



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	10 February 2016
OFFICER	Paul Holland, Head of Projects & Transformation
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Catriona Morris
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Station Merger Consultation: Feedback and Recommendations
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This report summarises the response to the Authority on a public consultation into a proposal to merge Great Holm and Bletchley Fire Stations with Thames Valley Police into a purpose built 'blue light hub' located in West Ashland in Milton Keynes.</p> <p>The consultation ran for eight weeks between 14 September 2015 and 9 November 2015.</p> <p>The Public Safety Plan (PSP) 2015-20 set out the strategic approach the Fire Authority will be taking to deliver the fire and rescue service. This included a commitment to deliver five area reviews that would look at a range of things including:</p> <p>"the right number and location of fire stations which may involve moving, merging, closing or co-locating with other blue light services"</p> <p>This consultation was part of a continuing dialogue with the public, which began with the 'listening and engagement' research (November/December 2013) which we did with the public prior to embarking on the development of the 2015-20 PSP, followed by the full PSP consultation which ran for 12 weeks (22 July-13 October 2014) with findings reported to the 17 December 2014 CFA meeting.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present to the Authority the results of the public and staff consultations into this merger; - Make recommendations based on the responses we received from across the different methods of consulting.
ACTION	Decision.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that one of the following options be approved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The resources from Great Holm and Bletchley

	<p>are relocated and merged into the new 'blue light hub' facility with Thames Valley Police at West Ashland and the existing station premises vacated. The Service will continue to ensure that current response standards are met via its dynamic mobilising system, utilising the fire crews that are out in the community delivering vital life-saving community safety work, or when appropriate utilising standby points strategically located across Milton Keynes, ensuring our communities will always benefit from the quickest possible attendance in an emergency; or</p> <p>2. The existing station premises at Great Holm and Bletchley are maintained and continue to operate as per the current arrangement.</p>
<p>RISK MANAGEMENT</p>	<p>The proposed station merger does not change BMKFA's approach to risk, however it does change some management aspects. Risk and demand work has been carried out by our Knowledge and Information team. The net rationalisation of fire stations will not increase risk due to the relocation of all resources to the new facility and the use of technological developments such as automatic vehicle locating systems (AVLS) ensuring our mobilising system always sends the nearest resource.</p> <p>If option 2 were to be approved the Authority would be required to return the £2.8m transformation fund grant to DCLG as we will be unable to deliver the combined blue light facility required by the approved business case.</p> <p>This consultation only covered the merger of the two stations, any subsequent changes to fire appliance numbers or availability as part of the transformation of Milton Keynes will require further public consultation.</p>
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p>	<p>The precise financial implications of this proposed merger are still to be determined, though original estimates obtained at the time of the bid (Jan 2014) indicated a capital programme of £4.4 million.</p> <p>If the merger proposition is successful, there may be a net expense on the cost of the land based on the cost of the proposed new site against the value of the current Bletchley and Great Holm sites. We have engaged three companies to provide valuation figures for both fire station sites to inform financial modelling for the build project. If the proposal to merge the two stations is approved a further paper will be brought to the authority detailing the build programme with costing scenarios.</p> <p>The Department for Communities and Local</p>

	<p>Government (DCLG) grant of £2.8million is based on the co-habitation of a new 'blue light hub' with TVP.</p> <p>The Head of Finance sits on the project board and oversees the capital programme associated with this build.</p> <p>This proposal will deliver circa £600k per annum revenue savings set out in the Transformation fund business case approved by DCLG. In addition we will have all the benefits of a modern environmentally sound and sustainable building that will provide financial savings and benefits to the local environment for the lifetime of the building.</p> <p>These are highly sustainable and are guaranteed as base budget savings for the future.</p>
<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p>	<p>This consultation was part of a continuing dialogue with the public following the publication of the PSP.</p> <p>The approach complies with National Framework requirements by ensuring that consultation is undertaken at appropriate points in the Integrated Risk Management Planning/Public Safety Plan (PSP) development process.</p> <p>The principles of fair and lawful consultation are set out in Appendix A – ORS Report (Executive Summary, paragraph 8)</p> <p>Before approving either of the officer recommendations, the Authority must take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the outcomes of the consultation (Appendices A-E);and b) the findings of the People Impact Assessment (Appendix F)
<p>CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION</p>	<p>This proposal supports the MOU with Thames Valley Police to share facilities when it is mutually beneficial. BMKFA are still in dialogue with South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) to relocate their operations in Milton Keynes to this blue light hub facility.</p>
<p>HEALTH AND SAFETY</p>	<p>Any material changes to operational configuration will be subject to appropriate and proportionate risk assessments of the implications for public and staff safety.</p> <p>Furthermore, there is conclusive evidence that there is no correlation between population increase and the amount of incidents we attend.</p>
<p>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY</p>	<p>Due consideration has been given by officers in the development of the proposals set out in this paper of the Authority's Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Equality Act</p>

	<p>2010.</p> <p>A People Impact Assessment has been completed for this proposal (see Appendix F). The PIA has identified that the new proposal is an improvement over the current facilities provided at the existing fire stations for our staff and for members of the public. There is an impact on on-call firefighters who would be required to travel further to attend the new facility. This issue has been factored into a review of this duty system across Milton Keynes. Employees affected by the proposal outlined in this paper have been engaged with through a staff engagement group established in July 2015.</p> <p>The selection process for the Public Forums was designed to ensure that a representative sample of the public was consulted. A socio-demographic profile of the public forums is shown on page 16 of appendix A. This indicates there was a broad cross section of residents from local areas.</p> <p>The staff engagement group was selected by staff from Milton Keynes stations as well as a Fire Brigades Union local official and therefore cannot be certified as necessarily representative of staff views as a whole. However, the group engaged constructively with the process providing valuable input and insights.</p> <p>Participation in the online survey was by open invitation so the views expressed via this channel cannot be certified as being necessarily representative of the views of the general public or staff as a whole.</p> <p>However, all staff and a wide range of organisations were encouraged to take part in the feedback process which yielded a diverse range of views and opinions.</p>
<p>USE OF RESOURCES</p>	<p><i>Communication with Stakeholders</i></p> <p>BMKFRS staff, representative bodies and a wide range of partner and community organisations and representatives were invited to participate in the consultation process.</p> <p>CFA members have been engaged via a series of workshops as well as in formal Authority meetings.</p> <p>The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) were invited to sit on the staff engagement group and interacted with our consultation throughout.</p> <p>A monthly project board meeting has been conducted with representatives from TVP and contact has been made with representatives from SCAS in order to keep both parties up to date with progress.</p> <p><i>System of Internal Control</i></p> <p>The governance of this project was clearly laid out at the beginning of the project and conforms entirely to</p>

	<p>the governance procedures laid out at previous BMKFA meetings.</p> <p><i>Medium Term Financial Planning</i></p> <p>This project has been considered in all appropriate financial modelling and planning documents.</p> <p><i>The Balance Between Spending and Resource</i></p> <p>The intention of this project is to merge the resources across two fire stations in West Milton Keynes into a single facility in a location that has the minimum impact on current response times.</p> <p><i>The Management of the Asset Base</i></p> <p>This will be determined by the decisions made within this BMKFA meeting.</p> <p><i>Environmental</i></p> <p>An aim of this project is to reduce the environmental impacts of BMKFRS in the Milton Keynes area in the long term by ensuring the potential new build achieves the highest environmental standard.</p>
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>The consultation sought to obtain the views of a representative cross section of the public and engage a wide range of other stakeholders including staff, representative bodies, and community and partner organisations in the consideration of the merger proposal.</p> <p><i>Consultation Programme</i></p> <p>There were a number of elements within our consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A series of three Public Forums took place, with the attendants being from Bletchley, Great Holm and then Milton Keynes as a whole. - A staff engagement group was formed in order to gain opinions and input from operational staff based in Milton Keynes, both full-time and retained. - An online questionnaire, hosted by ORS and accessible via the Authority's website. This was open to all staff, members of the public and representatives of partner and community organisations. <p>Awareness of the consultation was created through various press releases and features within local Milton Keynes media and social media, as well as direct communications being sent to appropriate stakeholders such as representatives of partner organisations. All MP's, Councillors and Parish Councils in Milton Keynes and the surrounding area were also directly contacted.</p>

	<p>Response</p> <p>In total, this was the most responded to consultation BMKFA has ever conducted, with a total of 873 responses. This total includes 782 responses to the online questionnaire, 45 direct responses through letter or email and 46 people took part in the Public Forums. We were extremely pleased with the levels of response and it shows that it was publicised appropriately.</p> <p>A total of 46 diverse members of the public participated in the Public Forums.</p> <p>A total of 12 members of staff participate in the MK staff engagement group.</p> <p>Additionally, 15 respondents to the online questionnaire declared themselves to be Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS) staff members or relatives although the actual level of response may have been higher with some preferring to identify as residents or not to say.</p> <p>A range of organisations also responded to the consultation via the questionnaire or by email or letter. A list of the organisations that responded to the online consultation is shown at pages 21-22 of appendix A.</p> <p>There were a total of 782 responses to the online questionnaire. A full profile of online respondents is shown at Tables 1–5 on pages 20-21 of appendix A.</p> <p>Overview of Findings</p> <p>Public Forums</p> <p>Whilst participants had mixed feelings about the proposal at the beginning of the forums, the majority supported it by the end of these meetings. This can mainly be attributed to the comprehensive nature of the information ORS provided them with, as well as the question and answer sessions that took place with BMKFA fire officers at each of the three Public Forums. The Public Forums were summarised by ORS and this has been fed into our responses and recommendations. A summary of the feedback received from these Public Forums can be found from page 35 of appendix A.</p> <p>Staff Engagement Meetings</p> <p>Staff engaged particularly well with this consultation and their views were extremely valuable in the progression of the project. Their input included ideas for the design of the potential new facility and their positivity towards the project was clear. Each member of this group represented their station, they were made clear of their role from the outset, to ensure</p>
--	---

that information was passed onto the staff at each of the Milton Keynes stations and to gather feedback and bring it to the staff engagement meetings.

Online Questionnaire

A summary of the main findings from the online questionnaire is shown from page 23 of appendix A. As well as a quantitative analysis of the findings, the report also includes analysis of qualitative feedback received in the form of written comments. These have been analysed to show how often a particular theme or issue was raised. In general the issues raised mirror those arising in the other consultation channels.

The numbers that responded to the online questionnaire were beyond our expectations and whilst the majority of the feedback was not positive, the questionnaire was extremely useful in highlighting the concerns of the public regarding this proposal.

The online questionnaire delivered some interesting responses, for example, 43% of participants stated they did not want community facilities in a fire station. Similarly, we received multiple responses stating that the reputation of the fire service would be negatively affected by sharing a facility with TVP.

FBU Response

The FBU submitted a written response during the consultation period and this has been carefully considered. A follow up meeting took place between the project lead and an FBU representative and no further feedback was received. The views of the FBU have been fed into the responses and recommendations outlined in appendix B. A copy of the FBU feedback can be found in appendix D.

Other Responses

All other responses received through email or letter were collated with BMKFRS and analysed alongside the feedback obtained through ORS. The themes from this feedback are included in the table in appendix B.

Overall, it was found that response times were the area of most concern for respondents to the consultation, whether they engaged through the questionnaire, Public Forums or through direct feedback. Nearly sixty per cent of both questionnaire feedback and direct feedback raised this as an issue, significantly more than any other concern raised.

Management Response to Consultation Feedback

A full summary of all responses to this consultation can be found in appendix B, along with recommendations.

In general the feedback was found to be constructive and useful in terms of informing the development of

	the options and recommendations outlined earlier in this paper.
APPENDICES	<p>Appendix A - ORS Report</p> <p>Appendix B - Management Responses and Recommendations</p> <p>Appendix C - Supporting Data Pack</p> <p>Appendix D – FBU Feedback</p> <p>Appendix E – Examples of other responses (letter/email)</p> <p>Appendix F – People Impact Assessment</p>
TIME REQUIRED	30 Minutes.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Paul Holland, Head of Projects and Transformation</p> <p>pholland@bucksfire.gov.uk</p> <p>07765 016879</p>