

2010 Summer Consultation – Summary of answers to consultation questions

Question 1 (staff and public): Using the funds available, is it better to prioritise (a) maintaining as many services as possible by working more efficiently OR (b) still maintaining essential services, but removing some other services to save money

Quantitative response: Staff – (a) 46%, (b) **54%**. Public – (a) **57%**, (b) 43%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Priority is maintaining “frontline services” or “getting back to basics”
- Prevention work is also seen as being important – some view it as being equally as important as responding
- Perception that the frontline can be entirely protected by reducing management costs and support functions
- Perception that the fire service should be protected from Government funding cuts
- A focus on the Technical Rescue Unit in staff responses

Question 2a (staff): Should we seek to raise additional revenue by offering external organisations paid-for services such as training?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 98%**, No 2%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- We should do this, offering our training facilities to other FRSs and other training services to the wider business community

Question 2b (staff): Should we seek to raise additional revenue by seeking commercial sponsorship for our facilities?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 83%**, No 17%

Many specific suggestions made by staff

Question 3 (staff) and 2 (public): We believe that the scale of the likely reductions mean we must look at all our expenditure to find savings. There is not one area of the organisation which can be protected entirely from the required savings. Do you agree?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 79%**, No 21% - Public – **Yes 58%**, No 42%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Frontline services should be protected at all costs
- Management numbers should be reduced
- All departments should be reviewed

Question 4 (staff) and 3 (public): As long as we ensure we respond as quickly as possible, is it fair to review our target time to make it more appropriate?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 66%**, No 34%; Public – **Yes 55%**, No 45%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- If the target time is too challenging and cannot be met it should be reviewed, but any review is likely to be seen by many as a reduction in service
- A target is necessary, “as quickly as possible” is not sufficient
- Some mention the Ambulance Service’s 8-minute target as being a fair benchmark.
- In responding to the consultation Sheffield City Council approved the following specific response:
 - (i) notes that the decision to close Ringinglow Fire Station in 2006 was, in part, based on the need ensure the quickest possible response times of between 6 and 8 minutes
 - (ii) requests that, as part of any review of target response times, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service set a minimum requirement of a response time of between 6 to 8 minutes.

Question 5 (staff): Instead of having one overall target response time for South Yorkshire, should we set local targets for each fire station to take into account distance to travel, traffic, etc.?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 61%**, No 39%

Question 6 (staff): Should we consider different targets at different times of day and night?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 52%**, No 48%

Question 7 (staff) and 4 (public): We believe we should base our fire station profile on actual risks in the community and actual incident statistics from previous years. Do you agree with this?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 73%**, No 27%, Public – **Yes 73%**, No 27%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Past incident stats should be used, although there is a suspicion that data can be made to say whatever we like
- Other community risks and the unexpected must also be accounted for

Question 8 (staff): Should we consider sharing accommodation with partner organisations, either permanently or at selected times?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 95%**, No 5%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Sharing with ambulance service was regularly suggested
- Several suggestions made for reducing station costs

Question 9 (staff): Should we continue to work more closely with local community groups by offering them facilities such as a meeting room?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 75%**, No 25%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Many respondents suggest charging for use of these facilities, even if just to cover costs such as electricity
- There is a suggestion that existing facilities are already available elsewhere in the community
- Questions raised over security issues

Question 10 (staff) and 5 (public): What is better (a) Keeping more fire stations open but staffed differently (but still providing 24/7 coverage) or (b) Keeping fewer stations open, but all staffed under the current arrangements?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 87%**, No 13%, Public – **Yes 83%**, No 17%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Some respondents felt that nothing should change despite the financial imperatives – more options should have been available than this ‘either/or’
- Some respondents proposed changes to staffing arrangements for quieter stations
- Some references to the need to effect changes to staffing by agreement where possible
- Some acceptance in staff responses that changes (such as removal of roving pumps) are sensible

Question 11 (staff): How should we manage the balance between operational and non-operational staff?

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Support staff are seen as being more expendable
- But it is acknowledged that non-uniformed staff are less expensive than operational staff in roles such as CFS/TFS

Question 12 (staff) and 6 (public): How can we do even better at reducing fires in your community?

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- A significant amount of support for the prevention work that we already do
- Education and young people’s initiatives perceived to be most important
- Others state the importance of advertising and publicity to raise awareness

Question 13 (staff). To what extent should we try to keep rescue pumps available for life-risk incidents?

- Strong support for keeping rescue pumps available
- Support for greater use of small incident units
- Still a view among some that pumps are all we need as they can be used for any incident, and could be mobilised directly from a life-threatening incident

Question 14 (staff) and 7 (public): We believe we should consider a greater use of specialist vehicles built for the job they are attending, as well as maintaining a full fleet of traditional fire engines. Do you agree? If not why not?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 75%**, No 25%, Public – **Yes 78%**, No 22%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Generally respondents believe the use of smaller vehicles is appropriate
- The views of respondents who disagreed appeared to have their views coloured by high profile incidents like the fatal fire at Malton, or by the CARPs project issues
- There were also some comments about the extent to which traditional appliances would be needed, ranging from an opposition to reducing their numbers at all to reducing numbers if smaller vehicles can take on a significant workload
- Some respondents are open to a wide range of different vehicles, and have used the diversity of those used by the ambulance service as examples

Question 15a (staff) and 8a (public): Home Safety Checks - if funding is tight in the future, should we continue to provide this service free?

Quantitative response: Public – **Yes 59%**, No 41%, Public – **Yes 76%**, No 16%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- HSCs are now so ingrained as part of the service we provide that there is a perception that people have already paid for their smoke alarms through their Council Tax
- Some believe that landlords should pay if they rent their property out
- Some suggest that it be kept free but people should be given the opportunity to make a donation
- Some suggested that it could be done more efficiently than by sending a fire appliance with 4 or 5 firefighters on board

Question 15b (staff) and question 8b (public): Should it only be free to vulnerable groups or to everyone?

Quantitative response: Staff - 52% everyone, 48% vulnerable groups only
Public – 57% everyone, 43% vulnerable groups only

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Although some people feel that people who can pay should do, some noted that the decision as to who is termed 'vulnerable' is a subjective one

Question 8c (public): Please suggest ways in which we may be able to gain the confidence of these people to allow us to perform HSCs

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Most suggestions involved things we already do, such as working with community groups and other public sector organisations – all will be passed to Community Safety for consideration

- Suggestions to use community leaders rather than an organizational approach
- Several responses asking what an HSC is, although people were clearly encouraged to complete the survey in conjunction with the booklet, which explained details in full

Question 9 (public): Should we investigate more closer working with our neighbours to save money? Or is it more important to keep services and staff based in South Yorkshire, even if this costs more?

Quantitative response: Work with neighbours – **Yes 55%**, Keep in South Yorkshire 45%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- The overall view appears to be that frontline resources should be kept locally but we can work closely with our neighbours on specific initiatives
- Many feel it would be sensible to join up in support staff functions
- Some feel a Yorkshire & Humberside service would work, and some raise the issue of sharing some resources with the likes of the Ambulance, Police and Health services

Question 19a (staff): What is your view on developing more regional working? If it makes sense financially, should we do more work regionally on frontline service provision? If not, why not?

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 58%**, No 42%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- A division in terms of responses – local provision of ‘traditional’ frontline response is viewed as being essential. Regionalisation of specialist, support or managerial provision is seen as being possible

Question 19b (staff): As 19a above, but for support functions

Quantitative response: Staff – **Yes 90%**, No 10%

Question 19c. Overall, how important is it to keep services and staff based in South Yorkshire, even if this costs more and means we would have to look for savings elsewhere in the service?

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Retention of local identity is seen as important by the majority, although a significant minority feel it is not important

Question 20 (staff). Should FRSs consider even more radical joint working options, if they would save money and provide equal or better services? Should a regional FRS be considered? Or a merger or neighbouring services, as Devon and Somerset did recently? Or is it important for us to remain a South Yorkshire-only service even if it costs more?

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- In summary, people would instinctively prefer to remain a South Yorkshire service but some feel investigating merger options should be considered due to the financial situation.

Question 21 (staff) and 10 (public): Should we look at options to work more closely with our partners, where we can, in the future? Does it matter which organisation puts a fire out, or gives emergency first aid, or clears away rubbish, as long as the job gets done?

Quantitative response: Staff - **Yes 87%**, No 13%, Public - **Yes 80%**, No 20%

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- There were some very strong views on this question, ranging from people who don't mind who provides a service as long as it gets done to those believing it would be madness even to consider this issue
- Some provided a more balanced response, indicating that some joint-working is appropriate (Fire Service and Ambulance Service mentioned a few times) but a 'jack of all trades' approach would not be appropriate, and would produce significant training needs

Question 11 (public): Have you any suggestions as to how we could make careers in the fire & rescue service seem more attractive to under-represented groups?

Quantitative response: Yes 32%, **No 68%**

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Overall, this is not seen to be a priority by the public or staff

Question 12 (public) – sought personal information from those who are interested in participating in future consultations

Question 23 (staff) - What is the best way for us to consult with you as an individual member of staff? Eg. through surveys or face-to-face?

Key issues from qualitative responses:

- Replies fairly evenly split between face-to-face and surveys

Question 13 (public): What are your top three priorities for our future?

The main priorities relate to:

- Emergency response/fast response times
- The importance of prevention work
- Maintaining frontline cover and staffing levels
- Maximising funding and efficiency

Question 14: Other issues

- We remain a popular service with the public, many of whom would prefer that the FRS was not one of the services to be endure Government cuts
- Key issues throughout have been to reduce the costs of managers and support staff to protect the frontline as much as possible – although some respondents believe the service needs to be more open to change
- Suggestions to examine the role of, and need for the Joint Sec, and rotate the position of Authority chair every year
- An FOI request was made which has been responded to

Respondent numbers

Public – 225* online responses, 18 written responses, 1 organisation response (from Sheffield City Council)

Staff – 138 online responses, 22 written responses, 1 representative body response from the Fire Officers' Association (FOA)

*It is clear from the content of some of the 'public' responses that this number includes some staff who chose to complete the public form instead of the staff form.

Diversity profile of respondents to the online **staff** survey

Male 66% Female 24% Prefer not to say 10%

Disabled 4% Not 82% Prefer not to say 14%

White British 81% White Irish 1% Any other white background 2%
 Caribbean 2% Any other black background 1.0%
 Other 1.0% Prefer not to say 11.3%

*Note – none from Chinese, Asian or African backgrounds

No religion 37% Buddhist 1% Christian 41% Other 8% Prefer not to say 13%

Heterosexual 82% Bisexual 1% Gay 0% Lesbian 1% Prefer not to say 16%

Married 61% In a civil partnership 0% Single 8% Divorced 3%
 Separated 1% Other (eg. living with partner) 17% Prefer not to say 10%

17-25 1% 26-35 31% 36-45 27% 46-55 36% 56 or over 5%

Diversity profile of respondents to the online **public** survey

Male 53% Female 40% Prefer not to say 7%

Disabled 9% Not 77% Prefer not to say 13.5%

White British 77% White Irish 1% Any other white background 3%
 Caribbean 1% Pakistani 1% Any other mixed background 3%
 White & Asian 1% Other 1.0% Prefer not to say 13%

*Note – none from Chinese, Asian or African backgrounds

No religion 29% Christian 44% Muslim 2%
 Jewish 1% Other 5% Prefer not to say 18%

Heterosexual 77% Bisexual 2% Gay 0% Lesbian 0% Prefer not to say 21%

Married 58% In a civil partnership 0% Single 13% Divorced 2%
Widowed 2% Other (eg. living with partner) 10% Prefer not to say 15%

17-25 5% 26-35 12% 36-45 34% 46-55 24%
56-65 14% 66-75 5% 76+ 1%

