

## Cabinet

<b>Report Title:</b>	Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	17 May 2016
<b>Lead Councillor(s):</b>	Councillor Matthew Hicks, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection
<b>Local Councillor(s):</b>	All Councillors
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### Brief summary of report

1. The Government's Fire and Rescue National Framework for England states that each fire and rescue authority must produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). The IRMP must identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature. The plan must reflect effective consultation through its development.
2. This report presents members of the Cabinet with the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority IRMP consultation response. The formal consultation closed on the 22 February 2016 after 14 weeks, having been previously agreed by Cabinet at its meeting of 10 November 2015.
3. The outcome of the consultation, the IRMP and the individual proposals, have been carefully considered since the consultation closed in February. This paper has a series of recommendations, including those associated with each of the individual proposals that were originally agreed and were the subject of the consultation. These revised proposals have been fully informed by the consultation response and the professional judgement of the Chief Fire Officer.

### What is Cabinet being asked to decide?

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan Consultation Strategy (Appendix A)
2. Note the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan Consultation Response (Appendix B)
3. Agree the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority IRMP 2015-18 (Appendix C)

4. Remove the proposal to replace the second fire engine at Sudbury fire station with a smaller rapid response fire engine and, instead, to maintain the current two standard fire engines and on-call firefighter crewing.
5. Remove the proposal to close Wrentham fire station and, instead, to maintain the fire station and replace the existing standard fire engine with a smaller rapid response fire engine and reduce the establishment of on-call firefighters from 11 to 8.
6. Remove the proposal to withdraw the on-call fire engine from Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station and, instead, to maintain the fire engine and on-call firefighter establishment
7. Remove the second full-time crewed fire engine from Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station and reduce the number of full-time firefighters by 16 instead of the originally proposed 20. The additional 4 full-time firefighters will be used to support on-call fire engine availability across the county during weekdays.
8. Support the establishment of either a new 'blue light' fire station in the centre of Ipswich, or a refurbishment of the existing Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station, as determined by a business case.
9. Remove the third fire engine from Ipswich (East) fire station and reduce the establishment of on-call firefighters at the station from 21 to 15.
10. Remove the third fire engine from Bury St Edmunds fire station and reduce the establishment of on-call firefighters at the station from 21 to 15.
11. Remove the third fire engine from Lowestoft South fire station and reduce the establishment of on-call firefighters at the station from 21 to 15.
12. Note the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2016-19 (Appendix D)

### **Reason for recommendation**

4. The National Framework provides clear guidance that an IRMP must reflect effective consultation with the community, workforce, representative bodies and partner organisations. The proposals agreed by Cabinet in November 2015 have been significantly adjusted to reflect the views of those who took part in and responded to the consultation. The adjustment to the proposals has been cross-referenced against the range of views and concerns that were raised through the consultation and each adjustment, to a greater or lesser extent, has a positive impact against the points raised.
5. The draft IRMP was agreed by Cabinet in November 2015 and sets out the Authority's analysis of risk and demand across Suffolk, and the wider UK, and considers the outcomes of the service provided by firefighters and staff in Suffolk.
6. The draft IRMP included a range of specific proposals about which the Authority sought the views of the public and stakeholders. This was to inform the development of a redesign of the way in which the fire and rescue service is delivered across Suffolk, against the backdrop of further reductions in grant funding and a requirement to provide a service that takes appropriate account of risk and demand.
7. In its budget, agreed by the Full Council at its meeting of 11 February 2016, the County Council set out its plan to realise savings of £34.4m in 2016-17 and then further provisional savings of £38.5m in 2017-18. The fire and rescue service, as part of this savings plan, is required to find savings of £300k in

2016-17 and a further provisional saving of £1m in 2017-18, subject to the future budget setting process. The proposals in this paper contribute to this savings plan.

### **What are the key issues to consider?**

8. The National Framework sets out Government's expectations in the development of an Authority's IRMP. These were provided in the previous Cabinet paper of 10 November 2015 and Cabinet will need to continue to assure itself that these have been satisfied.
9. The IRMP must be agreed through a robust and effective process of consultation and due regard must be taken of the response to that consultation. Cabinet will need to assure itself that an effective and meaningful consultation was carried out and that the proper regard has been paid to the views of the public and wider stakeholders, and in particular to the areas of concern that were raised on a more regular basis, in the recommendations contained in this paper.
10. The Fire and Rescue Authority has a statutory duty, primarily through the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to provide an effective fire and rescue service. Further detail about these statutory requirements is set out in the IRMP. Cabinet will need to assure itself that the recommendations in this paper, when considered against the Authority's IRMP and future plans for the delivery of the fire and rescue service in Suffolk, mean that the Fire and Rescue Authority will be able to continue to meet these statutory requirements. The paper and recommendations are informed by the professional advice of the Chief Fire Officer in this regard.

### **What are the resource and risk implications?**

11. The IRMP must satisfy the expectations set out in the National Framework. Officers have ensured that the expectations of the Framework are clearly understood and adequately addressed. In addition, the previous IRMP 2014-17 was included in a 4-day external peer challenge in December 2013 by representatives from the Local Government Association and Chief Fire Officers' Association. The peer challenge considered the development of the IRMP against the requirements of the National Framework. The final report from the peer challenge was published in January 2014 and confirmed that, "*the IRMP is in line with current guidance and meets the requirements of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)*". As set out previously, the current IRMP follows a similar approach to the previous one.
12. The consultation, the associated proposals and the consideration of the consultation findings must stand up to scrutiny. The Consultation Institute and Opinion Research Services provided assurance and support to the process. Further detail on their respective roles is set out in paragraphs 33 and 34. This third party support and assurance has been integral to the pre-consultation, the development of the documentation to support this IRMP, the consultation itself and the collation, analysis and presentation of the consultation findings. The consultation was also benchmarked against the Council's consultation processes and advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Services.

13. The Executive Summary provided by Opinion Research Services includes details that set out the basis of a consultation. The report states, *'Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and take into account public and stakeholder views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully. Consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what are the right or best decisions in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions.'*
14. The Service will need to meet its savings target in 2016-17 and balance its budget. The saving requirement for 2016-17 is £300,000 and is primarily being met through managerial reductions and savings to support function posts and funding. The savings target for 2017-18 is set, provisionally, at £1m however this will not be formally confirmed until such time that the budget for 2017-18 is agreed through the Full Council in early 2017. The financial difference between the original IRMP proposals and the new recommendations set out in this paper total c£310k and are set out in more detail later in the report. The timing of the end of the consultation, and the decision being taken by Cabinet, provides the Service with the time to assess the final financial implications of the IRMP recommendations. In doing so, and in considering how to bridge the savings gap in 2017/18, the Authority will now consider further opportunities for efficiency savings that do not directly impact on fire stations and fire engines. The Authority will then consider whether these new saving proposals are appropriate or there is a need to adjust the 2017/18 savings requirement so the estimated savings gap of £310k, or at least part of it, no longer needs to be met by the fire and rescue service.
15. The Authority must meet its statutory responsibilities in the provision of a fire and rescue service to meet all normal requirements. The changes that have been made to the proposals, that were the subject of the consultation and have been informed by the professional advice of the Chief Fire Officer, will ensure the Authority continues to meet these statutory responsibilities. These changes impact positively, to a greater or lesser extent, on the areas where respondents raised regular concerns about the risk to the provision of an effective fire and rescue service. The risk is further mitigated by the assurance processes that are in place to monitor and manage the performance of the fire and rescue service. These include, but are not exclusive to, internal managerial oversight, internal performance management and reporting, external peer challenge, publication of an annual Statement of Assurance, periodic review of the IRMP and regular engagement between senior officers and the Cabinet Member to ensure that the Chief Fire Officer is held to account for the delivery of the fire and rescue service.
16. Cabinet will need to assure itself that the impact of changes to the provision of the fire and rescue service has taken sufficient account of the equality impacts. The Service developed equality impact assessments through the Council's Equality's Policy Clearing House. An overarching equality impact assessment screening was completed in January 2015 and subsequently published on the Council's website. A further full equality impact assessment was agreed through the Policy Clearing House in April 2016 at the conclusion of the

consultation and this took account of the individual proposals and the associated consultation responses. These assessments are published on the Council's website. Additional assessments may be required as part of the implementation process for each of the agreed proposals and where required these will be undertaken.

17. Significant fire and rescue service resources have been allocated to the development of the IRMP and associated consultation. This is expected to continue through to early 2017 to support, subject to Cabinet approval, the implementation of the recommendations. This risk is mitigated through the Service having clearly resourced plans to manage the required implementation phase.

### **What are the timescales associated with this decision?**

18. If the recommendations are agreed then the work to implement them will begin immediately. This is expected to be managed through 2016-17.

### **Alternative options**

19. The on-going reduction in funding for the fire and rescue service coupled with the assessment of demand and risk in the Authority's draft IRMP, has provided the basis upon which an option of maintaining the status quo is not presented as a viable alternative.
20. In developing the original IRMP proposals the Service considered a range of different options across the Service's Prevention, Protection, Emergency Response and support functions. Changes have been made in all of these areas in recent years and the proposals to meet the current savings requirement through to 2017/18 already include further changes in support functions and senior management positions.
21. The original proposals, as set out in the IRMP consultation, have not been presented as alternative options to this paper. This decision has been informed by the process and outcome of the consultation, the findings of which are set out in more detail in paragraphs 31 to 67 and fully in the consultation report appended to this paper.
22. There are no further alternative options set out in this paper. However, Cabinet may decide to further adjust the IRMP and associated recommendations.

### **Who will be affected by this decision?**

23. Internal and external users of the services provided by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, including the general public, fire and rescue staff, neighbouring fire and rescue services and partner organisations.

### **Main body of report**

#### Background

24. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 is the principal legislation for fire and rescue authorities in England and Wales. The Act places a duty on fire and rescue authorities to make provision for a fire and rescue service that is: equipped to extinguish fires; protect life and property from fires; rescue people from road traffic collisions and respond to other emergencies. Services must receive and respond to calls for assistance; ensure staff are properly trained and equipped and gather information to deliver a safe and effective service.

25. The Act also places a duty on fire and rescue authorities to make provision for promoting fire safety education, in its area, to reduce deaths and injuries from fire.
26. The Act requires the Secretary of State to prepare a National Framework that sets out Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions. The Act requires fire and rescue authorities to pay due regard to the Framework. The current Fire and Rescue National Framework for England was published in July 2012 and sets out the following three priorities:
  - i. Identify and assess foreseeable risks and make provision for prevention and protection activities, and to respond to incidents appropriately;
  - ii. Work in partnership with communities and partners;
  - iii. Be accountable to communities.

#### Integrated Risk Management Plan

27. The Authority's IRMP 2015-18 sets out details of the risks that face the fire and rescue service and how these are assessed and then responded to through a combination of *Prevention*, *Protection* and *Emergency Response* services. The Plan also provides information about performance across a range of different areas linked to the management of this risk.
28. At a national level the fire and rescue service has been an excellent example of reducing the demand for its services. 999 incidents attended are down 42% compared to 10 years ago and fire deaths and injuries are down approximately 30% over the same period. This is a pattern that has been broadly reflected in Suffolk, although it is worth noting that there are signs that 999 emergency calls are now starting to level out as part of a longer term trend.

#### Performance Data 2015/16

29. The IRMP is informed by a range of performance data. Given the timescales for the development of the IRMP and the associated consultation, this performance data is only provided up to the end of 2014-15. During the consultation several people asked about performance in 2015-16 and the extent to which this would be considered in the decision brought back to this meeting. This performance has now been considered and comparative data is presented in Appendix F to this report. The data is indicative at this stage as it has, due to the timing of this meeting, not been fully verified through the normal internal fire service processes.
30. The indicative findings are that the performance is broadly consistent with that of 2014-15 with, as expected, some areas where performance has improved, others where it has stayed the same, and some where it has worsened. Overall 999 call volumes have increased slightly from 2014/15, but remain broadly consistent with recent years. The speed of response to incidents has improved against two of the Service's standards and got worse against the third. On-call firefighter availability has improved slightly during the day, at nights and over the weekend. These areas of performance will continue to be monitored and managed through the Service's established performance management arrangements. The performance in 2015-16, as compared to previous years, supports the recommendations in this paper.

## Consultation

31. To inform the IRMP consultation the Authority first carried out pre-consultation stakeholder engagement from the 23 June to 24 July 2015. The data and information was fully collated and the outcome used to frame the full consultation. The summary of the pre-consultation findings were brought to Cabinet in November as part of the decision making process to start the full consultation. The summary of the pre-consultation report was included in the paper that Cabinet considered in November 2015 and is appended to this report as Appendix G.
32. The Authority has carried out a comprehensive and detailed formal consultation with the public, partner organisations, representative bodies, staff and other interested parties. This consultation ran for 14-weeks from the 16 November 2015 to 22 February 2016. Full details of the consultation are set out in the enclosed Appendix B.
33. To ensure the consultation was carried out in accordance with notable practice and the 'Gunning' principles of consultation, the Service contracted The Consultation Institute (TCI). TCI is a not for profit organisation specialising in best practice public consultation and stakeholder engagement. They have provided formal third-party support and assurance at every stage of the consultation.
34. To ensure the consultation was properly managed and the findings collated, assessed and presented by an independent third party, the Authority contracted Opinion Research Services (ORS). ORS is an independent social research practice that works across the UK with public, voluntary and private sectors in areas of research that cover a wide range of social issues. The total one-off cost of c£51k for ORS and TCI have been met through underspends as a result of part year vacancies.
35. Appendix E summarises the detailed and significant amount of consultation activity that took place through the 14-weeks. The public meetings were attended by the Cabinet Member, Chief Fire Officer, senior fire service officers, ORS and the fire service IRMP team.
36. In addition to the consultation, and since it closed on the 22 February 2016, 3 separate IRMP related petitions have been received by the Council's Democratic Services. The petitions received contain a total of 11,439 valid signatures, which have been combined, by Democratic Services, into two separate petitions, due to their similarity. Petition 0002 was received and considered by Full Council at its meeting of 17 March 2016 in line with the wishes of the petitioner. Petition 0003 was received and considered by Cabinet at its meeting of 22 March 2016 in line with the wishes of the petitioners. On 17 March 2016 the Full Council debated a motion about the IRMP proposals. The motion was not carried. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection also responded to public questions about the IRMP proposals, consultation and decision making process.
37. The consultation response provided by ORS (Appendix B) was published on the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service website on 6 April 2016, well in advance of the recommendations being brought to this Cabinet meeting. This was widely publicised and has provided the opportunity for those who engaged in the

consultation, or who were interested in the responses received, sufficient and appropriate opportunity to consider the findings in advance of this meeting.

### Consultation Findings

38. The quality and quantity of the consultation findings has been notable and this is clearly evidenced in the consultation report. The number of people who responded, in one form or another, has totalled in excess of 20,000. Findings have been considered from a wide range of stakeholders across Suffolk, including Members of Parliament, district and borough councils, parish and town councils, business, blue light partners, fire service staff, representative bodies and the general public.
39. The Cabinet Member and Chief Fire Officer have considered the consultation responses in detail since they were provided by ORS. The consultation findings have been further supported by engagement with county councillors and other elected members from across the county. The findings from the consultation are wide ranging and, alongside the professional advice from the Chief Fire Officer, have directly informed the significant adjustment to the original proposals leading to the recommendations in this paper.
40. As well as focussing on the fire station based proposals, the consultation also sought views on the IRMP document itself. There was a significant amount of overlap in the responses and comments on both. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the key issues raised through the consultation and then set out the fire service's professional response to each of those points raised.
41. *Consultation Feedback - Speed of Response* - the consultation findings were that respondents were concerned that the Service is not meeting its local response standards and any further changes, such as those proposed, would have a detrimental impact.
42. *SFRS Response - Speed of Response* - the Authority's speed-of-response standards were set in 2010-11 and based on several years of performance prior to 2010. The Government publishes an annual national report into speed of response performance across all fire and rescue services. This report shows an average and gradual increase in response times of more than 90 seconds in the last 10-years. Appendix F shows the Service's speed of response performance in 2015-16 alongside the speed of response performance for 2014-15 as reported in the IRMP. Performance improved against 2 of the 3 standards in 2015-16 and is illustrative of the variations in performance over time and based on a range of different factors.
43. In selecting the IRMP proposals the Service sought to minimise the impact on the first fire engines that would attend 999 incidents thereby reducing the impact on speed of response to only some of those fire engines supporting the initial attendance. The Service is also working on other ways to improve speed of response performance, this includes a detailed plan to improve the availability of on-call fire engines, particularly during the working day and such improvements will, to an extent, improve response times in those areas. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper and alongside other improvement programmes, further support the intention to minimise the impact on speed of response. The adjustment to the proposal at Wrentham, in particular, secures a position for the Authority in that the

proposed changes will not directly impact the attendance of the first fire engine from any fire station across the county.

44. *Consultation Feedback - On-Call Fire Engine Availability* - the consultation findings were that respondents were concerned about the impact of the proposals on the availability of on-call fire engines, particularly during the working day when it is already the case that a number of fire engines can be unavailable
45. *SFRS Response - On-Call Fire Engine Availability* - The availability of on-call fire engines during the working day presents a challenge for all fire and rescue services. The on-call firefighter system provides a very professional fire service response at excellent value for money and the firefighters that work the system provide fantastic commitment to local communities across the county. However it does not provide, nor is it ever likely to provide, an absolute 24/7 system of operational response cover from every fire station. The Service has a detailed programme of work in place to make improvements to the availability of on-call fire engines and is working closely with staff and representative bodies to implement these changes in a safe and effective way. Some are already in place and others will be implemented over the coming 12 months. These plans will be discussed with the newly established cross-party Fire Service Steering Group. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, further support the intention to minimise the impact on, and in some areas provide direct support to, on-call availability.
46. *Consultation Feedback - Resilience of the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service* the consultation findings were that respondents were concerned about the impact of the proposals on the overall resilience of the Service to deal with 999 incidents.
47. *SFRS Response - Resilience of the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service* - The resilience of the fire service is an important issue and is central to the IRMP in terms of how the Service is able to deal with the risk and demand presented. Demand on the Service has changed and reduced significantly in recent years for a range of reasons. Analysis of incident data, as set out in the IRMP, shows that the average number of fire engines committed to an incident at any one time is very low, and where there are peaks in demand then there remains sufficient fire engines across the county should further incidents arise. The Plan sets out how the Service is able to respond to significant incidents, or multiple incidents, through the use of the current 47 fire engines and further specialist vehicles across the county but also, as a matter of course, draw on support from other fire and rescue services across the country, most frequently from our neighbouring services in Essex, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, further support the intention to minimise the impact on the overall resilience of the Service, and then to reduce that impact further through plans for improving the availability of on-call fire engines during the working day.
48. *Consultation Feedback - SFRS is a low-cost fire and rescue service* - the consultation findings were that respondents were concerned that as an already very low-cost Service it is not possible to release further financial savings.
49. *SFRS Response - SFRS is a low-cost fire and rescue service* - through benchmarking provided by the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy, Suffolk is shown as the lowest cost fire and rescue service in the

country when measured by the cost per head of population. In developing saving proposals since 2010, officers and councillors have worked hard to ensure there have been no reductions in the number of fire engines and fire stations in the county. In developing the proposals to meet the financial challenge facing the Service over the coming years, further reductions and changes are, again, first being made to managerial and support function arrangements. However, given the financial reductions over such an extended period, and the reduction in demand facing the 999 response element of the Service over the last 10-years, a review of the number and type of fire engines is appropriate. However, in developing these proposals the Chief Fire Officer has sought to propose only those that have the least impact on front-line service delivery. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, further support the recognition that Suffolk is already a low cost fire and rescue service.

50. *Consultation Feedback - Detrimental impact on Prevention and Protection services* - the consultation findings were that respondents were concerned that the proposed reduction in firefighter numbers would reduce the amount of prevention and protection work that is carried out in local communities.
51. *SFRS Response - Detrimental impact on Prevention and Protection services* - Prevention and protection work is carried out by firefighters on fire stations; however it is also carried out by dedicated staff working in the Service's prevention and protection teams, a team of community fire volunteers, and increasingly by partner agencies as the Service works more closely with other services and organisations. The Service has a clear strategy to increasingly target its Prevention work to those communities that are most at risk and this is reviewed on an annual basis. The proposals set out in the IRMP were not expected to have a notable impact on the overall levels of prevention and protection work. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, further minimise this impact.
52. *Consultation Feedback - Impact on attending high-rise and other larger emergencies* - the consultation findings were that respondents were concerned that the reductions in fire engines and firefighters would have a detrimental impact on the Service's ability to safely and effectively respond to certain incidents, for example fires in high-rise buildings or ship fires in Suffolk's ports.
53. *SFRS Response - Impact on attending high-rise and other larger emergencies* - the Service has established arrangements in place for sending the right number of fire engines and firefighters to each type of emergency – these are called pre-determined attendances. The proposals in the IRMP were carefully selected so as to minimise the impact on the response to high rise and other large and more complex emergencies and, in particular, on the first fire engines to respond to them. The impact for supporting fire engines varies depending on the location of the emergency and the associated proposals. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, further minimise this impact at these types of emergency. The Service will continue to work with staff and representative bodies to ensure there are safe and effective arrangements in place, this will include benchmarking our fire engine attendance arrangements to those of other fire and rescue services and having regard for national guidance.

54. *Consultation Feedback - Ability to maintain the availability of specialist fire appliances and capabilities* - the consultation findings were that respondents were concerned that the reductions in fire engines and firefighters would have a detrimental impact on the Service's ability to maintain the availability of specialist fire engines and capabilities.
55. *SFRS Response - Ability to maintain the availability of specialist fire appliances and capabilities* - the Service has clear arrangements in place for maintaining the availability of specialist fire engines. These arrangements are supported by the fact that the Service has more than one aerial appliance, water bowser, command support vehicle, water rescue team, advanced working at height team and Unimog 'off-road' appliance. This means that in the event of one not being available, 999 Control will send the next nearest vehicle and firefighters from inside Suffolk or from a neighbouring fire service. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, further minimise the impact on the specialist capabilities of the Service. The Service will continue to work with staff and representative bodies to ensure there are safe and effective arrangements in place through the implementation of any changes.
56. *Consultation Feedback - Impact on existing risk, future population and housing growth* - the consultation findings were that respondents were concerned that the reductions in fire engines and firefighters did not take full account of the current and future risks and predicted growth.
57. *SFRS Response - Impact on existing risk, future population and housing growth* - The IRMP clearly sets out how the fire and rescue service assesses and manages risk. The plan does take account of current and future risk and potential growth across the county. The plan presents clear data that shows, despite an increase in population and housing over the last 10-years, there has been a significant reduction in 999 call demand. This is a pattern that is consistent across the wider UK fire and rescue service. The National Framework requires Authorities to regularly review and update their IRMP and this will ensure that a continual process of risk assessment is in place and can take full account of any future growth and changing demand and risk for the fire service. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, support the need to maintain more resource than was originally proposed and this will be able to manage the inherent and future level of risk and demand.
58. *Consultation Feedback - IRMP Data; Pre-determined outcome; insufficiently advertised consultation* - the consultation findings were that some respondents felt that the information provided in the IRMP was incorrect or misleading and that the consultation had not been well advertised and was presented as a *fait accompli*.
59. *SFRS Response - IRMP Data; Pre-determined outcome; insufficiently advertised consultation* - The information provided in the IRMP has been gathered over an extended period and extensively verified. Where questions have been asked about data, through the consultation, it has been cross-referenced and checked and found to be correct. The data was presented, for the most part, across a 5-year period to present a more accurate picture of performance. The consultation and the public meetings have been extensively advertised by the Service through various means. All media requests have been supported and every opportunity taken to promote the consultation and

encourage people to take part. The number of people who have responded and have attended events has been excellent and supports the quality of the advertising and promotion. Throughout the consultation the Cabinet Member, and others, have been clear that the consultation is an important and valued part of the decision making process and the recommendations in this paper support the fact that the Authority has listened to the views raised and adjusted the original proposals accordingly. The consultation has been supported and assessed by TCI from a quality assurance and notable practice perspective and ORS in terms of direct support for the consultation process and collation of findings.

60. *Consultation Feedback - Responding to simultaneous incidents* - the consultation findings were that some respondents felt there would be a significant impact on the Service's ability to attend simultaneous incidents in the same area.
61. *SFRS Response - Responding to simultaneous incidents* - The Service attends an average of 14 emergency incidents in a 24 hour period and approximately 50% of these turn out to be false alarms. Simultaneous incidents in the same area are infrequent; however, they do happen and will again in the future. When they happen the 999 Fire Control has technology that enables it to identify and send the nearest available fire engines if the closest fire engine is already committed to another incident. Fire Control can also, and does, re-direct fire engines from one incident to another if they consider the second incident to present a greater risk and more urgent need. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, reduce the risk associated with establishing a prompt attendance at simultaneous incidents.
62. *Consultation Feedback - Impact of changes in neighbouring fire services* - the consultation findings were that some respondents felt the changes potentially taking place in neighbouring fire and rescue services would have a detrimental impact on the ability of Suffolk to call upon support when it was required.
63. *SFRS Response - Impact of changes in neighbouring fire services* - changes made in neighbouring fire services is a matter for those fire and rescue authorities. However, in developing Suffolk's IRMP, the Chief Fire Officer and senior officers met with the senior teams in each of the neighbouring fire services to consider the combined impact of proposed changes in Suffolk or in those neighbouring services. Cross-border support into and out of Suffolk is not expected to be impacted in a significant way by the current proposals. The engagement with neighbouring services will continue and future IRMPs will continue to take account of these cross-border and national support arrangements. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, reduce any additional reliance on cross-border support.
64. *Consultation Feedback - Impact of increased workload on remaining on-call firefighters and fire engines* - the consultation findings were that some respondents felt the reduction of fire engines would result in on-call firefighters being drawn from further afield to support incidents away from their local areas, and this would impact detrimentally on their availability from their primary employment and associated recruitment and retention.
65. *SFRS Response - Impact of increased workload on remaining on-call firefighters and fire engines* - the Service does not consider that this would

present a significant problem. Many on-call firefighters have a desire to respond to more 999 calls as it increases their experience, provides more opportunities to support local communities and increases their pay. Where issues do present then these will be considered and managed at a local level. The changes to the proposals, as set out in the recommendations in this paper, reduce the potential for this to be the case, particularly in Ipswich where four fire engines will now remain.

66. *Consultation Feedback - Council tax increases and/or use of reserves* - the consultation findings were that some respondents felt the Authority should offset the required financial savings through an increase in council tax or through the use of the Council's reserves.
67. *Cabinet Member Response - Council tax increases and/or use of reserves* - The Service has seen a significant reduction in its 999 call demand over an extended period and against this backdrop has, to date, protected the number of fire stations and fire engines across the county. The funding reductions through to 2019-20 mean that this level of resource should now be adjusted to reflect the changing demand and risk profile. The proposals in the consultation have been adjusted, as recommended in this report, to reflect the views presented through various means in the 14-week consultation, together with the advice of the Chief Fire Officer, and are evidence that the Authority has listened to the concerns raised. In considering the level of savings proposed, the protection being afforded to the Service by the Council and the demand and challenges being faced in other County Council services, then the recommendations for the fire and rescue service are appropriate and do not require a council tax increase. The Council is already using reserves to balance its budget in 2016/17 and the fire service expects to use some of its service reserves through to 2017/18 to support the implementation of the changes associated with the recommendations in this paper. The administration does not support the longer term use of reserves to manage recurring reductions in revenue grant funding.

#### Alternative Proposals - Consideration

68. At public meetings and in written consultation responses some respondents suggested alternative proposals to those presented in the IRMP. Where they were raised in face to face meetings they were discussed in some detail with the individual concerned and then recorded in the records of the meeting. Where they were raised in the consultation response questionnaire they are contained within the ORS report.
69. On some occasions the alternative proposals have been agreed and included in the proposals. For example, some respondents to the original Wrentham proposal suggested the introduction of a rapid response vehicle as an alternative and more cost effective approach to providing operational cover to the area and this has now been included as a proposal in this paper. In Ipswich, some respondents felt that the reduction from 6 to 3 fire engines was excessive. We have taken these views into account and adjusted the proposals to now move from 6 to 4 fire engines and the detail of this is set out in this paper.
70. On other occasions the alternative proposals had already been considered and discounted in the development of the original proposals and through the pre-

consultation stage. For example, some respondents suggested alternative fire stations including Nayland, Newmarket and Haverhill where the Service might consider making changes to the firefighter establishment, fire engine crewing arrangements and fire engine type. On all occasions the suggestions raised had already been considered and discounted in the considerations and risk analysis associated with the development of the original proposals. The Chief Fire Officer has, following the close of the consultation, revisited the original considerations that looked at every fire station and fire engine across the county. The conclusion is that the recommendations presented in this paper are the most appropriate.

71. Other suggestions, such as greater collaboration with blue light partners, increasing use of digital and ICT solutions, review of the attendance to automatic fire alarm calls, changes to fleet management and plans to improve the availability of on-call firefighters are being considered and some of these are already reflected in the broad intentions set out in the Service's Plan for 2016-19, included as Appendix D, and individual departmental plans for the same period. Where these approaches secure financial savings then they will be considered as elements of the future funding, expenditure and saving considerations for the Service.

#### Initial IRMP Proposals and Post-consultation Recommendations

72. As set out previously, feedback was received about the substance of the IRMP document. The issues and questions raised have been noted and will be used to inform future IRMP development. There are no changes recommended to the risk assessment part of the 2015-18 IRMP document.
73. Paragraphs 76 to 104 set out each of the original proposals followed by the revised recommendation. Each of the new recommendations has been properly and fully informed by the analysis of risk carried out at the outset of the IRMP and the findings from the consultation response, set out in summary form in the paragraphs 38 to 67. Both have informed the professional advice of the Chief Fire Officer and the political view of the administration.
74. The more detailed consultation responses that have informed these changes are set out in Appendix B. The recommendations to Cabinet, and the adjustment from the original proposals, provides for a cumulative benefit against the points raised in the consultation. For example, each of the revised proposals will reduce the impact on the Service's speed of response to 999 emergencies; the impact on on-call fire engine availability; and, the Service's response to larger incidents. The extent of the reduced impact for each of the revised proposals varies for many reasons, these include; the location of the fire engine, the crewing arrangement, the number of 999 calls it receives.
75. Whilst none of the original recommendations were supported by a majority of those who responded to the consultation, the revised recommendations reflect the position of the Authority having to make 'hard choices' across a range of Service areas. These choices are made against the situation of having to save money; experiencing a reduction in operational fire service demand over an extended period; needing to minimise the impact on 999 response standards and Service-wide resilience and continuing to meet the statutory duty of the Fire Authority to provide an effective Service in line with the Fire and Rescue Service's Act. For these reasons, whilst some of the concerns and ideas raised

have not been taken forward, they have been reviewed and where possible proposals amended in light of the feedback received. In this regard, the new recommendations provide for a number of important future principles for the Service which include:

- a) Maintain the current 35 fire stations across Suffolk
  - b) The proposed changes do not directly impact on the attendance of the first fire engine to any incident across Suffolk
  - c) The changes establish a principle of Suffolk's 4 full time fire stations in Ipswich (2), Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft South all having the same crewing model of 1 full time and 1 on-call fire engine together with specialist appliances
  - d) Providing the opportunity to consider the potential benefits from a rapid response vehicle as a means to maintain fire engine availability and speed of response in quiet rural fire stations
  - e) Using full time firefighters to provide additional resilience to on-call fire stations Monday to Friday during the day.
76. **Original IRMP Proposal - Sudbury fire station** – The original proposal was that the second fire engine is changed to a rapid response type fire engine and the number of on-call firefighters is reduced at the fire station.
77. **Recommendation - Sudbury fire station** – The recommendation, informed by the consultation and the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer, is to remove the proposal to replace the second fire engine at Sudbury fire station with a smaller rapid response fire engine and, instead, to maintain the current two standard fire engines and on-call firefighter establishment.
78. The rationale for the Sudbury recommendation is to support the provision of resilience to surrounding on-call fire engines and in particular to recognise that the proposal is the one that was located the greatest distance from the nearest full time crewed fire engine, with the associated resilience and capability this facility provides. The 999 call volumes at Sudbury are amongst the highest of Suffolk's on-call fire stations, this profile is expected to remain and the station will continue to provide hazardous material incident support to surrounding fire stations. Whilst some respondents supported the principle of the proposed vehicle, the majority felt that, given the risk profile in the town and evidence of fires in the recent and more distant past, the benefits of the rapid response vehicle did not outweigh the benefits of the current provision. The financial saving associated with the proposal was the lowest of all the proposals and the cost benefit analysis of the proposal, informed by the feedback, was considered to be marginal. The Service will also be taking the opportunity to review the use of a rapid response fire engine at an alternative location where it may derive greater benefit.
79. The original Sudbury proposal was estimated to save approximately £35k per annum. The recommendation withdraws all of this saving.
80. **Original IRMP Proposal - Wrentham fire station** – The original proposal was to remove the fire engine and 11 on-call firefighters and close the fire station.
81. **Recommendation - Wrentham fire station** - The recommendation, informed by the consultation and the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer, is to

adjust the proposal to close Wrentham fire station and, instead, to maintain the fire station, replace the existing fire engine with a smaller rapid response fire engine and reduce the establishment of on-call firefighters from 11 to 8.

82. The rationale for the Wrentham recommendation is to secure the provision of a fire station in a local rural community, albeit at reduced cost. The recommendation means that none of the current first fire engines to attend incidents across Suffolk is directly affected by the recommendations. It recognises and responds to the difficulties experienced with recruitment of on-call firefighters in Wrentham and supports this with a smaller rapid response vehicle able to respond with less firefighters. This type of provision will increase the amount of time the fire engine is available in Wrentham and the associated speed of response to incidents, particularly during weekdays. Maintaining the fire engine at Wrentham increases the overall number of fire engines in Suffolk from that originally proposed and supports the wider resilience across the county. It also reflects the impact of the removal of the third fire engine from Lowestoft South which is its neighbouring fire station.
83. The original Wrentham proposal was estimated to save approximately £79k per annum. The recommendation results in a saving of £25k per annum.
84. **Original IRMP Proposal - Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station** – The original proposal was to remove the second fire engine and reduce the number of full time firefighters by 20.
85. **Recommendation - Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station** – The recommendation, informed by the consultation and the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer, is to remove the second full-time crewed fire engine from Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station and reduce the establishment of full-time firefighters by 16 instead of the originally proposed 20. The additional 4 full-time firefighters will be used to support on-call fire engine availability across the county during weekdays.
86. **Original IRMP Proposal - Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station** – The original proposal was to remove the third fire engine and the 11 on-call firefighters.
87. **Recommendation - Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station** - The recommendation, informed by the consultation and the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer, is to remove the proposal to withdraw the on-call fire engine from Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station and, instead, to maintain the fire engine and on-call firefighter establishment.
88. **Original IRMP Proposal - Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station** – The original proposal was to establish either a new ‘blue light’ fire station in the centre of Ipswich, or a refurbishment of the existing Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station.
89. **Recommendation - Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station** - The recommendation, informed by the consultation and the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer, is to support the establishment of either a new ‘blue light’ fire station in the centre of Ipswich, or a refurbishment of the existing Ipswich (Princes Street) fire station, as determined by a business case.
90. **Original IRMP Proposal - Ipswich (East) fire station** – The original proposal was to remove one of the three fire engines and reduce the number of on-call firefighters from 21 to 13.

91. **Recommendation Ipswich (East) fire station** – The recommendation, informed by the consultation and the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer, is to remove the third fire engine from Ipswich (East) fire station and reduce the establishment of on-call firefighters at the station to 15, instead of 13, to improve the availability of the on-call fire engine and specialist appliances.
92. The rationale for the Ipswich recommendations is that the consultation response was consistent that the cumulative effect of the 3 elements to the proposals in Ipswich was thought to be too significant a change.
93. The withdrawal of the proposal to remove the on-call fire engine at Princes Street reflects the good availability performance of the fire engine; the support that the on-call firefighters will be able to provide to the availability of the new specialist Unimog 4x4 fire engine at the station; the improvements in speed of response that a second fire engine at Princes Street will provide, as well as the support it will provide at the more significant incidents in Ipswich, such as high rise and marine incidents.
94. The removal of the third fire engine at Ipswich East fire station will continue as this is the least used of all the fire engines in Ipswich, with very low call volumes. The adjustment to the proposal at Ipswich East provides for additional on-call firefighters at the fire station and provides more resilience in securing the availability of the remaining on-call fire engine and specialist fire engines. This adjustment also supports the wider resilience across the Service whilst at the same time continuing to secure a revenue saving.
95. The final element to the recommendation in Ipswich, the removal of the 2<sup>nd</sup> full time fire engine from Princes Street, will remain but has been adjusted. This is based on the fact that, alongside the other recommendations, Ipswich will continue to be served by 4 fire engines and specialist vehicles at 2 fire stations. Ipswich will have the greatest number of firefighters of all the towns in Suffolk which reflects the fact it is the busiest, in terms of 999 emergency calls. Together with the surrounding fire stations this will mean that there is a good level of response to 999 emergencies in and around the town. The approach across the 2 fire stations in Ipswich means that Suffolk now maintains a consistent crewing model of 1 full time and 1 on-call fire engine at each of its 4 full time 24/7 fire stations. The adjustment to the proposal provides for 4 additional full time firefighters who will work a weekday shift system and be used solely to provide additional resilience to surrounding on-call fire stations. This reflects concerns raised in the consultation and replaces the current and frequent use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> full time fire engine in Ipswich to provide support to on-call station areas during weekdays. The continuation of this element of the proposal, albeit with an adjustment, also reflects the cost benefit analysis associated with this proposal securing the greatest financial saving of all the proposals.
96. The original Ipswich proposals were estimated to save approximately £916k per annum. The recommendation now results in a saving of approximately £716k per annum.
97. **Original IRMP Proposal - Bury St Edmunds fire station** - The original proposal was to remove one of the three fire engines and reduce the number of on-call firefighters from 21 to 13.

98. **Recommendation Bury St Edmunds fire station** – The recommendation, informed by the consultation and the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer, is to remove the third fire engine from Bury St Edmunds fire station and reduce the establishment of on-call firefighters at the station to 15, instead of 13, to improve the availability of the on-call fire engine and specialist appliances.
99. The rationale for the Bury St Edmunds recommendation is that the town will continue to be provided by the 2 fire engines and associated specialist vehicles at the fire station. Additional support is able to be drawn from surrounding stations of Ixworth, Wickhambrook and Elmswell and, although not the closest station, the removal of the proposal at Sudbury provides for additional resilience to the surrounding area. The 999 call volumes at Bury St Edmunds are the lowest of the 3 full time fire station towns of Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury. Whilst population and housing growth is expected, the Service does not expect this to bring significant increases in operational demand and that any increase can be managed effectively by the proposed provision. The adjustment to the proposal provides for additional on-call firefighters at the fire station and provides more resilience in securing the availability of the remaining on-call fire engine and the specialist vehicles. Further work by the Service on improving on-call fire engine availability, particularly during weekdays, will provide further resilience to the fire stations surrounding Bury St Edmunds and will go some way to responding to concerns raised about firefighter support into Bury. This also supports the wider resilience across the Service whilst at the same time continuing to secure a revenue saving.
100. The original Bury St Edmunds proposal was estimated to save approximately £72k per annum. The recommendation results in a saving of approximately £62k per annum
101. **Original IRMP Proposal - Lowestoft South fire station** – The original proposal was to remove one of the four fire engines in Lowestoft, this being one currently based at Lowestoft South fire station and reduce the number of on-call firefighters at Lowestoft South from 21 to 13.
102. **Recommendation Lowestoft South fire station** – The recommendation, informed by the consultation and the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer, is to remove the third fire engine from Lowestoft South fire station and reduce the establishment of on-call firefighters at the station to 15, instead of 13, to improve the availability of the on-call fire engine and specialist appliances.
103. The rationale for the Lowestoft South recommendation is that the town will continue to be provided by 2 fire stations, 3 fire engines and associated specialist vehicles. Additional support is able to be drawn from surrounding fire stations of Beccles and Reydon, and now also Wrentham where it is proposed a rapid response fire engine will remain. Support can also be drawn from fire stations across the border in Norfolk. Population and housing growth is expected in Lowestoft and the surrounding area, however the Service does not expect this to bring significant increases in operational demand and that any increase can be managed effectively by the proposed provision. The adjustment to the proposal provides for additional on-call firefighters at the fire station and provides resilience in securing the availability of the remaining on-call fire engine and the specialist vehicles. Further work by the Service on improving on-call fire engine availability, particularly during weekdays, will provide further resilience to the fire stations in and around Lowestoft and will go

some way to responding to concerns raised about firefighter support into the town. This also supports the wider resilience across the Service whilst at the same time continuing to secure a revenue saving.

104. The original Lowestoft South proposal was estimated to save approximately £62k per annum. The recommendation results in a saving of approximately £52k per annum

#### Next Steps

105. Subject to Cabinet agreeing the recommendations in this report, implementation of the proposals will begin immediately and be introduced over the remainder of 2016/17. The Authority's IRMP 2015-18 and the Service's Plan 2016-19 will be published on the Council's website.
106. The Service will regularly review the impact of the changes made. The IRMP covers a three year time span and will be reviewed and revised in due course as it is necessary to ensure that the fire authority is able to deliver the requirements set out in the National Framework.

#### **Sources of further information**

- a) Fire and Rescue National Framework for England  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5904/nationalframework.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5904/nationalframework.pdf)
- b) Appendix A – Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Consultation Strategy
- c) Appendix B – Suffolk Fire Authority - ORS Consultation Response
- d) Appendix C – Suffolk Fire Authority IRMP 2015-18
- e) Appendix D – Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2016-19
- f) Appendix E – Consultation Activity - Summary
- g) Appendix F – Suffolk Fire and Rescue Data – 2015/16
- h) Appendix G – Pre-consultation Summary
- i) Appendix H - Equality Impact Assessment
- j) Cabinet 10 November 2015 – Cabinet Report IRMP Consultation  
([http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c\\_committee~~The%20Cabinet](http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c_committee~~The%20Cabinet))
- k) Council 17 March 2016 – Receipt of Petition, Public Questions, Motion  
([http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c\\_committee~~County%20Council](http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c_committee~~County%20Council))
- l) Cabinet 22 March 2016 – Receipt of Petition –  
([http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c\\_committee~~The%20Cabinet](http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/searchResult.aspx?qry=c_committee~~The%20Cabinet))

