Fire Cover and Special Appliance Reviews Consultation

June 2023

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INTRODUCTION

Here at Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) we're working hard to provide a modern, flexible, resilient fire and rescue service. We're achieving this through the aims and bold ambitions set out in our Fire Plan 2021-25 and supporting annual delivery plans.

We recently launched our new Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 and this includes our intention to consult with our people, partners and the public on proposals to make changes to our fire cover – that is, how our fire stations and fire appliances are crewed and where they are located. Doing so will allow us to increase our capacity and capability and ensure we invest our resources in areas of the highest need.

Greater Manchester's economic importance, diversity and infrastructure make for a complex picture in terms of the risks that we have to plan for, help prevent, and look for opportunities to improve. Our city-region's constantly changing landscape creates an operating environment that regularly and rapidly shifts. We must respond to these changes by evolving our approach, to ensure that firefighter and public safety remains at the forefront of our plans.

Keeping our residents safe is not just about firefighters responding to emergencies. It's also about investing in and enhancing our service and our communities. This means continuing to ensure that all our people have the tools, equipment, and training they need to do their jobs safely and effectively. It also means equipping and empowering all areas of our city-region to reduce the risks of fires and other emergencies through our prevention and protection work.

Our Fire Cover Review sets out the changes we are proposing to make to ensure our resources are used in the most effective and efficient way. Based on extensive data and insight, we believe the package of measures proposed are the best way for us to build a stronger, more resilient fire and rescue service while maintaining the highest levels of safety and lowest levels of risk as we protect our communities, work together and save lives.

We are now asking our residents, our partners and our people to share their thoughts on the proposed changes we've identified.

Our service has made significant improvements in recent years, which I am hugely proud of, and these proposals aim to build on this success and help us create an even stronger and more resilient fire and rescue service that is fit for the future.

Dave Russel
Chief Fire Officer

OUR PROPOSALS

Understanding the risk of fires, incidents and other types of emergency is crucial to providing an efficient and cost-effective fire and rescue service. Accurate information not only enables us to target our resources where they are most likely to be called upon in an emergency, but also helps us to prioritise proactive fire safety and prevention activity.

To enable us to create an accurate risk profile of our communities, each year we undertake a Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) that helps us to consider the impact of external factors that may be a risk to our communities and how we respond, enabling us to create risk profiles for all 10 boroughs, which are used alongside the SAoR to determine where our resources should be located and underpin our decisions.

While risks vary across the city-region, we aim to provide the same response should an emergency occur anywhere in Greater Manchester. All our plans are based on responding to 80% of 'life-risk' incidents (those incidents that pose the greatest risk to life such as house fires and road traffic collisions) within 10 minutes of North West Fire Control (NWFC) receiving an emergency call.

However, we aim to respond even quicker than this and our target that we measure our performance against is to respond to all life-risk incidents within **7 minutes 30 seconds**. Currently we are responding slightly quicker, with an average response time of **7 minutes 21 seconds** to these types of incidents. But we will of course always aim to respond to an incident in the shortest time possible and in as safe a manner as possible.

Every four years we carry out a Fire Cover Review and our most recent review took place during 2022-23 alongside a review of our special appliances (the appliances that respond to more complex or specialist incidents) and it is the recommendations from these reviews that we are now consulting upon.

The three areas we are seeking the views of our people, partners and the public are on introducing:

1.
Two additional 'day crewing' fire stations

2.
A new operating model at our two Enhanced Rescue Stations

3.
Two additional fire engines in Manchester

Our data gives us confidence that we can safely change how we provide round the clock cover at two of our fire stations which receive some of our lowest numbers of night-time incidents – **Offerton in Stockport and Sale in Trafford**.

We have also identified a more flexible and resilient approach for our technical rescue capability operating from **Enhanced Rescue Stations at Ashton in Tameside and Leigh in Wigan**. Combining the role of a frontline firefighter with an enhanced rescue technician means crew members will be able to respond to every type of incident, including more complex scenarios. It also means the appliances at these stations can have more specialist firefighters available at all times while reducing the overall number required.

Cost savings from these changes would allow us to increase our overall number of fire engines from 50 to 52. With Manchester's rapidly transforming and growing city centre, the addition of two extra fire engines will provide improved capacity to respond to emergencies, increased coverage of the area, and enhanced ability to save lives and property.

Taking these steps will bring overall savings of approximately **£0.340 million a year**, which would allow us to increase our funding for other areas, further building our resilience, capacity and capabilities.

1.

Introduce two additional ‘day crewing’ fire stations

Greater Manchester’s 41 fire stations ensure firefighters can be quickly mobilised to incidents anywhere in our city-region, 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Our aim is always to respond to all incidents in the shortest time and safest manner possible.

The vast majority of our fire stations operate a ‘wholetime’ shift duty system meaning there are firefighters on the station 24 hours a day. We do, however, have six fire stations that operate a ‘day crewing’ duty system, which means firefighters combine daytime hours in the station – as in our ‘wholetime’ stations – with on-call hours from their homes nearby at night-time. Crews provide an **immediate response during station hours** (8.30am to 6pm) or up to a **four-minute response** from their homes during on-call hours (6pm to 8.30am). For the on-call period, crews have a mobile phone that alerts them to an incident, and they make their way to the fire station before turning out to the incident.

These arrangements offer increased flexibility for our crews, support family-friendly working and provide greater work-life balance. Day crewing is a long-standing crewing model that has been successful at the six other stations at GMFRS and current waiting lists to transfer to these stations demonstrate that this is an attractive crewing model for employees.

We are proposing moving two further stations to this day crewing model:

- **Offerton in Stockport** – this has the smallest number of ‘very high risk’ locations in its area and Greater Manchester’s second lowest level of incidents and serious life-risk incidents at night times over the past three years. Stockport’s four other fire stations will continue to operate as they do now, including Marple which already uses day-crewing.
- **Sale in Trafford** – this has the fourth lowest number of ‘very high risk’ locations in its area and Greater Manchester’s third lowest level of serious life-risk incidents at night times over the past three years. Trafford’s two other fire stations will continue to operate as they do now.

These changes would increase average response times for Offerton by **1 minute 26 seconds** (from 6 minutes 41 seconds to 8 minutes 7 seconds) and the overall increase across Stockport borough would be **15 seconds** (from 7 minutes 22 seconds to 7 minutes 37 seconds.) For Sale, the average response time would increase by **1 minute 10 seconds** (from 7 minutes 45 seconds to 8 minutes 55 seconds) with the overall response time across Trafford borough increasing by **20 seconds** (from 7 minutes 43 seconds to 8 minutes 3 seconds).

In return, the changes would release around **£1.134 million** that would be reinvested in other priority areas such as prevention, protection and people services, and in frontline fire engines in other locations. This is because the day crewing model reduces the number of staff needed at each station by 15 (from 28 to 13), therefore releasing a total of 30 posts across both stations.

Summary

CURRENT

- **Six day-crewed stations** in Horwich, Irlam, Littleborough, Marple, Mossley and Ramsbottom.
- Offerton and Sale are **‘wholetime’** stations providing an immediate response 24/7.

PROPOSED

- **Two additional day-crewed stations** in Offerton (in the year 2023-24) and Sale (in the year 2024-25).
- Crews **on-call between 6pm and 8.30am** with up to a four-minute response from home.

BENEFITS

- Areas are those with some of the **lowest numbers** of ‘very high risk’ locations and lower levels of life-risk incidents at night.
- **No change** to emergency cover during the daytime.
- Releases **£1.134m** to be reinvested in other priority areas.
- **Increased flexibility** and greater work-life balance for crews.
- The day crewing model **better reflects the risk profile** of the areas.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Reduction in staff from 28 to 13 at each station.
- Increased average response times by:
  - Offerton: **1 minute 26 seconds**
  - Sale: **1 minute 10 seconds**

2.

A new operating model at our two Enhanced Rescue Stations

In our large and diverse city-region, our fire and rescue service responds to complex incidents far broader than fires. Our crews regularly rescue people trapped in road traffic collisions, collapsed buildings, waterways, high places and closed spaces.

We currently have two fire stations – Ashton in Tameside and Leigh in Wigan – with specially trained crew members and dedicated technical rescue equipment to provide an enhanced response to these complex situations – these are known as Technical Response Units (TRUs). Each of these stations also has a fire engine which is crewed separately to the TRU.

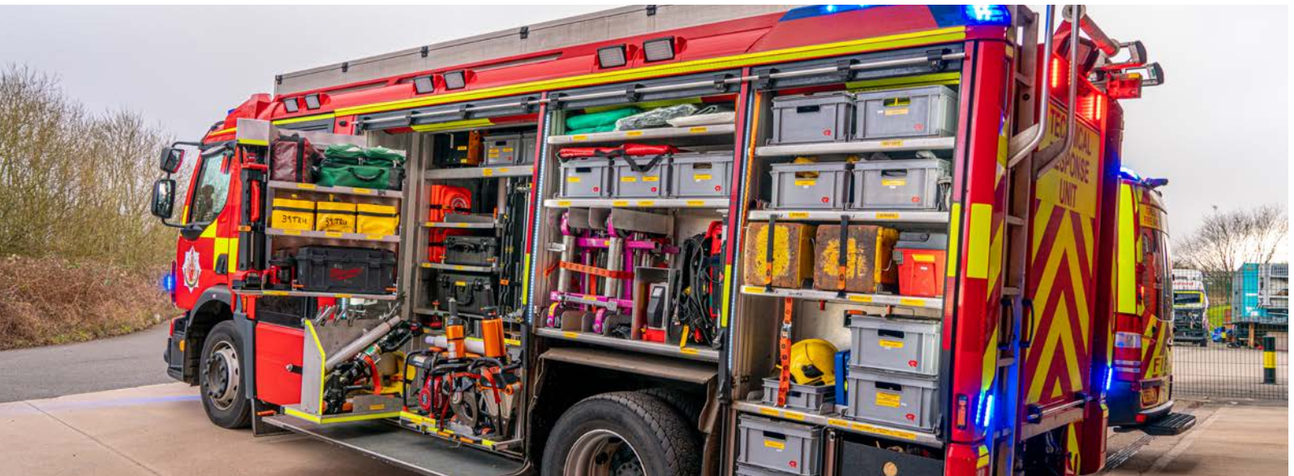
Our current staffing model has its limitations that can, at times, reduce the availability of staff members with the required skill sets to support an enhanced rescue response. We therefore propose to introduce a new operating model and staffing structure for this capability and create a **new era and new future for Enhanced Rescue Stations in Greater Manchester**.

Each Enhanced Rescue Station would have two fire engines and 44 firefighters in total (compared with the current 56 at each station) who are able to provide both a firefighting and enhanced rescue response at any time. While this is an overall reduction in staff from 112 to 88 across both stations, the new model means that more staff will be trained and equipped to deal with complex rescue incidents.

By having more firefighters who are trained for all types of response, their skills can be used more flexibly.

Crews at these stations would operate a self-sufficient crewing model, managing any crewing shortfalls locally – and for this they would receive a **3% uplift in pay.** This system provides greater resilience by guaranteeing the availability of an enhanced rescue capability at all times. It also creates development opportunities and more clearly defined leadership, with on duty crews having one Watch Manager covering the overall response, rather than separate managers covering the firefighting response and TRU as at present.

Overall, this would allow an increased enhanced response and greater resilience with a cost saving of around **£1.179 million**.



Summary

CURRENT

- **Technical Response Units** at Ashton and Leigh with between eight and 10 enhanced rescue technicians covering Greater Manchester per shift.
- Each of these stations also has a fire engine which is crewed separately.

PROPOSED

- A new **operating model** and **staffing structure** to create two Enhanced Rescue Stations (ERS) based in Ashton and Leigh.
- A single, combined enhanced rescue and frontline firefighting team per station.

BENEFITS

- **More staff trained** and equipped to deal with complex rescue incidents, with 16 enhanced rescue technicians across Greater Manchester per shift.
- **Greater resilience** and development opportunities.
- Releases **£1.179m** to be reinvested in other priority areas.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Overall reduction in staff from **112 to 88** across both stations.

3.

Introduce two additional fire engines for Manchester's areas of highest demand and greatest risk

We are proposing to increase our overall frontline fleet by introducing two additional fire engines, **taking our total from 50 to 52**. These fire engines would be placed in and around the city centre – at **Manchester Central Fire Station** in the heart of the city, and **Moss Side Fire Station** approximately two miles to the south. Currently, GMFRS believes it is the only fire and rescue service in the country proposing to expand its frontline fleet.

We are proposing this change in response to the ongoing transformation of our city-region, particularly in and around central Manchester, where increasing numbers of high-rise buildings are combining with a rapidly expanding transport and commercial infrastructure to create the most complex and challenging built environment outside of London. This means we will face increased demand to respond to a range of emergencies beyond fires.

While increasing our resilience where it is most needed, these measures will improve response times and performance. For Manchester Central, the response time will improve by **17 seconds**, from 6 minutes 16 seconds to 5 minutes 59 seconds. In Moss Side it will improve response times by **18 seconds**, from 6 minutes 18 seconds to 6 minutes.

The additional crew members in place alongside the new fire engines will also increase the capacity for prevention and protection focused outreach and engagement activities in some of our highest risk areas. For every building that poses a significant risk across Greater Manchester, we create and maintain Site Specific Risk Information records (SSRIs) that provide information on the buildings and help keep our firefighters and the public safe should an incident occur. By increasing the number of firefighters in an around the city centre where the overwhelming number of SSRIs exist, we are better resourced to meet this workload and ensure records remain current.

The cost of these two additional fire engines (**£1.974 million**) will be covered by savings generated through the implementation of day crewing arrangements and enhanced rescue stations.

Summary

CURRENT

- **50 frontline fire engines** across Greater Manchester.

PROPOSED

- **Two additional fire engines** in the Manchester area – one at Manchester Central and one in Moss Side – taking the total fleet across Greater Manchester to 52.

BENEFITS

- Improved response times and performance:
  - Manchester Central – response time improves by **17 seconds**.
  - Moss Side – response time improves by **18 seconds**.
- Increased capacity for prevention and protection activities in areas of highest risk and demand.
- Funded through savings achieved by proposals one and two.

ENHANCING OUR SPECIAL APPLIANCES

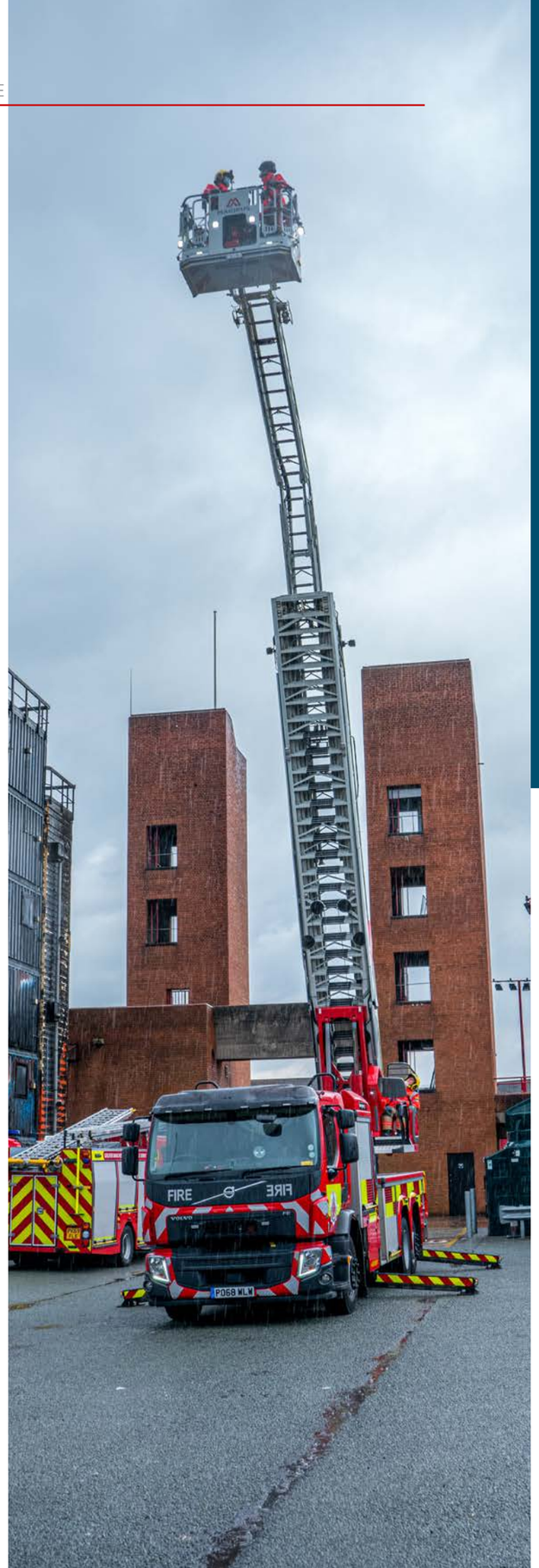
Alongside the three proposals set out above, we also intend to upgrade, replace and relocate some of our specialist fire and rescue equipment, to ensure our crews are best able to respond to the range of incidents they face.

We currently have 44 'special appliance' vehicles across our city-region, with dedicated equipment and technology for use in specific situations. We have evaluated each of these vehicles for their ability to meet our present and future challenges – and found that 13 of these vehicles require major enhancements and three will soon no longer be fit for purpose.

To address this, we are proposing to:

Move one of our four Turntable Ladders (TTL) from Stretford to Oldham Fire Station

These TTL vehicles have extendable, rotating ladders that allow access to high places such as roofs and upper floors of tall buildings and they are currently located at Manchester Central, Bolton Central, Whitehill and Stretford. Moving one TLL from Stretford to Oldham would improve our response times and ensure fires and rescues in all high-rise buildings across the city-region could be reached within our target of 20 minutes.



Replace three Hydraulic Platform Vehicles (HPV) with new High Reach Extendable Turrets (HRET)

Our Hydraulic Platform Vehicles currently located at Leigh and Oldham, with an additional vehicle in reserve, are reaching the end of their serviceable life. It is proposed that these be replaced with new alternatives called High Reach Extendable Turrets (HRETs) which are also classed as Aerial Appliances (AAs). Our current AA fleet contains seven vehicles and we propose to maintain this number but reconfigure their capabilities and locations.

The HRETs are equipped with a mechanical arm that can be extended to reach high places such as tall buildings, grounded aircraft, or ships. The HRET is also equipped with a turret nozzle that can pierce buildings and project water onto a fire from a safe distance, however, they do not provide a cage rescue capability. These would be based at Whitefield in Bury and Wigan fire stations, adding to our existing HRET based at Salford Fire Station – ensuring greater coverage across our city-region.

These vehicles will enhance our water firefighting capabilities and resources as they are also a fire appliance and they do not require a second support vehicle to attend an incident with them, freeing up capacity for use elsewhere and increasing the speed of the response.

These vehicles would be paid for from our existing fund for replacing major equipment (our 'Capital Replacement Programme') rather than through cost savings secured through the Fire Cover Review. It is anticipated that it could take around three years for the new vehicles to be ready for service.

Enhance our water search and rescue capability

Greater Manchester currently has two Water Incident Units, based in Heywood in Rochdale and Eccles in Salford. These have a range of specialist equipment and trained and skilled crew members for searching for and rescuing people from water, ice, mud and unstable ground. To address the growing risk of climate emergencies such as flooding and other water-related incidents, we are proposing to enhance our water response capabilities through enhanced training, increasing the number of current water rescue resources, and replacing three vehicles with new ones. We will do this by introducing a three-tier approach covering each of our 41 fire stations.

Tier 1 — **Floods and incidents** in lakes, canals, docks and other still, open water will continue to be responded to by all fire stations

Tier 2 — **Enhanced Rescue Stations** (see section above) at Leigh in Wigan and Ashton in Tameside will receive additional equipment and enhanced training for rescues from 'swift' or 'white' water conditions.

Tier 3 — Ashton will join Heywood and Eccles in hosting a dedicated **Water Incident Unit,** including new / replacement rescue vehicles for each and a powered boat.

These proposals will increase our water search and rescue capability from four units to six and include increasing the number of powered rescue boats from two to three.

HAVE YOUR SAY

We are inviting residents, partners and people within our service to give their views on these proposals. We want to know whether you understand and agree with the changes we have set out for how we can best use our available funding to provide a modern, flexible, resilient fire and rescue service for Greater Manchester.

If you would like further information about our proposals, please visit **manchesterfire.gov.uk**

While everyone's views are important, we particularly want to hear from residents and communities in the areas most directly affected by the proposals.

Our consultation is open for six weeks, from Monday 5 June to Monday 10 July, 2023.

There are a number of ways you can take part:

- Online, via **gmconsult.org**
- Attending our community events – details are available via **manchesterfire.gov.uk**

All contributions will be reviewed as we firm up our plans and make final decisions on our ways of working.

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FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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