



Tyne and Wear FBU

IRMP response

TWFRS

2021-24

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Fire Brigades Union in Tyne & Wear recognises and supports effective integrated risk management planning. The full potential of any IRMP (Integrated Risk Management Plan) can only be realised where the mix of prevention, protection and emergency response is optimised at both service and station levels. This is why we have taken the time to submit a comprehensive response to the IRMP 2021-2024 consultations.
- 1.2 The Fire Brigades Union recognises and supports the concept of the IRMP as a process for identifying all risks, whether they are physical, social, heritage or economical within the authority area and putting in place the resources, plans or interventions to mitigate against them.
- 1.3 The prime focus of the FBU while responding to the 3 year draft IRMP is safety; the safety of our members and the people of Tyne and Wear.

- 1.4 'Creating the Safest Community' is, as we have mentioned in previous IRMP responses an admirable aim for the Authority, and is supported by all members of the Fire Brigades Union. Overall this year's plan has the potential to enhance safety and improve service delivery in TWFRS.
- 1.5 Staff working on the front line of Service Delivery are clear as to the type of support they need from the Authority to constantly and consistently improve their effectiveness in saving lives, property and rendering humanitarian services across the whole of the Tyne & Wear Authority area. From the professional perspective of these front-line staff, the key to effective Integrated Risk Management Planning lies in the complete integration of preventative activity and robust emergency response capability at all levels.
- 1.6 The FBU understands the value of a well-designed, evidence based management of risk plan when it protects the health safety and welfare of all members of the UKFRS and the public to whom they serve. However, we are cautious that the IRMP process has drifted away from being an assessment of risk, and moved to an assessment based on perceived demand. It has become a tool to mitigate and manage Treasury based financial restrictions.

2 Executive summary

- 2.1 The proposed IRMP for 2021-2024 is on the whole positive and can generally be supported by the FBU. An opportunity to re-instate 54 operational posts is welcomed by our members. We also recognise funding for these posts will have to be found within current budgets as the Government continues to under-invest in the public sector. TWFRS is operating without any form of long, or even medium term funding plan from government.
- 2.2 We also recognise the difficulty in financial planning while continuing to operate with one year settlements. Financial planning will remain difficult until the Government put in place a multi-year funding settlement.
- 2.3 The Government planned changes to how local government resources are to be distributed, under the "self-sufficiency" agenda add further pressure when financial planning. The FBU have growing concerns this process will produce another mechanism in which the Government sustain underfunding as they have continued to do so for over a decade.

3 Proposal 1

- 3.1 The FBU welcomes the proposal to re-introduce an appliance into the Service Delivery establishment as this will inevitably increase resilience during times of high demand and improve response times.
- 3.2 The proposal also offers an alternative of placing additional firefighters at a number of one pump fire stations. The FBU maintains the position that having a crew of 5 in attendance, in the initial stages of an incident, wherever possible, improves firefighter safety. It also improves the weight of response and increases the intervention window which in turn increases the survival rates for those at risk. This is even more evident when persons are trapped in residential premises where any delay in firefighter intervention will decrease survivability or increase risk to the safety of firefighters.

- 3.3 The location of the additional appliance has been identified as West Denton. The FBU welcomes this station having its second pumping appliance (A02) reinstated. The return of A02 increases resilience for the Incident Command Unit (A07) also located at this station.
- 3.4 Overall the FBU support the proposal to reintroduce A02 but would like reassurance from the Authority that the crewing of appliances at 1 pump stations is reviewed as a matter of urgency.

4 Proposal 2

- 4.1 The FBU welcomes the return of dedicated crews for the specialist appliances (known as primary staffing). Ariel Ladder Platforms (ALP), which have multiple uses, are required on a regular basis and are currently staffed by utilising the crew from a pumping appliance (dual staffing). This means when an ALP is required, a pumping appliance is no longer available. When the ALP or ALPs are required at large fires for example it is common for a large proportion of the pumping fleet to also attend. This often stretches the resources across Tyne and Wear with some pumping appliances left in station with no crew.
- 4.2 The FBU supports the proposal of having two ALPs with dedicated crews. FBU members however have questioned the rationale for their proposed locations in respect of response times across the whole of Tyne and Wear. Further analysis on the locations of these appliances would be welcomed by the FBU.

5 Proposal 3

- 5.1 The FBU cautiously welcomes the removal of an unlawful duty system at Birtley fire station. Unlike the proposal for Rainton Bridge fire station however this proposal does not include 24 hour availability from Birtley fire station at night.
- 5.2 This proposal would be best considered in conjunction with the prevention and education strategy to look at the risk profile and preventative measures of the area.
- 5.3 Any new duty system at Birtley fire station should be compliant with National Terms and Conditions. The FBU has not yet been presented with a detailed proposal on a new duty system.
- 5.4 12 hour day shifts as mentioned in the IRMP do not align with our National Terms and Conditions. Any such proposals would need to be negotiated and agreed with the FBU if they fall outside of the shift systems described in the "Grey Book".
- 5.5 The FBU of Tyne and Wear is open to discussions on new duty systems to support the removal of the DCCC (day crewing, close call), arrangement. We must be clear though no such discussions have yet taken place.
- 5.6 We urge the Service to further explore duty systems which are not only Grey Book compliant but offer 24 hour response from Birtley fire station. We remind the Authority other nationally recognised duty systems, which have been used to great effect in Birtley over previous IRMPs, have not been proposed or even considered in this one.

6 Proposal 4

- 6.1 This is a welcome proposal which the FBU fully supports. A return to the long established and family friendly 2-2-4 duty system is supported by the FBU. We would also like to take this opportunity to expand upon some of the information contained in the consultation documents relating to the removal of the DCCC duty system.
- 6.2 The FBU challenged the South Yorkshire's DCCC duty system in the High Court and this duty system was declared to be unlawful. It is worthy of note however, that it is the Health and Safety Executive enforcing the move away from DCCC in Tyne and Wear.

7 Appliance Crewing Levels

- 7.1 The FBU has a longstanding position that pumping appliances should have a minimum crewing level of no less than five. This position is backed by the FBU in every Service in the United Kingdom and has been re-affirmed at FBU National Conference many times.
- 7.2 Over previous IRMP's during austerity, proposals were put forward to reduce crewing levels on TWFRS pumping appliances at all locations, to 4. The last of these proposals was to reduce crewing levels on one pump stations to 4. When accepting the proposal the Fire Authority made a commitment to reviewing this decision and reversing it if the financial situation of the Authority improved.
- 7.3 We remind the Service and the Authority of its commitment to review the crewing arrangements on one pump stations and urge they be returned to a minimum of five as a matter of urgency. Through prudent financial planning and governance the position has indeed improved.
- 7.4 The FBU recognises there is no new money available to the Service or Authority and the Government is unlikely to improve the financial position over the next few years. We still however urge the Service to explore every avenue to meet this goal.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 Overall this is a positive IRMP with growth for the first time in many years. The 54 additional posts, additional pumping appliance and dedicated crews for height appliances are supported by the FBU
- 8.2 Further work on opportunities to improve crewing levels on one pump stations must be explored.
- 8.3 Further exploration of existing, national duty systems must be explored for Birtley before any decision to rely on cover from other areas is considered.
- 8.4 We await details and negotiation of arrangements for staff working at locations where change has been made necessary by the legal challenge in South Yorkshire.
- 8.5 The FBU recognises that the FRS is unique in that it plans for risk and not demand. In order to continually improve service delivery requirements and support national resilience,

government needs to support TWFRS with long term planning and investment for capital, revenue and transformational funding.

- 8.6 Finally, in conclusion can we take this opportunity to remind elected members that whilst the IRMP proposal has been designed and written by the CFO, his senior Managers and advisors, it can only be approved by members of the Fire Authority. In doing so elected members take ownership and responsibility for the contents of the document.



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