



# **Proposed changes at Bracknell Fire Station Consultation Document Please tell us what you think**

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is considering the removal of one of the fire engines at Bracknell fire station.

This consultation document sets out the background to the proposals and invites you to comment.

***PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING***

## Introduction

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) reviews its fire and rescue arrangements in Berkshire regularly, in order to respond to changing needs and plan future requirements. As part of this process, we believe it is necessary to make some changes in the Bracknell area.

Before we make any decisions, we would like to hear your opinion. Whether you are an individual resident, a business owner or work for one of our partner organisations, please read this consultation document and let us know what you think.

- You can **either** complete the questionnaire that accompanies this document and return it in the FREEPOST envelope
- **or** complete it online using the hyperlink on page 6 of this document

## Background

Berkshire has 18 fire stations that provide cover 24-hours a day, 365 days a year. RBFRS has both Wholetime and On Cal (otherwise known as retained duty system) fire stations.

Wholetime stations are crewed 24/7 by firefighters working in four shifts, known as Watches. On Call stations are crewed by On Call firefighters, who are on-call from their nearby homes or jobs. On Call firefighters commit to a set number of weekly hours when they are available to crew a fire engine. When insufficient members of an On Call crew are available, then the station's fire engine cannot be used, so incidents are covered by adjacent stations.

Our standard response to dwelling fires is 10 minutes for the first fire engine and 12 minutes for the second, whilst the attendance standard for Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) is 11 minutes.

Nationally, there has been a steady decline in the number of fire and rescue service incidents. The following graph shows this national trend reflected by falling incident numbers in Berkshire.



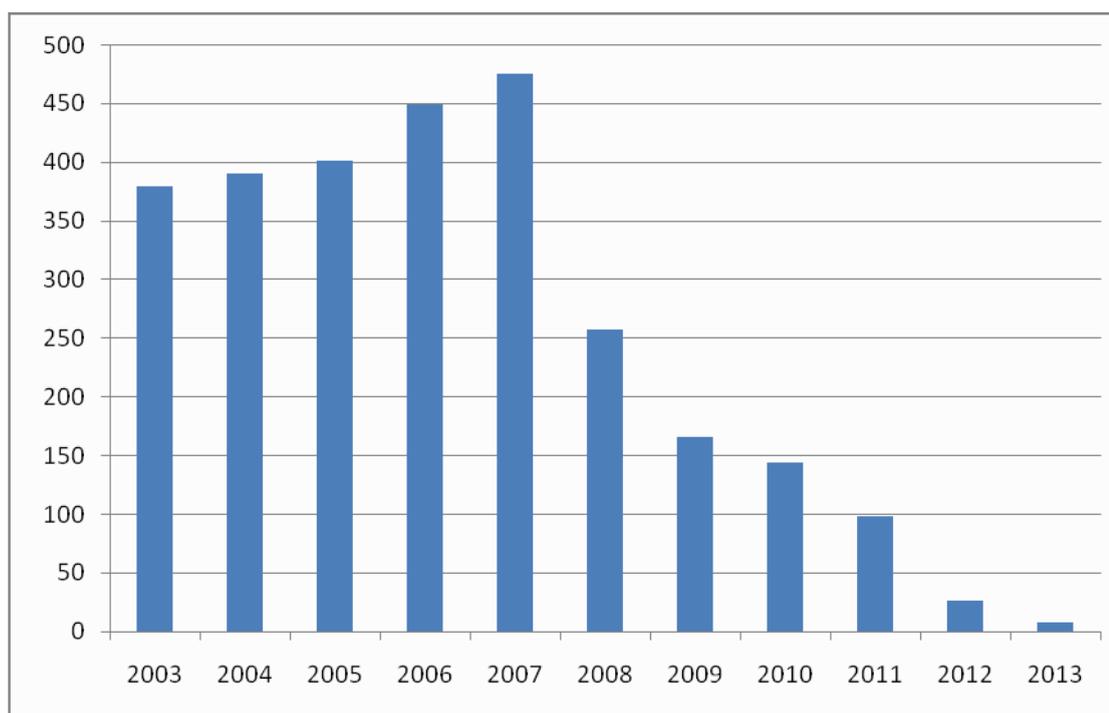
Over the last ten years, the number of fire and rescue incidents in Berkshire has reduced by over 50%.

Financial constraints - RBFRS is faced with annual reductions in central government grant funding of around 10% - and the reduction in incident numbers, mean that RBFRS must use its resources even more effectively, in terms of protecting the public and managing costs.

## Bracknell

This review is about Bracknell fire station. Currently, Bracknell has both Wholetime and On Call firefighters and two fire engines (one Wholetime and one On Call). The Wholetime fire engine attended 691 incidents last year and the On Call fire engine attended five incidents.

## Bracknell On Call Fire Engine – Attendance at Incidents



In 2011 we upgraded Wokingham’s fire engine to Wholetime status. As a result, Wokingham’s fire engine can get to most incidents in the Bracknell area more quickly than Bracknell’s On Call fire engine. This means that Bracknell’s On Call fire engine is required less often.

We have also struggled to recruit enough On Call firefighters in Bracknell. The number of On Call firefighters there has declined to the point where we now have significantly less than the full complement of 13. This situation is unsustainable because it means we cannot rely on the On Call fire engine being available (last year, it was unavailable for about 87% of the time). This means that we have been using fire engines from other fire stations, particularly the new Wholetime station in Wokingham but this has not adversely affected our incident response.

### **What have we done to recruit On Call firefighters?**

Firefighters work with our recruitment team on recruitment campaigns for On Call firefighters. In addition to advertising on our website and in the local press, targeted leaflet drops and community posters, we run popular ‘Have A Go’ events, where people can try out firefighter-related activities and learn more about the role.

However, the campaigns have resulted in just two On Call firefighters joining Bracknell fire station in the last two years.

## **What do we propose?**

Based on this situation, we are proposing that the On Call section at Bracknell ceases to operate. The Wholetime (24-hour) fire engine would remain at Bracknell.

## **Evidence and effects**

We have calculated the potential effects of this proposal, using specialist mapping and our own operational data.

If agreed, the removal of the On Call fire engine from Bracknell would have a small effect on attendance times, although these would continue to meet the standard response times set by RBFRS:

- Our calculations show that the average response time for Bracknell's first fire engine would increase from six minutes and six seconds to six minutes 11 seconds (an increase of five seconds)
- The average response time for a second fire engine would increase from nine minutes 38 seconds to 10 minutes 24 seconds (an increase of 46 seconds).

## **Effect on other fire stations**

Removal of the On Call fire engine would mean that incidents that they would have attended would be dealt with by other fire engines on a permanent basis, rather than the current temporary arrangement. Most of these would be dealt with by Wokingham fire station.

## **Effect on staff**

There are currently six On Call firefighters employed at Bracknell. Two already work for RBFRS as Wholetime firefighters (on a dual contract basis). If the On Call unit at Bracknell were to be disbanded, then we would seek to offer the four remaining staff alternative employment within the service, as their posts would become redundant.

Where alternative employment in RBFRS is not wanted, or not available, then these four staff would face redundancy.

## **Financial Savings**

Every year, RBFRS allocates £120,000 to run the On Call fire engine and crew at Bracknell. We believe that this money could be used more effectively elsewhere within the service. There would not be any savings associated with the cost of Bracknell fire station itself because the Wholetime fire engine would continue to be based there.

## Proposed Timeline

<b>June – Sept</b>	<b>Public and staff consultation</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>Public forums in Bracknell</b>
<b>October</b>	<b>Collation of feedback</b>
<b>November</b>	<b>Report to Fire Authority</b>

You are invited to comment on our plans using any of the following methods:

Online to: [www.opinionresearch.co.uk/rbfrs](http://www.opinionresearch.co.uk/rbfrs)

In writing to:  
Opinion Research Services  
FREEPOST (SS1018)  
PO Box 530  
Swansea  
SA1 1ZL  
(Remember no stamp is required)

Email to: [irmp@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:irmp@rbfrs.co.uk)

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