



Proposed IRMP 2021-2024: Consultation Report

Date of Report: 27 August 2021

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the results of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service's (TWFRS) recent consultation on the proposed changes to the Service, contained in our Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-24.
- 1.2 We consulted on the following four proposals:
 - **Proposal 1:** To introduce an additional fire appliance at West Denton Community Fire Station.
 - **Proposal 2:** To primary staff the Service's Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs).
 - **Proposal 3:** To change the current shift arrangement at Birtley Community Fire Station.
 - **Proposal 4:** To change the current shift arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station.
- 1.3 The findings presented in this report reflect the opinions of members of the public, stakeholders, staff, and volunteers, on these proposals.

2. CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority (TWFRA) has an obligation to the residents of Tyne and Wear to use our resources flexibly, efficiently and effectively to achieve value for money.
- 2.2 The consultation has been conducted in accordance with HM Government's 2018 Consultation Guidance, as set out at Appendix B. Details of our adherence with these principles are set out in Appendix C.

3. CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The consultation programme was conducted for an eight-week period between 16 June 2021 and 11 August 2021. The consultation period was formally launched via a press release (resulting in an article in the local press), supporting social media posts, and an internal bulletin and VLOG from the Chief Fire Officer.
- 3.2 Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we had to review and adapt our approach to engagement and consultation, to ensure the safety of our staff and the public. Public Health England advised that public meetings should only take place if absolutely necessary. As face to face public meetings were not possible, we utilised a wide range of other mechanisms to enable meaningful engagement and proportionate consultation on the proposals.

3.3 To provide a central source of information on the proposals being consulted on, a bespoke IRMP 2021-24 Consultation microsite, and intranet pages for staff, were developed. These pages included full background information and supporting data on each of the proposals, including links to the various mechanisms to provide feedback.

3.4 Similar to most consultation exercises, the main mechanism used to collate feedback was an on-line survey (via Survey Monkey). However, in addition, the following mechanisms were also used to engage with as many people, from a wide range of the community, as possible:

- A bespoke IRMP 2021-24 email inbox / account to direct further questions and queries.
- Meetings between TWFRS Senior Leadership Team and local councillors.
- 69 letters drafted to Stakeholders, for example local MPs, councillors, CEOs, and Chief Fire Officers, including an invite to provide feedback.
- 400 invites (including information leaflets and a hard copy survey) distributed to all Sheltered Housing Accommodation in the Birtley area.
- Contact made with all schools in the Birtley area, who shared the consultation information and invite utilising teacher / parent communication apps on our behalf.
- A consultation workshop held with Fire Cadets.
- 2000 leaflets distributed around the Gateshead and Birtley area which included: local mosques, community centres, GP surgeries, and leisure centres.
- 100 leaflets distributed via Food Parcel deliveries to vulnerable community members via Birtley Hub.
- Leaflets distributed during Safe and Well visits.
- 100 leaflets distributed to commercial premises in the Birtley area.
- 300 leaflets distributed at COVID-19 vaccination sites (including the North East Nightingale Hospital, and a COVID-19 Vaccination Bus, which was located to engage with the BAME community).
- Correspondence to community safety / strategic partnerships including the Birtley Youth Group.
- 100 leaflets distributed during out Fire Safety Audits in the Tyne and Wear area.
- IRMP 2021-24 Posters distributed to all TWFRS Community Fire Stations, Headquarters and Technical Services Centre.
- Two live IRMP 2021-24 staff briefings, hosted by ELT members delivered, providing a live forum to ask questions and provide feedback.
- Three live IRMP 2021-24 Watch briefings hosted by SLT members delivered, providing a live forum to ask questions and provide feedback (1 Watch joined a staff briefing due to a large incident occurring at the time of their briefing).
- An additional live (virtual) engagement event was held, at the request of Councillors from the Birtley and Lamesley areas, on Monday 9 August: five members of the public, six Councillors and one Member of Parliament (MP) attended the event.

- Published a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) link on all Social Media channels including the TWFRS Website.
- Email reminders were issued to staff to invite feedback and complete the survey.
- Six intranet news articles published to remind staff of the consultation.
- Several social media posts published to make users aware of the consultation programme and invite feedback via the survey (attracting 132,078 total reach on Social Media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) during the eight week consultation period).
- Information placed on LinkedIn (with 391 impressions recorded during the 8 week consultation period).

3.5 The Consultation documentation was also made available in alternative formats upon request. Full details of the consultation methodology and approach can be found at Appendix D.

4. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

4.1 Given the restrictions and challenges to consultation posed by the COVID-19 situation, the Service received a positive response to the consultation programme, with engagement from across the workforce and community of Tyne and Wear.

4.2 A total of **648** responses to the survey were received (this included 32 hard copy survey responses, which were input electronically once they were received), from members of the public, stakeholders, TWFRS staff, cadets and volunteers:

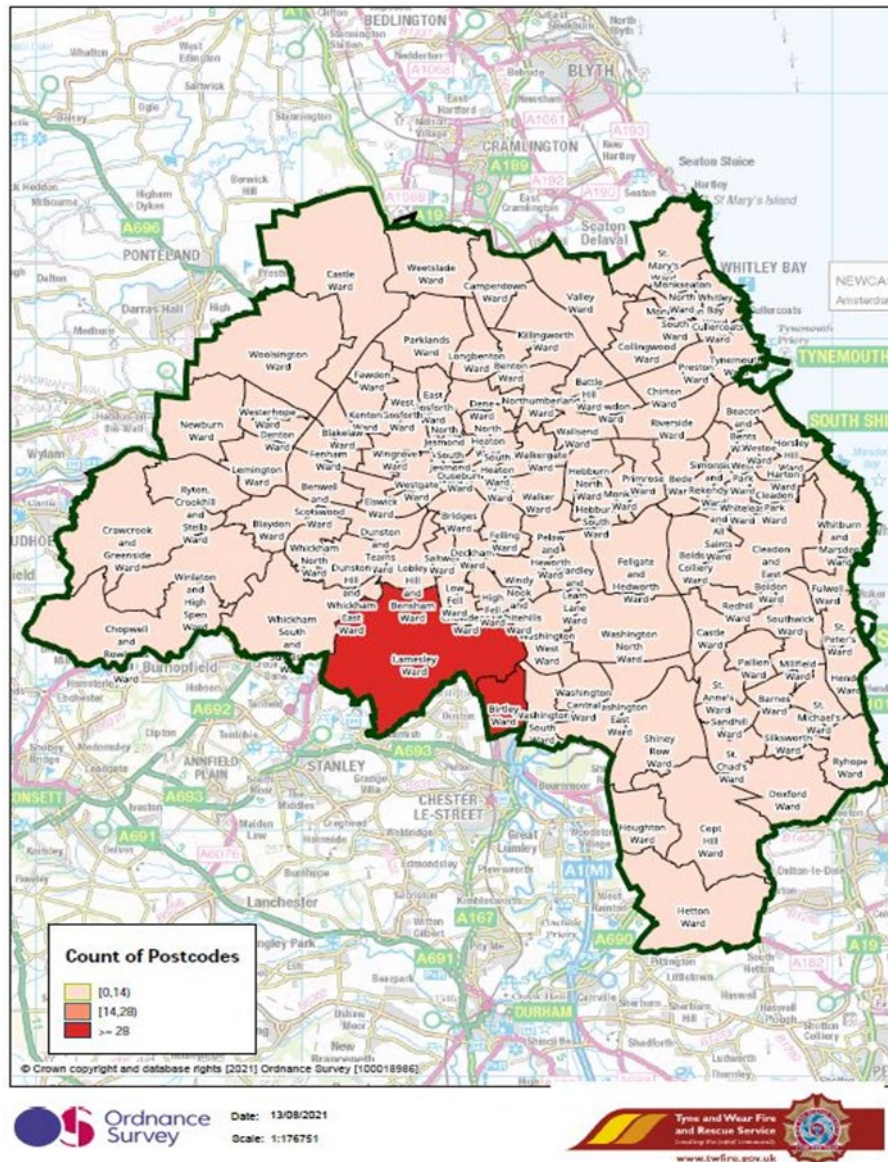
- **266** respondents identified as Members of the Public
- **162** respondents identified as Staff
- **5** respondents identified as TWFRS Volunteers
- **215** respondents did not declare / chose to skip the question.

4.3 Analysis of the socio-demographic data, collated at the end of the survey to help the Service understand the reach of the consultation exercise, confirm the majority of respondents (who completed this section) were:

- Aged between 35-54
- Male / identified as man / boy
- Described their sexual orientation as straight
- Declared themselves to be White British
- Declared themselves as having no religion, and no disability.

For further Socio Demographic data please see Appendix E.

- 4.4 Of the responses received to the online survey, 202 of the postcodes were classed as addressable (full and valid postcode). 176 of these were in Tyne and Wear and 26 were from outside of the area.
- 4.5 Figure 1 highlights that responses to the online survey were received from across the whole of TWFRS area (all council wards), and that **35%** of all respondents were residents of the area most targeted as part of the consultation programme: the Birtley (42) and Lamesley Wards (28).
- 4.6 **Figure 1: Responses to the online survey by Council Ward**



- 4.7 A number of responses were received via our dedicated IRMP channels (email, letter, social media accounts, and website):
- **12** stakeholder responses were received via a letter

- **5** comments / emails were received from members of the public via our dedicated IRMP Consultation inbox
- **16** comments were received via Social Media.

In addition, **1256** people visited our TWFRS website pages.

- 4.8 Outside of the established consultation mechanisms, we also received a petition which was delivered to Service Headquarters Reception anonymously. The petition contained **996** signatures (including 131 in total crossed out), in support of the following wording:

Title: ***“Save our Fire Station”***.

Introduction: ***“We the undersigned, wish to inform the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service that we are concerned about the potential risk to lives if the Birtley Fire Station becomes operational for less than 24 hours per day”***.

In accordance with HM Government Code of Practice on Consultation - Section 5 – this petition has been fully reviewed by TWFRS senior managers. However, as it is not possible to confirm the governance arrangements relating to this petition (i.e. whether signatories gave consent for their personal data to be published), it has not been included as an appendix to this report. In addition, as there is no opportunity for the verification of the validity of the signatures, the petition is being mentioned in this report for information only.

- 4.9 The consultation information document is presented at Appendix F, with accompanying consultation presentation slides at Appendix G.

5. CONSULTATION ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 This consultation programme proactively sought, and has attracted, a large amount of feedback from a range of stakeholders including staff, partners, and the community. Feedback has been received from a range of sources: in addition to the **648** responses directly to the IRMP Consultation Survey, feedback was also received via email, letters from stakeholders and partners, and via our Social Media Accounts (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram).
- 5.2 All feedback (in the form of the raw data), both quantitative and qualitative, have been reviewed and considered by TWFRS senior management as part of the consultation and development process, to help shape the final IRMP 2021-24 proposals. This report provides a summary of the findings, although the full IRMP 2021-24 Consultation Survey Report can be found at Appendix H, and other feedback at Appendix I, for information.
- 5.3 Quantitative data has been analysed and is presented in graphical format, to support understanding. Qualitative data, whilst more time consuming to provide and analyse, is a valuable source of information and allows respondents to provide more in-depth, rich, feedback. It also allows identification of frequently asked questions, allowing the Service to shape communications to address specific issues or concerns. In addition, it provides an opportunity for the Service to ensure that there are no issues that have not already been considered, when the proposals were developed and published. From the analysis, no new issues or matters were identified.
- 5.4 As qualitative data is subjective, it is important to apply an appropriate analysis methodology, to enable sound, systematic analysis and reporting of emerging themes in an objective and transparent manner. For this analysis, the principles of Grounded Theory¹, (utilising coding, identification of emerging of 'themes' and then subsequent generalisations (theory) was applied.
- 5.5 Firstly, a series of codes, emerging naturally from the qualitative data, were identified. For example '*Cuts to the Service*', '*Positive Comment*', '*Response Times*'. The text was then 'tagged' with these codes, and then codes were then filtered and reviewed, to identify themes emerging from the text. Finally, conclusions were developed (theory) for each consultation question area.

¹ *Glazer and Strauss (1967)*

6. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

6.1 Stakeholder letters of feedback

6.1.1 The vast majority of responses from stakeholders contained a positive response to the draft IRMP 2021-24 proposals. Only proposal 3 attracted some opposition. Stakeholder responses included:

6.1.2 A letter was received from Liz Twist, MP for Blaydon, welcoming some of the changes proposed in our IRMP 2021-24 Consultation, such as the provision of an additional appliance at West Denton and the proposal to fully crew the Aerial Ladder Platforms (Proposals 1 and 2). However The MP expressed objection to Proposal 3:

“While I am glad to welcome some changes, such as the provision of an additional appliance at West Denton and the proposal to fully crew the aerial ladder, you will not be surprised to hear that I am extremely unhappy and object to the proposal to strip overnight cover from Birtley fire station in my constituency. I particularly note the contrast with the proposal for revised staffing for the Rainton Bridge fire station which is affected by the same ruling on shift patterns”.

“You will, of course, remember that it is not very long since we lost a second appliance from Swalwell station, also in my constituency, and it seems to me completely unacceptable that we should now see a further reduction in service to the communities in my constituency”. A number of constituents have already contacted me to express their concern and to object to this change and I am aware that local councillors from Birtley and Lamesley wards have also expressed their objection to this proposal”.

“I have always sought to support our fire and rescue services and to make the case for additional funding and a fairer share of resources, and was very proud to be able to present my Angel Awards to the crews at Birtley, Chopwell and Swalwell stations. That support for our local firefighters continues but this proposal is unacceptable. To be absolutely clear about this, I am asking you and the fire authority, to withdraw this proposal and to come up with alternative proposals which will provide full overnight cover at the Birtley station. The communities of Blaydon constituency have already seen their Fire and Rescue service significantly reduced and this is a step too far. They deserve better”.

Liz Twist, MP

A letter received from County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) Chief Fire Officer offering his support, with particular reference to Proposal 3 - changing the current shift pattern at Birtley Community Fire Station, which is situated on the border between TWFRS and CDDFRS:

“I write to indicate the provision of a Day Crewing Shift System operating for a 12 hour period from 0800 complements the available resources at High Handenhold, especially our RDS provision which benefits from higher levels of availability during the hours of 1900-0800”.

CFO Stuart Errington, DDFRS

- 6.1.2 A letter received from the Director of Operations, Newcastle International Airport, offering full support the proposals, with particular reference to Proposal 1 – to introduce an additional fire appliance at West Denton Community Fire Station:

“We are fully supportive of your plans, in particular your plan to maintain an additional fire appliance at West Denton; given this being one of the stations that provides primary response to aircraft emergencies. The decision to primary crew your aerial ladder platforms is also welcomed, as these could also support an enhanced response to any emergency situation that may occur”.

Keith Faley, Director of Operations, Newcastle International Airport

- 6.1.4 A letter of support was received from Cllr Tracey Dixon Leader of South Tyneside Council, in particular to Proposal 2, to primary staff the Service’s Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs):

“The South Tyneside area has benefitted from the use of Aerial Ladder platforms on a number of occasions. The Council is aware when using this unit that the availability of fire engines from our local Fire Stations can be compromised. As such this change is welcomed to boost local resources. It is positive to see that the TWFRS are seeking some reinvestment in these services which better reflect public needs, and to ensure high quality services are maintained into the future”.

Cllr Tracey Dixon, Leader of South Tyneside Council

- 6.1.5 A letter of support was received from Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service’s (CFRS) Chief Fire Officer, highlighting our well thought out proposals and IRMP 2021-24 Consultation Programme, including the use of demographics in the Consultation survey, which will now be considered in Cumbria:

“Your approach to consultation is well thought out. Members of the public have the greatest possible opportunity to comment on your proposals, and the fact that you are consulting on the proposals only, rather than a much larger document allows for focussed responses that will help in the development of the final IRMP. Your use of demographic questions in the consultation response reflects the need to more accurately capture information on sexuality and gender and is something we can learn from in our own consultations”.

CFO, John Beard, CFRS

- 6.1.6 Paul Hanson, Chief Executive of North Tyneside Council, responded on behalf of North Tyneside Council to confirm they have no objections to the IRMP 2021-24 proposals:

“I can confirm the North Tyneside Council have no objections to the proposed changes”.

Paul Hanson, Leader of North Tyneside Council

- 6.1.7 Positive feedback was received from Councillor John Price, Sunderland, via the IRMP inbox:

“Pleased to read your plans for investment and changes to service, much better than the austerity cuts you have had to make previously, well done”

Cllr John Price, Sunderland

- 6.1.8 Feedback was received from the Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner (NPCC) with the following commentary:

“We have no comment to make at this time but welcome being a key stakeholder and will always be happy to collaborate/support you where we can”.

Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner (ONPCC)

- 6.1.9 The Service received two responses from The Fire Brigades Union (FBU). A letter from Brian Harris, North East Regional representative from the Fire Brigades Union (Appendix J), was received commenting on the positive impact on health and safety of our Firefighters – extract presented below:

“...The proposals that have been put forward by the TWFRAs for consultation are however positive, they will help mitigate the risks of the public and will also enhance the health and safety of firefighters”.

Brian Harris, FBU

6.1.10 The Service also received a formal report from the local (Tyne and Wear) Fire Brigades Union (FBU). This contained positive feedback on the proposals – see extract below:

“The proposed IRMP for 2021-24 is on the whole positive and can generally be supported by the FBU. An opportunity to re-instate 54 operational posts is welcomed from 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”.

The extract below relates specifically to Proposal 3. The full response can be found at Appendix J:

“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...”

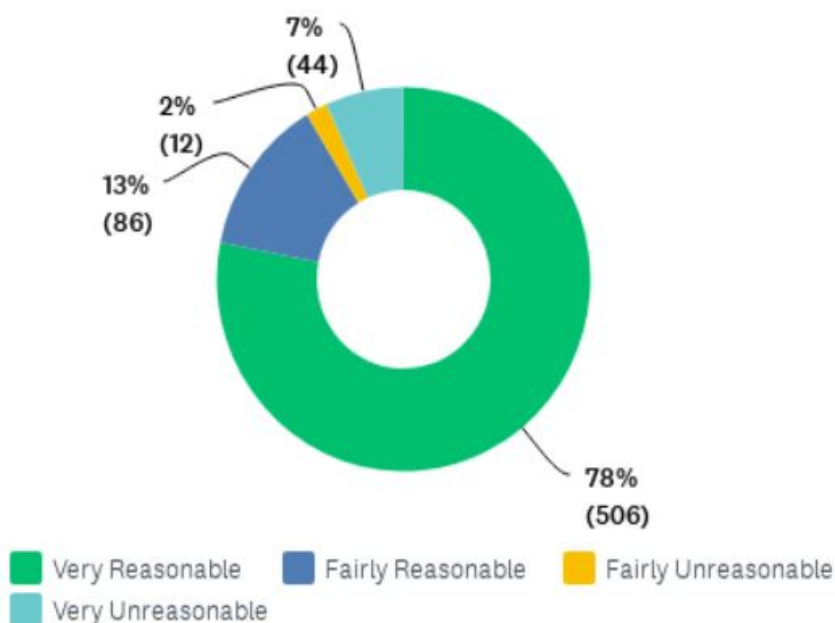
“...We urge the Service to further explore duty systems which are not only Grey Book compliant but offer 24 hour response from Birtley fire station”.

7. CONSULTATION FINDINGS

This section of the report presents the findings of the IRMP 2021-24 Consultation, including the survey and all other feedback. As detailed earlier, qualitative feedback has been analysed and the resulting themes and conclusions presented under each proposal.

7.1 PROPOSAL 1 – TO INTRODUCE AN ADDITIONAL FIRE APPLIANCE AT WEST DENTON COMMUNITY FIRE STATION

- 7.1.1 Staff and members of the public were asked for their views on how reasonable our proposals are to introduce an additional fire appliance at West Denton Fire Station. All 648 respondents (**100%**) to the online survey completed this question. A total of 592 (**91%**) of respondents to the survey felt the proposals were reasonable ('very reasonable' 506 (78%) or 'fairly reasonable' 86 (13%)).



Proposal 1: The Service is proposing to introduce an additional fire engine into the fleet on a permanent basis. This arrangement is currently being piloted at West Denton Community Fire Station which, following a comprehensive review of data relating to risk and demand, was identified as the Service's busiest single fire engine station for this additional resource. This strengthens our commitment to our statutory duties in supporting the community. This additional fire engine will result in an increased resilience across the whole of the area covered by Tyne and Wear FRS This proposal represents an investment in resources, creating an additional 4 Crew Manager and 12 Firefighter roles, and will enhance operational response, resilience and community safety. Based on the rationale provided do you believe this proposal is reasonable?

- 7.1.2 Only **9%** of respondents disagreed with Proposal 1 (44 (7%) 'very unreasonable' and 12 (2%) 'unreasonable')).

Respondents were also invited to provide additional comments on this proposal, via an open text box. A total of 67 respondents to this proposal chose to comment on their answer, and 60% of those left positive comments.

7.1.3 Proposal 1: Emerging themes

Theme 1: A positive response to the proposal

The majority of respondents who left positive comments (**60%**) highlighted that Proposal 1 was a positive improvement to the Service and a welcome addition to the front line. Comments included:

“An additional appliance at West Denton provides additional resilience to the whole of the service area but specifically the North West. The pilot scheme has already provided the necessary data to support its full implementation”.

“Any improvement in Firefighter numbers can only be a positive step following years of cuts”.

“Excellent news regarding new roles being created. Also, politically, is a very balanced approach without compromising response”.

“Busy fire station should have more resources, quite simple”.

“Any additional provisions to front line services has to be a good thing”.

“A very positive and encouraging proposal that is welcomed after years of austerity and brutal cuts to Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service”.

Theme 2: Comments on previous IRMP actions relating to frontline cuts

A total of 13 of the 67 people who left a comment to this question (**19%**) respondents queried previous IRMP actions, including Service reductions and cuts to frontline services. Comments received:

“What has changed that required the appliance that was at this location to be removed?”

“Was there a fire engine there a few years ago, and was removed despite the complaints? Why has it been put back now?”

“For the area the station covers 1 appliance puts the public at risk”.

Theme 3: Queries about the additional resource and location

A total of 10 of the 67 people who left a comment to this question (15%) respondents commented on the chosen location of the additional fire engine at West Denton Fire Station. Comments included:

“I still don't believe that it warrants a second pump (other than supporting and enhancing A07s capability)”

“Has there been an increase in fire incidents and risk(s) to justify the increase in FF numbers?”

“I'm not sure this is the best basis to decide where to allocate the new engine - would it not make more sense to look at which area external resources are sent in to most often? It may be, for example, that W Denton deals with a lot of small fires that only require one unit.”

7.1.4 **Note for consideration:** 9 comments (13%) were received in response to proposal 1, which do not relate to the proposal to introduce an additional appliance at West Denton Community Fire Station, and therefore have not been included on the analysis for this section.

The majority of these relate to the proposed changes to staffing arrangements at Birtley Community Fire Station (proposal 3). For example:

- “Birtley has a very large population now”
- “Given all the factorys [sic] in Birtley then all the new homes just been & still being built i think is a stupid idea”

These comments will be considered as part of the overall response to the consultation, however have not been included in the analysis for this question.

7.1.5 Other (non-survey) feedback on proposal 1:

Feedback was received from Graham Bridges, Chief Inspector, British Transport Police highlighting Proposal 1 as a positive resource addition to the Service:

“Really positive that an additional fire engine will be operating. Availability of that additional resource has to be beneficial for the public. In these tough economic times it is some achievement to be able to do this. You are proposing are a pragmatic solution to a problem that on the face of it is far more wide reaching than for the Tyne and Wear fire service. For me all points are positive and would have my support”.

Graham Bridges, Chief Inspector, British Transport Police

Feedback was received from Christine Herriot, Director of Operations and Regulatory Services, Newcastle City Council endorsing all proposals, in particular Proposal 1:

“We very much welcome and endorse your proposals, particularly the important addition of a further fire engine and resources to the West Denton Community Fire Station, this is an area of the City that continues to experience problems with youth disorder and fires”.

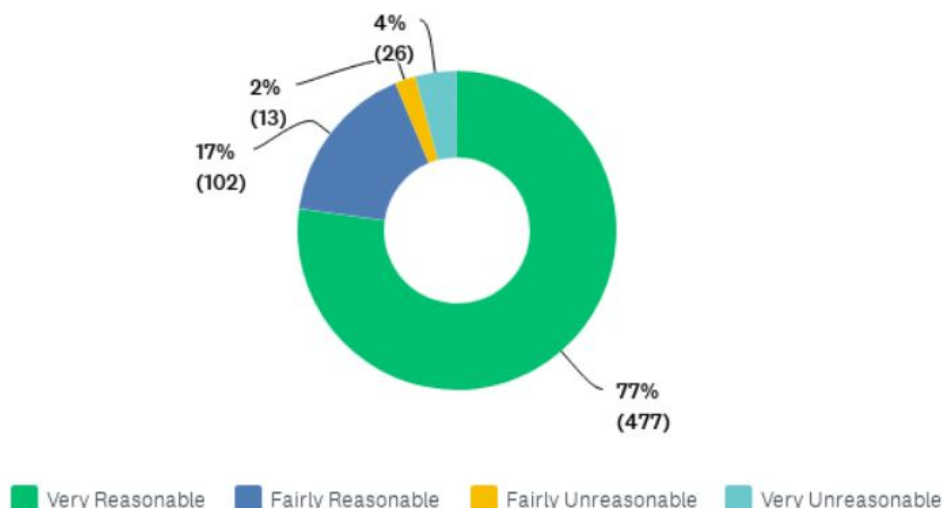
***Christine Herriot, Director of Operations and Regulatory Services,
Newcastle City Council***

7.1.6 Proposal 1 Conclusion

The vast majority of responses offer support for Proposal 1, believing this to be a very reasonable proposal. Analysis of survey and stakeholder responses supports the Service’s assertion, based on evidence, that this proposal will be an improvement to the Service, West Denton Community Fire Station and to the wider Community of Tyne and Wear we serve.

7.2 PROPOSAL 2 – TO PRIMARY STAFF THE SERVICE’S AERIAL LADDER PLATFORMS (ALPs).

- 7.2.1 Staff and members of the public were asked how reasonable they feel the proposed approach to primary staff the Service’s Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs). A total of 30 (5%) respondents chose not to answer this question. 579 of the 618 people who answered this question (94%) felt the proposals were ‘very reasonable’ or ‘fairly reasonable’.



Proposal 2: To primary staff the Service's Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs) The ALPs are dual staffed, – an arrangement where firefighters staff both the primary fire engine at that station, and also the ALP and crew which ever one is required. Sometimes this can create a conflict as both the fire engine and ALP may be required. Following significant national incidents, and a review of risk and demand data in Tyne and Wear, we are proposing to primary crew the two ALPs. This means if an ALP is required, for a fire in a tall building, a fire engine will not need to be made unavailable so staff from that engine can staff the ALP (as is the current situation). This proposal represents an investment in people resources and will result in the addition of a further 8 Crew Managers and 16 Firefighter roles into the Service. In your opinion, do you think the proposed approach is reasonable?

7.2.2 Only **6%** of respondents to this question disagreed with Proposal 2 (26 (4%) 'very unreasonable' and 13 (2%) 'unreasonable').

Respondents were also invited to provide additional comments on this proposal, via an open text box. A total of 69 respondents to this proposal chose to comment on their answer, and **61%** of those left very positive comments.

7.3 Proposal 2: Emerging themes:

Theme 1: A positive response to the proposal

The majority of respondents who left very positive comments (**61%**) highlighted that Proposal 2 was a positive improvement to the Service and a welcome addition to the front line. Comments included:

"This would ensure the PDA for high rise fires could be met as well as not compromising availability of pumping appliances during a large or protracted incident".

"Given the risks highlighted now more so than in the media this is a good idea".

"Seems positive, as it will enhance fire cover".

“More firefighters and immediate access to aerial appliances has to make us safer”.

“Safety of the public first”.

“I live in a flammable flat caught in the fire safety/cladding scandal. Any extra protection from fire will make me feel a little safer”.

“For those living in high rise premises, the ability to respond more expediently will be of great reassurance. Just as importantly, this will not be at the expense of alternative fire cover”.

“This will be excellent as it won’t hold up an appliance and the alps will always be ready to respond”.

Theme 2: Queries about the additional resource and location

A total of 30 (**43%**) respondents commented on the additional resource and chosen locations of the Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs) for proposal 2. Comments included:

“The 2 permanently crewed appliances that are capable of reaching higher up floors should be relocated to the centre of Newcastle and Sunderland respectively where they can reach the most build up areas in the 2 most populated areas of Tyne and Wear and where they can also reach surrounding areas where required”.

“Will the locations of the two stations be based upon the high rise talk building and the time taken to travel to it? Surely, speed and attack is the benchmark for any location and not what suits the political landscape?”.

“The location of these is questionable”.

“Following on from events in recent years this proposal will only serve to increase the safety and reduce the vulnerability of those in the community who reside in high rise premises”.

“Any additional personnel within the organisation are a valuable contribution to service delivery. The ability to primary staff special appliances, protecting fire cover is a very welcome concept”.

Note for consideration: The potential locations of the two ALPs to be dual staffed were not included as part of this consultation exercise. This is an operational decision, not requiring formal consultation or Fire Authority approval. Decisions on the future location of TWFRS resources, including special appliances such as

ALPs, will be based on data and intelligence on risk, demand, and any other considerations as appropriate, to ensure the most effective and efficient emergency cover across the Service area.

Theme 3: Comments on previous IRMP actions relating to frontline cuts

A small number of participants (5 (8%)) chose to comment on previous IRMP actions, including Service reductions and cuts to frontline services. Comments received:

“After years of very damaging cuts to the Service this proposal speaks volumes about the Services commitment to public safety and also to the safety of its employees”.

“At previous IRMP an argument was put forward to dual staff these appliances in, what has changed?”.

“After so many years of reduced staffing this is a positive step to expand our workforce”.

7.2.3 Other (non-survey) feedback on proposal 2:

Feedback was received from Cllr Tracey Dixon, Leader of South Tyneside Council highlighting Proposal 2 as a positive resource addition to the Service and a boost to local resources:

“It is recognised as a result of previous financial pressures that the number of Aerial Ladder Platforms were reduced from 3 to 2. In addition, further changes were required in circumstances when the Aerial Ladder Platforms are required, that the primary fire engine at that location becomes unavailable to attend other emergency incidents. Following national tragic events and local demand data it is proposed to crew both Aerial ladder Platforms”.

“The South Tyneside area has benefitted from the use of Aerial Ladder platforms on a number of occasions. The Council is aware when using this unit that the availability of fire engines from our local Fire Stations can be compromised. As such this change is welcomed to boost local resources”.

Cllr Tracey Dixon, Leader of South Tyneside Council

7.2.4 Feedback was received from Keith Faley, Director of Operations, at Newcastle International Airport, endorsing Proposal 2:

“The decision to primary crew your aerial ladder platforms is also welcomed, as these could also support an enhanced response to any emergency situation that may occur”.

Keith Faley, Director of Operations, Newcastle International Airport

7.2.5 Proposal 2: Conclusion

The vast majority of respondents believe to Proposal 2 to be a very reasonable proposal. Survey and stakeholder analysis supports the Service’s belief that implementing this proposal will result in an improvement Service wide, improve response capability to high rise incidents, and give greater assurances to the communities we serve.

7.3 PROPOSAL 3 – TO CHANGE THE CURRENT SHIFT ARRANGEMENTS AT BIRTLEY COMMUNITY FIRE STATION

- 7.3.1 For this proposal, respondents were asked for their comments on our proposal to amend the current DCCC arrangement at Birtley Community Fire Station. 131 **(20%)** of the survey respondents chose to skip this question, possibly indicating a neutral viewpoint. This proposal generated the most qualitative feedback in the survey - a total of 517 **(80%)** respondents made comment.

Proposal 3: To change the current shift arrangement at Birtley Community Fire Station (W)Current staffing arrangements in the Service include a combination of shift patterns including Retained/ on-call, day crewing close call (DCCC) and 2-2-4 where staff work 2 days shifts followed by 2 night shifts and then 4 days' rest.

Following a legal challenge in another area of the Country of the DCCC staffing arrangement in 2018, the High Court declared this arrangement is unlawful, and subsequently directed all FRS to change these arrangements, in the absence of any local collective agreement with representative bodies. No such agreement has been reached between the representative bodies and the Service, therefore we now have to implement an alternative staffing model at this station.

Following a detailed analysis of incident and risk data and to meet this ruling, the Service is proposing a change based on risk and demand, from Day Crewing Close Call (DCCC) to a nationally recognised Day Crewed model at Birtley Community Fire Station. This would see a crew of Firefighters working from the fire station in Birtley on day shift from 0800hrs to 2000hrs and through the night fire cover will be provided from surrounding fire stations and crews. This is based on risk and demand and modelling of this provision has clearly highlighted that it is safe and proportionate for the area and communities. Based on the rationale provided and given the legal requirement for the Service to amend the current DCCC arrangements and in consideration of the risk and data analysis - we are interested in any comments you have on this proposal.

- 7.3.2 Inviting respondents to provide comments via an open text box was intended to collate more detailed feedback on why a person may support, or not support, this proposal. Of the 517 respondents to this question, 141 **(27%)** of those left positive comments.

7.3.3 Proposal 3: Emerging themes:

Theme 1: A positive response to the proposal

A high number of the 517 respondents to this question - 141 **(27%)** - left positive comments, acknowledging the need to change due to the legal requirement to change the current shift arrangements, including the risk analysis / modelling that has been completed by the Service. Comments included:

“Agree due to rationale this is a good idea”.

“I can imagine this perceived reduction in fire cover for the residents of Birtley will be very concerning and is understandable. However as the appropriate risk modelling has been completed and the proposal is deemed to be safe and proportionate I consider it to be a reasonable option”.

“I feel the proposal is evidenced as the best option based on the situation and options available”.

“This appears to be a sensible solution to the problem given the neighbouring stations can provide a timely response outside the hours covered by the personnel on that Station”.

“It’s hard to say without seeing demand between 2200&0800. If there are barely any call outs in those hours this is a sensible proposal”.

“Still keeps a strong FRS presence in area during the day”.

“Very reasonable and a good use of resources to ensure that areas are still kept safe”.

“This seems to be a reasonable solution to manage the legal challenge and appropriately protect the community”.

Theme 2: Fire Cover in the Birtley area

The majority of the 517 respondents - 147 (28%) - left comments relating to concerns about Fire Cover. Comments included:

“I don’t agree with fire cover being provided by neighbouring stations. This is downgrading fire cover in Birtley and is unacceptable and puts people at risk. Extended travel times to incidents in Birtley will put lives at risk especially during busy times or when the service is dealing with other incidents”.

“Rather see night time cover as well”.

“As a local resident I would be very concerned if cover at Birtley was not 24 hour. Fire stations are highly in demand and cover from other stations is unacceptable”.

“I would not feel safe if the station is unmanned at night”.

“Please look at alternative shift arrangements instead. The increasing number of properties in the area imply a greater need for night cover rather than removing it”.

“I do not feel safe with no local night time cover in the Birtley area”.

“We need fire station covered 24 hours a day”.

Note: To provide context to the feedback received in response to this proposal, it is apparent there has been some misunderstanding / misinterpretation of the proposal in terms of ‘fire cover’. The proposal does not propose the removal of fire cover from

the Birtley area between 2000 – 0800 hours, but to provide this cover from the wider Service, instead of a resource based at that location as is common across some other areas of Tyne and Wear. This misunderstanding may have had an adverse impact on the findings”.

Theme 3: Response Times

A number of the 517 respondents - 92 (18%) - commented on concerns about increased response times, during the hours of 2000-0800, due to fire engines arriving from neighbouring stations, however it was also stated as long as average response times can be met this proposal is fair. Comments included:

“This will potentially cost lives as the timescale for an engine to arrive would longer. I Totally disagree with this proposal”.

“Strongly against this proposal. Response times will be increased on an evening and night when the service is needed most”.

“Obviously response times between 20:00 hrs and 08:00 hours will increase for the Birtley area. Will the predicted response time increases be published for public consumption?”.

“The proposal seems fairly reasonable providing the surrounding fire stations could attend an incident within the average response time”.

Note: There may be some misinterpretation of the data presented alongside this proposal. Feedback relating to concerns about increased response times, and relating to incident data (i.e. time of day when most incidents occur) does not align to evidence presented to support this proposal. This misunderstanding may have had an adverse impact on the findings. All data used by the Service in the modelling to develop this proposal was made publically available as part of the consultation literature, for anyone to access and analyse.

Theme 4: 24-7 Fire Station at Birtley

A number of the 517 respondents - 87 (17%) - commented that a 24-7 Fire Station was required in the Birtley area, due to the growing population, housing and industrial sites surrounding the area.

A total of 3 respondents commented on closing the Station, due to low level activity and cover already in place by neighbouring stations. Comments included:

“We need cover 24hours 7 days a week”.

“Do not agree with this. Birtley is a large area and it seems unreasonable that the fire station is not manned overnight”.

“The fire station needs to be a 24hr service for the residents of Birtley and surrounding areas”.

"I feel that this would leave the surrounding area of Birtley and further afield potentially limited if other stations were busy dealing with call outs especially when there are so many factories and homes in Birtley which is only growing further as more homes are built and more residents move to the area. I hope a 24/7 service will continue and provide our community with a fire service no matter what time of the day".

"Does the data analysis show that the appliance is required during the day? Could the station area be covered by surrounding stations or move the appliance to one of the surrounding stations and save money by closing Birtley".

"Does Birtley need a fire station?".

Theme 5: Staffing

A number of the 517 respondents - 55 (11%) - commented and gave feedback on staffing arrangements / shift patterns and offered alternatives to Proposal 3. Comments included:

"Could this not return to a normal shift pattern instead of the 0800 - 2000 arrangement".

"The only valid option is self-rostering. Why do you need to ask this question? Look to Yorkshire"

"What about day crewed as you suggest then retained on call fire fights for night duty it would be like going back to an old style system in a way".

"Would it be appropriate to suggest an on call system for the evenings to allow staff to be on call from home and assist when needed".

Theme 6: High Court Ruling Feedback

59 of the 517 respondents to this question (11%) highlighted the proposed changes to our staffing arrangements were unavoidable due to the national FBU legal challenge to South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and subsequent High Court ruling enforced through the HSE, supporting the Service's position to change shift arrangements at Birtley Community Fire Station, due to a legal requirement. Comments included:

"It appears that the FBU challenge, and subsequent legal decision, has left the Service with no option but to propose this".

“Given the legal position and the fact that Rep bodies are unwilling to enter in to a local agreement the FA has no option but to introduce this measure”.

“As it is a legal requirement to change and following comprehensive data analysis I believe this to be a fair proposal”.

“This seems like a logical option if the change is a legal requirement”.

7.3.4 Other (non-survey) feedback on proposal 3:

As reported earlier, feedback was received from Liz Twist, MP stating her objection to Proposal 3 This full response can be found at Appendix I.

Further non survey feedback was received via the IRMP inbox (5 submissions). The full feedback received via the inbox can be found at Appendix L. A sample of respondents commented:

“I am supportive of proposals one, two and four. I do not like the idea of having to wait on a neighbouring service to deal with situations in proposal 3”.

“I totally disagree with proposed changes which would leave Birtley with no overnight cover. I firmly believe that the existing shift pattern should remain”.

“In 1992 Birtley Fire Station went from retained to full time cover. The reason at the time was that Birtley population was set to grow in size and needed full time cover so what has changed?”.

7.3.5 Live Virtual Public Meeting

An additional live (virtual) engagement event was arranged at the request of Cllr Foy. On Monday 9 August 2021, five members of the public, six councillors and one MP attended the event.

The event was chaired by Councillor Kevin Dodds, (member of TWFA) with TWFRS DCO Peter Heath and AM David Leach in attendance. Attendees were given a brief overview of Proposal 3, and invited to raise questions and discussion. Key areas of discussion at this event were as follows:

- **Birtley Community Fire Station (24-7 Cover):** Attendees raised concerns around closing Birtley Community Fire Station at 2000hrs, leaving what was perceived as ‘no night time cover’ for the area.

- **Response times and major incidents:** Attendees raised concerns about a perceived possible increase in response times during the night. One respondent questioned arrangements in the event of a major incident, including if the Service is preparing for the worst-case scenario as well as the best-case scenario.
- **Impact of COVID-19 on data used** – One attendee queried TWFRS statistics, and if COVID-19 had impacted on statistics used in modelling and analysis of the proposals.

7.3.6 Proposal 3: Conclusion

Over a quarter of the 517 respondents to this question **(27%)** were supportive of Proposal 3. Many highlighted acceptance that, due to the legal requirement, a change of shift arrangements was necessary.

28% of respondents raised concerns over fire cover in the Birtley area at night, and **18%** stated concerns about increased response times. These two areas of feedback were echoed in some non-survey feedback, including responses from stakeholders and the live engagement event. However, as noted above, some misunderstanding of response times and 'fire cover' may have had an impact on these findings.

7.4 Proposal 4 - To change the current shift arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station.

- 7.4.1 Respondents were asked to comment on our proposal to amend the current DCCC arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station. 154 **(24%)** respondents skipped this question – again possibly indicating a neutral viewpoint. A total of 494 **(76%)** respondents chose to comment.

Proposal 4: To change the current shift arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station (H) Current staffing arrangements in the Service include a combination of shift patterns including Retained/ on-call, day crewing close call (DCCC) and 2-2-4 where staff work 2 days shifts followed by 2 night shifts and then 4 days' rest. Following a legal challenge in another area of the Country of the DCCC staffing arrangement in 2018, the High Court declared this arrangement is unlawful, and subsequently directed all FRS to change these arrangements, in the absence of any local collective agreement with representative bodies. No such agreement has been reached between the representative bodies and the Service, therefore we now have to implement an alternative staffing model at this station.

To meet this ruling, the Service is proposing a change based on risk and demand, from Day Crewing Close Call (DCCC), to the 2-2-4 shift system, at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station. This shift system would see a crew of firefighters based at the station throughout every 24 hr period as per current arrangements albeit on a different shift pattern. Analysis of the data and risk information has informed this proposal and underpins the proposal to have a crew on the station for 24 hrs per day. The level of activity has indicated that the proposal to maintain a 24 hr cover is balanced and appropriate based on the evidence and data.

Overall, this proposal will not result in any reduction of crewing or availability of staff in the Rainton Bridge station area and is simply a change to the shift pattern. Based on the rationale provided and given the legal requirement for the Service to amend the current DCCC arrangements and in consideration of the risk and data analysis - we are interested in any comments you have on this proposal?

- 7.4.2 252 of the 494 respondents to this question **(51%)** left positive comments. A total of 117 **(24%)** stated "No Comment" in the open text box – potentially indicating a neutral view.

7.4.3 Proposal 4: Emerging themes

Theme 1: A positive response to the proposal

The majority of respondents who left positive comments **(51%)** highlighted that Proposal 4 was a positive way forward and improvement to the Service. Comments included:

"Due to detailed rational and legal requirement, I agree it is the way forward".

"Reasonable solution based on the legal challenge and appropriate protection of the community".

"This makes sense as H01 can be a busy station".

"Common sense approach following the legal ruling".

"This shift pattern has worked previously at Rainton Bridge and the risk and data provides the support for the rationale".

“Given the legal obligation on the service and the need for cover in that area this seems a reasonable alternative”.

“This proposal would make me feel much safer as I know if anything were to go wrong and I had a fire there would be firefighters close by to help”.

Theme 2: 24-7 Fire Cover

A number of the 494 respondents - 38 (8%) - commented on 24-7 fire cover at Rainton Bridge Fire Station, respondents commented that Proposal 4 was a positive proposal with fire cover over a 24 hour period. Comments included:

“It seems a fair proposal and safe if still covered by staff for 24 hours”

“Definitely 24hr cover needed”.

“Again, a sensible response. Good that the Station will have fire cover 24 hours a day”.

Theme 3: Staffing

A small number of the 494 respondents to this question - 20 (4%) - commented on the change to staffing arrangements at Rainton Bridge Fire Station, including that that all avenues need to be explored before implementation of the legal requirement. Comments included:

“As a serving Firefighter at Station Hotel, i have enjoyed working on the DCCC system and will be sorry to see the system change, as my thoughts were that it saved the service valuable amounts of money over the years”.

“All avenues should be explored to change or influence legislation allowing voluntary participation in the DCCC staffing structure as it provides benefits for the service and the individual staff that have chosen to work at the two locations that currently adopt this mode”.

“Further work to maintain DCCC to be explored”.

7.4.4 Note for consideration: A number of the 494 comments - 51 (10%) - were received in response to proposal 4 that do not relate to the proposal to change the current shift

arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station, and therefore have not been included on the analysis for this section.

The majority of these relate to the proposed changes to staffing arrangements at Birtley Community Fire Station (proposal 3). For example:

- “Why doesn’t Birtley get this arrangement also”
- “Still need to be using Birtley”

These comments will be considered as part of the overall response to the consultation, however have not been included in the analysis for this question

7.4.5 Other (non-survey) feedback on proposal 4:

Feedback was received from Cllr Tracey Dixon, Leader of South Tyneside Council highlighting Proposal 4 as a positive resource solution, ensuring high quality services are maintained:

“To change the current shift arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station. The changes highlighted reflect the current Day Crewing and Close Call arrangement will be replaced by a 2-2-4 shift arrangement i.e. 2 day shifts, 2 night shifts, 4 days off duty. This change has been brought about by the previous shift arrangements being declared unlawful through the High Court. This change would appear to put the Fire Service on a lawful footing whilst still providing suitable fire cover arrangements. In the rapidly changing circumstances we find ourselves, it is important that we review and reorganise resources to mirror demand for Fire Services. It is positive to see that the TWFRS are seeking some reinvestment in these services which better reflect public needs, and to ensure high quality services are maintained into the future”. “

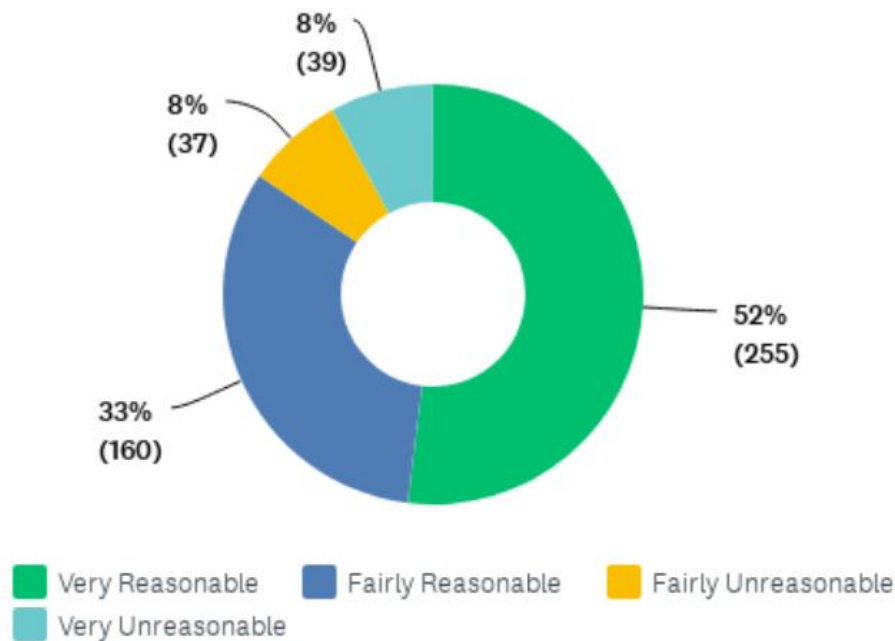
7.4.6 Proposal 4: Conclusion

The majority of respondents to Proposal 4 **(51%)** believe this to be a positive proposal. Survey and stakeholder analysis shows understanding that the Service has a legal obligation to change the current shift arrangements at Rainton Bridge Fire Station, and also that implementing this proposal will be an improvement to the Service.

7.5 Question 5 – Overall Approach IRMP 2021-24 Proposals

7.5.1 Finally, respondents were asked how reasonable they felt the IRMP 2021-24 approach is overall. 157 **(24%)** of survey respondents skipped this question. A total of 491 **(76%)** respondents answered.

A total of 415 of the 491 respondents to this question (**85%**) felt the proposals overall were 'very reasonable' or 'fairly reasonable'.



Question 5 - Overall IRMP Proposals: The proposed changes to operational response will support continuous improvement in standards through utilising staff and resources more effectively, efficiently and appropriate to risk and demand both locally and nationally. This also sees the introduction of 54 posts into the establishment all with the aim of supporting community safety. In your opinion, do you consider the proposals in our IRMP 2021-24 to be:

7.5.2 Respondents were also invited to provide additional comments on this question, via an open text box. A total of 107 of the 491 respondents to this question (**21%**) chose to comment, and 46 of the 107 (**43%**) of those left very positive comments.

7.5.3 Question 5: Additional Comments to our Overall Approach IRMP 2021-24 Proposals - Themes

Theme 1: A positive response overall to the proposals

A total of 46 (**43%**) respondents left very positive comments, specifically highlighting the additional resources, creating new Firefighter roles, improving front line services and increasing Firefighter safety. Comments included:

“Great that jobs are being created”.

“After what has been a very difficult and challenging time for all involved in Tyne and Wear FRS, it is massively encouraging to see that we are now in a position to put resources back into the community which will

increase both firefighter safety and the safety and confidence of the communities we serve”.

“Seems good sensible rationale that benefits the community and the service”.

“If it helps in saving lives and keep's people safe”.

“Given the financial pressures of the last 11 years, it is good to see the Service investing where it can, and addressing local risk appropriately”.

“Nice and rare to have an IRMP that involves making improvements and not cuts/reductions”.

“Good to see decisions based on risk and data and not just money driven”.

“Overall it feels like TWFRS are in a very positive position”.

Theme 2: Proposal 3 - Birtley Community Fire Station

A total of 47 of the 107 respondents (**44%**) chose to comment again in this section about Proposal 3 (changing the current shift arrangements at Birtley Community Fire Station), specifically highlighting that the Birtley area needs 24-7 fire cover, and questioning if Birtley Fire Station could have the same arrangements as Rainton Bridge Fire Station. Comments included:

“Birtley seems to be taking the biggest cuts and everywhere else getting extra funding?”.

“The Birtley station should remain 24/7 in line with changes at Rainton Bridge station”.

“Need to ensure Birtley gets 24hr cover”.

“It's unreasonable not to staff Birtley fire station fully”.

“Keep Birtley staffed 24/7”.

“I strongly feel Birtley need the fire service in our area during the night”.

“As long as Birtley Fire Station is not effected”.

“Provide a commitment to reinstate full time 224 firepower at Birtley asap”.

Theme 3 – Current Service Staffing Levels

A total of 27 of the 107 respondents **(25%)** commented on current staffing levels within the Service, including skills shortages, and recruitment of inexperienced Firefighters. Comments included:

“All of the proposals have staffing implications whereby we need more. Probably the biggest challenge facing the service in the next few years”.

“Staffing levels are so low already. More courses are needed and more drivers brought through. WM need CM on stations with the increase work load and scrutiny we have now. CM play a vital part in supporting the service, these roles should not be dismissed for so long like they have done over the years and even more so now”.

“Having 5 crew members on pumps would be of benefit to the whole of Tyne & Wear instead of just 1 area”.

“It would appear we will struggle to meet that staffing increase without recruiting heavily. This combined with retirements will lead to a vastly more inexperienced workforce. Training for Ops crews T2, T3, T4 needs to happen to compensate for this, and not place the responsibility for training solely on the stations”.

7.5.4 Other (non-survey) feedback:

Feedback was received from Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service highlighting our overall approach to the IRMP 2021-24 Plan:

“Overall commentary from this return was that the proposals are very reasonable and have been considered in a pragmatic way aligned to demand and considerate of staff welfare”.

7.5.5 Question 5: Conclusion

85% respondents this question stated the overall proposals in IRMP 2021-24 were ‘very reasonable’ or ‘fairly reasonable’. It is worth noting that nearly a quarter (**24%**) of respondents skipped this questions – possibly indicating neutrality. Whilst a number of respondents chose to use this question to repeat or reiterate the commentary left in Question 3 (Birtley Fire Station), a lot of positive comments were submitted in this section of the survey, with words such as ‘sensible’; very positive’ and ‘good to see decisions based on risk and data...’ used to support this judgement.

8 DISCUSSION

- 8.1 The vast majority of respondents to the survey felt the overall proposals contained within the draft IRMP 2021-24 were *'very / fairly reasonable'* (**84% overall, with 90%+ for both proposals 1 and 2**).
- 8.2 Generally, respondents acknowledged the positive nature of the IRMP, including the resulting additional posts that would be created, and understood the need to address the current legal position relating to proposals 3 and 4 (the DCCC staffing arrangement). A clear understanding has emerged that the proposals were based on risk, data and other relevant factors, and not based on financial cuts, as previous IRMPs had been.
- 8.3 Proposal 3 attracted the most feedback and discussion, with a mixture of support for the proposal; demonstration of an understanding of the need to change the shift arrangements due to the FBU challenge / legal decision; and concerns around the possible impact on emergency fire cover and response times in the Birtley area as a result. As detailed in the methodology section earlier, the Birtley (and wider Gateshead) area was specifically targeted in the consultation programme, to ensure the proposals were communicated clearly in this area and to engage as many people as possible in the consultation. Therefore this proportion of the overall consultation response is positive, as it demonstrates the engagement and interest of residents regarding proposed changes to their local fire station.
- 8.4 As noted earlier in this report, concerns over proposal 3 (relating to fire cover and higher response times) may have been influenced by a misconception / misunderstanding of data. All data used to inform the developments of the IRMP proposals were published alongside the consultation literature, in the interests of transparency. However, it is acknowledged that the full data set may not have been reviewed by all participants prior to completion of the survey / feeding back via local councillors and MP. This data is still available for review on the TWFRS website. Throughout, and as a result of, the consultation process, no gaps were identified and therefore it has not been necessary to add or publish any additional data to support the proposals.
- 8.5 Throughout the 8 week consultation programme, a number of frequently asked questions (FAQ) emerged. To address these questions, and enhance understanding and awareness of the IRMP proposals, a 'FAQ' communication was developed and published on the website and intranet. The FAQ document can be found at Appendix K.
- 8.6 FAQs included:
- 8.6.1 **What has changed at West Denton Fire Station / area since the second fire engine was removed a couple of years ago? Has there been an increase in incidents or in the risk in this area to justify re-introducing the 2nd fire engine?**

We continually monitor risk across the Tyne and Wear area and publish this via our Community Risk Profile. Following years of austerity and through sound financial management we are in a position to reinvest in TWFRS. Based on the previous 3 years of incident data and risk and demand it was identified that West Denton Fire Station was the best location for this additional resource to increase speed and weight of response across the TWFRS area.

It is also our busiest one pump fire station across the whole of Tyne and Wear. West Denton Fire Station also hosts our Incident Command Vehicle which is currently dual staffed. Reintroducing the second fire engine is based on incident data, operational effectiveness and efficiency. This additional fire engine will provide resilience across the whole of the Tyne and Wear area, when our incident command appliance is required to support large incidents.

8.6.2 How often are the Ariel Ladder Platforms (ALPs) used, and is there any evidence of incidents where both the ALP and primary fire engine at the same station were required at the same time?

Since 2015/16 - 2019/20 TWFRS ALPs have attended 366 incidents and, due to the current staffing model, this would have meant that for each of these attendances there would have been a fire engine made unavailable in order for the ALP to attend the incident. Shared learning from National Major Incidents, and the opportunity to reinvest in TWFRS, supports this proposal. By implementing this proposal an additional fire engine will be available to attend if required in addition to the ALP. A recent example of the challenges that can arise with the existing model is that during a recent fire in a scrap yard, the requirement for an ALP to attend reduced the fire engine availability temporarily which had an impact on the available resources.

8.6.3 Are the two remaining ALPs going to be located close to high rise buildings?

We have 3 fully trained ALP stations across the TWFRS area of which we are proposing to primary staff ALPs at 2 of these locations. Considering the compact geography of the Tyne and Wear area, we will position the ALPs to ensure they are available to attend high rise incidents in good time without impacting on other fire engines having to book unavailable.

8.3.4 What are the response times for fire engines from neighbouring stations to get into Birtley's area at night?

If all proposals are implemented, and Birtley Community Fire Station was staffed 0800-2000 hrs, response times for the most serious incidents such as fires in property and road traffic accidents (Level 1 and 2 incidents) across the Service would be as follows:

- The first fire engine response time would increase by 1 second for both risk Levels 1 & 2
- The second fire engine response time for Level 1 incidents would reduce by 3 seconds
- The second fire engine response time for risk Level 2 incidents would reduce by 2 seconds

What this means is that if an emergency call was received, the first attending fire engine would on average arrive 1 second slower than currently the case, however, the supporting fire engines would be up to 3 seconds quicker in attending which is a positive outcome.

8.3.5 Why is it being proposed to close the station at night when the majority of fires and deaths from fire happen then?

Across Tyne and Wear, and specifically in relation to the Birtley area, comprehensive incident data and evidence was analysed and presented to Fire Authority to support this proposal. This data clearly highlights that the majority of fire deaths in this area do not happen at night.

Detailed analysis of our incident data shows that, during the previous 12 years, TWFRS has unfortunately seen 28 fatalities from accidental dwelling fires across the whole Service area. Of the 28 fatalities, 15 occurred between the hours of 0800-2000 and 13 between 2000-0800; one fatality occurred in the Birtley area which was referred to the Coroner's court due to the circumstances around the incident. TWFRS recorded zero accidental dwelling fire deaths last year (2020/21).

8.3.6 Why is the proposal for Birtley fire station not the same as for Rainton Bridge e.g. 2-2-4 shift pattern? And Vice versa?

The proposals for Birtley Community Fire Station and Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station are different as they are based on previous incident data and understanding of risk and demand in each area. Rainton Bridge is geographically located on the extremity of the TWFRS area and the additional support and resources have a greater travel distance and therefore time to arrive. All data used to inform this proposal has been published on our website for transparency. It is clear from the data and evidence that fire engine cover around the Birtley area has a response time that is well below the national average times (by minutes).

This proposal ensures that 24/7/365 cover will continue in the Birtley area, as it does across all of Tyne and Wear. The presence of a fire engine in any town or village, or indeed the absence of one, does not detract from the fact that there is an extremely effective and well timed response from TWFRS to all areas of our Service even in those where a fire engine is not physically located. The response times for TWFRS are in many cases the fastest in the country by a considerable margin. This proposal does not negatively affect that and safety is, and will always remain our top priority.

8.3.7 Why can't Birtley fire station be staffed as an On-Call / Retained basis at night?

To operate an On-Call / Retained Duty System during the night at this station, retained staff would need to live within 5 minutes of the station to enable them to respond. This 5 minutes would be in addition to the mobilisation and response time. Due to the geographic locations of the surrounding fire stations, and based on incident data, there would always be a faster response time from a neighbouring station than using an On-Call response. Therefore fire cover would almost always arrive from neighbouring fire stations rather than an On-Call fire engine at Birtley.

8.3.8 There was a concern posted on social media that this proposal would result in people “dying in their beds”.

This concern is simply not founded and there is no evidence to suggest that this proposal will increase the risk of fire deaths. Evidence shows that the speed and number of fire engines that will attend incidents in the Birtley area confirms we have a very effective and timely response to emergencies in the Birtley, and the whole of Tyne and Wear area.

9 IRMP 2021-24 CONSULTATION: CONCLUSION

- 9.1 This report presents the consultation feedback regarding proposed changes to the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-24. All feedback received has been fully considered by TWFRS senior management. All relevant consultation documentation, including the full IRMP 2021-24 Consultation Survey Report (containing all raw data) can be found Appendices B-K.

