

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Authority Improvement Plan Consultation

<u>Section</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Question/Subject (abbreviated)</u>	<u>Answer/Comment</u>
<u>Intro</u>		What are your views of a fitter, stronger F & R Service?	
	i)	Deploy flexibly?	Flexibility does not always mean better.
	ii)	Improve and ensure availability of fully/highly trained Firefighters?	Are the present Firefighters not sufficient for the challenges they face?
	iii)	Location of Firefighters?	Closing stations will definitely mean slower cover in the areas affected!
	iv)	Community Fire Checks?	Closing of local stations will make this more difficult/time consuming!
	v)	Improve availability of fire engines?	Will there be more engine capacity than now? What about the time to arrive at incident in area with closed stations?
	vi)	Increase flooding + water rescue capabilities?	Will closing stations achieve this in the affected areas? Bidford has two rivers flooding: Avon and Arrow in Broom + the Brook (Steppe's Piece).
	vii)	Increase numbers of skilled/trained firefighters	How much is the increase? Are the local (Bidford) firefighters not trained to do their job presently?
	viii)	Additional 25 W/T firefighters?	An increase in numbers does not guarantee a better service due to new rotas. By what number will retained firefighters be reduced?
<u>1</u>		More flexible crewing system will give service that matches present + future needs.	How is it possible to answer this given the lack of information on what/how you will achieve this? Again flexible does not in itself mean better.
<u>1(a)</u>		Proposal: New crewing of 243 W/T + 74 RDS.	How do these figures compare to the present ones?

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<u>1(a)</u> (continued)	i)	New locations + increase in SF/CFS/ RTC units will increase operational cover.	That may be so in general, but unlikely to be the case in localities where stations are being closed.
	ii)	12 station plan.	Poorer cover in the Bidford area!
<u>2</u>		False alarms.	Agree, if the proposed system is fool-proof, i.e. prompt service is not denied, where needed. Why does this scheme require the closing of fire stations? Automatic False Alarms seems to be predominantly an urban problem, so what is achieved by closing Bidford in this respect?
<u>3</u>		Smoke Detectors and Home Fire Safety Checks.	Will this be done better in future than presently by Bidford? Don't like the idea of external agencies. The more checks made the better one can hope the prevention will be.
<u>4</u>		Double Hot Fires and Incident Command System training?	More training always good, if relevant, But DOUBLE? Has present management been deficient? If so, are they the same persons who have been preparing the present proposals?
<u>5</u>		Absence/Sickness Management.	Without knowing what you propose to do, it is impossible to answer. Some new systems look great on paper, but are nothing but form-filling and do not improve on the problem, but may enable management to tick the "right" boxes. The system may actually lead to more absence and a lowering of morale.
<u>6</u>		Boat Unit	If it does good, I agree, unless the resources could be better spent on other measures to the same or greater effect. Should an extra boat not be placed in Bidford, which has three landing facilities?
<u>7</u>		Road Traffic Collision	This probably makes sense!

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		Unit in Gaydon + Henley?	
<u>8</u>		Small Fire Units/ Targeted Response Vehicles?	How will the establishment of these units reduce the <u>incidence</u> of small deliberate fires?

General Remarks:

- 1) Far too little information has been provided to enable an informed response to the vast majority of questions in the consultation paper.
- 2) Given that W/T and Retained Firefighters (RFF) have the same standard of training, why has information not been given on the W/T Fire Stations, so proper comparison can be made in respect of e.g. availability, response times, costs, etc.?
- 3) It seems that the questions and the suggested answers have been designed to lead the respondent to give an emotional reply, and thus in the majority of cases suit the requirements of the proposals.
- 4) There is no doubt that the closure of Bidford Fire Station will mean a slower response to any incident within the locality and adjacent villages.
Bidford has a growing population, and plans are to increase it further. There are many vulnerable residents in the area (Pensioners, Home Farm Trust, and a number of Care Homes).
In addition there are also industrial/trading estates, camping areas, and – particularly – two rivers prone to flooding.
- 5) Given the lack of house numbers / the awkward numbering of houses (which has caused many problems for the ambulance service) the local knowledge of local Firefighters is an essential factor in ensuring prompt responses and the safety of the community.
- 6) All in all this so-called consultation document does not deserve its name, as it does not give anything near adequate/detailed information on what it wants to achieve and, furthermore, the questions are emotionally loaded towards a positive answer. For example:

Q: "Please indicate whether you agree or disagree that an increase in Hot Fires and Incident Command System training on an annual basis for all operational staff will increase the safety of our Firefighters and ensure the protection of our communities."

A: "Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree."

As there is not a shred of information on what the "Hot Fires and Incident Command System training" entails, anyone who wants to give an answer would be a moron if he/she did not tick either the "Strongly agree" or the "Agree" box.

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Unfortunately the above problematic applies to most of the “consultation’s” items and thus as a consultation document it is worse than useless. It is misleading!

It has even been suggested that the whole exercise is an attempt to hoodwink WCC’s residents into approving a design, which is in reality nothing more than a cover-up for saving money in a way which runs against the provisions of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004