CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

Making Cheshire Safer

Summary of proposals for 2013-14 and beyond

Cheshire Fire Authority is the public body responsible for ensuring local communities are protected by an effective fire and rescue service.

With budget cuts of up to £5 million expected over the next four years, it has carried out a fundamental review into how its frontline emergency response service could be delivered most effectively in the future.

A comprehensive package of options has been developed which could see more fire stations in Cheshire in the future, with virtually the same number of fire engines but staffed differently than now. The average time it takes to get to life-threatening fires and other emergencies would improve and the Authority would also be able to hit its savings targets.

The options have been developed using information gained from past consultations alongside expert fire service opinion and nationally-recognised fire and rescue computer modelling systems and consultants.

The Authority now wants to understand the views of residents, businesses, partners, staff and other stakeholders about these proposals. This summary document is intended to provide people with sufficient information to understand and be able to comment on the options. The following pages give details about current arrangements and future options, including estimated annual salary savings between £3-5 million. The consultation will influence important decisions around:

- Whether the proposed new stations should be built
- Which of the different options for the future crewing of specific stations should be implemented and when
- Whether the Authority should move from its current emergency response standards to a 10 minute blanket response for incidents where lives are at risk.

The consultation runs from 24th September to 17th December 2012. Please complete the printed survey or the on-line one at www.cheshirefire.gov.uk The full plan and supporting documents are also on the website, e-mail: consultation@cheshirefire.gov.uk or 'phone 01606 868408.

Current Position

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service currently has 24 community fire stations which are staffed according to local risk and activity levels. There are

- **Seven wholetime stations** in the main urban areas with crews working day and night shifts to provide 24/7 cover.
- **Five day crewing stations** in smaller urban areas with firefighters living in Authority-owned houses alongside the stations. They are on duty in the day but respond from home through a pager at night.
- **Two nucleus crewed stations** – here firefighters work 12 hour shifts covering the period of peak activity, with "on-call" staff who live within five minutes of the station covering the rest. We are considering increasing this to 6 or 7 minutes to aid recruitment.
- **Ten "on-call" stations** – these are in mainly rural areas, and staff - formerly known as retained firefighters - who live or work within five minutes of the station are alerted via a pager day and night.

Risk and activity

There have been reductions of over 40% in the number of incidents attended over the last seven years yet the amount of staff involved in responding to emergencies has reduced by 1%. Over the same period the number of fire engines and other response vehicles has increased.

In addition, the Service maintains the same level of emergency response in most areas 24/7 - even though there are major drops in incident numbers at night compared to daytime. The Authority, therefore, intends to better match its resources to reflect the likely risks and activity levels.

Response standards

The Service currently has sophisticated but complex emergency response standards setting out how quickly fire engines aim to get to incidents. It means the majority of homes in Cheshire - nearly 97% - currently have an emergency response standard between 10-21 minutes. In practice, most attendances are usually quicker.

The current response standard for road traffic collisions (RTCs) is 11 minutes. It intends to replace these with a blanket 10 minute standard for life risks - fires and RTCs.

Costs and funding

It costs between £1.6 and £2 million a year to run each of the six wholetime stations with two fire engines and £1 million a year for Macclesfield which has one.

Day Crewing stations cost around £700,000 a year, nucleus crewing £740,000 and On-call approximately £150,000. To make it easier to recruit and retain On-call firefighters, options to improve pay and conditions are being reviewed, as well as the impact of allowing people to live or work more than 5 minutes from the station.

The Authority's current budget is £44.1 million. As part of the moves to tackle future funding cuts it is planning to increase its Council Tax by 3.9% a year - the maximum permitted under Government guidelines, equivalent to £2.62 in 2013-14 for an average household.

Emergency Response Review

Warrington

The Warrington area currently has three fire stations:

- **Warrington** has two fire engines staffed Wholetime, as well as other specialist appliances. There has been a 12.7% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of 3.35 calls per day, while 65.6% are dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Stockton Heath** has two fire engines and an aerial appliance with staff on the Day Crewing system. The second fire engine is crewed by On-call staff. There has been a 25.8% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents with an average of 0.66 calls per day, while 61.1% are dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Birchwood** has one fire engine staffed through a Nucleus Crewing arrangement. There has been a 10.5% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of just less than a call a day, while 66.1% are dealt with by one fire engine.

Cheshire West and Chester

The area has seven fire stations as follows:

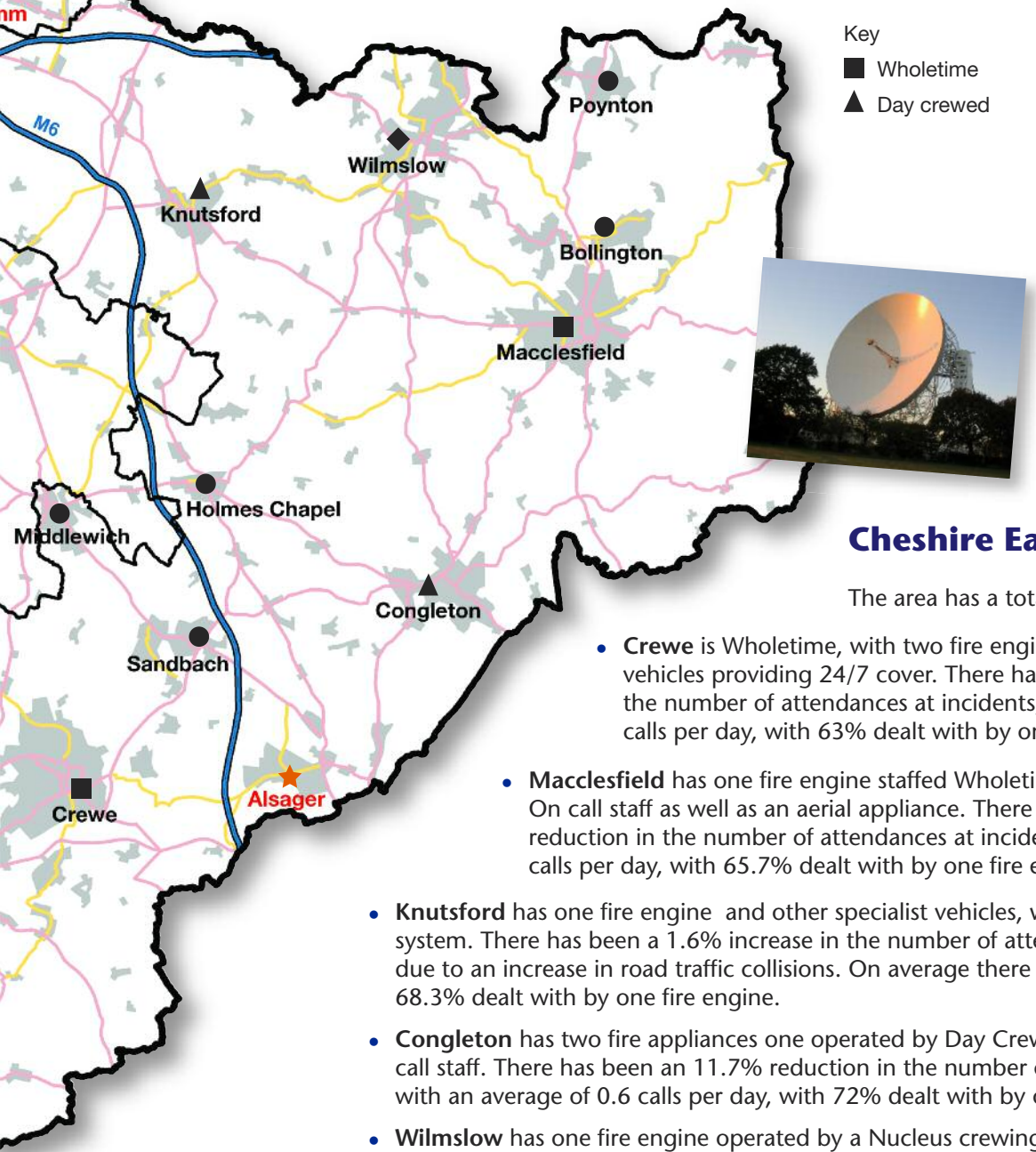
- **Chester** is Wholetime with two fire engines, an aerial appliance and other specialist vehicles. There has been a 9.2% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of just under three calls a day, with 57.8% dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Ellesmere Port** is Wholetime with two fire engines and other specialist vehicle. There has been a 12.4% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of 2.27 calls per day, with 69.5% dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Northwich** and **Winsford** both have two fire engines, one operated by Day Crewing staff and the second through On-call staff. Northwich has seen a 22.2% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of just over one call per day, with 68.1% dealt with by one fire engine. At Winsford there has been a 28.8% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of just under one call a day, with 87.1% were dealt by one fire engine.
- **Frodsham**, **Malpas** and **Tarporley** are staffed through the On-call system.

These pages outline how fire stations in the four council areas are currently crewed. The percentage reductions / increases in attendances are based on the last three financial years. Please see the back page for details about the new proposals, including provisional annual salary savings.

Halton

Halton currently has two Wholetime stations, one in **Runcorn** and one in **Widnes**. Both have two fire appliances each with fire crews working Wholetime.

- **Runcorn** has seen a 5.6% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents and has an average of 2.28 calls per day, with 70.5% dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Widnes** has seen a 24.7% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of 1.78 calls per day, while 68.3% of attendances are dealt with by one fire engine.



Key

- Wholetime
- Day crewed
- On-call
- Nucleus
- Proposed stations

Scan this code with a smart phone to go to our online consultation.

Cheshire East

The area has a total of 12 fire stations:

- **Crewe** is Wholetime, with two fire engines and other specialist vehicles providing 24/7 cover. There has been an 8.7% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of 2.14 calls per day, with 63% dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Macclesfield** has one fire engine staffed Wholetime and a second crewed by On call staff as well as an aerial appliance. There has been an 18.2% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents with an average of 1.39 calls per day, with 65.7% dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Knutsford** has one fire engine and other specialist vehicles, with staff on the Day Crewing system. There has been a 1.6% increase in the number of attendances at incidents, mainly due to an increase in road traffic collisions. On average there are 0.71calls per day, with 68.3% dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Congleton** has two fire appliances one operated by Day Crewing and the second by On-call staff. There has been an 11.7% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of 0.6 calls per day, with 72% dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Wilmslow** has one fire engine operated by a Nucleus crewing arrangement. There has been a 6.2% reduction in the number of attendances at incidents, with an average of just under one call a day, with 78.1% dealt with by one fire engine.
- **Audlem**, **Bollington**, **Holmes Chapel**, **Nantwich**, **Middlewich**, **Poynton** and **Sandbach** are staffed through the On-call system.

Warrington

Penketh – build a new Wholetime community fire station with two fire engines, the first transferred from Warrington and the second operated by On-call staff.

Warrington – move the second fire engine to Penketh. Replace the remaining fire engine with a new vehicle which combines the capabilities of a traditional fire engine and an aerial appliance or transfer the existing aerial appliance from Stockton Heath.

Stockton Heath – change the duty system from the current Day Crewing arrangement to On-call. Transfer the aerial appliance to Warrington.

Lymm – build a new Wholetime fire station near the M6/M56 junction, crewed by transferring existing Day Crewing staff from Stockton Heath and Knutsford. Use the new station as an "operational response hub" to store specialist operational vehicles.

Staffing for both the new community fire station at Penketh and new operational station at Lymm will be provided by moving crews from Warrington, Stockton Heath and Knutsford. It means salary costs would be unchanged.

Halton

Runcorn

1. Remove the second fire engine entirely – **£800,000** or
2. Replace it with a 'midi' fire engine used during busy periods such as bonfire night – **£750,000** or
3. Change how the second fire engine is crewed from Wholetime to On-call (24/7) – **£650,000** or
4. Change its crewing to a 12 hour day shift only – **£350,000** or
5. Change its crewing to a Nucleus Crewing model (12 hour day shift and On-call at night) – **£200,000**

Widnes

1. Stop crewing the second fire engine with support provided by the new station at Penketh – **£800,000**

Cheshire East

Congleton

1. Transfer the second fire engine to Alsager. Change the current Day Crewing duty system to an On-call arrangement, 24 hours a day – **£600,000** or
2. Change to a Nucleus Crewing system (Monday to Friday - 8 hour day shifts) with evening and weekend cover being provided by the existing On-call staff – **£300,000**

Crewe

1. Remove the second fire engine entirely – **£800,000** or
2. Replace it with a 'midi' fire engine used during busy periods such as bonfire night – **£750,000** or
3. Change how the second fire engine is crewed from Wholetime to On-call (24/7) – **£650,000** or
4. Change its crewing to a 12 hour day shift only – **£350,000** or
5. Change its crewing to a Nucleus Crewing model (12 hour day shift and On-call at night) – **£200,000**

Macclesfield

1. Change the current Wholetime duty system to a Nucleus Crewing system to maintain two fire engines – **£350,000** or
2. Move from having two fire engines to one during the 12 hour night time period – **£500,000**
3. Crew the aerial appliance with On-call staff at all times – **£100,000**

Knutsford

Change the current Day Crewing duty system to On-call. – **£500,000**

Cheshire West and Cheshire

Staffing for the new operational station near the M56/M53 junction will be provided by moving crews from Chester, meaning salary costs would be unchanged.

Chester

1. Transfer the second fire engine from Chester to a new Wholetime station near the M56/M53 motorway interchange. Use the new station as an "operational response hub" to store specialist operational vehicles
2. Replace the remaining fire engine at Chester with one which combines the capabilities of a traditional fire engine and an aerial appliance or maintain the existing aerial appliance and fire engine.

Ellesmere Port

1. Remove the second fire engine entirely – **£800,000** or
2. Replace it with a 'midi' fire engine which can be used during busy periods such as bonfire night – **£750,000** or
3. Change how the second fire engine is crewed from Wholetime to On-call (24/7) – **£650,000** or
4. Change its crewing to a 12 hour day shift only – **£350,000** or
5. Change its crewing to Nucleus Crewing model (12 hour day shift and On-call at night) – **£200,000** or
6. Transfer the second fire engine to a new On-call fire station, built in Neston – **£650,000**

Winsford

1. Change from the current Day Crewing system to On-call, 24 hours a day – **£600,000** or
2. Change to a Nucleus Crewing (Monday to Friday - 8 hour day shifts) arrangement with evening and weekend cover provided by existing On-call staff – **£300,000**

Northwich

1. Change from the current Day Crewing system to On-call, 24 hours a day – **£600,000** or
2. Change to a Nucleus Crewing (Monday to Friday - 8 hour day shifts) arrangement with evening and weekend cover provided by existing On-call staff – **£300,000**

One-off costs for building new stations would be met from reserves and balances or by taking out loans.