

The Fire Brigades Union



Devon & Somerset Fire Brigades Union

**Response to Devon & Somerset
Fire and Rescue Service
Draft Plan for 2013/14 to 2014/15**



Introduction

This document has been researched, developed and written by the local Brigade Committee of the Fire Brigades Union and its Officials within Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service. They have done this by attending countless meetings at local Fire Stations and seeking the views of the Firefighters that work in the Service. This document therefore represents the real voice of the professionals within the Service, and 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 the Service has been overwhelming and clear – ***it has not got the necessary support from either the professionals who deliver the Service or the public who receive it.***

FBU members have engaged with local communities on this issue and the message from the public has been one of support for their local fire crews and rejection of cuts to the frontline service. The memory of recent events is fresh in the minds of both the public and fire crews themselves. Only a few months ago, during some of the worst floods the Region has seen, crews worked around the clock and in the most difficult of circumstances to serve the public and their communities. At the large scale incident on the M5 in Somerset the heroic actions of operational crews, who faced appalling and deeply distressing conditions, has been widely and rightly recognised by politicians, colleagues and the public alike.

But it should be obvious to everyone that crews in these situations were working to the limit and, in some cases, beyond.

The extraordinary professionalism and commitment of fire crews, highlighted at high profile incidents, is replicated on a daily basis. The day to day work of operational crews requires dealing with a wide range of difficult, dangerous and highly technical emergency incidents. This work, and the skills and commitment of the crews who carry it out, is recognised, relied upon and deeply appreciated by the public.

It is against this background that the proposed package of frontline cuts has been considered; and it is against this background that the cuts package has been received with a sense of betrayal by staff and rejected overwhelmingly by the public.

It is the professional view of the FBU and our Members in Devon & Somerset that, if implemented, these wholesale cuts to the front line will dramatically reduce the operational effectiveness of Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service. They will increase response times, reduce resilience, compromise fire cover, place unsustainable pressure on remaining staff, increase risk to communities and compromise the safety of Firefighters and the public. On this basis we consider the proposals to be wholly unacceptable.



Tam McFarlane
Executive Council Member, South West FBU

The Fire & Rescue Authority has a responsibility to ensure that the financial pressures being created by central Government do not impact on the ability of the Service to keep our communities safe and protect the infrastructure and businesses within our Counties.

Our experience tells us that in economic downturns we can expect to see an increase in the work of the Service as properties become empty (and so become more at risk from fire & arson) and people who are struggling to afford basic necessities look to find short cuts in household bills and use open flames such as candles more often.

This, together with numerous plans being put in place for new housing projects, roads, buildings and even a new nuclear power station, will obviously increase the risks faced by the Fire and Rescue Service.

To deal with this properly the Fire Authority must place its responsibility for the people and places it represents at the very front of the decision making process.

Neither the public nor the Firefighters of Devon & Somerset will forget promises made time and again by political leaders that vital frontline services would be protected from spending cuts.

Despite these promises Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service has now produced plans which would create massive job cuts in frontline Firefighter posts and downgrade life saving frontline Fire & Rescue Appliances. They have done this, by their own admission, to achieve a spending cut. This has to change. The Fire & Rescue Service should never be compromised in order to make cuts.

It is time to listen to the professionals and not compromise vital life saving emergency services which are so relied upon by the public. The Firefighters and crews of Devon & Somerset Fire Brigades Union have spoken. 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 the Fire Authority must withdraw these damaging proposals and think again.

Tam McFarlane
Executive Council Member
South West FBU

Introduction from Devon & Somerset FBU Brigade Committee

This document has been developed and written by the Fire Brigades Union in Devon & Somerset. This represents our response to the Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service's consultation on the draft plan for 2013/14 to 2014/15 presented to staff in January 2013, and to the Public for consultation between 28 January 2013 and 22 April 2013.

This document has been researched, developed and written by the local Fire Brigades Union and its Officials within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service. We have done this by attending countless meetings at local Fire Stations and seeking the views of the Firefighters that work in the Service. This document therefore represents the real voice of the professionals within the Service, and the views contained within it must not only be listened to in that context, but also acted upon.

The primary concerns of the FBU are;

- The safety of the people and communities within Devon & Somerset and the surrounding areas which we cover;
- Ensuring the service delivers a swift, effective and professional response whenever called upon.
- To provide a safe and professional workforce who are well trained and well equipped.

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 & Rescue Service.

Within this context it is the firm view of the FBU that the "draft plan for 2013/14 to 2014/15" represents an unacceptable series of large scale cuts to the operational front line of the Fire & Rescue Service which, if implemented, would have serious repercussions for both Firefighter and public safety. We therefore call on the Fire Authority 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 Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service.

In constructing this response the FBU takes into account the normal negotiating machinery for changes to conditions of Service within DSFRS and this response does not negate the responsibility from DSFRS to proceed with National Joint Council (NJC) agreed procedures for resolving issues between the FBU and DSFRS.

All figures used in this document are based on DSFRS statistics – where there is a * in the tables, statistics were not available.



Trevor French
Brigade Secretary



Bob Walker
Brigade Chair



Andy Gould
Brigade Organiser

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1) Background

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS) is a result of the combination of the two separate Fire Services which took place in April 2007.

This combined Service has 84 Fire Stations consisting of 121 Fire Appliances, which are crewed by Wholetime, Retained Duty System and Volunteer Fire-fighters.

DSFRS also has an Urban Search and Rescue Service (U.S.A.R) station and an Emergency Fire Control Room. These are both based at Service Head Quarters in Clyst St George Exeter. The Control Room has been operating since 1st April 2012 following the combination of the Devon and Somerset control rooms. This combination led to a loss of 7 jobs through voluntary redundancies.

Since the combination of Devon and Somerset there have been a series of cuts to the operational frontline of the Service. These cuts include a total, so far, of 40 frontline Firefighter posts. This is shown in the table below.

Station	Station Establishment 1/04/2007	Station Establishment 1/04/2013	Station Establishment difference
Ilfracombe	9	9	0
Barnstaple	40	32	-8
Bridgwater	36	32	-4
Yeovil	36	32	-4
Taunton	56	52	-4
Exmouth	28	28	0
Danes Castle	64	56 (Danes + Middlemoor)	-8
Paignton	28	28	0
Torquay	64	52	-12
Plymstock	28	28	0
Plympton	28	28	0
Greenbank	13	13	0
Camelshead	64	52	-12
Crownhill	28	40	+12

A common theme running throughout the substantial series of meetings held by the FBU with our members is the deep discontent amongst staff that combination has simply led to a "race to the bottom" in regard to conditions of service, policies, watch strengths, payments, crewing arrangements etc. Our members have time and again raised their concern that detrimental change to their working arrangements is simply imposed from the distant centre under the threat of discipline. It is clear that staff feel that combination has simply been a cost cutting and casualisation exercise at the expense, primarily, of the operational front line. The latest series of massive cuts to the front line contained within the draft plan has simply served to reinforce this opinion.



2) Financial Arrangements/Council Tax

The Service draws funding from three main sources – Government grant, local share of business rates (a new system from April 2013) and local Council Tax precept.

When Devon FRS and Somerset FRS combined in April 2007 one of the primary drivers stated for this was "Fire and Rescue Services across the country are facing the need to modernise and deliver required efficiencies. They also have their own strategic objectives they want to deliver. The key driver facing Devon and Somerset is the need to deliver these objectives without increasing the burden on the council taxpayer" (Business case 2006). The year on year figures in regard to Council Tax from 2008 onwards are:

Year	Increase %	Precept £
2008/09	4.93	40,108,053.00
2009/10	3.90	41,900,779.00
2010/11	3.74	43,704,953.00
2011/12	frozen	43,942,942.00 (includes additional 1,099,000.00 from government due to freeze in council tax)
2012/13	3.00	45,634,541.00
2013/14	1.99	41,822,324.00 (includes 364,000.00 surplus from CT Collection fund (Plus and a further Council Tax Support funding of £5,000,000.00 total has to be added)

The table above shows that there has been an increase of 17.56% since combination. This equates to an average overall below inflation figure for the same periods. Two years ago it was announced that the grant element for FRSs (a second main source of funding for the FRS) was to be reduced by 25% over four years. The Service has stated that "this has been applied to date by means of a formula, rather than being equally shared, with 19% of the reduction to be applied over the next two years equating to a reduction in grant funding of £5.5m by 2014."

Key to the context of Fire Service funding is the expectation of the taxpayer (who actually pays for each of the separate sources of funding for the Service) in regard to what they expect the Service to deliver and provide. Time and time again the public has been reassured that reductions in budgets will come from "efficiencies" and that there "will be no cuts in the frontline" of Services. Interviewed in May 2010 on BBC One's 'The Andrew Marr Show', David Cameron stated that any cabinet minister "who comes to me and says, "here are my plans and they involve frontline reductions, they'll be sent straight back to their department to think again".



The Union has collated the following figures in regard to spending within DSFRS.

	2007/08 £	2013/14 £	Difference £
Wholetime employee cost	32,661,000	32,050,000 <i>(This figure includes a budget of £1.2 million pre arranged overtime)</i>	-611,000 <i>(-£1,811,000 if pre arranged overtime was excluded in cost)</i>
RDS Firefighters	11,320,000	11,905,000	585,000
Control	1,942,000	1,637,000	-305,000
Non Uniformed	6,954,000	10,977,000	4,023,000
Training	965,000	1,184,000	219,000
Pensions	1,656,000	2,058,000	402,000
Repair and Maintenance (Premises)	680,000	1,151,000	471,000
Energy	519,000	628,000	109,000
Cleaning	356,000	435,000	79,000
Rents and Rates	1,074,000	1,507,000	433,000
Repair and Maintenance (Transport)	510,000	636,000	126,000
Running/insurance (Transport)	1,143,000	1,415,000	272,000
Travel/Subsistence	1,007,000	1,690,000	683,000
Equipment/Furniture	1,569,000	2,649,000	1,080,000
Hydrants	158,000	111,000	-47,000
Communications	1,252,000	2,008,000	756,000
PPE	836,000	1,297,000	461,000
External Consultants/ Partners/Regional	33,000	465,000	432,000
Projects	131,000	0	-131,000
Catering	118,000	134,000	16,000
Printing/Stationery/Office	393,000	390,000	-3,000
Adverts incuding CFS	55,000	57,000	2,000
Insurances	543,000	386,000	-157,000
Support Services other FRS	598,000	549,000	-49,000
Loans/Lease	4,299,000	4,626,000	327,000

As shown before there has already been a **cut of 40 frontline Firefighter posts**. Additionally **7 Emergency Fire Control Operators** were lost to voluntary redundancy in April 2012 when the Service closed the Emergency Fire Control in Somerset. The cuts in operational frontline posts since combination are in stark contrast to an **increase** of over 67 posts in the **non operational** establishment. There are currently 267 non uniformed employees with an additional 22 vacancies in the structure. During the consultation period to make large scale cuts in the frontline of the FRS the service has also been advertising to fill non operational vacancies including;

- CYP Intervention Instructor
- Safety Assurance Support Assistant
- Data Analyst (performance)
- Health and Safety Manager

These posts are being filled whilst in stark contrast to this, 27 vacancies on Frontline Fire Station, known as the vacancy margin, are not.

(These figures can be found using the Devon and Somerset Harmonisation Power Point April 2007 and the December 2012 Structure Chart plus these Job adverts are on DSFRS Intranet.)

A précis in regard to the difference in staff costs is as follows.

	Revenue Budget 2007/08	Revenue Budget 2013/14	Difference
Wholetime Uniform	32,661,000	32,050,000	-611,000
RDS Firefighters	11,320,000	11,905,000	585,000
Control Room	1,92,000	1,637,000	-305,000
Non Uniformed	6,954,000	10,977,000	4,023,000

As stated previously, if the pre arranged overtime budget for 2013/14 (£1,200,000) was excluded, then the wholetime difference is significantly bigger in real terms. So in real terms the difference would equate to £1,811,000.00.

For frontline Firefighters, it is hard to come to any other conclusion than, since combination, the "new" DSFRS has had a clear strategy to cut the operational frontline Fire & Rescue Service and has increased and built the non operational side of the service in order to achieve this. This is a clear contradiction to the "Combination Business Case", which stated combination would "provide an opportunity to rationalise Support Services". This has not happened in any meaningful way. Instead the public and the staff has seen a continual series of cuts to the frontline of the Service and the "combination" of the previous 2 Emergency Fire Control rooms into a single centre with less Emergency Fire Control Operators available.

In addition to the above, there are also significant financial questions to be answered regarding the significant and additional amount of tax payers money being spent by the Service on:

- Increase of £432,000 External Consultants/Partners/Regional
- Increase of £756,000 Communications
- Increase of £1,080,000.00 Equipment/Furniture

If you took the spending on the above back to combination levels and included the additional increase of £4,023,000 spent within the non uniformed section this would equate to £6,291,000.00. A figure which equates to the vast majority of the cut in Government Grant which the service is now suffering.

All of this is against a background of the pay of frontline Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff being largely frozen and their pension contributions being largely increased. This is in stark contrast to the expenses of the Fire Authority.

It is our clear view, which we believe is widely supported by the public, that any "efficiencies" in budget terms must not come from further cuts to the operational frontline of the Service. It is neither sustainable or justifiable to continue to cut the frontline of the Fire and Rescue Service.



3) National Standards, Integrated Risk Management Plans (I.R.M.P.) and Response Standards

Between 1947 and 2004 all Fire Services had to meet National Standards of Fire Cover which were largely based on the risk to property. These standards were abolished in 2004 when the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 required Fire and Rescue Service's to produce local risk plans that would be based on risk to life. These plans would become known as Integrated Risk Management Plans or I.R.M.P.'s.

DSFRS has recently incorporated budget planning into its IRMP and now produces a "Corporate Plan". This highlights a fundamental flaw in the Service's Integrated Risk Management Planning process, namely the significant weight given to financial cost within a process originally designed to mitigate and remove risk to life.

It should be an obvious statement of fact that the proposals to remove 149 Frontline Firefighters will neither increase the safety of the Public in times of need nor the safety of Firefighters who deliver emergency response; despite claims to the contrary within the Corporate Plan 2013.

DSFRS "measures" itself against its own "Response Standards". These standards measure how long it takes DSFRS to attend incidents with a set number of Firefighters and equipment. This equipment is carried on Fire Appliances, which are classed as Pumps. Pumps should be crewed by a set number of trained Firefighters and DSFRS allows a minimum of four Firefighters to crew each pump and up to a maximum of five Firefighters per pump. Depending on how many Firefighters crew each pump, assists in determining how many pumps are needed.

DSFRS response standards include incidents such as Domestic Dwelling Fires, Road Traffic Collisions (R.T.C.'s) on a single carriageway and a Multi carriageway.

These standards include the following;

Domestic Dwelling Fire – 1st Pump to arrive within 10 minutes and 2nd Pump within 13mins from time of call, with an overall minimum of 9 Firefighters.

R.T.C. on a single carriageway – 1st Pump to arrive within 15 minutes and the 2nd pump within 18 minutes from time of call, with an overall minimum of 8 Firefighters.

R.T.C. on a multi carriageway – 1st Pump to arrive within 15 minutes and further 2 pumps to arrive within 18 minutes from the time of call, with an overall minimum of 10 Firefighters.

It is a matter of some concern to the FBU that Devon and Somerset Fire Authority (DSFRA) took a decision to limit the public reporting of how it is meeting these standards, or not. The Service **limits** its public reporting to **when the first pump arrives only**. This decision was taken in May 2011. This means that, in reporting terms, the clock stops ticking as soon as the First Pump arrives only, possibly even with a minimum crew of 4, rather than when the full standard is achieved by the 2nd or 3rd pump arriving with the correct, appropriate and safe number of Firefighters needed to deal with the incident.

Why is this so important?

To successfully and safely deal with incidents Firefighters have to work within defined standard operating procedures. These have been developed using Critical Attendance Standards, CAST scenarios, as these scenarios give an understanding of what is actually required to successfully resolve any given incident. If the appropriate numbers and type of appliances and/or Firefighters are not there it delays or even prevents us in doing our job safely and effectively. These standards are an important part of ensuring that incidents can be dealt with successfully and safely. They also give the public the opportunity to judge the service against an understandable and appropriate measure. But only if the standards are published in full.

This has been acknowledged, to a point, by CFO Howell and DSFA Chairman Healey when they stated publicly in May 2012 that the **full attendance figures** would be published, but as yet this has not happened.

When the full standards are considered it is clear that the Service is not performing successfully. The full attendance figures are poor however by publishing only the figures for the 1st Pump the impression is given that

DSFRS is performing better than it actually is. DSFRS should be more open and transparent with these standards or it may lead to the impression that the Service is attempting to portray a more optimistic delivery of service than the full figures actually show.

The following charts (expressed in percentage terms) give a breakdown of the difference between the published and full standards.

Domestic Fires	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Ist Pump	53.49	59.80	63.24	63.17	65.05	63.89	64.88	65.41	64.50	64.11	64.05
Full	56.52	58.88	63.52	60.10	60.31	60.25	60.00	59.58	59.15	59.15	59.93
Difference	3.03	0.92	0.28	3.07	4.74	3.64	4.88	5.83	5.35	4.96	4.12

RTC Single	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Ist Pump	62.14	67.33	68.94	69.29	70.23	70.50	70.74	71.08	71.03	71.48	71.62
Full	52.50	47.69	53.00	54.29	53.63	52.61	53.44	54.46	54.70	56.30	57.55
Difference	9.64	19.64	15.94	15.00	16.60	17.89	17.30	16.62	16.33	15.18	14.07

RTC Multi	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Ist Pump	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Full	14.29	15.38	11.11	23.08	27.27	31.58	32.61	34.55	32.35	35.00	33.70

This clearly shows there is a difference between what is published and what the full figures actually show. The FBU believe that DSFRS should fulfil its previous pledge to publish these figures in full to the public.



4) The impact on On Call/Retained Duty System (RDS)

Firefighters working the RDS duty system provide vital fire cover to the communities that they work within and throughout the service. By working alongside full time colleagues the Service is provided with an **integrated** Fire Cover where Wholetime Fire Cover is supported and supplemented by RDS cover and visa versa, RDS cover is supported and supplemented by Wholetime Fire Cover.

This integrated approach within a service like ours, which has large rural areas as well as large built up and City areas, provides a balanced form of fire cover which relies on effective support between different areas. To remove large proportions of wholetime cover, as is being proposed in the draft plan, would destroy this balance and have a seriously detrimental impact on the current level of integrated fire cover.

It is simply implausible to suggest that wholetime cover could be removed without serious implications for fire cover and public safety.

To then suggest, as the draft proposals do, that wholetime cover could be removed and subsequently RDS Firefighters would be required to take over the workload, shows a complete misunderstanding (or lack of proper consideration) of the RDS duty system and the people who provide it.

DSFRS currently employs around 1200 RDS Fire-fighters under several different contracts. In addition there are a number of Wholetime Firefighters who also undertake RDS duties. These employees are known as Wholetime/Retained and currently work under two separate contracts.

RDS contracts are based on the hours of availability and a % amount of calls the employee is expected to attend. These contracts vary from being on call all week and attending 40% or 60% of calls during that period, to being available for 120 hours per week and attending 75% of calls during this time. There are also further variations to this, which have been made locally to try to maintain fire cover.

The Wholetime/Retained contract is based on the employee giving either 63 or 84 hours per week and attending all calls during this period. There are also Wholetime/Retained employees who still work to a % contract. This is because the current Wholetime/Retained contract was only agreed in 2008.

RDS contracts generally allow for employees to respond to the Fire Station within a 5 minute period. In some areas however, this time has been extended to 7.5 minutes due to recruitment problems. The very nature of the RDS duty system creates limitations in the type of cover that can be provided. These limitations have been openly acknowledged by the Service. In a recent presentation regarding "Corporate Plan to 2014 and beyond", DCFO Gibbins outlined that the duty system gives "No Guarantee of Availability of RDS pumps".

During the same presentation, DCFO Gibbins also stated that despite a programme of targeted and continuous recruitment for RDS Firefighters, DSFRS has consistently struggled to recruit fully. Following discussions with RDS members the FBU believe that there are various reasons for this;

- less people now work in the same town as they live,
- employers are more reluctant to allow the release of their employees at a moment's notice,
- potential applicants take a long time to go 'through the process' and lose interest,
- of those who do make the grade, many resign quite quickly after starting due to the job not being quite what they expected it to be.

There has also been a recent downward trend in retention of Retained Duty System Firefighters and Retained members of the FBU have cited the pressure from endless auditing and testing, combined with frustrations of not riding the appliance to incidents due to policy changes as over-riding factors contributing to their colleagues leaving the Service.

During our discussions, RDS Firefighters also expressed their growing concern at what they see as increased pressure from the Service to provide cover and answer calls on a near "zero tolerance" basis and citing the threat of potential discipline as a driver.

It is time for DSFRS to understand and support RDS staff and the cover and service that they provide.

The proposal to remove around 149 Frontline Firefighters would not only destroy the current integrated Fire Cover relied upon by the Service, it would also place RDS Firefighters, their families and their employers under a greatly increased, and unsustainable, level of calls, workload and subsequently pressure.

If the Service presses ahead with these cuts RDS Firefighters, their current employers and their families will be placed under intolerable workloads which, it has been suggested, will lead many local employers to force an 'us or the Fire Service', choice onto the RDS Firefighter. In this situation the Firefighter will have no choice but to choose their main employment and the Service will have lost a valuable member of staff.

The proposed cuts in draft plan for 2013/14 to 2014/15, although targeted at wholtime staff and cover, would have a significant and detrimental impact on the RDS duty system and the people who work it.

Impact on Specific Areas

The Corporate Plan has proposed to remove 149 Frontline Firefighters at the Plymstock, Plympton, Camelshead, Crownhill, Torquay, Taunton, Yeovil and Ilfracombe Fire Stations. In documents and presentations DSFRS claim that this will "improve" public and Firefighter safety in these areas. At FBU meetings it is clear that this claim has sparked anger and outrage amongst professional Firefighters in the service who regard it as disingenuous and self serving. By making it, the Service leaves itself open to accusations of actually wanting to cut wholtime fire cover and Firefighter posts. The FBU rejects this claim and makes the following points regarding the specific situation in the areas involved:



5) Plymstock Fire Station

Plymstock Fire Station covers 70 square kilometres and 32,500 people live on its station ground. It is currently crewed by four Watches on the wholetime duty system which means that its Pump is crewed 24 hours per day 365 days per year. Its Pump is available for immediate turnout and Plymstock also dual crew the Fire Boat, which served at the Olympics 2012.

The following table gives the incidents Plymstock attended since 2007 on their station ground.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Average
Primary Fires	43	53	31	31	23	36.2
Secondary Fires	63	45	31	61	29	45.8
Chimney Fires	1	6	6	6	4	4.6
Special Service	92	79	64	48	62	69
Total including non attendance	281	261	185	219	221	233.4

Plymstock also attends on average an **additional 122 calls** that are not on its station ground. These calls were not shown in the Corporate Plan Proposals.

Plymstock has a highly positive record of **No Fire Fatalities** during this period and its fire crews have **Rescued 14 people** from Fires.

Plymstock has also had a highly positive record of **No Fatalities** and has **Rescued 10 people** during Special Service calls between 2009-11 **plus** has given medical assistance to a further **11 people**.

Plymstock's record (expressed in percentage terms) against the current attendance standards is;

Plymstock	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Dwelling Fire	*	66.67	66.67	66.67	66.67	75.00	60.00	50.00	55.56	55.56	60.00
RTC Single	*	*	*	*	*	*	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00

It is important that the Fire Authority understand the real impact that these cuts would have at a local level and the views of the people directly involved. Here is a comment from a local member at Plymstock Fire Station:

I have been a firefighter serving in Plymouth for the last 28 years, I am currently at Station 51 Plymstock. The cuts that are proposed will greatly affect our ability to serve the public by increasing response times, undermining training of the fire-crews, undermining local knowledge of the station ground, all of which will impact on the safety of the residents of Plymouth. There are more developments due in our area bringing in thousands more residential homes in the near future, all these need to be considered in this process and the extra contributions in council-tax should enable the residents to receive a first class service. All I want to do is continue to do the job we love and to give the Plymouth public a Fire & Rescue Service they deserve and should expect!

6) Plympton Fire Station

Plympton Fire Station covers 60 square kilometres and 33,157 people live on its station ground. It is currently crewed by four Watches working the wholetime duty system which means that its Pump is crewed 24 hours per day 365 days per year. The Pump is available for immediate turnout and they also Dual Crew the Multi Role Vehicle (MRV) and a Water/Foam carrier (WFC)

The following Table gives the incidents Plympton attended since 2007 on their station ground

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Average
Primary Fires	61	63	51	44	45	52.8
Secondary Fires	57	46	50	43	59	51
Chimney Fires	4	4	11	8	3	6
Special Service	82	79	82	65	65	74.6
Total including non attendance	366	310	338	290	310	316.8

The table above shows that there has been no significant fall in these types of incidents since 2007.

Plympton also attends on average an **additional 111** calls that are not on its station ground. These calls were not shown in the Corporate Plan Proposals.

Plympton has had a highly positive record of **No Fire Fatalities** during this period and **Rescued 11 people** from Fires.

Plympton has also had a highly positive record of **No Fatalities** and **Rescued 18 people** during Special Service calls between 2009-11 **plus** has given medical assistance to a further **15 people**.

Plympton's record (expressed in percentage terms) against the current Attendance Standards is:

Plympton	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Dwelling Fire	*	*	*	*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	25.00
RTC Single	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	66.67	75.00	75.00	80.00	83.33	83.33
RTC Multi	*	*	*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	66.67	66.67

It is important that the Fire Authority understand the real impact that these cuts would have at a local level and the views of the people directly involved. Here is a comment from a local member at Plympton Fire Station:

Plympton fire crews are extremely disappointed with the proposals to withdraw wholetime fire cover from Plympton and the eastern area of Plymouth. The area is due to have major population growth due to the construction of the Sherford Valley new town and other housing developments in and around the Plympton area and the proposed cuts to fire cover could put members of our community at risk.

In addition, the subsequent increase to response times for our industrial and manufacturing areas would cause a serious impact on the economic wellbeing of our community should there be an incident that is not dealt with quickly. The people of Plympton deserve a fire service that responds as quickly as possible and not just to achieve minimum standards which is what the corporate plan appears to be trying to achieve.

7) Camelshead Fire Station

Camelshead Fire Station covers 12.5 square kilometres and almost 53,500 people live on its station ground. It is currently crewed by four Watches on the wholetime duty system which mean that its 2 Pumps are crewed 24 hours per day 365 days per year. They also Dual Crew the Special Rescue Vehicle that is one of only three in DSFRS.

It should also be noted that HM Navel Base Devonport, one of the three principle base ports for the Royal Navy Fleet, is on Camelshead Ground. This base is a nuclear licensed site that provides refuelling, defueling and refitting of the UK's nuclear powered submarine fleet.

The following Table gives the incidents Camelshead attended since 2007 on their station ground.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Average
Primary Fires	201	165	179	112	124	156.2
Secondary Fires	329	229	173	157	137	205
Chimney Fires	3	8	5	5	3	4.8
Special Service	146	142	136	105	141	134
Total including non attendance	910	797	690	585	601	716.6

Camelshead also attends an average of **476 incidents** off its station ground per year. These calls were not shown in the Corporate Plan Proposals.

Camelshead has had **1 fire fatality** during this period and **Rescued 74 people** from Fire.

Camelshead has also had **No Fatalities** and **Rescued 11 people** during Special Service calls between 2009-11 plus has given medical assistance to a further **21 people**.

Camelshead's record (expressed in percentage terms) against the current attendance standards is;

Camelshead	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Dwelling Fire	100.00	75.00	76.92	78.57	70.00	75.00	76.67	75.76	73.53	72.22	72.50
RTC Single	*	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
RTC Multi	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	100.00	100.00

8) Crownhill Fire Station

Crownhill Fire Station covers 54.5 square kilometres and almost 83,000 people live on its station ground. It is currently crewed by four Watches on the wholetime duty system which mean that its Pump is crewed 24 hours per day 365 days per year. It has 1 Pump plus the Aerial Appliance, which are both available for immediate turnout.

The following Table gives the incidents Crownhill attended since 2007 on their station ground.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Average
Primary Fires	178	178	153	152	193	170.8
Secondary Fires	338	281	196	212	244	254.2
Chimney Fires	7	4	3	3	2	3.8
Special Service	218	230	271	176	186	216.2
Total including non attendance	1165	1143	1025	921	908	1032.4

Crownhill also attends an average of **156 incidents** off its station ground per year. These calls were not shown in the Corporate Plan Proposals.

Crownhill has had to deal with **4 fire fatalities** during this period and its crews have **Rescued 58 people** from Fires.

Crownhill has also had **No Fatalities** and **Rescued 28 people** during Special Service calls between 2009-11 plus has given medical assistance to a further **21 people** and there has been **1 fatality whilst giving medical assistance**.

Crownhill's record (expressed in percentage terms) against the current attendance standards is;

Crownhill	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Dwelling Fire	66.67	62.50	66.67	75.00	72.22	72.7	72.73	74.07	74.07	75.86	73.33
RTC Single	*	*	50.00	66.67	75.00	87.5	81.82	84.62	85.71	85.71	85.71
RTC Multi	*	*	*	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

It is important that the Fire Authority understand the real impact that these cuts would have at a local level and the views of the people directly involved. Here is a comment from a local member at Crownhill Fire Station:

Proposal 7 of the corporate plan proposes to downgrade the aerial appliance at Crownhill, which would result in a minimum loss of 12 aerial posts. Plymouth has primary crewing of the aerial appliance for a reason! Exeter, for example, has 2 High Rise buildings whereas Plymouth has multiple high and medium rise buildings. It also has a population of nearly three times that of Exeter. An on call response would leave Plymouth residents in medium to high rise buildings very vulnerable with response times of anything up to 30 minutes or longer.

There are no retained staff in Plymouth. The Chief Officer has made the huge assumption that Plymouth Personnel will carry out Wholetime Retained duties, which would include an on call response for the aerial.

We will not swap Wholetime posts for retained ones and have vowed to standby our resolution passed at Plymouth FBU meetings that we will not be carrying out retained duties for the Aerial or other Plymouth appliances.

9) Torquay Fire Station

Torquay Fire Station covers Torbay Area, which has a static population of 67,150 people, which can double during the holiday seasons. It is currently crewed by four Watches on the wholetime duty system which mean that its 2 Wholetime Pump's are crewed 24 hours per day 365 days per year. They also dual crew the Aerial Appliance following an earlier cut of 12 Frontline Firefighters at the station.

The following Table gives the incidents Torquay attended since 2007 on their station ground.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Average
Primary Fires	160	154	155	162	139	154
Secondary Fires	141	93	80	150	161	125
Chimney Fires	9	12	13	9	7	10
Special Service	270	259	288	246	219	256.4
Total including non attendance	988	916	948	930	933	943

Torquay also attends an average of **103 incidents** off its station ground per year. These calls were not shown in the Corporate Plan Proposals.

Torquay has had **4 fire fatalities** during this period and **Rescued 55 people** from Fire.

Torquay has also had **5 Fatalities** and **Rescued 20 people** during Special Service calls between 2009-11 plus has given medical assistance to a further **20 people**.

Torquay's record (expressed in percentage terms) against the current attendance standards is;

Torquay	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Dwelling Fire	60.00	62.50	81.25	78.95	81.82	84.6	86.7	88.24	82.93	82.61	84.31
RTC Single	*	*	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	93.33	93.75	93.75	93.75
RTC Multi	*	*	*	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

It is important that the Fire Authority understand the real impact that these cuts would have at a local level and the views of the people directly involved. Here is a comment from a local member at Torquay Fire Station:

The 50% cut to the wholetime frontline at Torquay will have a massive effect on public and firefighter safety.

Torbay has an abundance of high rise/high risk properties scattered over a huge geographical area, with a static population of 134,000 people which rises to a massive 260,000 in the summer.

I am proud of what we can do at Torquay with the current low number of firefighters but fear that if this unbelievable cut goes ahead, on many occasions, we will not meet the services full emergency response standard, putting property and lives at risk.

10) Taunton Fire Station

Taunton Fire Station covers 95 square miles and has a population of around 80,000 people. It is currently crewed by four Watches working the wholetime duty system which mean that its 2 Wholetime Pump's are crewed 24 hours per day 365 days per year. They also dual crew an Aerial Appliance following an earlier cut of 4 Frontline Firefighters at the station plus the Rescue Tender and Incident Support Unit.

The following Table gives the incidents Taunton attended since 2007 on their station ground.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Average
Primary Fires	198	198	186	184	158	184.8
Secondary Fires	195	194	148	139	98	154.8
Chimney Fires	17	40	18	24	32	26.2
Special Service	254	231	238	178	180	216.2
Total including non attendance	1085	1059	998	925	849	983.2

Taunton also attends an average of **375 incidents** off its station ground per year. These calls were not shown in the Corporate Plan Proposals.

Taunton has had **5 fire fatalities** during this period and **Rescued 71** people from Fire.

Taunton has also had **8 Fatalities** and **Rescued 58 people** during Special Service calls between 2009-11 plus has given medical assistance to a further **50 people**.

Taunton Fire Station provided the primary response to the major incident on the M5 in Somerset in November 2011. The incident resulted in the deaths of 7 members of the public however many more lives were saved by the actions of the firefighters involved. The incident resulted in the following message being sent by the Chief Fire Officer

Colleagues

As I write this, we are still dealing with the major incident on the M5 in Somerset which has brought into sharp relief the tragic consequences that we, as an emergency service, sometimes face.

I have been made aware of some really heroic actions of our operational staff in what were appalling circumstances. In addition, our fire control staff have dealt magnificently with some really distressing incidents and the way in which the whole organisation has responded is a credit to the Service.

I am immensely proud of what you have achieved and the efforts of each and every one of you. We might not always be able to save lives, sometimes circumstances make that impossible, however, the professionalism and commitment to do our very best in tragic circumstances is what sets us apart from others.

Thank you for all that you are doing, have done and continue to do for Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

Yours, in utmost respect, Lee.

Chief Fire Officer Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service.

Taunton's current attendance standards (expressed in percentage terms) are;

Taunton	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Dwelling Fire	100.00	66.67	80.00	68.75	72.22	63.64	69.23	64.52	64.86	64.86	67.50
RTC Single	100.00	100.00	100.00	83.33	77.78	80.00	76.92	66.67	58.82	60.00	62.50
RTC Multi	0.00	50.00	50.00	66.67	66.67	66.67	66.67	66.67	66.67	66.67	75.00

It is important that the Fire Authority understand the real impact that these cuts would have at a local level and he views of the people directly involved. Here is a comment from a local member at Taunton Fire Station:

"Firefighters at Taunton feel like they have been kicked in the teeth by these proposals. It was not too long ago we were being praised for saving lives at the M5 Disaster but Senior managers seem to have short memories as they are looking to cut another 24 Firefighters. This is also after 12 firefighters were cut a few years ago".



11) Yeovil Fire Station

Yeovil Fire Station covers 113 square kilometres and has a population of around 59,000 people. It is currently crewed by four Watches working the wholetime duty system which mean that its 1 Wholetime Pump is crewed 24 hours per day 365 days per year. Following a previous cut of 4 frontline Firefighters, they also dual crew an Aerial Appliance, Rescue Tender, Water Carrier and an Incident Support Unit.

The following Table gives the incidents Yeovil attended since 2007 on their station ground.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Average
Primary Fires	104	105	97	96	99	100.2
Secondary Fires	123	107	68	98	98	98.8
Chimney Fires	14	14	23	11	11	14.6
Special Service	155	183	136	115	115	140.8
Total including non attendance	651	670	567	527	527	588.4

Yeovil also attends an average of **307 incidents** off its station ground per year or another **33%**. These calls were not shown in the Corporate Plan Proposals.

Yeovil has had **3 fire fatalities** since 2005 and **Rescued 56 people** from Fire.

Yeovil has also **Rescued 35 people** during Special Service calls between 2009-11.

Yeovil's record (expressed in percentage terms) against the current attendance standards is;

Yeovil	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Dwelling Fire	100.00	80.00	71.43	75.00	77.78	72.73	71.43	71.43	75.00	70.59	75.00
RTC Single	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	80.00	80.00	83.33	87.50	90.91	76.92	71.43
RTC Multi	*	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00	50.00	33.33	33.33	50.00	50.00	50.00

It is important that the Fire Authority understand the real impact that these cuts would have at a local level and the views of the people directly involved. Here is a comment from a local member at Yeovil Fire Station:

Fire crews in Yeovil have a proven record of commitment and a high level of success in the service they provide. The Firefighters at the station are appalled at the plans to make cuts on this scale which we believe will put our communities at risk.

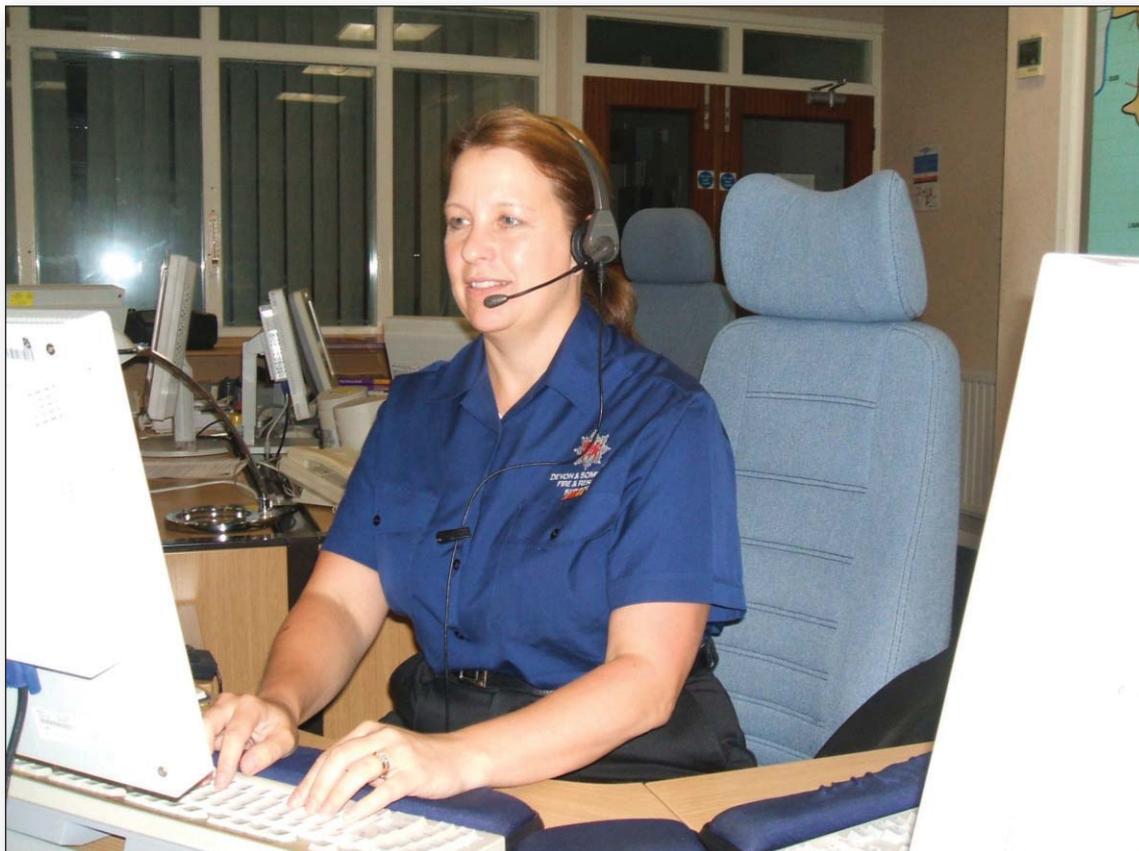
We are worried that our response times will increase and our ability to get sufficient sized crews to incidents on the A303 may be compromised.

With plans to rapidly expand housing and industry within Yeovil, we fear we will struggle maintaining adequate cover not only for Yeovil but also to villages as far away as Queen Camel and Milborne Port. Our communities big and small are at risk.

In the current economic climate we need to make it clear to the towns employers and business's that fires, similar to the incident at the Bell, could possibly see them cease trading altogether.

Cuts at other local Somerset stations will see Yeovil's crews, who have covered incidents as far away as Weymouth and Poole, stretched to the limit. During spate periods of flooding, snow or drought or ability and resilience to respond will be seriously compromised.

We would ask the elected members of the Fire Authority to reject the Services proposals, and ask the public to support their local firefighters by making their opposition to these cuts known.



12) Ilfracombe Fire Station

Ilfracombe covers about 48 square kilometres and has a population of around 13,000 people. It is currently crewed by the Day Crewing Duty System which provides 9 Wholetime Firefighters who crew 1 pump between the hours of 08.45-18.00 Monday till Friday plus they are available between 18.00-00.00 to mix crew the 2 pumps when they are on Retained status. They also crew the Incident Support Unit.

The following Table gives the incidents Ilfracombe attended since 2007 on their station ground.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Average
Primary Fires	37	27	19	19	29	26.2
Secondary Fires	16	13	10	11	10	12
Chimney Fires	2	9	4	4	4	4.6
Special Service	101	77	61	48	48	67
Total including non attendance	156	126	94	153	153	136.4

Ilfracombe also attends an average of **18 incidents** off its station ground per year or another **33%**. These calls were not shown in the Corporate Plan Proposals.

Ilfracombe has had **0 Fire Fatalities** since 2005 and **Rescued 10 people** from Fires.

Ilfracombe has also **2 fatalities** and **Rescued 12 people** during Special Service calls between 2009-11.

Ilfracombe's record (expressed in percentage terms) against the current attendance standards is;

Ilfracombe	Apr 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb
Dwelling Fire	*	*	*	20.00	16.67	37.50	41.67	42.86	42.86	43.75	43.75
RTC Single	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	80.00

Between April – December 2012 the Wholetime Firefighters worked 210 shifts and during this time the RDS Firefighters could not provide cover for both pumps on 209 of these shifts. This proves this proposal is a cut in Fire Cover plus on an additional 10% of these shifts, the RDS could not provide any cover which in effect put the station off the run. These figures are available through the Gartan Availability System.

Here is a comment from a local member at Ilfracombe Fire Station.

"I have been a firefighter at Ilfracombe for ten years, working both the Retained and Wholetime duty system, and this proposal is a cut in fire cover. It will increase response times and compromise public safety. It's that simple."

It is clear from the response standards listed within this section that all of these Fire Stations are under increasing pressure and performing to their absolute capacity. Using the Service's own response standards it should be obvious that the Stations and the Crews within them require additional support and resources in order to match the growing pressure on their provision of cover etc.

Effective intervention is what the Public expects DSFRS to provide and it is what they judge us on.

13) Response to Specific Proposals

Proposal 1

– Introduction of Light Rescue Pumps (LRP)

The FBU has been working with DSFRS over many years in the development of a LRP although this work seemed to drop off in 2011. The work picked up again in late 2012 when an LRP was stationed at Greenbank Fire Station. This is now there on a trial basis until 7th April 2013.

The FBU will continue to work with DSFRS to achieve a Pump that is fit for purpose and meets the requirements of all relevant Duty Systems. Despite claims to the contrary by the Service, it is unclear how an LRP could either improve Firefighter Safety or improve attendance times in an urban environment.

The question that this proposal raises concerns the affordability of these Pumps within the current financial settlement. DSFRS has had a request for an extra £4 million to fund these Pumps rejected by CLG plus the Capital Budget has been reduced by a further £800 000. It is the understanding of the FBU that DSFRS is looking to buy a further 6 of these appliances which raises obvious questions:

- how is this being financed?
- does it genuinely provide value for money in the current financial climate?
- or could this be better spent on protecting the front line?

Proposal 2

– Reduce attendance to Automatic Fire Alarms (A.F.A's)

It is the view of the FBU that DSFRS have mixed up risk and the measures that mitigate risk. As an example, DSFRS might say that a vehicle repair shop is a "low fire risk because it has a fire detection system". It is actually the case that the vehicle repair shop is a high fire risk, so a fire detection system has been provided to reduce the risk.

An A.F.A is designed to detect the unwanted presence of fire by monitoring environmental changes associated with combustion. In general, a fire alarm system is classified as either automatically actuated, manually actuated, or both. Automatic fire alarm systems are intended to notify the building occupants to evacuate in the event of a fire or other emergency, report the event to an off-premises location in order to summon emergency services, and to prepare the structure and associated systems to control the spread of fire and smoke.

It is clearly unsafe to request that a "client" goes to look for the signs and symptoms of a fire to confirm there is a fire. Firefighters undertake a rigorous training and retraining regime to look for these signs and symptoms and how to deal with them. The FBU is not confident that DSFRS "clients" will be trained in these skills. This proposal will lead to a delay in attendance times for pumps which in turn will have an impact on survivability of any casualties, and an increase in heat and smoke due to fire build up. In these circumstances there will be an increase in financial loss to the business involved. Even if the amount of calls where action is needed is small, it is still unacceptable for DSFRS to gamble on which of these calls are fire or not.

It should also be recognized that an Alarm Receiving Centre (A.R.C) is only contracted by the "client" to inform DSFRS that an alarm has been activated. They have no obligation to phone back the "client" which this proposal would require. There is also no guarantee that an A.R.C will be able to contact the "client" when requested by DSFRS leaving us with the scenario that someone will be waiting for our attendance without knowing we will not be attending.

Proposal 3

– Mobilise a single co-responder to co-responder incidents

The FBU has a national policy on this issue and the scheme that is being run by DSFRS still does not address the issues raised in our policy document.

Importantly, the scheme is not cost neutral and represents an additional cost outside of the core work of the Service at a time of great financial pressure.

What is disappointing in this proposal is that DSFRS is looking to improve its attendance time in this area whilst proposing cuts that will worsen attendance time in Frontline Firefighting.

Proposal 4

– Reduce number of Middle and Senior Managers

There is no detail in this proposal and any changes to our current structure would have to go through the correct process and be agreed before changes are implemented.

What is clear is that:

- The removal of one Deputy Chief Fire Officer and two Corporate directors were part of the business case for Combination in 2007 and no further changes have taken place at this level
 - The removal of six Area Managers has not been achieved as DSFRS currently has eight Area Managers
 - Six Flexi Duty Officers have been removed from the Flexi Duty Rota since 1st January 2013 in Western and Central Command. This was implemented without agreement with the FBU.
-

Proposal 5

– Invest £450,000 in additional prevention activity in 2013

The FBU supports prevention activities, indeed the Union has been at the forefront of fire safety initiatives and progression for decades. However the proposal to increase spending in this area of work runs alongside a massive cut in intervention cover, which would have a serious impact on the necessary balance between intervention and protection work. The FBU believes that the Service should undertake more work with the Union in an attempt to ensure that the £450 000 be spent on both protecting frontline cover whilst also enhancing prevention activity. For instance, provisions could be found where frontline Firefighters can carry out this work whilst simultaneously be ready for intervention work.

Proposal 6

– Dual Crew the Aerial Appliance in Plymouth with on call Firefighters

This proposal means a cut of 12 Frontline Firefighters at Crownhill and is not supported by the FBU. A clear decision was made in 2008, that due to risk, the Aerial Appliance in Plymouth should remain Primary Crewed. This risk has not changed since 2008 and the reasons for ensuring that this vital cover is provided within the City remain unchanged. If this cut were to go ahead it would be on the basis of a financial cut being placed ahead of public and Firefighter safety.

There is also no On Call/RDS firefighters within Plymouth to either work at this station or operate this Appliance.

Any proposal to cut Wholetime Crewing down to On call/RDS will have a negative impact on attendance times as discussed earlier in this response.

This would also create an increase in risk to both Firefighters and the Public.

Proposal 7

– Crew three fire engines in Plymouth as "on call" rather than Wholetime

This proposal, along with proposal 6, would leave Plymouth with a minimum of 16 Wholetime Firefighters at work at any one time. This would have a serious and detrimental impact on response and attendance times within the City areas and beyond.

This represents a cut of 50% of Wholetime Firefighters within DSFRS' biggest Urban Area, an area which also includes some of DSFRS' biggest risks.

With the exclusion of A.F.A'S, the incidents which we attend are not falling significantly and all our Stations are still saving lives, rescuing people in times of need and providing vital cover and other services. These proposals simply serve to reduce the emergency service we can provide to the public, at every level, and will have a seriously detrimental effect on attendance times.

As in proposal number 6 there are no "On call/RDS" Firefighters in the Plymouth area and it is of serious concern that no proper, robust and substantial analysis has been provided to confirm:

- the achievability of On call/RDS recruitment within Plymouth, including the numbers needed to support this proposal
- that long term retention can be achieved
- guaranteed availability of Pumps
- the potential significant increase in response times

This proposal is unsafe, will adversely impact on attendance times and represents an unsafe and unsustainable cut to the Frontline Fire & Rescue Service in one of England's largest, high risk and historically important cities.

Proposal 8

– End the pilot at Yeovil Fire Station

The FBU did not support the cut in Frontline Firefighters in 2009 and does not support the proposed cut of a further 4 Frontline Firefighters at Yeovil.

As stated before, DSFRS attendance times are currently increasing and show no signs of moving in the opposite direction. This proposal, if implemented would mean that Yeovil Fire Station would have lost an incredible **8 Frontline Firefighter** posts since 2007. All of this against a backdrop of an increase in council tax of 17.56%. This is a prime example of the discontent and cynicism regarding the real impact of combination on local communities who are now paying more and getting less, in real terms, despite promises to the opposite at the time of combination.

Proposal 9

– Change the Crewing arrangements of the second Fire Appliance at Taunton

This proposal will mean that since combination Taunton Fire Station will have had a cut of **28 Frontline Firefighters** or a reduction of 50% since combination. Taunton Fire Station plays a vital role in the provision of integrated fire cover within the county of Somerset. There are currently only 4 fulltime pumps within a county, which has 24 fire stations. The wholetime pumps provide backup, support and fast responding additional resources to RDS stations across the county and the removal of one of these represents a 25% reduction in this type of support. The impact of this cut, were it to go ahead, would have serious implications, not just for the town and public of Taunton, but for all the areas which the Station supports.

It seems that DSFRS senior management have a short memory as it was only last year that they were praising both Wholetime and RDS Firefighters at Taunton who attended the M5 incident and yet now they propose a cut of 50% of fulltime cover.

During local meetings at the station, it is clear that Firefighters at Taunton feel extremely let down by their local and senior managers. They have expressed the opinion that it was not so long ago that those same managers were stating how proud they were of the station's actions on the tragic night of the M5 incident. There has been no formal recognition from the service for the actions carried out that night by the crews except the threat of losing 50% of the wholetime firefighters jobs. This came as a great shock to the crews involved considering Taunton did not have enough crew that night to mobilize the rescue tender to the incident.

Proposal 10

– Change the Crewing arrangements of the Second Fire Appliance at Torquay

Torquay's activity levels remain either constant, or in some areas are actually increasing.

This proposal will mean that since combination Torquay Fire Station will have had a cut of **36 Frontline Firefighters** or a reduction of 56%. Similar to the other affected Fire Stations, the cut will actually mean that 1 pump will effectively be moth balled at the Station with nobody left to crew it. This is because alongside the cut in Wholetime Firefighters there will also be no increase in On Call/RDS Firefighters.

Proposal 11

– Change the crewing arrangements at Ilfracombe

Historically Ilfracombe fire station has operated on a Day Crewed basis due to the fact that it could not recruit On Call/RDS Firefighters to respond during the day. This system was cut in 1997 from wholetime cover being provided 7 days a week down to day cover being provided 5 days a week.

This was part of package that saw 3 stations upgraded to 24hr Wholetime Shift Cover.

The provision of RDS day cover remains a significant problem. This has historically always been the case and as stated before, the On Call/RDS Firefighters cannot maintain the cover that is currently provided by the Wholetime at Ilfracombe.

It is also clear from the Attendance times that Ilfracombe Attendance standards for Dwelling fires are poor whilst for RTC they are excellent. Why is this?

The difference between these two response standards is 5 minutes, Full Attendance for a dwelling fire is 13 mins, RTC is 18 minutes. This 5 minutes is the difference between Ilfracombe performing "poor" or "excellent" and this proposal will have a direct impact on these standards as the turnout to these incidents will be delayed during the day.

Further to this, the RDS could only crew two pumps between the hours of 08.45 – 18.00, Monday and Friday for two days between April and December last year. Further to this the RDS were not available to crew any pumps for 10% of this time. (Figures available through the Gartan management system)

This proposal was rejected in 2008 and should be rejected again as it is a cut in fire cover and DSFRS risk and response should not be based on call rates.

Summary

The proposals put forward within the "draft plan for 2013/14 to 2014/15" represent the biggest cut to the frontline in Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service in living memory.

They will increase the risk to the public and Firefighters alike and will compromise safety across every level of our work.

They are targeted at fulltime staff and fire cover in some of the highest populated, high risk areas covered by the Service.

They will impact detrimentally and dramatically on the future resilience of the Service.

They will place an intolerable and unsustainable burden upon RDS/On Call staff which has the potential to undermine RDS cover overall.

They have undermined the morale and confidence of Firefighters and provoked anger throughout the Service.

They are not supported by the public or the Staff.

They should be dropped immediately and a different strategy should be adopted which does not cut frontline cover at the expense of safety.

The FBU calls on the Fire Authority to reject this unacceptable and dangerous package of cuts to the frontline Fire & Rescue Service and adopt an alternative strategy which does not cut frontline cover at the expense of safety.



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