

Public Question 1. Steve Peel, Hamworthy Fire Station

QUESTION: In the interest of “Fairness”, the modelled data used by the RSP team have used parameters of 100% availability, with all appliances at home station, and without multiple incidents happening simultaneously. This has given you data that is wildly inaccurate, and simply unachievable. Councillors will presumably be aware that its modelling data for cutting Poole’s 2nd full time fire engine, was grossly inaccurate. The RSP team assured members that Hamworthy would only have 6 extra mobilisations a year. In truth, Hamworthy’s mobilisations increased by 142 for the year; totalling 287 for the pumping appliance alone – which is an increase of 97%. Modelled data is clearly misleading and does not accurately reflect the realities of a modern fire and rescue service.

Do councillors agree that they cannot proceed with a vote to close stations, basing their decision on data that is proven to be so significantly inaccurate?

RESPONSE: The comparison between two datasets of modelled data and actual mobilisations of one particular year is not an equal comparison. The information supplied here, within the question, has not been cleansed and includes duplicates, tests, exercises, incidents we did not attend and over 80 standbys. Any further differences are due to multiple factors:

- the very busy year felt by everyone,
- the expected increase from Poole (further enhanced by the busy year)
- the standard deviation that naturally occurs,
- the issues with availability with surrounding pump availability,
- the direct comparison with 2024 which was a quieter year for Hamworthy

The proposal within the question is that the increase in incidents is solely due to the removal of Poole's second wholetime pump is not accurate. That is, the concerns raised are not a simple cause (Poole's 2nd wholetime pump removal) and effect (increase in Hamworthy's incidents) and are much more complicated. The Station Review information includes the mobilisations that the Hamworthy appliance has attended over the 5 year period in order to ensure a full picture is understood by members.

Public Question 2. Steve Peel, Hamworthy Fire Station

QUESTION: Hamworthy Fire Station would like to know how DWFRS and the Fire authority are planning to fill the gaps created by sacking 96 firefighters, specifically when demand is overrun. These gaps can be caused anytime of year through simultaneous incidents, but perhaps most highlighted during our busy summers when protracted incidents such as major heath fires are common place. It is especially worth noting that we had to call on aid from 18 other FRS services during the most recent heath fires - and that is before these proposals are implemented. With the knock on affect of closures likely to effect availability to neighbouring stations as well (for example Poole RDS losing 2 members of staff due to increased workload in 2025), where will the standby pumps, relief pumps and make-up pumps actually be coming from after the 8 pumping appliances are cut and the rest of the RDS already struggling to crew their own pumps? It's already well documented across news outlets and social media that our neighbouring services of Hampshire & IOW, Devon & Somerset, and

Avon FRS, as well as their communities and councillors are deeply concerned by these proposals.

Are we not already relying too heavily on the help from our neighbouring services like with the deployment of national resilience and our cross border work?

RESPONSE: Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, a fire and rescue authority is required to make provision for firefighting and related emergency response within its own administrative area, in this case the counties of Dorset & Wiltshire. Its primary legal duty is to assess risk and ensure appropriate fire cover for the communities it serves within those boundaries. While fire and rescue services may provide assistance to neighbouring authorities through mutual aid arrangements, this support is discretionary and does not replace the statutory responsibility of each authority to provide adequate fire cover for its own area. The Service is committed to working with neighbouring fire and rescue services and is prepared to respond to cross-border incidents. However, as a Fire & Rescue Authority we are only able to base our Community Risk Management Planning on our own stations, data, risks and communities. Fire and Rescue Services operate under well-established mutual aid arrangements, enabling rapid support across service boundaries. These arrangements are supported by national standards, training frameworks, and interoperable equipment to ensure consistency and effectiveness during large-scale responses.

Furthermore, Fire and Rescue Services collectively maintain specialist national capabilities, strategically located across the country, to respond to major incidents. These include high-volume pumping, urban search and rescue (USAR), mass decontamination, enhanced logistics support, and specialist wildfire response. During significant incidents, national coordination arrangements can be activated to manage the deployment of resources across the country. This ensures that specialist assets are mobilised where they are most needed while maintaining resilience elsewhere. These recognised and embedded arrangements were called upon during the Holt Heath fire, mentioned in the question, which is exactly what these measures are set up for.

Public Question 3. Alex Davidson

QUESTION: Does the Fire Authority feel comfortable with only having one option to consider to make savings, an option that the Fire Service acknowledges puts communities at greater risk, and consequently firefighters at greater risk also?

RESPONSE: The Authority is fully aware of the Services' Resourcing and Savings Programme (RSP), which is helping the Service to ensure the right resources are in the right place to face changing risks, which includes scrutinising all ways of working across all areas of the Service. Some of this work has been to find savings and some to reinvest in priority areas.

Since the combination of Dorset Fire & Rescue Service and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2016, a total of £15.1m has been saved from the annual revenue budget. This is published in the productivity and efficiency plan available on the DWFRS website. Over the last three years savings include £665k from corporate roles, £750k from non-salary budgets, £389k from on call second aways, £874k from wholtime posts, £145k savings from our approach to Automatic Fire Alarms and £122k from Treasury

management. This has enabled the Service to invest approximately £1.2m in areas of greater risk, improving the Service to a higher number of residents and visitors to Dorset and Wiltshire. This included adding 12 wholetime posts at Amesbury fire station, Dorchester fire station becoming day duty and Westlea fire station becoming a wholetime station. Additional wholetime firefighters have also been added in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. It is therefore incorrect to suggest that only a single option has been presented. The progression of this station review project has been necessitated by the substantial savings achieved over previous years, alongside the ongoing budgetary pressures faced by the Service.

Furthermore, building on work already undertaken across the Service to deliver savings, efficiencies, and reinvestment, further activity is underway to support the development of a financially sustainable Service. Future priorities will be shaped by the financial position and decisions of the Authority, including those relating to potential station closures. However, in the meantime, work has commenced to explore more flexible duty systems for wholetime staff, opportunities to rationalise the estate, options to reduce the white fleet, and the appropriate provisions of specialist appliances to support emergency response. The Service also seeks to reinvest resources to strengthen immediate fire cover where risk and demand require. The scope and timing of these activities will depend on the level of savings needed to address budget deficits.

Public Question 4. Alex Davidson

QUESTION: Why has no alternative cost saving proposal been submitted to the Fire Authority that does not involve cuts to the frontline, giving them an actual choice to consider?

RESPONSE: Following on from the above response: Members appreciate that proposing fire station closures will not be a welcome decision for staff or communities and the Authority recognises the importance of fire cover to our communities and the impact that any changes may have. This is why, alongside this station review project, the Service is continuing work that looks carefully at risk, demand, and long-term sustainability. Taking this into account, the Authority must also ensure that the funding available is used in the right areas, rather than solely to maintain legacy arrangements.

Building on work already undertaken across the Service to deliver savings, efficiencies, and reinvestment, further activity is underway to support the development of a financially sustainable Service. Future priorities will be shaped by the financial position and decisions of the Authority, including those relating to potential station closures. However, in the meantime, work has commenced to explore more flexible duty systems for wholetime staff, opportunities to rationalise the estate, options to further reduce the white fleet, and the appropriate provisions of specialist appliances to support emergency response. The Service also seeks to reinvest resources to strengthen immediate fire cover where risk and demand require. The scope and timing of these activities will depend on the level of savings needed to address budget deficits.

Public Question 5. Liam Jackson

QUESTION: The fire authority have been tasked with a dangerous decision to make. It is acknowledged and accepted by the Service that station closures will increase risk, to communities and firefighters.

What alternative monetary saving options were put before councillors, without operational risk being a factor? i.e non-frontline savings

RESPONSE: The Authority is fully aware of the Services' Resourcing and Savings Programme (RSP), which is helping the Service to ensure the right resources are in the right place to face changing risks, which includes scrutinising all ways of working across all areas of the Service. Some of this work has been to find savings and some to reinvest in priority areas.

Since the combination of Dorset Fire & Rescue Service and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2016, a total of £15.1m has been saved from the annual revenue budget. This is published in the productivity and efficiency plan available on the DWFRS website.

Over the last three years savings include £665k from corporate roles, £750k from non-salary budgets, £389k from on call second aways, £874k from wholetime posts, £145k savings from our approach to Automatic Fire Alarms and £122k from Treasury management. This has enabled the Service to invest approximately £1.2m in areas of greater risk, improving the Service to a higher number of residents and visitors to Dorset and Wiltshire. This included adding 12 wholetime posts at Amesbury fire station, Dorchester fire station becoming day duty and Westlea fire station becoming a wholetime station. Additional wholetime firefighters have also been added in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. It is therefore incorrect to suggest that only a single option has been presented. The progression of this station review project has been necessitated by the substantial savings achieved over previous years, alongside the ongoing budgetary pressures faced by the Service.

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Public Question 6. Liam Jackson

QUESTION: Are FA members aware that the operational risk assessment for Bradford on Avon fire station is out of date?

Since the apparent data cut-off for the analysis presented, an SSRI for one additional property (The Hall in Bradford on Avon) has been completed, and risk information for a further two properties (Abbey Mill in Bradford on Avon, and Dorothy House hospice in Winsley) has been uploaded to the risk management system.

In addition, there are multiple other sites which are pending review.

RESPONSE: The removal of the five second aways was undertaken by the Chief Fire Officer, through his delegations, taking account of the data available at the time.

The data used within the Station Reviews is from 2019-2024 and represent 67,000 real incidents mapped out across Dorset & Wiltshire. All attendances were then calculated for these incidents based on the current crewing models across the Service (including the removal of second away fire engines).

The lockdown period started in March 2020 and continued intermittently until March 2021. The pandemic did lead to a temporary drop in total attendances, particularly during periods of strict lockdown, however this followed by a resurgence as restrictions lifted and demand normalised. This included incidents like Wareham Forest. For some stations the year 2020 represented a busier year than 2019 before it and it was also busier than 2021 and 2022 after it.

The reason 2025 data is not included is purely because the data was not available when the work started. 2019-2024 represented the most recent complete set of five years' worth of data.

Public Question 7. Sam Elliott

QUESTION: In reviewing the Station Reviews report and the specific Maiden Newton Fire Station appendix, I am concerned that the response time model underpinning the proposed station closures relies on unrealistic and internally inconsistent availability assumptions, which may distort the conclusions. For Maiden Newton specifically, the pre-closure model states that it assumes 100% station availability. However, the response time data used includes incidents where Maiden Newton was unavailable and response was therefore provided by covering stations with significantly longer turnout and travel times. This inflates the baseline response times attributed to Maiden Newton and understates the deterioration that would result from its closure. Conversely, the post-closure model assumes 100% availability of surrounding on-call stations. This does not reflect operational reality, as these stations have variable crew availability and may also be unavailable due to concurrent incidents within their own response area. The modelling therefore appears to compare a pessimistic representation of the current arrangement with an optimistic representation of the proposed one. I would therefore like the Authority/Service to clarify:

Why historic response time data that includes periods of Maiden Newton unavailability was used to represent a scenario described as 100% available?

RESPONSE: The use of modelled data is important and provides clarity on the demand for that station. The crew have struggled, through no fault of their own, to make the pump available. Modelled data allows the Fire Authority to see past these issues and understand the risk that lies in the station area. This means they can see the demand for that station and also measure the impact if it were to be closed. While station availability has been considered as part of the station review process, the assessment has taken a broader approach, with primary emphasis on incident levels, risk, and demand. Maiden Newton has been identified for consideration as it is assessed as a lower-risk location and fire cover can be effectively provided by neighbouring DWFRS stations.

Public Question 8. Sam Elliott

QUESTION: Why 100% availability was assumed for surrounding stations post-closure, and how on-call availability limitations and concurrent incidents were accounted for.

RESPONSE: The data modelling does not mean the Service assumes that all appliances are available at all times. It is a method that allows the Fire Authority to make a judgement on the actual demand and risk that is present on a station within the Service. It also allows the Fire Authority to make a comparison of impact that a station can have on safety of the community whilst removing the variables including the availability of an appliance. The Fire Authority consider neighbouring stations in section 4 of the report under the 'Impact on Neighbouring Stations'. This provides availability for the stations that would be impacted and the expected volume increase of incidents.

Public Question 9. Andy Elliott, FRSA

QUESTION: We, the FRSA, are deeply saddened and disappointed that the Fire Authority is considering the Chief Fire Officers proposal to close eight Fire Stations across Dorset and Wiltshire. Agenda item 26/07 [26-07-Station-Reviews-1.pdf] claims in 2.8 "Both the Fire Brigade Union and Fire and Rescue Services Association have been regularly engaged throughout the Resource and Savings programme, through a Joint Working Group." This is misleading as it infers that the Unions were party to the full nature of the proposal and were in some way consulted. This is not the case.

After discussion with our membership and others within DWFRS, it is clear that doubt exists about the accuracy and validity of the information provided to the Unions, Stations and Fire Authority members on the 2nd February. Much of the data appears to be flawed and misleading, even naive. A simple example of this is that two of the proposed Stations share a border, Wilton and Cranborne. This is contrary to one of the primary selection criteria for Stations I.E. "Non-removal of two neighbouring stations".

Therefore, due to the seemingly flawed data and selection process, will the Fire Authority members decline this proposal in favour of a full review, working closely with the Unions to seek a more sustainable proposal?

RESPONSE: Over the past 12 months, Members are aware through the approved stakeholder plan that the Service has met 3 times with the representative bodies as part of a Joint Working Group, with agreed terms of reference established at the inaugural meeting to ensure all parties were aligned on the purpose and approach of the discussions. In addition, a further 4 liaison meetings have been held, also under agreed terms of reference, involving both the FBU and FRSA.

Officers have ensured that the FRSA and FBU were fully aware of the order that the detailed information would be released and the priority being impacted staff. Both representative bodies were briefed prior to the Members Seminar on the 21 January 2026 when the proposals were presented to the Authority. Furthermore, representative bodies were met with on 2 February 2026 to ensure clarity and understanding of the data within the reports and invited to attend all sessions involving affected stations to provide support to staff. The Service intends to continue this established approach going forward.

Cranborne Fire Station and Wilton Fire Station are not typically considered “neighbouring stations” in the practical/geographic sense. Cranborne is in east Dorset, near the Dorset–Hampshire border. Wilton is in south Wiltshire, just west of Salisbury. The road distance between the two towns is roughly 20–25 miles, meaning they are not immediately adjacent communities. Their nearest neighbouring stations would be ones geographically closer (e.g., Cranborne with nearby Verwood/Sturminster Newton/Shafisbury and Wilton with nearby Salisbury/Tisbury).

The members working group is assured that the data is not considered to be flawed and remains a robust and reliable evidence base. It will therefore continue to be used to inform the Authority’s consideration of the proposals, including the decision on whether to proceed to public consultation regarding potential station closures.

Public Question 10. Peter Edge

QUESTION: As a retired Wilton firefighter and former Wiltshire Fire Authority vice chair overseeing the combination with Dorset and a council group leader on the new DWFRS CFA, I believe the members are being given limited options by the officers in that closing stations is the only real option.

Can the CFA change this recommendation using up to date evidence to fit in with current requirements and investigate all other areas for savings?

Wilton is the second pump for Salisbury, removing Wilton would mean a minimum of an extra 10 minutes to get Amesbury into the City and would mean 45 minutes to get an aerial appliance to the Cathedral if Salisbury were on Station. Wilton was recommended for closure back in the 1980’s when it used to be the third Salisbury pump, this was rejected on the basis that it could leave Salisbury’s fire cover exposed if the W/T were already committed elsewhere. It is possible that the removal of a station

at Wilton now could be even worse. All the turn out data is based on all pumps being on home stations in the event of a call.

If the average salary cost of an on-call station is £130k for a complement of 12, the wholetime equivalent to crew a pump is a minimum £451k for 4.

CFO Cole is the lead officer for the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) On-call strategic group, working with the NFCC, Home Office and other fire services to improve the on-call duty system across the sector and as such should be setting DWFRS as a beacon example. The NHS could not improve patient care by cutting Doctors and Nurses but savings can be made by streamlining management, the same applies to the Fire Service

DWFRS ratio of corporate management to frontline staff is 3-1 where nationally it is 5-1. On call recruitment has always been a problem but more effort could be done with looking at more options. As an example Tri-Service working is thriving in Devon and Cornwall and could provide a more flexible approach.

RESPONSE: The Authority is fully aware of the Services' Resourcing and Savings Programme (RSP), which is helping the Service to ensure the right resources are in the right place to face changing risks. This includes scrutinising all ways of working across all areas of the Service. Some of this work has been to find savings and some to reinvest in priority areas.

Since the combination of Dorset Fire & Rescue Service and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2016, a total of £15.1m has been saved from the annual revenue budget. This is published in the productivity and efficiency plan available on the DWFRS website.

Over the last three years savings include £665k from corporate roles, £750k from non-salary budgets, £389k from on call second aways, £874k from wholetime posts, £145k savings from our approach to Automatic Fire Alarms and £122k from Treasury management. This has enabled investment of approximately £1.2m in areas of greater risk, improving the service to a higher number of residents and visitors to Dorset and Wiltshire. This included adding 12 wholetime posts at Amesbury fire station, Dorchester fire station becoming day duty and Westlea fire station becoming a wholetime station. Additional wholetime firefighter posts have been added in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

The progression of this station review project has been necessitated by the ongoing budgetary pressures faced by the Service, despite the substantial savings achieved over previous years.

The current recommendation is for the Authority to undertake a public consultation regarding the potential closure of eight on-call fire stations. The decision on this recommendation rests with the Authority. As the governing body of the Service, it holds the authority to determine how, where, what and when such decisions are made and if further information is required.

Public Question 11. Lesley Elliott

QUESTION: As the Authority considers whether to proceed to public consultation on potential retained fire station closures, could Members please provide some clarification on the factors that are informing these proposals?

In particular, would the Authority confirm whether the primary reason for considering station closures is financial, or whether there are also wider operational considerations such as changes in risk, demand, or appliance availability that have influenced this approach?

RESPONSE: The approach undertaken by the Service has been to look carefully at risk, demand, and long-term sustainability. Taking this into account, the Authority must ensure that the funding available is used in the right areas, rather than solely to maintain legacy arrangements. Whilst the Station Closure project has been developed due to the financial position, the approach is aligned to risk and demand and the decisions will be considerate of the full picture. If the financial position improves through a reduced deficit or additional base budget funding, the Authority will seek to invest where it is most needed and where it delivers the best value and outcomes for our communities.

Public Question 12. Lesley Elliott

QUESTION: The station review papers indicate that closures are expected to deliver a relatively modest level of annual savings per station. With this in mind, it would be helpful to understand what other cost-saving options have been explored as part of the decision-making process before reductions to front-line provision are considered. For example:

- opportunities to reduce overtime expenditure through greater use of retained firefighters;
- potential efficiencies within senior leadership and management structures;
- savings from corporate and headquarters overheads;
- estate efficiencies, including co-location with partner agencies; and
- reviews of fleet and officer vehicle costs.

Could the Authority outline how these types of non-operational savings have been assessed alongside station closures, and how this has helped shape the current recommendations?

RESPONSE: Since the combination of Dorset Fire & Rescue Service and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2016, a total of £15.1m has been saved from the annual revenue budget. This is published in the productivity and efficiency plan available on the DWFRS website. This saw the implementation of single and reduced corporate teams and reductions in officer and leadership numbers.

Efficiencies and savings has continued to be a focus of the Service and over the last three years savings include £665k from corporate roles, £750k from non-salary budgets, £389k from on call second aways, £874k from wholetime posts, £145k savings from our

approach to Automatic Fire Alarms and £122k from Treasury management. This has enabled the investment of approximately £1.2m in areas of greater risk, improving the service to a higher number of residents and visitors to Dorset and Wiltshire. This included adding 12 wholetime posts at Amesbury fire station, Dorchester fire station becoming day duty and Westlea fire station becoming a wholetime station. Additional wholetime firefighter posts have also been added in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Building on work already undertaken across the Service to deliver savings, efficiencies, and reinvestment, further activity is underway to support the development of a financially sustainable Service. Future priorities will be shaped by the financial position and decisions of the Authority, including those relating to potential station closures. However, in the meantime, work has commenced to explore more flexible duty systems for wholetime staff, opportunities to rationalise the estate, options to further reduce the white fleet, and the appropriate provisions of specialist appliances to support emergency response. The Service also seeks to reinvest resources to strengthen immediate fire cover where risk and demand require. The scope and timing of these activities will depend on the level of savings needed to address budget deficits.

Public Question 13. Nathan Berryman

QUESTION: In February 2026, Bath fire station will relocate from its current location at Cleveland Bridge to Lower Bristol Road, for a period of 18-24 months. This latter location is 10-15 minutes travel time further away from the western margin of the Bradford on Avon fire station ground.

Can the FRA Chair please clarify that, as directed by the Members' Working Group in November 2024, the Bradford on Avon Station Review has taken the relocation of Bath fire station into account in the "Current and Emerging Operational Risk" section?

RESPONSE: Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, a fire and rescue authority is required to make provision for firefighting and related emergency response within its own administrative area, in this case the counties of Dorset & Wiltshire. Its primary legal duty is to assess risk and ensure appropriate fire cover for the communities it serves within those boundaries. While fire and rescue services may provide assistance to neighbouring authorities through mutual aid arrangements, this support is discretionary and does not replace the statutory responsibility of each authority to provide adequate fire cover for its own area. The Service shares borders with neighbouring Services, including Avon, Devon & Somerset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire. Mutual aid agreements are in place to cover Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act, 2004, which allow each Service to request resources from neighbouring areas during times of high demand. These arrangements are further supported by National Resilience provisions. The Service is committed to working with neighbouring fire and rescue services and is prepared to respond to cross-border incidents. However, as a Fire & Rescue Authority we are only able to base our Community Risk Management Planning on our own stations, data, risks and communities.

Due to this, the response modelling has therefore incorporated only DWFRS appliances attending incidents within the DWFRS Service area. The data does however use actual mobilising records to assess the impact on cross-border mobilising. The temporary movement of Bath fire station (to facilitate refurbishment of station) is a decision and consideration of Avon fire and rescue service.

Public Question 14. Nathan Berryman

QUESTION: Are FA members aware that the operational risk assessment for Bradford on Avon fire station is out of date?

Since the apparent data cut-off for the analysis presented, an SSRI for one additional property (The Hall in Bradford on Avon) has been completed, and risk information for a further two properties (Abbey Mill in Bradford on Avon, and Dorothy House hospice in Winsley) has been uploaded to the risk management system.

In addition, there are multiple other sites which are pending review.

RESPONSE: As identified, these were submitted after the publication of the data for MWG. Two of the risks have an SSRI, both scoring medium in some areas and low in the rest and are subject to a 3 yearly review. The other 2 risks recently completed have scored 'low' or 'very low' and will not warrant site specific risk information.

Public Question 15. Lee Norton, Watch Manager Cranborne

QUESTION: Response Times. The majority of the area covered by Cranborne Fire Station as a first attending pump is to the North of Cranborne. These villages include Sixpenny Handley, Gussage All Saints, Gussage St Michael, Woodcuts, Tollard Royal, Woodyates and Pentridge. For the next nearest station to reach these communities they would need to drive past Cranborne to reach them. For the report to suggest that response times to these villages would only increase by 1m 17seconds (which is based entirely on theoretical averages) is misleading, and in fact, response times to these villages would increase by in excess of 5 minutes.

Should the Fire Authority really make the decision to close Cranborne Station based on purely theoretical information?

RESPONSE: The data from 2019-2024 represents 67,000 real incidents mapped out across Dorset & Wiltshire. All attendances were then calculated for these incidents based on the current crewing models across the service (including the removal of second away fire engines). The same process is repeated but with the stations proposed for consultation removed. This shows what each real incidents increase would be. This is then averaged. Some incidents would be more some would be less dependent on the incident location.

Public Question 16. Lee Norton, Watch Manager Cranborne

QUESTION: In page 3 (executive summary) there are 5 plain bullet points evidencing the main impact of the closure of Cranborne Station. One of the bullet points evidences a capital receipt from sale of the site. Later in the report, Section 2.13 states “no covenants in place”. The Fire Authority will already know that this statement is factually incorrect. Our question therefore is;

What other statements and evidence within the recommendation to close Cranborne Fire Station are also incorrect?

RESPONSE: As part of the project, a provisional review of documentation relating to site ownership and associated details was undertaken. A covenant affecting the Cranborne site, restricting its use to that of a fire station, was not identified at that stage and is now being investigated. While this covenant may affect any potential sale of the site and the receipt of a one-off capital sum, the primary objective of the programme is to achieve ongoing revenue savings rather than reliance on a single capital receipt. The identification of this issue does not undermine the robustness of the wider analysis, data, and evidence contained within the reports. Where a station is progressed to public consultation, further detailed estate checks, including up-to-date valuations, will be completed to ensure that final reports are accurate and current.

It is important to note that this issue relates to a site-specific legal constraint and does not affect the underlying operational, financial, or risk-based evidence that informs the wider report. The analysis of fire cover, demand, response, workforce implications, and revenue savings has been developed using established data sources and assurance processes that are entirely independent of individual site covenants. As such, the presence of this issue does not diminish the reliability or integrity of the broader evidence base on which the report’s conclusions and recommendations are founded.

Public Question 17. George Skews

Question: How was projected demand weighted in closure decisions?

RESPONSE: The data from 2019-2024 represents 67,000 real incidents mapped out across Dorset & Wiltshire including summer periods. The suggested increase in risk due to tourism is accounted for within these incidents. All attendances were then calculated for these incidents based on the current crewing models across the service (including the removal of second away fire engines). The lockdown period started in March 2020 and continued intermittently until March 2021. The pandemic did lead to a temporary drop in total attendances, particularly during periods of strict lockdown, however this followed by a resurgence as restrictions lifted and demand normalised. This included incidents like Wareham Forest. For Charmouth the year 2020 represented a busier year than 2019 before it and it was also busier than 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 after it.

Public Question 18. George Skews

QUESTION: What specific adjustments or weighting have been applied to reflect seasonal and tourism-driven population changes in Charmouth’s station area?

RESPONSE: The data from 2019-2024 represents 67,000 real incidents mapped out across Dorset & Wiltshire including summer periods. The suggested increase in risk due to tourism is accounted for within these incidents. All attendances were then calculated for these incidents based on the current crewing models across the service (including the removal of second away fire engines). The lockdown period started in March 2020 and continued intermittently until March 2021. The pandemic did lead to a temporary drop in total attendances, particularly during periods of strict lockdown, however this followed by a resurgence as restrictions lifted and demand normalised. This included incidents like Wareham Forest. For Charmouth the year 2020 represented a busier year than 2019 before it and it was also busier than 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 after it.

Public Question 19. Adam Nice

QUESTION: I would like to raise concerns then a question regarding the station review, to be discussed on the 10th Feb. It contains significant omissions and inaccuracies that undermine the validity of the proposal to close Hamworthy Fire Station.

1. The review excludes the major operational change in October 2024: The withdrawal of Poole’s second wholetime appliance was predicted to add 6 incidents per year to Hamworthy, yet the station absorbed 142 additional mobilisations, showing the modelling was flawed. As the review uses data only up to March 2024, it entirely omits the impact of this major change. The Authority is proposing further reductions without assessing the consequences of the previous cuts.

2. The “low availability” rationale is misleading: The quoted 71% availability excludes periods when the pump is off the run due to mobilisation of the Command Unit or Land Rover, artificially lowering the figure. Support appliances were available almost 100%. Availability has also increased year on year under the current Watch Manager, but this is not acknowledged, nor is the imposed 2-year recruitment freeze that hindered improvement. Hamworthy is being assessed on fundamentally flawed data.

3. Local risk is significantly understated: Despite being labelled “low risk,” the area contains major port and marine infrastructure, marinas, care homes, high rise buildings, wildfire prone heathland, and large commercial and industrial sites including energy infrastructure, alongside high risk Safe & Well properties. Expanding volatile council housing zones further increased risk. This profile is not comparable to rural low risk stations.

4. Hamworthy’s resilience role is overlooked: Modelled data lists 800 mobilisations over five years, but 2025 activity suggests closer to 1,200. Closure would shift around 240 incidents annually to Poole, which has already lost its second wholetime pump. Around 22% of Hamworthy’s work is resilience for wholetime stations which will be difficult to replace.

5. Geography has been oversimplified: The review ignores Hamworthy's peninsula layout and limited access via Blandford Road, and the Poole Bridge's. These routes are frequently disrupted by flooding, faults, congestion, and port traffic. Modelled response times therefore underestimate real travel times. Closure would create an unparalleled isolation zone, with over 21 minute response times in some cases, posing a significant risk to public safety. Back to the central question:

How can the Authority justify placing Hamworthy an urban, peninsula-based station with significant cross station resilience responsibilities and a materially different operational profile into the same closure category as rural, low risk stations, when the data used in its review excludes the substantial post 2024 demand increase and fails to reflect real world risk and geography?

RESPONSE: The data is based on 67,000 real incidents and includes all mobilisations (excluding standby's etc). The modelling has been based on the current level of appliances which includes Poole Fire Station having 1 wholetime and 1 on-call appliance. The quoted 142 incidents includes standbys - this is not generated by incidents on Hamworthy station ground and this data has also not been cleansed and includes duplicates, tests, exercises, incidents we did not attend and over 80 standbys. Any further differences are due to multiple factors:

- the very busy year felt by everyone,
- the expected increase from Poole (further enhanced by the busy year)
- the standard deviation that naturally occurs,
- the issues with availability with surrounding pump availability
- the direct comparison with 2024 which was a quieter year for Hamworthy.

The proposal within the question is that the increase in incidents is solely due to the removal of Poole's second wholetime pump is not accurate. That is, the concerns raised are not a simple cause (Poole's 2nd wholetime pump removal) and effect (increase in Hamworthy's incidents) and are much more complicated. The issues with appliance availability and simultaneous incidents is why modelled data is so important to give an accurate picture of the actual demand for that station even while the crew are unavailable ie crewing the command unit. The risk information was the most up to date risk information at the time of publication for the Members Working Group and includes all known risks. Standbys (Resilience in question) are not included in the data as these are based on a number of factors including:

- the interpretation of the incident being attended and where they would cover,
- these are not emergency incidents,
- they do not necessarily have to be carried out by any particular fire engine and
- they also indicate that the risk is elsewhere rather than that fire engines home station.

The travel times are calculated on 67,000 real incidents and utilises software based on Ordnance Survey mapping and data on travel speeds from DWFRS automatic vehicle location system to create predicted attendance times. The extra time required for an on-call crew to arrive at station before mobilising reduces the effective size of Hamworthy's ground.

The current recommendation is for the Authority to undertake a public consultation regarding the potential closure of eight on-call fire stations. The decision on this recommendation rests with the Authority. As the governing body of the Service, it holds the authority to determine how, where, what and when such decisions are made and if further information is required.

Public Question 20. Ray Dyer

QUESTION: The data supplied by the service and presented as fact to the fire authority does not reflect the actual statistics from the stations. It does not include cross border shouts, standby moves, relief shouts, or shouts where we are 3rd or more pump in attendance. Taking this into account doubles the number of shouts. In Charmouth we are only 3 miles from the Devon border. Many of our shouts are into Devon and Somerset, particularly as our nearest Devon Fire station is struggling to maintain availability. On a very recent shout we were 1st in attendance to a time critical rescue as the local Devon pump was unavailable. The next pump in was from Colyton who also recently fought off a closure proposal by D&SFRS.

How then can the fire authority and the public gauge the true usefulness of a fire station without taking in the wider context of use?

RESPONSE: Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, a fire and rescue authority is required to make provision for firefighting and related emergency response within its own administrative area, in this case the counties of Dorset & Wiltshire. Its primary legal duty is to assess risk and ensure appropriate fire cover for the communities it serves within those boundaries. While fire and rescue services may provide assistance to neighbouring authorities through mutual aid arrangements, this support is discretionary and does not replace the statutory responsibility of each authority to provide adequate fire cover for its own area. The Service shares borders with neighbouring Services, including Avon, Devon & Somerset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire. Mutual aid agreements are in place to cover Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act, 2004, which allow each Service to request resources from neighbouring areas during times of high demand. These arrangements are further supported by National Resilience provisions.

The Service is committed to working with neighbouring fire and rescue services and is prepared to respond to cross-border incidents. However, as a Fire & Rescue Authority we are only able to base our Community Risk Management Planning on our own stations, data, risks and communities.

Standbys are not included in the data as these are based on a number of factors including:

- the interpretation of the incident being attended and where they would cover,
- these are not emergency incidents,
- they do not necessarily have to be carried out by any particular fire engine and
- they also indicate that the risk is elsewhere rather than that fire engines home station.

Relief appliances are planned ahead of being required at incidents. The decision on which appliance goes as a relief is based on multiple factors including but not limited to; availability, time spent at an incident already, and any specialisms required. The data focuses on the risk covered by each station, not on other station areas as would be indicated by attendance at incidents where the appliance would be third or greater appliance in attendance.

The Service has target times for the first and second appliance at certain incidents. DWFRS sends two fire engines to house fires as a standard response, occasionally, a third fire engine or more may be mobilised at the discretion of the Service Control Centre, Incident Commander or where persons may still be in the property. The Service response standard for all house fires and any building where there is a sleeping risk is based on two fire engines responding within a given time. This standard is approved and scrutinised for performance through the Fire Authority and is standard practise across the UK.

Included in each station review is the information on all of the incidents that the fire engine has been mobilised to, this includes incidents where it was the third fire engine to respond or more, and the data also includes where the fire engine was used as a relief crew to support dealing with a protracted incident. By doing this, the Service understands the number of times the fire engine has been called upon for use across the Service and how many times it has been used to respond to incidents in the stations own community. This information is included within each review paper (Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service | Fire and Rescue Authority)

Public Question 21. Ray Dyer

QUESTION: Our availability at Charmouth Fire Station is over 93% and the true number of mobilisations last year was 126 taking into account cross border, standby moves and relief shouts such as heath fires in the summer.

How can the Service/Fire Authority justify closing a station with such high availability, whilst keeping others that are struggling to recruit and subsequently have low availability, particularly when the service is so often in business continuity due to low numbers of available appliances, and struggles every summer to mobilise enough appliances to cope with the demands of heath fires?

RESPONSE: The availability of Charmouth is a credit to the station personnel who have sacrificed personal life, birthday parties, and social events to ensure their availability for emergencies in the area. The station personnel are not the issue, nor is their dedication to the community. This is simply the demand in that location is low as assessed over 5 years.

It is noted that Charmouth received 126 mobilisations, but this includes standby's, exercises, non-attendance, and notifications and only 49 were in the station area.

Relief appliances are planned ahead of being required at incidents. The decision on which appliance goes as a relief is based on multiple factors including but not limited to; availability, time spent at an incident already, and any specialisms required. The

data focuses on the risk covered by each station, not on other station areas as would be indicated by attendance at incidents where the appliance would be third or greater appliance in attendance.

Public Question 22. Noel Tomlinson

QUESTION: With regard to the recently announced station closures, Para 3.1 of the document 26-07 “Appendix 9 - Stakeholder Plan November 2025” states that any consultation approach will be based on the Gunning Principles. These include inter alia an obligation to i) conduct consultation when proposals are in their infancy, not decided and ii) provide consultees with adequate information and time to formulate an intelligent, informed response. At the Members’ Working Group meeting on 10th September 2025, the CFO advised that 8 fire stations should be considered for closure. This advice presumably reflected the outcome of months of Members’ Working Group deliberations since it first convened in November 2024. It is hard to qualify the station closure proposals as being in their infancy in this context. Furthermore, the public has been given just over 2 working days to review over 800 pages of FRA papers pertinent to the proposed station closures and to submit their questions. Similarly, should public consultation proceed, the public will be given just 3 months to respond to proposals that the DWFRS and the FRA working group have been contemplating since the Members’ Working Group was established in June 2024 (or earlier).

Can the Chair categorically assure Members of the FRA (and the general public) that, in this context, the FRA is complying with its legal obligations in relation to public consultation and the Gunning Principles?

RESPONSE: The Members Working Group reviewed the detailed data for each of the eight proposed stations and reports were taken to meetings in July (three stations), September (three stations) and November (two stations). Each of the reports at all three meetings recommended to Members that they put forward the individual station for public consultation for closure.

At their final meeting in December, Members conducted a final moderation process and agreed to put forward a recommendation to the full Authority the public consultation of eight station closures. The Members handbook states that all public questions must be submitted three working days prior to the meeting to ensure sufficient time to prepare a response. This is not unusual in a democratic process. With regards to the public consultation period, a minimum of 12 weeks is required and the timetable being proposed allows for 13 weeks. There will be information made available on the Services website, a survey to capture all feedback and public events providing information and an opportunity for questions and feedback which will all be collated and presented by the independent consultancy company in their final report at the June fire authority meeting. The process has received legal verification that the Authority is fully compliant with the requirements of the Gunning principles. These are at the heart of the Authority's approach - no decision will be made without a thorough review of all consultation feedback.

Public Question 23. Noel Tomlinson

QUESTION: With regard to the recently announced station closures, The "Asset Ownership and Covenants" section of Appendix 8 Appendix A Bradford on Avon Fire Station states that "The station land is owned by the Authority with no covenants in place". However The Title Register for title number WT218176 (Fire Station and Police Station, St Margaret's Street, Bradford-on-Avon BA15 1DF states the following in the Charges Register section "A Conveyance of the land in this title and other land dated 28 August 1963 made between (1) British Railways Board and (2) The County Council Of The Administrative County of Wilts contains restrictive covenants".

Can the authority explain this error in the data set and does this bring into question the validity of the data provided?

RESPONSE: As part of the project, a provisional review of documentation relating to site ownership and associated details was undertaken. A covenant affecting the site, was not identified at that stage. While covenants may affect any potential sale of the site and the receipt of a one-off capital sum, the primary objective of the programme is to achieve ongoing revenue savings rather than reliance on a single capital receipt. The identification of this issue does not undermine the robustness of the wider analysis, data, and evidence contained within the reports. Where a station is progressed to public consultation, further detailed estate checks, including up-to-date valuations, will be completed to ensure that final reports are accurate and current.

It is important to note that this issue relates to a site-specific legal constraint and does not affect the underlying operational, financial, or risk-based evidence that informs the wider report. The analysis of fire cover, demand, response, workforce implications, and revenue savings has been developed using established data sources and assurance processes that are entirely independent of individual site covenants. As such, the presence of this issue does not diminish the reliability or integrity of the broader evidence base on which the report's conclusions and recommendations are founded.

Public Question 24. Alice Elliott

QUESTION: The report appears to rely mainly on historical attended incidents.

Please clarify what data and models were used to project future demand, why attended data is prioritised over wider risk modelling, and how this aligns with the Response Policy duty to plan for all foreseeable risks.

RESPONSE: The Service's response policy is defined by the Community Risk Management plan. In Dorset and Wiltshire, this is known as the Community Safety Plan. In the development and delivery of the Community Safety Plan, the Service undertakes a Strategic Assessment of Risk. This sees the Service complete a full PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal) analysis, and organisational review, as well as a full review against risk and demand. The approach aligns to the relevant Fire Standards Board Standard (for CRMP). The Strategic Assessment of Risk is reviewed and updated on a biennial basis.

The Station review work and reports have been developed taking the Strategic Assessment of Risk into consideration. This includes a review of the national and local risk registers and other future risks. The report also includes a community impact assessment and a consideration of local plans.

The Service has also based the impacts on historical data, this includes 67,000 real incidents over a 5 year period. This has enabled the Service to understand incident types, plot where incidents and themes have or have not occurred over the 5 year period.

Public Question 25. Alice Elliott

QUESTION: How was projected demand weighted in closure decisions?

RESPONSE: Fire and Rescue Services are required to plan on the basis of identified and evidenced risk, in line with Community Risk Management Planning principles and the inspectorate's (HMICFRS) expectations. Over-reliance on projected demand risks shifting resources away from areas with demonstrable current risk, potentially reducing operational resilience and the Service's ability to meet its statutory duty to protect life and property.

Planning founded on current risk profiles and historical incident data, reviewed regularly, provides a more proportionate, defensible, and evidence-based approach to Service provision. That said, the Service has considered future risk as part of the Station review work, through the Strategic Assessment of Risk, Local planning and Community Impact analysis.

Public Question 26. Paul Griffith

QUESTION: The “headline” availability figure quoted in the appendix for Bradford on Avon fire station is (34.67%), which is for FY24/25. Over this period, availability was significantly impacted by a number of factors, including:

The sudden departure of our WM in November 2024, leaving us with only one incident command-qualified crew member (and his availability was subsequently impacted by sickness and a lack of ICL1 revalidation opportunities) • A significant reduction in support from the Service in terms of crewing support, with total import person-hours falling from 765 in FY23/24 to 272.5 in FY24/25, a 64% reduction. The crew has made strenuous efforts to improve appliance availability, both through enhanced crew availability (positive hours over and above contractual commitment) and upskilling (one extra ERD, two extra non-blue light ERDs, and three extra and ICL1 qualified crew members). Availability for the first nine months of FY25/26 has increased to 50.4% as a result, i.e. broadly in line with the stated availability of on-call appliances at neighbouring stations. This figure was achieved with only 78 person-hours of crewing import support, highlighting the significantly enhanced resilience that has been built up within the Bradford on Avon fire station crew. The response time impact should be remodelled using this more up-to-date availability figure. Notwithstanding comments in the appendices in relation to demographics in the Bradford on Avon station ground and

the challenges these may create for recruitment, the station has had considerable success over the last 12-18 months in attracting on-call firefighter candidates (two in the system at present, both of whom offer invaluable weekday cover). The lack of new joiners since September 2023 has reflected a hiring freeze imposed by the Service during HR072 contract reviews as well as an overall lack of support from the Service for the station's recruitment efforts. The statement that the "Service has, and continues to struggle, to recruit and retain on-call firefighters at this station" should be viewed in this context. Access to recruitment, training and crewing support are all in the control of senior management, not at station level.

Why is up-to-date data re appliance availability omitted from the report and how can senior management at DWFRS justify closing a station which has had the necessary elements that would improve availability withheld?

RESPONSE: This is why the use of modelled data is important and provides clarity on the demand for that station. The crew have struggled, through no fault of their own, to make the pump available. Modelled data allows the Fire Authority to see past these issues and understand the risk that lies in the station area. This means they can see the demand for that station and also measure the impact if it were to be closed. While station availability has been considered as part of the station review process, the assessment has taken a broader approach, with primary emphasis on incident levels, risk, and demand. Bradford on Avon has been identified for consideration as it is assessed as a lower-risk location and fire cover can be effectively provided by neighbouring DWFRS stations.

Public Question 27. Dr Nigel Keiser

QUESTION: I refer to the document 26-07 Appendix 8 - Station Review - Bradford on Avon Fire Station, specifically Table 16 (Number of cross border mobilisations between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2024). The figure for cross-border mobilisations (zero) into Avon FRS over the five year review period is incorrect – Bradford on Avon's appliance was mobilised multiple times over this period to standbys at Bath fire station as well as to incidents in and around the City.

Given this discrepancy between the quoted figure and reality, what assurance can the FRA Chair provide around the accuracy of the other figures upon which the rationale for the proposed station closure is based? What external assurance has been completed on the data?

RESPONSE: Table 16 is correct. Bradford Upon Avon did not go into Bath over this period in response to an incident. They did cross 22 times (2019 - up to and including the current time), this was for standbys only. Standbys are not included in the data as these are based on a number of factors including:

- the interpretation of the incident being attended and where they would cover,
- these are not emergency incidents,
- they do not necessarily have to be carried out by any particular fire engine and
- they also indicate that the risk is elsewhere rather than that fire engines home station.

Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, a fire and rescue authority is required to make provision for firefighting and related emergency response within its own administrative area, in this case the counties of Dorset & Wiltshire. Its primary legal duty is to assess risk and ensure appropriate fire cover for the communities it serves within those boundaries. While fire and rescue services may provide assistance to neighbouring authorities through mutual aid arrangements, this support is discretionary and does not replace the statutory responsibility of each authority to provide adequate fire cover for its own area.

External assurance of the data is not deemed necessary, as it is derived from validated internal systems, governed by established quality assurance processes, and recently reviewed and updated through comprehensive internal and cross-border fire cover assessments. Engaging an external provider for validation could incur additional costs and delays and may introduce risks to data security or result in contextual misinterpretation.

Public Question 28. Dr Nigel Kieser

QUESTION: I further refer to the document 26-07 Appendix 8 Appendix A - Station Review - Bradford on Avon Fire Station. Flooding risk is a major concern to the people of Bradford on Avon. The analysis of the impact of potential station closure on flooding response is, however, not sufficiently comprehensive. Table 20 (which, incidentally, is incorrectly labelled as referring to heritage risk sites) suggests that there would be a negligible impact on modelled response capacity to flooding risk sites if Bradford on Avon fire station were to close, with the initial response instead fulfilled by resources from Melksham and Trowbridge. In the two most recent serious flooding episodes (November 2024 and February 2025) access to Bradford on Avon from both Trowbridge and Melksham has been severely impacted, with water run-off closing almost all access roads to the town.

Can the FRA Chair assure the public that the DWFRS analysis of impact on flood response is not just a desktop exercise, but actually takes into account ground-truthed information on flooding impacts, from sources including the Environment Agency, Wiltshire Police, and the Highways Agency?

The above represent just two examples of factual errors and incorrect assumptions in the FRA papers. I would ask, in this context, that the FRA Chair instruct DWFRS to complete a detailed review of the underlying data, including external assurance, before considering any proposed station closures.

RESPONSE: The assessment of Bradford on Avon response to flooding is based on real incidents that have occurred and Bradford on Avon have been need for. Bradford on Avon flooding response has been limited to 1 rescue from open water and 4 assist from vehicle in water from 2019-Jan 26

Public Question 29. Lyndsay Wood, Wiltshire Councillor Mere

QUESTION: Mere Town Council challenges the proposal to close Mere Fire Station on multiple grounds. The risk modelling underpinning this proposal is fundamentally flawed: it assumes 100% appliance availability with no simultaneous incidents at Gillingham station, an unrealistic scenario that severely underestimates risk. A substantial part of the review period fell during the COVID-19 pandemic, when national lockdowns and operational restrictions affected incident demand, workforce availability and response arrangements; consequently, data from this period may not fully reflect typical or sustainable service performance. Furthermore, data from 2025 has not been included and the summer of 2025 was one of the busiest for Firefighters tending to heath fires which needed 17 different services to help extinguish and recent floodings have not been analysed. Mere is also classified as a Local Service Centre earmarked for housing and employment growth, yet the closure proposal ignores the town's expanding risk profile. Mere's strategic position astride the busy A303 trunk road - an accident-prone corridor often requiring air ambulance interventions - underscores the need for a local emergency response presence. New developments, including a confirmed 57-home estate and the opening of a 70-bed care home in January 2026, have already increased the local population (including vulnerable elderly residents), thus elevating demand for emergency services. Whilst we recognise the financial pressures facing public services, fire and rescue provision is a statutory requirement. Climate change predictions suggest that there will be an increase in climate related emergencies such as wildfires and flood related rescues. The Fire Authority's own review indicates that removing Mere's fire engine would add nearly 5 minutes to average response times. Such a delay would drastically reduce the proportion of incidents reached within standard target times – for example, first-engine attendance within 10 minutes for house fires in Mere's area would drop from roughly 48% of incidents to only 31%. Relying on Gillingham Fire Station in Dorset as cover is not viable: Gillingham is an on-call station that is not at full crewing capacity and is facing rapid population growth (over 2,000 new homes planned). Moreover, travel time from Gillingham to Mere is far longer than the 5 minutes suggested by the model – around 9 minutes even off-peak, often worse with Gillingham's regular congestion. This cross-border dependency would leave a Wiltshire community's safety hinging on resources from Dorset, setting a concerning precedent.

In light of these facts and the clear risks posed to a growing Mere community, how can Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service justify the closure of Mere Fire Station?

RESPONSE: The data used within the Station Reviews is from 2019-2024 and represent 67,000 real incidents mapped out across Dorset & Wiltshire. All attendances were then calculated for these incidents based on the current crewing models across the Service. The reason 2025 data is not included is purely because the data was not available when the work started. 2019-2024 represented the most recent complete set of five years' worth of data.

The data modelling does not mean the Service assumes that all appliances are available at all times. It is a method that allows the Fire Authority to make a judgement on the actual demand and risk that is present on a station within the Service. It also

allows the Fire Authority to make a comparison of impact that a station can have on safety of the community whilst removing the variables including the availability of an appliance.

The lockdown period started in March 2020 and continued intermittently until March 2021. The pandemic did lead to a temporary drop in total attendances, particularly during periods of strict lockdown, however this followed by a resurgence as restrictions lifted and demand normalised. This included incidents like Wareham Forest. For some stations the year 2020 represented a busier year than 2019 before it and it was also busier than 2021 and 2022 after it.

The report for Mere provides a clear section on Road Traffic Collisions. Within this it recognises the A303 and the associated RTC risk. The report highlights that with the closure of Mere a further 36 RTC incidents, over the 5 year period, would not have met the 15 minute response standard. This demonstrates that the information provided is clear that the closure of stations is not without risk. However, the stations identified for consideration are those with the lowest risk.

The availability of Gillingham fire station is currently around 89%, whilst Mere is 58%. Mere has other stations located nearby including Shaftsbury and Tisbury. Furthermore there is a section of the report considerate of local risk and local plans.

Fire and Rescue Services collectively maintain specialist national capabilities, strategically located across the country, to respond to major incidents. These include high-volume pumping, urban search and rescue (USAR), mass decontamination, enhanced logistics support, and specialist wildfire response. During significant incidents, national coordination arrangements can be activated to manage the deployment of resources across the country. This ensures that specialist assets are mobilised where they are most needed while maintaining resilience elsewhere. These recognised and embedded arrangements were called upon during the Holt Heath fire, which is exactly what these measures are set up for.

Public Question 30. Lyndsey Wood, Town Councillor, Mere

QUESTION: Will the Fire Authority acknowledge these compounded risk factors and abandon the closure proposal entirely, rather than proceeding to a public consultation that would only prolong uncertainty for residents and firefighters?

RESPONSE: The Fire Authority will consider the recommendations formed by the Members Working Group, based on the data within the published reports. Should they agree, a 13 week public consultation process will commence on 13 February which will be led by an independent external company. The feedback will be analysed and presented to the Authority at its meeting on 30 June to enable a final decision on station closures to be made.

Public Question 31. Tom Elliott

QUESTION: In The Medium-Term Finance Plan and associated papers for this meeting were published on 2 February 2026 and comprise approximately 34 documents totalling just over 1,000 pages of material. These include detailed financial strategies, audit reports, treasury and capital plans, and multiple station review reports containing technical, operational and financial analysis. Based on typical professional reading speeds for complex governance and finance documentation, reading alone would reasonably require 30–50 hours. Proper scrutiny — including checking assumptions, cross-referencing figures and forming an informed view — would likely require 60–100+ hours, equating to at least two to three working weeks of focused review time. Given the limited number of working days between publication and the meeting, could the Authority please explain:

How all members have been able to sufficiently read and scrutinise the full pack to support informed decision-making; whether summaries, briefings, or draft materials were provided to all members in advance of publication; and what processes are in place to ensure adequate time for effective democratic oversight when documentation of this scale is issued? Can the Authority confirm whether the volume and timing of these papers is considered appropriate for meaningful scrutiny, and provide assurance that the scale of documentation is not unintentionally — or otherwise — creating a situation where the quantity of information makes proper review impracticable for Members or for the public?

RESPONSE: The scrutiny and involvement of Members in the resourcing and savings programme has been ongoing since 2023. Members are regularly informed of the financial position, at Authority meetings and finance seminars to ensure they have sufficient information in advance of any decision making at public meetings. Once the Service had taken decisions under the Chiefs delegation to make changes to crewing arrangements and removing second fire engines at some stations, the Authority always knew that unless the financial outlook changed significantly, station closures would need to be considered next and this would be a Fire Authority matter and a matter for public consultation.

A Members Working Group was established in March 2024 to start this process, agreeing the terms of reference and methodology for scrutinising this data. At their meetings in September, November and December, the Members Working Group considered all eight stations individually and agreed to the recommendation for the full Authority that public consultation should be considered for the closure of all eight stations. A finance seminar was held in January, ensuring that all Members had sufficient data in advance of February's decision making meeting. Additionally, there is a full week for a further review of the papers and Members have been advised to allocate sufficient time for this. Once Members have made their decision, members of the public and all stakeholders will be provided a 13 week consultation period where they will be able to access further information on the website, complete an online survey and attend public consultation events being held at all eight locations, one in the daytime, one in the evening and one on line. This is all well in advance of any decision for closure on 30 June 2026 and meets the Authority's legal requirements.

Public Question 32. Tom Elliott

QUESTION: How a deadline for submitting questions has been set at 5 working days before the meeting, which equates to 2 days to read, digest, and submit a question from the time of publication.

I raise this in the interests of transparency, accountability, and effective governance.

RESPONSE: Inline with Members handbook, public questions are permitted to a fire authority meeting and the rules around this are 3 working days prior to the meeting, no more than 2 questions and no more than 450 words. Should the Authority approve the recommendation, a full consultation process will commence, to enable all stakeholder views to be captured and considered at the June decision making meeting. This is a period of 5 months in total.

Public Question 33. George Jeans, Wiltshire Town Councillor Mere

QUESTION: Being the local Wiltshire Councillor and living in Mere all my life, I have knowledge of the area. My question is, I am aware of about 20 more social houses coming to Mere, plus about 40 more open market houses, within 2 years, plus other open market and rental housing, which provides need and increased chances of firefighters should the nearest cover be moved to at least 5 miles away,

How will we manage when as happens every few years we are cut off with snow. How will we manage as happened to me, my Post Office was on fire, had I have had to receive cover from away, the flames would have caused much more damage?

I guess the fire authority know Mere is a Town which is a service centre. I guess the close proximity of the trunk road the A303T has been considered.

RESPONSE: As noted in your question, the Service has continued to provide fire cover to Mere residents when the local station is unavailable, relying on the proximity of neighbouring DWFRS stations. The Service will maintain this level of coverage, which the 2024–25 station availability figures report indicates currently occurs 41.87% of the time. Additionally, in line with the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), the Service collaborates with multi-agency partners through the Local Resilience Forum to support communities during severe weather events, such as snow, and this support will continue.