

Reduction of Fire Appliances from Two to One

Introduction

Following a period of consultation in 2009 the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority agreed to implement a proposal to combine Cradley Heath and Halesowen Fire Stations.

The 2009 proposal stated that there would be two fire appliances based at the combined station.

The latest analysis shows that, due to the level of risk in Cradley Heath and Halesowen, the Service is able to provide adequate fire cover to the Cradley Heath and Halesowen area with one fire appliance.

Due to this change in risk and the significant reduction in government funding the Authority has to review this proposal in order to provide the most efficient and effective service with the resources that are available.

The Service has therefore carried out a Public Consultation process on the following subjects:

1. Informing the public on the decision taken back in 2009 to combine Cradley Heath and Halesowen Fire Stations.
2. Consulting the public to gather views on the proposal to have one appliance at the combined station.
3. Consulting the public to gather their views on the delivery of prevention based activities in the area of Cradley Heath and Halesowen.

During consultation the public could make their views known in several ways: via the email link on the website, which included an area of supporting information; via voicemail to a designated phone line; via letters sent into Fire Service Headquarters or their local fire station; or at the two public meetings held in the area, one in Cradley Heath and one in Halesowen. These meetings were advertised in the Halesowen News and Dudley Express and Star along with an additional advert in the Wolverhampton Express and Star Weekly TV Guide.

During the consultation the Service received 17 email responses and approximately 250 people attended the two meetings. This represents 0.032% of the residents of the Halesowen and Rowley Regis constituency of 84,000.

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Following the consultation a number of questions have been raised by the community and its representatives at both public meetings and in writing. These questions and the Authority's responses are set out in this Appendix. All those people that have asked questions have been responded to either verbally or in writing.

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**Cradley Heath and Halesowen Consultation
15th August 2011 – 12th September 2011
Summary of Comments/Responses**

Received by email

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
Where will the site of the new Fire Station be?	The exact location of the new facility is yet to be determined. The consultation responses will help us to identify this along with new ideas of how we support fire reduction awareness and education in the area.
The merger of the stations covers two separate council areas; will we see a reduction in Council Tax for either Dudley or Sandwell?	The fire cover provided by us is for the whole West Midlands and we do not differentiate on the basis of Authority, all residents pay a flat rate for the Fire Service and it doesn't change depending on what Authority you pay it to.
How can you make a more efficient service by reducing the number of fire appliances and firefighters?	The residents of Halesowen will still receive sufficient fire cover and we are confident that we can maintain our standards of service with the resources we are proposing. We have no choice in having to make cuts to our service due to the decrease in funding we receive from the government but by reorganising our resources we can maintain the service to our communities.
Is there any possibility that the existing fire stations will remain open if an alternative/replacement site/facility is not found? Will they remain open until the replacement facility is provided or will the community be left with no replacement facility?	Once a suitable location is identified the timings with regards to the station closures will be agreed and at no point will Cradley Heath and Halesowen be without fire cover.

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<p>Will an adequate replacement facility be provided with sufficient facilities/equipment to replace those lost at the existing fire stations?</p>	<p>Yes, work is underway with the local managers and crews to identify the requirements for the new facility.</p>
<p>What will happen to the existing facilities and sites of the current fire stations, and will they be made available to the community in all or part?</p>	<p>If a single new facility was acquired, the 2 sites would be disposed of. The subsequent capital receipt could provide funding for investment in WMFRA buildings/vehicles/equipment (the precise use would be subject to WMFRA approval but potentially, for example, could help fund the new facility if there was a need to buy land/buildings).</p>
<p>Will the Fire Authority choose the cheapest or safest replacement facility?</p>	<p>We will always pick the safest option in line with the budget available to us and the risk to the community.</p>
<p>Will the Fire Authority properly consider all the comments made as a result of this consultation, and will the results be publicised?</p>	<p>Yes, all responses received and WMFRA's responses will be published on our website (www.wmfs.net).</p>
<p>Respondent asked for further consultation discussion meetings regarding the closure of the fire stations to take place in addition to the existing meetings.</p>	<p>To clarify, the public meetings have not been arranged to discuss the closure of the fire stations. The arranged public meetings are to discuss the proposal of reducing appliances at the new location from two to one and discussing the delivery of prevention based cover.</p>
<p>Please explain how 1 Station with 1 Appliance and Crew can provide the same level of cover as 2 Stations with 2 Appliances and Crews. What happens if neighbouring Stations are on a call and are not able to respond to an incident in Halesowen/Cradley area?</p>	<p>Due to the budget settlement announced by Government, following the Comprehensive Spending Review, West Midlands Fire Service has to reduce its revenue spending by approximately £10m in the 2 year period 2011-13, on the understanding that there will be more stringent cuts during the following 2 years.</p>

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	<p>The proposal to combine 2 fire engines and crews into a single unit has to be seen against that background, as it is obviously not possible to provide the same level of service across the West Midlands if we are forced to operate with a reduced level of firefighters and appliances.</p> <p>Halesowen's appliance attended 535 incidents during the year 2010-11, compared with 1007 for Cradley Heath. The overall time commitment at these incidents amounted to approximately 4% of the Halesowen crew's total time on duty, with a figure of 6% for Cradley Heath's crew.</p> <p>By combining the 2 into 1, the number of incidents attended will still be manageable, as the surrounding stations of Stourbridge, Brierley Hill, Oldbury and others, will respond over a slightly expanded response area and we anticipate that if the merger goes ahead in this way, the new combined crew will spend around 7% of their total time committed to emergency incidents. This compares favourably with other single pump stations across the brigade area.</p> <p>It should also be noted that many of the incidents currently responded to by the separate crews are double counted in effect, because for many of the more serious calls, each existing crew will provide back-up for the other, at the same incidents. In future, this assistance may need to be provided by other neighbouring appliances, but the initial response will still be maintained at a high standard.</p> <p>A further factor to consider is the active management of emergency</p>
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	<p>resources that is carried out by staff in our Fire Control Centre. Should there be activity in progress that reduces the level of fire cover in a given area; Fire Control will take steps to make cover moves, so that appliances from further a field are brought in to stand by in that area, to ensure response standards can still be met if further calls occur.</p> <p>Due to the active tracking of all our vehicles by Fire Control, it is part of routine business, that the fastest appropriate response is always identified for mobilising to a particular call, even if that response is not from the home station, but from another appliance that is mobile within the area. This has allowed us to improve response times. The recent initiative to reduce the number of false alarm calls that we attend, brought about by automatic fire alarm systems has reduced calls to these incidents releasing additional capacity from our resources.</p>
<p>The decision taken in February 2009 with regards to the merger of Halesowen and Cradley Heath Fire Stations was proceeded with on the basis that there would be a new fire station built serving both areas with 2 24/7 engines located there. The decision to maintain existing levels of cover was taken explicitly in response to the consultation. Therefore, the decision taken by the WMFRA in February 2009 was based on a fundamentally different premise to what we are now being presented with. I believe, therefore, that the changed proposals as presented now mean that the original decision should be regarded as null and void and the whole proposal needs to be revisited in light of the changes proposed.</p>	<p>The original consultation proposals in 2009 preferred by WMFRA would have seen one 24 hour pump and one 12 hour pump. Following consultation, it was decided to increase this to two 24 hour pumps, based at one station. These two aspects of the proposals were treated separately, with the merger of the two stations being approved as planned while the staffing proposals was modified in light of the consultation response. Now, in 2011, we are continuing with the original merger proposal but have changed the staffing aspect. As a result of this we have consulted again on the staffing aspect. Nothing has changed with proposal to merge the two stations.</p>

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<p>It is also simply not acceptable to present these major Service changes without providing further detailed information or specific plans about the location of the new fire station which was not forthcoming during the consultation. In order to properly evaluate the merits of these proposals it is essential for me and my constituents to be presented with a specific, detailed, costed plan with appropriate timescales. This requirement has not been met other than in the most vague of terms. The original decision to merge was taken over two years ago and it is not acceptable that there has been so little progress on developing plans for the new site.</p>	<p>For reasons of commercial sensitivity we cannot yet propose a specific location for the new station, but we have been able to highlight to members of the public where the 'optimum' location for the new fire station is likely to be, based upon risk data and call demand. Although the original decision to merge the two stations was taken over two years ago, work did not go ahead as there was insufficient capital funding available to begin work on all of the proposals contained within the 2009 Service Review. As we did not face such acute budget pressures at that time, planning was delayed while other capital projects were undertaken.</p>
<p>I wrote to Vij Randeniya on the 8th June 2011 raising concerns about the safety and risk implications of the proposals. These concerns have not been addressed during the consultation and remain as significant issues and are ones which most exercise those local residents who have contacted me.</p>	<p>This proposal has been made on the basis of risk. Halesowen is the quietest 24 hour appliance station within the West Midlands Fire Service, and the crews there respond to less than 540 calls a year. The appliance at Cradley Heath is busier, and this is reflected in the 'optimum' site for the new station. However, the two appliances combined still respond to fewer incidents than several of our busiest appliances elsewhere. The Halesowen station itself is far from ideally located, being very close to the border with Hereford and Worcester (and therefore covered by another brigade) and with a large part of the area it covers being rural or suburban, which are low risk areas. If this appliance was not removed from Halesowen and Cradley Heath, it would need to be removed from somewhere else where risk and demand were higher.</p>
<p>I understand that the West Midlands Fire Service is operating in a challenging financial environment. However, my</p>	<p>The service is currently undertaking a wide ranging review of its management structure, and expects to make savings in this area.</p>

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<p>constituents cannot understand the logic behind this proposal given, that over 6 senior staff within the West Midlands Fire Service earn in excess of 100,000 per year and the Fire Authority itself spends 250,000 per year on members' allowances and expenses. I believe that it should be possible for West Midlands Fire Service to make the savings it needs without reducing the number of engines in the constituency and that further work should be undertaken to identify where these savings can be made.</p>	<p>The service will be carrying out a similar review of Members' allowances and expenses. Officers are also reviewing every area of the back office and a number of savings have already been made here with more in the pipeline. However, the scale of these cuts is too great to make savings from the back office and senior management alone. Even if the service were to remove every single member of back office staff (a ridiculous proposition considering the many vital roles they undertake) we would not be able to reduce our budget sufficiently. By comparison, the potential revenue saving of removing a single pump is £1.2 million. The vast majority of the budget is spent on front line staff and equipment, and with cuts in 2011/12 and 2012/13 of nearly £10 million and further cuts of around £20 million expected in 2013/14 and 2014/15, there is little choice but to reduce front line capacity to meet these budget reductions.</p>
<p>It is also the case that these proposals are also opposed by a majority of the Councillors who represent the Wards that make up my constituency.</p>	<p>While this is unfortunate, the members of WMFRA represent the entirety of the West Midlands, and all their decisions must be made with the collective best interest of people of the West Midlands as a whole. While WMFS always has a local focus and seeks to cater to the needs of our many constituent communities, in response terms the service has to think terms of a West Midlands wide network.</p>
<p>This proposal and the consultation exercise has been presented on the basis of partial information, inadequate explanation of future plans, a reference to a decision taken in February 2009 which, as I have said, should be regarded as null and void. Therefore I would urge the West Midlands Fire</p>	<p>Given the length of time required to identify a site and build the new station, officers need to begin work as soon as possible in order to make the savings needed in time. When were planning for our budget reductions officers assumed that the WMFRA would face 25% formula grant cuts as announced by the Chancellor in</p>

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<p>Service to withdraw these proposals as it is simply not acceptable to me as the local MP and my constituents that such a major change should be proposed on the basis of such a poorly presented set of proposals.</p>	<p>October 2010. In reality, WMFRA has so far faced double the national average, and could face cuts nearer 37% of WMFRA formula grant.</p>
<p>In the past few years the area has seen major housing projects being carried out involving a migration of new residents within the area.</p>	<p>As part of our Integrated Risk Management Planning we use a number of data sets which include the demographics of the area. Within this work, the Local Development Framework for the Black Country shows that housing in Halesowen is planned to increase by around 300 units over the next decade. The risk generated by new housing is lower than that for older premises and risk levels overall are not expected to increase.</p>
<p>The proposal to close two stations to be replaced by a single station can only mean an increase in response times to the majority of the area covered.</p>	<p>We review incident data attendance times and appliance activity. This information shows that the Authority can meet both its statutory and moral obligations to the community by having a single fire engine based in an 'optimum area' providing fire cover for both Cradley Heath and Halesowen.</p>
<p>I believe that the merger of the two fire stations should result in the closure of Cradley Heath Fire Station, not Halesowen. Having viewed the response times (within 5 & 7 minutes), it appears that some parts of Halesowen's area would not be reached within the times stated.</p>	<p>Whilst we accept there will be a slight increase in attendance times for a very small number of incidents it should be noted that incidents in the Halesowen area are not just attended by fire engines from Halesowen and Cradley Heath. The fire engine from Halesowen only responds to a small number of incidents and only attends 51% of all incidents in the Halesowen area. Incidents in the Halesowen area are also attended by Cradley Heath (26%), Woodgate Valley (9%), Oldbury (6%) and Stourbridge (3%). Northfield and Brierley Hill also attend a small amount of incidents in Halesowen. The current operational utilisation of the existing fire</p>

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	<p>engines in this area is very low; therefore, by utilising the excess capacity at Cradley Heath and a number of surrounding fire stations we will still be able to provide emergency cover that is proportionate to the risk in the area.</p>
<p>Cradley Heath Fire Station is over 100 years old and is not fit for purpose in today's climate. I believe it would not be financially wise to spend money in refurbishing the station.</p>	<p>Cradley Heath Fire Station is fit for purpose as it is currently functioning well as a fire station. No decision has been made with regards to the chosen location; the Authority will review the options and make a decision in due course.</p>
<p>With a station utilised in the 'optimum' area this still results in some areas of Halesowen not being reached within 5 to 7 minutes.</p>	<p>We review incident data attendance times and appliance activity. This information shows that the Authority can meet both its statutory and moral obligations to the community by having a single fire engine based in an 'optimum area' providing fire cover for both Cradley Heath and Halesowen.</p>
<p>Halesowen Community Fire Station remains with 1 appliance meaning all fire stations within WMFS still have at least 1 fire appliance and all areas of WMFS have adequate cover.</p>	<p>The proposal to change the number of fire engines from two to one is not based on location alone. The proposal is based upon the local risk profile which considers a variety of different factors that enable the Authority to maintain the right resources in the right location at the right time.</p>
<p>The current proposals would involve locating the 'merged' station at a site that is not close to the sites proposed in the original consultation, and possibly locating the merged station at the existing Cradley Heath site. That would not be a merger of the two stations, but the closure of the Halesowen station, and would not be consistent with the decision made by WMFRA in February 2009. This is despite the consultation not</p>	<p>No Sites were discussed during the consultation period that took place in 2009. The Authority is currently considering the options for a new facility. When the preferred options have been agreed the community will be consulted on these options before a final decision is made.</p>

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<p>inviting any discussion of this point.</p>	
<p>Some call-outs currently dealt with by Halesowen and Cradley Heath Fire Stations would be dealt with by other stations in future (primarily Stourbridge and Woodgate Valley). However, the consultation process did not present any information on the extent to which this would happen.</p>	<p>The fire engine from Halesowen only responds to a small number of incidents and only attends 51% of all incidents in the Halesowen area. Incidents in the Halesowen area are also attended by Cradley Heath (26%), Woodgate Valley (9%), Oldbury (6%) and Stourbridge (3%). Northfield and Brierley Hill also attend a small amount of incidents in Halesowen. The current operational utilisation of the existing fire engines in this area is very low; therefore, by utilising the excess capacity at Cradley Heath and a number of surrounding fire stations we will still be able to provide emergency cover that is proportionate to the risk in the area.</p>
<p>The proposals did not include any information on how fire prevention activity carried out by crews based at the two stations would be maintained. Having only a single tender would presumably reduce the time available for prevention activity by over 50%. In the medium to long-term this could lead to an increase in the number of incidents dealt with by the combined station.</p>	<p>The Authority recognises that preventing incidents occurring is the best way to save peoples lives. We not only respond to emergency incidents but we also have a Community Safety Strategy which identifies resources, and targets the most vulnerable people in the community. Whilst it is accepted that in the future there will be less resources, by refining how we target the most vulnerable people in the community we will be able to maximise the use of our resources to deliver community safety activity.</p>
<p>We are aware that West Midlands Fire Services' budget is below its projected needs, but any savings necessary must be from 'back office', not front-line.</p>	<p>The Halesowen & Cradley Heath proposal is one of a number of options we are considering. These options include proposals to improve both our frontline and support services whilst generating savings that will enable the Authority to set a balanced budget. We will continue to consider the views of all the communities and our own employees. These proposals are not just about cost but about providing a proportionate and value for money response to emergencies based on the information and data that forms part of</p>

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	our Integrated Risk Management Plan.
Co-locating the paramedic vehicles at Halesowen Fire Station would provide a budget win-win situation. If the Police Station has to close, again co-locate.	We will continue to work very closely with our partners in the community to look at the options to improve the way services are delivered and ensure a proportional response to emergencies.
If the facilities and fabric of the current Halesowen Fire Station were poor, which they definitely are not, this could be a weighting factor for closure. In fact, the current station is in far better condition than other stations in the Service's portfolio.	The proposal to change the number of fire engines from two to one is not based on location alone. The proposal is based upon the local risk profile which considers a variety of different factors that enable the Authority to maintain the right resources in the right location at the right time.
Perhaps we need the balance of the constituents of these Fire Committees to be weighted with not only ordinary members of the community but also serving operational firefighters?	We will continue to consider the views of all the communities and our own employees whilst developing any proposal.
We are led to believe that the current Government's policy is to give communities the lead in decision making. This is not happening regarding Halesowen Fire Station.	The proposal is based upon the local risk profile which considers a variety of different factors that enable the Authority to maintain the right resources in the right location at the right time.
In light of the recent riots, now is not the time to be making cuts.	In the event of a major emergency the Authority still has the capacity to provide a suitable operational response. Any large scale emergency requiring fire and rescue resources would use the resources of a number of agencies from across the West Midlands and as an example the recent riots would be classed as a major emergency.
You will necessarily be reducing capacity to respond to a fire and this is, by definition, irresponsible.	We regularly review incident data attendance times and appliance activity. This information shows that the Authority can meet both its statutory and moral obligations to the community by having a single fire engine based in an 'optimum area' providing fire cover for both

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	Cradley Heath and Halesowen.
If capacity has been reduced, surely a major fire/incident is likely to overwhelm capacity.	In the event of a major emergency the Authority still has the capacity to provide a suitable operational response. Any large scale emergency requiring fire and rescue resources would use the resources of a number of agencies from across the West Midlands.
Is this just a cost cutting exercise?	These proposals are not just about cost but about providing a proportionate and value for money response to emergencies based on the information and data that forms part of our Integrated Risk Management Plan.

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1st September 2011 – Lutley Community Centre, Halesowen

Location of New Station

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
Will decision result in more fatalities in Halesowen?	There is no reason to believe that the effect of these proposed changes will result in a greater life risk to the community.
How long will project take?	This is unknown as no decision will be made with regards to the new station until we have the WMFRA's decision on whether it will house one or two appliances.
What about responding to incidents on M5 – how will this work if station moves from Halesowen?	Response to any particular location or road will always be made by the nearest and fastest response. The M5 can be served from other stations such as Oldbury and even at present, Halesowen's pump may not be available for the M5 when needed.
Growing population in Halesowen	Local Development Framework for the Black Country shows that housing in Halesowen is planned to increase by around 300 units over the next decade and the risk generated by new housing is lower than that for older premises, so risk levels overall are not expected to increase.

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Response Times

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
What will the response times be from new station to Hayley Green & Hasbury area?	We can not confirm this until the location of the new facility has been decided upon, but from our existing site in Cradley Heath, we know that a journey time of approximately 7 minutes is achievable under blue lights.
Fire control system doesn't recognise some places – requires local knowledge of fire control operator – might affect response times.	Fire Control uses a sophisticated system from their base in the centre of Birmingham to mobilise all appliances within the West Midlands. When a call is received regarding an incident in Halesowen it may not always be the Halesowen appliance that responds as we send the nearest available appliance and Halesowen may be carrying out other duties at that time. Any change in the number of pumps in this area will not impact upon this ability.
Response times based on computer modelling – not real times – don't believe them.	Some of our evidence is based upon computer models of journey times, but these are based upon actual blue light journeys and our mobilising system is constantly updated to reflect actual response times achieved by our appliances.
Response times published on WMFS intranet different to those being quoted at consultation	The software system referred to is a planning tool to help our crews plan their non-emergency journeys (such as when carrying out Home Safety Checks) It has no bearing upon our assessments of emergency run times.

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<p>Has number of incidents gone up or down over last few years?</p>	<p>Incident numbers in recent years have reduced significantly. The only type of incidents that have increased are those involving road traffic collisions, but even then, the numbers of killed and seriously injured is declining year by year.</p> <p>We have seen massive reductions in the number of house fires and other serious incidents.</p>
<p>Ambulance have changed how they work – positioning of vehicles, being more spaced out – the Fire Service should consider this.</p>	<p>The service is examining more flexible and dynamic ways of responding to fires and of positioning our resources to enable this. There will be some trials of innovative new systems in the near future.</p>

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Economic & Financial

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
What savings will be made by closing Halesowen?	By combining two pump crews into a single one, we will save approximately £1.1m per year in revenue and any posts saved in this process will be absorbed across the West Midlands, as we froze our recruitment process 2 years ago.
Cost of building new station?	The cost of the new facility depends very much on the decision made by the WMFRA as to the size and nature of the station. A number of options are being considered at the moment.
What will the cost of redundancies be?	There will be no front line redundancies arising from this change, and the support staff will be found other roles within the organisation where possible.
How much money saved if no redundancies?	By combining two pump crews into a single one, we will save approximately £1.1m per year in revenue and any posts saved in this process will be absorbed across the West Midlands, as we froze our recruitment process 2 years ago.
How much money saved by having single station?	As above for staff costs, but there will be additional savings arising from vehicle purchase, maintenance and the running costs of the building, etc.
Sale of existing property – who benefits financially?	The service would receive a capital receipt for the sale of any existing property which could be used to fund other investments such as buildings/vehicles/equipment.

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<p>Closing two stations and building a new one – how much is this going to cost?</p>	<p>The cost of the new facility depends very much on the decision made by the WMFRA as to the size and nature of the station. A number of options are being considered at the moment.</p>
<p>Use money earmarked for station build to keep Halesowen with 2 appliances</p>	<p>The service are unable to do this, as the savings we have to make are in revenue and the receipt from the sale of a station or its land will be in the form of capital.</p>
<p>What is the cost of keeping a fire engine on the road 365 24/7?</p>	<p>Approximately £1.1m for the staffing costs, but with additions for the costs of the vehicle and its station, etc.</p>
<p>This area will become more susceptible to arson due to all these cuts – what is the Fire Authority going to do about it?</p>	<p>The service is actively engaged in public education, deterrence of arson and prosecution of offenders. There is no reason why the removal of a fire station should have any negative impact on this work, which will continue to be delivered.</p>
<p>James Morris MP – Believes the Fire Service can make the necessary savings.</p>	<p>The Chair welcomes the opportunity to discuss this view in more detail.</p>

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Recruitment and Redundancy

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
Will reduction in staff (recruitment freeze) mean less people doing prevention work in community?	Due to the spending review in the public sector, the service will have fewer staff overall, but will continue to provide all of its services in terms of prevention and education in the community.
What will cost of any redundancies be?	There will be no front line redundancies arising from this change, and the support staff may be found other roles within the organisation if possible. However, the Authority will have to consider its Re-organisation, Redeployment Policy.

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2nd September 2011 – Reddal Hill Primary School, Cradley Heath

Economic & Financial

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
<p>Closing 2 stations - making one new one – how much is it going to cost?</p> <p>Capital provision – use it to keep 2 appliances</p>	<p>The cost of the new facility depends very much on the decision made by the WMFRA as to the size and nature of the station. A number of options are being considered at the moment.</p> <p>The savings the service have to make are in revenue and the receipt from the sale of a station or its land will be in the form of capital.</p>
<p>How many times in last 10 years has Authority dipped into reserves?</p>	<p>Reserves are kept for major emergencies or an unforeseen crisis in expenditure- not for planned changes such as this.</p>
<p>CLG money for new control centre – now scrapped – tell the MP we want to use money for fire stations.</p>	<p>The MP will be taking up the case for protecting the funding of local amenities in Westminster.</p>
<p>The – funding settlement unfair.</p>	<p>WMFRA agrees with the statement.</p>

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Response Times

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
For a 30 pump fire – how long will it take for engines from Halesowen and Bromsgrove to get to Cradley Heath?	For any large scale incident, the service will bring in resources from across the West Midlands and would rarely need to rely on help from outside brigades. We currently have sufficient resources to enable this and a large fire is part of our routine business from day to day.

Location of New Station

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
The optimum location not necessarily Cradley Heath – has to be debated and agreed by Fire Authority.	We have identified an area from which the service could achieve the optimum response times into the whole area, but the decision as to how to proceed, has to be taken by the WMFRA.

Vehicles

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
Will there be a back-up pump available to cover when a single pump is out?	As at the moment, the service always moves pumps around on a dynamic basis so that there is appropriate cover across the whole area. This process will continue to be managed by Fire Control, from minute to minute.

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Localism is being pushed by government – this local area wants 2 pumps.	The analysis demonstrates that the service can maintain the level of cover required in this area with one appliance.
Smaller, different types of response vehicles might make more sense than a fire engine.	The service is examining more flexible and dynamic ways of responding to fires and of positioning resources to enable this. There will be some trials of innovative new systems in the near future.

Recruitment and Redundancy

Summary of Comments	WMFRA Response
Freeze on recruitment – what happens if no more recruitment – number of fire-fighters will decrease – how will we respond to incidents?	The Service will constantly monitor risk across the area and plan to ensure that we always have the right spread of people available to meet the risk present. The Service are examining more flexible and dynamic ways of responding to fires and of positioning our resources to enable this. There will be some trials of innovative new systems in the near future.
Having service based on prevention-based work – how will we do this if number of firefighters is reduced?	Due to the spending review in the public sector, the service will have less staff overall, but will continue to provide all services for prevention and education in the community.
Why not use government money for apprenticeships? Maybe for support services and prevention based activity?	Our firefighters go through a robust training programme following a rigorous selection process to ensure safety and quality of service. This wouldn't be suitable for an apprenticeship scheme.

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Halesowen and Cradley**

Lack of recruitment – worrying if no young people being recruited.

What will happen to crews at Halesowen and Cradley Heath?

There will be no front line redundancies arising from this change, and the support staff will be found other roles within the organisation where possible.