

Appendix F – FBU Response to IRMP 2011/14 Consultation

Executive Summary.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has compiled this response document commenting upon the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2011 - 2014.

The FBU urges the elected members of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MF&RA) to read this document as it represents the views of the professional firefighters and firefighters (control) it employs. The FBU has made a number of comments and alternative points of view, the FBU has also made a number of recommendations to the Authority which for ease we reproduce within the executive summary.

FBU Recommendation 1

That due to funding constraints and the subsequent financial position the Fire Authority now finds itself in, since this IRMP was drafted, that the IRMP process is rerun to adequately reflect those increased financial challenges.

FBU Recommendation 2

That the Fire Authority recognise that the Regional Control Project has been costly and inefficient and that the subsequent uncertainty for Mobilising and Control Centre (MACC) employees, over possibly losing their jobs or being redeployed to Warrington (first outlined to MACC employees in 2004), has gone on long enough. The FBU ask Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to reassure MACC employees that MACC will remain in Merseyside, where it should be, as the first line of firefighting provided by Merseyside Fire Service.

Recommendation 3

That MF&RA recognise the agreements and policies in place to ensure that given the practical benefits it provides that minimum crewing levels of 5 and 4 for two fire appliance stations and 5 for a one fire appliance station is returned without any further undue delay, to be achieved on 75% of occasions with a year on year improvement to that achievement target.

Recommendation 4

The FBU notes the worthy intent of some initiatives but believe that they should be thoroughly and systematically reviewed for relevance to a Fire and Rescue Service that has to target and prioritise its resources as never before. Such review should include a full Cost Benefit Analysis.

Introduction.

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) presented to Parliament by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 18th October 2010 outlined broadly the significant challenges that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority would have to face for 2011-2014. It is now clear that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is the joint worst-hit fire service in the country, following the Government spending review. The specific details of what the CSR meant for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MF&RS) were outlined on 16th December 2010. MF&RS is among eight fire authorities that need to slash their budgets by 12.6% in the next two years. That will mean losing £7.7m from Merseyside's £73m budget. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) contend that the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Consultation Document 2011-2014 has, as a result of the CSR become dated and offers the following evidence.

The IRMP consultation document Introduction page 10 states-

"In these difficult and uncertain times we review and republish the IRMP on an annual basis, giving the document currency. This will allow us to report how we have reacted to significant changes in the economy, our finances or Central Government policy more quickly and to reflect any effects of the continuing economic and political change within our risk assessment process"

The FBU believe that due to the unprecedented level of savings that the Fire Authority is now expected to deliver in years 2011-2014 that the IRMP presented does not have 'currency' and does not 'report how the Service has reacted to the significant changes in the economy'. To address this the FBU believe the IRMP needs to be rewritten and the all consultation processes rerun to adequately reflect the challenge that is now faced by the Fire Authority.

Evidence that the IRMP in its current form has become dated is contained within the Introduction (page 10) ref- Regional Fire Control

"We are currently engaged in a large scale Central Government project to implement a Regional Control Centre at Warrington. This will see all five of the North West Fire and Rescue Services transfer their control and mobilisation functions to a Regional Control Centre"

Fire Minister Bob Neill's announcement, 20th December 2010, that the Fire Control Project is now scrapped is not reflected within the IRMP, further evidence that the Fire Authority needs to consider rerunning the IRMP.

We believe the conclusive evidence for the FBU position is contained in the Service's "What is Integrated Risk Management Planning" definition, page 12-

"In essence the Integrated Risk Management Plan is a balancing act between risk and finite resources"

That CSR has now severely affected that 'balancing act' and the IRMP must, by the Service's own definition, be outlining how the Fire Authority intends to reassure all sections of the community and stakeholders how it intends to now strike that balance as the IRMP in its current form clearly does not.

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FBU Recommendation 2

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Our Service to the Community

Emergency Response

Response to Fire

The members of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority are being asked to again consider and set the local response standards for the communities of Merseyside through the core service delivery of emergency incident response through Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. Effectively the body corporate required to be performance managed, i.e. the Service, is setting the performance targets; the FBU draws the member's attention to that for the following reasons.

Through discussions with the Services data collation department the FBU now understand that if a standard of say 5 minutes is set, 5 minutes effectively means 5 minutes 59 seconds in terms of data purposes. That is an important fact to be taken into account when setting response standards for emergency services and an issue of transparency as stakeholders may be of the opinion that 5 minutes actually means 5 minutes rather than the 5 minutes 59 seconds that in reality it does.

MF&RA is perfectly entitled to consider such response standards and in fact the FBU would consider the Authority is under an obligation to consider the standards. The Authority has considered and agreed the response standards of the Service, as proposed by the Service, since 2004/05 within that years' IRMP.

For 2011/14 the Authority is being asked to consider targets for responding to emergency incidents *in relation to fire* only. The reason for the distinction between fire and other life threatening emergency incidents that attract a lesser response standard, such as Road Traffic Collisions (RTC), is unknown to the FBU at this time.

Regrettably the standards that the Authority is being asked to agree are demonstrably worse than those they agreed in 2004. The FBU question why this is the case and why such slippage in response standard expectations has been allowed to occur in this manner within this Authority.

Table 1 indicates the standards that have been agreed and put in place since 2004.

Table 1 - MF&RS Response Standards 2004/05 to 2011/14

| Level of Risk | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2011/14 |
|---------------|---|--|--|
| High Risk | 1 st Appliance - 5 Minutes 2 nd Appliance - 8 minutes. | 1 st Appliance - 5 Minutes 2 nd Appliance - 8 minutes. | 1 st Appliance - 5 Minutes 2 nd Appliance - 10 minutes. |
| Medium Risk | 1 st Appliance - 8 Minutes 2 nd Appliance - 10 minutes. | 1 st Appliance - 6 Minutes 2 nd Appliance - 9 minutes. | 1 st Appliance - 6 Minutes 2 nd Appliance - 11 minutes. |
| Low Risk | 1 st Appliance - 10 Minutes 2 nd Appliance - 12 minutes. | 1 st Appliance - 7 Minutes 2 nd Appliance - 10 minutes. | 1 st Appliance - 7 Minutes 2 nd Appliance - 12 minutes. |
| Level to be | 85% of occasions | 90% of occasions | 90% of occasions |

| | | | |
|----------|--|--|--|
| Achieved | | | |
|----------|--|--|--|

Table 2 - Response Standards from 2004/05 to 2011/14 (*1st figure is first appliance in attendance, 2nd figure second appliance*)

| LEVEL OF RISK | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/14 |
|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| HIGH | 5 and 8 mins | 5 and 8 mins | 5 and 8 mins | 5 and 10 mins | 5 and 10 mins | 5 and 10 mins | 5 and 10 mins | 5 and 10 mins |
| MEDIUM | 8 and 10 mins | 6 and 9 mins | 6 and 9 mins | 6 and 11 mins | 6 and 11 mins | 6 and 11 mins | 6 and 11 mins | 6 and 11 mins |
| LOW | 10 and 12 mins | 7 and 10 mins | 7 and 10 mins | 7 and 12 mins | 7 and 12 mins | 7 and 12 mins | 7 and 12 mins | 7 and 12 mins |
| ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL | 85% | 90% | 85% | 85% | 85% | 85% | 90% | 90% |

It can be seen then that since the inception of IRMP in 2004 through to the latest Plan, that the elected members of the Fire Authority have agreed standards that have worsened over the subsequent years; the FBU have concerns why this would be the case and why no explanation has been offered as mitigation.

Such a degradation of the standards over the years stands in breach of the Authorities Best Value principles and legislation.

The FBU have consistently called for the response standards set by the Authority to be achieved on 100% of occasions, as was the case in relation to the national standards of fire cover. The FBU recognise that the national standards have been repealed and replaced by locally set standards, however the Governments principle of performance management of any standards in place remain current.

A major source of concern for the FBU relates to the collation of the response standards and affects the legitimacy of the data collected.

It is the case that the Authorities current Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Government requirements as stipulated within Technical Bulletin 1/97 for Breathing Apparatus Command and Control Procedures, and later within the imminent Operational Guidance for Breathing Apparatus Command and Control Procedures compiled by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser (CFRA), set safe systems of work for the fighting of fires.

All those procedures and stipulations aforementioned require that for Breathing Apparatus to be used in all cases, except for those of an exceptional circumstance, a minimum of 5 firefighters are required.

Members will recall that the FBU in previous IRMP response documents has referred to this issue and provided the Service with detailed risk and task analysis that identified that a minimum of 9 firefighters is required to safely and efficiently resolve a dwelling house fire involving rescue. The risk and task analysis are entitled CAST scenarios and

are identical to the suite of generic risk assessments undertaken and approved by Central Government.

The definition of exceptional circumstances are very specific and the latest assessment from CFRA define that immediate Life Risk BA (Rapid) Deployment is only to be used in exceptional circumstances involving risk to life. That is:

- a. persons at great risk within a structure or other risk area, requiring urgent, immediate assistance and/or rescue and who are either within view or known to be within a short distance of the point of entry; or
- b. persons are at great risk and limited immediate action will mitigate risk to life and the environment, by preventing dangerous or catastrophic escalation of the incident

Given that definition, or even if the more dated definition as contained within Technical Bulletin 1/97 is relied upon, then it is clear that a dwelling house fire, property fire or commercial fire, including those with persons reported as being within the building unless they fall within the categories laid out above, cannot be tackled offensively with a crew of 4 firefighters and additional resources, i.e. a second or third appliance, must be waited for. Simply put then, a fire appliance with crew of four firefighters that is in attendance at a house fire etc cannot tackle the fire but must wait for the appropriate number of firefighters.

This is a ludicrous position for the Authority to consider and presents the crews with a real moral dilemma. Do we stand and wait for the correct resources to be able to offensively fight the fire and wait to be able to use Breathing Apparatus to contain and extinguish the fire, or do we breach all procedures and instructions to intervene to tackle the blaze. The simple solution is to have crews of 5 on the fire appliances and to that extent the FBU strongly urge the Fire Authority to set crewing levels at that which the Authority agreed in 2005, reinforced within the Agreement of Principles document it agreed with the FBU in 2006, reinforced as a valid and current agreement by the Local Joint Secretaries with NJC assistance in June 2009 and again reinforced by the National Joint Secretaries as the Policy of the Authority in July 2009. All documents are attached as appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4.

It is the firm view of the FBU that the Authority cannot look to set targets and have those targets as anything other than meaningless if the Authority cannot demonstrate to the public that the first appliance on scene cannot undertake *'the first attack'* within the targets it has set within this IRMP. Regrettably the issue of 4 firefighters on a rescue appliance serves only to save money but then has an enormous impact on Service procedures, instructions, policies, safe systems of work and performance management and, the FBU believe, the safety of firefighters and the public alike.

FBU Recommendation 3

That MF&RA recognise the agreements and policies in place to ensure that given the practical benefits it provides that minimum crewing levels of 5 and 4 for two fire appliance stations and 5 for a one fire appliance station is returned without any further undue delay, to be achieved on 75% of occasions with a year on year improvement to that achievement target.

One issue that is constantly overlooked by the Service is that currently the LLAR stations are placed on secondary mobilisation when they move to the retained element of the duty system. This means that they are not turned out to a number of categories of incident. There is also a 3 minute built in delay to LLAR appliance availability so that if the incident is a primary dwelling house fire within an LLAR station area, the nearest appliances, including the 3 minutes delay is factored into mobilising the appliances so it could be that the LLAR appliance is not mobilised even to its own area.

The consequential effect is that the workload has to be carried out by wholetime appliances leaving those appliances that are actually operationally available (which is decreasing due to a chronic lack of staff) having to undertake that workload. They become significantly busier as a result.

Response to Road Traffic Collisions (RTC)

It is a matter of some concern to the FBU that this element of the IRMP seeks that the Authority set a response standard to an RTC of 8 minutes, to be achieved on only 90% of occasions. This standard, at first glance, appears a reasonable standard to consider until the qualification is considered that the 8 minutes only becomes legitimate when it is reported that persons are trapped in the vehicle.

In this regard and as a consistent principal for managing performance, and by all indications given that an incident with person trapped attracts a higher response standard than RTC's with no reports of persons trapped, then it should surely be the case that a 'persons reported' incident of fire should have a higher response standard than fire incidents that have no 'persons reported'. To be clear however, the FBU do not subscribe to this form of tiered response principal and view all incidents of this nature as emergencies. However if it is apparent that persons are trapped within the vehicle, it is the case that life is at risk, it can only be assessed as being a high risk incident and that the standards the Authority has set in relation to high risk in incidents of fire must, at the very least on a matter of consistency, be set at the same response standard.

Given that RTCs are now a statutory responsibility of the Fire and Rescue Authority the FBU urge that the Authority sets similar response standards to such threats to life.

Site Specific Risk Information.

The FBU are happy to welcome and support the development of the Site Specific Risk Information initiative and view it as an important tool to assist firefighters in their work.

Community Safety.

Whilst entirely admirable in their intent a proportion of the community safety initiatives outlined in pages 21-29 lack clear direction and verifiable outcomes. In including these initiatives in local IRMP's it is not sufficient to use phrases such as-

“We firmly believe that helping improve interest in sport and culture will strengthen communities and ultimately make them safer”

That may well be the case but how will it strengthen communities? How will it make them safer? Without any input and output performance measures giving quantifiable statistics and data to reinforce these assumptions the Fire and Rescue Service will not be able to monitor improvements in the majority of these community safety initiatives and neither should it given that it is not the Fire and Rescue Services core service or responsibility, it is a worthy aspiration that cannot now be reached. Without that important monitoring element the Fire Authority cannot develop an effective strategy that shows clear measured improvements with clear measured results. In essence how does the Fire Authority know they are allocating the correct resources to the correct areas in order to maximise benefits to the community, could resources be better used to maximise safety benefits for the communities elsewhere?

In line with IRMP guidance the negatives of such initiatives also need to be explored as well as the positives, it may be a cheaper option for the Fire Authority to allocate money to more worthy initiatives rather than a full cost implication of allocating staff. In the current financial climate a full assessment of all initiatives and their verifiable impacts needs to be urgently undertaken.

The FBU acknowledge the suite of initiatives the Service has undertaken in recent years and given the extra-ordinary financial pressures posed by the grant settlement from the Coalition Government, the worst in the history of the Fire and Rescue Service, the FBU has requested the individual and cumulative costings of the initiatives. The Service has decided not to provide the information we have requested.

It may be the case that the initiatives in more financially abundant years may be progressive initiatives to participate in, the FBU struggle to see the relevance to a Fire and Rescue Service under extreme financial pressure of some of the initiatives captured within this IRMP. Those initiatives include:

1. Street Based Teams
2. Neighbourhood Fire Service Co-ordinators.
3. Deep Clean for Merseyside Cabs.

4. Goodness Grows on Trees.
5. New Boxing Club is Fighting Fit.
6. Romeo & Juliet in the Community by the Community.
7. Keeping Migrant Communities Safe in Sefton.
8. Southport Hotels Strategy.
9. Crosby Plaza Community Engagement Cinema.
10. Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food.
11. Youth Intervention.
12. Protecting the Vulnerable.
13. Smoking Cessation.
14. Community Information.
15. Firefighters Adopt a School in Knowsley.
16. Boxing Academy.
17. Neighbourhood Firefighters.
18. Volunteer Facilities Coordinator.
19. St Helens Give Alcohol the Boot at Road Safety Day.
20. Working Together for Safer Homes.
21. Youth Hub Launches in a Blaze of Glory.
22. Dig It.
23. Green Space Strategy.
24. Healthy Homes Initiative.
25. Cage Multi Sports on the Move.
26. Helping Older People.
27. Latest Recruit for Fire Safety.

The FBU are aware that to some managers some initiatives would appear worthy and will be defended by those who gave the initiatives impetus within the Service. It may even be argued, by some, that they are necessary initiatives and bring about external funding and benefits, but the cumulative cost to a Fire and Rescue Service facing unprecedented budget cuts must be a factor that is to the front of member's minds.

Given that, the FBU urge the members to consider this issue and to undertake a Cost Benefit Analysis to all similar initiatives, including an assessment of relevance

Recommendation 4

The FBU notes the worthy intent of some initiatives but believe that they should be thoroughly and systematically reviewed for relevance to a Fire and Rescue Service that has to target and prioritise its resources as never before. Such review should include a full Cost Benefit Analysis.

The Legal Responsibilities of the Fire and Rescue Service.

National Equality & Diversity Strategy for Fire & Rescue Services (2008-2018).

The FBU sincerely hope that the progress and improvements in relation to equalities issues will not be fettered by the change of Government and that the Authority will remain vigilant and proactive on this important area.

Equality Act 2010.

The FBU repeat our concerns mentioned above and view the weakening of commitments to assessments in relation to socio and economic deprivation as a worrying indication of the Coalition Governments view on the issue of true equality.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The FBU are concerned that again the IRMP does not appear to have due regard to the statutory duty placed on the Fire Authority in relation to Legislative Fire Safety and the specific requirement as set out in Governments IRMP Guidance Note 4, and more lately the Fire Service Circular 53/2009 '*Revised IRMP Guidance Note 4, a Risk Based Approach to Managing a Fire Safety Inspection Programme*'.

The IRMP Guidance Note 4: A Risk Based Approach to Managing a Fire safety Inspection Programme states that under the national framework 2008-11, FRA's are required to have a management strategy and a risk based inspection programme to enforce the provisions of the Fire Safety Order and this *must* form part of each Fire and Rescue Authority's IRMP.

Further the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework 2008-11 requires *each* Fire and Rescue Authority to have a management strategy and a risk based inspection programme to enforce the provisions of the Fire Safety Order. This *must* form part of each FRA's IRMP.

Clearly no such management strategy or risk based programme is contained within the IRMP and as such the Authority may be in breach of legislative requirements on this matter. The FBU urge the Authority to address this issue as a matter of urgency.

The Financial Challenges Ahead.

The FBU accept that due to circumstances beyond the control of those who collated information for this IRMP, that this draft IRMP is now dated to such a degree that is the view of the FBU that it does not adequately or realistically reflect the position that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service now finds itself in. The FBU position on this is clearly demonstrated in what is a fundamental part of this IRMP, the chapter titled 'The Financial Challenges Ahead'.

This chapter makes financial assumptions that are hugely 'wide of the mark'. The only realistic solution to this is for the Fire and Rescue Authority to take the decision that due to exceptional influences beyond its control that the IRMP needs to be rewritten taking into account the severe financial position that the Fire Authority now finds

itself in. To push ahead with this IRMP unamended fundamentally misunderstands the business planning associated with an IRMP, one of the most important aspects of the IRMP process is that it should describe a business plan, its objectives, its strategies, the market it is in and its financial forecasts. This IRMP fails dramatically in addressing financial forecasts as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Risk Assessment.

The Climate of Risk.

The assessment of risk as referred to in this section of the IRMP is a fundamentally important and integral element of any IRMP. This section refers to how the Service has systems in place to meet the new or growing risks the Authority faces.

One of the issues that greatly concern the FBU is the issue of the Coalition Governments intent to deliver huge cuts to public services unimpeded and the foreseeable risks that presents the Fire Authority in delivering an emergency service. It is fact that 40% of the working population of Merseyside is employed within the public sector, the inevitable and significant job losses will consequently increase unemployment and deprivation in an area already blighted by considerable deprivation.

It is also the case that the Neighbourhood Statistics indicates that the indices of deprivation reveals that 40% of wards within the Merseyside area are in the top 5% of the most deprived wards in the country. Such a postcode disgrace will be exacerbated with the increase in unemployment expected through slashing public sector workers jobs. An increase in deprivation in this manner is a foreseeable risk that must be assessed and planned for. The Fire Authority has repeatedly informed the community that more poor people die in fire, which must be the basis for further thought on this issue.

Consultation and Engagement Plan.

This section mentions and refers to a consultation programme undertaken with a focus group. Bizarrely, the focus group was counselled prior to the Authority agreeing the draft plan for consultation.

This forum is used within the IRMP to comment upon some of the more contentious initiatives the Service has considered including saying the forum provided majority support for fire bikes yet they displayed concern for the safety of lone workers. Somewhat fortuitously for the Service the forum apparently put forward ideas such as changing staffing levels or the number of appliances available at night.

Consultation Survey Outcomes.

There was reported to be 5 forums that took pace across the 5 local districts. These were not public forums where community members could make their views known but forums where at least 50% of participants had previously attended such forum meetings. The FBU note that the members of the forum were paid along with having their expenses reimbursed for their participation.

The first part of the forum meetings saw the participants sit through a detailed presentation which informed the forum of the nature of risk management planning and current incident trends across Merseyside and participants were shown a demonstration video of a single operative with a specialised motorbike tackling a car fire. This video, if it is the same as shown on television programmes has caused a certain degree of notoriety as the car was clearly in the earliest stages of fire, and so was not developed. The demonstration has been the subject of some derision throughout the firefighting community with virtually all professional firefighters of the opinion that a single firefighter on a motorbike not being able to successfully resolve a well developed car fire with the amount of firefighting medium it carries. The policy now is not to send a single motorbike to any incident.

The FBU would also wish to view the initial detailed presentation given the forum members to be able to comment further on this issue.

After the forum had watched the video and had detailed discussions, the forum expressed concern about lone working, Breathing Apparatus wearing, communications, training etc, concerns the FBU share. The FBU see no merit whatsoever of a motorbike/s in relation to firefighting and urge the Authority to cease such an initiative as it cannot be safely used in terms of protecting operators through the provision of Personal protective equipment (PPE) in the shape of Breathing Apparatus, which has been explained previously in this document (TB 1/97 etc).

The forum displayed caution about reducing numbers of fire engines and only after full discussion and explanation did that caution vary. This is the clearest example of a group being persuaded by senior members of the service, or their agents, that an issue of great concern such as fire cover was safe, despite those genuinely held fears of the forum members. Neither the FBU, nor any other group, were able to put forward an opposing but balancing view to the forum members and as such the data is clearly not balanced but integrally and fundamentally flawed. The FBU regularly attend public meetings where at the end of our report there is universal support for the lack of removal of fire cover in any shape.

This is even more startling given the report itself states that forum members asked *'are the firefighters happy with this proposal'* and *'how do the crews feel about this proposal'*.

Pointedly but not surprisingly given previous consultation forums run by the Service, one member volunteered the option of closing wholtime fire stations and stated that *'What do firefighters do overnight? Sleeping is not the most efficient system! (sic) (FBU comment - The FBU is unsure whether the forum member spoke in exclamation marks as is captured in his/her comment). The system is treasured by the firefighters! (sic) Could you not manage with a skeleton crew and other firefighters on call? The world has changed, the political climate has changed! (sic) I am not hypercritical, but you need to look at the system.'*

The FBU is used to such extreme hyperbole which only serves to undermine the vital role of firefighters and unlike previous areas of discussion where forum members were persuaded that issues were indeed safer than initial concerns raised, it does not

appear clear from the report that any person present on behalf of the Authority spoke in defence of the MF&RS firefighters. I am sure elected members will be aware that no fire call goes unanswered at time of rest, the system referred to as treasured by this forum member is a contractual shift system renowned for its popularity and family friendly provisions and that the Union view current staffing levels as being at the skeleton crewing levels referred to.

Interestingly, the forum felt that due to the financial pressures that MF&RS should no longer issue and fit free smoke detectors to all households, regardless of their levels of risk and whether or not they are vulnerable or living in hardship. This also ties in with the Audit Commissions thinking in that in their analysis of the total home fire safety checks from October 2004 to March 2007, the Audit Commission concluded that there is no clear link between home fire safety checks and reductions in accidental fires in the home. (*Fire services forum minutes - 11th October 2008.*)

This issue though emotive requires clear thought with the option of ceasing the fitting of free detectors a possibility.

A more professional and fuller survey of public opinion has been carried out by professional pollsters YouGov who surveyed 1020 people about their attitudes to the fire and rescue service. The following data was collated:

- ◆ 93% of those surveyed think the fire and rescue service is providing a good service.
- ◆ 98% of people in the North West think the fire and rescue service is providing a good service - that was the best in the country with East Midlands gaining 97%, SW - 95%, Wales - 95%, West Midlands - 91%, London - 88% and Yorkshire and Humber - 88%.
- ◆ 82% of people are satisfied with their local fire and rescue service, 91% ration in the North West, again the highest rating in the country.
- ◆ 85% oppose plans to cut funding in the fire and rescue service.
- ◆ 85% either strongly or tended to oppose plans to cut funding in the fire and rescue services, illuminatingly the political breakdown of this sections was the 94% of Labour supporters strongly or tended to oppose, 85% of Lib Dem supporters and only 68% of Tory supporters, a clearer more ideological picture is emerging.
- ◆ 32% of those surveyed think there should be more frontline firefighters, 63% think the numbers should stay the same and just 5% think there should be less firefighters.
- ◆ 49% didn't know that fire losses cost the economy £4.87bn a year indicating a job of work for the Fire Authority and the FBU to better inform our communities on the real financial cost of fire.

- ◆ 95% agree that a rapid response to fires should be a high priority for local people and local businesses.
- ◆ 95% agree that a rapid response to fires should be a high priority for the fire and rescue service.
- ◆ 90% of people believe that the fire and rescue service is good value for money.
- ◆ 67% oppose plans to close three quarters of local fire control rooms and replace them with nine regional control centres.

IRMP Medium Term Strategy 2010-2015.

Objective 2.

Objective 2 states that we will achieve the speed and weight of attack standards of our emergency response to fires and road traffic collisions. The weight of attack is confused as the Fire Authority policy and agreement is to have 5 and 4 on two fire appliance attendances, and to crew a rescue appliance on a one engine station (such as LLAR) with 5 firefighters yet the Service constantly rides 4 and 4, and 4 on one appliance stations.

Objective 5.

Naturally the FBU fully supports the target set within this objective in that a reduction in the cost of property loss in fires in commercial premises by 10% and to reduce business failure rates due to fire by 10% by 2015, yet views this as an extremely challenging target especially whilst proposing record firefighter job losses on top of the huge job losses in the last 8 years.

The cost of fire damage losses in the UK rose to a record £639 million, or £3.6 million a day, over the first half of 2009 according to the Association of British Insurers (ABI).

The figure follows a total of £1.3 billion paid out by insurers for UK fire losses during the whole of 2008, which was also a record. The ABI recorded that between 2002 and 2008, the average cost of a claim doubled to £21,000 for commercial fires and £8,000 for domestic fires.

The ABI reports that an increase in the number of open plan buildings, which allow fires to spread more rapidly, and out of town developments has been a contributing factor to the increase. Arson, which becomes more frequent during a recession, comprises half of all commercial fires and around 20 schools per week suffer an attack.

While the number of fires may have been reported to have been falling, the increase in large scale fires is increasingly putting lives at risk, including those of firefighters.

Objective 7.

This objective claims that there will be a 5% improvement of regulatory compliance performance by 2015 but does not inform the reader how. The FBU request more detailed information on this target.

Action Plan.

4.2 Respond.

Investigate the Provision of Support at Larger Scale Emergency Incidents.

The Plan states that our response to emergencies will be more flexible because we will investigate the potential performance and the efficiency of innovative ways of providing support to the initial emergency response at larger more protracted incidents, yet doesn't tell the reader how. It is a pointless exercise stating such bold statements yet not explaining how that bold statement would be undertaken in detail. The Service struggles to cope with large scale incidents as the Birkenhead fire on April 13th 2010 evidenced when a second blaze occurred at the same time in Maghull it took fire crews 15 minutes, including a crew from Lancashire, to attend the incident, resulting in a coach firm losing almost a million pounds worth of transport.

The FBU are now becoming concerned that we may not be able to meet our statutory requirements, a situation that is bound to get worse with the level of cuts being announced.

Develop an Appropriate Risk based Response to Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) Actuations.

This is an old and discarded notion which MF&RS had the misfortune to experiment with under the tenure of the previous Chief Fire Officer. That experiment concluded with the ending of the tenure of that Chief Fire Officer, the policy was reversed and full attendances were returned to AFA's. It is an old but useful firefighter saying that *'we never go to a false alarm, only come back from them'*. The elected members would be well served by keeping the saying at the front of the mind when dated initiatives like this resurface, in this case ten years later.

It seems incredible that the Service would consider placing property, and as such life, at risk under this proposal, especially at a time when the Localism Bill may give Authorities the ability to charge for them and therefore stemming a possible revenue stream.

The FBU strongly urges the Authority to reject this proposal.

Mobile Emergency Paediatrician.

This initiative falls into the well deserving category that is simply not the role of the Fire and Rescue Service and should remain the role of our colleagues in the health services.

IRMP Action Plan 2011 - 2012.

Expanding our Role in the Voluntary Sector.

Given the extraordinary financial climate, the FBU urges caution on this and similar initiatives.

Fire Fit Community Hub.

Given the extraordinary financial climate, the FBU urges caution on this and similar initiatives.

Crosby Water Sports Centre Partnership.

Given the extraordinary financial climate, the FBU urges caution on this and similar initiatives.

Home Fire Safety Check Evolution.

Members must question whether this is an appropriate use of fire and rescue service resources at this time of such austerity. Health and wellbeing assessments are laudable initiatives but there are other agencies better placed and better trained to deliver such services.

Multi Agency Licensing Group.

The FBU notes this objective.

Advocate Development.

Given the extraordinary financial climate, the FBU urges caution on this initiative and requests that a thorough review on benefit of cost to the authority including the realisation of cashable savings is undertaken.

Speed Awareness Course.

Unless the Service receives revenue then the initiative should cease.

Community Hub in Speke.

Without external funding this initiative should cease.

Fire Awareness Accommodation & Integration for Refugees.

Noted.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms.

Carbon monoxide testing and assessment is a difficult and skilful area undertaken by trained and qualified licensed professionals in the field of carbon monoxide detection which firefighters simply are not. This is an area the FBU urge caution on and fear that community members may feel a false sense of security.

Digital Inclusion.

This initiative is already being undertaken through the FBU's Union Learn Fund and Union Learn Representatives. This is a classic example of the Service looking at the FBU's function and trying to take the credit for it. The FBU calls on the Authority to continue working with the FBU to expand on this important function.

Investigate the Provision of Support at Larger Scale Incidents.

Comment has already been made on this issue earlier in this document.

Develop an Appropriate Risk Based Response to Automatic Fire Alarm Actuations.

Comment has already been made on this issue earlier in this document.

Mobile Emergency Paediatrician.

Comment has already been made on this issue earlier in this document.

Review Internal Logistics.

Noted.

Joint Emergency Services Protocol.

The FBU look forward to more details and the required consultation.

Climate Corps.

The FBU look forward to more details and the required consultation.

Preparing for Change.

This is an emotive issue and needs the fullest trade union and elected member involvement.

Create the Merseyside Observatory.

Noted.

Appendix 1 - MFRA Resolution January 2005

The Chief Fire Officer would wish to draw Elected Members' attention to the FBU response to consultation with regard to a proposal to implement a default crewing level of 4 personnel. These concerns are set out in some detail on pages 6-10 of their response. The primary concerns are summarised as follows:

The FBU believe that the minimum response to a property fire is nine firefighters not eight (page 7).

The FBU have not yet seen the detailed risk assessment documentation (page 9).

The FBU are concerned that a reduced crewing level (from 9 to 8) would exacerbate the existing problem of providing and maintaining water supplies for firefighting (page II).

Accordingly the Chief Fire Officer would ask the Authority to adopt the following resolution.

The Authority has taken account of the representations of the Fire Brigades Union and all other consultees. In particular the Authority takes account of the specific concerns that have been raised about proposals to apply a default crewing level of 4 firefighters for all fire engines attending property fires on a predetermined basis, subject to the actual crew level for a fire engine which is based at a single fire engine station to be increased to 5 where operational circumstances dictate.

Having taken into account the responses received, the Authority adopts the draft IRMP year 2 (2005/6) supplement and action plan amended as follows.

The Authority will continue to plan for:

- a) Fire engines at fire stations where only one fire engine is based, to be staffed with 5 firefighters (subject to further risk assessment)
- b) Fire engines at fire station where 2 fire engines are based, to continue to be staffed with a minimum of 5 staff on the first engine, and 4 on the second engine, subject to the following:
- c) The Chief Fire Officer be requested to present to Members the detailed analysis research and the risk assessment process that supports attendance by a crew of 8 firefighters as an initial response to property fires, and a proposal for piloting a response to property fires by 8 firefighters at a fire station at which 2 fire engines are based, such pilot to take place over a period of [6 months] in 2005/6
- d) the Authority then considers implementation of the pilot arrangement referred to above following consideration of the of the matters set out above.

The Authority notes the concerns of the FBU with regard to this proposal and therefore the Authority also invite the FBU to submit any detailed analysis or research in relation to their concerns at the same time as the Chief Fire Officer presents the information above.

Appendix 2 - Agreement of Principles Document Agreed between the MFRA and the FBU
September 2006

5 Operational rider levels

5.1 Although this is not an issue of the dispute the Fire Authority note the concerns of the FBU in this regard. The Authority is committed to making our community safer by reducing the risk of death or injury from fire or other serious incidents. It will achieve its aim of a safer community by a combination of prevention and response strategies.

5.2 The Authority will work towards achieving a rider level of 5 and 4 on normal pumping appliances. This to be achieved 75% of the time, followed by a year on year joint review on how best to achieve improved levels. Local Joint Secretaries will develop a recruitment schedule for recommendation to the Fire Authority that would underpin this proposed standard.

Where a single fire engine will respond on its own, as a matter of course, it will be staffed by 5 riders subject to the exigencies of the Service.

6 Industrial Relations Review

6.1 The Authority is receptive to a joint approach to a review of industrial relations to ensure future industrial harmony in the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. This work to begin before the end of 2006, and to conclude as soon as practicably possible. The arrangements to be agreed following meetings between the Local Joint Secretaries. Matters which cannot be resolved through local machinery/processes, will be referred to a mutually agreed third party. Both sides recognise that such a third party would have to be independent.

7 Return to work agreement

Both sides agree that there must and will be an acceptable return to work agreement before the trade dispute could be lifted.

8 Financial Context

Both sides recognise the financial position which underlies the original proposed changes. Both sides recognise the respective positions of the other side on this matter.

9 Collective Agreement

9.1 It is accepted that a collective agreement is required. Work has already commenced on drafting a collective agreement.

9.2 Both sides recognise and accept the need for absolute clarity with regard to the detail of the resolution of the dispute which should be available to all interested parties prior to the conclusion of the dispute.