

The Fire Brigades Union



Gloucestershire Fire Brigades Union

Response to Gloucestershire County Council
consultation "Future Service Provision"

1st October 2015 – 4th January 2016



Introduction

This document has been researched, developed and written by the local Brigade Committee of the Fire Brigades Union and its Officials within Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. They have done this by attending meetings at local Fire Stations and seeking the views of the Firefighters that work in the Service. This document therefore represents the real voice of the professionals within the Service, and the views contained within it must not only be listened to in that context, but also acted upon.

The reaction to the cuts package put forward by the County Council has been overwhelming and clear – it has not got the necessary support from either the professionals who deliver the Fire and Rescue Service or the public who receive it.

FBU members have engaged with local communities in Cirencester, Painswick and throughout Gloucestershire. The message from the public has been one of support for their local fire crews and rejection of the cuts being put forward to the frontline service. The memory of recent events is fresh in the minds of both the public and fire crews themselves. Only days after this package of cuts was announced, the public witnessed at first hand the massive fire at Baker's Quay in Gloucester docks. This brought home the very real risk that large scale fires bring and was a timely reminder of the vital need for proper and full resilience throughout the Fire and Rescue Service. The public also recognise that this was not an isolated incident. On our campaign days in local communities, members of the public brought up other large scale incidents such as the massive fire at Dowty factory in Staverton and, time and again, the devastating floods which caused so much damage and disruption to Gloucestershire in 2007 – an event that has been repeated in Somerset, Cumbria and elsewhere across the country.

During the 2007 floods, which were some of the worst the UK has seen, Gloucestershire fire crews worked around the clock and in the most difficult of circumstances to serve the public and their communities. The commitment and heroism of our operational crews, who faced appalling conditions for weeks on end, has been widely and rightly recognised by politicians, colleagues and the public alike.

Incidents such as these show why resilience, in the form of available frontline resources, is so vital to the Fire and Rescue Service. Resilience in the Fire and Rescue Service can only be properly developed through overall, county wide, risk management, development and planning – as opposed to the piecemeal "supply and demand" process that has been put forward in an apparent attempt to justify these cuts. The "supply and demand" argument, which seems to equate less fires with less firefighters, is simplistic, misguided and dangerous. It would strip the Fire and Rescue Service of vital assets required for resilience at large scale, protracted incidents and would leave people in rural communities with less cover and greater risk.

The provision of proper and safe Fire Cover has to be based around risk, not supply and demand. Less calls does not mean that those people involved in a fire can wait longer. Fire behaviour remains unchanged and the increased response times which would result from the proposed cuts could prove catastrophic to Gloucestershire communities.

We are calling on Gloucestershire County Council to place public safety ahead of budget cuts. It is time to recognise the dangerous consequences that cuts to the frontline Fire and Rescue Service would bring to our communities, infrastructure, businesses, and heritage within Gloucestershire. It is also time to recognise the dangerous impact that these cuts would have on public and firefighter safety if they are voted through.



Tam McFarlane
South West FBU

It is time to listen to the professionals and not compromise our life saving emergency services which are so relied upon by the public. The Firefighters and crews of Gloucestershire Fire Brigades Union have spoken. Their views are made plain in this document and, if consultation is genuine and meaningful, their professional viewpoint will be treated with the respect it demands.

On this basis we call on Gloucestershire County Council to reject these damaging proposals and think again.

Tam McFarlane
South West FBU

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Gloucestershire Fire Brigades Union

This document has been developed and written by the Fire Brigades Union in Gloucestershire and represents our response to the consultation document entitled "Future Service Provision" which opened on 1st October 2015.

The primary concerns of the FBU are;

- The safety of the people of Gloucestershire and surrounding areas;
- Ensuring the service delivers a swift, effective and professional emergency response whenever called upon;
- Ensuring the service develops and delivers an effective and professional community safety strategy;
- To provide a safe and competent workforce who are well trained, well equipped and provided with the proper pay and conditions appropriate to their role and employment.

The purpose of the FBU is clear, to represent collectively the best interests of our members and ensure that the public is served and protected by a highly effective Fire and Rescue Service.

Within this context it is the firm view of the FBU that the proposals being consulted upon, specifically the closure of Painswick Fire Station and the downgrading of Cirencester Fire Station, represents an unacceptable and dangerous series of cuts to the operational front line of the Fire and Rescue Service which, if implemented, would have serious repercussions for both Firefighter and public safety. We therefore call on the County Council to reject these dangerous cuts outright.

This document represents the views and voices of the professional Firefighters that make up and deliver our Service. We urge you to seriously consider the contents of this document and act upon the views represented when considering the future of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

In constructing this response the FBU takes into account the normal negotiating machinery for changes to conditions of Service within GFRS and this response does not negate the responsibility from GFRS to proceed with National Joint Council (NJC) agreed procedures for resolving issues between the FBU and GFRS.



Scott Turner
FBU Gloucestershire



Rosie Tully
FBU Gloucestershire

Executive Summary

- 1) The proposal to close Painswick Fire Station will increase response times to emergency incidents within Painswick and the surrounding area. This will result in increased fire growth and a longer wait for people trapped in property fires, road traffic collisions and other emergency incidents. This proposal, if implemented, will compromise the safety of the public and firefighters.
- 2) The proposal to close Painswick Fire Station will compromise emergency cover for periods within Stroud as fire crews from this station respond to calls normally covered by Painswick.
- 3) The proposal to remove wholetime fire cover from Cirencester Fire Station will increase response times to emergency incidents within Cirencester and the surrounding area. This will result in increased fire growth and a longer wait for people trapped in property fires, road traffic collisions and other emergency incidents. This proposal, if implemented, will compromise the safety of the public and firefighters.
- 4) There has been a failure to investigate thoroughly the feasibility of recruiting an effective second retained crew in Cirencester despite its importance to the impact on fire cover regarding the proposal.
- 5) The proposals to close Painswick Fire Station and downgrade Cirencester Fire Station will have a dangerous impact on the resilience of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. It will compromise the ability of the Service to deal with large scale protracted incidents, including fires and floods, whilst also providing a level of ongoing local cover.
- 6) The consultation document glosses over the importance of resilience and gives too much weight to a crude and inappropriate "supply & demand" version of fire cover. This results in no proper value being given towards the necessity of resilience at times of large scale, protracted incidents.
- 7) The County Council appears to have forgotten the experiences and lessons from the huge floods that our County suffered in 2007 and is now putting forward proposals which would undermine our resilience and ability to deal with similar incidents.
- 8) The proposals to close Painswick Fire station and downgrade Cirencester Fire Station will compromise emergency cover in rural areas during periods of snow and bad weather where travel access can be limited for periods of time.
- 9) The public consultation documentation, including supporting documents, are full of jargon, lack proper alternative solutions, are overly one sided and, in areas, are misleading.
- 10) The campaigning activities of the FBU – who have engaged with the public on the streets of Gloucestershire – show overwhelming public opposition to these proposals.
- 11) The outcome of the FBU petition and FBU campaigning activities show that no politician can claim a mandate to put cuts ahead of emergency cover – it is our clear experience that the public do not support cuts to emergency cover.
- 12) The decision to suspend wholetime fire cover at Cirencester Fire Station, during the course of the public consultation, was unnecessary and has undermined the consultation process. It took no account of public opinion and has pre-empted a decision that is properly the remit of the County Council.
- 13) The decision to suspend wholetime fire cover at Cirencester Fire Station, during the course of the public consultation, has undermined agreed negotiating processes and damaged industrial relations within the Fire Service.
- 14) The County Council should enter into immediate negotiations with the FBU in order to return full-time fire cover at Cirencester subject to the outcome of the consultation and decision making process.
- 15) The proposals within the consultation are being put forward entirely as a result of the failure of politicians, at all levels, to finance our Fire and Rescue Service to a level where it can function as an effective and safe emergency service.

- 16) The FBU believes that cuts cost lives and ruin communities. We demand long term, strategic investment in Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and a fairer, sustainable and protected funding formula that better reflects the contribution our Service makes to society within the County.
- 17) It is our assessment, as the professional voice of firefighters within Gloucestershire, that these proposals will compromise the safety of the public and of firefighters. They will compromise the ability of the service to deal with large scale, protracted incidents and undermine our resilience overall. The proposals are not supported by the public or by firefighters. We call on the County Council to reject these proposals.



1) The Financial Background – A Failure of Funding

The options within this consultation are being proposed entirely as a result of the failure of politicians, at all levels, to finance our Fire and Rescue Service to a level where it can function as an effective, safe and locally accountable emergency service.

Our service has suffered unprecedented and dangerous cuts to central funding in the last decade.

Nationally, central funding to the Fire and Rescue Service has been cut by 30% in the last Parliament and further cuts are planned for 2015-16, an unprecedented reduction. These cuts will ultimately cost lives, destroy homes and businesses, drive up insurance premiums and damage the environment.

However, central cuts are only one part of the story. Locally driven cuts to funding, compounded by council tax freezes, have further reduced local revenue and exacerbated the decisions of central Government.

Although the majority of the funding cuts have been driven by central Government, the County Council must also take responsibility for the role they have played locally in this funding crisis. For the last five years Gloucestershire County Council has voted in line with their political masters and taken the unsustainable option of freezing council tax. By doing so the Council has prioritised politics over essential services and as a result, has reduced firefighter numbers and seen reductions in protective services.

The decision to freeze council tax was made despite clear evidence showing that the public is willing to accept increases in order to fund essential services. Despite this, the County Council, for purely political reasons, voted for a decision which could only compromise the long term financial position of the Fire and Rescue Service and create cuts in frontline emergency cover.

Such decisions clearly illustrate that the current lack of adequate funding to our service, and the frontline cuts which result, are not due to external forces outside of anybody's control: They are a deliberate consequence of decisions taken by politicians who put political ideology ahead of professional advice and cuts ahead of life saving emergency cover.

The Fire and Rescue Service is a life saving emergency service which requires a budget sufficient to ensure we can provide effective and safe fire & emergency cover, as well as providing and building on our vital community safety work. This purpose has been forgotten at a political level in the drive for financial cuts year after year.

Instead of developing our service and community safety, principle managers have been expected to focus on budget cuts. The County Council's political focus on making the council tax as cheap as possible has blinded them to the consequential impact on the frontline emergency service so relied upon by the people of Gloucestershire and has now resulted in proposals to close a vital community Fire Station and downgrade another.

This is not just a damning indictment on the failure of politicians to discharge their responsibilities; it is also unacceptable and dangerous

2) The Value of The Fire and Rescue Service

Annual UK fire and rescue service expenditure for 2014-15 was £2.7bn – a tiny fraction of central government expenditure on public services. This spending equates to less than £50 for every man, woman and child in the UK per year – extraordinary value for money considering the wide range of protection offered and activities undertaken. We urge the County Council to put these figures into a local context and explain clearly to the taxpayers of Gloucestershire the localised cost per taxpayer of the Fire and Rescue Service and the value that this brings. Alternatives to the current package of cuts could then be put forward and the cost per taxpayer clearly identified.

The value that we bring to the people, economy and communities of Gloucestershire is well identified and proven. The financial costs of fire are no longer published by the Westminster government. The last report published by DCLG, on the cost of fire in England for 2008, put the total estimate at £8.3bn. The costs in anticipation include prevention or protective measures such as sprinklers and insurance. The costs as a consequence of fires, includes damage to properties, loss of business, and the costs of human injury and death. Response costs are the expenditure on fire and rescue services. Firefighters play an important role in all these activities. Community fire safety work with vulnerable people helps prevent scores of deaths and injuries, while a rapid response can limit losses to property as well as life.

Table 1: Estimates for the total cost of fire (2008)

	Anticipation (£m)	Consequence (£m)	Response (£m)	Total (£m)
England	£3,185	£3,285	£1,807	£8,277

There are good reasons to believe that at least some of these costs have risen since 2008. The most recent figures published by the Association of British Insurers (ABI) indicate that the insured cost of fires in 2008 was £1.3 billion, a 16% increase on the previous year. Between 2002 and 2008 the cost of the average fire claim for both commercial and domestic fires doubled, to £21,000 and £8,000 respectively. The ABI suggested that if this trend continues, the UK could stand to lose as much as £10 billion as a result of commercial and industrial fires by 2020.

Some fire and rescue services have carried out their own cost-benefit analysis to quantify the value of the contribution of their service to the communities they serve. For example, Greater Manchester fire and rescue service has estimated this year that for every £1 the service costs to respond to incidents, there is an £18 saving in terms of life and property. This estimate refers only to fires and does not include other areas of work such as responses to road traffic collisions and other types of rescue.

Other recent estimates have underlined rising costs to households and businesses. The financial and economic impacts of blazes in warehouses without sprinkler systems in England and Wales add up to over £1bn over the last five years, according to a report published by the Centre for Economics and Business Research. These warehouse fires cause a direct financial loss to business of £230m per year, £190m per year in productivity and impacts to the supply chain, approximately 1,000 jobs lost through disruption and business failure and £160m in tax receipts lost to the Treasury over five years.

The fire and rescue service has reduced the costs of fires, deaths and injuries over the last decade. The cost to the economy of a single fire death is £1.65 million and the estimated average consequential cost of a domestic fire is £44,000 – never mind the harm done to families and communities by fires. The fire and rescue saves the economy billions of pounds every year. On this basis alone, the fire and rescue service merits investment, not cuts. The FBU believes the value of the service is even greater, with many other benefits to society from firefighters' work.

The social value of the fire and rescue service is immense. Every day firefighters around the UK work with the young and the old, with offenders and the unemployed, as well as businesses of all sizes and with vulnerable

households. Fire and rescue services make a direct contribution to a number of other public agencies through their wider work in communities. Firefighters reduce the costs of:

- Traffic congestion
- Road traffic collisions
- Youth unemployment
- Anti-social behaviour
- School exclusion
- Slips, trips and falls in the home
- Reoffending
- Troubled families.

There is some recognition of these additional benefits delivered by the fire and rescue service, although this has not translated into more funding. Last year the UK fire and rescue service won the Big Society award for its ground-breaking work with young people to educate them about fire prevention and tackling anti-social behaviour. The fire and rescue service's education programmes have allowed over 10,000 young people to learn essential safety information and gain wider social skills. Activities ranging from primary school visits, sports coaching and interventions to reduce anti-social behaviour by disaffected young people are recognised to add enormous value to society, helping to reduce the social and economic costs of crime.

Firefighters bring unique value and experience to such work, which is built upon their emergency response role. It is precisely because of the hazards we face and the humanitarian role we play that firefighters can have such a significant impact in other areas of public engagement, with young people and others within the community. There are also numerous possibilities going forward for the fire and rescue service to add value to other social programmes. However the FBU fears that these programmes are threatened by continual cuts in firefighter numbers and the closure of community fire stations. The union believes central government needs to come clean about the value of firefighters and the service we provide, and fund our service to reflect the value added.



3) The Importance of Emergency Intervention at Fires – Response Times

Fires devastate people's lives, ruin their homes and wreck businesses. There are numerous examples of high profile incidents within Gloucestershire which bring this home in the most dramatic fashion. Only a day or so after the County Council announced these planned cuts to frontline cover the massive warehouse fire at Baker's Quay took place. This fire, which was witnessed by hundreds of members of the public close by at the Rugby World Cup "fanzone" tested the current resilience of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service to the maximum and took place only a matter of months after another massive fire at Dowty factory in Staverton which required 14 Fire Engines, 2 Aerial Appliances, 80 Firefighters, 9 main jets and 2 water monitors over a sustained period of time.

To safely and properly deal with such large scale incidents requires a level of resources and resilience within Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service which is now being put at risk through the cuts proposed by the County Council. The proposals would strip vital full-time cover, of which there is precious little in Gloucestershire. The proposals would not only increase response times and adversely affect resilience in the area's covered by Painswick and Cirencester fire stations, but would also have a dangerous impact on the ability to successfully allocate resources to large scale incidents whilst also providing a level of local cover.

The proposals would remove Painswick Fire Station, its Firefighters and appliances altogether, which once again, would not only increase response times in the Painswick area, but would also permanently remove these crews and appliances from the already limited resilience within GFRS required at large scale incidents.

The consultation document being used to justify these cuts glosses over the importance of resilience and instead focuses solely on a local perspective. This gives the misleading, and for firefighters offensive, impression that the provision of Fire Cover should be judged solely from the amount of calls received locally – with no proper account or value being given towards the necessity of resilience at times of large scale, protracted incidents.

Against this background it is vital to recognise that the Firefighters of Painswick and Cirencester Fire Stations have played a full role in many, if not most, of the large scale incidents that Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service has tackled in recent times, including:

- Large scale flooding;
- The blaze at The Orchard Pub in Quedgely;
- Fire at Westmidland Farmers in Cirencester;
- The large fire at MFI in Gloucester
- The massive blaze at Bakers Quay in Gloucester
- Fire at Megabowl Gloucester
- The Brick Row fire in Stroud

And this list could go on and on and on...

No-one should underestimate the need to provide an emergency service for such incidents and no-one should underestimate the requirement for resilience within Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service in order to properly resolve these incidents whilst also maintaining a level of cover across the rest of the County.

Our firefighters have much to be proud of. The fire and rescue service is a real success story when provided with sufficient personnel and the resources to do the job of preventing, protecting and responding to emergencies. In Britain over the last decade:

- The total number of fires is down by almost a half
- Building fires are down by a quarter
- Total fire deaths are down by a third
- Non-fatal casualties have also been cut by nearly a third

Some politicians and commentators argue that the downward trend in fires and fire deaths justifies making further cuts to the fire and rescue service. Indeed, this argument appears implicit within the proposals under consultation by Gloucestershire County Council. The FBU rejects this conclusion. Firefighters have been active agents in

bringing about the progress made through successful fire prevention and protection. There is still a long way to go. It is irresponsible to decimate the active force that has catalysed these improvements. The FBU rejects the flawed notion of determining levels of fire and rescue service resources based on cost rather than risk.

Response times

Another key measure of quality in the fire and rescue service is the time it takes firefighters to reach an incident, known as the response time. DCLG figures estimate that average response times to dwelling fires in England slowed over the past decade from 6.1 minutes in 2003-04 to a peak of 7.4 minutes in 2013-14. Although dwelling fire response times for a first appliance appear unchanged in the last four years, they are still a long way from the norm when there were national standards. The average response time to dwelling fires in England is now almost two minutes slower than two decades ago. Responses times to other building fires, including workplaces and businesses have also fallen substantially.

DCLG previously attributed the slowing of response times to increased traffic levels. However traffic levels peaked in 2007, while attendance times continued to increase. The FBU believes that the effects of cuts are the central reason for the slowdown in response times. Fewer firefighters, fewer fire stations and fewer appliances have led to a worsening of the speed and necessary weight of emergency response.

Another factor is a shortage of staff, which has meant that appliances and crews are taken off the run due to staff shortages, for training or to deliver community fire safety. Sadly, DCLG does not consider the impact of cuts. Instead worsening response times are blamed on control staff for longer call handling times, policies on "drive to arrive" and firefighters for time spent putting on personal protective equipment.

In contrast to the political rhetoric and crude justification for cuts, the independent consultants Greenstreet Berman suggest that by 2020 slower response times will mean:

- Between 14 and 41 additional deaths at dwelling fires
- Between 33 and 91 additional deaths at road traffic collisions
- Between 42 and 57 additional deaths at water incidents
- Between 98 and 212 additional deaths at special service incidents overall.

The cuts being proposed to Painswick and Cirencester by the County Council will have a serious impact on the real response times to 999 emergencies occurring in local communities across Gloucestershire. With fewer firefighters, fewer appliances and fewer fire stations the quality of service will worsen. With slower response times, more people, property and workplaces are put at increased risk.

4) Environmental Challenges – Flooding

No-one in our County can ever forget the massive, and highly destructive, floods of 2007. On 19 July, Gloucestershire FRS attended 1,800 calls in a 48 hour period, compared with the usual 8,000 calls a year. Although these figures are significant, they appear to underestimate the number of incidents and rescues actually carried out. The Fire Service rose to the challenge which we were faced with and we made countless rescues of people trapped in flood water as well as fighting to protect vital infrastructure and rendering humanitarian services. We did all this, and more, for days on end.

The risk of flooding has not gone away – far from it – and many areas, and thousands of homes, remain at risk from the devastation that flooding brings. These risks are increasing due to increased population, building on flood plains and climate change.

The FBU has been fully engaged since this time developing flood policy. We have put the lessons of our experience to good use and have worked with the service to build our training, equipment and flood resilience throughout the service. This would be put at risk if the cuts being proposed by the County Council go ahead.

The public rightly expects firefighters, as highly-trained professionals, to respond to flooding. Failure to manage flooding, including emergency response, carries huge financial and individual costs, impacts on productivity and other aspects of the economy. There are particular industrial issues with regard to flooding that need to be resolved within the fire and rescue service, including funding, IRMPs, training, PPE, equipment, welfare provision, health concerns, pay and other matters. The FBU believes that more resources are needed for the fire and rescue service to respond to flooding and other environmental matters, so that firefighters have the tools to respond professionally to these emergencies.

Against this background it is hugely disappointing that the County Council appears to have forgotten the experiences and lessons from the huge floods that our County and its population suffered in 2007, and is now putting forward proposals which would undermine our resilience and our ability to deal with similar incidents.



5) Firefighters Wide Ranging Contribution – Resilience

Resilience within Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service is vital in ensuring our ability to respond to large scale incidents, protracted incidents and ensure supporting colleagues and partner agencies throughout a wide range of threats and emergency situations, now and in the foreseeable future.

Earlier this year, the previous government published the latest edition of the 'National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies', the unclassified version of the National Risk Assessment. The register covers a range of civil emergencies that threaten serious damage to our welfare, the environment and security. A striking number of these threats are matters dealt with by the fire and rescue service:

- Terrorist attacks
- Coastal and inland flooding
- Storms and gales, low temperatures and heavy snow
- Heatwaves and severe wildfires
- Public disorder (such as the civil disturbances in 2011)
- Pandemic influenza and related outbreaks of disease
- Major industrial and transport accidents

Firefighters plan, prepare and train for these kind of emergencies. Some of the risks posed by these events have increased in recent years. With climate change, many of the risks are likely to increase in the foreseeable future. Others events are highly uncertain and difficult to quantify, with multiple events a real possibility to plan for. All assume that the fire and rescue service is prepared, equipped and staffed to meet every challenge thrown at it. The government's planning for these risks assumes there are sufficient firefighters available to tackle these emergencies and that the fire and rescue service is resilient in the face of these threats. The FBU believes, worryingly, that this is no longer the case and the proposals being put forward by Gloucestershire County Council can only serve to make this situation dramatically worse within our own County.

Rescues

One of the best measures of the quality of our emergency service is the number of rescues carried out. DCLG does not publish rescue figures systematically and has not done so since the turn of the century. Neither does the Welsh Assembly or the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Scottish government does publish rescue figures for fires, but not for other incidents.

New FBU research reveals an impressive level of rescues carried out by firefighters every day, reinforcing the vital role of emergency intervention. The data, obtained from individual fire and rescue services by the Labour Research Department (LRD), indicates that over 38,000 people were rescued by firefighters in the UK between April 2014 and March 2015 – over one hundred rescues a day. In England, over 32,000 were rescued by firefighters during that period.

There are a huge number of rescues from non-fire incidents – including flooding, road traffic collisions, hazardous chemicals and lift rescues. For the UK as a whole, firefighters carried out over 34,000 rescues at non-fire incidents in 2014-15. In England, there were over 29,000 rescues carried out at non-fire incidents between April 2014 and March 2015. There were over nine times more rescues at non-fire incidents than at fires, reflecting the wider range of activities now undertaken by firefighters, indicating the irreplaceable response to a huge range of emergencies.

Firefighters still make a significant intervention at fires, which is well appreciated by members of the public. For the UK as a whole, firefighters rescued over 3,700 people from fires in the last year. There were some issues of concern with the returns from some individual fire and rescue services, including how some incidents are recorded. A basement flood and a flooded high street are both recorded as a single incident, masking very different resource requirements. It is possible some brigades have not recorded all incidents, underestimating the real extent of rescue activity carried out by firefighters. Nevertheless, the figures underline the contribution firefighters make to improving people's lives.

6) Methodology used for the Consultation – Impact on Painswick and Cirencester

Painswick

The FBU is committed to maintaining the highest standards of fire and rescue service intervention capability across Gloucestershire and is dedicated to the protection of firefighter posts on both full time and retained duty systems.

However, notwithstanding any improved risk mapping (see below), the authors of the consultation rely on a crude and inappropriate "supply vs demand" argument in order to justify the closure of Painswick community Fire Station. We wish, once again, to make this point clearly: Fire cover cannot properly be arranged around the laws of supply and demand – it must properly be done according to risk. Is the County Council, when using this assessment, really saying that the number of fire calls equates to risk? Are they saying that the people of Painswick and its surrounding areas who are trapped in a fire can afford to wait longer for a fire engine based on numbers? Less calls does not mean that those people involved in a fire can wait longer.

Fire behaviour remains unchanged and the increased response times which would result from the proposed cuts could prove catastrophic to these Gloucestershire communities. The crude calculation around the "number of calls received" versus the "value of the fire cover" being supplied is, in our view, simply an attempt to justify cuts to frontline fire cover which are, in actual fact, financially driven.

Painswick Fire Station is a vital asset to the resilience of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and attends all medium to large scale incidents in and around Stroud and Gloucester in addition to attendance at large scale, protracted incidents throughout the County (see chapter 3). The Firefighters of Painswick refute many of the claims made within the consultation document and, in the view of the FBU, the consultation document is not only misleading in regard to Painswick, but also lacks context and shows no professional respect towards the station and the RDS Firefighters who serve there – all of whom have shown tremendous commitment towards GFRS, their local community and the wider public of Gloucestershire.

The consultation document states that Painswick responded to 34 shouts in the last year. However this figure is challenged by the Firefighters of Painswick who actually recorded the figure of 54 within their Station log book. When this discrepancy was brought to the attention of management, Painswick Firefighters say they were informed that only the calls "within the station ground" were recorded. If this is the case, then a proper assessment of overall resilience has not been made.

Much is also made within the consultation document regarding a supposed incident involving a dwelling fire when **"Stroud attended alongside Painswick on one of these occasions and arrived nearly one minute ahead of Painswick."** Obviously this has been reported in this way to create an impression that supports the proposals being put forward by the Council; namely to justify the closure of Painswick Fire Station. However, if the full facts had been properly reported the context of this one incident entirely changes.

The truth, is that this one incident – a fire at Dutchcombe Farm – requires a different geographical approach from each of the two Fire Stations on the pre-determined attendance. The approach from Stroud is relatively straightforward, however the approach from Painswick requires the pump and its crew to drive up a long, steep hill which considerably slows the appliance as it makes its way to the incident. On this occasion the Stroud appliance actually just crossed across the Painswick appliance at the crossroads and the two appliances arrived at the incident LESS than a minute apart (note the use of the phrase "nearly a minute" in the consultation document, as opposed to "under a minute").

The truth is that Painswick Fire Station is overwhelmingly the first attendance to incidents within the Painswick area and the authors of the consultation document have made too much of a single incident in an attempt to create a favourable impression towards their own proposals.

There is no mention of any incidents, of which there are many, where the first response was made by Painswick fire crews in life saving situations. The authors of the consultation could have included a reference to a recent incident where Painswick crews were first attendance at a road traffic collision (RTC). At this incident the Painswick crews arrived at the incident not only before Stroud fire crews, but also before the ambulance service attended.

The attendance of the Painswick crews was vital to the incident where they were able to give immediate care to an elderly lady who had rolled her car.

Such incidents could, and should, have been included within the consultation – if even for balance. The exclusion of such incidents adds to the suspicion that the consultation has been pre-designed to achieve a pre-determined outcome. This suspicion is added to by recent incidents where the Service have not mobilised Painswick despite the incident being within their station ground.

A proper assessment of risk would show a number of areas of concern which support the need for the retainment of Painswick Fire Station. These include:

- Painswick and its surrounding areas have a high population of elderly residents, who statistically are at the highest risk of injury in fire;
- There are “Swiss House” developments within the Station area which, being made of timber, are at a higher risk of fire and require a speedy response in that event;
- The Station provides cover to motorists on the A46 and other smaller country roads. These have seen several serious incidents in the past which have been dealt with by Painswick Firefighters. If this Station was to be closed by the County Council then people involved in such incidents would be trapped for longer in badly smashed vehicles;
- In bad weather and heavy snow, Painswick and its surrounding areas can be cut off and isolated for periods of time. In this situation the only support to the community and cover in the event of an emergency comes from the crews of Painswick Fire Station.

Risk mapping

The GFRS Operational Response Overview describes an approach to calculating risk and presents a risk map for Gloucestershire based, presumably, on this approach.

However there are a number of flaws in the approach to calculating risk which mean that the map may not present a realistic picture of the true risk across the county.

The use of rates

Using dwelling fire rate (number of dwelling fires in an area divided by the number of dwellings in the area) is not a useful step in the calculation of risk.

Consider the following:

Two areas, both exactly the same except that one has ten times the population of the other:

Area 1: 2000 houses, 100 fires

Area 2: 200 houses, 10 fires

Quite clearly, if a fire and rescue service wants to have the biggest impact on reducing the harm caused by fire, they would put most of their resources into area 1.

But if you look at the dwelling fire rate:

Area 1: Dwelling fire rate = $100/2000 = 0.05$

Area 2: Dwelling fire rate = $10/200 = 0.05$

That is, the dwelling fire rates are both the same. They would be allocated the same category of risk and the service would distribute their resources 50:50 between the two areas. Area 1 would get an inadequate service while area 2 gets a service that it doesn't need most of the time.

Using dwelling fire rate destroys the fundamental principle of risk assessment where 'risk' is measured as frequency multiplied by impact. Rate multiplied by impact simply doesn't calculate risk.

Ignoring impact

What is worse, according to page 13 of the GFRS Operational Response Overview, the final risk score is calculated by adding together the dwelling fire rate and the casualty rate.

This is an inappropriate method of assessing risk for three reasons:

1. The use of rates instead of actual numbers as explained above.
2. The fact that 'casualties' is the only measure of dwelling fire impact that is used in an assessment of risk.
3. Risk is frequency multiplied by impact, not frequency added to impact.

By simply counting dwelling fires and casualties, the implicit assumption is that every fire and every casualty is exactly the same. But a small kitchen fire in Stow on the Wold is not the same as a burned out bedsit flat in the middle of Gloucester. These two fires have different impacts but by the GFRS methodology, they both count equally towards the risk categorisation of Stow and Gloucester.

Worse, a casualty is an impact of a dwelling fire. And yet in the GFRS methodology, the dwelling fire (rate) is added to the casualty (rate). This is completely at odds with the accepted approach to assessing risk in which frequency should be multiplied by impact.

To truly assess risk across Gloucestershire, historic records of fires need to be examined and fires need to be categorised by their impact. That is, impact in terms of amount of damage and severity of human injury. The number of fires in each 'impact category' (frequency) need to be multiplied by a value that reflects the impact. This would give a true measure of overall risk, based on the tried and tested principles of risk assessment used in every other risk assessment model throughout the safety industry.

By way of an example:

	Weight	Area 1		Area 2	
		No	Risk (weight x No)	No	Risk (weight x No)
Impact 10 fires (fatality)	100	5	500	0	0
Impact 9 fires (serious injury)	95	5	475	1	95
Impact 8 fires	90	5	450	1	90
Impact 7 fires	84	7	588	0	0
Impact 6 fires	77	7	539	0	0
Impact 5 fires	69	9	621	1	69
Impact 4 fires	60	7	420	0	0
Impact 3 fires	47	15	705	1	47
Impact 2 fires (small cooking)	30	20	600	2	60
Impact 1 fires (out on arrival)	1	20	20	4	4
Total		100	4918	10	365

NOTE: For this example we have used a log scale for the weighting because a fatal fire is at least 100 times worse than a small cooker top fire. A more appropriate weighting may be developed after more serious consideration.

Cirencester

Presently, according to the GFRS document, the availability of fire appliances at Cirencester is as follows:

1st appliance	(day crewed)	98.77%
2nd appliance	(retained crewed)	81.88%

The question to be addressed is this:

By changing the crewing of the first appliance to retained, what would be the effect on appliance availability and turn out time?

Availability

The published data shows that the availability of first appliances on two pump fully retained duty fire stations is very high – average 99%. We assume that is because where two crews of firefighters are retained, it is relatively easy to assure the availability of at least one crew nearly all the time.

The availability of appliances at one pump retained duty fire stations is also very high at an average of 98%. This is a commendable figure in the national context and reflects well on our members at these stations.

However the data shows that the availability of second appliances on two pump fully retained duty fire stations is poor – average 70%. There is no analysis of the reason for this fact that we can find in either document but ORH accept that “the callsigns with the lowest levels of availability are generally the second appliance at stations with two RDS pumps.” (para’ 2.2.7).



If Cirencester were to become a two pump retained station and were to meet average availability standards seen across the county, the availability of fire appliances at Cirencester would reduce to:

1st appliance	(retained crewed)	99%
2nd appliance	(retained crewed)	70%

This is a 13% reduction in the availability of a second appliance in Cirencester.

But even to achieve this, Cirencester would have to meet the average availability figures seen across the county. The FBU (and we assume the population of Cirencester) would expect GFRS to undertake a study to examine the feasibility of at least meeting these average values before any change is proposed, let alone actually made.

Could the service recruit a second crew in Cirencester?

- Currently the Cirencester retained pump is the second pump, according to Figure 3 of the ORH document, only turning out to 47 jobs a year.

How would the current retained duty system firefighters be affected if they had to attend five times as many calls?

Would employers still give them release?

Some firefighters would value the additional experience, but some may not want to be turned out five times a week.

Turn out time

GFRS say that "there is already a well developed retained group of firefighters established at Cirencester".

But it is worthy of note that according to Figure 3 of the ORH document, the current Cirencester second pump takes on average 6 minutes and 1 second to turn out (nearly the longest turnout time in the County).

- If Cirencester loses its day crewed appliance, will 6 minutes and 1 second become the turn out time of the first appliance?
- What would be the turn out time of a second retained appliance in Cirencester (when one is available) if it takes 6 minutes to turn out the first?
- Has GFRS examined the reasons why the existing retained firefighters at Cirencester have such a long turnout time?
- If GFRS are already experiencing difficulties in recruiting firefighters who live close enough to the fire station to achieve a rapid turnout, upon what analysis do GFRS assume that a whole second crew could be recruited who could turn out in less than 6 minutes and one second?

It would appear that ORH have taken account of the drop in the availability of the second pump when they say that changing to two retained duty appliances would result in a 0.4% fall in the number of primary dwelling fires reached in target time for Gloucestershire as a whole.

But the FBU has two questions in regard to this:

1. What assumptions did ORH make about the turnout time of a first and second retained duty appliance at Cirencester when calculating this 0.4% impact?
2. What would be the impact upon the population of Cirencester specifically?

It is a legal requirement of a suitable and sufficient public consultation that it must give the public sufficient information to make an informed decision. The people of Cirencester are material in this proposal and they cannot make an informed decision based only on the "service-wide" impact of the proposed change. They need to be told the effect that it will have on them locally for the consultation to be compliant.

Other issues

The GFRS document says that changing the crewing of the first appliance at Cirencester from day crewed to retained "provides an ability to focus on local prevention and protection initiatives through enhanced involvement from Retained Personnel".

- How would this be an improvement over the provision of local prevention and protection initiatives delivered through the involvement of day crewed personnel?
- How much time per week does the average retained duty system firefighter spend on community safety compared to a day crewed firefighter?

The FBU suspect that in reality, the proposal would result in a reduction in the ability of the service to deliver community safety in the Cirencester area.

Once again, in order to be legally compliant, the consultation must give the people of Cirencester a true picture of the impact of the proposal. The FBU does not believe that the bland claims made in the current document about community fire safety are even accurate, let alone give sufficient information to make an informed decision.

Finally, we note that the GFRS document says that the proposal "gives control of resources at Cirencester to people in the local area increasing local employment". Presumably 'local employment' is a reference to half a dozen retained firefighter contracts. It is a sad reflection on the UK's employment market that this can be described as "increasing local employment"

The FBU understands the financial challenges faced by GFRS as a result of politically motivated cuts to the public sector and the challenges in posting firefighters to Cirencester when vacancies arise. However before progressing further the proposal to change to a fully retained duty system, the service should have first investigated thoroughly the feasibility of recruiting an effective second retained crew in Cirencester.

The service should also make it very clear in any consultation process what the true impact could be (appliance availability, attendance time and community fire safety provision) on the population of Cirencester and Painswick specifically – as opposed to Gloucestershire as a whole.



7) Concerns Regarding Consultation Content and Conduct

In addition to our serious concerns regarding the proposals, the FBU also has concerns regarding the content and conduct of the public consultation itself.

The Government has set out a number of principles regarding public consultations. These include the following: ***"information provided to stakeholders should be easy to comprehend. It should be in an easily understandable format, use plain language and clarify the key issues, particularly where the consultation deals with complex subject matter."***

Many public bodies ensure that consultation materials are free of jargon, easy to read, relevant and to the point. This approach, combined with the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, ensures that the consultation is meaningful. Also, in order to achieve openness and transparency, consultations should avoid the use of technical terms that might not be understood by the people taking part. Where this is unavoidable, an explanation should be given of what the terms mean.

In this case, it is the view of the FBU, backed up by many members of the public to whom we engaged with, that the consultation document (Fire and Rescue: Future Service Provision – Have your say) falls foul of almost every basic requirement set out above.

In addition to these concerns we also wish to raise the closed nature of the questions, the lack of clarity regarding the outcome of any response and the lack of alternative put forward.

It is the view of the FBU that the one sided nature of the consultation shows an intent to achieve a pre-ordained outcome – namely cuts to frontline cover – which the person responding to the consultation may not actually support.

In addition, we also wish to raise our concerns regarding a supporting document entitled "frequently asked questions". This document contained the following two "questions and answers" which are designed to be taken into account by a person when completing the consultation:

Question:

Will the emergency response in Painswick change due to these proposals?

Answer:

No. We always aim to provide a response to a call for assistance as quickly and as safely as possible; this will not change. The response provided using the fire engine(s) from Stroud can arrive in Painswick in a similar time to that taken by the fire engine currently located at Painswick.

Question:

Will the emergency response in Cirencester change due to these proposals?

Answer:

No. We will still be providing two fire engines and crew at Cirencester Fire Station to cover the risk in the area. These will respond to calls for assistance in exactly the same way that they do now with the aim of arriving as quickly and safely as possible.

Both of these answers are, in our view, plainly misleading. The emergency response, as defined and understood by any reasonable person, is clearly going to change under these proposals in both Painswick and Cirencester (see Section 6) and it would be wrong for the Council to deny otherwise in any forum, let alone a public consultation.

Any reference to emergency response, if it is to be meaningful, must include the time of response. The time a service takes to respond and arrive to an emergency incident is a vital factor and is clearly understood by the public, however the author of these "questions and answers" mask this issue and, by doing so, creates what we believe to be a misleading impression.

In question 1 (re Painswick) the answer goes from a straight "No" to a somewhat more equivocal "can arrive in Painswick in a similar time". However there is no reference to the obvious occasions when this will not, and cannot, happen. If these proposals are accepted by the Council any emergency response to Painswick and its

surrounding area will have to come from another Fire Station located further away. In the case of Stroud, where level of calls are far higher, any response to Painswick and its surrounding area relies upon the Stroud crews being fully available and not on one of the **670** calls which they answer on an annual basis. There is also the mirror concern for people in Stroud who will now have no cover in their own area when crews are responding to incidents which would previously have been answered by crews from Painswick.

In regard to the answer to question 2, it is stretching the truth to breaking point to state that fire crews at Cirencester Fire Station will respond "in exactly the way that they do now". The future response will be entirely from Firefighters working the RDS system and not from the wholetime crew who are currently based at the Fire Station during day time hours. This means that in future all calls will have a built in delay whilst RDS firefighters travel from their place of work or home etc to the fire station and then respond from the Station to the incident. This change will create a significantly increased response time to future emergency incidents.

We have also raised our concern in Chapter 6 regarding the misleading approach to a supposed incident involving a dwelling fire when "**Stroud attended alongside Painswick on one of these occasions and arrived nearly one minute ahead of Painswick.**" This has clearly been reported in this way in order to create an impression that supports the proposals being put forward by the Council – namely to close Painswick Fire Station. However, if the full facts had been properly reported the context of this one incident entirely changes.

The truth is that this one incident – a fire at Dutchcombe Farm – requires a different geographical approach from each of the two Fire Stations on the pre-determined attendance. The approach from Stroud is relatively straight forward, however the approach from Painswick requires the pump and its crew to drive up a long, steep hill which considerably slows the appliance as it makes its way to the incident. At this occasion the Stroud appliance actually just crossed across the Painswick appliance at the crossroads and the two appliances arrived at the incident LESS than a minute apart (note the use of the phrase "nearly a minute" in the consultation document, as opposed to "under a minute").

The truth is that Painswick Fire Station is overwhelmingly the first attendance to incidents within the Painswick area and the authors of the consultation document have made too much of this single incident in an attempt to create a favourable impression towards their own proposals.

The FBU were so concerned about the issues raised regarding this consultation that we set up a clear and unambiguous petition where members of the public could express their opposition to these cuts (see chapter 9) and, based on the concerns raised here, we urge all members of the Council to give this the full weight it deserves. We also urge the Council to review the conduct of future public consultations and put in place proper and full guidance which will prevent the issues raised regarding this consultation from reoccurring.

8) Suspension of Duty System Despite Ongoing Public Consultation

The Fire Brigades Union have publicly condemned what we regard as the disgraceful decision of the "Strategic Leadership Team" (SLT) to suspend the wholetime Duty System at Cirencester Fire Station, despite the ongoing and inconclusive public consultation into the future of fire cover at this station.

The FBU believe that this decision is totally unnecessary. The SLT have stated that the primary reason for their decision to suspend the duty system at Cirencester is to ensure legislative compliance following a letter from the HSE, which, for clarity, was not addressed to Gloucestershire FRS. This letter was in regard to so called "Day Crew Plus" duty systems and highlighted their non compliance with Working Time Regulations. The view of the SLT was that this impacted on the duty system at Cirencester and they therefore made the decision to "suspend" the duty system and forcibly transfer all of our members working that system to different workplaces and different duty systems. However, the "suspension" of this duty system was not the only option open to the SLT. The FBU put forward other, obvious, options to the SLT which would have ensured compliance with legislation and also ensured that wholetime, day cover would have remained available at Cirencester. These solutions, which would have prevented members being forcibly transferred and maintained fire cover, were rejected by the SLT.

The FBU believe that the decision, and the manner in which it has been conducted, is outside the Grey Book and conflicts with agreed negotiating conditions of service. When the Service indicated that they were pressing ahead with the "suspension" of the duty system and the forced transfer of our members the FBU registered a formal dispute under the agreed negotiating procedure within the Grey Book. This procedure included the following section: **"While an issue is subject to discussion/resolution under this negotiating procedure neither side will seek to take any collective action or introduce change."** – Despite acknowledging our formal letter of dispute, the service has chosen to ignore this section and impose the change while the negotiating processes are still underway.

The FBU believe that the decision undermines the current public consultation being run into fire cover at Cirencester Fire Station and has pre-empted the decision that was properly the remit of the County Council to make. The FBU believe, as we have made clear in our ongoing campaign of opposition to the proposed cuts in Gloucestershire FRS, that the decision to suspend cover at Cirencester will serve only to increase response times in this area and will consequently compromise the safety of firefighters and the public. This is clearly a very important matter and was properly made the subject of a public consultation. Government guidelines on public consultation are clear and state **"engagement should begin early in policy development when the policy is still under consideration and views can genuinely be taken into account."** By removing the duty system whilst the consultation was ongoing, the SLT have shown no regard for the views of the public, nor the guidelines put in place by the Government and have undermined the evidence base which the public could have used to form an opinion.

This was a unilateral removal of fire cover which has increased response times in Cirencester and the surrounding areas without reference to a risk assessment or evidence base. The decision had no regard for national protocols or industrial relations and did not even seek, let alone pay any regard to, the views of the public affected. To make this decision during an ongoing consultation into the same matter is an affront to proper consultation protocols and makes a mockery of the purported processes and reasoning for public consultations within Gloucestershire County Council.

By pressing ahead in this manner with the "suspension" of this duty system and the forced transfer of our members at Cirencester, the SLT have shown a contempt for industrial relations and agreed negotiating procedures at both a local and national level. We have made our views regarding this clear to principal managers within the Service and the Union will continue to pursue all options available to us, however we wish to make clear to every member of the County Council that when a Service shows itself unwilling to follow basic agreed negotiating procedures, the Union has no option other than to call on the Unity of our membership in order to make our collective voices heard.

9) Public Opinion and Perceptions of The Fire and Rescue Service

Firefighters rightly receive plaudits for the invaluable work we do. The public expects firefighters to respond in an emergency and deliver unparalleled assistance in the most dreadful circumstances imaginable. Public support for firefighters is exceptionally high. A YouGov survey commissioned by the FBU in 2010 found that more than nine out of ten believed the Fire and Rescue service was providing a good service, with only 1% describing it as "fairly bad". Two out of three thought the service was very good – a glowing tribute to the work firefighters do on a daily basis. Four out of five members of the public were satisfied with their local fire and rescue service, while only 2% were dissatisfied.

There was no mandate for cutting the service in 2010. Some 95% said they favoured maintaining the current level of staffing across the UK, with a third demanding more firefighters. Some 85% said they opposed plans to cut funding to the Fire and Rescue Service as a whole, with the same percentage opposed to local cuts in funding. Nine out of ten people said the Fire and Rescue Service was good value for money. An overwhelming majority of people (95%) said that rapid response to an emergency call is a priority for them as householders and for local businesses. The same percentage believe that attendance times should be a high priority for Fire and Rescue Services – exploding the myth that response times don't matter. A swift response with adequate resources remains crucial to providing a first-class service.

No politician can claim there is a mandate to put cuts ahead of frontline emergency services – there is not.

The value which the public places on Firefighters was confirmed by even more recent research undertaken by the FBU

Published in October 2015 the research shows that 73% of the British public feel firefighters contribute most to society's wellbeing, next only to doctors (87%) and hospital workers (81%).

Some three quarters of respondents to the independent online survey of 1,015 people conducted in August (2015) by YouGov for the FBU showed that the public believe firefighters and teachers contribute to society's wellbeing at the same level, with the two professions achieving a joint third place. In a list of thirteen professions police came fourth at 67%, with actors scoring 9%, and bankers at the bottom of the league at just 4%.



In terms of who the public hold in the highest esteem among a list of 13 professions, firefighters came third, again only ranking below doctors and hospital workers. Teachers however scored lower on the esteem rating, with police worse still, achieving just half of the 12% scored for firefighters. Women, people aged 35-44 and those living in the east or south of England were most likely to hold firefighters in high esteem.

Some 84% of respondents opposed cuts to the fire and rescue service, with just 4% thinking there should be fewer firefighters serving the public – the remainder of the response was split evenly with 43% believing we should keep jobs at the same level and the same proportion believing firefighter job numbers need to increase. Nearly 7000 frontline firefighter jobs have been lost since the coalition government were elected in 2010.

Another 88% of respondents think the fire and rescue service, which makes up around 4% of council tax bills, is good value for money – police services are allocated 10-11% of council tax.

More than nine in ten (95%) of survey respondents agreed that rapid response to fires needs to be a priority – (at a national level, government figures show that fire engines now take on average 20% longer to get to house fires than they did 10 years ago).

This survey shows what the County Council should already know – that the public places a tremendous value on the work firefighters do, which isn't just about fighting fires these days, but a whole range of other work, from assisting paramedics, to emergency response, lift rescues, public education, chemical spillages and road traffic accidents and even assisting at the thankfully rare scenes of terrorist attacks such as 7/7. Firefighters put their lives at risk to save others, and this selflessness is clearly something the public hold very dear. Against this background the Council should shift its focus from cutting Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue service and instead provide us with the investment we now badly need in order to save lives and protect our communities.

Funding cuts are threatening not only emergency response, but also prevention and enforcement work, and overall national resilience to a wide range of emergencies. The FBU believes cuts cost lives and ruin communities. The union wants long-term, strategic investment in the service, not cuts – and a fairer funding formula that better reflects the wider contribution made by the Fire and Rescue Service to society.

10) Online Petition and Campaigning in our Communities

We have raised our concerns regarding the validity of the Council consultation in chapter 7 and stated that, in order to ensure that Councillors could actually consider an alternative view, the Union set up an online petition run by an outside provider.

This consultation was entitled "Stop dangerous cuts to Gloucestershire Fire Service" and had the following wording contained in sections:

TO: GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Gloucester County Council is considering plans to slash frontline fire cover in our County. They want to close Painswick Fire Station and remove all full-time Firefighters from Cirencester Fire Station. Your local Firefighters believe that these plans are dangerous. We believe they would severely compromise our ability to do our job safely and protect the public. Please add your name to our petition and tell Gloucestershire County Council to rethink these dangerous cuts!

Why is this important?

Firefighters understand that times are difficult and money is tight, but we believe these cuts go too far and would risk the long term safety of the public. The cuts would lead to slower response times, with fire engines taking longer to reach you in times of need. They would lead to a significantly increased risk to both the public and firefighters alike. Please add your name to our petition and tell Gloucestershire County Council to rethink these dangerous cuts!

This petition, run by the campaign group 38 Degrees, began in October 2015 and has achieved a powerful connection with the public view, with hundreds of signatures.

This is an extraordinary reaction from the public and shows the level of concern and anger that the public feels regarding these proposals. We urge every member of the Council to take heed of these concerns when considering their position.

The petition allowed members of the public to state their reasons for signing the petition. Here is a sample of these comments:

Joanne C

"I have family in Gloucestershire and think these proposals are unsafe. Sign the petition to support the FBU and our brilliant and brave fire service."

Kerry B.

"I am a regular visitor to Cirencester and think these proposals are unsafe. Sign the petition to support the FBU and save our brilliant fire service from decimation."

Peggy C.

"People die in fires, they need to be controlled as swiftly as possible and won't wait for help from the other side of the county"

Lesley P.

"Firefighters cannot be in two places at once if they are already at an incident then the next available appliance will be sent. This will endanger lives of the public and firefighters."

Genevieve B.

"More homes being built means a higher population in Cirencester. Not a time for cutbacks."

Gary S.

"These cuts will INCREASE the time it takes for Firefighters to attend incidents – they are dangerous for the public and dangerous for the Firefighters!"

These are the real voices of the public and we urge the County Council, as representatives of the people of Gloucestershire, to take heed of them. No politician can claim there is a mandate to put cuts ahead of frontline emergency services – there is not.

Campaigning in Communities

In addition to the online petition we have also held several "campaign days" within local communities. These consisted of Firefighters taking to the streets and explaining to the public why we feel these proposals would compromise our ability to provide them with a safe and effective Fire and Rescue Service.

These days proved to Firefighters that there is virtually no support for the County Council proposals to cut our fire service. As an example, during just one 2 hour period we collected almost 300 signatures from people in the street who wanted to put their name to our petition against these cuts.

Firefighters talked through our concern with members of the public and answered any questions which they cared to put. On every occasion where we took to the streets, members of the public willingly queued to sign a petition against the cuts. Firefighters were also approached by people who had received help from the local Fire Station in the past.

Cirencester resident Lucie Rowe, asked to be quoted saying ***"I am so grateful to Cirencester firefighters, who responded very quickly when a serious fire caught hold in my house. I have witnessed at first hand the terrifying consequences of fire and I cannot believe the Council is considering making these cuts. If full-time Firefighters are taken away from Cirencester then the public will have to wait longer in an emergency, and believe me, in a fire time can cost lives. Please support our Firefighters and no to these cuts."***

All of these signatures, which represent public opinion in regard to this matter, will be handed to the County Council and we ask that they are given the proper priority by County Councillors when considering whether to accept these proposals or not. It is our clear view, having been on the streets of Gloucestershire, that the public overwhelmingly reject these proposals to cut our Fire and Rescue Service.

11) Our Vision for The Fire and Rescue Service

The FBU has a powerful, positive vision for the Fire and Rescue Service. Firefighters are proud of our jobs and the services we provide to our communities. We want to see a highly effective and efficient Fire and Rescue Service.

The FBU wants a Fire and Rescue Service that:

- Professionally assesses the full range of risks facing communities and plans to address these by integrating the various measures of prevention, protection and intervention
- Rapidly responds to a wide range of emergencies facing communities
- Provides a first-class service to the communities we serve
- Is publicly-owned
- Is democratically-controlled, democratically-run and accountable to communities
- Receives sustained investment, not cuts
- Is resourced to manage a wide range of risks, rescues and interventions
- Has consistent, universal and professional standards at its core
- Trains and prepares a highly skilled and professional workforce.

The public have the right to know that their Fire and Rescue Service is planning professionally for the various risks faced by the community. Firefighters have the right to know that the service is planning adequately for incidents rather than deliberately under-resourcing them.

Firefighters are trusted professionals, enthusiastic advocates for our Fire and Rescue service and absolutely committed to serving our communities. Firefighters are confident we have the skills and experience to revitalise our service. Give us the tools and let us get on with doing the job.



12) Conclusion

It is our conclusion, as the professional voice of firefighters within Gloucestershire, that these proposals will compromise the safety of the public and of firefighters. They will result in increased response times to emergency incidents within the affected areas. This will result in increased fire growth and a longer wait for people trapped in property fires, road traffic collisions and other emergency incidents.

They will compromise fire cover in other areas as surrounding fire crews have to respond to incidents in areas normally covered by Painswick in Cirencester.

They will compromise the ability of the service to deal with large scale, protracted incidents and undermine our resilience overall. The proposals are not supported by the public or by firefighters. We call on the County Council to reject these proposals.





Produced by FBU Region 13
FBU Regional Office
158 Muller Road
Horfield
Bristol
Avon BS7 9RE
Tel: 0117 9355132

www.southwestfbu.com