem to have been given via a locally delivered campaign flyer.

- 6.12 Finally in terms of specific areas, the proposed removal of the second fire engine from Rye was opposed by several respondents, who were concerned about longer second appliance response times and enhanced risk to life and property in incidents requiring more than one fire engine – especially as the town is on the “*very edge of the county*” and at some distance from neighbouring fire stations. Particular local risks were highlighted also, most notably: the high number of high-risk heritage properties in the citadel area of the town (the incident at the George Hotel was frequently mentioned in this context); seasonal tourist risk at places like Camber Sands; several areas of conservation and special scientific interest; and a high level of water risk.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

- 6.13 The proposals for Hastings were mentioned 38 times, with 21 respondents opposing the proposed crewing change at The Ridge (from wholetime to day-crewed) again on the general grounds of longer response times meaning greater risk to life – and more specifically as the station covers Hastings Old Town with its many listed buildings and ‘back to back’ layout. The potential for longer response times was an issue not only for respondents from Hastings itself, but also for those from the more rural areas between Hastings and Rye to which The Ridge responds currently.

Proposal 5a: Changes to the provision and crewing of aerial appliances

- 6.14 Many staff members and the representative bodies objected to the proposals for Aerial Ladder Appliances (ALP’s), particularly that those at Eastbourne and Hastings would, in future, be share crewed with a fire engine at those stations. Their primary objection was that the use of either vehicle would put the other out of action, resulting either in potentially unsafe practices at high-rise incidents (if the fire engine is out and the ALP is unavailable) or delays at incidents requiring a standard appliance (if the ALP is out and the fire engine is unavailable). In light of this, many demands for ALP’s to be single crewed were made.
- 6.15 In this context, there was particular concern around share crewing the Hastings ALP with the proposed second appliance at Bohemia Road in light of the fact the latter would likely be frequently mobilised on evenings and weekends if The Ridge becomes a day-crewed station (thus incapacitating the ALP).

Proposal 5b: Changes to the provision and crewing of other specialist appliances

- 6.16 There was worry among some respondents about losing 4x4 off-road vehicles from service, particularly that at Wadhurst Fire Station. Its removal was considered unacceptable, primarily due to the wildfire risk posed by Ashdown Forest, the rurality of the area and its difficult terrain. The retention of the swift water rescue team in light of climate change and more frequent flooding events was also strongly advocated in several submissions.

Proposal 6: Demand management

- 6.17 While there was some support for ESFRS no longer routinely attending AFA activations and incidents involving trapped birds and delaying its response to lift rescues – many staff members, representative bodies and other stakeholders advocated a continuance of current policy. Their main reasoning was that: it can never be known at the outset whether an AFA activation is an actual fire; confinement in a lift can be traumatic and so a swift response should be seen as a humanitarian gesture; and knowing the FRS will not be attending to

a trapped bird might result in members of the public and animal charities putting themselves in danger while attempting a rescue.

- 6.18 It was also often said that these types of incidents enable firefighters to familiarise themselves with their built environments and interact with businesses, organisations and communities and that bird rescues in particular are a positive means of real-life training with the ALP outside the ‘emergency’ environment.

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch shift duty system

- 6.19 Staff and representative bodies in particular criticised the proposed move away from the four-watch duty system toward a ‘less family friendly’ flexible rostering system, which they said would also result in the ‘destruction’ of the watch system that *“is the bedrock of the fire service and contributes enormously to our effectiveness”* (staff member)²⁵.

Home and building inspections

- 6.20 More home and building inspections were supported as an important means of prevention and protection, though there were some comments that they should not be increased at the expense of front-line response services.

ESFRS’ finances into the future

- 6.21 Those who commented generally felt that ESFRS does currently provide value for money, but some said that perceptions might change in future if the Planning for a Safer Future proposals are implemented.

Overall

- 6.22 The table overleaf summarises the frequency with which common themes were raised in the submissions. It shows that by far the most often raised viewpoint was that the proposals represent a reduction in resources that will lead to longer response times and enhanced risk to life and property.

- 6.23 Other commonly recurring themes were around:

The need to consider the impact and implications of the current Covid-19 pandemic prior to making significant resourcing decisions;

The effect of the proposals on firefighters’ wellbeing and work-life balance;

The legitimacy of the data used for the Operational Response Review; and

ESFRS funding and the prospect of lobbying Government for a more realistic settlement.

²⁵The main objections raised by many staff to this proposal are covered in the FBU’s responses, which have been summarised later in this chapter.

Table 17: Comments received on the Planning for a Safer Future proposals – other common themes

THEME	NUMBER OF TIMES RAISED
Cutting resources/increasing response times will cost public and firefighter lives	111
Need to wait for the impact and outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic prior to making decisions	24
The proposals will affect firefighters' wellbeing/work-life balance/childcare arrangements	20
Out of date data used/data is different to fire stations' log books	15
ESFRS requires more funding from Government/need to lobby for more funding/the Government has not asked for reductions	13
Need clarification on 'slightly longer' response times	11
Should use wholtime firefighters to cover the evening and weekend periods/on-call staff lack experience and training	11
Insufficient on-call firefighters currently; more on-call firefighters needed; short-term contracts should be ended	11
Recruitment levels	5
Standbys are increasing	3
Requests for information on response times	2

Views on ESFRS and resourcing more generally

^{6.24} As for comments on ESFRS and its resources more widely, the two most common concerns by some considerable distance were the need for adequate resourcing in light of rising populations and household numbers – and to properly accommodate risks associated with climate change. Wildfires and flooding were most frequently raised in relation to the latter. There was also some feeling that Planning for a Safer Future is merely a cost-cutting exercise.

Table 18: Comments received on the Planning for a Safer Future proposals – ESFRS and resourcing

THEME	NUMBER OF TIMES RAISED
More resources are needed not fewer, especially in light of rising population/household numbers	80
More resources are needed to cater for climate change risks (wildfires and flooding in particular)	58
Proposals are a cost-cutting exercise	25
Thanks to/respect for firefighters and the FRS	12
Managers and support staff should be reduced, not front-line staff	10
References to large-scale past incidents (e.g. George Hotel, Claremont Hotel)	10
Reductions are being made in areas rated 'good' by HMICFRS	5
Need to consider amalgamation of/tripartite agreements and collaborative working between blue light services	2

Views on the consultation process

- 6.25 Finally, ESFRS' classification shows that 47 responses opposed the decision to undertake such a significant consultation during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a further five requesting a moratorium until the implications of the crisis for the FRS are better known. 39 respondents criticised the consultation itself as flawed and/or biased, citing: leading questions; cumbersome, misleading and unclear information; "massaged" data; and a perception that it is a 'done deal'. Moreover, six people said the consultation document and questionnaire did not reflect what they had heard elsewhere, via petitions and leaflets for example: in fact, a couple explicitly said they had changed their minds about the proposals (from opposition to support) after reading the former.

Summaries of detailed and/or 'representative' submissions

- 6.26 As previously mentioned, some written submissions have been summarised in detail to highlight their main arguments and any alternative proposals. Those reported have been chosen either because they are particularly complex, well-evidenced or raise several 'different' issues to those being repeated by a number of respondents - or because they have been written to represent the views of larger groups of people (for example staff groups and representative bodies; and politicians, local councils or political parties/groups writing on behalf of their constituents).
- 6.27 These submissions are included in Appendix 2 of this report. They have been made available in full to Fire Authority members for their consideration, but the précis are offered in an attempt to make these often-lengthy documents as accessible as possible, and we believe they are faithful summaries of the key points made.

Standardised submissions

- 6.28 In addition to the unique submissions reported above, 152 copies of a templated questionnaire response were received via email. This response is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix 4, but the main points are summarised below.
- 6.29 The submission provides responses to the consultation questionnaire, 11 of which are directly linked to the six IRMP proposals. The remaining six are around: building and home inspections; ESFRS' finances in the future; ESFRS' purpose and commitments; and further comments.
- 6.30 Predominantly negative feedback is provided, with the 'strongly disagree' response option chosen for nine of the 11 questions directly linked to the six IRMP proposals. The answer to the remaining two (around crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings and lift releases) is 'no opinion'.
- 6.31 The following reasons are given for the 'strongly disagree' responses, many of which match the code frame already used to classify comments from the consultation questionnaire:

Proposal 1 (Operational Resilience Plan): there is support for an increase in the number of immediate response engines but fears that this would be realised by decreasing the number of resilience engines, increasing risk;

Proposal 2 (Changes to day-crewed duty stations): the submission highlights that on-call firefighters are hard to recruit, retain and train, and that relying on this model to provide evening and weekend cover is dangerous. It further suggests that using "scratch" teams that do not train together would increase risk. Neither Option A nor B is supported;

Proposal 3a (Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines): it is said that removing the second fire station from seven stations will increase call-out times and risk;

Proposal 3b (Re-classifying the three 'maxi-cab' stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations): the submission says that removing the maxi-cab capability from three stations will reduce the effectiveness of response, increase call-out times and risk and leave other stations without cover when support engines are called in from other stations;

Proposal 6 (Demand management - AFAs): the submission highlights that the dense commercial areas of Lewes, Newhaven and Seaford would be particularly vulnerable to the spread of the fire and that the quicker response from responding to AFAs is critical in avoiding loss of life;

Proposal 6 (Demand Management - trapped birds): concern is expressed that if ESFRS no longer responds to incidents involving trapped birds, there will be a much greater risk of the public trying to rescue them themselves without suitable equipment; and

Proposal 7 (Changes to the four-watch duty system): the submission again states that replacing "permanent" firefighting crews with flexible or "scratch" crews increases risk. Neither Option A nor B is supported.

- 6.32 The remaining six questions (around building and home inspections, ESFRS' finances in the future, ESFRS' purpose and commitments and further comments) are more positively answered, with 'tend to agree' or 'agree' chosen as three of the response options.
- 6.33 The 'tend to agree' responses are chosen for the questions around 'whether more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety' (though the submission also says that this should not come at the expense of front-line services) and 'to what extent do you agree/disagree that the purpose and commitments of ESFRS are appropriate'.
- 6.34 The 'agree' response is chosen for the question 'to what extent do you agree or disagree that East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service offers value for money' - though the submission additionally says that if these proposals were implemented then ESFRS would no longer offer value for money.
- 6.35 For the question on whether respondents would 'be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22)', the submission says that "*central government must provide assurances that Fire Service grants will not be reduced, so that the Fire Service can make proper plans for the future without the need to make these dangerous cuts to front-line services*". It is also said that the policy of front-line NHS cuts has been shown to be a mistake by the recent Covid-19 pandemic.
- 6.36 Lastly, for the question on 'ways that ESFRS could make savings and be more efficient in the future', It is said that "*ESFRS should be properly funded by central government*".

Additional comments

- 6.37 A few respondents added additional comments to the template submission, mainly outlining their objections to "cuts" in general and their perception that the proposed changes will increase risk to life and the local economy. Some typical comments are below.

"Cuts to any of our essential services and particularly emergency service providers would be short sighted and, in this case, dangerous"

"Please keep our fire and rescue service as it is! Do not make cuts to such a vital part of civil society"

“Please do not compromise safety and security and the livelihoods and welfare of firefighters and other staff. Fire safety is not something to skimp on”

“We should do all that is necessary to maintain vital fire and rescue services. We have had personal experience of two major fires, and we dread to think what the outcomes would have been if ESFRS were operating under these proposed changes”

“I am well aware of legitimate concerns about the proposals to reduce the fire service and the potential for increased risk to life -- as well as economic risks. This is not a thought-through policy”

“If Newhaven harbour needs help due to a big accident coming from outside the town could be too late!!!”

“The proposals suggest you are willing to put lives at risk rather than ask the government to pay for what is an essential front-line service”

- 6.38 A couple of people explicitly stated that they would be prepared to pay more council tax for ESFRS, albeit with the caveat that any increases should not inordinately disadvantage the less well-off. Moreover, the need for government to better fund the service was stressed.

“I would be prepared to pay more in council tax, but it is important that people less well-off are not disadvantaged”

“In my opinion this service has already been cut to the bone and without extra investment we will all be in a more precarious situation. It is only in times of severe distress that we need these services, but that time can be vital and potentially life changing so I support more investment not less”

- 6.39 More specifically, there was some explicit support for the ORP and more building and home inspections – but some opposition to delaying responses to lift rescues.

“I agree [with the ORP] - particularly in the light of the need to safeguard our communities, protecting them from likely climate threats (droughts and floods)”

“I agree [with more building and home inspections], and this must take more account of communal areas in blocks of flats such as where I live, where there are no alarms or alerts in the main areas, or a designated meet space outside. Regular six monthly or annual building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety, as long as recommendations are followed up on the next visit”

“It's a bad idea. Building owners are unlikely to respond quickly”

Petition

- 6.40 One petition was received by ESFRS during the consultation period: it was organised by St Martins Sheltered Housing and signed by 40 people in *“opposition to proposed cuts to East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and Battle Community Fire Station”*. The petition statement was as follows:

We, the residents of St Martins, after reviewing the information given in the public consultation, strongly disagree with the proposals put forward by East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.

List of Tables

Table 1: Breakdown of target interviews and achieved number of interviews by district (count and %)	27
Table 2: Age – All Respondents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 3: Gender – All Respondents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 4: Disability – All Respondents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 5: Ethnic Group – All Respondents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 6: Working for ESFRS – All Respondents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 7: Districts– All Respondents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 8: Respondent type– All respondents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 9: Telephone survey responses by area (unweighted and weighted)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 10: Telephone survey responses by age (unweighted and weighted)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 11: Telephone survey responses by gender (unweighted and weighted)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 12: Telephone responses by working status (unweighted and weighted)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 13: Telephone responses by ethnicity (unweighted and weighted)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 14: Telephone responses by disability (unweighted and weighted)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 15: Summary of submission contributors by type	126
Table 16: Comments received on the Planning for a Safer Future proposals – by proposal	127
Table 17: Comments received on the Planning for a Safer Future proposals – other common themes	131
Table 18: Comments received on the Planning for a Safer Future proposals – ESFRS and resourcing	131

List of Figures

Figure 1: To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines?	34
Figure 2: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield?	36
Figure 3: Which of the two options (A or B) do you prefer?	37
Figure 4: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations?	38
Figure 5: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to re-classify the three "maxi-cab" stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst, as single fire engine stations?	39
Figure 6: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road?	40
Figure 7: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises?	41
Figure 8: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners (who are responsible for broken lifts) time to resolve the issue in the first instance?	42
Figure 9: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting?	43
Figure 10: Do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change crewing arrangements at the following ESFRS fire stations: Bohemia Road (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus (Brighton) and Roedean (Brighton)?	45
Figure 11: Whether or not you agree with the proposal to change the crewing arrangements at the 5 ESFRS fire stations listed above, if the crewing arrangements are changed, which of the two options (A or B) do you prefer?	46
Figure 12: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety?	47
Figure 13: Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22)?	48
Figure 14: If you would be willing to pay more council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22), what level of increase would you accept?	49
Figure 15: To what extent do you agree or disagree that East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service offers value for money?	50
Figure 16: In what ways do you think that ESFRS could make savings and be more efficient in the future?	51
Figure 17: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the purpose and commitments of ESFRS are appropriate?	55
Figure 18: How did you hear about this consultation?	56
Figure 19: Further comments you would like to make about any of the proposals in the consultation	57
Figure 20: Are there any positive or negative impacts from ESFRS that you believe should be taken into account?	61
Figure 21 :To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines?	68
Figure 22: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in training and prevention and protection work?	69
Figure 23: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in training and prevention and protection work? (Grouped Responses by district)	70
Figure 24: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations?	71
Figure 25: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road?	72

Figure 26: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road? (Grouped Responses by district).....	73
Figure 27: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should stop attending to certain calls in order to release capacity for fire prevention, protection and training?	74
Figure 28: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should stop attending to these calls in order to release capacity for fire prevention, protection and training? (Grouped Responses by district)	75
Figure 29: In principle, do you agree/disagree with ESFRS looking at ways to change its 24/7 crewing arrangements – either through “flexible rostering” at Bohemia Road, Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus and Roedean, or “group crewing” at Preston Circus, Hove and Roedean?	76
Figure 30: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety?	77
Figure 31: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety? (Grouped Responses by district)	78
Figure 32: Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year – 2021/22?.....	79
Figure 33: Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year - 2021/22?	79
Figure 34: To what extent do you agree or disagree that ESFRS offers value for money?.....	80
Figure 35: To what extent do you agree or disagree that ESFRS offers value for money? (Grouped Responses by district).....	80
Figure 36: Do you have any further comments you would like to make about any of the proposals we've just talked about?	81
Figure 37: To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines? Public focus group/depth interview result	83
Figure 38: To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines? Stakeholder webinar result.....	86
Figure 39: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in training and prevention and protection work? Public focus group/depth interview result.....	88
Figure 40: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from 'day-crewed' to 'day-only' at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a 'flexible crewing pool' and invest in training and prevention and protection work? Stakeholder webinar result	91
Figure 41: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations? Public focus group/depth interview result.....	94
Figure 42: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations? Stakeholder webinar result	98
Figure 43: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road? Public focus group/depth interview result	100
Figure 44: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day-crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road? Stakeholder webinar result.....	102
Figure 45: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises? Public focus group/depth interview result.....	103
Figure 46: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises? Stakeholder webinar result	105
Figure 47: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners (who are responsible for broken lifts) time to resolve the issue in the first instance? Public focus group/depth interview result	106

Figure 48: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners (who are responsible for broken lifts) time to resolve the issue in the first instance? Stakeholder webinar result	108
Figure 49: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting? Public focus group/depth interview result	108
Figure 50: To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting? Stakeholder webinar result	110
Figure 51: Do you agree/disagree with a review of arrangements at the following ESFRS fire stations: Bohemia Road (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus (Brighton) and Roedean (Brighton)? Public focus group/depth interview result.....	111
Figure 52: Do you agree/disagree with a review of crewing arrangements at the following ESFRS fire stations: Bohemia Road (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus (Brighton) and Roedean (Brighton)? Stakeholder webinar result.....	114
Figure 53: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety? Public focus group/depth interview result.....	115
Figure 54: To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety? Stakeholder webinar result	117
Figure 55: Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22)? Stakeholder webinar result	120
Figure 56: To what extent do you agree or disagree that ESFRS offers value for money? Stakeholder webinar result.....	120



East Sussex Fire Authority

Planning for a Safer Future (IRMP 2020-2025)

Report of Consultation Findings:
Appendices



Opinion Research Services

August 2020

East Sussex Fire Authority

Planning for a Safer Future (IRMP 2020-2025)

Report of Consultation Findings: Appendices



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Contents

Appendix 1: questions, comments & answers from stakeholder webinar	144
Questions submitted in advance	144
Comments submitted in advance.....	151
Questions asked/comments made during the webinar	156
Questions submitted post-webinar.....	179
Comments submitted post-webinar.....	180
Appendix 2: summaries of detailed or ‘representative’ submissions	182
Staff groups and staff members	182
Representative Bodies.....	188
Members of Parliament and city/district/ borough councils and councillors.....	195
Town and parish councils	203
Other stakeholders.....	210
Appendix 3: clarification questions from staff members.....	214
Appendix 4: templated questionnaire response	222

Appendix 1: questions, comments & answers from stakeholder webinar

Questions submitted in advance

General: resources

How many fire engines does ESFRS have now? How many will it have if these proposals are implemented?

We currently have 32 fire engines which include 3 “maxi cabs” (which have a different cab design), 1 combined “aerial rescue pump” in Eastbourne, and 2 “aerial ladder platforms” in Hastings and Brighton. This is a total of 35 vehicles.

If all the proposals are accepted, by 2025 we will have 27 fire engines with a standardised design, and 3 aerial ladder platforms in Eastbourne, Hastings and Eastbourne. This is a total of 30 vehicles.

Under these proposals there will be some changes in where the fire engines will be based because we want to move resources to areas of high risk.

It is important to remember that currently not all fire engines are “available” to respond 24/7 due to staff availability and this is a key factor that we are seeking to improve.

How many full-time firefighters are there in ESFRS now? How many will there be if these proposals are implemented? How many on call firefighters are there in ESFRS now? How many will there be if these proposals are implemented?

It is important to remember these proposals are not focused on making cuts. They are focused on making sure we have a better balance of resources in our prevention, building fire safety and emergency response teams. The proposals allow us to move resources to other areas where they can do more good. For example, in increasing the availability of a number of fire engines and / or into increasing our capacity to undertake more community safety fire prevention and building fire safety activity.

The number of posts affected depends on what options are selected by the Fire Authority at its meeting in September, and on other decisions about where and how we could reinvest released posts and associated funding.

The types of posts which are impacted are all based on fire stations, from Firefighters to Watch Managers and will range between 35 and 42 posts in total over a five-year period. This is principally linked to the proposals around the “day crewed” system (proposal 2). This does not mean we will make compulsory redundancies.

We will look to use between eight and twelve of these posts to form a dedicated “flexible crewing pool”, which will increase our ability to improve fire cover and fire engine availability at key strategic locations around the Service area. If possible, we will look to use other posts released to improve our capacity to do more community safety fire prevention and building fire safety activity.

The changes can be made over the next five years without the need for compulsory redundancies, because of natural turnover and retirements.

Year	Wholetime firefighters	On-call firefighters	Total Firefighters
2014	407	281	688
2015	384	283	667
2016	382	268	650
2017	352	306	658
2018	357	246	603
2019	352	235	587

How many on call firefighters has ESFRS recruited in the last 5 years? What is the average tenure of an on-call firefighter (as an on-call firefighter – i.e. not becoming full time)? How long does it take to train an on-call firefighter?

We plan to run 3 On-call training courses each year, each with a maximum of 8 candidates, however these are often not full for a varying number of reasons. 24 On-call Firefighters is normally sufficient to manage the turnover of On-call staff for 18 different sections.

We do not maintain an average tenure figure; however, we have On-call Firefighters who have spent more than 30 years fulfilling the role in their local community.

General: climate change

How have you assessed the additional flooding risk that will result from climate change?

We have considered this as part of our risk assessment and it is laid out in the main report of our Operational Response Review on pages 99-100, 108-109, and in each individual fire station risk profile under environmental risks as well as incidents attended. The combination of proposed future growth/housing developments combined with flood risk from rivers/seas, groundwater & surface-water flooding have also been analysed to understand the likely impact this may have on ESFRS resources in the future.

How have you assessed the increase in wildfires that will result from climate change? How many more call outs do you anticipate? How many engines does a 'typical' wildfire require?

The whole purpose of our proposed Operational Resilience Plan (proposal 1) is to ensure we have the right number of resources (for example fire engines and firefighters) to manage multiple incidents, protracted incidents and spate conditions. The proposals allow us to increase the minimum number of fire engines available from 15 to 18.

In addition, the minimum of 6 resilience fire engines will also give us an additional ability to further support protracted incidents, support standby moves and to provide regular relief crews to on-going incidents.

Sitting behind the IRMP document itself is a very detailed and comprehensive look at all of the risks whether past, present, and future to really get a comprehensive understanding of what could face us in the future - so things like flooding and wildfire. And attached to that main report are our

individual fire station risk profiles, we've got 24 of those. And, of course, we've taken cognisance of our list of local and national risk registers when formulating our proposals. So, the combination of those, along with our predicted increase in housing and development over the coming years, has all been considered. And so, our proposals, particularly this one around the Operational Resilience Plan is to ensure that we have the right number of resources to deal with these types of incidents and also to manage simultaneous incidents protracted incidents. And so, these proposals allow us to increase that minimum number of fire engines available from 15 to 18 which will give us additional ability to attend these sorts of incidents in the future.

General: Covid-19

Covid-19 has shown the foolishness of cutting frontline staff until the services fail. Will these proposals be revisited in the light of the Covid-19 experience?

The longer-term impact of Covid-19 won't be known for some considerable time and as the months pass, we will of course assess any new information or requirements which may emerge, but we don't anticipate significant change in the short term. The draft proposals are to ensure that both the Fire Authority and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service will be strongly placed to effectively deal with the inherent and anticipated risks for the future and over the next five-year term.

The impacts from a national event such as a pandemic were considered in the risk planning process for the IRMP. The Operational Resilience Plan (proposal 1) is targeted at ensuring the optimum level of cover is known and then maintained by targeting our resources.

You can read more about our work during Covid-19 on our website– this includes links with the IRMP.

Our IRMP is due to be delivered over five years as a long term, flexible programme supported by phased and measured implementation, giving us the flexibility to respond and adapt to any fundamental changes in our communities or Fire Service's responsibilities.

General: other

West Sussex FRS implemented similar changes 4-5 years ago. Their most recent inspection report rated it as one of the worst Fire Services in the country (inadequate in its protection of the public and looking after its staff; and requiring improvement in the way that it keeps people safe and secure and the way it uses its resources). How will you ensure that these similar proposals in East Sussex do not lead to the same outcome?

Our robust data gathering, and analysis process agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and the Combined Fire Authority was based on good practice from a number of other UK Fire and Rescue Services, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Fire Brigades Union (FBU). In addition, we use a range of specialised predictive analysis tools with 9 years-worth of cleansed data that places us in the best possible position to accurately assess the best Prevention, Protection and Response provision for our City and County. This agreed process was recently hailed as best practice by the NFCC and there are a number of other FRS's who are taking a keen interest in replicating what we've done and how we've done it. Finally, the HMICFRS recognised improvement was required in how

we had previously assessed countywide risk. We can now say that the conclusions from this analysis in the form of the IRMP Proposals are entirely proportionate enabling us to better match our resources to risk.

Our HMICFRS report stated that “The service acknowledges that it isn’t clear how its IRMP links to its operational work. The IRMP doesn’t clearly detail how it influences the service’s prevention, protection and response activity.” (P10 of <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/east-sussex-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2018-19.pdf>)

We have spent 18 months preparing and analysing data in order to develop these proposals which seek to address that.

We are confident that this will bring about improvements not only in response, but also in prevention and protection.

We also believe that the proposals will improve training, firefighter safety and will better recognise the contribution made by on call staff through enhanced contracts.

Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP)

Increasing the number of “core” stations while reducing the number of engines in East Sussex will increase the occasions on which there is no cover at all in some of the “non-core” stations, such as Barcombe. What is your assessment of the number of occasions in which “non-core” stations will have no cover?

The IRMP proposes to enhance all our workforce availability, and this includes stations not contained in the ORP or the current core station policy.

We will introduce a new “flexible crewing pool” made up of firefighters who can be posted to all stations as necessary to cover for staff absences due to sickness, training or other matters affecting their availability levels. This concept is widely used across other UK Fire Services.

ESFRS wants to improve the availability across all our stations, however the ORP will specifically target the higher risk station areas to ensure we maintain a higher level of resilience for these higher risk areas. We expect stations such as Barcombe to benefit from the range of proposals, and overall cover levels to improve over the 5-year IRMP.

The recent (May 2020) Ashdown forest fire required the attendance of 8 fire engines. If the total number of fire engines is cut to 24 as in these proposals, how would cover be provided at the 18 core stations during future wildfires?

The proposals if fully implemented will ensure that we have 27 fire engines, with higher levels of overall availability by implementing the IRMP proposals. Furthermore 18 of these 27 will be providing high levels of cover. A further minimum of 6 resilience appliances will be provided to support large and protracted incidents such as forest fires.

The ORP proposes to include 4 stand alone On-call stations, and only 1 of these is currently a core station. Rye fire station is the only On-call station, which is a core station, over the 9-year data period their average availability is very high and has only dropped by 0.2%. However, the 3 other On-call

stations that are proposed to be part of the ORP have had significantly lower availability over the last 9 years. Hailsham as an example has seen its availability drop by 43.1% over 9 years.

It is important to differentiate between the proposed ORP approach where we would plan to have at least 18 immediately available Fire Engines and the existing Core Stations Policy where we currently plan to start the day with 15.

The new approach does not focus on stations, it focuses on a more geographic spread which helps with reducing the need for unnecessary stand-by moves. Most (74%) of all calls are dealt with within 15 minutes where, at the moment, we move any number of Fire Engines to cover an area that doesn't necessarily warrant it.

Proposals 2 (day-crewed to day-only) and 3 (changes to 2-engine stations)

With Ashdown Forest on our doorstep what will happen with large forest fires. One recent fire took about 7 hours to extinguish and damping down was still going on next day?

Answered above.

With all the proposed development in Crowborough, nearly 600 houses in Walshes Road if approved alone with 197 already being built, surely these cuts to the service and vehicles will be disastrous? With the main A26 running right through Crowborough and beyond, what will happen to response and attendance at serious and fatal road traffic crashes?

In summary, the proposal to move to a day only duty system or the removal of the second fire engines at some stations would only affect the response time for a small number of incidents, which was highlighted in the Fire Authority Paper considered on the 23rd April 2020 and which can be found on our consultation page www.esfrs.org/saferfuture.

The work that has been done to reach these proposals and the methodology used is robust and the duty we have as a public service to ensure that the Fire Authority have an integrated plan for management of risk and use of resources is not only open to public scrutiny, but will also be judged by the independent inspectorate – HMICFRS against the guidance set out in the Fire and Rescue Services legislation and the underpinning national framework and guidance documents.

With Crowborough being on the northern extremity, what will happen to response times?

As above

How will ESFRS manage the requirements of Crowborough when the part time firemen are so hard to find, and if the cuts are not financially driven, why are they being contemplated?

ESFRS has committed to improving the current retention rate for on-call personnel since several national reports were issued by the RFU (Now FRSA), this is in-line with the national drive by the NFCC on-call working group. ESFRS setup a dedicated action learning set to target on-call improvements and the national recommendations, however limited improvements could be completed outside of the IRMP process.

The ORR and IRMP now present the opportunity for further investment in our on-call systems by realigning existing resources into improving overall on-call performance levels.

The following areas will be carried out subject to Fire Authority approval on the 3rd September 2020:

Introduce a dedicated crewing pool to improve appliance availability levels

Introduce trials of new and improved On-call contracts to drive recruitment and improve retention of existing on-call personnel.

Introduction of the ORP and in particular the use of resilience appliances, these appliances will utilise unused capacity in our on-call system when appliances are unavailable due to crew numbers but can be used as part of a slower planned approach to support large scale incidents and spate conditions.

We do recruit appropriate levels of on-call personnel, however due to the level of leavers being higher than the intake of new personnel the overall retention rate is negative. If we reduce the level of leavers and improve the level of new entrants, the benefit will be significant and more sustainable than taking no action.

Would it be better if the Crowborough precept was transferred to the Kent Fire Service as Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough are more of a homogenous unit?

Please be assured that ESFRS always mobilises the nearest available and appropriate resource(s) to an incident, so although you pay council tax in East Sussex you will always get the quickest resource even if it means an appliance from Kent FRS attends as part of our emergency response and this aligns with the Fire Services Act 2004 Section 13 Reinforcement Schemes.

Proposal 6: demand management (AFAs)

If 96% of automated fire alarm call outs are false alarms, 4% are real incidents. How many real incidents are there each year that you would no longer attend with these new proposals? In the dense commercial/residential centres of Lewes, Newhaven and Seaford, what do you consider to be the increased risk to life and of the fire spreading to adjacent properties?

We average around 9,200 operational responses to incidents each year. Automatic fire alarm (AFA) systems account for 34% of all these calls. 96% of the calls initially categorised as AFAs turn out to be false alarms – these are often described as “unwanted fire signals”.

Only 2% of calls to AFAs in non-domestic premises turn out to be fires (average of 32 per year). Of these 32 fires, 20 do not require any firefighting action (the fire will already be out when the crews arrive). The remaining 12 require varying amounts of firefighting action, ranging from an item being taken outside, use of portable extinguishers, and use of main jets. On average, only one call per year to an AFA in non-domestic property requires use of main firefighting jets.

Our HMICFRS report was critical of the Service in relation to this matter. We have the largest number of AFA calls compared to our family group average (our family group of comparable and similar sized fire and rescue services) and attendance at these particular call types are widely considered to be an unnecessary drain on valuable fire service resources.

They divert essential service resources rendering them unavailable, with the possibility of delayed attendance at genuine emergencies; they create unnecessary risk to fire crews and members of the public when appliances are responding under emergency conditions; they are disruptive to work routines, particularly community and business fire safety activity, and training; they have a demoralising effect on personnel attending a high number of false alarms, and instil a culture of complacency with an expectation of a wasted trip; they impose an additional financial burden on the Service, particularly salary and vehicle fleet costs; and they adversely impact upon other employers who release on-call staff for such calls.

Many other Services have already introduced sweeping changes to how they manage calls to premises with AFA systems. A number have simply stopped attending completely and will only attend if there is a confirmed fire.

We are proposing a more measured and risk-based approach. This includes appointing a subject matter expert on a fixed term contract to lead an engagement and education project with property owners and responsible persons, in order to allow them to better understand and comply with their responsibilities. Further, we will be introducing a more robust call challenge process via our control centre in line with best practice.

In relation to non-attendance, we are proposing that the Service no longer automatically attend calls to fire alarms operating in low risk commercial premises. These premises are classified as commercial (non-domestic) premises with no sleeping risk, such as offices, shops, factories, pubs, clubs and restaurants. In these premises, when people are present, they are able to check for fire and call back on 999 to confirm; we would then attend as a confirmed fire call with the full attendance of appliances. When people are not present, such as when the business is closed at night, then the life risk is very low.

Finally, we are also reviewing whether, at some point in the future, we should charge a fee for attending unwanted fire signals in some other premises types, in some circumstances. If the Fire Authority are minded to consider such an approach, this would be subject to a separate public consultation in due course.

Building and home inspections

Will Fire Service attendance and assistance at reported dangerous structures and buildings particularly out of normal day time hours be affected? Will Tech Team assistance be affected?

No impact is expected to the current pre-determined attendances for these types of incidents.

Will Fire Safety consultations on Building Regulation applications with Building Control be affected?

No, not affected and may improve if we can get more staff into protection dept.

ESFRS' finances into the future

What 'back office' savings have been considered to reduce the impact on front-line services (e.g. reducing salaries of a few very highly paid staff, reducing use of expensive consultants, simplifying service reporting, bring the call centre back to East Sussex)?

The Authority has already made over £9m of savings between 2010/11 and 2019/20 and these have been made across the whole service, not just from the operational frontline. The savings proposals for 2020/21 – 2024/25 currently stand at £0.651m, none of which relate to operational services, being primarily a combination of procurement savings and other efficiencies in our support services.

The reality is that given the Authority spends 76% of its gross revenue budget on its employees and the vast majority of them are operational, then to make the level of savings required to balance the Authority's budget over the last 10 years and in the future then reductions in operational posts have been / will be unavoidable.

The Service has reduced its number of senior managers – since 2012/13 it has removed two non-uniformed Principal Officer / Brigade Manager posts reducing the total from five to three (all now uniformed) and it has also reduced the number of Assistant Directors from six to five of which three are uniformed.

So, over the last few years we have managed the increase in the salary bill and other pressures by directly reducing costs in other areas, including senior posts, contracts and procurement, in fact the vast majority of savings (62%) that have been required during the current IRMP have been from corporate and professional services. However, if you consider the financial predictions and scenarios as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, it is clear that savings in those areas alone will not be sufficient in order for the Fire Authority to balance the budget in the future.

Significant additional funding (£34m) has had to be allocated to address the shortfalls in West Sussex (far outweighing the range of savings anticipated by this consultation document). How have potential downside costs been factored into the calculation of savings?

A full financial impact assessment supports the proposals that enable us to contribute to the predicted shortfalls in funding for the same time period as identified within our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Comments submitted in advance

I would like to raise the following points relating to the proposals listed below, in relation to our Newhaven Fire Station:

The proposals for Newhaven are:

- Cut one fire engine from the station***
- Downgrade fire station from Day crewed to Day-staffing***
- Cut Foam Tender from the station***
- Cut 50% of the full-time firefighting staff***
- Introduce a Command Unit and an Operational support unit (OSU)***

It appears that the public consultation IRMP document is very misleading and full of loaded questions based on out of date data (only includes figure up to 2018 – there have been operational changes since, including an increase in the number of calls of around 12.5% in 2019 and the

introduction of a close working relationship with SECAMB). It would seem that unfortunately, the Fire Authority has been briefed on this out of date data for many months now and it is hard for them to listen to up to date facts. However, there are some key issues pertaining to Newhaven fire station I would like to point out. I appreciate that we are not alone in these cuts proposals - this is county wide.

We're not using out of date data. The data that underpins the proposals in the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan used the most up to date data that we had when we started the review in late October 2018. So, at that time, we extracted all available incident and mobilisation data that was stored in our incident recording system, dating back to April 2009. We weren't then in a position to be able to use data for the 2019 year or beyond because we were still in the year at that time, but using nine years' worth of data has enabled us as a Fire and Rescue Service to get a really informative trend to undertake really informative trend analysis.

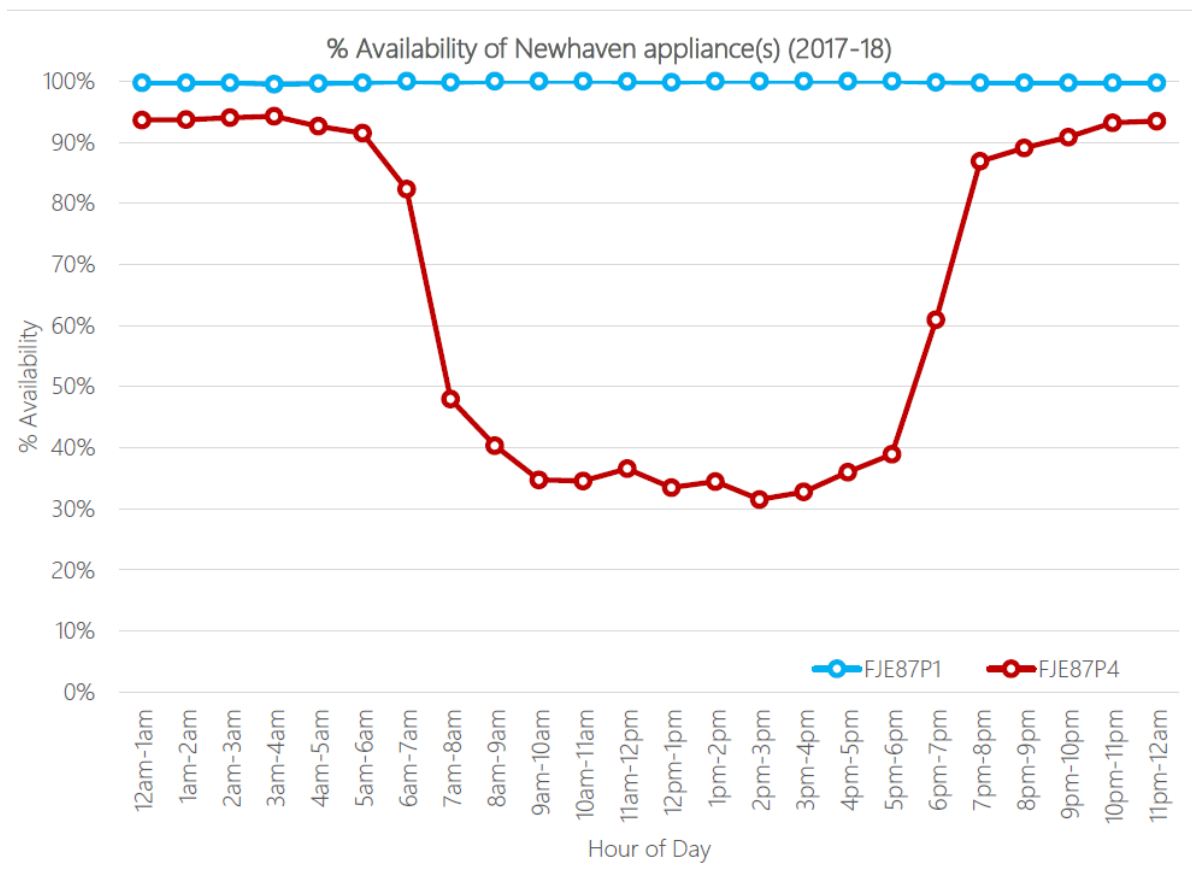
Typically, data covering between three and five years is considered appropriate when identifying trends and assuring robustness of data. So, our approach to using up to nine years' worth is over and above the standard approach. And so, the proposals that that are in the draft IRMP are therefore built on a solid evidence base, and our strategic and long-term view. And so, this means, importantly, that they don't become redundant because the data doesn't include an additional years' worth of data. And now over that nine-year period, there has been ups and downs, peaks and troughs in terms of the incident numbers. But over the longer term, a more reliable trend can be identified, which moderates for any annual changes from year to year.

In addition to that, we have also undertaken a very comprehensive assessment of future growth. So, we've looked at what's happened historically, we've looked at the numbers of households and residents between the last two censuses and the growth between the last census in 2011 up until now. And then looking forward, we've done an assessment to take account of future growth and its impact. So, to summarise, using up to nine years' worth of data helps us to really get a good long-term view of where we need to go, it gives us a good direction of travel.

Those key issues are:

Cut a fire engine (87P4) - This engine was used 51 times in 2019, but what is not brought to the attention of the Fire authority is that every time our first fire engine goes out (87P1), the second engine remains on station - giving cover to the community, when the first (87P1) is busy. Thus: no break in cover and consequently, a safer community.

The scenario you describe is as a result of Service Policy and only occurs when 87P4 is available. Whilst the primary pumping appliance has remained available nearly 100% of the time over 9-year period, it can be seen that the availability of 87P4 has fluctuated over the 9 years, with a peak of 79% availability in 2011/12 and a low of 61% in 2016/17.



Between April 2013 and March 2018, **82% of incidents within the Newhaven station area were attended by a single fire appliance**, which is higher than the ESFRS average of 72% of incidents – and is the greatest percentage out of all 24 stations, by a significant margin. This means that despite the number of emergency calls, the vast majority only require one crew of 4 Firefighters.

When there was a 2nd pump attendance, 87P4 was, as you would expect, the 2nd pump attendance on 52% of occasions. Roedean provided the 2nd pump attendance on 18% of occasions, the primary pump at Newhaven on 14% of occasions, and Seaford 10% of occasions.

When attending an incident, 87P1 will turn up with a crew of 4 - made up of an officer in charge (OIC), driver/pump operator/breathing apparatus, board controller and a Breathing apparatus (BA) team (2 x firefighters). Before the OIC can commit a BA into a burning building and to conform to Health and safety and fire service national risk assessments, the OIC must wait for another BA team to be available before committing the first. This is a national H&S standard and can only be breached in the most extreme circumstances.

For Newhaven the second BA team is on the second engine (87P4) - the engine they want to cut.

As described earlier, 82% of all calls for Newhaven were dealt with by 1 appliance with a crew of 4 Firefighters. Newhaven’s P4 is the second busiest from a Day crewed Station and despite its availability due to crewing ranging between 30% and 95% on any given day, is classed as low-activity due to the number of calls that do not require more than one fire engine.

So 87P1 will have to wait for an engine from either Roedean or Seaford. That's an extra 10/15 minutes and often that's the difference between life and death or losing your property or business.

The Newhaven Station Risk Profile is based on historic, inherent and foreseeable risk gathered from the Newhaven local area and from multiple local sources including East Sussex County Council, Lewes District Council, Newhaven Port Authority etc. The Operational Resilience Plan proposes to increase the number of available appliances from 15 to 18 as a direct result of recognising our risk needs more fire cover.

Down Grading of Newhaven Fire Station - This would reduce the community's fire cover greatly. The proposal states it wants full time firefighters to man the station - possibly 9 till 5 and no weekend cover. Times outside these hours would be covered by on-call firefighters, responding from their homes. As it stands at the moment, the full-time firefighters are split into 2 watches of 6 - doing a 'four days on, four days off' on a rota system. They cover a total of 96 hours per watch, being bolstered by on-call firefighters. "This would reduce the community's fire cover greatly".

This is incorrect. The community in Newhaven will still have an immediately available Fire Engine 24/7. The evening response time will be exactly the same as it is now because the current day-crew respond from home at night. There will however be the standard On-call response time introduced during the weekend daytimes which is the same as evening callout turn-out and response times.

"The proposal states it wants full time firefighters to man the station".

This is also incorrect. As a socially inclusive organisation ESFRS and its Combined Fire Authorities proposal does not differentiate which members of staff shall crew its Fire Engines by gender, race, religion or any other of the protected characteristics identified by the Equalities Act 2010. It is fundamental to our organisation that we are as diverse as the community we serve and are pleased you reference firefighters.

The trouble with relying on the on-call firefighters, is there is not enough of them to cover all the hours required. There have been some problems with on-call firefighters not turning into station for a call, for up to 10 minutes. Then having to get ready to go out. That results in a delay of 12/15 minutes from time of call. There is problem getting on-call firefighters to be available at crucial times of the day (i.e. 6am to 9am and 5pm to 7pm), because of their primary employment and having to get to and from work. Also, most on-call firefighters, can be full time firefighters from shift stations and so are hampered by the working time directive.

Almost all UK FRS' rely on the on-call duty system. The majority of stations outside of metropolitan areas tend to have a high proportion of on-call stations. Our proposal to improve the on-call system is proven in a number of other UK FRS' and we need to improve what we do and how we do it, because we want to make more fire engines more available. Traditional recruitment and retention systems are no longer efficient partly due to the commuter belt.

ESFRS service has a large on-call capability already and we have a lot of on-call firefighters available and working for the service. We want to improve availability and yes, in East Sussex and nationally it is harder at the moment to recruit and retain on-call firefighters. So, what we are doing is proposing a range of options that will improve that current picture.

However, at the moment we do have very good on-call availability in some areas ... Seaford and Rye have nearly 100% availability, which is very high for on-call stations. And the proposals we're bringing in such as the crewing pool enables us to use our wholetime resources more effectively to help put on-call stations back on the run. So, we are very confident about the ability of the on-call to provide cover. And the periods that we're asking them to provide additional cover is actually quite small. We are only talking about the two weekend days; they already provide cover seven days a week, in the evenings and during the days and weekends. We are asking for a bit more cover from them, obviously at the weekends but that is why we're putting these proposals in place, to encourage more recruitment and better retention.

Introduction of command unit and OSU - This on the surface, appears to not be a bad thing, if the station is not downgraded. However, if it is and you have a call for one of these vehicles outside of 9am to 5pm, it causes a problem. Out of office hours, they will only have 4/5 on-call firefighters on duty. If they get a call for one of the new vehicles, that would mean the main fire engine (87P1), would no longer have a full crew and so would not be available and therefore no fire cover for the community.

ESFRS wants to improve the availability across all our stations, however the ORP will specifically target the higher risk station areas to ensure we maintain a higher level of resilience for these higher risk areas. It is important to differentiate between the proposed ORP approach where we would plan to have at least 18 immediately available Fire Engines and the existing Core Stations Policy where we currently plan to start the day with 15.

The new approach does not focus on stations, it focuses on a more geographic spread which helps with reducing the need for unnecessary stand-by moves. Most (74%) of all calls are dealt with within 15 minutes where, at the moment, we move any number of Fire Engines to cover an area that doesn't necessarily warrant it.

Current systems in place deal with the mobilisation of Special appliances and teams through stand-by moves as necessary.

50% full time firefighter posts lost - Loss of skills and experience, that would be detrimental and feasibly would have serious consequences for the service and the communities it serves.

No decisions have been made to date. If proposal 2 or 7 were taken, changes would be sequential and over the period of the IRMP. As we have planned to not require any redundancies, the careful management of posts and the support mechanisms required will be in place beforehand to prevent any degradation of safety or service delivery.

Cut Foam Tender from the station - This is not of too much concern to the station, as I understand it was originally introduced to assist with potential refrigeration fires, etc. at the port. With the lessening of freight traffic over recent years in that vicinity, its requirement has similarly reduced. However, there are a number of small rural-based airfields locally and redeploying this to say, Lewes Fire Station, may be a prudent measure.

No firm decisions have been made in regard to the relocation of any Specialist team, appliance or equipment. This operational matter will be subject to ongoing reviews to ensure they meet the needs of the risk profile without under or over-provision.

I would be grateful for a response to the above concerns that have been raised with me, by Fire Officers and local people. We cannot compromise on Health and Safety of our residents and businesses, when considering financial cuts. There is no price on life and property and our Fire Services have a duty of care, to the public and businesses it serves, as well as the brave firefighters and staff, that it calls upon to take on this responsibility within our communities.

The draft IRMP proposals remain exactly that until the Combined Fire Authority meet in September. Rest assured that the CFA would not publish any proposal without receiving full assurances, as documented in the extensive research and analysis documentation already published, of their feasibility to be successfully implemented in our County and City.

Questions asked/comments made during the webinar

General: resources

Are specific skills/trainings influential in availability? i.e. dangerous materials, sensitive buildings, flooding

The primary influence on the availability of on-call fire engines are the skills required for Incident Command and driving; however, these are all part of the relevant role maps. Firefighters are trained to use all equipment on both the first and second fire engines including dangerous materials, sensitive buildings, flooding etc.

Kelly said earlier in the call that East Sussex was struggling to recruit on-call firefighters, but these proposals seem to depend far more heavily on on-call firefighters. Isn't it dangerously risky to rely so heavily on a model that is not working / is not proven?

Almost all UK FRS' rely on the on-call duty system. The majority of stations outside of metropolitan areas tend to have a high proportion of on-call stations. Our proposal to improve the on-call system is proven in a number of other UK FRS' and we need to improve what we do and how we do it, because we want to make more fire engines more available. Traditional recruitment and retention systems are no longer efficient partly due to the commuter belt.

ESFRS service has a large on-call capability already and we have a lot of on-call firefighters available and working for the service. We want to improve availability and yes, in East Sussex and nationally it is harder at the moment to recruit and retain on-call firefighters. So, what we are doing is proposing a range of options that will improve that current picture.

However, at the moment we do have very good on-call availability in some areas ... Seaford and Rye have nearly 100% availability, which is very high for on-call stations. And the proposals we're bringing in such as the crewing pool enables us to use our wholetime resources more effectively to help put on-call stations back on the run. So, we are very confident about the ability of the on-call to provide cover. And the periods that we're asking them to provide additional cover is actually quite small. We are only talking about the two weekend days; they already provide cover seven days a

week, in the evenings and during the days and weekends. We are asking for a bit more cover from them, obviously at the weekends but that is why we're putting these proposals in place, to encourage more recruitment and better retention.

Will there be a reduction in full time personnel?

There could be a reduction in full-time personnel; however, this is dependent on the Service's Medium-Term Financial Plan which is influenced by long-term central funding. The Integrated Risk Management Plan's primary objective is to rebalance resources and so we expect a significant amount of posts identified being reinvested into the crewing pool, prevention and protection. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has a Workforce Planning Strategy and every attempt will be made to implement the proposed changes without having to use voluntary or compulsory redundancies.

Do hours of opening reflect hours of need?

Yes, the main report and risk profiles show the response activity times and they change dependent on area. Across the whole service, calls tend to rise from 08:30 peaking in the early afternoon before tapering off to 20:00 hours.

General: attendance standards

Does this mean there is a delay in [on-call firefighters] responding to incidents i.e. for Heathfield?

Heathfield, amongst a number of other current on call stations, will remain the same. There'll be no adverse effect to response standards in those areas. In fact, we are planning to improve availability, particularly at Heathfield, and three other on-call stations around the county. So, in short, the answer to that question is no, there will not be any adverse effect to emergency response standards.

What is the basis for determining the rate of 70% compliance with your response standards?

Attendance standards are one way in which the Fire Authority monitors and measures the performance of East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. They help explain how long it could take the Service to respond to emergencies.

Since departing from the National Standards of Fire Cover, East Sussex Fire Authority have locally set its own attendance standards since 2004/5. Through the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-20, it was agreed that a full review of our attendance standards would be undertaken as, due to a number of operational policy changes, our standards at that time were no longer fit for purpose.

In 2018, the Fire Authority agreed that the Service would move away from using Home Office's definition of average response times. This is because members of the public may get a different response time in different areas for a whole range of reasons. One reason is that fire stations are staffed in different ways.

Therefore, the Service:

Set an attendance standard for the first fire engine with an 'on-station' response of 10 minutes 70% of the time

Set an attendance standard for the first fire engine with an 'on-call' response of 15 minutes 70% of the time

It also included the call handling time as part of the new attendance standards – this is the amount of time it takes our Sussex Control Centre staff to take the call and send out the right fire engines or other resources.

An analysis of attendance times was undertaken using historic incident data, and considered our response times against a range of variables including incident types, location and the time of day, alongside an analysis of call-handling times and fire-engine turn-out times to enable the Service to set these standards.

These standards are service-wide performance indicators which enables us to monitor our emergency response to all incident types. It is important to note that these are therefore not targets, as we will always endeavour to send the quickest, appropriate resource.

Major appliances are located primarily on the coast. How can the orphan area, North Wealden - Crowborough, Forest Row, Wadhurst, Mayfield and Heathfield get access in time?

It is true that the disposition of our resources are matched to our risk profile and, in fact, the Fire Authority's proposals in this draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020-2025 seek to enhance and/or move resources to ensure an overall improvement to public safety across the Service area. Around two thirds of the population across our Service area are to be found in the main conurbations along the coast and the number, type and disposition of our emergency resources are appropriately matched to the risk profile.

The individual fire station risk profiles provide a breakdown, by each fire engine, of the percentage of calls attended within 5, 8, 10, 13, 15 & 20 minutes.

So, for example, the fire engine at Forest Row attended 61% of its calls (where it was the first-arriving fire engine) within 15 minutes. However, it's important to note that our current attendance standards are service-wide standards based on the duty system and not the individual fire engine/station so, for instance, we are not saying that Forest Row failed.

It is important to note that these are therefore not station-based targets and that we will always endeavour to send the quickest, appropriate resource.

Will response times be shorter or longer?

Fundamentally, the proposals in the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020-2025 are about a rebalance of our emergency resources to address the risks across our communities as well as a reinvestment into prevention and protection so that the number and severity of emergencies are reduced in the first place. The Operational Resilience Plan (ORP) will improve public safety by having more fire engines available than currently; the crewing pool will further enhance on-call availability over and above the core 18 ORP fire engines; the addition of another fire engine into Hastings will ensure that our resources are better aligned to the risk within Hastings and the wider area, improving community safety and reducing the overall risk profile and the positive impact of the demand management proposals (AFAs, lift releases and trapped birds) will also ensure that fire engines are more available to attend incidents with risk to human life.

Therefore, for many incidents, response times will improve due to the reasons mentioned above. However, the proposal to move to a 'day only' crewing model on six fire stations and the proposal to remove the second fire engines from 7 fire stations will mean that response times may be slower in some areas – but not at all times.

We have analysed the likely numbers of incidents per year that may have an increased response time as well as the impact that this would have on community risk and these were highlighted in the presentation. However, our analysis shows that there is a very low impact, whether looking at community risk, attendance standards or incident demand.

We believe these proposals, if agreed, will enable the Service to use its resources more effectively both now and in the future and are robust and proportionate. Furthermore, where we have identified any perceived change in community risk, we will focus our prevention and protection resources in those areas to further reduce or mitigate the risk in those areas – as prevention is better than cure.

General: data

Why is the data 2 years out of date?

We are not using 'out of date' data. The data which underpins the proposals in the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan used the most up-to-date data we had when we commenced the analysis in January 2019. At that time, we extracted all available incident and mobilisation data stored in our Incident Recording System, dating back to April 2009. We were therefore not in a position to use data for the 2018/19 year, or beyond, as we were still 'in-year' at that time.

Your Station Risk Profiles do not add up. Coverage percentages are out by up to 10%. How can you risk the lives of residents on flawed data?

We are confident that our data is not flawed. At the heart of the proposals in the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020-25 is the most comprehensive risk review that the Service has undertaken to date. Our data went through a robust cleansing, validation and enrichment process in order to develop a risk assessment methodology and which underpins the information contained within the main Operational Response Review report and the 24 individual fire station risk profiles.

We believe that you are referring to some of the percentages contained within the 'headline summary' of the station risk profiles. For example, in the Crowborough station risk profile, we state that the main fire Crowborough engine "mobilises to 34 critical incidents per year - 65% in own area, 11% in Uckfield, 8% in Forest Row area, 8% Mayfield". The percentages highlighted here are not meant to add up to 100% as they are indicators of which station areas the Crowborough fire engine mobilises to the most. In the main content of the report, page 34, we show the full breakdown of mobilisations and every station that it has mobilised to. The 'headline summary' on page 4 is just that - a summary, to show the main areas it supports, otherwise we would need to include an additional 10 stations in the list.

It took 4 years for Wealden to fail to provide a viable Local Plan. Your data as seen in the Station Risk Profiles is error prone at best

As above, we are confident that our data is not flawed. At the heart of the proposals in the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020-25 is the most comprehensive risk review that the Service has undertaken to date. Our data went through a robust cleansing, validation and enrichment process in order to develop a risk assessment methodology and which underpins the information contained within the main Operational Response Review report and the 24 individual fire station risk profiles.

Furthermore, we have undertaken an in-depth analysis of the predicted impact of the proposed development areas across the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Area which has provided the Service with an initial assessment of the impact on community risk, and was based on available information and assumptions of the proposed development areas as well as national / local research.

It is interesting to note that there was more historic growth over the last 10-20 years than is portrayed in the adopted local plans going forward, and the quantity and severity of incidents have also decreased over the past 10-20 years. All residential development sites which were supplied to the analytical team sit within the existing attendance standards isochrones and these have been fully portrayed in the Operational Response Review Main Report and the Individual Station Risk Profiles.

Incident figures don't relate to callout figures, why aren't these included, this gives a false picture

If you mean standby moves then the standby moves of each fire engine have been fully documented in each of the 24 fire station risk profiles, as well as the main analytical Operational Response Review report. However, it is important to note that these have been considered separately to our incident data because one relates directly to an emergency and the other relates to a non-emergency mobilisation which are linked to our internal policies and procedures. It would therefore be inappropriate to include standby moves with incident data to assess the level of risk in any particular area, or indeed, the level of emergency activity of an appliance in its own response area.

General: population and development

With all the new developments that's are planned for Wealden, i.e. the 1,000 houses in Uckfield so a possible increase of 3,000-4,000 car movements and many more from Hailsham and other areas, how do ESFRS foresee managing response times around this?

Over the last nine years, there's been increases in cars on the road, population increases and increases in households. And we've looked at that. We've looked forward and done a number of risk analyses on all of the proposed housing developments. We've looked at those to determine what the additional impact is in terms of community life risk, so the impact on additional fatalities effectively, and casualties, injuries, rescues in dwelling fires. We've undertaken a comprehensive assessment that takes into account these proposed housing developments. We've looked at the types of houses, the numbers of houses in each area, we look at the response times for those areas for the first and second fire engines, we look at and predict the likely socio-demographic background

of these areas to get a really good indication of the likely additional number of incidents, but also the service-wide impact of the proposals.

So the bottom line is that yes, we have absolutely taken consideration of that and we've supplied a comprehensive report to our senior leadership team based on the data that we had at the time we compiled our analysis, and the outcome of that was that ... with the proposed increase in growth, there was no real community risk impact. We've looked at census data and household projections, and all of that going forward.

Over the past 10-20 years, the numbers of incidents and the severity of those incidents has decreased over that time. And so, this goes back to the great work that we do with prevention and protection ... And that's our key driver. That's why emphasise again, our first proposal around our Operational Resilience Plan in getting more fire engines available will allow us to have that better coverage of risk to stop the thing happening in the first place.

With the substantial increase in development of new homes in East Sussex over the next 10 years are the panel confident in their new proposals will be adequate?

We are confident. As discussed, there is a very large amount of data that has led us to these conclusions in the form of the 7 proposals. We have included 9 years of previous callouts and current and foreseeable risks. The proposals have considered the difference between a perception of risk and real fire and rescue related risk. E.g. modern premises are built to modern building standards with modern materials and with hard wired detection.

General: consultation

I'd also like to ask if this is just a review of land-based service or includes sea based? i.e. marina, onshore, etc.

So East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, like every UK Fire and Rescue Service we know, has no statutory duty to respond to incidents at sea. However, there are a small number of services now that provide an offshore firefighting capability, along with or under the auspices of the maritime and coastguard agency.

Beyond fire and rescue, what infrastructure is included? IT, IT Support, maintenance, VPN

The significant areas of impact are detailed in the IRMP proposals. However, smaller changes may occur in IT and equipment and are considered as business-as-usual.

What types of specialist equipment are included? I.E. ladder, decontamination, etc.

The significant areas of impact are detailed in the IRMP proposals. However, smaller changes may occur in specialist equipment and is considered as business-as-usual.

Are Community Fire stations included? Such as Roedean Community Fire Station?

Yes, all community fire stations are included in the proposals, including Roedean.

What is the final date for representations against these nonsensical and dangerous proposals?

We strongly disagree with your analysis of the proposals which are based on 18 months of data gathering from multiple internal and external sources. We would welcome the opportunity to hear

how your empirical data and analysis contradicts ours for the benefit of the Community of East Sussex and City of Brighton and Hove.

The consultation closes on 19th June.

Has the police or pcc commissioner expressed a view?

I don't believe we have had a response from the PCC as yet.

How much of the proposed changes are voluntary and have employees been consulted?

This process has taken a couple of years to get to this point. And we have regularly spoken to current employees and have been very much in correspondence with trade unions and with employee groups all the way through the formation of these proposals. But when you get to the point of whether it's going to be voluntary or compulsory, that depends on what the proposal is. But we've been very clear all the way through this is that the implementation plan is a very different set of options. And we can't get fully detailed implementation plans until the decisions are made. So, at the moment, these are proposals, but we have laid out some key principles to our employees that we don't expect certain things to happen.

So, in the case of on-call contracts, we are very much of the mindset that these should be voluntary. We have no intention of making our on-call and personnel take on contracts that are going to be detrimental to their own ability to carry out that contract. So, we are looking at providing more opportunities, more flexibility but not making it compulsory. But the final details won't be provided until the decisions are made because we have to do full impact assessments with all employees to make sure that our implementation is done in the best way possible.

Are you concerned with the unions already rejecting these proposals that future strikes may be a direct result of some of these proposed cuts?

The Unions' responses to the proposals will be considered along with all of the consultation responses. It will be a matter for them.

We are always concerned when any single one of our valued stakeholders raises legitimate reservations in regard to any proposal for change. We have a long-standing formal internal consultation and negotiation framework that enables both employers and employees representatives' sufficient time and space to objectively debate proposals for change.

What happens if these proposals are not agreed? You said these have taken years to build? Would it be back to the drawing board completely or would it be tweaking? I'm trying not to be vague! Sorry!

We have worked hard over the last couple of years to actually get the proposals into a shape for the Fire Authority to undertake the consultation. The whole point of the consultation exercise is for people to have a view, including staff, in terms of what they think of the proposals and if they can suggest alternatives. The Integrated Risk Management Plan and the proposals within it are part of a five-year implementation plan and a five-year window.

So, at the moment, we are forecasting that we may need to make savings of between £0.3m and £3.5m over the next five years because of the uncertainty around funding in the future. So, in terms

of the proposals and the information that we receive back and the comments that we receive, then absolutely all that will be taken into consideration by the Fire Authority when they make their decision in September. Over recent years, we've had changes to plans put forward because staff have come in with alternatives. That's part of the consultation process. The Fire Authority will take cognisance and take note of the comments that people are sending in. And if there are changes that are appropriate and that can be made, we'll consider that as part of proposals going forward.

General: equalities

A general question regarding your Equality Impact assessment in the info you previously sent out via email link. If I read it correctly, your EIA seemed to be saying that people with disabilities would be at greater risk because of these plans; however, it was not clear to me what the increased risks to disabled people would be. It would be helpful to understand this more clearly. Thanks.

So, with regards to disability, that is a bit of a generic term. The specifics were with regard to current members of staff with neuro disabilities such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and associated conditions. And us being able to effectively communicate the changes to them to make sure that they understand as well as their colleagues do. So, we put in place a communication strategy to make sure that we got to every single member of out of our workforce.

General: other

I would appreciate understanding the impact on service provision of specialist equipment and depth of cover for Ashdown Forest? The speed of development and recent history of fires on Ashdown will potentially be significantly be impacted by reduction in service to daytime and weekday, which are not our peak fire times. This leaves the environment at greater risk and properties, so scale and speed are important.

The whole purpose of our proposed Operational Resilience Plan (proposal 1) is to ensure we have the right number of resources (for example fire engines and firefighters) to manage multiple incidents, protracted incidents and spate conditions. The proposals allow us to increase the minimum number of fire engines available from 15 to 18. In addition, the minimum of 6 resilience fire engines will also give us an additional ability to further support protracted incidents, support standby moves and to provide regular relief crews to on-going incidents.

Is this the first Risk Management Plan? Also, if not what did the previous one achieve?

We've done a number of them since the law changed from the Fire Services Act 1947. Back in 2004, that was repealed to the Fire and Rescue Services Act. And that's when the statutory duty for fire services to do an IRMP came in. And we're required to do them between every three and five years.

Additional information provided: If you refer to the following page, it has details of some of our previous IRMPs: <https://www.esfrs.org/about-us/publication-of-information/strategies-plans-and-performance-information/community-risk-analysis/integrated-risk-management-planning/>

Is it possible to get a copy of the flexible rostering and group rostering policies/guidance documents?

The actual policies, procedures and guidance documents are not being drawn up yet because this is part of the proposals to go out and consult with. So, once the proposals are agreed, the next phase of the project, that's when all the guidance documents, policies and procedures etc. will be drawn up, with staff feeding into the proposals and their development. So that will be part of the implementation plan if the proposals are agreed in September.

It sounds as if employers are not being considered in this equation.

Just to assure you, the employer (ESFA via ESFRS) complies with the legal duties to ensure sufficient transparent consultation on organisational Policy has been afforded. All ESFRS Policies drawn up by the employer require a minimum of 6 weeks staff consultation before acting on any suggested amendments or additions and submitting them to the sign-off committee chaired by our Deputy Chief Fire Officer with employee representatives.

On 1/6 there was a fire near Heathfield, 1 of the vehicles attending was from Seaford which is miles away

We regularly use available appliances from all areas of the county to deal with incidents, whether on initial callout, on requests for assistance by the incident commander or because they are specialist appliances. The Seaford vehicle you refer to was one of our 5 Land Rovers.

ESFRS wants to improve the availability across all our stations, however the ORP will specifically target the higher risk station areas to ensure we maintain a higher level of resilience for these higher risk areas. It is important to differentiate between the proposed ORP approach where we would plan to have at least 18 immediately available Fire Engines and the existing Core Stations Policy where we currently plan to start the day with 15.

The new approach does not focus on stations, it focuses on a more geographic spread which helps with reducing the need for unnecessary stand-by moves. Most (74%) of all calls are dealt with within 15 minutes where, at the moment, we move any number of Fire Engines to cover an area that doesn't necessarily warrant it.

Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP)

How are you planning on improving at Heathfield?

The ORP will target Heathfield as an appliance we want to improve availability to near 100%. The crewing pool will assist us in doing this.

What contractual requirements do you require of on-call employees for your normal on-call model (5 minutes) and your 30 minutes model in terms of availability and remuneration?

We are following the guidebook terms and conditions for on-call personnel. So, we currently don't have any variations to that approach other than the fact that we offer a whole, three-quarter unit and half unit status. And all eligible firefighters in an on-call role have to be within five minutes of a nearest fire station either working or living. However, we are proposing through the IRMP to introduce new contracts such as combined salary, and other enhancements.

As you are struggling to recruit and retain Retained personnel how can you guarantee service?

ESFRS is not alone in struggling for a number of years to recruit and retain on-call staff in the traditional manner. This is why this proposal has been put forward, because we do know that there are a number of services across the country that have made some changes that we would like to bring in because they are experiencing some real successes.

The ORP is very much focused on increasing the availability of the core on-call stations. We will continue to invest in those stations to keep their availability as high as possible. So, the range of options that we're proposing such as the crewing pool could be utilised to help keep the availability of these stations higher as well. And this is a complete package designed to improve the overall availability of all stations.

How many staff have accepted this disruptive pooling suggestion?

We strongly disagree with your interpretation of the flexible Crewing Pool as disruptive. Whilst Policy and ways of working remain a matter for consultation and negotiation with the employees' representatives, there would not be any reduction in remuneration, pension or leave allowances. Hours at work and responsibilities pertaining to each of their individual roles (rank) would also remain unchanged and their rota pattern would be mutually agreed in advance. In addition, transport from base to workplace will be provided.

It's a proposal at this time, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service have not brought in the crewing pool. However, we do know because we've done our research across the country that a number of other services have benefited for a number of years by having this additional level of access to other firefighters who can be sent to cover.

How much will the new on-call contracts pay?

The proposals to introduce new on-call contracts will not contain final details on payment until the Fire Authority decision on 3rd September. However, we have been considering a range of contracts that are available across the country, but it is not possible to disclose full payment terms at this point.

Given the total number of engines is reduced (by 7??), how/why do the coverage percentages appear to increase?

East Sussex has 24 fire stations and there are a mixture of wholetime and on-call stations. With wholetime stations we can guarantee the availability of those appliances by the way we roster our staff on duty. All the other on-call appliances such as Heathfield, Hailsham, we cannot guarantee 100% availability because we rely on the availability each station provides through their on-call staff. So, the ORP targets on-call stations that historically have not had 100% availability. The only one that did was Rye and it was treated as a core station, so we actively put resources there. For the ORP, there's going to be three more stations, Heathfield, Seaford and Hailsham that will be having a higher degree of availability. That is why our coverage will increase with the 18 appliances being available. Obviously, there are times a day when all 24 stations have all their classes available. But that is not always 100% of the time.

If an incident occurs where a "30 minute" response pump is the geographical nearest resource is there a way of speeding up the response?

The 30-minute response is to describe resilience crews where we can notify colleagues that they may be required to make up a relief crew.

If fire control receive any emergency call out, they'll do their immediate assessment as per normal. If it requires an immediate attendance, then the nearest and fastest appliances will be sent. Sometimes that may be one of these stations that's been identified as one of the six that has a resilience pump. If that pump is available but doesn't form part of the 18 that we definitely need to cover the most risky parts of the county, it will be sent first and foremost if it is the closest and the fastest. And the only time that 30 minutes or any kind of delay would come in is if there is a non-life threatening call that comes into a particular area where we know there's perhaps three people who are currently available, but we always need four to turn out a fire engine ... if we know that fourth person is going to be available because they finish work in, say, 20 minutes time, that's when we will allocate that resource to that particular incident, but only if it's a non-life threatening situation.

You are confident, but the confidence is based on an assumption that the new contract will be effective in attracting and retaining staff. A big assumption.

We disagree with your interpretation of the proposal as an assumption. The proposal is based on the research and analysis of how other Fire and Rescue Services, Police Services and Ambulance Services have benefitted from prioritising their calls and have managed them according to risk.

Do you think the reason for your struggles to employ persons is because the police are recruiting as well? From having friends and family in both services it takes a special person to take on these roles and surely that limits the numbers applying to each service? Surely, it's not just down to wages!

Our on-call colleagues are a valuable asset and we realise that lots of factors influence their decision to join the FRS is. They are paid a retaining fee at the moment and a call out fee for the incidents they attend, We think a salaried scheme may be more attractive to some and other FRS' have employed them successfully.

The hours for on-call firefighters (on call nights and at weekends) are about as family-unfriendly as it's possible to be. So, I imagine that you will find it hard to recruit so many on-call staff.

We have 235 on call colleagues and they do give up a lot for their local community. We think the contracts may be attractive to some, but our on-call staff can remain as they are if they don't want to move to the new contracts.

This is a thoroughly misleading question. Of course, more engines are good. The problem is the lack of personnel to man them.

Have you considered implementing the new contracts before reducing the full-time staff?

Please see the answer provided earlier.

Proposals 2 (day-crewed to day-only) and 3 (changes to 2-engine stations)

The main issue that I have had from constituents so far including firefighters at our station, is that we are losing a pump. Bearing in mind our station is practically brand new this seems to people to be a waste. Their worry is that a loss of an appliance on site will surely result in an overall delay in response. I appreciate people do not always read all the information available, but people are afraid.

The proposal to withdraw 7 of our second appliances is based on the data we mentioned earlier from 9 years in the past, what we're doing now and what we can anticipate for the future including housing developments, demography, geography, road networks, business etc. Noting this, and that our modelling for the removal of P4s' was based on their 100% availability, there was a negligible impact across the Service.

If there aren't crews at Uckfield at a weekend and response times are longer, wouldn't there be a risk to life at this point either if a fire or a vehicle accident on the roads? With ESFRS making these cuts and the cuts the paramedic teams and police are struggling with, surely this leaves someone in an incident at even a longer risk because you are all taking longer to get there to help?

There will be crews at the weekend. It's just that they will be on-call. The difference between on-call and day crewed in terms of immediate response, at the weekend there's a potential for a 10-hour window, where on-call colleagues turn out to incidents. And the modelling that we've done has shown that actually there's very few critical incidents at the weekends. But the on-call crews will still be there, and they will still turn out, albeit it's a slightly longer turnout because they have get to the station and then turn out to the emergency incident.

Forest Row is struggling to respond. Crowborough provides backup to Forest Row, but would not be able to assist with only one fire engine?

Forest Row does have periods when they are not available, when this happens, we send the nearest resources to an incident in Forest Row. Sometimes this will be from Crowborough, but it could also come from other station areas. We also send the nearest and quickest appliance to an emergency call. The second appliance at Crowborough is not available 100% in a similar way to Forest Row.

Does the 74% relate to incidents or callouts? Call out figures should be being used otherwise they give a false picture as a vehicle is being used whilst they are out on the road whether it ends up as a true incident or not. What about where there is a callout which is cancelled on the way to what is thought to be an incident? Also, with the standby movements it still means that the firefighters are having to respond elsewhere.

Callouts and incidents are the same thing. 74% of our incidents are dealt with by one appliance within 15 minutes.

All incident data is used in our calculations and modelling. Standbys are not included as they are internal vehicle movements. When there is an emergency, control room staff will mobilise the nearest available resources to deal with the incident, supported by our mobilising IT systems. As part of this process, sometimes this will include a number of 'standby' movements. This is where other fire engines are mobilised, normally to other fire station areas, to ensure that there is an

optimum level of cover across the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service area at all times whilst an incident is being resolved in a specific area. These standby moves are essentially cover moves and are not in themselves a mobilisation to an emergency/incident.

So, looking at this you are stating that you are cutting fire appliances. Am I correct on this?

We are proposing to withdraw 7 but immediately relocate 2 of these. One to Eastbourne and one to Bohemia Road in Hastings. The impact has been modelled in consideration of past, present and future risk and there is little to no impact to life or response standards. One of these 7 attends about 13 calls a year. The time, equipment, maintenance and resources required to keep these available when we know we can provide at least the same response service with an improved prevention and protection team to reduce calls in the first place can only be a good thing.

Some of my constituents are concerned that the data used for this is out of date and is actually not reflective of the second appliance's use. I have had feedback from people who work in the fire service who have suggested this is the case. What if it turns out that there was an increase in use for this past year? Or next year? Newhaven has a projected increase in population for the next decade. My constituents are concerned that this cover will not be sufficient.

We're not using out of date data. The data that underpins the proposals in the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan used the most up to date data that we had when we commenced the analysis in January 2019. So, at that time, we extracted all available incident and mobilisation data that was stored in our incident recording system, dating back to April 2009. We weren't then in a position to be able to use data for the 2019 year or beyond because we were still in the year at that time, but using nine years' worth of data has enabled us as a Fire and Rescue Service to get a really informative trend to undertake really informative trend analysis.

Typically, data covering between three and five years is considered appropriate when identifying trends and assuring robustness of data. So, our approach to using up to nine years' worth is over and above the standard approach. And so, the proposals that that are in the draft IRMP are therefore built on a solid evidence base, and our strategic and long-term view. And so, this means, importantly, that they don't become redundant because the data doesn't include an additional years' worth of data. And now over that nine-year period, there has been ups and downs, peaks and troughs in terms of the incident numbers. But over the longer term, a more reliable trend can be identified, which moderates for any annual changes from year to year.

In addition to that, we have also undertaken a very comprehensive assessment of future growth. So, we've looked at what's happened historically, we've looked at the numbers of households and residents between the last two censuses and the growth between the last census in 2011 up until now. And then looking forward, we've done an assessment to take account of future growth and its impact. So, to summarise, using up to nine years' worth of data helps us to really get a good long-term view of where we need to go, it gives us a good direction of travel.

If 74% are attended by one engine, that means 26% are attended by more than one. Surely this is still too a high percentage of requirement to consider the reduction unless the issue is with not being able to man the second engine.

The attendance of two appliances at 26% incidents is a significant figure, however this figure is before we remove the non-critical incidents. A critical incident is an incident that involves a life risk, critical calls only account for only 5.2 % of total incidents. The key reason for the 26% is the use of pre-determined attendances, these are agreed in advance and specify the weight of attendance across a range of incidents. An example would be an automatic fire alarm call at a residential property, this would attract a two-pump attendance even though we know that 96% of AFA incidents turn out to be false alarms.

The next important factor to consider is the fact that the 26% of two appliance incidents will include responses from two different stations particularly in rural areas. In these cases, the quickest two appliances are sent one from each station due to the location of the incident determining a split attendance.

Only a small number of incidents occur where the home station sends two appliances to the same incident, these are mainly found in the City, Eastbourne and Hastings areas due to the higher risk profiles.

This is misleading. What is your response to the fact that the Forest Row calls are supported 15% from Crowborough 83P4 and 6% from 83P1?

The Station Risk Profile for Forest Row highlights the numbers of incidents that occur in its area, along with the numbers of mobilisations of each fire engine. The figures you have quoted above appear to be incorrect.

On page 27, we state that 69% of incidents within the Forest Row station area were attended by a single fire engine over a five-year period (April 2013 – March 2018). For the remaining 31% of occasions where there was a second fire engine, Crowborough's main fire engine (FJE83P1) was the second fire engine on 14% of occasions. Crowborough's second fire engine (FJE83P4) to which you allude in your question was the second fire engine on just 2% of occasions.

There are, on average, 74 incidents per year within Forest Row station area.

If the quickest response - Crowborough is no longer available, what happens in Forest Row? Wrong - 14% is correct

We disagree with your interpretation of the data. There are many and varied factors that may affect which appliance is available at the time of the call. From page 27 of the Forest Row station profile, we know that if there is an incident in Forest Row station area that requires a second fire engine, this is provided by an over-border fire engine on 35% of occasions and, in fact, on 22% of occasions, Forest Row itself is the second-arriving fire engine. Crowborough's main fire engine is the second fire engine on 14% of occasions and this is likely to remain the same going forward. However, the proposal to remove the second fire engine at Crowborough (FJE83P4) will have a small impact. If you refer to the Crowborough Station Risk Profile, the table on page 34 demonstrates that the

Crowborough's second fire engine mobilises to, on average, 2 incidents per year in Forest Row (of which <1 are critical incidents).

Can we have an apology for incorrect information given?

Thank you for your questions and comments around the data. I would strongly encourage you to submit a detailed response which brings together all of your comments in that regard to be included in the consultation feedback.

As an on-call station, sometimes availability drops, and the engine is not available at Forest Row. So, when that happens, depending on the location of a call we will send the next nearest appliance. Sometimes that will be from Crowborough, sometimes that'll be from neighbouring stations. So, who goes depends on where the actual call comes from. And so, I don't believe that's misleading; it's just down to how things actually happen based on the address of the incident.

Just to add to that looking at the Forest Row station profile, when there was a requirement for a second fire engine to attend, it was Uckfield's main fire engine that attended on 15% of occasions. Crowborough's second fire engine attended in Forest Row as the second appliance 2% of the time, not 15.

In addition to the response (above) we gave in real-time, we don't believe we gave any incorrect information and sought to square some of your own figures which did not match those in the station-risk profiles whilst in a fast-paced Q&A session. However, in hindsight we recognise there may have been different ways of handling the many questions coming and this is something we will take on board. As explained in the stakeholder webinar, this was the first time that both Opinion Research Services and East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service had conducted a stakeholder groups via an online webinar.

This was a question I received from a constituent: The service has stated that there will be a delay to the second appliance but have only stated this will take 'slightly' longer.' Exactly how long would this be for any given area in Newhaven and Peacehaven's area and at the busiest times of the day? Thanks in advance

It is actually a very complicated question because it depends on so many aspects. So, if we took Newhaven, the impact on the second appliance is dependent on what appliances are available. So, at the moment, Newhaven has got two fire engines. And the second fire engine is not a wholtime fire engine it is an on-call fire engine, so it's not 100% available. So, when it's not available, we have to send another second appliance into Newhaven anyway. Now the other issue we've got is, where the call is in the Newhaven area will depend on which two appliances attend. So normally as you would expect, one appliance will always pretty much attend from Newhaven. But the second appliance may come from a bordering fire station into Newhaven ... So, the actual time it takes for a second appliance to arrive at a call in Newhaven will be dependent upon where that call is and what time of day it is. But we do appreciate if we remove it, then there will be more dependency on other stations to come in. But as we've already mentioned, that happens quite regularly already because the availability is not 100%.

Can you give me a definition for how long 'slightly longer' would be and how much impact 'negligible impact' would be? What was this data based on as the definition of slightly and negligible would vary between different people?

East Sussex Fire Authority have a statutory duty to balance risk with a resourcing plan and, in executing those duties, we need to factor in a number of issues to ensure that we can always mobilise the nearest/quickest available crew, fire engine(s) and other resources required to respond to an incident.

There are three main reasons why we haven't provided figures on the additional time that it might take for a fire engine to arrive, which are outlined below.

1. Large variability in timings due to wide array of factors

Resources may come from your local fire engine/ station, but not always and that's for a variety of reasons:-

- It may be that the local fire engine is not the most appropriate resource to send because different or specialist equipment is needed

- The local crew may already be at a different incident, or on standby at another fire station;

- The local crew may be out conducting a home safety visit or undertaking some business safety activity in a different part of their station area;

- The local fire engine may be unavailable because of training or for mechanical reasons;

- There may be significant congestion or roadblocks/diversions which would mean the local fire engine would not be the quickest resource;

- Sometimes the local station is not available due to staffing issues.

Therefore, we need a plan to ensure that we have resilience and ensure the correct resources, sometimes from neighbouring fire stations and, on occasions, a neighbouring fire and rescue service to ensure that we achieve our agreed response times.

Given the wide range of factors that impact on our response, it would be inappropriate to place a hard figure on how much longer it would take for a particular fire engine to arrive at an incident as there are so many variables that already affect the attendance time of our fire engines, so we instead plan by taking a wider view of risk and available resources. This is clearly demonstrated in the fire station risk profiles which shows the actual distribution of our attendance times – these can be found on our consultation page www.esfrs.org/saferfuture and an example is provided in Appendix A.

2. Perception of risk vs actual risk

The important thing to understand is that the perception and fear of risk is different to reality. It is therefore important to look at the facts, data and the robust analysis which has been undertaken and sits behind these proposals. For example, our analysis shows that 95% of our incidents have no life-risk associated with them. Furthermore, out of the 528 accidental dwelling fires we attend per year:

Almost 90% result in no form of injury.

For those that do, less than half (approximately 46%) are classed as serious or slight injuries, equating to around 26 incidents per year

0.4% of accidental dwelling fires result in a fatal injury.

Another thing to bear in mind is that, over the last 20 years in the UK the number of dwelling fires has been reducing, partly due to more modern and safer electrical devices, but also because of the other two elements of our statutory duty – prevention and protection:

Our prevention activity helps educate people to reduce the risk of fires occurring in the first place and when people are vulnerable, we must ensure we continue to work alongside partners in health and social care to identify and reach these individuals before they have a life-threatening emergency - prevention is better than cure.

Our duty for protection and building safety means we regulate buildings that have higher fire risk. In all elements of our work we will continue to proactively target areas where community risk is higher, and we can evidence that this balanced approach helps ensure risk is reduced and mitigated.

3. Response times are part of a larger collection of factors that affect community risk

Whilst we agree that a quick response with the appropriate resource can reduce the risk to life, we are aware that our response time is just one of a number of factors that contribute to community risk.

We have previously stated that our modelling indicates that there will be no material impact on community risk and our current attendance standards with these proposals. Our robust modelling process considers a range of factors to determine the overall community risk impact including the number of dwellings and residents in each local area, the socio-demographic profile of the area, a historical analysis of what has happened in the area over a number of years, as well as the average response time for both the first and second arriving fire engines.

The predicted fatalities, serious and slight injuries are calculated using algorithms defined by comprehensive national research, which also feature as the underlying risk calculations within the government's Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) toolkit. Full details can be found in our risk assessment methodology on our consultation page www.esfrs.org/saferfuture.

Summary

In summary, the proposal to move to a day only duty system or the removal of the second fire engines at some stations would only affect the response time for a small number of incidents, which was highlighted in the Fire Authority Paper considered on the 23rd April 2020 and which can be found on our consultation page www.esfrs.org/saferfuture. Appendix B illustrates this.

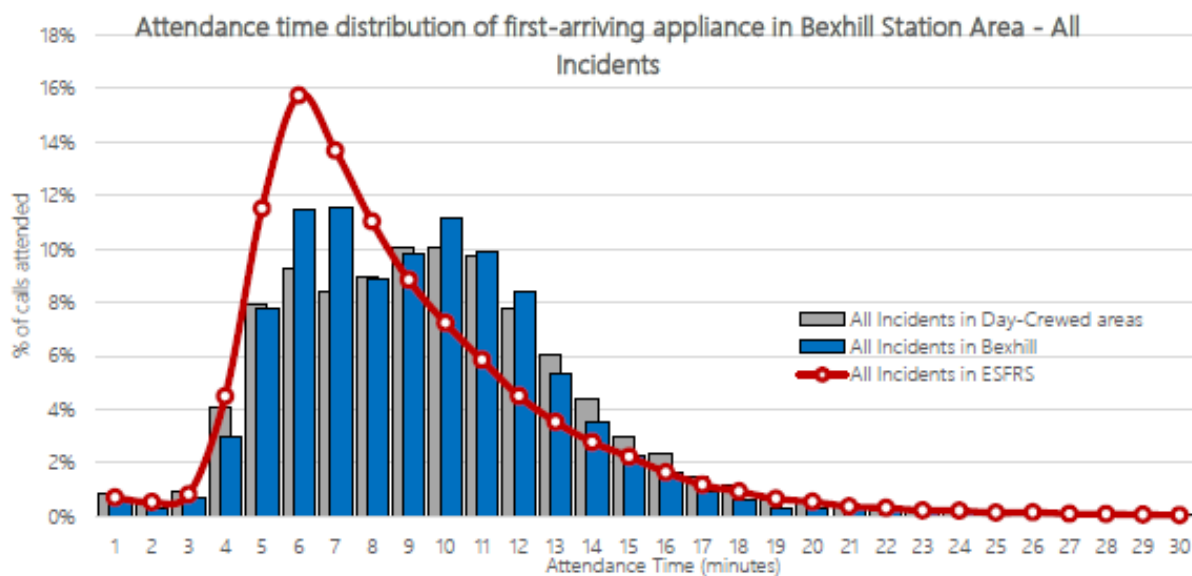
The work that has been done to reach these proposals and the methodology used is robust and the duty we have as a public service to ensure that the Fire Authority have an integrated plan for management of risk and use of resources is not only open to public scrutiny, but will also be judged

by the independent inspectorate – HMICFRS against the guidance set out in the Fire and Rescue Services legislation and the underpinning national framework and guidance documents.

Appendix A

Example of an attendance time distribution curve – taken from Bexhill Fire Station Risk Profile.

The chart below depicts the distribution of attendance times for incidents in the Bexhill area, ranging from 0 to 30 minutes. This demonstrates the difficulty in providing a hard figure for the ‘increased attendance time’ due to some of the proposed changes in the IRMP, as the chart clearly shows there are many factors which already affect the response times of our fire engines.



We can also see in the table below that the primary fire engine based at Bexhill attended 67% of all incidents within 10 minutes and 95% of all incidents within 15 minutes.

Incidents attended within X minutes by FJE73P1 where first-arriving appliance (Apr 2013 – Mar 2018)

Performance of FJE73P1 as first arriving appliance	< 5 mins	< 8 mins	< 10 mins	< 13 mins	< 15 mins	< 20 mins	Total Incidents
All Incidents	304 (13%)	1074 (46%)	1548 (67%)	2084 (90%)	2212 (95%)	2286 (98%)	2,323
Critical Incidents	15 (14%)	65 (59%)	82 (74%)	105 (95%)	109 (98%)	109 (98%)	111

It is likely, therefore, that the small number of incidents affected by the proposal to move to a day only duty system will not significantly alter the attendance time distribution curve, nor on our attendance standards.

The 24 fire station risk profiles and main operational response review report can be found on our consultation page www.esfrs.org/saferfuture.

Appendix B

The table below shows the average number of incidents per year that would potentially receive a longer response time and it can be seen that there are very few critical incidents which may be impacted with a longer response time. The table below also shows the attendance times of each

day crewed fire engine over 5 years (April 2013 - March 2018). Given the small number of 'daytime' weekend incidents, along with the small number of calls made by some of our second fire engines, our modelling suggests there will be no material impact on our attendance standards and negligible impact on community risk.

Please refer to the individual fire station risk profiles for further details including data around the average time difference between the first and second fire engines arriving, found on our consultation page at www.esfrs.org/saferfuture

Home station of appliance	Appliance	Ave. Mobilisations to Incidents per Year (2013-18)	% < 5 mins	% < 8 mins	% < 10 mins	% < 13 mins	% < 15 mins	% < 20 mins	'Day time' weekend mobilisations	Critical incidents	Home station of appliance	Appliance	No. of Mobilisations in (2017/18)	Critical Incidents
Battle	FJE72P1	243	13%	34%	49%	71%	81%	95%	32	4	Battle	FJE72P1	13	1
Bexhill	FJE73P1	557	13%	46%	67%	90%	95%	98%	84	7	Bexhill	FJE73P1	70	9
Crowborough	FJE83P1	290	15%	38%	55%	76%	84%	94%	47	4	Crowborough	FJE83P1	54	11
Lewes	FJE89P1	410	15%	39%	56%	79%	89%	97%	58	9	Lewes	FJE89P1	51	7
Newhaven	FJE87P1	423	13%	37%	60%	85%	93%	98%	61	6	Newhaven	FJE87P1	61	8
Uckfield	FJE84P1	332	12%	30%	47%	69%	81%	94%	54	6	Uckfield	FJE84P1	39	6
											Rye	FJE70P4	28	1

Can I sum up for you Paul? Times cannot be guaranteed because staffing levels are under pressure, and no viable solution to this has been proposed by ESFRS.

Proposal 4: crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

It's a shame that Proposal 4 isn't in two parts as I would agree with the increase to two vehicles at one site but not a reduced service at the other site.

Proposal 6: demand management (AFAs)

How will operators be notified that the fire service will no longer automatically attend if there is an automated fire alarm call out?

If the proposal is agreed, we will work with the premises we have identified and let them know the new procedure.

If the Fire Authority agrees to us not going to this type of call outs, the service will be employing a project manager to work out all the details and how we liaise with all the businesses to make sure that everybody's aware of the new process and the new procedures.

And just to say that we've got some call challenge procedures in place at the moment, which we've had in place for quite some time. So call operators, on receipt of a call, they go through a set process to identify whether the service needs to attend immediately or otherwise ... to ask whether the reason for the alarm going off has been checked, what systems they've got in place to ensure that someone's checked as to why the alarm has gone off, and things like that. If at that time there's no reason to call the fire service out, then the call will be ended. However, if there is then obviously, they're informed and requested to call dial 999 immediately if they find a fire.

If an AFA takes place, how would you then ascertain if an appliance was required?

The responsibility for maintaining commercial/ industrial fire safety lies with the responsible person. The FRS has robust call challenge systems to assess whether we need to attend immediately or otherwise.

As a general comment, larger fines for false alarms might be better rather than to ignore it.

We are also reviewing whether, at some point in the future, we should charge a fee for attending unwanted fire signals in some other premises types, in some circumstances. If the Fire Authority are minded to consider such an approach, this would be subject to a separate public consultation in due course.

So, if the alarm goes off at night, would you attend or wait for 'positive confirmation'?

In most cases, we would still be attending AFA activations at night. However, the proposal states that we will be increasing our levels of call-challenge therefore repeat offenders may receive changes to the pre-determined attendance. We will have an AFA Reduction Manager, who will work with the premises to lower the amount of false alarms. If this is not successful, then ultimately, we decide not to attend until a positive confirmation is received.

Proposal 6: demand management (trapped birds)

I understand from local firefighters that animal rescues are normally only attended if/when a wildlife charity has requested FRS attendance because other people cannot reach it. If the FRS don't attend, what is the risk to people attempting to rescue the animals themselves without proper equipment?

It is correct that our policy requires involvement of RSPCA and/or other wildlife charities before we attend. However, in a significant amount of animal rescue calls, no third party is in attendance when the call is made to the fire service. We are unable to comment on the actions of people that choose to carry out their own animal rescues, but we would attend an incident if there is a life-risk involved. Please note, this proposal is only related to birds trapped in netting, of which we have around 80 per year.

Home and building inspections***These sound like chargeable services ... Protection & Prevention?***

We do not charge for prevention services. That's a free service that we provide to the public. It's a key priority of ours to provide home safety visits to all the premises that require them to reduce the occurrence of fires. With regard to protection, some aspects are chargeable. But that's very small amounts of it. And again, protection is more an enforcement role for the fire service. However, we do have the primary priority scheme, which is a scheme that we've put in place that does enable us to make a charge for some services we provide around protection. And if you want further information on that, that is available on our internet website.

Isn't this just about cutting the front line to increase prevention and protection? These proposals will fundamentally affect the North Wealden safety

Our proposals are to make sure our resources are better matched to risk. The call numbers and risk profiles in comparison with our FRS family group (similar group of 12 UK FRS's) demonstrate the proposals are proportionate and appropriate. We have never produced such a rich and robust assessment of fire and rescue related risk and these proposals will place us in a good position to deal with incidents now and for the future, and, to invest into prevention and protection to stop the incidents from happening in the first place.

Our Operational Response Review has taken 18 months of hard work for a team of dedicated individuals to gather an enormous amount of information based upon nine years' worth of historical data and plan for the future, looking into all of the foreseeable risks that we could possibly be faced with. As a result, we've been able to do a really robust risk assessment which has stood up to scrutiny by the National Fire Chief's Council. They've acknowledged we've used best practice, and that has enabled us to stand by proposals to say that they are proportionate and appropriate, and they'll deal with the risk that we have identified not just now but for the future. And that will enable us to not only cover our emergency response, which is of course really important, but also the prevention and protection activities that stop incidents happening in the first place. The proposals will release a number of posts back into the service so that we can reinvest them into those really, really important areas of prevention and protection. That's the aim of this. It's not about financial cuts. Notwithstanding that, like every local authority, we do have a challenge with regards to working within our cost envelope. In addition to that, fire services are funded on an annual basis, and it's very difficult to try and plan effectively further than that. So again, our proposals not only improve an enormous amount of operational cover, we also improve the prevention and protection side of the business, as well as working within our financial boundaries.

How does money that is switched from front line to admin help safety? Ultimately, when we dial 999, we expect a fire engine, not a man with a clipboard to advise how we could have avoided the call.

The proposals are a balance of prevention protection and response. The fire service has been very successful in reducing incidents over the last decade. Our incidents have reduced by 40% in 10 years. We work hard from preventing incidents from happening in the first place, but when you call 999 in an emergency you will get a fire engine responding

When we receive an emergency call, we would continue to send the correct pre-determined attendance from the nearest and quickest station. We would never send one of our firefighters with a clipboard to deal with an emergency incident.

On this question, I responded that I tend to agree with increasing inspections etc, but that should not be read to mean that I agree with cuts in front-line services to fund.

It is vital for the community and our valued stakeholders to recognise that front-line services includes the Firefighters, Crew Managers, Watch Managers, Station Managers and their professional equivalents who work in the Prevention and Protection teams which is a statutory duty. In many respects, these valued colleagues are more front line than their equally valued colleagues

who respond to emergencies when something has gone wrong. It is the responsibility of all our staff to prevent and protect first to improve safety, reduce emergencies and harm.

Another unreasonable question. If the base data was not flawed, the answer would be 'agree', but this is a PR BBC-style question. You demean yourselves.

We would welcome the opportunity to hear how your empirical data and analysis contradicts ours for the benefit of the Community of East Sussex and City of Brighton and Hove.

Another loaded question. 'Yes' is the answer but not at the cost of front-line services.

Please note the previous comment above. The proposals include the reinvestment of posts into prevention and protection work.

ESFRS' finances into the future

Because of the recent grants you have received due to Covid-19 will you not need to make so many cuts?

We have received a certain amount of money from the government around COVID-19, but that money is actually ring-fenced to undertake whatever extra work we've had to carry out because of the pandemic. So that grant money is a one-off; once we've spent it on additional resources or people to help us out with some of the work that we've had to undertake, then that money is gone. It's not something that would be in our base budget year after year after year ... we can't use that in terms of what our future budget is and what our future projected savings or improvements and efficiencies need to be.

Since the shortfall has been caused by the reduction in central government grants, why isn't increased central government funding being considered as another option? As a Councillor, I would certainly support any lobbying of central government for proper funding of such a critical service.

Because Central Government Grant funding is consistently reducing. Despite this, our proposals make some considerable improvements in frontline service delivery (prevention, protection, response) all based on risk where very few others have.

Our Fire Authority and Chief do lobby central government, as do the National Fire Chiefs Council, in terms of the central grant. But we are, as a local authority, bound by what central government allow us to raise Council Tax by and what their settlement figure is. This is why we've come up with a suite of proposals which we think balances our prevention, protection and response based on the information and the findings from the Operational Response Review, and gives us some flexibility in terms of what the financial position and the situation will be over the next five years.

It will also be improvements that we'd like to make in terms of efficient efficiencies to the Service. So, we might not have to take the savings, we can reinvest that money in certain areas as well. So, the IRMP proposals at the moment set a range of options for the Fire Authority to consider in terms of how we might need to tackle the financial constraints that we find ourselves under. If the picture changes, then we can we can reinvest that money and those posts to improve the other services in prevention and protection and response.

We know that already because of the outcome of the Grenfell inquiry that the Inspectorate has a view on how Fire and Rescue Services are run. They've said across the board that actually more investment needs to be put into the prevention and protection arm of the service.

Why not use the £17m non-essential costs to fund the prevention?

The proposed IRMP is based on a comprehensive assessment of risk across the communities of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove and, if approved, will improve the effectiveness of our prevention, protection and response services. The proposals primarily focus on the reallocation of resources across the Service in line with that risk assessment.

There is significant uncertainty about our future funding (in common with many public sector bodies). The Authority currently has a one-year funding settlement from central Government for 2020/21. Beyond that the Government has made no commitment – it was planning to carry out a comprehensive review of fire funding for the next 3-4 years in 2021/22 but Covid-19 is likely to delay this.

This makes financial planning for the Authority's future extremely difficult. The Authority included three funding scenarios in its Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2020/21 – 2024/25 giving potential savings requirements over the next five years of between £0.7m and £3.6m. The IRMP proposals could provide efficiencies of between £1.7m - £2.4m. The extent to which the Authority may need to realise these as savings or could use them to reinvest in the Service or reduce the planned level of future council tax increases is dependent on the Government providing certainty on our future funding.

The Authority is continuing to explore the potential for further savings to meet the identified target by 2024/25 through the activities set out in the Efficiency Strategy which detailed in the IRMP document.

The Authority has already made over £9m of savings between 2010/11 and 2019/20 and these have been made across the whole service not just from the operational frontline. The savings proposals for 2020/21 – 2024/25 currently stand at £0.651m, none of which relate to operational services, being primarily a combination of procurement savings and other efficiencies in our support services.

The reality is that given the Authority spends 76% of its gross revenue budget on its employees and the vast majority of them are operational, then to make the level of savings required to balance the Authority's budget over the last 10 years and in the future then reductions in operational posts have been / will be unavoidable.

The Service has reduced its number of senior managers – since 2012/13 it has removed two non-uniformed Principal Officer / Brigade Manager posts reducing the total from five to three (all now uniformed) and it has also reduced the number of Assistant Directors from six to five of which three are uniformed.

A significant proportion of the savings that have been required during the current IRMP have been from Corporate and professional services. It is clear, going forward, that savings in those areas alone will not be sufficient for the Fire Authority to balance the budget in the future.

How do you justify £4.9m for Corporate costs?

70% of our budget is actually on operational staff costs and wages. Like any organisation we do have a back-office function ... we have engineering, we have estates, we have payroll, we have equipment ... we have fire stations to maintain. So, there's a whole suite of costs that are attributed to the corporate centre. And we couldn't provide a frontline service if there wasn't a number of additional costs within our budget.

Questions submitted post-webinar

General: Covid-19

Why no review of IRMP due to impact of Covid?

Answered earlier.

Proposal 2 (day-crewed to day-only) and 3 (changes to 2-engine stations)

If IRMP is based on risk, where is the reduced risk of crews taking longer to get to incidents just because it is a weekend?

The ORR is the most comprehensive risk assessment carried out by ESFRS; it has considered data over a 9-year period. The use of risk assessment tools such as FSEC and extensive modelling of proposals has underlined the level of risk introduced by the proposals. The overall benefit from introducing improvements from the ORP, demand management, Hastings second appliance and the on-call enhancements improving availability levels will reduce overall risk levels across the service. Finally, the balancing of Response resources with greater resources in Prevention and Protection will reduce future risks levels.

A slide says about taking slightly longer to get to incidents due to day-only crews and reduced number of pumps at some RDS stations. How long is slightly longer and what is the impact of that?

Please see earlier answer.

Proposal 5: aerial appliances

How is it a dedicated appliance at Eastbourne and Hastings if it is shared with the aerial crew?

This is about the balance of call numbers in a higher risk area and us taking a balanced view based upon risk as to what the most appropriate provision to deal with that risk is. So, our risk analysis showed that we needed to improve the immediate response provision in the Hastings area. And as a result, we want to put an additional frontline fire engine into Bohemia Road.

The number of calls that the current primary crewed aerial appliance at Bohemia Road attends is roughly 50% fewer than its sister appliance and crew at Brighton Preston Circus. Based upon that and the fact that the calls predominantly require frontline fire engines to attend, the balance of risk is proportionate, and we have made sure that all three of those appliances, the two frontline appliances and the aerial, remain available. In the event that all three appliances are required for the same incident, shared crewing will be used ... if the Fire Authority decided to go ahead.

What would happen is all three appliances could still turn out to the same incident. The crew from the second appliance would split two and two, and all three appliances would attend that incident. What this means is that aerial appliances aren't traditionally the first vehicles that we need to get to something like a fire, we need crews to do that wearing breathing apparatus... Having the aerial appliance there at the very early stage enables us when other appliances turn up to redistribute the people who are on scene and get the aerial working. If we don't do that, we know that through past experience trying to get a very large aerial vehicle in after multiple fire engines have attended, perhaps in a busy residential street, is almost impossible.

So, there are a number of key operational opportunities that we see will be beneficial doing it this way. It's almost like having a cake and eating it by making sure that we get the right number of people there with the right number of appliances at the right time.

ESFRS' finances into the future

Why are efficiency savings all made at the operational end, which the fire service inspectorate reported were of a good standard, and not including other areas of the service?

Please see earlier answer.

Comments submitted post-webinar

The reduction in fire engines in Newhaven and the resultant cover being reliant on the Seaford Station. The swing bridge at Newhaven is expected to have more openings in the near future, as there is a new tarmac plant that is soon to open on the North Quay – receiving materials by boat. If the bridge is open when the Seaford engine is required to cover west of the bridge, there would be a minimum delay of 10mins., whilst the bridge is open and a further delay through traffic jams caused as a result. This is even more an issue at peak times.

It is impractical and dangerous, to rely on the cover for Newhaven, by a station or stations separated by the navigable river and its associated swing bridge on the A259 at Newhaven.

The swing bridge at Newhaven has been considered when undertaking our risk analysis and is representative of many locations, permanent or otherwise which have an impact on our response times. Naturally, this response-time impact is inherent within the 9 years of fire appliance mobilisation data that we have analysed, and which is summarised in the individual station risk profiles.

However, it is important to note that the numbers of instances where the bridge has had to open has steadily decreased over the years. The shipping numbers requiring the opening of the swing bridge have steadily decreased by 83%, from 853 in 2004 to 141 in 2019.

The new developments (including Conway's and Tarmac) north of the bridge include a potential maximum of 96 bridge closures per year which is the current situation/ phase of Port development. Bridge average opening time is 10-15 minutes maximum.

Even with this increase in bridge closures, this is still lower than the number of closures at the beginning of our review period. However, these will continue to be monitored and reviewed if the Fire Authority agree the proposals in September.

The consultation is entitled "Planning for a Safer Future - East Sussex Fire Authority" and is well supported by a wide range of documents. It is based on a risk management assessment which includes an organisational evaluation of front-line resourcing and response to events. I found the amount of information was extensive and easily accessible, however I did have some concerns as to transparency and the language used for the public's understanding.

I would also note that for an exercise aimed at addressing infrastructure and front line resourcing the discussion was overly almost exclusively around personnel and freeing up people to become more flexible. As an organisation, tasked with dealing with a wide range of situations and requiring a wide range of solutions, the tools and systems needed are wide and varied, including IT support, communications, training, mechanics and HR. I believe that very little of these were considered or presented. Also, little time was given to the skill sets that individuals acquire and how they fit in to a team and resourcing into other teams should dynamic responses be required into out of area events.

So, asking, as a part of a consultation, for people to give a vote of confidence mostly based on a perception of what can be seen at the front end and yet not be able to feedback on to after an event. There seems also to be no public feedback after an event; there is no tradition of the public being engaged in the "lessons learned".

In all the discussion no thoughts seem to be based upon improving Prevention with improving engagement with the community, such as redeploying staff.

ESFRS is required by the National Fire Service Framework to complete an integrated risk management plan every 3 to 5 years, this is in addition to providing annual business plans for Prevention, Protection, Training and several other key strategy documents. We have a range of strategies published on our website covering areas such as IT, HR, Estates, Engineering, Workforce planning and financial planning. The areas you raise in your question are fully covered in these long-term documents.

The purpose of the IRMP is to address the balance between Response, Protection and Prevention. In addition, we have to consult the public and stakeholders on any changes to response provision that could impact on public risk.

Appendix 2: summaries of detailed or 'representative' submissions

Staff groups and staff members

Brighton Fire Station (Blue Watch)

'Blue Brighton' Staff raise the following points and questions:

The IRMP presentation contains significant inaccuracies, inconsistencies and misleading statements;

The consultation should not have been undertaken during lockdown as *"this will lead to a very small level of engagement with the public and a total lack of opportunity for questions and challenges to be heard and answered"*;

Does the call analysis that the process is based on take account of how frequently ESFRS goes across border?

The process is based on 'projected budgets' but uses 18-month-old data and so does not take into account the extra work that being undertaken supporting SECAMB or other additional work-streams being negotiated;

Eastbourne is said to have a dedicated ALP as a bonus of the proposals, but it is not a dedicated appliance if it is not primary crewed;

The proposed changes to crewing models *"do not leave enough firefighters for our own task analysis"*, which states that for a single occupancy domestic house fire with one casualty needing rescue via internal stairs, 11 Firefighters are required as a minimum. Moreover, with the additional resources coming from further afield due to the removal of many second appliances, this will place even more moral pressure on officers in charge to rapid deploy in the early stages of an incident;

ESFRS is sixth in the country for high-rise buildings therefore demand for lift rescues is high;

In the event of The Ridge becoming a day crewed station, dynamic mobilising would likely initially mobilise from Bohemia Road during the evening and on weekends, which would have an impact on ALP cover in Hastings;

Where are the risk assessments on how the proposed changes impact firefighter safety – and with such significant changes being proposed, why has there not been an Officer and Green book review to reflect changes?

Crowborough Fire Station (Red Watch)

Staff at Crowborough Fire Station have produced a detailed PowerPoint presentation which has been made available to the Fire Authority. The following key points were raised in relation to the proposals.

Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed duty stations

Day crewed firefighters are more part of the community and are passionate and committed;

Attendance times on evenings and weekends will be further increased at Crowborough due to the location of wholetime personnel;

It is difficult to recruit on-call staff and the five-minute attendance time has been stretched in some areas, meaning extra road risk;

There would be no guaranteed evening and weekend cover, with a heavy reliance on new contracts and recruitment strategies;

The north of the county is a unique area and very isolated – and it is a large area to be covered;

There may be issues with special appliance availability on evenings and weekends, and with training in their operation; and

There is a great deal of development planned for Crowborough over the next three years.

Proposal 3a: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

There will be long waits for second appliances;

Unlike the coastal stations, there is no wholtime support nearby; and

With turnout times increasing, *“this is severely reducing the ability to provide the public with definitive care within the golden hour”*.

People

The proposals will result in demotivated staff, and anxieties around their impacts on individuals and families. Moreover, it is said they will result in a *“less effective service for residents of Crowborough”*.

Swift Water Team, Crowborough Fire Station

The author of this submission strongly disagrees with the decision to remove a swift water rescue asset from ESFRS and with the statement that ‘the data and analysis so far have demonstrated that we no longer need to maintain a swift water rescue team in its current guise...’ They provide a great deal of evidence (which has been provided to the Fire Authority) to support their claim that the team has been mobilised on significantly more occasions than referenced in the IRMP and is thus an important resource to be maintained.

Recommendations

Currently, the swift water team’s full strength is set at 24 to ensure sufficient resilience to provide relief crews when required. It is recommended to/for:

- Split the existing team into two smaller teams of 12+ with one based at Crowborough and one based on the coast (Lewes);

- Split the two existing sets of kit between the two sites, one set stowed on the swift water rescue van (once fitted with radio and MDT) and the second set on the technical rescue unit based at Lewes;

- Current swift water rescue instructors to train new team members in-house to level 3 technician standards;

- Assign a single call sign and response vehicle to mobilise across the county for simplicity; and

- Allow instructors to review and re-write water rescue risk assessments and manual notes to agree on better ways to utilise resources within East Sussex.

This plan, it is said, would:

- Offer reduced basic training costs (utilising the competent crew at Crowborough) and reduced costs in training new team members in Lewes by doing so in-house;

Build resilience across the service.

Enable crews based at Crowborough to support, train and maintain the competence of Animal Rescue Operatives; and

Maintain the wealth of knowledge and experience built up by instructors and technicians over 10 years.

Other observations

Finally, the submission notes that:

ESFRS has reduced the calls it attends and resources it sends to incidents to an all-time low and would not be able to reduce further without detriment to firefighters and the public;

There is major growth across the county and its population is increasing, but infrastructure is not keeping pace;

Severe weather events peaked in 2019 with 21 swift water rescue team mobilisations, and already in 2020, the team has been mobilised 10 times; and

ESFRS should be proud to provide the swift water rescue team as a national asset and it should be re-registered as so.

Wadhurst Fire Station

Staff at Wadhurst Fire Station have produced a detailed PowerPoint presentation which has been made available to the Fire Authority. The following key points were raised in relation to the proposals.

The Wadhurst Land Rover is in the right place to serve Wadhurst and the rest of the county (it sits close to the A21, A26 and A22 and so can support incidents in its area, Ashdown Forest, Hastings, Eastbourne and Brighton) - and its calls are increasing, not decreasing;

Wadhurst already has the infrastructure in place i.e. two bays;

Climate change will put more pressure on ESFRS and Wadhurst has an experienced wildfire/forest firefighting team and has been used for incidents in the snow and flooding response; and

Keeping a two-vehicle response at Wadhurst improves public and fire firefighter safety - and allows the Service to have a wider range of options when deploying the station's primary appliance as a standby or relief pump.

Individual staff member (1)

In addition to reiterating many of the points made in the FBU submission (summarised later in this chapter), one individual staff member makes the following observations in their detailed response.

Proposal 3a: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

The respondent says that *“the significance of cutting seven [second] fire engines and the loss of cover and resilience these appliances provide to East Sussex residents should not be underestimated”* and that *“whilst these ... fire engines may attend some of the fewest numbers of incidents, these figures alone do not tell the whole story”*. The reasoning for this is that whenever these resources are available, residents in these towns get a faster two pump attendance and fire cover within five minutes if the primary appliance is unavailable. Furthermore, ESFRS is not required to make a standby move, thus maintaining cover on other station grounds that would otherwise be negatively impacted by a standby mobilisation.

Proposal 3b: Re-classifying the three 'maxi-cab' stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations

The respondent cites a recent decision to replace the three maxi-cabs with two pumps at each station. They find it *"difficult to understand"* why, with no new data, a proposal has been put forward to downgrade these stations to single pump status – and suggest that *"further interrogation of this proposition is required to understand the evidence base for this proposal"*.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

Introducing a second appliance at Bohemia Road is *"a welcome proposal"*, but not when considered in tandem with reduced cover at Battle and Bexhill (who attend 10% of their incidents in Hastings), and changing The Ridge from wholetime to day crewed. Moreover, this second appliance would be dual crewed with the ALP, meaning that *"any incident requiring aerial cover would effectively reduce the immediate response available in Hastings to one fire engine. To make use of both fire engines, an aerial response would have to be provided by either Eastbourne or Brighton"*. The respondent feels that *"a slower response from surrounding stations at night-time and the weekend, an increased reliance on Bohemia Road to cover a much larger area, and the dual crewing of the second pump with an aerial does not represent an improvement in fire cover for Hastings"*.

The respondent suggests that a *"much more detailed examination of Hastings resourcing should be undertaken before any decision is made to reduce cover by dual crewing the aerial at Bohemia Road"* because this appliance is busier than that at Eastbourne – and there will be less support available from neighbouring stations if the changes to day crewing go ahead, changes that *"would put significant pressure on the two Bohemia Road appliances, especially at night and over the weekend"*.

Proposal 5: Changes to providing and crewing specialist vehicles, including aerial appliances

In addition to the comments made in relation to Hastings above, the respondent welcomes that ESFRS modelling supports the retention of three aerial ladder platforms in the county and that the Combined Rescue and Aerial Platform (ARP) will be replaced with a dedicated ALP and Extended Rescue Tender. However, they say that while the IRMP implies Eastbourne will be given an additional resource, this is not the case because *"Eastbourne currently has two fire appliances, one of which can be used as either a fire engine or an aerial. Replacing one combination vehicle with two vehicles that will perform the same functions with the same number of crew is not an increase in resourcing"*.

The respondent notes that Seaford, Hailsham, Heathfield and Rye have been identified as four stations where efforts will be focused on improving on-call cover and that, if achieved, *"this may go some way towards mitigating the risks identified by ... dual crewing"*. However, they also suggest that as it takes a significant period of time to recruit and train competent on-call staff, it would *"perhaps be prudent to primary crew Eastbourne's two appliances and aerial ladder ... at least until the Fire Authority can be satisfied that adequate support can be provided from surrounding stations..."*

In conclusion

The respondent says that the trends identified in recent data evidence that: ESFRS's incidents are on the rise; the Service continues to attend a significant proportion of incidents at night; it has had the least success at reducing incidents during the night; and that there is no evidence to suggest it attends fewer incidents on the weekend. As such, the data *"does not support changing our crewing model from one that provides consistent availability of appliances throughout the day and over the year, to one that increases fire cover"*

during the day, but reduces cover at night and over the weekend". Moreover, the reduction from 33 fire engines to 26 will *"impact firefighters' ability to respond to emergencies across the county"*.

Finally, the respondent says the proposals were drafted prior to the Covid-19 public health crisis, and do not account for the new risks posed by this pandemic. They consider it encouraging that there is cross-party consensus locally to secure additional funding for ESFRS from central government, which *"could enable ESFRS to provide the 18 appliances needed to meet our expected level of activity and could also enable further investment into prevention and protection"*.

Individual staff member (2)

Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan

The respondent says that the ORP's promise of 18 immediate response fire engines being available at the start of each day under is *"misleading"* inasmuch as only 14 will be crewed by personnel on station responding to a fire call within a minute. The remaining would be either be available on a five-minute turnout or jump crewed *"so cannot be viewed as immediately available ... since a choice would need to be made between a fire engine and aerial appliance"*. They also say that ESFRS has not communicated clearly that on the weekend six of the 14 'guaranteed' fire engines would be crewed by on-call staff with a five-minute turnout.

Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed duty stations

The respondent feels that:

No matter what the new contracts and pay structures are, it will be incredibly difficult to recruit and maintain the number of on-call staff required to crew the relevant appliances on evenings and weekends – and to achieve a balance between the skill sets and experience of wholetime and on-call contingents;

Offering on-call contracts to those working the proposed new duty system will be a *"necessity"* since it takes two to three years to reach competence, a year to drive and the move from firefighter to junior officer is based on experience and personal drive to progress;

The day crewed stations house most of the special appliances, the use of which are not part of basic training;

The new proposals ask current day crewed personnel to work Monday to Friday (or longer days four days per week) – which is *"not a family friendly proposition, especially in light that their take home pay will be reduced significantly with the removal of housing allowance [and] many staff will feel forced into taking up retained contracts to manage the shortfall in income"*.

Their main opposition to the proposed duty system change, though, is that when there is an incident during the daytime on the weekend, response times will be at least five minutes longer than they are currently for a *"sufficient amount of fire appliances to make a safe intervention"*.

Proposal 3a: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

The respondent comments that while ESFRS presents these second fire engines as underused, they have actually been historically under-resourced. Moreover, they say the mobilisation of the second appliances relies on on-call personnel, *"the same people that the service expect to be able to guarantee cover for seven fire appliances over evenings and weekends, and four around the clock"*.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

The respondent feels that:

Adding a fire engine to Bohemia Road station does not offset downgrading four of the five closest stations - Bexhill, Battle, The Ridge and Rye;

Risk levels on The Ridge's station ground have not changed and so the crewing change is not justified there; and

If it is intended that the proposed new second appliance at Bohemia Road will pick up many of The Ridge's calls, this would *"serve to reduce cover in Hastings ... since this would make the aerial appliance unavailable, and whatever standby move brought into Hastings would be from a surrounding station with less resources than before, leaving their area uncovered"*.

Proposal 5: Changes to providing and crewing specialist vehicles, including aerial appliances

The respondent welcomes the proposed introduction of additional fire engines at Bohemia Road in Hastings and Eastbourne but is very concerned that they are to be share crewed with ALP's. Using Hastings as an example, they explain that if the Bohemia Road second fire engine goes out it leaves the ALP unavailable, which is a *"downgrade to resources in Hastings, and the replacement of the current full proof system of crewing which guarantees appliance availability"*. Moreover, in terms of issues around which vehicle to choose in the event of needing more resources at an incident, the respondent does not agree that members crews could split, with two bringing the second fire engine and two bringing the aerial because *"the resources are not worth much without the adequate crew"*.

Proposal 6: Demand management

The respondent supports continuing attendance to AFA activations and people stuck in lifts. In relation to the former they suggest that *"owners and responsible people ... should be penalised if they do not have adequate keyholder or contact details in place to expedite a quick outcome"*. They also support responding to trapped birds to mitigate the chances of a member of the public or an animal rescue charity putting themselves at risk and because *"these jobs can be seen as good, practical, non-time critical practice for ladder pitches and aerial use outside of training scenarios"*.

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system

The respondent is *"very worried"* about the impact the proposed shift changes would have on their family life and the relationships firefighters build at work through the current watch systems. They say; *"the service teaches that a team approach to incidents is of utmost importance, the change to a flexible duty system would destroy the watch culture, and the team environments they facilitate"*. They also have particular worries that people's mental health will be affected by the proposed change, because managers will not be able to monitor their staff effectively over periods of time.

Other comments

The respondent also says that:

While ESFRS states that many of the cut firefighter posts will be used to bolster its protection work, local MPs say they have not been asked for more funding to enable the service to deliver in these areas. *"This route should be explored before cutting frontline posts"*; and

They are very disappointed that the proposals have gone to consultation during the pandemic.

Representative Bodies

Fire Brigades Union (FBU)

Introduction

The FBU is of the opinion that ESFA's consultation process fails to meet the Gunning Principles that govern consultation processes because:

The reasons for the proposals are untrue: they are not 'centred on public and firefighter safety' nor do they 'aim to deliver our service in a more flexible and efficient way' - they are purely cost driven; and

Those being consulted were not given enough information about the consequences of the proposals to allow intelligent consideration and response.

The FBU also criticises the decision to consult on proposals during the Covid-19 health crisis, which has limited the opportunity for maximum engagement and external scrutiny. It also disputes the narrative that ESFA had to consult during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Proposal 1: Operational Response Plan (ORP)

The FBU supports a proposal to work to increase the number of appliances guaranteed to be available. However, it suggests it is misleading to state that 'our new Operational Resilience Plan (ORP) will plan for 18 immediate-response fire engines' because *"only an appliance crewed by on-duty wholtime firefighters guarantees an immediate response"* – which will no longer be the case on weekends as it is also proposed to change all day crewed stations to day only.

It is said that *"improving appliance availability must seek to improve availability no matter the time or day of the week"* as the data produced by ESFRS does not support a reduction in cover or an increase to response times at night-time and over the weekend. Indeed, the data *"proves that incidents are on average marginally more frequent on the weekend ... and proportionally more of those incidents are likely to be critical in nature"*. Moreover, the FBU says:

The ORR findings report that over the last three years there has been an increase in the number of critical incidents per year, and that the proportion of incidents per year that have been critical has been rising for the last five years;

26% of critical incidents occurred in day crewed areas, meaning that reducing cover and increasing response times in the evenings and weekends will present more risk; and

The data also shows that the number of incidents attended tends to increase throughout the day, peaking between 5pm and 8pm – and that over the nine years of data used, there was a greater reduction of incidents during the daytime compared to the night-time. This *"suggests that ... we do not have a proven or successful strategy for reducing incidents at night and that we will continue to receive a similar, or higher ... number of calls at night-time"*.

Proposal 2: Changes to day-crewed duty stations

The FBU reiterates the points made earlier in relation to the data not supporting a reduction in cover or an increase to response times at night-time and over the weekend in day crewed areas. It has also concluded through available modelling that:

Appliances at Brighton, Hove, Roedean, Eastbourne and Hastings are already travelling further to incidents at night than in the past, which in turn reduces fire cover in highest risk areas;

Day crewed primary appliances are also travelling further to incidents in the daytime; and

If these this proposal is introduced *“the impact on shift stations at the weekend will be very significant”* because their appliances will start travelling into day crewed areas if there is no immediate response there - and they will provide more cover to the neighbouring on-call areas currently being picked up by the day crewed stations.

The FBU thus rejects options 2a and 2b due to the negative impact on fire cover at weekends and evenings, and the impact this will have on not only the day crewed and on-call station communities, but also the highest risk areas in towns and cities.

Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

The FBU says that this proposal will have a negative impact on both public and firefighter safety because *“firefighters work to agreed safe systems of work that require a certain number of firefighters to be in attendance at an incident before they can make rescues or extinguish fire”* and *“removing the second appliances from these stations would severely hamper firefighters ability to make rescues, extinguish fires and save lives at the most life critical incidents”*.

The FBU outlines the *“historic reasons”* why availability of some of the second appliances at these stations is low: it says that *“successive senior management teams ... have failed to recruit and retain on-call firefighters, they have also taken policy decisions that have been detrimental to on-call availability such over utilisation of fixed term contracts and failing to run wholetime recruitment processes”*.

It is also said that these stations often provide resilience when larger incidents occur, and/or when the primary appliance is mobilised into other areas. Removing these second appliances would *“leave the local communities without any fire cover for potentially, long periods of time”*.

The FBU thus recommends that ESFRS should: seek to review and address historic policy decisions and planning failures; seek to recruit and retain on-call firefighters to improve availability at these stations; cease using fixed term contracts to fill gaps in wholetime deficiencies; commit to running external wholetime recruitment processes; and use funding to improve building safety and protect the built environment across the county.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

The FBU says that Hastings is a high-risk area due to the high levels of vulnerability of residents and social deprivation, and that any reduction in fire cover there will cost lives.

With particular reference to the proposed change of crewing system at The Ridge (from wholetime to day crewed), the FBU makes the following points:

The change will result in a reduced response at night, which will impact those living in the north and east of the town and the more rural areas to which the station currently responds; and

The Ridge provides a vital 24-hour immediate response to other neighbouring fire stations at Bohemia Road, Broad Oak and Rye. In the latter two areas, this mitigates the impact of their on-call response and ensures suitable speed and weight of resources.

The FBU supports the addition of a second fire appliance at Bohemia Road fire station, but not if this is to the detriment of a primary crewed, immediately available ALP. Its reasons are that:

The proposed shared crewing model (whereby firefighters to crew either the second fire engine or the ALP) does not guarantee the availability of the ALP because if the second appliance is committed to an operational incident, the ALP will be unavailable for response; and

This is likely to happen much more frequently if the changes are implemented, as the proposed second appliance at Bohemia Road will form part of the predetermined attendance for all two pump calls in the surrounding areas – and will likely be mobilised to areas at night that The Ridge Fire Station would have historically covered.

Other points are that:

The Hastings ALP provides aerial cover to the whole of the east of the county;

East Sussex has more high-rise properties than anywhere else in the South of England outside London. The county's risk profile evidences the need for a primary crewed ALP at Hastings;

Without a primary crewed immediate response ALP at Hastings, several recent high-profile incidents would have had a very different outcome;

The ALP has recently been added to the predetermined attendance for all 'assistance to paramedic calls' where a casualty is located above the ground floor and who is in need of removal to hospital, which has reduced injuries to firefighters undertaking this new work; and

UK FRS' that have historically share crewed ALP's have learnt lessons from the Grenfell disaster and are seeking to reverse this model in favour of primary crewing.

Proposal 5a: Changes to providing and crewing aerial appliances

The FBU repeats many of the points made above in stressing its opposition to the proposed shared crewing model for ALP's, but also says that:

The ALP's provide aerial cover to the whole of the county.

The reality of shared crewing of ALP's is that the crew is not available to crew the standard appliance if they are committed to an operational incident or if they are undertaking community safety work (as they take the fire appliance when doing such work); and

Shared crewing means the public are "*at the mercy of luck*" as to whether the ALP is available.

Proposal 5b: Changes to providing and crewing other special appliances

The FBU is deeply concerned that current 4x4 provision within East Sussex is to be reduced from five to four – and that Wadhurst Fire Station shall cease to have a 4x4 off-road capability.

Moreover, while East Sussex has rope rescue and swift water capabilities, the future of these teams, vehicles and equipment are not addressed in the proposals – and the FBU is particularly worried that the swift water team no longer appears to be part of ESFRS's capabilities in the future "*due to the very low mobilisation of the team*". It is said that the data referenced sits at odds with that held locally at Crowborough and that the 114 recorded mobilisations during the period referenced in the ORR "*clearly shows a need for the swift water team both as a local and national asset*".

Proposal 6: Demand management

The FBU stresses that every attendance is an opportunity for the Service and its firefighters to interact with communities. Therefore, it does not view the incident types below as a burden on resources but rather as

“opportunities to carry out engagement work, use equipment in an operational environment, enhance knowledge of the built environment and improve both firefighter and public safety”.

Overall, the FBU feels that ESFRS should:

Continue to attend all AFA activations, lift releases and incidents involving trapped birds (with regard to the latter, there is concern that should the Service seek to cease attending incidents relating to trapped birds, members of the public or partner agencies will put themselves at greater risk by trying to free them without suitable equipment);

Seek to work with premises with high numbers of AFA activations and lift rescues through engagement work;

Utilise these mobilisations to undertake engagement work with responsible persons, partner agencies and the public and carry out reviews of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) data – and as familiarisation/training to further enhance firefighter knowledge and safety in the built environment.

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system

The FBU does not support proposals that seek to introduce a flexible or self-rostering duty system at the five wholetime shift fire stations because:

They will not improve training, reliance on overtime or be more family-friendly than the current shift pattern – and will worsen work-life balance; and

Removing the watch-based structure at wholetime shift stations would be detrimental to public and firefighter safety as it provides a far safer team approach at emergency situations and *“provides the safest and most efficient training mechanism for imparting and retaining knowledge and skills”*.

The FBU says it has witnessed the introduction of similar self-rostering and group crewing duty systems elsewhere, with little success – and that it has seen a rise in the use of overtime to maintain operational availability of appliances in services where these duty systems have been introduced.

Fire Brigades Union (FBU): Women’s Section and LGBT+ Section¹

The FBU’s Women’s and LGBT+ Sections are concerned that the IRMP Impact Assessment has found ‘the proposals shall have a negative bearing on disabled persons (staff and public), carers of disabled persons, those with neurodiverse conditions, and female primary carers’. They therefore expect ESFA to review any such proposals prior to voting on their implementation to ensure the impacts are reduced for both staff and public.

There is significant concern expressed around the proposal to change the four-watch duty system for the following reasons:

Having a regular shift pattern where leave days change week by week in a progressive manner is more family-friendly than a work pattern where shifts are organised six weeks in advance;

¹ Please note that several of the points made in this submission were also included in the FBU’s main organisational response.

“A higher proportion of women than men have childcare and caring responsibilities [and] LGBT+ carers can in particular find it difficult to organise culturally appropriate respite care. This proposal would more negatively impact women and LGBT+ carers”; and

It may impact on individuals making parental access arrangements through courts, as if they are unable to commit to planned arrangements beyond a six-week window, *“this could cause undue stress and harm to the individuals concerned”*.

It is also said that the proposed changes to the day crewed shift system will rely on wholetime firefighters taking on additional contracts to provide cover at evenings and weekends – and that a *“sense of moral obligation combined with new financial pressures when current allowances are no longer payable will lead firefighters to agree to contracts that will have a negative impact on their ability to balance work and family life”*. This, it is felt, may disproportionately affect women and LGBT+ firefighters who often have to accommodate the dual pressures of parental and caring responsibilities.

In light of the above, it is recommended that ESFA apply the ‘family test’ to any proposed changes, which ensures that policy makers recognise and make explicit the potential impacts on family relationships in the process of developing and agreeing new policy. The FBU’s Women’s and LGBT+ Sections reiterate that any proposal to change duty systems to a flexible or self-rostering style pattern would introduce uncertainty for firefighters around work patterns and childcare.

Finally, it is acknowledged that the ESFRS workforce does not reflect the communities it serves in terms of diversity and gender, and Fire Authority members are urged not seek to introduce duty patterns that will be less attractive to under-represented groups.

Fire Officers Association (FOA)

Introduction

FOA considers the proposed re-allocation of resources to match risk and demand for prevention, protection and response activities to be a considered and sensible approach.

FOA also describes the approach to data gathering to identify trends and station risk profiling as *“sound”* but highlights significant concern across its membership that ESFRS has seen a marked increase in demand in the last 18 months. Whilst understanding that the ORR utilised nine years of data, it did stop in 2018 and FOA recommends using the latest and most recent call data in future planning.

Proposals 1, 2 and 3: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP), changes to day crewed stations and changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

FOA says that the proposal for 18 immediate response appliances to be available is directly linked to changes to day crewed stations and the future robustness of cover by on-call firefighters. Its concern is that it would wish to see ESFRS demonstrate the robustness of the on-call duty system before considering changing any day crewed station to day only.

Although *“there are some recognisable benefits of a day only duty system”* (firefighters will not be required to live in an area and it may be more family friendly which in turn may encourage recruitment of under-represented groups), FOA feels that its impact on firefighter safety and operational response could outweigh these. In particular, *“the impact of routine planned crewing four firefighters on an appliance and the dynamic pressures associated by these restrictions raise concerns to the adoption of more frequent rapid deployment procedures and therefore reduced safe systems of work for life threatening calls, this whilst waiting for a second appliance to arrive from further afield”*.

It is also the view of FOA that the proposed system will impact on the availability of specialist appliances (especially those requiring enhanced levels of training and qualification) at nights and on weekends as *“it is highly unlikely the on-call colleagues will have the availability and capacity ... to train and provide these current response services”*. Moreover, although Kent FRS has an urban search and rescue (USAR) team and West Sussex FRS has Technical Rescue, FOA says ESFRS cannot base its own IRMP on other services’ provision.

Finally, in relation to these proposals, FOA suggests that if ESFRS’ management of on-call contracts, recruitment and retention processes were more robust, this would provide adequate cover on current day crewed stations. Therefore, *“the reason to change the day-crew duty system or remove the second appliances is questionable and the focus would be to improve the recruitment of on-call staff, which has been long proven as a more efficient system”*.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

FOA considers it difficult to understand why ESFRS seeks to introduce a day crewed model at The Ridge which would *“not only be unique across the service ... it would be unique and reliant on wholetime staff only and no on-call which is not a proven system ... and may have a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of the firefighters...”*. It also foresees significant mobilisation of the Bohemia Road appliances away from the risk areas to support calls in other regions of the town during the evenings when day crewed staff would be at home.

Proposal 5: Changes to providing and crewing specialist vehicles, including aerial appliances

FOA considers the current provision of ALP’s to be adequate and notes the professional opinion of many past Chief Officers that the crewing of such appliances should remain dedicated.

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system

FOA says the proposed changes to the shift system should be supported if efficiencies are identified and reinvested into prevention and protection services – and as long as crewing and training are fully supported. There are reservations around the proposal of a ‘crewing pool’ though due to training, inclusivity, welfare provision and lone working.

Consultation process

The consultation process has, it is said, *“been hindered by current circumstances and has made consultation difficult”*. FOA suggests a *“delay or an improved engagement process would be more helpful for all stakeholders to be advised, informed and engaged with so that the Service could reach a satisfactory outcome via a meaningful consultation process...”*

Conclusions

In conclusion, FOA says *“the new principles of design around the ORR ... is supported, however some of the current proposals remain underdeveloped or [not] fully understood to enable agreement”*. It suggests:

- An effective engagement process to collectively seek alternative solutions to the difficulties facing ESFRS;

- An IRMP that focuses on individual areas aligned to station risk profiles as opposed to a blanket approach of removing second appliances;

- Improving on-call availability via better contract, recruitment and retention management;

- Ensuring any efficiencies identified are reinvested and showing a transparent, auditable transfer of resources into prevention, protection and response services; and

If financial savings are required, a Service-wide expenditure review to include the exploration of collaborative working arrangements with other blue light services, partners and agencies.

Fire Rescue Services Association (FRSA)

Introduction

The FRSA believes ESFRS has failed its on-call firefighters in the following ways (all of which have resulted people leaving the Service):

A lack of recruitment;

Using fixed-term contracts to fill wholetime shortfalls, which has had a *“devastating effect”* on on-call stations and appliances and on firefighters working such contracts, as they *“have been used and then dropped when not needed”*;

Using migration during recruitment;

Allowing firefighters to move to day crewed stations in their final year;

Removing the sixth seat on fire appliances; and

Letting wholetime firefighters take up on-call contracts and watch and crew manager positions without any processes.

It is also said that *“your service has, for too long, been held hostage by the FBU ... and managers need to manage without fear of the FBU”*

Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP)

The FRSA seeks clarification as to what any new contractual arrangements for on-call firefighters will entail, and stresses that *“just paying someone more money does not mean they can cover the hours needed. The hours required have been a problem for years and years, because on-call firefighters have to work and spend time with their family during the hours you want them to be available. Even in large numbers, it cannot be achieved”*.

Proposal 2: Changes to day crewed duty stations

The FRSA is against the proposed changes to day crewed stations because:

On-call firefighters cannot crew appliances nights and weekends alone – and cannot safely be trained on all appliances on affected stations;

Longer response times at weekends and some hours during the week *“is a backward step in serving our community”*;

Due to lack of interest in the role, some stations have increased the recruitment radius for on-call firefighters, so the statement that *‘firefighters will live within 5 mins...’* is not correct; and

Having wholetime firefighters at day crewed stations 24/7 is essential for ensuring all appliances have the correctly trained and available staff when required.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

The FRSA does not agree with the proposed changes because *“by changing The Ridge to day crewed it will decrease the support to other stations and its own community”*.

Proposal 5: Changes to providing and crewing specialist vehicles, including aerial appliances

The FRSA feels that dedicated ALP crews must be maintained in all areas as *“outside London we have the most risk regarding high rise buildings and the increase in NHS and other incidents where the platform is needed is increasing”*.

In terms of other special appliances, the FRSA believes that:

While the water rescue team could be removed from Crowborough, swift water rescue trained staff should be maintained there *“due to the risks to staff while carrying out animal rescue in or around water”*. It also feels that a swift water rescue team should be available in the county and city due to future flooding risks, and that this would be best based at Lewes & Battle on the proposed technical rescue vehicle and rapid response vehicle;

While the rope rescue team could reduce to one 4x4 vehicle, it should not be reduced to half a team and must be based over two stations - Battle & Bexhill. Moreover, *“if the 4x4 is to go the rope rescue equipment needs to be on the proposed RRV at Battle ... due to the increased number of NHS incidents where rope rescue and TRU/RRV has be needed together”*; and

The 4x4 vehicle is needed at Wadhurst for incidents within Ashdown Forest.

Proposal 6: Demand management

The FRSA believes AFAs, lift rescues and incidents involving trapped birds should be attended *“as you never know when these incidents can become life risks”*. It does, though, feel ESFRS should charge for attendance.

Members of Parliament and city/district/ borough councils and councillors

Conservative Group at Brighton & Hove City Council

The Conservative Group passed the following motion: *“to inform our two representatives on East Sussex Fire Authority ... that we as a Group are against the loss, through deployment, redundancy or otherwise, of firefighters on the front line in Brighton & Hove”*.

Huw Merriman MP

Mr Merriman’s first concern about the consultation is its timing. While noting the reasons for not wishing to delay, he feels that the pandemic should have led to a pause in process because of: the ability for the public and stakeholders to fully consider and respond to the proposals within the timescales (meaning the number and quality of responses may not be as high as in normal circumstances); and the expansion of ESFRS’s role during Covid-19.

In relation to the latter point, Mr Merriman says this role expansion has presented the service with a unique opportunity to examine whether any of its recent Covid-related work is likely to lead to new responsibilities or work. His view is that it would be *“sensible to pause and reflect on the changes this may bring and incorporate the outcome in the IRMP”*. Moreover, he asks whether ESFRS would have the staffing capacity to support the Local Resilience Forum (as it has done this year) under the new proposals in the event of another national crisis?

Mr Merriman is concerned about the proposals to reduce the number of fire engines at Bexhill Fire Station from two to one and to change the crewing model from 'day crewed' to 'day only' - particularly in light of the fact ESFRS data demonstrates that Saturdays are *“the busiest days”*. He also asks for clarification about exactly what 'slightly longer' response times will entail.

Mr Merriman's worries are based on the demographic profile of Bexhill, which has a high proportion of vulnerable residents unable to self-rescue, a higher than average retired population and is an area of poorer general health. He also notes that he was informed by local firefighters that their own records show they were mobilised 949 times in 2019, and that the 519 incidents quoted in ESFRS' plan does not include incidents attended in neighbouring towns and villages or standby moves.

Mr Merriman fully agrees with the proposal to increase the number of fire engines at Hastings Bohemia Road but has concerns about the crewing of the town's ALP if firefighter numbers are not to increase overall. This, he suggests, *"will mean that if two fire engines are required to attend an incident, the ALP could not also be crewed. The next nearest ALP would have to be sent from Brighton"*. He notes that following Grenfell, other FRS' in England with a high proportion of high-rise properties (as East Sussex does) are primary crewing rather than share crewing ALP's.

The re-classification of Heathfield from a two- to one-engine station is noted in the context that the station will, in future, be considered to have one fire engine (the maxi-cab) and therefore a reduction in cover – and that in order to balance this the proposals for a new shared crewing model will increase the fire engines available from 15 to 18. Mr Merriman asks for clarification on *"how this will benefit the residents of Heathfield and surrounding villages"*.

Finally, as new contracts for on-call firefighters are proposed, Mr Merriman asks whether ESFRS anticipates any difficulties in the negotiation process and whether the new contracts will attract more people to this role? If not, he asks: *"is there a risk that you will not have enough staff to fill the posts and provide the cover that is needed?"*

Lloyd Russell Moyle MP and Maria Caulfield MP

The two MPs feel that it is not the right time to proceed with such a major restructure of the local fire and rescue service. They are not satisfied with the urgency of the review and consider it unfair that firefighters should have the proposed changes forced on them while taking on extra duties during the Covid crisis.

The MPs are particularly concerned about the proposals for Lewes and Newhaven, which help support the east of Brighton. They also say that demand figures are based on historic cases which have *"since be superseded by more recent, higher callout figures which are not being taken into consideration"*.

The MPs say that *"no-one knows what the future shape of local government, including fire and police services, will look like after this pandemic"* and so they think it is premature to be making determinations that may need to change. As such, they call for a moratorium on any wholesale changes until the impact of the pandemic on ESFRS and the wider community is better understood.

Brighton and Hove City Council Green Group of Councillors²

The councillors are concerned that the changes proposed could lead to a poorer service and have negative impacts on Brighton and Hove. Indeed, while they are relieved to see that none of the city's fire stations will close, they feel that *"the removal of secondary engines from surrounding towns will have an impact on the capacity of the service to respond to fires across the region and therefore in our city"*.

² This response is acknowledged to have been *"informed by feedback from staff represented in the Fire Brigades Union"*.

The councillors have reviewed proposals 1 (the Operational Resilience Plan) and 3 (changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines) together. They say that the proposal to increase the number of fire engines available at the start of the day from 15 to 18 does not affect fire cover in the city, but they are concerned that the fire engines at Preston Circus and Roedean will be taken out of the city to cover neighbouring fire stations like Lewes and Newhaven if their second engines are removed. Moreover, they say this proposal will mean there are fewer fire engines to back-up the city.

The Councillors also state that: *“if this number of second engines is removed, then that might leave some fire stations (including some ‘core’ stations) without any engine available in the event of a local fire”*; and that as climate change is likely to mean an increase in wildfires and flooding across East Sussex, *“we need all of our fire engines to remain as is”*.

The councillors’ views on the other proposals are as follows:

Proposal 2 (changes to day crewed duty stations): there is again concern that Preston Circus crews *“will go on calls further towards the Lewes area”* due to the reduction in the immediate response provided by Lewes at night-time and on weekends – and that the same will happen with Roedean in relation to Newhaven;

Proposal 3b (re-classifying the three ‘maxi-cab’ stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations): again, there is worry that Roedean’s fire engine will be *“taken out more and more from the city, leaving the city vulnerable”*;

Proposal 4 (crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings): with regard to Brighton and Hove, the Councillors are concerned this will mean there will be no guaranteed second ALP for Brighton to call upon;

Proposal 5 (changes to the provision of specialist vehicles, including aerial appliances): the councillors say that the reduction of wholetime and retained staff on day crewed stations and the removal of second fire engines means that there will be fewer staff to crew big incidents. If there is a large incident in Brighton and Hove and both fire engines and special vehicles are needed to come, they question whether there will be enough staff to crew them;

Proposal 6 (demand management - AFAs): The councillors note feedback from firefighters that AFAs are never false alarms to start with and that without checking, actual fires can be left to burn for longer periods of time, needing more resources to put them out once they are called;

Proposal 6 (demand management - lift rescues): There is deep concern that this proposal is being made without regard to what other services may or not be available. The Councillors say that: the FRS has the equipment and expertise to deal with lift rescues; there is a high degree of trust in the FRS as a responder to these incidents; lift maintenance teams may not respond in an acceptable timescale; and that firefighters themselves believe that lift rescues are vital in maintaining a core humanitarian service and in offering opportunities to maintain familiarity with high-rise buildings;

Proposal 6 (demand management - trapped birds): it is suggested that if animals are not rescued by ESFRS, there is potential for greater risk that the public will attempt to rescue them themselves. It is also said that: firefighters consider bird rescues to be a positive means of real-life training with the ALP; and that animal charities do not currently have the funding, equipment or necessary training to make rescues safely and appropriately; and

Proposal 7 (changes to the four-watch duty system): The councillors are concerned that both flexible and group crewing could have a negative impact on Brighton and Hove inasmuch as:

Flexi-rostering could prove detrimental to firefighters needing childcare and will mean some people will never work or train with the same crew. In the context of the latter point it is said that *“individuals may be less effective on incidents due to unfamiliarity with the team and ... such conditions can also affect morale”*;

Group crewing takes four firefighters from Brighton and Hove and reduces the watch strength at Hove and Roedean to five. The concern is that *“when leave is rostered this will leave both stations always crewing at the minimum”* and without numbers at certain incidents until the second fire engine arrives. Moreover, *“the arrival of the second fire engine could also be delayed owing to the impact of other proposals...”*

The councillors agree that more building and home inspections and visits is a positive way to reduce risk and would offer more public assurance about fire safety - and that as the service is under pressure to make savings, prevention is better than cure.

They also strongly agree that ESFRS offers value for money and say that *“the level of public trust and engagement with the service cannot be underestimated”*. In this context, the councillors consider it vital that the approach to changes within the FRS are not only viewed through a ‘monetary’ lens but also through a need to strengthen communities, adopt new and innovative practices and support hard working fire crews. For this, stronger investment from central government is said to be needed, and the Fire Authority is urged to continue to take an active role in lobbying for this.

In terms of savings and efficiencies, the councillors suggest: reducing permanent office space; recruiting staff on permanent contracts; energy efficient buildings; refurbishments of existing space; and sharing expertise with other authorities.

Finally, the councillors express concern that the length of this consultation and the detail of the proposals involved will have deterred many members of the public from responding.

Brighton and Hove Labour Group

The Labour Group of Councillors on Brighton and Hove City Council call upon ESFA members to halt the consultation and any plan to implement changes to ESFRS until the Covid-19 crisis is over and the post-pandemic financial settlement for local government and the FRS is arranged. The Councillors say that as part of the response to Covid-19, firefighters are already taking on extra duties and that *“now is not the time to try and implement disruptive changes, including further cuts, to our fire and rescue service”*.

The Councillors also share FBU concerns that the loss of equipment and crew would lead to *“a reduction in crucial coverage in some areas of the county, and therefore increase the risk to public safety”*.

Green Party in Lewes and Councillor Imogen Makepeace (some points also made by Councillor Adrian Ross)

The Green Party in Lewes comments on the proposals as follows:

Proposal 1 (the Operational Resilience Plan): this looks like a better arrangement as it seems to increase cover, but it does so *“by spreading the service more thinly over most of the area covered”*. Moreover, Lewes station will be downgraded to a ‘non-core’ station meaning that *“an incident in Seaford will take away a vehicle, leaving Lewes with a diminished capacity”*;

Proposal 2 (changes to day crewed duty stations): the Party objects to this proposal on several grounds as below:

The crew providing evening, night and weekend cover would be entirely different to the permanent crew, so *“will have limited experience operating the engine and equipment”*;

Recruiting on-call firefighters is extremely challenging, particularly in a reasonably prosperous town like Lewes – and those undertaking the role often have other work commitments that affect their availability;

On-call staff turnover is very high, which is a particular problem as *“training firefighters in all of the necessary disciplines generally takes about 2 years”*;

On-call crews are *“scratch crews”* with availability dictated by other work commitments; therefore, assembling a crew with the right skills mix will be complex;

The on-call crews will have limited experience of working together and will not know each other’s strengths and capabilities well, reducing the efficiency of the response;

There would be less emergency/contingency cover available in the event of multiple calls; and

The replacement of trained full-time firefighters with a ‘flexible crewing pool’ will increase stress and risk to them as the strength of working in established teams will be compromised.

Proposal 3 (changing the number of fire stations that have two fire engines): for bigger incidents in Lewes, two engines are deployed as a matter of course to provide additional equipment, resilience and flexibility, *“which would be lost if this proposal were implemented”*. Moreover, if a second engine was needed it would have to come from another station, increasing response times – and *“if there was an incident elsewhere in East Sussex, Lewes would be far less likely to be able to provide an additional engine for fear of leaving the town unprotected”*;

Proposal 6 (demand management - AFAs): there is a risk of fire spread in the high-density/old commercial areas in Lewes which could lead to loss of life, especially in the flats above many of the town centre commercial properties;

Proposal 6 (demand management - lift rescues): it is questionable whether this will make a great deal of difference as lift maintenance teams are unlikely to respond within an acceptable timescale; and

Proposal 6 (demand management - trapped birds): members of the public and others might try to rescue the birds themselves, putting themselves at considerable risk.

The Party also says that:

Central Government must provide assurances that FRS grants will not be reduced, so that ESFRS can make proper plans *“without the need to make these dangerous cuts to front-line services”*;

West Sussex FRS implemented similar changes a few years ago and was recently rated one of the worst FRSs in the country. It now requires £34m of investment to address the identified failings and so *“trying to make similar savings in East Sussex would ... have a high risk of actually costing more in the medium term”*;

According to ESFRS’ risk profile for Lewes; incidents have increased 0.3% since 2009; Lewes is the third busiest day crewed area within East Sussex; and there are proportionally more fires and RTC’s and twice the number of non-residential fires compared to other areas;

A Lewes firefighter has said that ‘figures covering January 2018 to May 2020 showed that if the proposal to change the current shift system was in place then, the first appliance at Lewes would be available for response by on-call staff for less than 10% of the time’; and

The consequences of climate chaos (flooding and wildfires), and the town's increasing residential and business development makes it clear that reducing FRS capacity in Lewes will compromise public and firefighter safety.

Hastings Borough Council

The Council recognises the challenges facing ESFRS to modernise, provide best value for public money but also to operate within an uncertain and ever tighter financial envelope. However, it is extremely concerned about:

The reduction in overall firefighter posts;

The move from a wholetime to a day crewed system at The Ridge, which it feels will lead to longer response times during evenings and on weekends generally and *"a delay to major event responses where all three appliances are required or where there are concurrent emergencies..."*. It is noted that Hastings has recently experienced a series of major fires and that climate change resulting in longer periods of drier weather, is *"putting areas such as our country park at a greater risk"*;

The ability to recruit and retain enough on-call firefighters to cover the move to day crewing, especially if new contracts are aligned only to periods where cover is needed at weekends/evenings; and

The change proposed to the crewing of the ALP at Bohemia Road to a shared crewing model as *"the number of HMOs in Hastings always necessitates this facility to be available and staffed"*.

As regards the timing of the consultation, the Council believes any changes should not be reviewed or made whilst ESFRS and its partners and communities are dealing with a global pandemic.

The Council welcomes:

The focus on prevention, support to businesses and the evidence and risk-based targeting of resources (though it also advocates that FRSs should be *"funded at an appropriate level to avoid the need to choose between competing priorities..."*);

The introduction of an additional fire engine at Bohemia Road, in the light of the higher risk profile within that station ground; and

The moves to direct resources into prevention, protection and training, with the following caveats:

AFAs: the 96% statistic should be well-publicised to businesses, together with clear criteria, particularly where lack of appropriate maintenance is an issue; and

Lift releases: the Council would not support a move to delay responses to lift rescues but would be prepared to consider supporting a fee for attending such calls if it is clear that there are not adequate maintenance and support arrangements in place.

Hastings and Rye Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats consider Rye to be *"amongst the jewels of this country"* and say that the Citadel contains many timber buildings and must be considered as a potential risk on that basis. They note that the recent fire that destroyed much of the George Hotel was attended by eight engines. Furthermore, it is said that the IRMP identifies Camber as a potential problem because of its housing stock, a problem exacerbated by tourist risk in the summer months – which can make access difficult. For these reasons, any reduction of service at Rye Fire Station is opposed.

The Liberal Democrats say that similar arguments apply to The Ridge Fire Station in Hastings, which affords a significant time saving on Bohemia Road in reaching incidents in the villages between Hastings and Rye (Fairlight and Pett in particular). On that basis, they do not recommend any reduction of service at The Ridge.

Lewes District Council (some points also made by Councillor Adrian Ross)

The Council tends to disagree with proposal 1 (the Operational Resilience Plan). While it supports the proposal to increase the number of immediate response fire engines at the start of the day to 18, it does not support a reduction in the number of fire engines at Lewes and Newhaven to enable this. The Council's main concern is that these fire stations would be unable to provide a resilience fire engine in Seaford, and that if one were required, it would likely need to come from Barcombe. This would mean a longer wait for said resilience engine and may leave Barcombe without a fire engine for that period. The Council is also concerned about the potential for heightened risks to households, businesses and firefighters from increased delays arising from the reduction in the total number of fire engines.

The Council disagrees with proposals 2 and 3 (changes to day crewed duty stations and changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines). With regard to the latter, it says that removing second fire engines has the potential to significantly increase call-out times, increase the risk that fire engines will not be available, and increase the risk to households, businesses and firefighters. Moreover, it is said that climate change is expected to increase wildfires and flooding in East Sussex, incidents that require the attendance of many fire engines for long periods. The Council feels that *"a reduction in the number of fire engines ... may compromise the ability of ESFRS to respond to any such incidents"*.

The proposal to re-classify the three "maxi-cab" stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations is a concern in that this may *"decrease the effectiveness of any response and has the potential to increase the time required to respond to larger incidents. This may also increase the likelihood that other fire engines will need to be called in from nearby fire stations"*.

With regard to demand management, the Council:

Is concerned that in the dense commercial areas of Lewes, Newhaven and Seaford, where in many cases people are living above the commercial premises, *"the ability to respond quickly to AFAs will be critical in avoiding loss of life or the spread of fire to other businesses"*. Councillor Adrian Ross adds that *"the relatively small savings that might be achieved by not responding to AFAs could be very quickly dwarfed by the cost (in lives and property) of a fire that has longer to take hold"*;

Agrees that building owners should resolve lift-related issues when there is no risk or distress to the people who are trapped, but questions how often this will be possible without causing risk or distress to lift occupants who are trapped;

Worries that if trapped birds are not rescued by ESFRS, there is potential for greater risk to the public and others in attempting to rescue them themselves.

The proposed changes to the four-watch duty system are a concern in the context of replacing permanent fire fighters with flexible and/or on-call crews.

Finally, the Council:

Agrees that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and would offer more public assurance about fire safety. Councillor Adrian Ross, though, adds that *"these must not come at the expense of front-line services"*;

Agrees that ESFRS offers value for money, but argues that the IRMP proposals *“have the potential to compromise the overall ability of ESFRS to maintain its range of services and consequently, this may reduce the organisations’ ability to provide value for money...”*; and

Suggests some potential ways to make savings, including simplifying services or sharing or multi-purposing office spaces to reduce administration costs.

Wealden District Council

The Council strongly agrees with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18 (in addition to a further 6 fire engines), but tends to disagree with the proposal to change from day crewed to day only, particularly at Crowborough and Uckfield Fire Stations. It says that the Uckfield area has and is likely to have increased numbers of dwellings over the coming years, which could increase risk – and that the road safety in the Wealden area must be considered. It is also noted that changing the crewing system may mean longer response times during evenings and weekends.

The proposals to remove the second fire engines from seven fire stations and re-classify the three “maxi-cab” stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations are considered operational decisions *“to be assessed on risk and experience”*.

With regard to demand management, the Council agrees that ESFRS should:

No longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises, providing it works with local businesses to raise awareness of the changes and ensure they comply with fire regulatory standards;

Consider delaying its response to lift rescues, providing the person(s) trapped are not in distress or any other immediate danger. It also says that ESFRS must educate building owners about the importance of regular lift maintenance and alternative rescue arrangements;

No longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting, while being mindful of the distress such issues can cause to some people, who may *“undertake high risk activities to facilitate a rescue”*.

The Council agrees that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety as *“prevention is always better than cure and can be a better use of resources”*. However, it is said that *“research and evaluation must be part of any prevention work to ensure ...it is effective and is leading to less emergency calls...”*.

Finally, the Council stresses that the area will see significant housing and other developments in the coming years and that ESFRS must take this into account when deciding on the way forward, as well as making any changes and proposals subject to review to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. It also says that the consultation proposals will have positive and negative impacts, and that it is particularly important that *“communities are communicated with and any changes and the rationale behind them explained. It will be important to particularly highlight the positive impacts of the changes”*.

Wealden Green Party

The Green Party feel that the consultation format and questions *“has been designed to hide the true nature of the consultation, which is little more than a cost saving exercise, and will result in a degraded service...”* They also say ESFRS should be planning for a worst-case scenario rather than looking at historical data and planning on the basis of minimum required resources.

Particular concerns are that:

While second fire engines are not called out as often as first fire engines, they are available to provide cover when the latter are at incidents;

Changing from day crewed to day only would *“lengthen response times at weekends and in the night, and leave less experienced crews to deal with emergencies”*;

Changes to the four-watch duty system will worsen working conditions for those with families as *“they will find it impossible to plan ahead for childcare and schooling commitments”*;

The dual crewing of the ALP’s at Eastbourne and Hastings could potentially leave only one fully crewed ALP to cover the whole of East Sussex;

Switching from wholetime to day crewed duty systems will increase response times at night and on weekends, *“which are not lower risk times and therefore danger to life and property would be increased”*;

There is no mention of consultation with or information from neighbouring FRSs in West Sussex, Surrey and Kent, who are *“vital to the safety of East Sussex residents in a major incident”*; and

There is no mention of the time it would take to get multiple engines to incidents at hospitals or care homes *“where there will be many people needing specialist rescue”*.

Town and parish councils

Fairlight Parish Council and Cllr Andrew Mier

Fairlight Parish Council opposes the proposed duty system change at The Ridge Fire Station in Hastings because:

Response times will increase outside daytime hours due to on-call firefighters’ turn out times or the need for a crew from Bohemia Road to respond (*Bohemia Road fire station is further away [5.3 miles] from the centre of Fairlight than The Ridge [2.7 miles]*). As Councillor Mier notes, *“the additional time required to call out retained staff will add significantly to response times, which must already be at the margins of acceptability”*;

There is a high percentage of residents over the age of 65 in Fairlight and these residents are more likely to need third party assistance. There are also many timber-framed properties in the ward that are vulnerable to fire;

There are narrow lanes between Ore and Fairlight and these can be difficult for large vehicles to negotiate, which further enhances the potential for increases in response times.

Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council

Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council strongly objects to the consultation proposals and has *“serious concerns over the information in the consultation document”*. It particularly alleges that call-out figures are two years out of date and that not all callouts have been included.

With regard to the proposals and specifically their impact on Heathfield, the Council suggests that:

A reduction in vehicles and staff would mean less resilience in the event of a large fire. For example, Heathfield firefighters have attended a number of large fires over the past year at the Claremont Hotel in Eastbourne, in Ashdown Forest and at Isenhurst, all of which were tackled in conjunction with other stations;

A reduction in vehicles and staff would lead to increased response times. Heathfield Fire Station is an on-call station that does not currently meet attendance standards, and there is worry that response times would be further impacted by changes at nearby Uckfield – as well as at Battle, and Crowborough;

The “*cutbacks*” are not centred on public and firefighter safety and will put people’s lives at greater risk.

The Council feels that three of the four commitments raised in the consultation document are not satisfied by the proposals: these are ‘delivering high performing services’; ‘having a safe and valued workforce’ and ‘making effective use of our resources’. However, it does applaud ESFRS’ efforts in education and fire prevention.

The Council makes the following additional points

Population and housing increases will place more pressure on the FRS and will lead to more road traffic collisions;

The consultation should not have been undertaken during the Coronavirus pandemic as public meetings cannot be held and ESFRS staff are already under extra pressure;

Sharing a call centre with other counties will result in savings, but a loss of local knowledge could prove crucial in emergency response;

There is no definition of ‘slightly longer’ and ‘negligible impact’ in the consultation document.

Lewes Town Council

Lewes Town Council wrote to James Brokenshire MP, Minister of State for Security, to formally requested “*that you halt the cuts in the central government grant to ESFRS*”. The Council believes that “*the reduction in direct grant, alongside a lack of secure ongoing funding, has deeply compromised the Fire Authority in its ability to effectively plan for the future*”.

With specific regard to the proposed removal of the second fire engine and six firefighters from Lewes, the Council is specifically concerned that: the proposal to replace full-time positions with on call staff is unlikely to meet the needs of the area; and that the changes do not take into account the increasing local population or the increasing effects of climate change.

Lewes Town Council recognises that Integrated Risk Management Planning is a legal requirement for fire authorities and that ESFRS were required by the government to continue with theirs during the Coronavirus pandemic. The Council says, though, that this “*has caused concern and consternation among local residents and councillors*”.

Plumpton, East Chiltington, Streat and St John Without Parish Council

Plumpton, East Chiltington, Streat and St John Without Parish Council has “*great sympathy*” with ESFRS in respect to the savings that must be made due to reduced Government grant and feels these reductions would have not have been considered were it not for ESFRS being put in an “*impossible situation*”.

With specific regard to the proposed removal of the second fire engine and a number of firefighters from Lewes, the Council accepts there would still be 24/7 cover but is concerned about a reduction in capacity, and about slightly longer response times during the daytime and at the weekend. It also cites two other factors that have emerged relatively recently:

Climate change: May 2020 was one of the driest months since records began, which led to forest/moorland fires at Ashdown Forest, Chailey Common and Ditchling Common; and

The Covid-19 pandemic and the increased number of people working from home.

The Council would like to see further work to fully understand the impact of climate change on the area and how the fire risk profile will have changed as a result of these home working arrangements.

The Council recognises that the IRMP is a legal requirement and that the Minister of State instructed all Fire Authorities to continue with their consultations despite the pandemic. However, it believes Government *“should instead be lobbied to relax this requirement to meet the requirements of the framework at this time and to reverse funding cuts to ESFRS”*.

Rye Town Council

Rye Town Council, using the knowledge of a councillor who is a serving firefighter, make the following comments about the seven Planning for a Safer Future proposals.

Proposals 1 and 2: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP) and changes to day crewed duty stations

The Council says that:

The new contract for on-call retained firefighters does not appear to cover their training time, nor does it consider that some people will want to become on-call firefighters in the spirit of community service rather than financial gain;

On-call staff must take time off work to train as firefighters and there is concern that not enough is being done to up-skill them;

It is becoming more difficult to recruit in Rye due to an older demographic, fewer self-employed people, less flexibility from employers and cover eating into family and leisure time, so recruitment should be done centrally rather than being the sole responsibility of Rye Fire Station;

ESFRS's own policy of offering firefighters at retained stations fixed term contracts at wholetime shift stations is having a detrimental effect on crewing at Rye;

It is concerned that the 'flexible crewing pool' may be less resilient because it is being used everywhere and has no back up;

The new contract gives staff at some stations longer to turn-out, but this will mean increased response times;

The data shows that there are a large number of institutions outside the agreed attendance times, certain businesses and caravan parks for example. There are also additional considerations in the Rye area such as the number of water incidents, tourism, flooding, listed buildings, and heavy industry; and

Eastern Rother, Camber and Rye are in the top 5% of the most deprived areas in the UK and statistics prove that these areas are some of the most at risk due to fire related incidents.

Proposal 3: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

The Council says that:

There is already a second appliance at Rye, and it does not currently need to be replaced, so the only costs will be maintenance related in the next few years;

The 55% availability of the second fire engine at Rye is due to the fact that insufficient numbers of firefighters are trained and, therefore, it cannot be used when needed. Statistics would show much greater usage if it were operational;

Removing the second appliance puts more pressure on neighbouring stations to cover the area if the Rye appliance is already in use, thus reducing their availability in their own locale;

Not having a second engine in Rye will increase response times and could/will lead to a greater loss of property, injuries to the public and firefighters and, potentially, more deaths;

Greater upskilling and training of Rye firefighters would mean more local knowledge that could save vital minutes as a result of them understanding the roads and built environment.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes in Hastings

The Council says that:

Rye relies on The Ridge for supporting fire engines and the proposed change from full time shift crewed to day crewed would mean extended attendance times if the second appliance is removed at Rye. This is because it is not always possible for Kent crews to cross over the border;

The proposed changes in Hastings are due to social demographics which are mirrored in the Rye area, with Camber being in the top 5% of deprived areas in the UK. If this argument is applied in Hastings, then Rye should also retain its second appliance; and

The population of Camber swells with tourists in the summer, which can lead to increased attendance times due to congestion. There is an additional risk from gas cylinders at caravan parks.

Proposal 5: Changes to providing and crewing specialist vehicles, including aerial appliances

The Council says that:

Removing the swift water response can only be detrimental to a coastal station and this is a current issue due to the increase in illegal immigration seen on the beaches in the past few months;

Rye's listed buildings, as seen during the major fire at the George Hotel last year, would benefit from a closer ALP; and

The Council would be interested to learn whether a smaller vehicle would be more beneficial in gaining access to the medieval citadel, holiday homes and manoeuvring around nearby business parks.

Other observations

Rye Town Council concludes with the following observations;

The consultation appears to look only at front line services for 'efficiency savings' and does not consider savings in other areas, such as back office work;

There is no reassurance that ESFRS is investing in 'future proof' IT systems that could save money in the longer term; and

It would be more advantageous to wait a few months to see what resources and responses are needed post-pandemic, so they are more robust.

Seaford Town Council

Seaford Town Council believes that the *“review should be more honest about the fact that one of the main purposes must be to make up a deficit in funding”* but does welcome the fact that no fire stations will close.

The Council is, though, concerned about/that:

The reclassification of Seaford from a maxi-cab to single engine station and future cover due to *“significant housing growth in the town”* and its large elderly population;

Proposed changes at Newhaven Fire Station will affect emergency cover in both towns;

Accidents on the A259 between the two towns could block the road and prevent assistance to other incidents;

The ‘flexible crewing pool’ may affect staff morale *“which comes from attachment to a particular team or watch at a specific home station”* – and proposed staff reductions will not improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the service;

While not attending AFAs may sometimes be appropriate, this *“discriminates against small business and could have grave consequences for those businesses and their neighbours”*;

Lastly, the Council has concerns about delayed responses to lift releases but would support charging.

South Heighton Parish Council

South Heighton Parish Council:

Expresses concern about the decision to hold the consultation during the Covid-19 pandemic, stating that *“the pandemic, and its effect on fire and rescue services, must be taken into account within the consultation process”*;

Highlights residents’ worries that ‘slightly longer’ response times outside daytime hours as a result of the proposed changes to day crewed stations *“has the potential to put lives at risk”*;

Notes that the increasing population of East Sussex *“will undoubtedly lead to increased traffic on our roads and increased households within our towns and villages”*. The recent closure of the Newhaven Port lorry holding area over the weekends and the large influx of tourists to the South East coast are also cited as contributing to increased traffic locally. As a result, the Council and local residents *“feel that now is not the time to be reducing available fire engines and crewed stations”*;

Says that the Newhaven Swing Bridge causes significant queues and tailbacks, which are likely to increase due to further industrial developments in the area- and that recent flooding in the area has led to worry that the proposed removal of second fire engines may reduce the capacity to respond to such incidents.

Wadhurst Parish Council

Wadhurst Parish Council strongly opposes any resource changes at Wadhurst Fire Station, noting that in the space of three years, the service there has been reduced from two appliances and 13 firefighters to one appliance and five firefighters. The Council says, *“this is a huge reduction and puts lives at risk”*.

Wadhurst Parish Council notes that local response times are already longer than the ESFRS average and that the proposals will only exacerbate this. It is particularly concerned about this because Wadhurst:

Has a higher proportion of elderly residents and children than the ESFRS average;

Has a hospital, five schools, three nursing homes and numerous assisted living premises; and

Is in close proximity to the largest inland body of water in south-east England (Bewl Water) which is used for leisure activities and is largely inaccessible by road.

Wadhurst Parish Council also comments that:

A second appliance needs to be *“at the scene of any fire before fire crews can enter the building in Breathing Apparatus”* and that the current 17-minute average is already too long, with any cuts only serving to *“exacerbate the problem”*;

Wadhurst sits close to the Kent border, and Kent FRS has different procedures for breathing apparatus - so there are locations where three appliances need to be in attendance before such equipment can be used;

There are currently significant difficulties recruiting on-call fire fighters and *“this will not be helped by the further reduction in watch strength”*;

Undertaking the consultation during the pandemic was inappropriate *“as peoples’ focus is rightly elsewhere”*, community engagement and scrutiny would be insufficient, and *“it is not the right time for a restructuring of an emergency service”*.

Ultimately, Wadhurst Parish Council is opposed to the removal of the land Rover (second appliance) from Wadhurst as this will make *“accessing Bewl Water, rural properties and forest fires more difficult in what is a largely rural location”*.

Withyham Parish Council

Withyham Parish Council strongly disagrees with five of the six proposals for the following reasons:

Proposal 1 (Operational Resilience Plan): the loss of ten potentially available fire engines;

Proposal 2 (changes to day crewed duty stations): this *“will lengthen response time and leave less experienced crews to deal with emergencies”*;

Proposal 3a (changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines): the second engines *“provide continuing cover when the first engine is called away”*;

Proposal 3b (re-classifying the three ‘maxi-cab’ stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations): the maxi-cabs *“enable a single machine to take a full life-saving team to an incident”*;

Proposal 4 (crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings): day crewing at The Ridge is opposed, but a second engine at Bohemia Road is endorsed;

Proposal 7 (changes to the four-watch duty system’): uncertainty over shifts means it would be difficult to organise family life.

Withyham Parish Council strongly agree that ‘more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety’ and ‘that the purpose and commitments of ESFRS are appropriate’, and tend to agree that ‘ESFRS offers value for money’. They also support the three demand management proposals.

The Council also comments that:

Withyham is a rural area with isolated farms, a large number of big houses and narrow lanes - and as two fire stations in the area are losing their second fire engine, there is concern about the level of cover should a major incident occur;

Dual crewing of the ALP at Eastbourne and Hastings could potentially leave only one ALP to cover the whole of East Sussex;

Danger to life and property would be increased by longer response times at night and on weekends due to the switch from “*fully crewed*” to ‘day crewed’;

There is no mention in the IRMP of the adjoining fire services of West Sussex, Kent and Surrey which are relied upon for assistance in major incidents – nor is there any mention of response times to properties such as The Horder Centre Hospital or care homes where there will be many people needing specialist rescue in the event of an incident;

ESFRS should be planning for a ‘worst case scenario’ instead of the “*minimum number of engines and crews that could deal with past incidents*”.

Other Town and Parish Councils submitted shorter responses as follows.

Battle Town Council expresses its “strong objection to the changes proposed for Battle Fire Station”.

Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council is concerned that the gradual removal of posts, and the cutting of second engines at Lewes and Uckfield Fire Stations is a risk to fire protection across the Parish. It also feels that “*growing extremes of weather lead to a clear potential of larger and more severe fires in the countryside during extended periods of high temperature*”. The Council would like the Service to reconsider the cut of second engines at Lewes and Uckfield.

Chiddingly Parish Council objects to the Planning for a Safer Future proposals and endorses the responses submitted by Crowborough and Uckfield Town Councils.

Crowborough Town Council and Rotherfield Parish Council are “*vehemently opposed*” to the changes proposed to firefighter contracts and the removal of the second fire engine from Crowborough because: the proposals haven’t taken into account the planned extra housing developments in Crowborough and Uckfield over the coming years; the nearby A26 has a poor safety record of the A26 road; there are an increasing number of wildfires in Ashdown Forest; and because on-call firefighters are “*notoriously difficult to recruit*”. The Councils also note that their respective areas sit “*on the extremity of East Sussex*” away from other supporting stations.

Crowhurst Parish Council “does not support [the] proposals to remove a second fire appliance from Battle and Bexhill, and to move to ‘day only’ at Battle and Bexhill”.

Newhaven Town Council believes “the proposed cuts will place the town and its surrounding villages at an increased level of danger and will therefore ... seek to maintain the current high standards of coverage and first rate service that the people of Newhaven have come to expect”.

Peacehaven Town Council feels that: the consultation should have been postponed owing to the Covid-19 restrictions; no changes should yet be made as firefighters are undertaking additional engagement with the public as well as their normal duties; that the consultation documents are too complicated; and that the modelling and statistics used are “*out of date*”. More specifically in relation to the proposals, the Council says that: Peacehaven has previously been identified as a remote area but there is nothing in the IRMP to reduce associated risks; natural and geographical restrictive features have not been properly considered, nor has Telscombe Cliffs; the proposal to remove the second appliance from Newhaven and change shift patterns at Roedean will lead to increased response times and risk; and it

is unacceptable that fire cover for the entire area during evenings and on weekends will be solely dependent on the availability of retained firefighters.

Pett Parish Council feels that the consultation *“fails to address questions specific to our rural location”*, which is equidistant between Rye and The Ridge Fire Stations. It also asks questions around: how long is ‘slightly longer’ and *“how do you quantify any potential loss of life that may be caused the ‘slightly longer’ response times?”*; the extent to which the availability of the ALP at Bohemia Road can be guaranteed; and the reasoning behind reducing emergency response to invest in additional protective duties, *“downgrading”* Rye Fire Station given its proximity to a chemical/industrial facilities, airport and a nuclear power station, and making The Ridge a day crewed station.

Telscombe Town Council strongly opposes the proposals for Newhaven Fire Station, which it feels will *“come at a cost of risking the lives of local people”*. The Council cites the following reasons for its opposition: the slower response time on weekends is *“totally unacceptable and presents a danger to the public”*; the A259 road suffers heavy congestion which could further impact on response times; changes to employment contracts are unfair to firefighters; local population increases and development; and Newhaven has a ferry port and requires firefighters with specialist training to deal with incidents there. The Council also expressed concerns that the consultation is taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic and requests that it be suspended *“until it is clear what resources the fire service will need”*.

Uckfield Town Council *“urgently and forcefully call upon ESFRS to immediately drop all and any proposed amendments to the fire service”* in the county. It believes the proposed changes *“will put the town and its villages at risk and in danger”*. The Council particularly asks that: the proposals are suspended until they can be given *“proper consideration”* following the Covid-19 pandemic; ESFRS takes more account of upcoming population increases and housing developments and the risk of fires within Ashdown Forest; a comprehensive risk assessment of the changes and their impact on capacity takes place; and that ESFA provides a full explanation of the proposals. It is also said of the consultation document that there is a *“lack of detail with regard to some of the statistics”* and that *“in a number of places, the content appears vague”*.

Other stakeholders

Forestry Commission

Within the IRMP or its supporting document, and as part of FRS statutory duties for fire safety and to ‘assess, plan and advise’, the Forestry Commission would like to see the following information for the general public, landowners, Local Planning Authorities and National Parks and forestry and environmental regulators:

A clear list and/or map/s of wildfire risk in the Fire and Rescue Service area, to provide an evidence base to help target increasing building wildfire resilience today and in the future;

How FRS engages on wildfire mitigation and adaptation with landowners in terms of government land management incentives;

How land management regulators will be effectively engaged in Community Risk Registers to ensure short, medium and long-term mitigation and adaptation to wildfire;

Advice, assessment and planning on building wildfire resilience, such as providing advice to land managers on wildfire risk and future impact on climate change;

FRS policy on wildfire mitigation and adaptation and how this is reported in terms of the Climate Change Act;

How wildfire risk should be addressed by Local Planning Authority Local Plans and development applications; and

Ways of improving partnership working and interoperability between FRSs and land management organisations who work at the landscape scale (Natural England; National Park Authorities; other large landowners such as National Trust and the Ministry of Defence; and representative organisations such as National Farmers' Union, Countryside and Built Landowner Association and environmental Non-Government Organisations.

It also suggests examining the current FRS definition of a wildfire to prevent the risk of under-reporting; and the need for a consistent format with other FRSs, using a national approach to set standards across the land management and fire sectors. This *"will be critical for landowners who have property across adjacent county borders as well as national land management agencies"*.

Sussex Police

Sussex Police welcomes and supports ESFRS' evidence-led approach in compiling its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2020 –2025 for consultation. It says that *"understanding your operational demand can only help shape and inform your response to managing risk and highlighting opportunities in order to deliver a better service to the public and partners"*.

Individual resident (retired watch manager)

Proposal 1: Operational Resilience Plan (ORP)

The respondent says that:

15 'immediate response' fire engines has and will continue to be the bare minimum provision from the current 36 fire engines and the remaining 27 if the proposals are implemented;

Additional fire engine availability has always been provided by on-call fire stations and second engines at day crewed stations. However, the daytime availability of on-call staff has severely diminished over the past 10 years and the proposal offers no evidence that ESFRS will definitely be able to form or maintain a 'flexible crewing pool' or to recruit and retain sufficient on-call firefighters to guarantee the availability of additional stations – which in any case would not be available for immediate response, but would be delayed by five to six minutes;

The further six 'resilience' fire engines will only be crewed 'as far as practicable' and the suggestion that they could be allowed up to half an hour to turn out is *"laughable"*.

Proposal 2: Changes to day crewed duty stations

The respondent is concerned that the day only system would be reliant on on-call firefighters being available to cover nights and weekends, and that the Service's own statistics show that this cannot be guaranteed. They suggest that this proposal has the potential to result in no fire appliances being available on evenings and weekends outside of Brighton & Hove, Eastbourne and Hastings due to the potential lack of on-call personnel and will extend attendance times from six fire stations by at least five minutes at weekends.

The respondent also states that ESFRS has been repeatedly asked to clarify what 'slightly longer' means in the context of attendance times if the changes to crewing systems occur and have failed to do so *"because [they] do not know which fire engines will be available at any one time during evenings and weekends"*.

Proposal 3a: Changing the number of fire stations with two fire engines

The respondent notes that the evidence offered for this proposal concentrates on the 'under use' of the second fire engines, but that there is little information about the reasons for this: that they are not available due to the lack of available on call firefighters (an issue caused partly through ESFRS utilising many of its on-call staff on temporary whole-time contracts to plug gaps in full time crewing). They also say:

There is no evidence of how many calls these fire engines would have attended had they had an available crew or how many standby cover moves were required due to their unavailability;

The claim that these stations would still provide a 24/7 response is potentially untrue due to the proposed changes to the full-time duty system and the inability to guarantee on-call crews;

When crewed properly, the seven fire engines are the Service's resilience and negate the need for a large number of standby moves; and

This proposal will extend attendance times of a critical second fire engine to these seven fire station areas by at least 10 minutes (which is problematic inasmuch as fire engines increasingly have crews of four firefighters, which restricts the ability of a first responding appliance to intervene at certain incident types until the arrival of a second).

Proposal 3b: Re-classifying the three 'maxi-cab' stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations

The proposal to reclassify maxi-cab stations as one pump stations is opposed because: it will extend attendance times of a second fire engine to these three fire station areas by at least 10 minutes.

Proposal 4: Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

The respondent opposes "downgrading" The Ridge to a day crewed fire station as it "will extend attendance times to East Hastings and communities to the East and North of the town compounding the removal of the on-call fire engine from The Ridge in 2015". Moreover, they are concerned that shared crewing of the proposed additional fire engine at Bohemia Road with the ALP combined with shared crewing of The Ridge's fire engine and 4x4 vehicle means that "only three of the five Hastings appliances can ever be 'truly' available".

Proposal 5: Changes to providing and crewing specialist vehicles, including aerial appliances

The respondent notes that this proposal raises several concerns regarding appliance availability, training and competencies, notably around: the reduction of 4x4 capability; special appliances at on-call stations risking losing fire engine availability; special appliances on day duty stations having no available crew if removing second pump; and the need for additional and regular training for on-call personnel on special appliances.

Proposal 6: Demand management

The respondent says that "an automatic fire alarm is not a false alarm until it has been confirmed as such" and the ESFRS has no right to ignore such alarms at the risk of a company losing its business. They also support maintaining response to lift rescues "on humanitarian grounds" (while engaging with building owners to ensure they are improving lift maintenance) and to incidents involving trapped birds to prevent other organisations or individuals attempting to rescue them without the appropriate equipment.

Proposal 7: Changes to the four-watch duty system

The respondent says that "this proposal has nothing to do with risk management but is purely about cutting further firefighter roles and money saving" and that "further reducing full-time posts will nullify the formation

of a 'resilience pool' as the pool will also be called upon to cover crewing shortages due to sickness, leave, training etc at the shift stations".

Building and home inspections

While the respondent has no objection to increasing public awareness of the dangers of fire, they say this *"cannot be at the further expense of operational cover"*.

ESFRS' finances into the future

The resident notes that Wealden residents contribute more to the Fire Authority budget than any other district outside of 'the City' yet receive the worst service and are disproportionately impacted by the proposals. They also feel that value for money overall *"is being eroded"*.

Other comments

The respondent also states that:

No detailed evidence is offered in the consultation documents of how the 'resilience pool' would operate and there is no evidence to prove that any of appliances (other than full-time ones) would have a guaranteed available crew at any time;

The recruitment and retention of on call personnel has been an issue that FRSs nationwide have been struggling with for many years and is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon; and

The consultation is *"descending into chaos"* with continual accusations by ESFRS and numerous parties of 'misinformation'.

In conclusion

The respondent feels that, if approved, these proposals *"will pare emergency response and resilience to the bone and can only have a detrimental impact on all, but particularly rural communities across the county"* and that *"hiding behind manipulated statistics to further reduce resources and emergency cover across the county make ... this IRMP the most dangerous document that ESFRS has ever produced"*.

Appendix 3: clarification questions from staff members

THEME	QUESTIONS
Operational Response Review (ORR): general	<p><i>In the IRMP You are proposing to have 18 fire engines available at the start of each shift before demand. Can you guarantee these 18 fire engines will remain available all day unless they are on a call and will not be taken off the run due to lack of crewing? (Individual staff member)</i></p> <p><i>It states you are proposing to enhance the operational resilience of ESFRS, by increasing the number of core fire engines available at the start of each day to 18. Will these 18 fire engines remain available all day every day after the start of the day (unless they are at an incident of course), or will the service allow this figure to drop to below 18 fire engines after the start of each day as it progresses, thus not increasing the operational resilience at all? (Individual staff member)</i></p>
Operational Response Review (ORR): flexible crewing system	<p><i>Could you tell me if we moved to the flexible crewing system on wholtime stations as per the IRMP proposal, as there will be in effect no watches and just a station leader, what would happen to the current Watch Managers would they be demoted back down to Crew Manager and pay protected, or would they be moved into other Watch Manager roles within the service? (Individual staff member)</i></p> <p><i>The current day crewed rota system allows all staff who work this shift system to provide on call hours at evenings and weekends. By changing this shift system to just day crewed, means these individuals do not have to give on call cover at night or weekends. The service will have to recruit and retain a lot more new on-call firefighters to keep these stations available during these periods. You will notice around the UK Fire and Rescue Service that they already struggle to recruit and retain on call staff; do you not envisage this a problem? (Individual staff member)</i></p>
Day-crewed to day-only duty system	<p><i>We are unclear as to how the On-Station response improves by 0.04% as a DO Station bearing in mind the turn out times are not improved during the daytime. Please could you advise how these figures are calculated? (Station 83, Crowborough)</i></p> <p><i>Now we are in the public consultation period is there any chance that anybody in a management role could explain to us what the actual proposals are for the Day crewed duty system? This would include proposals on how the on-call firefighters would be deployed. We have no meat on the bones to the vague proposals put forward to the fire authority. How will your proposals work, we cannot see how you can make it work with no on-call availability now? (Individual staff member)</i></p> <p><i>I work at Lewes and there is not enough retained personnel to guarantee a pump at night or weekends. This is why the second pump is hardly ever on the run. They have just one driver and no J.O's, so until that changes the new system cannot work. It would take quite some time to recruit and train at least a couple more drivers and at least a couple of J.O, to be able to do the new system. Will the Service press ahead or wait until sufficient crew are available? Management must be aware of this; what timescale do they think they can make the new system work. (Individual staff member)</i></p>

Crewing and fire engine changes at Hastings

As per the proposals in East Sussex IRMP, I understand that The Ridge Fire Station will be day crewed Monday to Friday, then be covered by on call firefighters in the evenings and weekends.

(1) Could you tell me how and why the risk in The Ridges fire ground changes on weekend days and evenings, to enable ESFRS to increase the response time by covering this period using on call firefighters?

(2) I also understand there is a whole time second appliance going into Hastings Bohemia Road. This is excellent as I understand the risk in this area has been discovered to be greater following this IRMP and annual assessment of risk.

(3) Due to the 4i mobilising system picking nearest and quickest fire appliances, won't this second wholetime fire appliance from Bohemia Road pick up all The Ridges fire calls first?

(4) Won't this leave a greater risk at Bohemia Road as the calls for The Ridge take away that second fire appliance for Bohemia Road?

(5) How will Bohemia Road jump crew the aerial appliance when their 2nd appliance is out?

(6) And finally, what happens if both fire appliances for Bohemia Road are attending incidents who covers the aerial capability at this station? This question would also apply to Eastbourne if they jump crew their aerial. (Individual staff member)

I'd like to know the total average number of two pump incidents in Bexhill, Battle and Hastings areas over the last few years please.

With my experience from working in Fire control, I would estimate that the proposed second appliance for Hastings Bohemia Road will form part of the PDA for all two pump calls into these areas and beyond should P4s be removed. I would also hazard a guess that at night two appliances from Bohemia Road would be mobilised to The Ridge fireground ahead of The Ridge fire station should the proposal for The Ridge to move to a day-crewed model. Any one pump calls in the Eastern group that leave a station requiring a standby move will also inevitably mean 76P2/P4 would be moved. Has any modelling been done to predict the total number of mobilisations predicted for station 76?

My concern is that as much as on paper an additional pump in that area is a good thing, coupled with the removal of surrounding pumps it will be extensively used to the point where the proposed dual crewed 76A1 will frequently be unable to mobilise, or at best be waiting for one of the Hastings pumps to return to station to crew. There is also the likelihood that the two Hastings pumps are mobilised as a standard Two pump PDA, an incident commander requires an ALP and despite one sitting in Hastings would have to wait for one to come from elsewhere. I know other services dual crew ALP's but most, if not all of the stations that I'm aware that use this model have RDS resilience at the same station to backfill appliances and at least drive, or even crew the ALP. Has the service calculated the potential attendance times of an ALP in the Hastings area should 76A1 not be able to attend? (Individual staff member)

<p>Aerial and other special appliances</p>	<p><i>In the proposal It eludes that its acceptable for 2 persons to travel to and incident on a P4 appliance and the remainder of the crew to travel on an ALP. It is my understanding that if the incident commander decides that the ALP is not required then it can be parked up, and those crew will revert to the BA positions on the P4 Appliance. If this is deemed an acceptable practice to have crews swapping over vehicles and duties once in attendance, why is it currently not acceptable for the OIC to also be the driver for an incident when skill sets are deficient? All firefighters are trained to operate the pump, interrogate the MDT, utilise the main scheme radio and can take on the role of command support. None of these tasks are included within the ERD Initial training course any way. (Individual staff member)</i></p> <p><i>I would like to raise the issue of the Landrover being removed from Wadhurst. I have looked through the “The Plan” that is available on the ESFRS website which the public are asked to read before taking part in the survey. There is no mention of the removal of the Landrover from Wadhurst in The Plan, the survey also has no reference or question relating to this either. The only place I could find any referral to the Landrover at Wadhurst is that it is removed from the map and not listed on the specials. There is no information on the Landrover removal in the short videos on Proposal 3 & 5, again there is no information when referred to page 46 & 50 of the IRMP Document. How can there be an informed/consulted decision on this important issue of an appliance being removed from the front line when it is not clear to see and appears to be covered over? What are the deciding factors regarding the removal of this special, and why have they not been communicated in the consultation? (Individual staff member)</i></p> <p><i>I understand that it is being proposed that the ALP in the City of Brighton and Hove will be primary crewed, but the aerial appliances in Hastings and Eastbourne will be dual crewed. Can I ask what happens if the City appliance goes off the run through damage servicing or defect, will we still get a primary crewed aerial to cover the risk in the City from Hastings or Eastbourne like we do now? Also, if you do send the Aerial over from the dual crewed stations won't that take an appliance off the run at Hastings or Eastbourne which reduces fire cover in these areas, which increases the risk? (Individual staff member)</i></p>
<p>Changes to the four-watch duty system</p>	<p><i>Please could you take the time to answer the below questions that have been requested by Blue Watch Eastbourne....</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. How has the change to the flexible rostering duty system been assessed to be ‘more a family friendly work pattern’?</i> <i>2. To what extent has the impact of flexible rostering on dual contract staff been considered?</i> <i>3. How will flexible rostering not have a negative impact on teamwork and crew familiarity when crews will rotate on such a frequent basis, working with different people constantly?</i> <p><i>(Blue Watch, Eastbourne Fire Station)</i></p> <p><i>Hoping to consult with [name] this evening and I know they will ask me on Group crewing models, under this option, is there a decision on how many J.O's would be based at the single pump station in the City? There is a thought process that there would be a reduction across watches from 6 to 5 at the single stations under these proposals, would the reduction in watch establishment be a firefighter or a Junior officer Level? Secondly when do we expect the changes to the shift options to take place if the agreement is to move forward with a or b? Are you able to share the proposed timings over the next five years for the DC stations to move to DODS if agreed?</i></p> <p><i>Does The Ridge going day crewed mean that under 41 the station ground at 75 would in fact mean that 76 appliances would be called to respond to any calls , thus leaving 75 to only attend 3 pump calls in in the Hastings Area or provide the standby as a Pump that is available under the cluster Cover? (Individual staff member)</i></p>

RDS recruitment	<i>From the presentation, there appears to be a heavy reliance on retained crews to fill the gaps with evenings and weekends. Working on station, I am aware that current recruitment of RDS can be challenging. What would the financial impact be on the service for recruitment and training of the additional RDS crews. Does the service have capacity in terms of staff and premises for the training of the additional crews needed? If not, what would the additional financial implications be for providing? (Individual staff member)</i>
Housing and demographics	<p><i>Been reading ORR ... got a couple of questions below;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Whilst you breakdown housing type in our area, is there a National benchmark, so we can see how we compare to the national data sets with regards to building type and population density?</i> • <i>Is there any National comparisons available with regards to building height i.e. number of high-rise dwellings?</i> • <i>There is an absence of any information around officer attendance at incidents, surely this is a key part of our response to emergency incidents (including specialisms and specialist response), is there a reason for the absence of any data? I did some of this work a couple of decades ago after the Palmeria Avenue Fire and we had some of the highest HMO (buildings converted to flats) densities in Europe, even greater than London at that time.</i> <p><i>Obviously, these questions are following the datasets made available through the NFCC Protection Board, which line us up with Metropolitan Services rather than our Family Group 2, this goes someway to explaining our higher than average AFAs, Lift Rescues and being coastal animal rescues. (Individual staff member)</i></p>
Figures/data	<p><i>The Service has presented Crowborough's risk profile detailing that between April 2013 & March 2018 there have been 1,505 mobilisations to incidents by a Crowborough appliance. From the work that the local teams have undertaken, they have produced the following statistics which vary significantly from those produced by the Service. Could you please confirm if the Service figures include:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Cross border working</i> 2. <i>Standbys</i> 3. <i>Specialist Water Rescue calls</i> 4. <i>Animal Rescue Calls</i> 5. <i>Specialist Landrover calls</i> <p><i>There is disparity of 1000 calls which is of obvious significance to the team here and we would therefore welcome your advice on how the statistics are calculated. (Station 83, Crowborough)</i></p>
Consultation process	<p><i>As the IRMP process moved into Stage four on Thursday, we were hoping to arrange a meeting with yourselves to discuss the proposals of the IRMP. We have all seen the You Tube presentations, that are available to the general public, but it would be good to speak to someone, from the ORR Team. We were hoping that now the process has been given CFA approval for consultation, we could be told of any plans that you have on the table. Again, we have all seen the generic plans but now that we are at this stage, it would be good to have a bit more detail. Obviously, in these current times, it would need to be carried out "virtually". (Individual staff member)</i></p>

**General/
Multiple
themes**

Please could you provide answers for the following questions regarding the IRMP?

1. *The IRMP states the new proposed fire engine for Bohemia Road will be available for 24/7 response, how is this possible under the shared crewing model? Is it not only available when the alp is not at an incident?*
2. *Will this new fire engine be quicker to The Ridge fire station at night than the day crewed staff there? If so, will that mean more calls for that appliance and even less availability of the alp there?*
3. *How will cover at The Ridge be maintained at night when there are members of the duty watch off sick?*
4. *Fires in the open: How will we cope with the increased number and likelihood of fires in the open like forest fires with less appliances and 4x4's? Crowborough could currently mobilise two appliances and a 4x4 to a fire on Ashdown Forest yet if these proposals go through, they could only mobilise one of these appliances and the next nearest 4x4 is also proposed to be removed?*
5. *Can you explain how the ORR plans to reduce standby moves? If the second appliances are removed from DC stations, as soon as the remaining appliance from these stations, or the station special(s), go out for the pre-determined time a standby appliance will be required. This must vastly increase required standby moves and because the DC stations will only be one appliance these 6 stations will no longer be useable for standby moves because they would automatically need backfilling? At the moment, providing the second appliance is available at these stations, the first appliance can fulfil standby moves but without these second appliances this resilience will be taken away.*
6. *Proposal 1 includes 6 RDS stations be allowed a longer turn out time for resilience purposes. Could this principle be applied to all current RDS stations/appliances?*
7. *How do you calculate the proposals to be a total net loss of 5 fire engines?*
8. *How many fire engines does Wadhurst currently have? The IRMP says it is classified as a two fire engine station yet CFO said it has only one fire engine?*
9. *How does the service propose to have no RDS redundancies? For example, Crowborough has 14 RDS firefighters, if there was only one appliance there and the remaining 6/7 DC WT staff all also took RDS contracts that would be 20/21 firefighters for one appliance?*
10. *When will the service release the details of proposal 7 option A? How can staff consult on this proposal without knowing the full details of which type of flexible rostering is being proposed?*

(Individual staff member)

1. *My question related to the wording in the IRMP for the new appliance at Bohemia Road. How can the new appliance be claimed to be available 24/7 if it doesn't have a dedicated crew? I appreciate the policy on how it will be crewed is yet to be written but if the crew for the appliance are committed to a call on an alternative appliance how will the new appliance remain available?*
2. *What is the predicted time it would take an appliance from Bohemia Road to attend a call at The Ridge Fire Station at night? What is the turnout time for a retained appliance at night? If the appliance from Bohemia Road will get to The Ridge fire station quicker than the appliance from The Ridge could turn out, then the appliance from Bohemia Road will be quicker to all calls that The Ridge would attend at night. This would also have a detrimental effect on the availability of the ALP at Bohemia Road.*

3. *The IRMP states that Wadhurst, Seaford and Heathfield are currently classed as two fire engine stations. The IRMP proposes to change this so those stations will be classed as one fire engine stations. This is a reduction of one fire engine at each of the 3 stations so increases the total reduction to 10. Why are these 3 fire engines not included in the reduction figures released by ESFRS?*
4. *Swift Water Rescue – What is the services plan for response concerning incidents involving swift water rescues? As far as I can see, all other specialisms and associated appliances are mentioned within the IRMP but the SWR team isn't mentioned? Is it being removed? Is it being moved to an alternative station while keeping the same capabilities? Is it being moved to an alternative station while increasing the teams capabilities? Is it being moved to an alternative station while reducing the teams capabilities? Why isn't it mentioned in the IRMP?*
5. *Crowborough is a rapidly growing town with many new houses currently under construction and in the planning phase, there will be a minimum of 938 new houses built by 2023/24 which is double the amount of the last 9 years combined. Can you explain how these new houses won't automatically increase the risk in this area?*

(Individual staff member)

Have local councils/authorities been consulted about future housing developments, proposed changes to built environments, infrastructure etc?

How many hours will the new Day only contracts be and how does this compare to the current DC?

Will those moving from DC to Day only contracts be financially impacted and if so how?

If crewing is being reduced at affected DC stations, what number of personnel will they be reduced to?

What is the purpose of the crewing pool?

The figure quoted for the crewing pool is 8 – this seems very low, how was this figure arrived at?

Is the proposal to replace the Aerial appliances with one standard model still being considered or will a crew still need to accompany an aerial if it moves to another station?

(Individual staff member)

Could I ask if there is a criteria on who specifically will be liberated from posts at the proposed stations if that is the direction it IRMP goes, for example if someone at a proposed station is already qualified within the mentioned areas of training/protection will they be more likely given notice that they are to be liberated and reassigned to the training or protection teams. Alternatively, if not is there a budget for the cost of retraining those liberated and if that is the case will there be a minimum time frame they have to hold that post? (Individual staff member)

Change always brings uncertainty and understandably there is concern from our whole-time colleagues about their future both financially and as to how their working environment may change. This has the potential to promote speculation and cause discontent between the different work groups, undoing a lot of hard work by myself and others into building and improving relationships.

Examples of questions I have been asked by RDS staff, reluctant to speak openly are:

Will RDS Staff be required to be on call every evening and weekend?

Are RDS staff putting whole time Firefighters out of their job by supporting these proposals? I've been told only a limited number of On-Call positions will be required at each station and whole-time staff will be given first refusal on these to maintain their pay. Therefore, if these proposals go through, will I be out of a job?

We need to know more about the contract options available to RDS staff, as I've been told I'll be considerably worse off financially but expected to be available more with little or no flexibility.

Whilst I am confident these statements are misguided, I do not feel that I have been provided with enough information to rely the fears of my crew and I am concerned this may lead to greater anxiety, stress and potentially resignation of RDS staff across the County at this testing time. (Individual staff member)

I've been stopped several times in the streets of Hove & Brighton and asked the following. Please can you provide some guidance, as I wouldn't want to be accused of giving the whole story

Why are certain tweets being blanked out or deleted on the various East Sussex twitter feeds? (I'm unable to answer)

Several people have asked this question. Who much longer is longer for a fire engine to arrive- if I dial 999 in an emergency how long are you going to take? And they got no answer or were told to read the IRMP (which doesn't give a time)

You (i.e the fire service) put out information the other week, that certain parties weren't telling the whole story. Who is this and what have they said that's not factual or correct? Why does your IRMP/ Plan not make sense –its written in such a way that both a lawyer and baker have said they don't understand what certain parts mean and I was asked separately? And they've also both asked How long is longer? With no reply

I was also asked how many fire engines were in the city? And when I asked where they lived in the event of incident and they said a block of flats, so when I told them we send 6 fire engines as PDA to a block of flats (they asked what PDA meant, so I told them) and they were shocked that a city as big as Brighton & Hove only had 4 fire engines but needs 6 for a block of flats and the figures don't add up- so perhaps you could tell me how I answer that . I also explain that we send 3 fire engines to a confirmed house fire and 2 to a car crash and they said the numbers didn't again add up. (So how am I meant to answer this) They were concerned as it was the 3rd anniversary of Grenfell Tower.

I also got asked about the big fire in Lancing / & the hotel In Eastbourne the other day and asked if we went, So people in Brighton and Hove are aware of the news.

One person said they saw Sky news and the MP's from Brighton on TV talking about the cuts, but nowhere in the letter they received or anything they've read talks about cuts, but it was clearly mentioned on the TV, and in the House of Commons.

One person was told to go away and read the IRMP- he told me he's got 2 degrees, one in English & one in engineering and it didn't make sense to them. So how are staff meant to answer these questions honestly? (Individual Staff Member)

Where in the IRMP does it make the workforce feel valued and supported?

Is there an example where the changes to On-call have been successful in another service that proves that the contracts and payments will work?

How are we going to guarantee 24-hour fire cover at current Day Crewed stations when WT are only providing day cover?

The latest Comms regarding payment scales for contracts are steered at On-call and take little account of WT at those DC stations.

Even during Covid-19 when many On-call staff are either working at home or on Furlough, still there has been very little positive impact on P4's on Day crewed. This illustrates the lack of depth in our staff at DC stations.

Where is the SWOT analysis on the IRMP proposals? It feels there are plenty of 'opportunities' but where is the other detail?

The 'performance impact' slide shows on station response versus on-call response, which are portrayed in percentages as opposed to times. Isn't there at least a 5-minute addition to turn out times when a call is received outside day crewed hours?

Concerns the IRMP is beyond the point of change

Pay protection v taking new contract? If WT take new contract will they still get pay protection?

Pay protection for those that have to drop their current RDS contract?

Implications of 4-hour rule?

How will it work for WT staff taking an On-call contract if they are out after midnight?

*How would they decide who were being moved from stations if Watch sizes are reduced?
(Red Watch and Green Watch, Uckfield Fire Station)*

Question 1: Will on call staff be utilised to crew specials such as the Water Carrier throughout the weekdays?

Question 2: Will the service maintain current employment of on call Staff to be available during the day to crew mixed crew pumps anywhere in the county?

(Individual staff member)

Special appliances at on-call stations rely on trained personnel from that station. If that special appliance is then deployed, that station then goes off the run.

Will there ever be a point where on-call will be used for resilience pool at other on-call or day only duty stations?

(Mayfield Fire Station)

Appendix 4: templated questionnaire response

To whom it may concern:

Please find below my responses to the consultation questions regarding your “Planning for a Safer Future” proposals.

1. To what extent do you agree/disagree with ESFRS increasing the number of immediate response fire engines it has available at the start of the day from 15 to 18, in addition to a further 6 fire engines?

Strongly disagree. I support the proposals to increase the number of ‘immediate response’ engines. But this must not be achieved by reducing the total number of ‘resilience’ fire engines as this would significantly increase risk across the whole of East Sussex.

2. Do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from ‘day crewed’ to ‘day only’ at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield in order to staff a ‘flexible crewing pool’ and invest in training and prevention and protection teams?

Strongly disagree. On-call fire fighters are extremely hard to recruit, retain and train; relying on this unproven model to provide all evening and weekend cover is dangerous. And having all evening and weekend cover provided by a scratch crew who do not work and train together all the time would present an unacceptable risk to households, businesses and fire fighters.

3. Whether or not you agree with the proposal to change the crewing system from ‘day crewed’ to ‘day only’ at Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, and Uckfield, if the crewing change is agreed by ESFRS, which of the two options (A or B) do you prefer?

I strongly disagree with the proposal to change the crewing system from ‘day crewed’ to ‘day only’, and therefore do not support either of the alternative options proposed.

4. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to remove the second fire engines from Battle, Bexhill, Crowborough, Lewes, Newhaven, Rye and Uckfield Fire Stations?

Strongly disagree. Removing second fire engines from seven fire stations will significantly increase call-out times, increase the risk that fire engines are not available to attend an incident, and unacceptably increase the risk to households, businesses and firefighters.

5. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to re-classify the three “maxi-cab” stations of Seaford, Heathfield and Wadhurst as single fire engine stations?

Strongly disagree. Removing the “maxi cab” capability from Seaford and the other stations will reduce the effectiveness of the response, increase the time required to respond to larger incidents and increase the likelihood that fire engines will need to be called in from nearby fire stations, leaving them without cover.

6. To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should introduce a day crewed system at The Ridge and a second 24/7 fire engine at Bohemia Road?

No opinion.

7. To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer automatically attend calls to AFAs in low-risk commercial premises?

Strongly disagree. In the dense commercial areas at the centre of Lewes, Newhaven and Seaford (where buildings are often constructed of timber, other business next door, and often flats above) the quicker response from responding to AFAs is critical in avoiding loss of life and the spread of the fire to other businesses.

8. To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should consider delaying its response to release people from lifts to give building owners (who are responsible for broken lifts) time to resolve the issue in the first instance?

No opinion.

9. To what extent do you agree/disagree that ESFRS should no longer attend calls to birds trapped in netting?

Strongly disagree. If the animals/birds are not rescued by ESFRS there will be a much greater risk of the public / others trying to rescue trapped or dying animals and birds themselves without suitable equipment, putting themselves at considerable risk.

10. Do you agree/disagree with the proposal to change crewing arrangements at the following ESFRS fire stations: Bohemia Road (Hastings), Eastbourne, Hove, Preston Circus (Brighton) and Roedean (Brighton)?

Strongly disagree. Replacing permanent fire fighters with 'flexible' or 'scratch' crews increases risk unacceptably for the reasons given in response to Proposal 2, above.

11. Whether or not you agree with the proposal to change the crewing arrangements at the 5 ESFRS fire stations listed above, if the crewing arrangements are changed, which of the two options (A or B) do you prefer?

I strongly disagree with the proposal to change the crewing arrangements, and therefore do not support either of the alternative options proposed.

12. To what extent do you agree/disagree that more building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety?

Tend to agree. More building and home inspections and visits would be a positive way to reduce risk and offer more public assurance about fire safety. But these must not come at the expense of front-line services.

13. Would you be willing to pay more in council tax for your local fire and rescue service next year (2021/22)?

The cuts are being proposed because of reductions / uncertainty in Government Grants. Central Government must provide assurances that Fire Service grants will not be reduced, so that the Fire Service can make proper plans for the future without the need to make these dangerous cuts to front-line services. The policy of cutting front-line services has been shown to be a mistake by the Covid-19 crisis and the inability of the NHS to respond adequately; these proposals must therefore be reconsidered in the light of Covid-19.

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree that East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service offers value for money?

Agree. ESFRS offers value for money currently. However, if implemented, these proposals would make such severe cuts in services that ESFRS would no longer offer value for money.

15. In what ways do you think that ESFRS could make savings and be more efficient in the future?

ESFRS should be properly funded by central government.

16. To what extent do you agree/disagree that the purpose and commitments of ESFRS are appropriate?

Tend to agree.