



# AVON FIRE BRIGADES UNION



**RESPONSE TO "AVON FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE IRMP 2016-2020  
DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION"  
18TH NOVEMBER 2016 – 31ST DECEMBER 2016**



# INTRODUCTION

This document has been researched, developed and written by the local Brigade Committee of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and its Officials within Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AFRS). They have done this by attending meetings at local Fire Stations and seeking the views of the Firefighters that work in the Service as well as gathering the views of the public. This document therefore represents the real voice of the professionals within the Service, as well as the public which they serve. The views contained within it must not only be listened to in that context, but also acted upon.

The reaction to the cuts package put forward by Avon Fire Authority (AFA) has been overwhelming and clear – it is not supported by either the professionals who deliver the Fire and Rescue Service or the public who receive it.

FBU members have engaged with local communities in Yate and throughout the service area. The message from the public has been one of support for their local fire crews and rejection of the cuts being put forward to the frontline service.

Avon Firefighters have in recent times attended several high profile incidents which stretched them and the service to the limit. Incidents such as these show why resilience, in the form of available frontline resources, is so vital to the Fire and Rescue Service.

Resilience in the Fire and Rescue Service can only be properly developed through overall, service area wide, risk management, development and planning – as opposed to the piecemeal “supply and demand” process that has been put forward in an apparent attempt to justify these cuts. The “supply and demand” argument, which seems to equate less fires with less firefighters, is simplistic, misguided and dangerous.

**The provision of proper and safe Fire Cover has to be based around risk, not supply and demand. Less calls does not mean that those people involved in a fire can wait longer.** Fire behaviour remains unchanged and the increased response times which would result from the proposed cuts could prove detrimental to our local communities.

- We are calling on AFRS to place public safety ahead of budget cuts.
- It is time to recognise the dangerous consequences that cuts to the frontline Fire and Rescue Service would bring to our communities, infrastructure, businesses, and heritage within the Service area.
- It is time to recognise the dangerous impact that these cuts would have on public and Firefighter safety if they are voted through.
- It is time to listen to the professionals and not compromise our life saving emergency services which are so relied upon by the public.



*Tam McFarlane,  
South West FBU*

The Firefighters and crews of Avon FBU have spoken, along with the public they serve. Their views are made plain in this document and, if consultation is genuine and meaningful, their professional viewpoint will be treated with the respect it demands.

On this basis we call on Avon Fire Authority to reject these damaging proposals and think again.

Tam McFarlane  
South West FBU

# CONTENTS

<b>AVON FIRE BRIGADES UNION</b> .....	4
Executive Summary .....	5
1) The Financial Background – A Failure Of Funding.....	7
2) The Value of the Fire and Rescue Service.....	8
3) The proposed reconfiguration of Emergency Intervention .....	10
4) The Importance of Emergency Intervention.....	14
4.1 Resilience.....	15
4.2 Rescues.....	16
4.3 Response times .....	17
4.4 Protection.....	20
4.5 Prevention.....	21
5) The Collaboration with other services .....	23
6) Environmental challenges – Flooding.....	25
7) Public Opinion and Perceptions of the Fire and Rescue Service.....	26
8) Online Petition and Campaigning in our Communities.....	28
9) Our vision for the Fire and Rescue Service .....	30
10) Conclusion.....	31

# AVON FIRE BRIGADES UNION

This document has been developed and written by the Fire Brigades Union in Avon and represents our response to “Avon Fire & Rescue Service IRMP 2016-2020 Draft for consultation”.

The primary concerns of the FBU are:

- The safety of the public served within AFRS and surrounding areas;
- Ensuring the service delivers a swift, effective and professional emergency response whenever called upon;
- Ensuring the service develops and delivers an effective and professional community safety strategy;
- To provide a safe and competent workforce who are well trained, well equipped and provided with the proper pay and conditions appropriate to their role and employment.

The purpose of the FBU is clear, to represent collectively the best interests of our members and ensure that the public is served and protected by a highly effective Fire and Rescue Service.

Within this context it is the firm view of the FBU that the proposals being consulted upon, specifically the downgrading of Yate Fire Station, represent an unacceptable and dangerous cut to the operational front line of the Fire and Rescue Service which, if implemented, would have serious repercussions for both Firefighter and public safety. We therefore call on AFA to reject these dangerous cuts outright.

This document represents the views and voices of the professional Firefighters that make up and deliver our Service. We urge you to seriously consider the contents of this document and act upon the views represented when considering the future of Avon Fire and Rescue Service.



*Chris Taylor,  
Avon FBU*



*Gary Spindler*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**1. “Change the crewing model at Yate Fire Station from wholetime to day crewing, but maintaining fire cover using on-call staff during the night.”**

The proposal to remove Wholetime Fire Cover between the hours of 1700 and 0800 at Yate Fire Station will increase response times to emergency incidents within Yate and the surrounding area, it will result in increased fire growth and a longer wait for people trapped in property fires, road traffic collisions and other emergency incidents. This proposal, if implemented, will compromise the safety of the public and firefighters. Supply and demand is not an argument to be used to downgrade.

**2. “Trial alternate crewing of our turntable ladders at Bath, Bedminster and Weston-super-Mare and introduce a similar method of crewing for our heavy rescue tender at Avonmouth. We will evaluate the trial and, depending on the results, make a permanent change from primary crewing to alternate crewing on:**

- **the heavy rescue tender at Avonmouth; and**
- **the turntable ladders at Bath and Weston-super-Mare”**

The Alternate Crewing model being trialled means when these Specialist Appliances are needed, the normal crew of a front line fire appliance (either 4 or 5 Firefighters) splits up to take both this and the specialist vehicle needed to the incident.

These Turntable Ladders and Heavy Rescue Tenders are known within the Fire Service as ‘Specials’. These Special appliances, although used on a less frequent basis than a normal Fire Appliance, form a vital role when they are required at an incident through their specialised attributes. To apply the logic that simply due to their low mobilising frequency we can delay their response time is ignoring the massive role they do play when they are required.

These Specials are required normally at large scale, high profile incidents where, by the very nature of their capabilities, they are required quickly for an early weight of attack. Therefore the very times when they are going to be required will be when the Service is already stretched. This increases the possibility of a crew not being available to mobilise the vehicle as needed. This, in turn, increases both the response time of the appliance and the risk to the public and our Firefighters.

3. The consultation document pays little regard to the importance of resilience and relies too much on a crude and inappropriate “supply & demand” version of fire cover. This results in no proper value being given towards the importance of a quick, appropriate weight of response to incidents and the necessity of resilience at times of large scale, protracted incidents.
4. The campaigning activities of the FBU – who have engaged with the public on the streets of the AFRS Service area – show overwhelming public opposition to these proposals. The outcome of the FBU petition and campaigning show that no politician can claim a mandate to put cuts ahead of emergency cover – it is our clear experience that the public do not support cuts to emergency cover.

5. The proposals within the consultation are being put forward entirely as a result of the failure of politicians, at all levels, to finance our Fire and Rescue Service to a level where it can function as an effective and safe emergency service.
6. The FBU believes that cuts cost lives and ruin communities. We demand long term, strategic investment in Avon Fire and Rescue Service and a fairer, sustainable and protected funding formula that better reflects the contribution our Service makes to society within the Service Area.
7. It is our assessment, as the professional voice of firefighters within AFRS, that these proposals will compromise the safety of the public and of firefighters. They will compromise the ability of the service to deal with large scale, protracted incidents and undermine our resilience overall. The proposals are not supported by the public or by firefighters. We call on AFA to reject these proposals.

# 1. THE FINANCIAL BACKGROUND – A FAILURE OF FUNDING

The options within this consultation are being proposed entirely as a result of the failure of politicians, at all levels, to finance our Fire and Rescue Service to a level where it can function as an effective, safe and locally accountable emergency service.

Our service has suffered unprecedented and dangerous cuts to central funding in the last decade.

Nationally, central funding to the Fire and Rescue Service was cut by 30% in the last Parliament and now AFRS are facing another 21% cut to their Government grant, an unprecedented reduction. These cuts will ultimately cost lives, destroy homes and businesses, drive up insurance premiums and damage the environment.

AFRS are a “Combined Fire Authority” (CFA) and within the South West Region there are two other CFA’s. Local taxation for the Fire & Rescue Services that cover CFA’s are collected through a precept to the Council Tax. The Precept within AFA for a Band ‘D’ property is set at £66.60 which is below the National average for CFA’s across the country and is the lowest of the three within the South West. The FBU both Nationally and locally have lobbied for sufficient funding of Fire Service’s through central Government, however if AFA raised the precept within the service area by £5 per household per year these damaging cuts would not be needed. Local politicians of all persuasions should be insisting through their political parties for a workable way to maintain the service they provide to the community without being forced into dangerous and damaging cuts.

The Fire and Rescue Service is a lifesaving emergency service which requires a budget sufficient to ensure we can provide effective and safe fire & emergency cover, as well as providing and building on our vital community safety work. This purpose has been forgotten at a political level in the drive for financial cuts year after year.

Instead of developing our service and community safety, principle managers have been expected to focus on budget cuts. This is not just a damning indictment on the failure of politicians to discharge their responsibilities; it is also unacceptable and dangerous.



## 2. THE VALUE OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Annual UK fire and rescue service expenditure for 2014-15 was £2.7bn – a tiny fraction of central government expenditure on public services. This spending equates to less than £50 for every man, woman and child in the UK per year – extraordinary value for money considering the wide range of protection offered and activities undertaken. We urge AFA to put these figures into a local context and explain clearly to the taxpayers within the service area the localised cost per taxpayer of the Fire and Rescue Service and the value that this brings. Alternatives to the current package of cuts could then be put forward and the cost per taxpayer clearly identified.

The value that we bring to the people, economy and communities of the Avon service area is well identified and proven. The financial costs of fire are no longer published by the Westminster government. The last report published by Government, on the cost of fire in England for 2008, put the total estimate at £8.3bn. The costs in anticipation include prevention or protective measures such as sprinklers and insurance. The costs as a consequence of fires, includes damage to properties, loss of business, and the costs of human injury and death. Response costs are the expenditure on fire and rescue services. Firefighters play an important role in all these activities. Community fire safety work with vulnerable people helps prevent scores of deaths and injuries, while a rapid response can limit losses to property as well as life.

**Table 1: Estimates for the total cost of fire (2008)**

	<b>Anticipation (£m)</b>	<b>Consequence (£m)</b>	<b>Response (£m)</b>	<b>Total (£m)</b>
England	£3,185	£3,285	£1,807	£8,277

There are good reasons to believe that at least some of these costs have risen since 2008. The most recent figures published by the Association of British Insurers (ABI) indicate that the insured cost of fires in 2008 was £1.3 billion, a 16% increase on the previous year. Between 2002 and 2008 the cost of the average fire claim for both commercial and domestic fires doubled, to £21,000 and £8,000 respectively. The ABI suggested that if this trend continues, the UK could stand to lose as much as £10 billion as a result of commercial and industrial fires by 2020.

Some fire and rescue services have carried out their own cost-benefit analysis to quantify the value of the contribution of their service to the communities they serve. For example, Greater Manchester fire and rescue service has estimated that for every £1 the service costs to respond to incidents, there is an £18 saving in terms of life and property. This estimate refers only to fires and does not include other areas of work such as responses to road traffic collisions and other types of rescue.

Other estimates have underlined rising costs to households and businesses. The financial and economic impacts of blazes in warehouses without sprinkler systems in England and Wales add up to over £1bn over the last five years, according to a report published by the Centre for Economics and Business Research. These warehouse fires cause a direct financial loss to business of £230m per year, £190m per year in productivity and impacts to the supply chain, approximately 1,000 jobs lost through disruption and business failure and £160m in tax receipts lost to the Treasury over five years.

The fire and rescue service has reduced the costs of fires, deaths and injuries over the last decade. The cost to the economy of a single fire death is estimated to be £1.65 million and the estimated average consequential cost of a domestic fire is £44,000 – never mind the harm done to families and communities by fires. The fire and rescue service saves the economy billions of pounds every year. On this basis alone, the fire and rescue service merits investment, not cuts.

The FBU believes the value of the service is even greater, with many other benefits to society from firefighters' work.

The social value of the fire and rescue service is immense. Every day firefighters around the UK work with the young and the old, with offenders and the unemployed, as well as businesses of all sizes and with vulnerable households. Fire and rescue services make a direct contribution to a number of other public agencies through their wider work in communities. Firefighters reduce the costs of:

- Traffic congestion
- Road traffic collisions
- Youth unemployment
- Anti-social behaviour
- School exclusion
- Slips, trips and falls in the home
- Reoffending
- Troubled families.

There is some recognition of these additional benefits delivered by the fire and rescue service, although this has not translated into more funding. Last year the UK fire and rescue service won the Big Society award for its ground-breaking work with young people to educate them about fire prevention and tackling anti-social behaviour. The fire and rescue service's education programs have allowed over 10,000 young people to learn essential safety information and gain wider social skills. Activities ranging from primary school visits, sports coaching and interventions to reduce anti-social behaviour by disaffected young people are recognised to add enormous value to society, helping to reduce the social and economic costs of crime.

Firefighters bring unique value and experience to such work, which is built upon their emergency response role. It is precisely because of the hazards we face and the humanitarian role we play that firefighters can have such a significant impact in other areas of public engagement, with young people and others within the community. There are also numerous possibilities going forward for the fire and rescue service to add value to other social programs. However the FBU fears that these programs are threatened by continual cuts in firefighter numbers and the closure of community fire stations. The union believes central government needs to come clean about the value of firefighters and the service we provide, and fund our service to reflect the value added.

### 3. THE PROPOSED RECONFIGURATION OF AVON FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

#### AFRS STATE:

*Trial alternate crewing of our turntable ladders at Bath, Bedminster and Weston-super-Mare and introduce a similar method of crewing for our heavy rescue tender at Avonmouth. We will evaluate the trial and, depending on results, make a permanent change from primary crewing to alternate crewing on:*

- *The heavy rescue tender*
- *The turntable ladders at Bath and Weston-super-Mare*

#### How our Appliances are crewed and by which firefighters?

- Primary Crewed by Wholetime Firefighters – 365 days of the year, 24hrs a day there is a dedicated crew on duty to respond with the vehicle as and when it is required.

This may be 4 or 5 Firefighters on a Fire Appliance, or a crew of 2 Firefighters on a Turn Table Ladder for example.

#### **An immediate response is guaranteed via this system.**

- Primary Crewed by Retained Duty Firefighters – These Firefighters play a crucial role and will crew appliances in an 'On-Call' basis.

Unfortunately this system cannot guarantee the availability of the appliances being crewed as these Firefighters have other primary jobs and employment, as such they are not available to respond at all times.



- Alternate Crewing by Wholetime & Retained Firefighters – In order for the vehicle to respond a crew from another vehicle will need to split up and take both this and the specialist appliance required to the incident.

***It has to be made clear that Alternate Crewing will always put some delay on the response time of a vehicle at best, and at worst render the appliance unavailable – for a number of reasons which will be made clear.***

These Turntable Ladders and Heavy Rescue Tenders are known within the Fire Service as **‘Specials’**. These Special appliances, although used on a less frequent basis than a normal Fire Appliance, form a vital role when they are required at an incident through their specialised attributes.

AFRS are using a false logic that due to their low mobilising frequency, it is acceptable for there to be an increase in their response time when they are needed. This is clearly not an acceptable argument, nor is it in the interests of Public or Firefighter safety. It is ignoring the massive role these appliances play when they are required in resolving incidents.

The number of times that an incident occurs has absolutely no bearing on the nature of that incident when it happens. For instance, whether a fire occurs in a high rise block of flats once a year, or once a day, the fire in each case will remain the same and still require a suitable response from the Fire Service and present the same dangers to any occupants and Firefighters involved.

These Specials are required normally at large scale, high profile incidents by the very nature of their capabilities. Therefore the very times when they are going to be required will be when the Service is already stretched. This increases the possibility of a crew not being available to mobilise the vehicle as needed. This therefore, increases the response time and as a result, the risk to the public and our Firefighters.

As stated earlier, there is a risk that these appliances when Alternately Crewed may actually be unavailable when required. Should the Fire Appliance that would supply the crew for the special be unavailable, maybe due to attendance at another incident, there are plans in place for RDS Firefighters to be called in and respond with the Special. This however relies on there being an RDS crew available to do so, it must be accepted that there will be occasions when there are no RDS Firefighters available, whether due to them also being at an incident already, or simply unable to supply an available crew. This situation would leave the vehicle unavailable on the Fire Station.

#### **AFRS STATE:**

***Change the crewing model at Yate Fire Station from wholetime to day crewing, but maintaining fire cover using on-call staff during the night.***

#### **Purpose of 24 hour Wholetime cover at Yate Fire Station.**

In 2009 the AFA agreed to increase fire cover in Yate to 24 hour wholetime cover. The reasoning behind the decision was to acknowledge the increased growth in the population of South Gloucestershire, especially on the northern and eastern fringes of Bristol. The extra cover also gave an important resilience to AFRS who were intensifying their training plans following an increase in firefighter deaths in the line of duty since 2002.

## What has changed?

- Central funding to the Fire Service by government has been slashed since 2010 resulting in the loss of around 10,000 frontline firefighter posts. 150 of these posts have been lost within AFRS.
- South Gloucestershire covers an area of 497 square kilometres and has a population of 264,800. South Gloucestershire has seen substantial levels of development throughout the past half century (the population has grown by 13% in the last 15 years and by 23% in the last 25).
- In the last 20 years the population of South Gloucestershire has grown by around 18%. This same level of growth is projected for the next 20 years, with the number of people over 65 and 85 increasing by 55% and 78% respectively.
- A new neighbourhood to the north of Yate, will accommodate around 3,000 new homes (2,700 up to 2027), employment and community uses. This will enable the towns to meet locally generated housing requirements, provide a broader employment base and provide opportunities for modern flexible working practices, enhancing their sustainability.

### **NB. The last three bullet points is taken from the public document “South Gloucestershire Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-2027”**

Although Yate Fire Station has the lowest operational activity of any AFRS wholetime station, it is important to highlight the vital role it plays in the overall resilience of the service

The proposed change would have a dramatic and detrimental impact on fire cover between the hours of 17:00 – 08:00, through the removal of immediate wholetime response. In addition, not only would the response become slower, but the availability would be halved from the current two appliances to only one, increasing the danger to both the public and firefighters due to a much delayed response.

### **AFRS STATE:**

***Bring our Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team into the wholetime establishment to make better use of our resources and the grant received from government for our National Resilience assets.***

### **What is USAR?**

USAR is a National asset provided by a number of Fire Services throughout the United Kingdom. It was Government funded and is required to provide USAR technicians to Level 4 incidents. These highly specialised technicians are trained to a Gold standard and are purely used at this time for the purpose of USAR and construction collapse were their unique skills can be utilised.

**FBU supports AFRS stated purpose in utilising USAR to enhance the efficiency of the service.**

## **AFRS STATE:**

***Use the posts generated from the reconfiguration of frontline operational resources detailed above to provide areas of risk critical importance with additional resources and capacity.***

### **How to achieve the above statement**

The FBU would always support a “safe, efficient and effective delivery of the fire and rescue service” we have been doing that for almost 100 years.

The most effective way of achieving that goal is for the lobbying of Governments by Fire Authorities and local government to increase the funding to the Fire Service.

It is essential that Westminster Governments are taken to task on the running down of vital services especially at a time when economies will need lifting following the recent vote on leaving the European Union.



## 4. THE IMPORTANCE OF EMERGENCY INTERVENTION

Fires devastate people's lives, ruin their homes and wreck businesses. There are examples of high profile incidents within Avon Fire & Rescue Service area, which bring this home in the most dramatic fashion. Recent fires in the centre of Bristol at both Colston Street and St Michaels Hill clearly showed the effect that fire has on commerce and the wider community. These along with recent "High Rise" fires within the service area shows the worth of "Specialist Appliances" and the need for genuine resilience within the Fire and Rescue Service. In addition, the community safety work of firefighters, which has successfully driven down fire calls, has been abused by Government in an attempt to cut personnel. The Government mantra of "less fires = less firefighters" is a deliberate failure to recognize the role of risk in the provision of fire cover. This is unacceptable to the FBU. In the South West there has recently been a number of large scale fires, not only in Bristol but also in Exeter, Gloucester and Plymouth. Increased response times, which are happening throughout the UK Fire and Rescue Service, mean that fires when they occur, will be larger due to the nature of fire growth and our delayed attendance.

In order to safely and properly deal with such large scale incidents requires a level of resources and resilience which is now being put at risk through the cuts proposed by the AFA. The proposals would strip vital full-time cover, and would not only increase response times and adversely affect resilience in the service area, but would also have a dangerous impact on the ability to successfully allocate resources to large scale incidents whilst also providing a level of local cover in South Gloucestershire.

The consultation document being used to justify these cuts glosses over the importance of resilience and instead focuses solely on a local perspective. This gives the misleading, and for firefighters offensive, impression that the provision of Fire Cover should be judged solely from the amount of calls received locally – with no proper account or value being given towards individual incidents when they do occur, or the necessity of resilience at times of large scale, protracted incidents.

No-one should underestimate the need to provide an emergency service for such incidents and no-one should underestimate the requirement for resilience within Avon Fire and Rescue Service in order to properly resolve these incidents whilst also maintaining a level of cover across the rest of the Service Area.

Our firefighters have much to be proud of. The Fire and Rescue Service is a real success story when provided with sufficient personnel and the resources to do the job of preventing, protecting and responding to emergencies. In Britain over the last decade:

- The total number of fires is down by almost a half
- Building fires are down by a quarter
- Total fire deaths are down by a third
- Non-fatal casualties have also been cut by nearly a third

Some politicians and commentators argue that the downward trend in fires and fire deaths justifies making further cuts to the Fire and Rescue Service. The FBU rejects this conclusion. Firefighters have been active agents in bringing about the progress made through successful fire prevention and protection. There is still a long way to go. It is irresponsible to decimate the active force that has catalysed these improvements. The FBU rejects the flawed notion of determining levels of Fire and Rescue Service resources based on cost rather than risk.

## 4.1 RESILIENCE

Resilience is of massive concern to the FBU for a number of reasons, it is a term often used with the Fire Service, and it covers many areas. In basic terms it determines how well logistically the Service would be able to operate, on different levels, in the face of different scenarios. These range, for example, from planning on how to cope with an outbreak of a Pandemic Flu, rendering the service extremely short of staff and needing to operate in a totally different way, to having Fire Appliances and Firefighters available to attend a house fire on a Tuesday afternoon.

Firefighters, and indeed the public, can accept that if the first of these were to happen, response to the second at the same time may be delayed – what Firefighters and the Public should not accept or expect, is that the response to that house fire is delayed simply because government supplies insufficient funds to provide adequate resource, resilience and fire cover. As we have stated, Resilience is a key concern, especially in terms of Appliance availability for Firefighters within Avon Fire and Rescue Service. The impact of cuts over the last six years, and those potentially to come, have and will result in less Firefighters and Fire Appliances – this has a fundamental impact on resilience which is being felt and seen on the ground floor. Over 200 firefighter posts will have been lost within AFRS since 2010 if these proposals go ahead.

With less Firefighters, our rescue Fire Appliances (Water Tender Ladders) are more often than not being crewed by 4 Firefighters instead of the required 5. As a result crews are often faced with a delay in supporting appliances arriving to resolve incidents safely and in good time. This delay would not be necessary should adequate crews be available at all times.

The service has also lost 1 wholetime and 1 RDS appliance in this time, from the Speedwell/Kingswood merger and Keynsham/Brislington relocation to Hicks Gate respectively. Whilst these are small numbers, their loss has had a direct effect of the incident ground, there is a conscious feeling from Firefighters, especially in the north and east of the service area of having to wait longer for appliances to arrive, and at times a real feeling of vulnerability at busy times.

It has to be recognised that the two appliances mentioned above both operated within the North and East of the service area, the same area in which Yate responds to, and indeed provides resilience support to other stations from. Reducing Yate to a single RDS appliance at night will inevitably reduce our resilience further and negatively impact on public and Firefighter safety.

Earlier this year, the previous government published the latest edition of the ‘National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies’, the unclassified version of the National Risk Assessment. The register covers a range of civil emergencies that threaten serious damage to our welfare, the environment and security. A striking number of these threats are matters dealt with by the fire and rescue service:

- Terrorist attacks
- Coastal and inland flooding
- Storms and gales, low temperatures and heavy snow
- Heatwaves and severe wildfires
- Public disorder (such as the civil disturbances in 2011)
- Pandemic influenza and related outbreaks of disease
- Major industrial and transport accidents

Firefighters plan, prepare and train for these kind of emergencies. Some of the risks posed by these events have increased in recent years. With climate change, many of the risks are likely to increase in the foreseeable future. Other events are highly uncertain and difficult to quantify, with multiple events a real possibility to plan for. All assume that the Fire and Rescue Service is prepared, equipped and staffed to meet every challenge thrown at it.

The government's planning for these risks assumes there are sufficient firefighters available to tackle these emergencies and that the fire and rescue service is resilient in the face of these threats.

The FBU believes, worryingly, that this is no longer the case and the proposals being put forward by AFA can only serve to worsen the situation.

## 4.2 RESCUES

One of the best measures of the quality of our emergency service is the number of rescues carried out. DCLG does not publish rescue figures systematically and has not done so since the turn of the century. Neither does the Welsh Assembly or the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Scottish government does publish rescue figures for fires, but not for other incidents.

New FBU research reveals an impressive level of rescues carried out by firefighters every day, reinforcing the vital role of emergency intervention. The data, obtained from individual fire and rescue services by the Labour Research Department (LRD), indicates that over 38,000 people were rescued by firefighters in the UK between April 2014 and March 2015 – over one hundred rescues a day. In England, over 32,000 were rescued by firefighters during that period.

There are a huge number of rescues from non-fire incidents – including flooding, road traffic collisions, hazardous chemicals and lift rescues. For the UK as a whole, firefighters carried out over 34,000 rescues at non-fire incidents in 2014-15. In England, there were over 29,000 rescues carried out at non-fire incidents between April 2014 and March 2015. There were over nine times more rescues at non-fire incidents than at fires, reflecting the wider range of activities now undertaken by firefighters, indicating the irreplaceable response to a huge range of emergencies.

Firefighters still make a significant intervention at fires, which is well appreciated by members of the Public. For the UK as a whole, firefighters rescued over 3,700 people from fires in the last year. There were some issues of concern with the returns from some individual fire and rescue services, including how some incidents are recorded. A basement flood and a flooded high street are both recorded as a single incident, masking very different resource requirements. It is possible some brigades have not recorded all incidents, underestimating the real extent of rescue activity carried out by firefighters. Nevertheless, the figures underline the contribution firefighters make to improving people's lives.

## 4.3 RESPONSE TIMES

A key measure of quality in the Fire and Rescue Service is the time it takes firefighters to reach an incident, known as the response time. DCLG figures estimated that average response times to dwelling fires in England slowed from 6.1 minutes in 2003-04 to a peak of 7.4 minutes in 2013-14. Although dwelling fire response times for a first appliance appear unchanged in the last four years, they are still a long way from the norm when there were national standards.

The average response time to dwelling fires in England is now almost two minutes slower than two decades ago. Response times to other building fires, including workplaces and businesses have also increased substantially.

DCLG previously attributed the slowing of response times to increased traffic levels. However traffic levels peaked in 2007, while attendance times continued to increase. The FBU believes that the effects of cuts are the central reason for the slowdown in response times. Fewer firefighters, fewer fire stations and fewer appliances have led to a worsening of the speed and necessary weight of emergency response.

Another factor is a shortage of staff, which has meant that appliances and crews are often taken off the run due to staff shortages, for training or to deliver community fire safety. Sadly, DCLG did not consider the impact of cuts, instead worsening response times were blamed on control staff for longer call handling times, policies such as “drive to arrive” and even firefighters for time spent putting on personal protective equipment.



Proper recognition of the vital role that response times play within the Fire & Rescue Service is necessary when considering any change. To drive this home, we urge the AFA to consider carefully the following text which comes from AFRS Document “Response standards” V12006:

*“The Society of Fire Protection Engineers analysed the results from a series of experiments, which were carried out in order to measure the concentration/time profiles of important toxic products in fires and their effects in humans, primates and rodents. The following predictions were made regarding the effects on a victim exposed to the conditions in a typical domestic dwelling sitting room involved in Sustained fire growth:*

- *between 2.5 – 3 minutes from ignition: smoke development and growth sufficient to severely inhibit escape from the room of origin;*
- *4 minutes from ignition: average temperature is 220°C, sufficient to cause skin burns and incapacitation;*
- *after 4 minutes from ignition: victim escaping or rescued would likely suffer severe post exposure effects that may be fatal, due to skin burns and respiratory problems (e.g. combined effects of inhaled hot gases, chemical irritants and pulmonary secondary effects of the skin);*
- *5 minutes from ignition: victim likely to lose consciousness due to combined effects of the accumulated doses of narcotic gases;*
- *after 6 minutes from ignition: victim would likely die sometime between a few minutes and one hour after rescue, due to the effects of narcosis, circulatory shock and possibly hypothermia.*

*When considering the time taken for a fire to develop and the effects it has on a person within the room where the fire started as described above, one must remember that the first call to the Fire and Rescue Service following discovery of the fire may be some time after the fire started. In many cases, the discovery of a fire is not until the effects of the fire are noted from outside the building. This may be some considerable time after the fire ignited. These facts prove that the response to, with the appropriate weight of attack is crucial to enable effective and safe firefighting”.*

**(NB. Above text from AFRS Document “Response standards” V12006)**

In contrast to the political rhetoric and crude justification for cuts that follow the line of ‘Less Fires means need Less Firefighters’, the independent consultants Greenstreet Berman suggest that by 2020 slower response times as a result will mean:

- Between 14 and 41 additional deaths at dwelling fires
- Between 33 and 91 additional deaths at road traffic collisions
- Between 42 and 57 additional deaths at water incidents
- Between 98 and 212 additional deaths at special service incidents overall.

The cuts being proposed by the Fire Authority will impact on the real response times to 999 emergencies occurring in local communities across the service area. With fewer firefighters and slower response times, the quality of service will worsen. With slower response times, more people, property and workplaces are put at increased risk.

## **AFA Response Standards 2006 – 2012:**

Since 2006 AFA have had three categorised areas in order to determine their response standards, these were included within the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2012:

- Category 1 areas of population exceeding 50,000
- Category 2 areas of population between 10,000 and 49,999
- Category 3 areas of population below 10,000

These standards being set with a commitment to the Health, Safety and Welfare of AFRS staff and the well-being of the communities that they serve by ensuring that **Critical Attendance Standards (CAST)** be maintained. This provided a weight of response to the categories as follows:

**Category 1** 2 fire appliances, 9 firefighters on scene in 8 minutes – 85% of incidents

**Category 2** 2 fire appliances, 9 firefighters on scene in 10 minutes – 90% of incidents

**Category 3** 2 fire appliances, 9 firefighters on scene in 15 minutes – 95% of incidents

For fires with a pre-determined attendance (PDA) of 3 fire appliances (e.g. High Rise buildings/ Houses of Multiple Occupation) a minimum of 13 firefighters to attend to maintain CAST.

## **New Response Standards from 2012:**

In 2012, two years after the first austerity measures were brought to bear on the Fire Service through government cuts to the Public Sector, AFRS consulted with AFA elected members and the Fire Brigades Union outlining their intent to change the way that they would record the Response Standards. The change meant that instead of recording the attendance times of all appliances, they would simply record the first only.

Following this change, elected members and the FBU at that time shared their concerns with AFRS, this resulted in assurances that the second appliance attendance figures would be monitored by the Performance and Risk Management Forum (PRMF). This has now been superseded by the Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee (PRSC).

Since this was agreed by the AFA the service has decreased significantly in terms of frontline firefighters. This has resulted in increased instances when AFRS are operating below their minimum operating level of crewing i.e. below the recognised minimum numbers of firefighters on duty.

## **The need for assurance**

Due to the loss of over 150 Firefighter posts within AFA since 2010, and the proposed cut of another 49, there has been a massive impact on our crewing resilience which cannot be ignored.

***Avon FBU believe it is vital that for the assurance of both public and Firefighter safety, a return is made to recording the attendance times of all appliances as per the AFA Standards of Response in place from 2006 – 2012.***

Avon FBU believe this recording is vital in order to show AFA are truly committed to CAST, and accept that the length of time that a supporting appliance takes to arrive on scene is crucial to the safety of their firefighters and the communities they serve.

## 4.4 PROTECTION

Our Technical Fire Safety team play a key role in offering sound guidance in relation to building design and safety. This advice can only be given if they are in receipt of the latest information and we support the pursuance of this with regard to our enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

### **Sprinklers**

We are pleased to see that once again AFRS are continuing to lobby for the installation of Domestic Sprinklers, this is something that would undoubtedly increase both public and Firefighter safety and we will work with AFRS in support of this.

We would also ask AFRS to join the FBU in campaigning to achieve sprinkler installation within our schools, a policy introduced in 2007 by Dorset MP Jim Knight when he was an education minister in the last Labour government. The move was outlined in a government document called 'BB 100 Design for fire safety in schools.' It was described at the time as "a landmark in improving fire safety in schools", by the then government and it identified the major fire risk that schools pose and the need to make them even safer places for children. The stated purpose of fitting sprinklers was to "help prevent the devastating impact that a fire can have in a school (which is) longstanding".

At the time, many of us felt that even this did not go far enough as it did not produce a requirement to retrofit older schools but it was a very welcome and positive step forward for safety.

Now, however, the government has redrafted the document, completely changing the previous wording. What had read: "*it is now our expectation that all new schools will have sprinklers fitted*", has been replaced with a statement declaring the absolute opposite. It now reads "*BB 100 no longer includes an expectation that most new school buildings will be fitted with them (sprinklers)*".

In doing so, the government has overturned a basic, relatively modern policy that was introduced to keep children and staff in schools safe, safeguard against long-term damage to children's education and protect school buildings and resources for future generations. The government's arrogant decision flies in the face of overwhelming evidence.

Since the policy was introduced sprinklers have been credited with saving 17 schools from huge fire damage. They allow for quick evacuation of children and staff and limit the spread and growth of fire. Their removal would be disastrous. The subsequent damage to children's education due to the loss of a school in a fire can be both long-term and catastrophic. There are also other societal costs in the loss of a school, including the jobs of staff and the loss of the school building and facilities to community groups and sports clubs.

The cost of fitting sprinklers to a school represents a very low investment when weighed against that of a rebuild due to fire. The average cost of a large school fire, as recorded by the Fire Protection Association (who collate statistics on behalf of UK insurers), is £1.3 million. Compare this to the cost of having a sprinkler fitted which is, according to Jim Knight, "roughly the same as carpeting a school", and any reasonable person will recognise the sensible option.

In addition, recent legislative changes by the Department of Education, especially around academy schools, means that much of this cost will ultimately be borne from the public purse i.e. from taxpayers like you and me.

The government has proceeded with the short-sighted and dangerous measure of scrapping the requirement for sprinklers in new schools regardless of the risks, showing a contempt for safety and no regard to the potential disruption of our children's education.

There is no group of people who understand more the huge value of having sprinkler systems in schools, of which there were 600 last year, than firefighters, we understand more than most the vital role that sprinklers have in preventing fire growth, limiting damage and saving lives.

Avon Fire Authority championed the sprinklers in schools agenda for a number of years and that lobbying undoubtedly aided the introduction of the policy in 2007. The FBU would hope that the AFA position is reaffirmed and that they actively push for unitary planning departments to continue to ask for sprinklers to be present in all new schools.

The loss of officers within AFRS Technical Fire Safety department has meant an increased pressure and workload on the Technical Fire Safety team. This must be taken into account by AFA when considering future plans within the department.

The FBU locally are committed to engaging and helping AFRS to grow and maintain the high standards of work and services provided in these vital areas.

## 4.5 PREVENTION

### **Health, Safety and Welfare (HS&W)**

AFRS say they are committed to the HS&W of their employees.

The agreement to sign up to the MIND Blue Light Campaign Pledge is welcomed by the FBU.

The increase in these types of illnesses is a worrying trend which the FBU believe is contributed to by the pressures put on the frontline as a result of ongoing cuts. All too often the frontline are riding below the recognised minimum crewing model which results in an increase in the pressure put on crews. This inevitably causes an increase in sickness and stress. The reductions in the ridership factor, which has decreased from 1.6 to 1.39 since 2010, we feel is a major contributing factor to this problem.

The service must commit to maintaining minimum crewing on all frontline appliances, especially now that a trial on alternate crewing of specials is being undertaken.

### **Road Safety**

The FBU recognize and welcome the commitment of AFRS to actively promote road safety to young people, as a member of the West of England Road Safety Partnership.

This vital work is performed by the Community Fire Safety team in conjunction with the partnership and its WRECKED program, the FBU wholly supports the work our CFS personnel do. We would like to improve the service our members provide by working closely with the Risk Reduction department agreeing smart initiatives going forward.

Road Safety within AFA was originally piloted by the Fire Crews at Speedwell Fire Station but the reality of cuts in central funding and the pressures that causes to the everyday work that crews undertake has resulted in crews not being as actively involved as they once were. We

feel that young people benefit from seeing their local crews and this is essential not only for the respect that gives the Fire Service but also the appreciation to the job that crews have to perform.

Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) are an increasing part of the everyday activities of Fire Crews throughout the country and the prevention agenda should reflect this reality by aiming to extend the successful work that Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) have achieved in the reduction of fires, into the reduction of RTC on our roads.

The decrease in central funding which some politicians have aligned to the reduction of fires, need to realise that the real reduction in fires are achieved through the prevention agenda and as such should look at the advantages that extra funding brings to all types of prevention.

### **Home Fire Safety Visits**

The FBU are committed to supporting AFRS in developing the HFSV, the Fire Service brand hopefully will continue to be welcome on the doorsteps of our communities.

We agree with targeting the vulnerable within society and that of signposting members of the public to other agencies. Likewise the FBU welcome working closely with agencies and charities which will enable the service to effectively target the most vulnerable.

Avon FBU believe that through the correct initiatives, these vital services may expand and we will work closely with AFRS to achieve this. However, when working with other agencies the Service must always ensure that proper consideration is given to any potential negative impact on the image of our profession.



## 5. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

### AFRS STATE:

***“Relocate our headquarters function to co-locate with the police at their headquarters in Portishead.”***

***“Collaborate with partners where this is mutually beneficial and does not impact on our frontline service delivery.”***

It is a common misrepresentation that the FBU are always against change or modernisation. What is actually correct is that we are against changes that fail to improve our ability to do our job or the level of service we can provide to the public.

As well as the vital work of fighting fires, the modern firefighter keeps the public safe from many other threats, including floods and road traffic incidents, and plays a major role during major incidents such as terrorist attacks. Crucially, Fire and Rescue Service staff help prevent fire and loss of life with comprehensive public information and engagement campaigns.

The general public turns to firefighters when their safety is threatened, particularly when they do not know where else to turn, knowing that we can be relied on to get the job done. Firefighters keep the public safe to enjoy their lives knowing that an unseen hand helps protect them from fire and many other dangers.

Firefighters have three key aims:

1. To save lives and prevent injury
2. Protect property, both public and private
3. Render humanitarian services

We respect AFRS need to explore the potential of new working arrangements through various avenues that may be reached with other emergency services, we also welcome their key point of *“...protecting the services we provide to our communities.”* One of the Fire Services extremely valuable asset is trust, this has been built up over decades and is a result of us being seen as an impartial service that will not judge or discriminate, we simply help in the best way we can in the public's time of need.

This trust is one of our biggest assets when it comes to helping people, it means that they are not worried about letting us into their home. This has allowed us to reach tens of thousands of people and offer safety advice, through Home Fire Safety Visits for example.

Our continued standing as an independent and non-judgemental service has to be maintained as a priority if we are to truly protect the services we provide to our communities.

**Matt Wrack, general secretary of the FBU, said on the subject of the potential running of the Fire Service by Police and Crime Commissioners:**

***“Firefighters provide a humanitarian service, and this just does not mix with law enforcement – firefighters rely heavily on public trust in order to gain access to their homes, not just to extinguish fires but for all the safety checks they do, the fitting of smoke alarms, and other work in the community such as keeping an eye on vulnerable people and the elderly. If PCCs are allowed to take over the running of***

***the fire and rescue service, we are in no doubt that public safety will be put severely at risk. PCCs may hope for a share in the popularity firefighters enjoy with the public, but neither firefighters nor the public will benefit from this association with law enforcement. We have already had cases where firefighters were asked to pitch in and help with evictions – this is simply not their role. To be linked with police in this way will be extremely damaging.”***

#### **AFRS STATE:**

***“Explore the potential for expanded provision of support to the ambulance service for immediately life-threatening emergency medical calls.”***

Since 2013, the FBU has engaged in discussion around a number of issues with the fire service national employers. As a result, FBU members are taking part in a number of work streams through the National Joint Council (NJC), concerned with the future of the fire and rescue service. The work streams are examining the following areas:

1. Environmental challenges – e.g. flooding, inland water safety, snow, wild fires
2. Emergency medical response – e.g. co-responding, falls, on-site trauma care, provision of community training
3. Multi agency emergency response – e.g. Marauding Terrorist and Fire Arms (MTFA), joint working, any issues falling out of Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP)
4. Youth and other social engagement work – e.g. arson reduction, working with risk of offending youth groups
5. Inspections and enforcement – e.g. schools, illegal homes, crown properties, expansion of unregulated business use, related fire safety advice

In each case the work streams have begun to meet and initial progress reports given to both sides at the NJC. The FBU has considered this work from various aspects:

- a. The need to protect the fire and rescue service from further devastating cuts.
- b. The need to constantly assess the changing risks facing society so that our service and profession develops to reflect these changing risks.
- c. The need to develop a case for the long term improvement in the pay and conditions of FBU members.

Upon completion of these national talks Avon FBU will welcome local discussions in regard to their outcomes.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES – FLOODING

No-one in our Region can ever forget the massive, and highly destructive, floods of 2007. On 19 July, Gloucestershire FRS, supported at times by AFRS, attended 1,800 calls in a 48 hour period, compared with the usual 8,000 calls a year. These along with similar scenes in Somerset are more frequent than ever. Although these figures are significant, they appear to underestimate the number of incidents and rescues actually carried out. The Fire Service rose to the challenge and we made countless rescues of people trapped in flood water as well as fighting to protect vital infrastructure and rendering humanitarian services. We did all this, and more, for days on end.

Homes within the service area had been disrupted and flooded in November 2016 by torrential rainfall which saw flooding on the streets of South Bristol and Bath. This rainfall caused major problems to the infrastructure within the AFA especially in rural areas.

The risk of flooding has not gone away – far from it – and many areas, and thousands of homes, remain at risk from the devastation that flooding brings. These risks are increasing due to increased population, building on flood plains and climate change.

The public rightly expects firefighters, as highly-trained professionals, to respond to flooding. Failure to manage flooding, including emergency response, carries huge financial and individual costs, impacts on productivity and other aspects of the economy. There are particular industrial issues with regard to flooding that need to be resolved within the Fire and Rescue Service, including funding, IRMPs, training, PPE, equipment, welfare provision, health concerns, pay and other matters. The FBU believes that more resources are needed for the fire and rescue service to respond to flooding and other environmental matters, so that firefighters have the tools to respond professionally to these emergencies.

Against this background it is hugely disappointing that Fire Authorities around the country appear to have forgotten the experiences and lessons from the huge floods suffered in 2007 and more recently during the winter of 2015/2016.

It is the FBU's view that a statutory duty for firefighters to attend floods would help Fire and Rescue Services, other emergency services and the government as a whole to plan effectively and reduce risk to life and property. Such duty has already been adopted in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We would expect AFA to continue lobbying through local MP's to ensure that the select committees recommendations to secure adequate National funding which will enable Fire Services to provide resilience and an ability to deal with similar incidents in the future.

## 7. PUBLIC OPINION AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Firefighters rightly receive plaudits for the invaluable work we do. The public expects firefighters to respond in an emergency and deliver unparalleled assistance in the most dreadful circumstances imaginable. Public support for firefighters is exceptionally high. A YouGov survey commissioned by the FBU in 2010 found that more than nine out of ten believed the Fire and Rescue service was providing a good service. Two out of three thought the service was very good – a glowing tribute to the work firefighters do on a daily basis. Four out of five members of the public were satisfied with their local fire and rescue service, while only 2% were dissatisfied.

There was no mandate for cutting the service in 2010. Some 95% said they favoured maintaining the current level of staffing across the UK, with a third demanding more firefighters. Some 85% said they opposed plans to cut funding to the Fire and Rescue Service as a whole, with the same percentage opposed to local cuts in funding. Nine out of ten people said the Fire and Rescue Service was good value for money. An overwhelming majority of people (95%) said that rapid response to an emergency call is a priority for them as householders and for local businesses. The same percentage believe that attendance times should be a high priority for Fire and Rescue Services – exploding the myth that response times don't matter. A swift response with adequate resources remains crucial to providing a first-class service.

No politician can claim there is a mandate to put cuts ahead of frontline emergency services – there is not.

The value which the public places on Firefighters was confirmed by even more recent research undertaken by the FBU.

Published in October 2015, the research shows that 73% of the British public feel firefighters contribute most to society's wellbeing, next only to doctors (87%) and hospital workers (81%).

Some three quarters of respondents to the independent online survey of 1,015 people conducted in August (2015) by YouGov for the FBU showed that the public believe firefighters and teachers contribute to society's wellbeing at the same level, with the two professions achieving a joint third place. In a list of thirteen professions police came fourth at 67%, with actors scoring 9%, and bankers at the bottom of the league at just 4%.

In terms of who the public hold in the highest esteem among a list of 13 professions, firefighters came third, again only ranking below doctors and hospital workers. Teachers however scored lower on the esteem rating, with police worse still, achieving just half of the 12% scored for firefighters. Women, people aged 35-44 and those living in the east or south of England were most likely to hold firefighters in high esteem.

Some 84% of respondents opposed cuts to the fire and rescue service, with just 4% thinking there should be fewer firefighters serving the public – the remainder of the response was split evenly with 43% believing we should keep jobs at the same level and the same proportion believing firefighter job numbers need to increase. Nearly 7000 frontline firefighter jobs have been lost since the coalition government were elected in 2010.

Another 88% of respondents think the fire and rescue service, which makes up around 4% of council tax bills, is good value for money – police services are allocated 10-11% of council tax.

More than nine in ten (95%) of survey respondents agreed that rapid response to fires needs to be a priority – (at a national level, government figures show that fire engines now take on average 20% longer to get to house fires than they did 10 years ago).

This survey shows what the Fire Authority should already know – that the public places a tremendous value on the work firefighters do, which isn't just about fighting fires these days, but a whole range of other work, from assisting paramedics, to emergency response, lift rescues, public education, chemical spillages and road traffic accidents and even assisting at the thankfully rare scenes of terrorist attacks such as 7/7. Firefighters put their lives at risk to save others, and this selflessness is clearly something the public hold very dear.

Against this background the Government should shift its focus from cutting Fire and Rescue Services and instead provide us with the investment we now badly need in order to save lives and protect our communities.

Funding cuts are threatening not only emergency response, but also prevention and enforcement work, and overall national resilience to a wide range of emergencies. The FBU believes cuts cost lives and ruin communities. The union wants long-term, strategic investment in the service, not cuts – and a fairer funding formula that better reflects the wider contribution made by the Fire and Rescue Service to society.



## 8. ONLINE PETITION AND CAMPAIGNING IN OUR COMMUNITIES

### Petition

Avon Fire & Rescue Service are consulting on plans to cut frontline firefighter jobs and reduce lifesaving cover across the Service. The Fire Brigades Union in Avon believe these plans are dangerous and are asking for your help to get them reversed.

#### **Why is this important?**

In an emergency, every second counts. The cuts being proposed by Avon Fire & Rescue Service would compromise our ability to get to an emergency quickly and would limit our use of vital, specialist equipment to fight fires and rescue people.

The cuts would mean the loss of 49 firefighter jobs, removal of full time cover at night from Yate Fire Station and downgrading vital aerial appliances and a heavy rescue tender which covers the motorway network. We know times are tight, but these cuts would compromise the safety of the public and of firefighters. Demand that public safety is put ahead of budget cuts. Please sign our petition and say NO to dangerous cuts.

The above petition, run by Avon FBU, through the campaign group 38 Degrees, began in November 2016 and has achieved a powerful connection with the public view. We will be handing in the completed petition as part of this consultation response.



During our campaign, there has been an extraordinary reaction from the public which shows the level of concern that the public feels regarding these proposals. We urge every member of the Fire Authority to consider these concerns whilst making difficult decisions.

The petition allowed members of the public to state their reasons for signing the petition. Here is a sample of these comments:

***“Ive had a house fire and my 5 year old son was very seriously burned – 60% burns. If it wasnt for the Fire crews attending he would be dead now. In a house fire seconds really do count and we need the right number of crews and appliances. Losing 49 firefighters means risking peoples lives – it could be yours or the people you love. No to these disgusting cuts and NO to losing our fire service throughout the country”.***  
Marika

***“When I was involved in a terrible car crash, the fire service were there in minutes, they cut me out of my car and saved my life, without them being so quick there is a great chance I could have died from my injuries. Seconds matter! Seconds can be the difference between life and death. Yate is a large town and it is constantly expanding, not to mention the expanding surrounding areas, cutting our fire service is dangerous, it needs to stay the way it is.”***  
Sarah J.

***“I don’t want it to be my family who are put at risk because of cuts, you hope you will never need the emergency services but I’d sleep happy knowing they were there if I did!!!!***  
Tracey R.

***“Enough’s enough. Who are the faceless bureaucrats proposing these cuts? I wouldn’t mind betting they don’t live in the area where the cuts are proposed!***  
Geoff P.

***“Time to stop taking our firefighters and stations away. Stop these dangerous cuts...”***  
Darren C.

***“Cuts not only have an impact on public safety but firefighters safety as well! Time is critical in an emergency and less firefighting resources will put huge pressure on officers and firefighters.***  
Andrew P.

***“The public sector protects vulnerable people. No one else. We need to protect all our services.***  
Matthew S.

***“Our fire and rescue services have already been cut too much and too many firefighting posts lost.***  
George W.

## 9. OUR VISION FOR THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The FBU has a powerful, positive vision for the Fire and Rescue Service. Firefighters are proud of our jobs and the services we provide to our communities. We want to see a highly effective and efficient Fire and Rescue Service.

The FBU wants a Fire and Rescue Service that:

- Professionally assesses the full range of risks facing communities and plans to address these by integrating the various measures of prevention, protection and intervention
- Rapidly responds to a wide range of emergencies facing communities
- Provides a first-class service to the communities we serve
- Is publicly-owned
- Is democratically-controlled, democratically-run and accountable to communities
- Receives sustained investment, not cuts
- Is resourced to manage a wide range of risks, rescues and interventions
- Has consistent, universal and professional standards at its core
- Trains and prepares a highly skilled and professional workforce.

The public have the right to know that their Fire and Rescue Service is planning professionally for the various risks faced by the community. Firefighters have the right to know that the service is planning adequately for incidents rather than deliberately under-resourcing them.

Firefighters are trusted professionals, enthusiastic advocates for our Fire and Rescue service and absolutely committed to serving our communities. Firefighters are confident we have the skills and experience to revitalise our service. Give us the tools and let us get on with doing the job.



## 10. CONCLUSION

It is our conclusion, as the professional voice of firefighters within Avon that these proposals will:

- **compromise the safety of the public and of firefighters**
- **result in increased response times to emergency incidents**
- **result in increased fire growth**
- **result in a longer wait for people trapped in fires, road traffic collisions and other emergency incidents**
- **compromise the ability of the service to deal with large scale, protracted incidents**
- **undermine resilience overall**

These proposals are not supported by the public or by firefighters.

We call on Avon Fire Authority to lobby this and any future Government that puts firefighters and the communities they serve at increased risk through the negative austerity measures being placed on vital Public Services. The austerity measures being imposed on Fire Services are decimating fire cover which increases response times and places pressure on Services resilience.

Avon FBU are committed to continue working closely with AFRS to ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare of its members and that of the public. We welcome innovative forward thinking ideas to improve the vital services that AFRS provide in the protection, prevention and the speedy response to emergency incidents. Avon FBU will also continue to embrace the national work streams that aim to protect the Fire Service as a modern efficient emergency service geared to the twenty first century, however we will continue to protect that service as the professional voice of firefighters throughout the United Kingdom.

***“WE RESCUE PEOPLE NOT BANKS”***







Produced by FBU Region 12  
FBU Regional Office  
158 Muller Road  
Horfield  
Bristol  
Avon BS7 9RE  
tel: 0117 9355132  
[www.southwestfbu.org.uk](http://www.southwestfbu.org.uk)