

## OPTIONS TO STATION MERGERS

1. The information below is a detailed explanation of the alternative options to achieve the required levels of savings, and whether they are considered feasible options at this time.
2. Of the 25 current stations in Merseyside, 10 are designated as key stations. From these 10 key stations the Authority can provide a 10 minute response to all areas of Merseyside on 90% of occasions (our response standard).
3. The number of wholetime Firefighters employed directly equates to the numbers of fire appliances that can be staffed for an immediate response by fully trained Firefighters and therefore the numbers of fire appliances the Authority can operate on a wholetime basis.
4. The removal of 90 Firefighter posts required to deliver savings of £3.4m will result in the loss of 4 wholetime fire appliances. It is the view of the Chief Fire Officer that the Authority should maintain 2 appliances at Kirkdale and Southport, because of the location of Southport and the fact that Kirkdale is the Operational Resource Centre for Merseyside.
5. In maintaining 2 appliances at Kirkdale and Southport the Authority can only staff enough appliances to maintain 22 fire stations on a wholetime basis. The Authority could as an alternative maintain 26 stations through altering the crewing arrangements on specific stations or across the Service.

### Low Level of Activity and Risk

6. The Low Level of Activity and Risk (LLAR) duty system is currently in operation at 4 of the Authority's 26 stations. The system consists of a 12 hour wholetime day shift followed immediately by a 12 hour retained night shift (spent off the station) where the crew must respond to an incident within 1minute 54 seconds of an alert thus maintaining a comparable alert to mobile time as achieved by other wholetime staff during their night-time rest period.
7. Changing the crewing at a station from wholetime to LLAR would deliver a saving of 8 wholetime equivalent (WTE) posts. In order to deliver the same savings as for a station merger 3 wholetime stations would need to convert to LLAR. Whilst this option would maintain an immediate emergency response (assuming it was possible to secure accommodation for the night time retained period separate from the station but within a 1 minute 54 seconds alert to mobile time) it is less resilient than wholetime crewing as the same staff cover the 12-hour wholetime period and the 12-hour retained period. For example, if a crew attends incidents during the night-time period they will then require a period of stand down time to recover during the day shift, meaning they are either not available to provide operational response or unable to

undertake prevention work or normal scheduled duties. As the number of appliances reduces the ability for Fire Control to not mobilise LLAR appliances during the retained period is also reduced meaning they will attend more incidents and potentially no longer meet the Low Level of Activity and Risk threshold. To make the £3.4m savings required from operational response the Authority would need to convert 12 wholtime appliances to LLAR in addition to the existing 4 LLAR appliances.

8. This would result in 16 of the Authority's 28 appliances being crewed in this way. In order to comply with working time regulations the Authority would be required to provide separate accommodation for the retained duty period that is within a 1 minute 54 second response from the stations in question. The cost of building accommodation at existing LLAR stations has been around £300k. Converting 12 appliances to LLAR would therefore require a capital spend of around £3.6m for accommodation. Of the 10 key stations only one, Formby, is currently crewed LLAR which is as a result of its geographic location and the very low numbers of incidents on the station ground and number of appliance mobilisations. In any other circumstances a key station would not be crewed on the LLAR duty system. Of the stations not designated as 'key' a number have appliance mobilisation numbers which exceed the LLAR threshold of 825 incidents to the station area agreed in 2006 (Kirkdale, Kensington, City Centre and Birkenhead).
9. A number also do not have sufficient space within the curtilage of the station to build separate accommodation necessary to make the 1 minute 54 seconds alert to mobile time during the retained period (for example Kensington and Aintree). There is a very low likelihood indeed that the Authority could attract and indeed retain sufficient volunteers from existing staff to crew an additional 12 LLAR appliances. Whilst the Authority could recruit Firefighters directly on to the LLAR system this would result in crews on LLAR stations with a disproportionately high number of inexperienced Firefighters until such time as they were able to demonstrate competence in role. It would also invariably result in existing wholtime firefighters who did not wish to volunteer for the LLAR duty system being placed at risk of compulsory redundancy. It is for these reasons that LLAR has not been proposed by the Chief Fire Officer as an option to maintain operational effectiveness at this time.

### Day Crewing

10. The Authority does not currently operate the Day Crewing duty system at any station on Merseyside. This system consists of a wholtime day shift (typically 10 hours duration) immediately followed by a 14 hour retained night shift where a response is made by a Firefighter from home within 5 minutes of an alert. Changing the crewing at a station from wholtime to Day Crewing would deliver a saving of 10.8 wholtime equivalent (WTE) posts (assuming a 10% retaining fee). In order to deliver the same savings as a station merger would, 2 wholtime stations would need to convert to Day Crewing.

11. To make the £3.4m savings required from operational response the Authority would need to convert 8 wholetime appliances to Day Crewing in addition to the existing 4 LLAR appliances. This would result in 12 of the Authority's 28 appliances either on Day Crewing or LLAR crewing. Day Crewing is less resilient than wholetime crewing for similar reasons as for LLAR as the same staff cover the 10 hour wholetime period and the 14 hour retained period. As the number of appliances reduces the ability for Fire Control to not mobilise LLAR or Day Crewing appliances during the retained period is also reduced. This option would introduce a 5-minute delay in responding from 8 appliances for 14 hours each day. Assuming the 5-minute delay in responding in to the station and given the geography of Merseyside, it is likely that the nearest wholetime appliances would be able to attend an incident in at least the same time as the Day Crewing appliance if not quicker during the retained period. There is a very low likelihood indeed that the Authority could attract and indeed retain sufficient volunteers from existing staff to crew 8 Day Crewing appliances.
12. Whilst the Authority could recruit Firefighters directly on to the Day Crewing system this would result in crews on Day Crewing stations with a disproportionately high number of inexperienced Firefighters until such time as they were able to demonstrate competence in role.
13. It would also invariably result in existing wholetime firefighters who did not wish to volunteer for the Day Crewing duty system being placed at risk of compulsory redundancy. It is for these reasons that Day Crewing has not been proposed by the Chief Fire Officer as an option to maintain operational effectiveness. If as expected the Authority faces further cuts beyond 2015/16 this option may have to be reconsidered as a means of maintaining capacity during the daytime period.

#### Day only crewing

14. The Authority does not currently operate day only crewing at any station on Merseyside. This system involves Firefighters crewing the station for a 12-hour wholetime day shift only in order to maintain capacity to undertake training and community safety activities. Changing the crewing at a station from wholetime to day only crewing would deliver a saving of 12 wholetime equivalent (WTE) posts. In order to deliver the same savings as the station merger option 2 wholetime stations would need to convert to day only crewing.
15. To make the £3.4m savings required from operational response the Authority would need to convert 8 wholetime appliances to day only crewing in addition to the existing 4 LLAR appliances. This would result in 12 of the Authority's 28 appliances either on day only crewing or LLAR crewing. Whilst an immediate response to incidents would be achieved during the 12- hour day shift there

would be no response at all during the 12-hour night-time period from day only crewed stations.

16. There is a very low likelihood indeed that the Authority could attract and indeed retain sufficient volunteers from existing staff to crew 8 days only appliances. Whilst the Authority could recruit Firefighters directly to day only crewing this would result in crews on day only stations with a disproportionately high number of inexperienced Firefighters until such time as they were able to demonstrate competence in role. It would also invariably result in existing wholetime firefighters who did not wish to volunteer for day only crewing being placed at risk of compulsory redundancy. It is for these reasons that day only crewing has not been proposed by the Chief Fire Officer as an option to maintain operational effectiveness at this time. If as expected the Authority faces further cuts beyond 2015/16 this option may have to be reconsidered as a means of maintaining capacity during the day time period.
17. It should be noted that these appliances would in all likelihood be used as a pan Merseyside resource to for example stand in at key stations to facilitate the key appliance crew attending the Training and Development Academy for crew-based training. It would make more financial sense therefore to relocate the day crewed only appliance permanently to a key station thus allowing the Authority to make permanent savings on premises overheads (on average around £100k per year) through closing the non key station.

### Retained

18. The Authority does not currently operate retained only crewing at any station on Merseyside. This system involves members of the community who live or work within 5 minutes of a fire station volunteering to be available for up to 120 hours per week for a retaining fee equivalent to 10% of a wholetime Firefighter's salary. Changing the crewing at a station from wholetime to retained would deliver a saving of 22 wholetime equivalent (WTE) posts. In order to deliver the same savings as for a station merger 1 wholetime station would need to convert to retained crewing. To make the £3.4m savings required from operational response the Authority would need to convert 4 wholetime appliances to retained in addition to the existing 4 LLAR appliances. This would result in 8 of the Authority's 28 appliances either on retained or LLAR crewing.
19. Pursuing this option would require the Authority to either seek volunteers from existing Firefighters who would be required to live within a 5-minute response time of the station (wholetime retained) or for the Authority to recruit members of the public who live or work within 5 minutes of the station. There is a very low likelihood indeed that the Authority could attract and indeed retain sufficient volunteers from existing staff to crew 4 wholetime retained appliances on a 5 minute recall. That being so, the Authority would need to recruit almost a full crew of retained Firefighters. It is the view of the Chief Fire

Officer that a retained Firefighter does not have sufficient contact (training) time within the Grey Book (Firefighters' nationally agreed conditions of service) retained contract to acquire and maintain the skills of an existing Merseyside wholetime Firefighter.

20. Also, the Merseyside Trainee Firefighter course is currently 40 weeks long and the wholetime work routine allocates in excess of 20 hours per week to on station training. A retained firefighter has approximately 2/3 hours per week contact time at station for training, development and maintenance duties). If the Authority were minded to still pursue this option they would have to accept that the retained Firefighters would not be trained to the same level as their wholetime counterparts and it would take a long period of time to train the crew to a position whereby they were deemed fit to ride. Additionally to maintain retained appliance availability a minimum of 4 members of the crew including a driver and an officer in charge would have to be permanently available within 5 minutes of the station. With 3 hours contact time each week retained Firefighters would not be able to undertake any amount of community safety work.
  
21. Assuming the 5-minute delay in responding in to the station and given the geography of Merseyside, it is likely that the nearest wholetime appliances would attend an incident in at least the same time as the retained crew if not quicker. It is for these reasons that retained crewing has not been proposed by the Chief Fire Officer as an option to maintain operational effectiveness at this time.