



**GREATER
MANCHESTER**
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Consultation Report: Fire Cover Review and Special Appliance Review

September 2023

Communications and Engagement Team

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1. Executive Summary

The Fire Cover Review is a process carried out by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) every four years to make sure that our available resources are used most effectively and efficiently across the city-region.

Our latest Fire Cover Review, accompanied by a Special Appliance Review, is being undertaken in 2023/24. This includes proposals around crewing models in two fire stations (Offerton and Sale), Enhanced Rescue Stations in two locations (Ashton and Leigh), and additions and changes to our frontline fleet.

There is no legal requirement to consult on these proposed changes. But we recognise that good quality engagement with our people, our residents and our partners leads to better decision making, improved trust and confidence and further enhanced professional judgement. We have therefore undertaken a process of internal and external engagement on the proposals over a total of eleven weeks, from Monday 8 May to Monday 24 July 2023.

For internal engagement (initially from Monday 8 May to Monday 5 June, but then continuing throughout the subsequent external engagement period), managers from across the Service held 140 sessions with their watches or teams. Each manager provided feedback about the main issues raised in these discussions and any questions that had been asked.

During the external engagement period (Monday 5 June to Monday 24 July), 830 people responded to an online survey, leaving a total of 1100 comments about the proposals.

Opportunities were also provided for people to respond in-person. Public events were held in the areas most directly covered by the proposals Offerton in Stockport, and Sale and Partington in Trafford. A total of 180 people attended these three events.

Senior GMFRS officers also attended Council Scrutiny meetings in both Stockport and Trafford, where they outlined the proposals to local Councillors and took questions about the potential local impacts.

Feedback on the proposals was also received from a number of key stakeholders, either through the online survey or separate letters / emails to our service. This included submissions from the Fire Brigades Union, Trafford and Stockport Councils and their individual councillors, and local MPs.

Two petitions were also received which, combined, had signatures from 2,043 people.

The headline feedback from this internal and external engagement is that:

- The proposals to move to "day crewing" in Sale and Offerton fire stations are strongly opposed by local residents and their representatives. This opposition is driven largely by concerns and fears for safety, including for older and more vulnerable residents and in response to local risks and developments.

- The day crewing proposals are also opposed by many GMFRS staff and the Fire Brigades Union. Safety concerns shared with residents are also added to by questions over the deliverability of the proposed staffing model.
- There is support for the addition of two new fire engines (or appliances) for the city region to be located in Manchester – but this support turns to opposition when it comes at the cost of a move to day crewing in other areas. Many respondents spoke of “robbing Peter to pay Paul” and feelings of unfairness of reducing cover in one part of Greater Manchester to increase cover in another.
- The Enhanced Rescue Unit proposal received mixed reviews from both the public and staff. While the broader range of incident response provided was often welcomed, there were questions about the cover levels provided, identified locations of the units and deliverability of the staffing model.
- There was significantly less feedback on the Special Appliance Review than on the other proposals. There was broad support for the proposals outlined, but with some limited localised opposition – predominantly from staff – from some areas where appliances are proposed to be moved elsewhere.
- Consulting on the Fire Cover Review proposals as a single combined package has complicated analysis of how people feel about each of the proposals individually. Where there is opposition to the Enhanced Rescue Station, additional fire engine and Special Appliance proposals, accompanying free text comments often (but not always) link this back to the individual’s opposition to the day crewing proposals.
- Overall there is recognition that GMFRS is facing a difficult challenge in achieving its aims within the resources available to it. A number of responses spoke of the proposals being driven by financial pressures, while enthusiasm for the two additional appliances was tempered by a belief that this was not ‘new’ cover but replacing resources previously removed. People called for GMFRS and the Mayor to seek additional funding to keep communities safe, rather than changing current service levels to deliver within what is currently affordable.

2. Overview of the consultation

This report summaries non-statutory consultation activity undertaken by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) over eleven weeks between May and July 2023 to inform our latest Fire Cover Review (FCR). It covers both internal and external engagement activities.

Every four years, GMFRS carries out a review of how we manage our operational resources. Using data and modelling on recent and current incidents and on future spatial planning and developments across the city region, the review considers how we best keep Greater Manchester safe by managing the differing risks each individual community faces while delivering within a balanced overall budget.

The most recent Fire Cover Review is taking place during 2023-24, alongside a review of our “special appliances” which respond to more specialist and complex incidents.

Recommendations for changes that were identified formed the basis of the non-statutory consultation and engagement activity carried out internally with staff and externally with residents and partners. While there is no legal requirement of us to consult on these proposed changes, we committed to engage with people likely to be affected out of a recognition that good quality engagement with our staff, our residents and our partners leads to better decision making, improved trust and confidence and further enhanced professional judgement.

The proposed changes set out in this Fire Cover Review and Special Appliances Review include:

- Introducing two additional “day crewing” fire stations at Offerton and Sale, moving them from their current ‘wholetime’ model (where crews are based on the stations 24 hours a day) to an alternative already used in six other Greater Manchester stations, where firefighters combine daytime hours in the station with on-call hours from their homes nearby at night-time and weekend afternoons.

NB – during engagement on the proposals, we received comments on the accuracy and credibility of the headline summary of this proposal, as “Introducing two additional “day crewing” fire stations at Offerton and Sale”. This had been interpreted initially in some cases as adding two stations to our overall number of stations, rather than adding two current stations to our existing number of day crewed stations. While not intended to mislead, and clearly explained in supporting information, this headline will be reworded in any future description; we are maintaining this summary description in this report for consistency with how the headline was presented in the consultation documentation.

- Introducing two Enhanced Rescue Stations, in Leigh (Wigan) and Ashton (Tameside). These would build on the Technical Response Units (TRUs) currently based at these stations, but with an alternative operating model and

staffing structure to increase the response and resilience while bringing cost savings.

- Increasing our frontline fleet by adding two new fire engines for our city region, based in and around Manchester city centre (Manchester Central and Moss Side Fire Stations), which would also increase service capacity for prevention and protection-focused outreach and engagement
- Proposed changes to upgrade, replace and relocate some of our specialist fire and rescue equipment (“Special Appliances”), including relocating one Turntable Ladder (from Stretford in Trafford to Oldham), replacing three Hydraulic Platform Vehicles with new High Reach Extendable Turrets, and enhancing our Water Incident Units’ capabilities.

A more detailed summary of each of these proposals, and the data and modelling informing them, is available in a separate [summary document](#) and on GMFRS’ [Fire Cover Review webpages](#).

This consultation summary report outlines:

- The [planning](#) that took place before the engagement activity – including the development of a communications and engagement plan, events plan, Equality Impact Assessment, supporting materials and a dedicated digital consultation space.
- The [mapping of stakeholders and audiences](#) that we considered to make our engagement as inclusive as possible for people and communities potentially affected if the proposed changes were to go ahead
- The [external](#) and [internal engagement](#) that took place within the overall eleven week non-statutory consultation period from Monday 8 May (internal) and Monday 5 June (external) to Monday 24 July 2023.
- The [responses](#) to each specific proposal of the Fire Cover Review and to the Special Appliances Review, received from residents, community members, stakeholders and GMFRS staff.

3. Consultation approach

Planning

Our [Equality Impact Assessment](#) outlines how we considered the Fire Cover Review and Special Appliance Review proposals, their potential impacts on different communities, and how all those potentially affected – including those with protected characteristics – could be informed and engaged about them. This identified suitable activities to mitigate any risks that people from across the city-region might not have appropriate and relevant opportunity to hear about and help inform the proposals.

In particular, the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) drew on recent findings from Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA's) [regular residents' surveys](#), showing that over a third (37%) of Greater Manchester's population experiences one or more aspect of digital exclusion, with this proportion higher among parts of the population including older and disabled residents. It was therefore made a key consideration when developing our communications and engagement plan that both digital and non-digital methods of engagement should be provided for people to hear about the proposals and respond if they wished.

The overall approach included a range of tactics to help to engage as wide an audience as possible, through both GMFRS' own networks and those of partners and communities.

Stakeholder mapping

Through a process of stakeholder mapping prior to beginning our external engagement, we identified a range of key people and partners with potential interests or impacts related to the Fire Cover Review and Special Appliance Review proposals. This included:

- Greater Manchester Councils and their Leaders
- Local Councillors
- Greater Manchester MPs
- Greater Manchester's Police, Crime and Fire Panel
- North West Fire Control
- Our neighbouring fire and rescue services (and in particular those closest to Trafford and Stockport with whom we have 'mutual aid' provisions)
- Fire Brigades Union
- Greater Manchester Police
- Representatives of the VCSE sector (including the VCSE Leadership Group)

- Greater Manchester's Equality Panels, focused on engaging with and improving outcomes for Greater Manchester's diverse communities - including young people, disabled people, LGBTQ+, women and girls, races, faiths and beliefs and older people.

Each of these key groups was invited to share and respond directly to the consultation, for both themselves and those whose interests they represent.

The consultation was also promoted through the weekly information bulletin provided for the seven organisations commissioned by GMCA to facilitate the Greater Manchester Equality Panels. These organisations in turn disseminate the information received to over 100 organisations, representing a diverse range of people and communities.

Key communications and engagement and policy contacts from Greater Manchester's wider partner networks – including local authorities – were also provided information and materials to raise awareness of the proposals and their consultation among people they regularly engage.

Key external engagement - online

Dedicated [Fire Cover Review webpages](#) were created on the GMFRS website, providing summaries and access to more detailed information about the proposals and the engagement activity. These were intended as the main online hub of information, which could be regularly reviewed and added to in response to key questions or issues as the engagement activity progressed.

This was supported by the use of [gmconsult.org](#) to host the main online feedback survey on the proposals. This is the established standard platform used by GMFRS, GMCA and partners for Greater Manchester-wide surveys and consultations, which received over 76,000 visitors during 2022. The Fire Cover Review survey appeared as a main featured item on the portal's homepage for the duration of the external engagement period (5 June to 24 July)

Social media toolkits were created with recommended messaging and visual assets for use on GMFRS and GMCA corporate channels (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), including by all GMFRS borough-level accounts. This content was also shared with counterparts from Greater Manchester partners and local authorities, so that they could make use of the content and messaging to extend reach wider to their networks and audiences.

Organic social media posts were supported by boosted / paid-for promotion via Facebook and Instagram.

Two online community events were held via MS Teams (19 and 21 June) so that people and partners could dial in from where they live or work to hear from GMFRS Senior Officers about the proposals.

The Fire Cover Review and Special Appliances Review was also promoted through GMFRS and GMCA's established digital communication channels, including the June and July monthly email bulletins sent to around 3,200 residents and partners from across Greater Manchester.

Online engagement impacts and outcomes

The Fire Cover Review and Special Appliances Review survey on gmconsult.org received 830 responses

- Further detail on these responses is included in [section 4 below](#)

During the consultation period, the gmconsult.org platform was accessed by 3,661 unique users. Of these:

- 33% came directly to the consultation portal, e.g. by using the web address featured on communications materials
- 44% came by clicking through from Facebook, through which paid-for advertising was undertaken
- 7% linked through from the GMFRS website
- 6% clicked through from posts on Twitter.

In addition, the dedicated GMFRS webpages on the Fire Cover Review proposals were visited by 946 unique users.

- Around a third of these (34%) accessed the pages through google
- A similar proportion (29%) came directly to the page
- Around 1 in 5 (21%) accessed the pages through social media posts – 11% via Twitter and 10% via Facebook.

The combination of organic and paid-for social media posts resulted in reach / impressions totalling 118,998:

- 63,192 users were reached via GMFRS Facebook, with 2,415 engagements (reactions, link clicks, shares) including 492 people linking through to the gmconsult.org consultation platform or GMFRS Fire Cover Review webpages from paid-for posts.
- 21,780 users were reached via GMFRS Instagram, with 577 engagements including 391 people linking through to the gmconsult.org consultation platform or GMFRS Fire Cover Review webpages from paid-for posts.
- 34,026 impressions were made via GMFRS Twitter via organic posts only, with 938 engagements.

The GMCA email bulletins featuring the Fire Cover Review and Special Appliances Review proposals and feedback information had an open rate of around 40%. This meant that information was seen by 1,195 readers in June and 1,235 readers in July.

Key external engagement - offline

Three face to face community events were hosted so that people could meet GMFRS Senior Officers (Chief Fire Officer or Deputy Chief Fire Officer, plus Assistant Chief Fire Officer / Director of Service Delivery) to hear, ask questions and provide feedback about how the day crewing proposals might impact on their local communities. These took place in easy to access fire stations (Offerton on 12 June, Sale on 14 June) and a central community location (Partington on 4 July), in early evening timeslots identified with local partners as most suitable for residents' attendance.

Posters were put up in shop windows and distributed in local areas to promote the engagement events, especially around the Partington area when it became apparent that there was a gap in the information getting to that particular community that could be impacted by the proposals.

A paper version of the online survey was available at the events and community locations so that people could complete their feedback outside of the events themselves without using a digital device.

Alternative methods for responding to the proposals were also accepted, beyond the main online and paper survey. This included through letters and emails, petitions and submissions collected by member organisations and groups on behalf of people they represent.

Greater Manchester and local media were targeted at key points during the engagement. Two press releases were issued during the public consultation period, [setting out the proposals](#) on 5 June and announcing an [extension of the consultation period](#) on 26 June. Regular media enquiries were also supported.

Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer / Director of Service Delivery attended public Scrutiny Committee sessions with [Stockport Council](#) (29 June) and [Trafford Council](#) (10 July) to discuss the day crewing proposals in each borough with committee members and other interested councillors. The sessions were open to the public, and available to watch back online afterwards. The discussions informed each Council's formal responses to the consultation on behalf of local residents and communities.

Multiple Freedom of Information requests were received throughout the consultation period; these were responded to within the statutory time limits whenever the information was held. These were accompanied by less formal requests for information from MPs, councillors, media and other stakeholders, which were replied to in a similar manner.

Offline engagement impacts and outcomes

Three community events were attended by a total of 180 residents and partners. This included:

- 83 attendees at the Offerton Fire Station event – including 12 staff members and 3 Fire Brigades Union (FBU) representatives
- 47 attendees at the Sale Fire Station event – including 7 staff members and 1 Trafford local councillor
- 50 attendees at the Partington Community Centre event – including Andrew Western MP and 3 Trafford local councillors

Media engagement activities secured six pieces of news coverage in Manchester Evening News between 5 June and 19 July, with further coverage in local titles including Wigan Today and The Messenger (Trafford).

Key internal engagement

Colleagues from across GMFRS were told and given opportunities to ask and provide feedback about the proposals one month before the public consultation started – from Monday 8 May to Monday 5 June.

This period of internal pre-engagement was increased to one month from an originally intended two weeks, following a high volume of interest from colleagues across the Service, and the detailed nature of their comments. This increase was to ensure that everyone in the Service who wanted to hear about and discuss the proposals before they were presented publicly had the opportunity to do so.

During this internal pre-engagement, line managers from across GMFRS hosted sessions with their teams and Watches to discuss the plans. They were supported to do this by being provided:

- A key information presentation to guide discussions and provide consistent and accurate information on the proposals and evidence for their rationale.
- A standard feedback form to complete after the session, so that all information, insight and queries raised from all staff during the sessions could be routinely captured and followed-up.

In addition to these manager-led sessions, Executive Board members and the Deputy Mayor made targeted visits at several points through the internal and external engagement periods, to hold discussions with colleagues from stations most directly covered by the proposals, including Offerton, Sale and Stretford.

Central internal communication activities were provided and updated throughout the internal and external engagement periods. These included a dedicated intranet page with key messages and FAQs, regular newsletters, and senior leadership videos.

At key points of the engagement period, a total of ten targeted emails were sent from the Assistant Chief Fire Officer / Director of Service Delivery to Service Leadership Team members, middle managers and other colleagues whose teams were particularly featured in the proposals. These messages were intended for wider cascade and discussion by managers with their teams.

Information and updates on the Fire Cover Review and Special Appliances Review were also regularly featured in the monthly GMFRS Leaders' Core Brief document, provided to Executive Board and Service Leadership Team members and borough managers to support them in having conversations with their teams about key issues affecting the service.

In addition to this bespoke engagement, internal colleagues had access to information and response opportunities provided more widely through external approaches set out above.

Internal engagement impacts and outcomes

During the month-long internal pre-engagement period ahead of external consultation, 140 manager-led sessions took place across the organisation:

- 85% (119) of these took place on fire stations with operational colleagues.
- 15% (21) were in offices and other locations with non-operational staff.
- All stations received at least one briefing on the proposals; there was a mixed approach to delivering these, with some managers choosing to combine briefings for multiple watches, and others providing multiple, individual briefings. In general, more briefings were held in those stations most directly featured in the proposals.

Information on the Fire Cover Review and Special Appliances Review was featured in 15 editions of the GMFRS weekly email newsletter – sent to all operational, non-operational and shared-service staff – between 24 April and 15 August.

- These articles were viewed a combined total of 1,622 times

Four video updates were provided, from the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (24 April) and Assistant Chief Fire Officer / Director of Service Delivery (3 May, 28 July, 2 August). These were shared to all GMFRS staff via the intranet, weekly email newsletter and an all-staff email, and displayed on AV screens across GMFRS stations, offices and other locations.

- These videos received a total of 1,212 trackable views (intranet and newsletter), alongside those views which cannot be counted (AV screens)

The Fire Cover Review and Special Cover Review was also featured in a monthly update briefing and Q&A for wider GMCA staff, including those from GMFRS. This was hosted by GMCA Chief Executive and Chief Fire Officer on 28 June.

- This additional GMCA briefing was attended by 167 colleagues

4. Consultation responses

Overview of public / partner survey responses

The gmconsult.org feedback survey received 830 responses.

The majority of these respondents stated they have no direct current connection with GMFRS:

Relationship to GMFRS	Total	Percent
I have no past or current work or volunteering relationship with GMFRS	721	87%
I am a current member of staff	66	8%
I used to work or volunteer for GMFRS	43	5%
I am a current volunteer with GMFRS	0	0%
Not Answered	0	0%

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide both tick box (quantitative) and free text (qualitative) responses to each proposal.

For the free text responses, all individual comments have been read, reviewed and coded, to provide both a theme and a sentiment (supportive, opposing or neutral) of the response. This process allows us to identify key themes and trends coming from the qualitative data. Whilst there is a level of subjectivity to this process, all coding has been peer reviewed to ensure consistency across comments.

Overview of wider engagement

Day crewing was the dominant theme in each of the three face-to-face community events held – not surprisingly given these Fire Cover Review proposals would have the biggest local impacts.

A number of detailed responses from a range of specific people, groups and organisations were also received. Summaries of each are included in the relevant thematic sections below.

196 specific comments on the proposals were also received via social media. While not included in the thematic analysis of free-text survey responses, there are some common and consistent themes, reflecting a largely oppositional viewpoint and varying degree of awareness of the detail of the proposals:

“Some things are a good idea and I say some! But others which are quite a few a bad idea. To be honest we need more and not robbing Peter to pay Paul! Just to cover Manchester City centre!”

“You seem to be doing a lot already. I have noticed teams of you going to bad road accidents helping to free (cutting people out), from cars which seems a

great idea and helping carrying them to the ambulance. You are all (teams) doing a great job, very great full.”

“More appliances for City but less cover for wealthy suburbs.... Makes some sense on paper, but fire location is unpredictable...”

“The people who do the job, should be those you should be asking. What does the public know about fighting a fire. All we want to know is, will the service be there when we need it.”

Overview of staff engagement sessions

Feedback was received from 117 of the 140 sessions held by managers with their watches / teams (84%).

The most frequently discussed issues in these sessions were the proposals:

- to introduce day crewing - at Offerton (discussed in 70 sessions, 50%) and Sale (64 sessions, 46%)
- around aerial appliances (turntable ladders and hydraulic platform vehicles / high reach extendable turrets) in the Special Appliances Review (45 sessions, 32%)
- to introduce two new fire engines based in Manchester (42 sessions, 30%)
- to introduce Enhanced Rescue Stations – at Ashton (37 sessions, 26%) and Leigh (34 sessions, 24%)

107 specific comments and 224 questions were received from these staff sessions. Key issues include:

- a genuine interest in having a say about the operational fleet and its Special Appliances (in particular the turntable ladders and water incident unit)
- concerns about impacts on staffing and welfare facilities should the new fire engines be introduced in Manchester Central and Moss Side
- questions on if the proposed remuneration for working on an Enhanced Rescue Station is sufficient
- feelings of a lack of recognition about all the work done by a shift duty system (ie, non-day crewed) station
- calls for staff to be routinely engaged and have their voices heard – as people and ‘not just numbers’ – as an important part of transforming organisational culture.
- requests to be provided additional information to be able to make an informed response to the proposals
- concerns around how staff will be managed and supported through any changes

- questions around crewing models and staffing numbers on different appliances
- questions around the location and turnout of various specialist equipment
- requests for details of the subsequent public consultation and how public will be helped to hear about and understand what is proposed.

Responses on proposal 1 – Introduction of day crewing at Sale (Trafford) and Offerton (Stockport)

Consultation survey responses

The day crewing proposals were opposed for both Sale and Offerton:

- For Sale, 86% of respondents opposed the proposal, including 77% who strongly disagree. This compares with 8% of people who agree with the proposal.
- For Offerton, 78% of respondents opposed the proposal, including 67% who strongly disagree. Similar to Sale 9% of people agree with the proposal (with a larger proportion of Offerton respondents neither agreeing or disagreeing with the proposal, or leaving the question unanswered)

Opinions on day crewing proposals – public	Sale	Offerton
Strongly agree	4% (33)	4% (36)
Agree	4% (35)	4% (37)
Disagree	9% (73)	10% (82)
Strongly disagree	77% (641)	68% (562)
Neither agree or disagree	5% (42)	9% (72)
Not Answered	1% (6)	5% (41)

Among survey respondents who say they currently work for GMFRS, support for the day crewing proposals appears higher than among the public overall – although this is based off a much smaller number of responses:

Opinions on day crewing proposals – public / staff	All responses (830)	Staff only responses (66)
Agree / Agree Strongly - Sale	8% (68)	17% (11)
Neither agree or disagree - Sale	5% (42)	7.5% (5)
Agree / Agree Strongly - Offerton	9% (73)	20% (13)
Neither agree or disagree - Offerton	9% (72)	7.5% (5)

There is also a majority of opposition to the proposed reallocating of funding to other operations from any move to day crewing at Sale and Offerton stations.

Opinions on reallocation of funding – public	Total
Strongly agree	5% (43)
Agree	5% (40)
Disagree	14% (119)
Strongly disagree	63% (527)
Neither agree or disagree	12% (96)
Not Answered	1% (5)

As with the individual station proposals, agreement for this proposal is higher among people identifying as GMFRS staff – with 21% of staff (14 responses out of 66) supporting it, compared to 10% of all responses (83 out of 830).

Respondent comments

(NB – quoted comments appear throughout this document as they were submitted. For accuracy, we have not corrected any spelling or grammar)

515 free text comments were received in response to the day crewing proposals.

Comment analysis found significantly more negative comments specifically about the proposal for Sale (58) than for Offerton (22). However, there were many comments about community and personal safety (99) which could be applied to day crewing in either station, reflecting the strong overall opposition to the proposals seen in the quantitative results:

“The idea to take away coverage to local residents at night is offensive and could be catastrophic”

“It beggars belief that you are even considering such a proposal. You are telling the residents & businesses locally that they are not worthy of maintaining a night service so you can support more “worthy” areas”

“Gambling with public safety, yet again further demise of our public services”

A large proportion of comments (127 of the 515) related to response times, with 94% of these being negative. Many related specifically to increased response times in areas of Trafford that would result from the move of Sale to day crewing - citing

traffic along the roads in Sale which could prevent on-call crews mobilising within four minutes, and limited access routes in and out of Partington which already impact on response times to the area:

“Sale would not make the turn out time due to the traffic of washeay road [sic] at peak times and when sporting events or concerts are taking place at old Trafford cricket group or old Trafford football stadium”

“The residents of Partington are effectively being told their fire cover isn't important. They already have to put up with excessive turnout times from trafford remaining pumps.”

Some specific local risks were raised at the in-person community events, and in stakeholder responses – most notably associated with hydrogen storage and other industrial sites in Partington and Carrington (in relation to the Sale proposal) and Stepping Hill Hospital access (in relation to Offerton). These issues did not feature heavily in the public survey responses.

85 comments related specifically to budgets, and how GMFRS receives and spends its money. 92% of these comments were negative. They included regular calls for GMFRS to lobby national government for additional funding:

“This is a bad idea. Go back to the govt and get them to give you the extra money. Support the Fire Service by giving them ALL the resources they need!!”

There were also many comments related to the perceived unfairness of local council tax payers in one area subsidising the fire and rescue service provision in other local authorities. Rather than viewing GMFRS as a city region-wide service, these respondents feel that if people pay the same amount, they should receive the same level of service – regardless of local levels of risk or demand.

Of the 515 comments, there were 5 positive comments, including:

“With the extra money coming off of the day crewing scheme, it would also be amazing if you could restart the community fire cadets. I know plenty of people who would love to join and would like to join GMFRS in the future”

“If the resource saved by the proposals is used to enhance business support in fire safety and improve compliance with regulatory requirements this is positive. The investment in time for prevention of fires and personal responsibility is invaluable.”

Issues raised at community events

Day crewing was the dominant theme in each of the three face-to-face community events held – not surprisingly given these Fire Cover Review proposals would have the biggest local impacts.

Attendees at the Sale community event highlighted in particular:

- Increased response times across Sale and Trafford should the proposal go ahead
- Queries around the accuracy of modelling data being used for the Sale proposal, including whether it is appropriate to look at averages across the Sale area as a whole rather than smaller “lower super output areas” (typically containing around 625 households or a population of around 1,500), which will show a greater range of variance in impacts
- Low likelihood of crews meeting the 4-minute turnout time, when considering the current traffic in and around Sale station and the current home locations of staff based at the station.
- Personal circumstances and local traffic will affect the crews going out from the station. The need to understand the locality crews are located and proximity to station.
- Increased training needs and how they will be met with the change in moving appliances
- Various funding concerns raised as Sale is an area with predominant growth in both economy and housing, however this proposal is a reduction/cut for Sale.
- Community safety at night and anti-social behaviour concerns raised.
- Concerns raised around community engagement and if all communities and businesses know about Fire Cover Review proposals.

An additional community event was organised in Partington in response to particular potential impacts for the area that could result from the Sale proposal that were highlighted during initial weeks of the consultation. Issues raised at this event included:

- Increased proposed response times, and the further challenges of local road infrastructure such as access routes in and out of the village.
- Lack of consideration for future developments in and around the area, such as major housing and employment projects in Carrington, and perceived ‘high risk’ businesses such as Trafford Park and nearby hydrogen storage.
- Lack of local buy-in to the need for additional prevention activity, with perceptions that this is already being done to the maximum extent and extra

activity would struggle to reach any further households not already being engaged.

- Dissatisfaction with the station-area (rather than lower super output area) level of data and modelling to calculate response times
- Whether on-call firefighters would be able to turn out to Sale within the required four minutes (due to local traffic and one-way systems) to meet response times

Attendees at the Offerton community event highlighted:

- The need for transparency around modelling of data for the day crewing model and the 4-minute response time
- The need to listen and understand staff concerns about all the proposals and how they will impact their personal life and wellbeing also. [OBJ]
- Reduction or displacement of staff results in loss of expertise and skills.
- Concerns raised around why the fleet was being moved back to the city centre.
- Staff training needs would need to be met and those who have these specialist skills may not be able to relocate
- Safety of the station once reduced to day crewing only.
- Concerns raised for the lack of funding for Stockport as the borough is growing in population and has seen a substantial growth in the last 4 years.
- Dissatisfied with the long-term effect this will have on future fire fighters and service or those aspiring to join as this is a cut in service not an increase.
- FBU narrative questioned why every fire cover review was a cut in service not a positive increase.

Stakeholder responses

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) response stated it does not support the introduction of the two-day crewing stations, on the basis of it being a downgrade for the station area which will lead to an increase in response times, impacting on both firefighter and public safety.

Andrew Western MP (Stretford and Urmston) stated strong opposition to the introduction of day crewing, arguing that managing the growth of the city centre should not be to the detriment of the service provided in Sale. Specific concerns raised include:

- Unfeasibility of a four-minute turnout time for staff, considering traffic conditions and road infrastructure around the station.

- Impacts of the proposals on Partington residents – an area where there is existing inequality, is densely populated and comparatively disadvantaged compared to other areas currently served by day crewing.

Trafford Council acknowledged that GMFRS needs to review its service provision periodically, and that it is right for the Service to be planning for the growth of Manchester city centre and supporting the training and development of firefighters to deal with the changing nature of risks and incidents across the city region. But a number of concerns were raised in its response:

- Trafford would be disproportionately affected by the Fire Cover Review, experiencing two significant proposals with the introduction of day crewing in Sale and the moving of a turntable ladder from Stretford to Oldham.
- Whether the data and evidence support the day crewing proposal, and an overall lack of concrete rationale for Sale being proposed as one of the two stations.
- The potential impacts on Partington, with specific reference to complex industrial activity and upcoming significant housing growth.

A separate response was received from Trafford Council Scrutiny Committee, following the evidence session held with Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer / Director of Service Delivery and representatives from Fire Brigades Union (FBU). This set out the Committee's unanimous decision, supported by local Ward Councillors, to oppose the proposal for Sale due to the increased risk and danger it would present to local people. Specific issues raised in the response include:

- Growth in Trafford, including planned new developments which would increase existing traffic on key roads, causing further challenges to firefighters being able to respond within the required timeframe.
- The lack of any alternate options within the consultation, leaving a feeling that the options for changes were 'all or nothing'.

A response from Stockport Council set out their opposition to the proposals for day crewing at Offerton, and referenced local potential risks. There was also a focus on the methodology of response times if the proposal for day crewing was adopted, with a view that it wasn't calculated accurately or presented in a transparent way. The response also contained criticism of firefighters ability to turnout in the proposed time (if they lived in the area). Reference to being pleased about the investment of a new fire station in the Borough in the next 18 months

A further response was provided by Stockport Council's Labour Group. This reflected a view that the day crewing proposal for Offerton is a 'significant downgrade' for the borough of Stockport – especially as Marple is already day crewed, resulting in the east of the area being without suitable fire cover. Further issues raised include:

- the evidence and data which have driven the proposals
- the need to talk to the affected staff about the process (and any personal implications that might occur should the changes go ahead)

- presentation of some proposals, with some information – particularly around response times at night – felt to be misleading

Two local petitions with over 2,000 signatures were submitted in opposition to the Offerton day crewing proposal. As these signatures were not submitted directly in response to GMFRS-led activity, it is not clear what information had been provided to people ahead of their supporting the petition. But the calls behind each petition and number of signees are presented in this report as part of consideration of the responses received:

- 1,253 responses submitted by Hazel Grove Liberal Democrats, in support of the statement that “we call on Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service to scrap plans to cut night cover at Offerton fire station [and] believe that we need full time crews based at Offerton, rather than relying on ‘on call’ firefighters.”
- 800 signatures from residents around the Offerton area, submitted in opposition to the proposals which “intend to reduce staff between 6.30pm – 8.30am and close at weekends at 1pm. If there was a fire during these closed hours there would be delays as the crews would have to travel from homes – by that time your house could have burnt down.”

A letter was also received from William Wragg MP (Hazel Grove) seeking clarifications around the Offerton day crewing proposal, following a visit he had made to the local fire station. These clarifications were provided. No subsequent formal response to the consultation was received.

Responses on proposal 2 – Enhanced Rescue Stations

Consultation survey responses

Overall, more than half of respondents (58%) were opposed to the proposed changes to our existing Technical Response Units to create two new Enhanced Response Stations. This included around 4 in 10 (40%) who were strongly opposed:

Opinions on proposed introduction of Enhanced Rescue Stations – public	Total
Strongly agree	7% (59)
Agree	10% (83)
Disagree	18% (149)
Strongly disagree	40% (330)
Neither agree nor disagree	24% (196)
Not Answered	1%

	(13)
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Half of respondents specifically felt the proposed change to the existing Technical Response Unit staffing model was a negative move. Around 1 in 3 (34%) respondents were undecided, leaving 1 in 6 (16%) who felt the change would be a positive move.

Opinions on Enhanced Rescue Station proposed staffing model – public	Total
A positive move	16% (132)
A negative move	50% (417)
Undecided	34% (281)
Not Answered	0% (0)

As with the day crewing proposals, and with the same caveat about relative response sizes, support for the Enhanced Rescue Station proposals was higher from respondents who stated they currently work for GMFRS, than from the public as a whole:

Opinions on proposed introduction of Enhanced Rescue Stations – public / staff	All responses (830)	Staff only responses (66)
Strongly agree / agree	17% (142)	36% (24)

Opinions on Enhanced Rescue Station proposed staffing model – public / staff	All responses (830)	Staff only responses (66)
A positive move	16% (132)	33% (22)
Undecided	34% (281)	23% (15)

It should be noted that analysis of respondent comments suggests that a degree of opposition to this proposal is being driven by opposition to the day crewing proposals for Offerton and Sale. A number of respondents who disagree with the proposed Enhanced Rescue Stations approach cite their opposition to the day crewing proposal in their supporting free text responses.

Respondent comments

A further 236 free text comments were received in response to the Enhanced Rescue Unit proposals.

Of these, 67% were analysed to be opposed to the proposals, 30% neutral and 3% supportive.

The most frequent comments were about staffing, including impacts of the reduced staffing levels in the proposed new model on people who work for GMFRS, plus terms and conditions and pay. There were also calls to ensure operational staff who would be affected were suitably consulted:

“It is a disgrace to even contemplate staff reductions to save money. It is a critical service that must be maintained. Train the existing staff numbers in all areas if you want more flexibility but don’t reduce numbers.”

“The safety of firefighters will be put into question. Consider global warming, fires on the moors have increased, the hotter weather will ultimately cause more problems. The last thing we should be doing is losing staff.”

“I think listening to the firefighters and taking on board their suggestions would be in the best interests of the service.”

There were also a number of comments from staff relating to the historical perception of the current Technical Rescue Units, the culture within that crewing model and the subsequent reluctance from some people to work within it:

“The concept, the way the unit functions and how it is poorly crewed is a total waste of taxpayers money.... Nobody wants to be apart of this unit and because of that it struggles to retain any staff. Most have forgotten what core business is and are very much detached from fire service reality.”

Within this question, the quantitative and some qualitative responses imply a low level of understanding about the proposal, including one respondent stating, *“I have insufficient experience to make a judgement”* and others suggesting that this is an operational decision needing to be made by subject matter experts which appropriate experience and expertise.

But from GMFRS staff and their representatives, there were some very detailed and informed responses, focused in particular around training and managing skills across the service:

“Retention of specialist staff is already hard and ARA payments need to reflect the role. This coupled with doing a dual role will lead to skill fade. There are too many skills on one appliance. If there is a vehicle defect, these skills are gone”

“The skills should be spread throughout the brigade which would allow for pumps across the brigade to specialise in their own area and actually provide a higher level of service due to being specialised in fewer areas. You can be good in many areas, but you can be excellent in a few”

Stakeholder responses

The Fire Brigades Union’s (FBU’s) response states its support for the proposals to introduce Enhanced Rescue Stations at Ashton and Leigh, and the associated opportunity for firefighters to learn new skills and earn additional pay. It recognises the changing risks faced in the city centre and believes more training, equipment, PPE and vehicles will add to the resilience to be able to deal with this changing risk.

Responses on proposal 3 – Introduction of two new fire engines based in Manchester

Consultation survey responses

Almost half of respondents (46%) do not agree with the proposal to introduce two new fire engines for the city region, based at Manchester Central and Moss Side stations. Around 1 in 3 (32%) support the proposal and 1 in 5 (21%) neither agree nor disagree.

Opinions on proposals for two additional fire engines in Manchester – public	Total
Strongly agree	16% (133)
Agree	16% (133)
Disagree	15% (123)
Strongly disagree	31% (255)
Neither agree nor disagree	21% (174)
Not Answered	1% (12)

Analysis of free text responses, and submissions for stakeholders, shows that this relatively high level of opposition to the proposal is again being driven by opposition to the day crewing proposals and, to a lesser extent, the proposed Enhanced Rescue Service staffing model. While few people appear to be against the idea of new fire engines per se, they are opposed to them if they come at the cost of perceived cuts in service levels elsewhere.

Respondent comments

A further 349 comments were received in response to this proposal.

Of these, 66% were opposed to the proposal, 31% neutral and 3% supportive. Of the three main proposal areas in the Fire Cover Review and Special Appliances Review consultation, this was the area that received the least opposition.

As set out above, many of the qualitative responses (over half, 51% or 179 of the 349) referred back to other areas of the proposals – in particular citing the day crewing proposals for Offerton and Sale and not wanting this proposal to happen if it is funded by another area being negatively impacted:

“The additional pumps shouldn’t be at the expense of over stations reduction”

“I believe 2 additional appliances will be a great addition to the fleet and the areas they are proposed to be moved to they are needed. But not at the detriment to other areas in the brigade. Offerton and Sale will be losing out on fire cover to accommodate other areas and I think this proposal would be considered unfair by members of those communities.”

There were a number of comments relating to resources being re-distributed to the city-centre and how that could better be paid for:

“Given the huge number of new flats and businesses it makes sense to enhance cover in Manchester although there should be adequate money from all these new properties to pay for this”

“Developers of high-rise buildings should be made to pay towards extra fire fighting infrastructure”

Wider financial pressures were also cited, with references to this proposal rectifying previous decisions to remove resource from the city centre to meet earlier required spending reductions, rather than being new or additional cover.

“We should not have lost those appliances in the first place. Now due to what is coming out in the Grenfell Tower inquiry we want to add further appliances. These should not come at the cost of reducing other station cover”

Stakeholder responses

Consistent with the tone of many public responses, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) response stated that it supports the introduction of two new appliances based in Manchester - but not at the cost of detriment to Sale or Offerton.

Responses to the Special Appliances Review

Consultation survey responses

Just over half of respondents to the Fire Cover Review consultation survey (52%, 424 people) agreed to also provide feedback on the Special Appliances Review proposals. Of these:

- Over three quarters (77%, 328 people) said that they thought it was important to update and replace specialist equipment
- There was particularly strong support for the proposed replacement of three hydraulic platform vehicles with new high reach extendable turrets; more than 4 in 5 respondents agreed with this.
- There was also a majority of approval for the proposal to enhance our water response capabilities through enhanced training, increased water rescue resources, and replacing of three existing vehicles with new ones.
- There was a lower level of support for the proposal to move the turntable ladder from Stretford to Oldham; 4% more respondents disagreed with this proposal than agreed with it.

Respondent comments

The qualitative free-text comments for the Special Appliances Review were less extensive than those received for the Fire Cover Review proposals. They reflected views that were both supportive and opposed to the proposals, with the most opposition again focused on how some areas of the city region would be 'missing out' were the proposals to go ahead.

Stakeholder responses

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) submission set out its support for the proposals outlined for GMFRS' special appliances.

As highlighted above, Trafford Council acknowledged that GMFRS needs to review its service provision periodically, and that it is right for the Service to be planning for the growth of Manchester city centre and supporting the training and development of firefighters to deal with the changing nature of risks and incidents across the city region. But it felt that Trafford would be disproportionately affected by the overall package of proposals with the introduction of day crewing in Sale and the moving of a turntable ladder from Stretford to Oldham.

Trafford Council's opposition was reinforced by the view of local MP Andrew Western (Stretford and Urmston), who expressed concern over moving the turntable ladder from Stretford to Oldham, especially considering new and planned high-rise buildings in the district.

5. Conclusion

The consultation was far reaching and the response rate and participation in community and scrutiny events shows a wide range of voices were heard from across the city region, and in particular areas most directly featured in the proposals.

Feeling against the proposals for day crewing at both Sale and Offerton was strong, with opposition coming from multiple stakeholders, residents and staff. This opposition reflected a combination of general concerns about the level of cover that can be provided through day crewing, and some specific issues unique to the two communities. These local considerations were particularly strong for the Sale proposal, and its potential impacts on the Partington community where response times are currently higher than the Sale station and Greater Manchester averages.

There was more support – from both public and stakeholders – for the introduction of new fire engines for Greater Manchester to be based in Manchester, reflecting the rapid growth and changing risks in the city centre, its surrounding areas and the city region more widely.

But the consultation responses were very clear – any additional fire engines should not be at the detriment of fire cover in other areas. Perceptions of fairness came up regularly – around the reduction of service levels in one area of the city region to increase those in another, and around the need to make changes to crewing models in these two areas at all when there was no financial imperative to do so.

GMFRS is a service that recognises the importance of listening to communities and its people, taking their thoughts and attitudes into consideration when developing future plans. During the consultation and engagement, residents and staff called for a swift and decisive decision on the proposals, which considers the points they raised.

The detailed feedback from the consultation, alongside the service's data modelling and professional insight, should together further develop these proposals into a revised plan that will be adopted across Greater Manchester, creating a more efficient and effective use of resources while considering and protecting residents' and partners' feelings of safety and wellbeing.