Justice Committee

Post-legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012

Written submission from the Fire Brigades Union

Introduction

This is the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) submission to the Scottish Parliament’s Justice Committee inquiry, Post-legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, launched on 1 April 2018. The FBU is the democratic, professional voice of firefighters and other workers within fire and rescue services across the UK. We represent the vast majority of wholetime (full-time) and retained (part-time, on-call) operational firefighters and operational fire control staff across the UK. In Scotland we represent 90% of full time firefighters and more than two-thirds of all frontline staff.

The FBU welcomes the Justice Committee’s inquiry into the policy objectives of the 2012 Act. Our submission will address the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) performance, which our members work for and therefore have a direct interest in. The union is immensely proud of the work firefighters do in Scotland. However our members have told the union about a range of concerns they have with their working conditions and how the service is delivered. The recent satisfactory settlement of the harmonisation of terms and conditions should impact positively on these views. However the dissatisfaction has been deepened as a result of the transformation proposals and the method of communicating those proposals via the media. The FBU’s criticisms are reflected in this submission – as concerns about the management of the service, not criticism of the workforce.

This FBU submission addresses the questions 3, 4 and 5 set out by the Justice Committee’s inquiry. The union notes the overlap with the SFRS’s “Your Service Your Voice” (YSYV) consultation. The FBU believes the Justice Committee inquiry should take a holistic view of the performance of the SFRS and accordingly that the proposals in YSYV need to be considered as part of the Justice Committee overview.

The FBU supported the creation of the single service, but subject to it being to implement an improvement agenda in the fields of response, training, prevention, equipment and the creation of national standards. We did so on the basis of the assurances given by the Scottish government and the Scottish Parliament that it offered the opportunity for protecting and increasing frontline firefighter jobs and capability:

“Single services for Scotland are the best way to protect communities from cuts by freeing up resources for frontline policing and fire and rescue services.”

We feel that firefighters and the people of Scotland have been let down.

However the union also wants to raise concerns about the governance arrangements, particularly concerns about the over-reliance on chief officers and the
need for expertise input from lead stakeholders such as the FBU. Our assessment is that the actual achievements for the public and for firefighters have been limited, and there is room for improvement. Those matters need to be urgently rectified if the service is to be successful in the future.

3. In your view, what have been the consequences of the 2012 Act for the fire and rescue service?

(a) Benefits

There is much to be proud of. Firefighters in Scotland rescue substantial numbers of people every year. FBU research has found that firefighters carry out almost 3,600 rescues during a year or around 10 a day in Scotland. Annually, this includes over 500 people in Scotland rescued from fires, and a host of other rescues on the roads, in homes and in workplaces. The tremendous contribution firefighters make is widely recognised by the Scottish public.

The last five years there have been a number of memorable incidents where firefighters’ intervention has made a critical difference to lives, property and critical national infrastructure. For example this year the importance of 24/7 fire cover in Scotland was reinforced by the blaze at Victoria’s nightclub in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, when firefighters averted fire spread to the historic Pavilion Theatre.

Similarly, firefighters’ flood response under the statutory duty (established in 2005) has been widely praised. During the 2013-14 storm surge, Christmas Eve and New Year floods, the SFRS dealt with 356 incidents during the three months. This included 140 flooding and water rescue incidents in the Strathclyde and Dumfries and Galloway areas. Before Christmas firefighters also dealt with flooding in the Scottish borders after a river burst its banks. In November 2014, heavy overnight rain caused some of the worst flooding seen in 30 years in Campbeltown, Argyll and Bute, which again saw significant intervention by firefighters.

The FBU would also point to some improvements in industrial relations in Scotland. This has led to some important agreements, such as the transfer of many volunteer firefighters to the retained, acknowledged as a success by HMI inspectors. This was a significant and welcome commitment to local services, but it has not been without its challenges and it is now clear that a long overdue review of the RDS service delivery model must be completed and reported on as a matter of urgency.

The FBU submission to the Justice Committee in December 2015 stated our view with respect of the need to review the RDS arrangements:

“Due to concerns over the availability of Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters and volunteer firefighters to attend incidents, particularly during working hours, the SFRS has embarked on two projects to consider how this can be improved in the short term and further enhanced in the medium to long term.

These projects are considering any barriers to recruitment and retention, sustainable crewing arrangements and the costs of any proposed changes. Many of the almost 3,000 RDS firefighters no longer work in the communities they provide protection for
and this results in an unacceptable number of RDS Stations being unavailable during working hours. Options to address this safety critical concern are being developed and shall almost certainly require further funding. It is now difficult to envisage how any additional funding shall be available in future budget allocations to implement the options recommended by these projects. The aim to provide enhanced and essential resilience to smaller towns, rural and remote communities and the benefits of equitable access to specialist services as well as the further community benefits of an evolving SFRS may be at risk.”

It is disappointing to say the least that little of any substance has altered in the intervening period.

Moreover, we have serious concerns with the early direction of travel with the current RDS review. To give a prime example: Firstly, the current proposals diminish the quality and effectiveness of the service provision in the areas where fire and rescue service cover is provided by those working the RDS. This will impact on safety. Specifically, in order to provide a cosmetic level of service provision, particularly in remote rural areas, the proposals include the introduction of over 30 Rapid Response Units (RRU), which will replace fully-equipped pumping appliances and will be crewed by an insufficient number of firefighters to ensure an early safe and effective response including rescue.

The FBU is determined to ensure that communities in rural areas do not receive a worse level of fire cover.

(b) Negative consequences

The FBU challenges the assertion that the creation of a single Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has been an unambiguous “good” for Scotland. There is much evidence that simply does not support this. An honest professional balance sheet on the first five years of the single service shows that there is still much to do. The SFRS’s own figures show that after years of fewer fires and fire deaths, the last five years have seen a real plateau. The total incidents and fires attended have remained largely static. Firefighters now attend similar levels of false alarms and more non-fire incidents. The following tables and figures illustrate these key indicators.

**Table 1: Scotland’s long-term trend data for fires, casualties, non-fire incidents and false alarms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fires</th>
<th>False alarms</th>
<th>Non-fire</th>
<th>Total incidents</th>
<th>Fatalities</th>
<th>Non-Fatal casualties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>38,737</td>
<td>53,549</td>
<td>11,495</td>
<td>103,781</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>38,970</td>
<td>51,125</td>
<td>11,319</td>
<td>101,414</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>32,338</td>
<td>49,103</td>
<td>10,117</td>
<td>91,558</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>26,746</td>
<td>47,926</td>
<td>9,158</td>
<td>83,830</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>27,992</td>
<td>47,753</td>
<td>9,162</td>
<td>84,907</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>25,026</td>
<td>49,303</td>
<td>10,743</td>
<td>85,072</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>26,628</td>
<td>49,421</td>
<td>12,836</td>
<td>88,885</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>27,240</td>
<td>51,555</td>
<td>12,344</td>
<td>91,139</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1,189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SFRS data also shows that performance in some areas in Scotland compares unfavourably with other parts of the UK. For example the comparison of primary fires per million of population is substantially higher in Scotland compared to Wales and England (see Figure 2).

Similarly, home fire safety visits have not risen dramatically, while there are more fire safety audits the time spent on these has reduced, which presumably is due to the reduction in fire safety enforcement officers. We are concerned that this reduction in total hours spent on each visit – down from an average of more than five hours to less than four hours reflects a reduction in the quality of the audits being carried out.
Table 2: Number of Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) and Fire Safety Audits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>HFSV</th>
<th>Audits</th>
<th>Hours auditing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>52,730</td>
<td>6,744</td>
<td>40,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>56,545</td>
<td>7,555</td>
<td>49,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>56,251</td>
<td>7,994</td>
<td>40,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>70,686</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>65,343</td>
<td>8,209</td>
<td>33,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>71,743</td>
<td>9,829</td>
<td>36,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>70,744</td>
<td>8,939</td>
<td>33,054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: SFRS, Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics, 2016-17: Tables 18, 21

The FBU’s concerns have also been reflected in the key performance indicators published by the SFRS in its Annual Performance Review 2016-2017. While performance varies year on year, the trend for deliberate and accidental fires of various kinds, as well as special service (non-fire) incidents and other more fine grain measures show little or no improvement over the five year period.

The FBU therefore cannot countenance what appears to be a “mantra” from senior managers that the SFRS always has “the right resources in the right place at the right time”. The FBU believes that this language (spin) is both unhelpful and is misleading to the public and political overseers alike.

It is also unsubstantiated. Such a claim cannot even be measured given the current set of statistics published by the SFRS. For example the service does not publish response or attendance times for any appliances. Even the Westminster government manages to produce figures for the arrival of the first appliances, despite the larger geographical area in England and a similar pattern of large inner cities as well as diverse, rural and remote communities. All governments in the UK fail to produce satisfactory data. For example, no government produces the statistics for the time of arrival of the second or subsequent appliances; the number of crew members on the appliance and/or whether the appliance/vehicle is a pumping appliance. Without such data no government – or fire authority/board can make any assessment of performance.

4. Have the policy intentions of the 2012 Act in relation to the fire and rescue service been met?

The Scottish Government's three main policy intentions in promoting the 2012 Act were:
(1) To protect and improve local services despite financial cuts, by stopping duplication of support services eight times over and not cutting front line services;
(2) To create more equal access to specialist support and national capacity - like murder investigation teams, firearms teams or flood rescue - where and when they are needed; and
(3) To strengthen the connection between services and communities, involving many more local councillors and better integrating with community planning partnerships.

The FBU does not believe that the SFRS has succeeded in preventing cuts to frontline services in its first five years, an original policy objective of the Act. Since the formation of the single service in Scotland, the SFRS has cut more than one thousand jobs, including more than 500 frontline wholetime firefighters and 200 frontline retained firefighters. Emergency fire control room staffing has been reduced by nearly a third. In summary, the frontline has been cut by 10.5% - 781 posts. That, in itself is an indictment of the single service. The recent “Your Service Your Voice” proposals will, if implemented slash further posts with the resultant deterioration in services supplied to the public. The following table indicates some of the key trends.

**Table 3: Headcount of SFRS Workforce by type of staffing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Frontline personnel Wholetime</th>
<th>Frontline personnel Retained</th>
<th>Frontline personnel Control</th>
<th>Total Frontline</th>
<th>Frontline personnel year on year</th>
<th>Frontline Chang e since 2013</th>
<th>% Since 2013</th>
<th>All staff incl Support staff</th>
<th>All staff Chang e since 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4,151</td>
<td>3,076</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>7461</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,547</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4,001</td>
<td>2,940</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>7164</td>
<td>-297</td>
<td>-297</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
<td>8,125</td>
<td>-422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>3,856</td>
<td>2,950</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>7036</td>
<td>-128</td>
<td>-425</td>
<td>-5.7%</td>
<td>7,903</td>
<td>-644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3,690</td>
<td>2,870</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>-243</td>
<td>-668</td>
<td>-9.0%</td>
<td>7,591</td>
<td>-956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>3,645</td>
<td>2,870</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>6680</td>
<td>-113</td>
<td>-781</td>
<td>-10.5%</td>
<td>7,518</td>
<td>-1029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change 2013-17</td>
<td>-506 (-12.2%)</td>
<td>-206 (-6.7%)</td>
<td>-69 (-29.5%)</td>
<td>-781</td>
<td>-781</td>
<td>-781</td>
<td>-10.5%</td>
<td>-1029 (-12%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SFRS, Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics, 2016-17: Table 1a (excluding volunteers)

Job cuts, limited recruitment and a lack of forward planning (which has continued since the beginning the early years of the single service) has also impacted on efforts to improve the diversity of the workforce. Although there has been a small increase in the proportion of women wholetime firefighters over the last five years, the situation for women who work on the RDS has not improved and many of the job losses in control and support services have been women. The proportion of women
in operational roles does not compare favourably with other countries and brigades across the UK. Similarly, ethnic minority representation among those employed by the SFRS remains very low (less than 1%), but the statistics are difficult to interpret because almost half of staff are “not stated”.

While the FBU welcomes the recent commitment to recruitment, unfortunately it is too little, too late to address some of the consequences of failing to heed our repeated warnings in the first few years of the creation of SFRS. (Recent events across some of the country’s largest cities are a direct result of a failure to properly plan for large scale workforce retirements).

The FBU is not alone in raising concerns with single service resourcing. The Scottish government’s *Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 2 Report* found plausible evidence of progress being made, but highlighted that firefighters feel stretched with falling numbers of staff. The report also recognised firefighters’ concerns with career progression within the single service, as well as with some training. In particular, low morale was identified, with senior managers failing to respond adequately, leading to stress, higher sickness absence and the beginning of what may be a worrying trend of firefighters’ leaving the job after only a few years in the service. Similarly, the recent HM Fire Service Inspectorate report, *Local Area Inspection: Glasgow* found “challenges with staffing levels”, appliances off the run and old personal protective equipment still in use.

(2) To create more equal access to specialist support and national capacity - like murder investigation teams, firearms teams or flood rescue - where and when they are needed; and

The FBU believes the SFRS has not yet achieved the right balance between national capacity and specialist support provided by firefighters in Scotland. The union is saddened and no less frustrated to report that it has taken the SFRS five years to finally provide an acceptable solution to the standardisation of firefighters’ terms and conditions – including for flood work. The FBU has negotiated in good faith to ensure our members get the benefits from long established conditions and do not lose out from efforts to bring the previous arrangements into harmony. Our members recently voted to accept revised proposals, which were affected by the involvement of lead officials from the FBU and employers' side of the NJC. However members are understandably sceptical about new proposals from SFRS management in light of this experience.

The FBU also rejects the claim that the SFRS has huge spare capacity to take on any number of new activities. This is repeatedly stated by both chair and chief officer, yet the only factual evidence presented thus far, is the reduced numbers of fires we now attend. The FBU does not dispute the reduction in the number of fires. Indeed, it is the hard work of firefighters in education and support to communities which has largely contributed to this downward trend. However, actual attendance at fires only ever constituted a small percentage of a firefighters overall working day – firefighters carry out a range of duties and activities as part of prevention and preparation of fires and other incidents. This has been explained by the FBU in previous submissions to government.
Firefighters in Scotland are busy tackling a wide range of hazards, rescuing scores of people, protecting critical national infrastructure and saving business assets. Newer responsibilities such as flooding and prevention work all take time and resources. All require training. The SFRS’s own *Response & Resilience, Review of Specialist Equipment* report rightly highlighted the 300 dedicated training hours available per year to a wholetime firefighter. Given the 222 hours of training to maintain basic competency in the role of a firefighter and a further 80 hours just to maintain competency in water rescue, our members have huge responsibilities to prepare for. To reach these goals of national capacity and specialist support, the FBU wants investment in the fire and rescue service, to recruit a new generation of firefighters to add to our existing workforce.

(3) To strengthen the connection between services and communities, involving many more local councillors and better integrating with community planning partnerships.

Responses on whether there have been better connections between SFRS and local authorities, local councillors and community planning partnerships is perhaps best made by those organisations/ people. With respect to the connection between services, in line with the Christie commission we believe that there is close working between SFRS and all other services. A key focus will be on extended SFRS response/activity at terrorist events and emergency medical response.

The FBU along with the SFRS has been engaged for several years in an important project to develop the role of firefighters, to better connect our service with the communities we serve. The NJC, which includes representatives from the SFRS as a lead member, has five workstreams to develop potential areas of work:

- Environmental challenges
- Emergency medical response
- Multi agency emergency response
- Youth and other social engagement work (since renamed “Health and community”)
- Inspections and enforcement

In 2015 NJC members agreed that fire and rescue authorities could carry out approved emergency medical response trials. By the end of 2016 there were 38 different NJC-approved trials across the UK. In Scotland, the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA) trial involved firefighters stationed at Bathgate, Livingston and Linlithgow, Musselburgh, Turriff and Maud, Hawick, Lauder and Coldstream, and Falkirk.

In 2016 the NJC commissioned researchers from the University of Hertfordshire and the College of Paramedics to evaluate the work done in the trials. Their report, *Broadening Responsibilities* was published in early 2017. It highlighted substantial benefits for the public, particularly from cardiac arrest work, but also indicated ongoing difficulties with funding, call mobilisation, training, equipment, inoculation, mental health, pay and other issues for firefighters. Following broad consultation with our members, the FBU decided in September 2017 that the trials had reached a natural conclusion, sufficient evidence had been gathered and should therefore cease.
The NJC continues to work on this agenda, for example publishing the New Economy report on costs and benefits and by establishing a working group to find practical solutions to the very real issues encountered in the trials. The FBU and the employers remain committed to this work. We believe this is the best way to introduce sustainable change, benefiting not only other public services but also the fire and rescue service itself – and those who work for it.

5. Are there any other issues you would like to raise in connection with the operation of the 2012 Act?

We feel it prudent to focus on four issues:

   a) The current consultation on changes proposed by SFRS in its Your Service, Your Voice consultation
   b) Matters concerning governance and scrutiny
   c) Matters concerning the workforce’s terms and conditions including and broadening the role of firefighters
   d) Funding.

(a) SFRS Your Service, Your Voice consultation

As stated earlier in this submission, the FBU believes that consideration of the performance of the SFRS must be taken in conjunction with the SFRS’s current proposals for “transformation” as contained in its Your Service Your Voice consultation (YSYV). The Justice Committee has a key role in the scrutiny of the SFRS. The proposals outlined in the SFRS’s YSYV document indicate an intended direction of travel which poses significant risks for firefighters and public alike. For the avoidance of doubt, the FBU opposes:

   ● The introduction of any shift systems that diminish the level of fire cover at night or which extend firefighters’ working hours from the current dayshift of 08.00hrs to 18.00hrs and the current nightshift of 18.00hrs to 08.00hrs (such as close proximity crewing, low level of activity and risk, and other schemes)
   ● The introduction of reduced crewing on fire appliances, which puts public and firefighter safety at risk and breaches agreements just recently reached with the FBU on what constitutes a safe crewing model. The FBU had reservations about the agreement as it moved away from the safest assumption of 5-5-3 riders, but the current package of proposals is a worsened option as it will bring into a being, if implemented, an unacceptable crewing model.
   ● The introduction of so-called rapid response units (RRUs) or other small vans as substitutes for fully equipped and staffed fire appliances
   ● Any cuts or staffing reductions. Instead there should be investment in a new generation of firefighters to meet the new and emerging risks
   ● Any further reductions of operational fire control rooms that have previously seen a reduction from eight to three and compromised local knowledge.

Our full submission to the YSYV consultation is attached as an appendix.
(b) Governance and scrutiny

A principal concern that we have is with the arrangements for governance and scrutiny of the SFRS. Essentially they are many layers of scrutiny: the Board, the minister, the independent Inspectors of SFRS, the Scottish Parliament and Audit Scotland. We have noted that whilst the two principal Acts for the fire and rescue service and the Framework make reporting and planning requirements of the Board and SFRS, it took the Audit Scotland 2015 report into the SFRS to start the process of proper reporting. The FBU is not convinced that this has been completed. For example the YSYV consultation contains no information of projected staff degradation through retirement or projected future numbers of staff based upon current workload or desired future workload based upon broadened activity.

The FBU believes there is insufficient knowledge or experience of operational matters by members of the Board. As a consequence the Board is wholly reliant upon the advice and guidance provided by the officers of the SFRS whose plans the Board scrutinises. This is unsatisfactory.

The union suggests that a mechanism be identified so that the Board has ready access to independent objective advice and information in respect of operational matters, including the known or potential/projected impact of proposals on operational matters. We propose that the optimum method for providing such information should be undertaken by a forum of lead stakeholders.

From our experience, supplemented and confirmed by a review of the minutes of the Board, there is little evidence of close scrutiny of papers and proposals presented to the Board by the SFRS. The Framework states that the Board needs to identify how to improve its scrutiny.

It is not possible to assess the performance of the SFRS without adequate data. The data sets are insufficient and we note that different data sets are acquired, reported and made subject of comment by the different scrutiny organisations. Yet the 2016 Framework requires “appropriate performance measures to support its strategic plan”.

Those performance measures are vital not just for the SFRS Board, but for all stakeholders and scrutiny bodies including the Scottish Parliament. They must be meaningful and must drill down into the performance of the service.

We note the current performance indicators in use. However we feel there should be a suite of indicators for each of the main centres of performance: e.g. operational service delivery, workforce, finance and so on. The FBU wants a commitment to a continuing programme of year on year improvement based on outcomes that will be released publicly every year, which would include:

- Fewer fires
- Less aggregate damage to buildings where fires do occur (aggregated)
- Fewer fire deaths
- Fewer fire injuries
- Fewer firefighter deaths
- Fewer firefighter injuries
• Faster attendance times in all deciles or quartiles of attendance times (i.e. of not just averages) for first and second appliances
• Faster average response times by the first engine
• Faster average response times by the second engine
• No incident left unattended by a full PDA for more than an agreed number of minutes.
• The number of appliances on PDAs will be maintained or increased but not lowered.

We propose that the development of the suite of performance indicators should be undertaken by a forum of lead stakeholders including the FBU and representatives of the Scottish Parliament.

(c) Workforce terms and conditions including pay and broadening the role

Our submission to the YSYV consultation had workforce matters as one of the cores centres of focus. We do not intend to replicate that response within this submission to the Justice Committee. We have appended our consultation response.

However for the avoidance of doubt, the FBU opposes any to efforts intended to circumvent or replace the existing negotiating system for collective bargaining, which is the National Joint Council. The National Joint Council’s joint secretaries were instrumental in finding a resolution to the long-running terms and conditions harmonisation process.

The union rejects any imposed changes against the wishes of the workforce and against the advice of its representative body, the FBU. We are willing to negotiate on expanding the role of firefighters, as long as this is negotiated in good faith.

The FBU notes that the SFRS wishes to expand the role of the service into care services for aged, emergency medical response and responses to terrorist incidents. We have expressed our concerns regarding the manner in which it might be introduced. It is imperative to recognise that firefighters must have the capacity to train and maintain their current core competencies before progressing any expansion into other roles. However the current YSYV proposals contain no evaluation of the increased call volume, time spent at such incidents, training needs analysis or the time to learn and maintain and update the skills and knowledge required.

(d) Funding

Funding is clearly a key factor. With the resolution of the battle over the SFRS (and Police Scotland) VAT payments problem, the FBU:
• welcomes the Scottish government assurance that the VAT money will be given to the SFRS as additional fire and rescue service expenditure
• looks forward to that money being invested year on year in the service and not mis-used on not elements of transformation which are inappropriate, increase the risks to firefighters and public safety and/or are unsustainable
• looks forward to those assurances being given unconditionally by the Justice Department to the Justice Committee.

May 2018
This is the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) submission to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) consultation, The SFRS Strategy for safe and planned transformation, launched on 1 February 2018. The FBU is the democratic, professional voice of firefighters and other workers within fire and rescue services across the UK. We represent the vast majority of wholetime (full-time) and retained (part-time, on-call) operational firefighters and operational fire control staff across the UK. In Scotland we represent 90% of full time firefighters and more than two-thirds of all frontline staff.

The FBU submission focuses on the “Your Service Your Voice” (YSYV) document, published for this consultation. The FBU is immensely proud of the work firefighters do in Scotland. But we have professional concerns with the YSYV proposals and these are shared by our members. These are concerns about the management and funding of the service, not criticism of the workforce.

The FBU notes that this consultation overlaps with Scottish Parliament’s Justice Committee inquiry in the SFRS. The Justice Committee inquiry appears to be taking a holistic view of the performance of the SFRS. The FBU believes that the proposals in YSYV need to be considered as part of the Justice Committee overview.

Whilst there are specific aspects of the YSYV proposals that may be worthy of consideration, in the main the ‘transformation’ plans laid down in the document will not benefit the people of Scotland nor the firefighters who serve them. Whilst we
understand that the SFRS would always present its proposals with a positive spin, the FBU has concerns that the proposals have not been formulated following a rigorous process and the outcomes of the proposals have not been considered.

We believe that the proposals, if adopted, would worsen service delivery, resulting in worse outcomes for the public in a number of ways including fire damage before extinguishment, injuries and deaths at incidents, business continuity and societal resilience.

The proposals represent a collection of ideas rather than a set of coherent, integrated measures targeted at identified operational and service delivery factors. A robust process would involve:

- assessing service delivery problems, primarily risk
- consideration of available or identifiable options
- analysis of comparable advantages and disadvantages of those options using the criteria of projected or potential impact.

These proposals should be considered at an objective main stakeholder evaluation forum, which we suggest would consist of the SFRS, the HMI (Scotland), Scottish Government and the FBU as the principal trade union representative body. The effectiveness of the proposals would then be measurable against a set of comprehensive performance indicators based upon risk removal, reduction or mitigation, which would be constructed in parallel via the same process.

The FBU is sounding the alarm. There is no evidence of any risk assessment of the proposals or, in respect of new work, assessment of the risk to be covered including reasonable worst case planning scenarios. They represent a significant worsening of firefighters’ working conditions. The proposals should be withdrawn rather than patched and tweaked. Service delivery models must be integrated and holistic with the objective of continued improvement for both the public and the workforce.

In particular the FBU challenges:

- The assertion that the creation of a single Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has been an unambiguous “good” for Scotland (YSYV p1)
- The view that the service is mired in the 1940s—a complete caricature of legislative and other changes enacted in recent years, including the range of hazards firefighters now tackle such as vehicle fires, floods and rescues from height (YSYV p2, p11)
- The contention that these proposals will improve firefighter safety – e.g. reducing the standard number of crew members on a pumping appliance from 5 to 4, and replacing fire engines with vans (YSYV p3)
- The belief that senior managers have a “mandate to transform” because they have held some superficial public ‘consultations’ and paid for some loaded surveys (YSYV p5-6)
- The notion that the current “operating model” and crewing arrangements limit the time firefighters can spend on worthwhile activities (YSYV p9, p11)
- The assertion that 80% of calls are during the day time and therefore night cover can be cut – on the contrary two thirds of fire deaths and fire casualties are at night (YSYV p11)
• The unsubstantiated claim that the SFRS always has “the right resources in the right place at the right time” – when it does not even publish annual response time data and plans to cut the number of firefighters, fire station and appliances with these proposals (YSYV p12)

• The slippery formula of “no compulsory redundancies” after control rooms have been reduced from eight to three and more than one thousand jobs (including nearly 800 frontline firefighters) have been cut since 2013 (YSYV p12)

• The suggestion that new technologies can somehow substitute for firefighters – ultra high pressure lances and small vans can’t rescue people from burning buildings, floods or other hazards our communities face (YSYV p14).

The FBU welcomes the recognition that firefighters’ pay must be substantially increased to account for the current commitment and activity, and should be further improved for new skills, activity and responsibility. However, the “enhanced recognition package” (YSYV p18) offered to firefighters asks our members to trade in jobs, plus hard-won, UK-wide conditions and, as currently contained in the proposals, collective bargaining arrangements in order to fund the extra pay and to implement a plan we know will damage the service to the public and worsen their working lives. The additional pay should be provided without this “trade”.

The SFRS claim (YSYV p1) that it has laid the foundations for future transformation. FBU members tell us that this is not the case, giving examples of the problems with the new duty system and fire appliances regularly being unavailable due to shortages of crews. These problems arise from the current staffing levels in SFRS and the self-rostering clauses within the policy. These problems will be exacerbated by the staffing reductions in the SFRS proposals.

In short, the benefits of these proposals are unsubstantiated, the risks unquantified and the likely consequences highly detrimental.

Please provide your response to the following statements by ticking the relevant box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I trust the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to change its operating model – including station footprint - in ways that are safe for Scotland</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighters should be trained and equipped to meet the new and emerging risks Scotland faces</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighters should be rewarded for taking on an expanded role, and in accordance with the risks they take</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latest technology should be used where possible to improve firefighter and public safety</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighters could be trained to take on roles that would reduce the burden on other public services</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A more flexible approach to crewing during the late evening and early morning hours would allow firefighters to do more during the day when</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I trust the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to change its operating model – including station footprint in ways that are safe for Scotland – **DISAGREE**

The FBU cannot endorse SFRS management being given a blank cheque to fundamentally alter the fire and rescue service based upon hope, promise and reassuring words when they have failed to objectively evaluate the impact of the proposals and demonstrate that they bring any improvement to public safety or reduction in damage caused by fire or other sources. The very question is loaded – it seeks consent to start shutting fire stations and dismantling the infrastructure of the service, which will extremely costly to replace. Accompanying the closure of stations, fewer firefighters will be employed. This is unsafe for the Scottish public and dangerous for firefighters. It has taken five years to finally harmonise firefighters pay and conditions across Scotland – firefighters are understandably sceptical about hasty and ill-thought through proposals contained in this package of ‘transformation’ proposals.

**Firefighters should be trained and equipped to meet the new and emerging risks Scotland faces – AGREE**

The FBU has campaigned for professional firefighter training and equipment for a century. The union has also been in the vanguard for meeting emerging new risks such as vehicle fires and flooding, which expand the role firefighters play in serving our communities. The FBU is committed to the vision of firefighting as an all-hazards emergency service, working in cooperation with our colleagues in related sectors such as the NHS.

Since the proposals were first drafted the FBU has met with SFRS representatives, who have acknowledged and agreed that those matters such as pay and broadening the firefighters’ role should continue to be negotiated through the National Joint Council (NJC), which governs UK-wide collective bargaining arrangements between the union and employers. The FBU is opposed to Scottish, regional or local bargaining arrangements that undermine the reasonable desire firefighters have for consistent standards of training and equipment across our industry and for equitable pay and other arrangements. We cannot accept the fragmentation of our industry or our conditions – we will not accept a race to the bottom such a move would eventually entail.

**Firefighters should be rewarded for taking on an expanded role and in accordance with the risks they take – AGREE**

All firefighters across the UK should be rewarded for the role we undertake in our communities – it is travesty that firefighters’ pay has been capped for the last eight years by governments at Westminster. Firefighters already bring a range of wider skills and competencies to our jobs, which have been ignored by governments and employers when the FBU has submitted our annual pay claims.
The FBU also believes that as firefighters expand our role, this should also be rewarded. However the union cannot accept the trade-off suggested by these proposals, which cuts firefighter jobs and conditions for a one-off pay boost. Firefighters do not want to have to work longer, with fewer colleagues and in more arduous conditions and without guarantees in place for our physical and mental health. A one-off bribe is not the way to force through unpalatable changes.

These SFRS proposals ignore important safety findings from coroners’ inquests and other reports from around the UK into the importance of having sufficient firefighters, and practices, and the right command and control systems in place to avert firefighter fatalities and injuries. The identification of these lessons make such occurrences now foreseeable. The SFRS proposals ignore important findings in the Broadening Responsibilities report for the NJC into the emergency medical response trials, which raised a number of health and safety concerns. The SFRS is aware that firefighters deployed to terrorist incidents must have guarantees in place for their own safety and for their families, should the worst happen.

The service leads have recently re-affirmed their commitment to discussions on firefighters’ pay and broadening the firefighters’ role being conducted through the NJC. We expect, and have no reason to believe otherwise, that the SFRS and the Board will honour this commitment. The FBU is committed to negotiations on firefighters’ pay and on expanding the role through the NJC. The SFRS should not undermine these negotiations.

Latest technology should be used where possible to improve firefighter and public safety – AGREE

The FBU has fought for the best technologies to be utilised by the fire and rescue service for decades. Our union fought for decent breathing apparatus for every firefighter, along with suitable personal protective equipment, crew cab safety and a host of other measures. We were instrumental in ridding the service of dangerous equipment such as hook ladders.

The SFRS proposals appear to believe that technologies can somehow substitute for firefighters. SFRS managers want to introduce small vans instead of fully equipped fire appliances, despite numerous examples from across the UK where such vehicles have been dispatched, only to require proper fire appliances when they arrive on the scene. This is particularly unsafe for firefighters who ride the vans, as they are placed in an invidious situation on scene with members of the public demanding an intervention firefighters are not resourced or equipped to tackle with vans.

Similarly, the FBU accepts the use of ultra-high pressure lances in the right circumstances to assist and supplement firefighting operations and not replace current safe and robust firefighting equipment and practice. However firefighters are necessary to affect rescues and to carry out firefighting operations in the wide range of conditions when fire spreads. Rarely do people die from fires. They die from the effects of fire, notably smoke inhalation and/or irrespirable atmospheres. The FBU is wholly unconvinced that the notion of causing a room to become completely filled with smoke, with no air layer below the smoke barrier, from outside of the building
with no breathing apparatus crews in the room or available to be deployed into the room to carry out a rescue is a safe method of work to maximise the safety of the public.

**Firefighters could be trained to take on roles that would reduce the burden on other public services – AGREE**

From its inception, the FBU has led on expanding the role of firefighters. For example, from the 1950s the union supported involving firefighters in fire prevention and fire inspection roles – contributing to the Holroyd report and legislation such as the Fire Precautions Act. Similarly from the 1960s the FBU backed the project for firefighters to attend both vehicle fires but also other road traffic collisions where our firefighters with their unique skill-set could assist. The FBU has worked closely with health and ambulance unions, as well local government to pioneer youth engagement schemes, support for vulnerable people and backing the wider humanitarian role of firefighters in our communities.

The NJC, which includes representatives from the SFRS, is committed “to work jointly on changes identified by each side to ensure that there is a pay framework alongside terms and conditions in the fire and rescue service which reflect the responsibilities of, and current and future demands on, the service and the profession”.

The NJC has five workstreams to develop potential areas of work:
- Environmental challenges
- Emergency medical response
- Multi agency emergency response
- Youth and other social engagement work
- Inspections and enforcement

In 2015 NJC members agreed that fire and rescue authorities could carry out approved emergency medical response trials. By the end of 2016 there were 38 different NJC-approved trials across the UK. In Scotland, the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA) trial involved firefighters stationed at Bathgate, Livingston and Linlithgow, Musselburgh, Turriff and Maud, Hawick, Lauder and Coldstream, and Falkirk.

In 2016 the NJC commissioned researchers from the University of Hertfordshire and the College of Paramedics to evaluate the work done in the trials. Their report, *Broadening Responsibilities* was published in early 2017. It highlighted substantial benefits for the public, particularly from cardiac arrest work, but also indicated ongoing difficulties with funding, call mobilisation, training, equipment, inoculation, mental health, pay and other issues for firefighters. The FBU decided in September 2017 that the trials should cease.

The NJC continues to work on this agenda, for example publishing the New Economy report on costs and benefits and by establishing a working group to find practical solutions to the very real issues encountered in the trials. The FBU and the employers remain committed to this work. We believe this is the best way to
introduce sustainable change, benefiting not only other public services but also the fire and rescue service itself – and those who work for it.

We note that the service wishes to expand the role of the service into care services for aged, emergency medical response and responses to terrorist incidents. It is imperative to recognise that firefighters must have the capacity to train and maintain their current core competencies before progressing any expansion into other roles. The proposals contain no evaluation of the increased call volume, time spent at such incidents, training time to learn and maintain the skills and knowledge required.

A more flexible approach to crewing during the late evening and early morning hours would allow firefighters to do more during the day when demand is higher – DISAGREE

The FBU is disappointed that the SFRS has imported the language of free market fundamentalism into its proposals. The fire and rescue service does not operate in a market, where ‘demand’ and ‘supply’ determine outcomes. Even mainstream economists recognise that firefighting is a public good, best provided as a publicly owned service paid for by direct taxation. The language used in these proposals is reminiscent of Westminster think-tanks at their worst.

The proposals contain an unsourced graphic suggesting that 80% of incidents and calls are dealt with during the daytime. In the graphic ‘daytime’ is made up of 16 hours and does not correspond to the shift patterns currently worked by most firefighters in Scotland. Clearly activity is different at night – firefighters receive some stand down time when on duty at night, for good working time and safety reasons. But the graphic is not a fair reflection of firefighters’ work.

Removing, reducing and mitigating risk is what must determine matters such as crewing and shift patterns, not the notion of ‘demand’. The fire and rescue service is a 24/7 emergency service because fire and other hazards can occur anytime. The public rightly expects and pays for a service that is universal – not a multi-tier, postcode lottery.

The SFRS publishes figures on the number of particular fires each hour, as well as fire deaths at dwelling fires. Under the current shift system, with day shifts starting at 8am and finishing at 6pm, and night shifts from 6pm to 8am, there are slightly more calls on the night shift (54%) than during the day shift (46%). However in terms of the risk of fatalities and injuries to members of the public, and utilising the SRFS’s own data for the last decade, approximately two-thirds of dwelling fire deaths and casualties occur at night in Scotland. This is illustrated on the following diagrams. To be clear the issue isn’t the pattern of start and finish times. The issue is that fire cover should be maximised at all times throughout the 24 hour period every day of the year.

Figure 1: Number and rates of casualties in dwelling fires by time of call, 2007-08 to 2016-17
Behind figures like these are real people and actual victims of fire. In recent months, firefighters in Scotland have responded to fires at night in which tragically, people have died. These include a couple killed in Cameron House Hotel fire in Loch Lomond, the blaze at a house in Springburn Road, Glasgow, another death in Shapinsay Square, Aberdeen and most recently, a woman found dead after a fire in Gartcosh, North Lanarkshire. The importance of 24/7 fire cover in Scotland was reinforced by the blaze at Victoria’s nightclub in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, when firefighters averted fire spread to the historic Pavilion Theatre.

The reduction in night cover is bad for the public but also dangerous for firefighters. The FBU has highlighted a number of firefighter fatalities that have occurred at night, such as Bethnal Green, London (2004), Harrow Court, Hertfordshire (2005), Warwickshire (2007), Shirley Towers, Hampshire (2010) and Oldham St, Greater
Manchester (2013). The SFRS is well aware that our member Ewan Williamson was killed at work during a night shift in Dalry Rd, Edinburgh (2009). The FBU is clear that diminishing night cover puts firefighters at risk.

**What single thing is most important to you about the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service?**

The FBU believes that the purpose of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – providing high quality public service to maintain and improve the safety to the public – is indistinguishable from the interests of those who provide that service, namely the workforce. It is the dedicated professionals, working around the clock that make the fire and rescue service the world class and highly respected institution it is today in our communities. Without operational firefighters, emergency fire control and the staff that deliver the support functions there would be no service to the public. Every role, from the newest recruit to the most experienced officer, whatever duty system they work, wholetime or retained, it is those who do the work that know best how to improve it. Therefore it is incumbent upon those who currently manage the service to consult and negotiate with the FBU, as the elected representatives of the overwhelming majority of firefighters in Scotland.

**Do you think there is anything the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service should NOT do as part of transformation? YES**

The proposals outlined in the “Your Service Your Voice” document indicate a dangerous direction of travel. For the avoidance of doubt, the FBU opposes:

- The introduction of any shift systems that diminish the level of fire cover at night or which extend firefighters’ working hours from the current dayshift of 08.00hrs to 18.00hrs and the current nightshift of 18.00hrs to 08.00hrs (such as close proximity crewing, low level of activity and risk, and other schemes)
- The introduction of reduced crewing on fire appliances, which puts public and firefighter safety at risk and breaches agreements just recently reached with the FBU on what constitutes a safe crewing model. The FBU had reservations about the agreement as it moved away from the safest assumption of 5-5-3 riders, but the current package of proposals is a worsened option as it will bring into a being an unacceptable crewing model.
- The introduction of so-called tactical response vehicles (TRVs) or other small vans as substitutes for fully equipped and staffed fire appliances
- Any cuts or staffing reductions. Instead there should be investment in a new generation of firefighters to meet the new and emerging risks
- Any further reductions of operational fire control rooms that have previously seen a reduction from eight to three and compromised local knowledge.

The FBU is also opposed to efforts to circumvent the existing negotiating system for collective bargaining, which is the National Joint Council. The union rejects any imposed changes against the wishes of the workforce and against the advice of its
Do you have any final comment to make on the transformation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service?

The FBU rejects the unsubstantiated premise of the “Your Service Your Voice” document that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is mired in the 1940s. It is reminiscent of the vitriolic, dismissive and frankly rude ideological narrative and invective which the service and firefighters began to suffer 15 years ago from the government in Westminster and which has persisted to a large degree to the present day. We expect better. Very little of the post war fire service architecture remains anywhere in the UK. Important statutory bodies such as the Scottish Fire Brigades Advisory Council (SFBAC) and its UK-wide equivalent were scrapped without a comparable replacement. Uniform standards of fire cover, adopted across the UK, were scrapped leading to a slowdown in response times. The ridership factors which were central to the establishment scheme for each fire brigade were removed, along with the establishment scheme arrangements with resultant loss in fire service posts and quality service provision to the public.

Nevertheless, the legislation underpinning the fire and rescue service has changed under devolution – notably the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. Regulation of cladding is better in Scotland since the Garnock Court fire than in the rest of the UK. It is a complete caricature to suggest little has really changed for seventy years when the single service is just five years old. Firefighters now carry out rescues from height and water, and we now have statutory duties to respond to hazards such as flooding.

Similarly, the idea that firefighters do the same things as our predecessors shows a remarkably lightminded attitude to the history of our industry. Firefighting procedures changed substantially after the Cheapside and James Watt St fires in the 1960s. Our members who joined in the 1980s have witnessed huge changes, including attendance at road traffic collisions and swift water rescue work. Modern appliances are now packed with state of the art specialist hydraulic rescue tools and life-saving emergency equipment. Today’s professional firefighter can adapt this equipment to a multitude of hazards. The modern firefighter possesses a broad array of skills and qualifications, which will continue to evolve.

However the change to the single service has impacted on the workforce. The number of fire and rescue staff recorded as being off sick with stress has increased five-fold in three years according to a freedom of information report in October 2017. Figures indicated that absence with stress has increased from 27 in 2013, the year the single service was created, to 137 in 2016. The reorganisation of the service had been traumatic for employees, with hundreds of posts being lost, placing a strain on employees by increasing their workloads.

The FBU would also challenge the assertion that the creation of a single Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has been an unambiguous “good” for Scotland. Of course there is much to be proud of. Firefighters in Scotland are rescuing substantial numbers of people. FBU research has found that firefighters carried out almost 3,600
rescues during 2016-17, almost 10 a day in Scotland. This includes over 500 people in Scotland rescued from fires, and a host of other rescues on the roads, in homes and in workplaces. The tremendous contribution firefighters make is widely recognised by the Scottish public.

However an honest professional balance sheet on the first five years of the single service shows that there is still much to do. The SFRS’s own figures show that after years of fewer fires and fire deaths, the last five years have seen a real plateau. The total incidents and fires attended have remained largely static. Firefighters now attend similar levels of false alarms and more non-fire incidents. Home fire safety visits have not risen dramatically, while there are fewer fire safety audits due to the reduction in fire safety enforcement officers. The following table illustrates these key indicators.

**Table 1: Scotland's long-term trend data for fires, casualties, non-fire incidents and false alarms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fires</th>
<th>False alarms</th>
<th>Non-fire</th>
<th>Total incidents</th>
<th>Fatalities</th>
<th>Non-Fatal casualties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>38,737</td>
<td>53,549</td>
<td>11,495</td>
<td>103,781</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>38,970</td>
<td>51,125</td>
<td>11,319</td>
<td>101,414</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1,328</td>
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<td>2011-12</td>
<td>32,338</td>
<td>49,103</td>
<td>10,117</td>
<td>91,558</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>26,746</td>
<td>47,926</td>
<td>9,158</td>
<td>83,830</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>27,992</td>
<td>47,753</td>
<td>9,162</td>
<td>84,907</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>25,026</td>
<td>49,303</td>
<td>10,743</td>
<td>85,072</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1,101</td>
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<td>2015-16</td>
<td>26,628</td>
<td>49,421</td>
<td>12,836</td>
<td>88,885</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>27,240</td>
<td>51,555</td>
<td>12,344</td>
<td>91,139</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1,189</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: SFRS, Fire and Rescue Statistics 2016-17, Scotland: Scotland's long-term trend data for fires, casualties, non-fire incidents and false alarms

**Table 2: Number of Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) and Fire Safety Audits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>HFSV</th>
<th>Audits</th>
<th>Hours auditing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>52,730</td>
<td>6,744</td>
<td>40,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>56,545</td>
<td>7,555</td>
<td>49,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>56,251</td>
<td>7,994</td>
<td>40,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>70,686</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>65,343</td>
<td>8,209</td>
<td>33,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>71,743</td>
<td>9,829</td>
<td>36,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>70,744</td>
<td>8,939</td>
<td>33,054</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Sources: SFRS, Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics, 2016-17: Tables 18, 21
These figures also show that firefighters do not have huge spare capacity to take on any number of new schemes. Firefighters in Scotland are busy tackling a wide range of hazards, rescuing scores of people, protecting critical national infrastructure and saving business assets. Newer responsibilities such as flooding and prevention work all take time and resources. All require training. The SFRS’s own Response & Resilience, Review of Specialist Equipment report rightly highlighted the 300 dedicated training hours available per year to a wholetime firefighter. Given the 222 hours of training to maintain basic competency in the role of a firefighter and a further 80 hours just to maintain competency in water rescue, our members have huge responsibilities to prepare for.

The FBU is not alone in raising concerns with the single service. The Scottish government’s Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform: Year 2 Report found plausible evidence of progress being made, but highlighted that firefighters feel stretched with falling numbers of staff. The report also recognised firefighters’ concerns with career progression within the single service, as well as with some training. In particular, low morale was identified, with senior managers failing to respond adequately, leading to stress, higher sickness absence firefighters’ leaving the job after only a few years in the service. Similarly, the recent HM Fire Service Inspectorate report, Local Area Inspection: Glasgow found “some challenges with staffing levels”, appliances off the run and old personal protective equipment still in use.

The FBU therefore cannot countenance the mantra from senior managers that the SFRS always has “the right resources in the right place at the right time”. Such a claim cannot even be measured given the current set of statistics published by the SFRS. For example the service does not publish response or attendance times for any appliances. Even the Westminster government manages to produce figures for the arrival of the first appliances, despite the larger geographical area in England and a similar pattern of large inner cities as well as diverse, rural and remote communities.

Since the formation of the single service in Scotland, the SFRS has cut more than one thousand jobs, including more than 500 frontline wholetime firefighters and 200 frontline retained firefighters. Emergency fire control room staffing has been reduced by nearly a third. In summary, the frontline has been cut by 10.5% - 781 posts. That, in itself is an indictment of the single service. The YSYV proposals will, if implemented slash further posts with the resultant deterioration in services supplied to the public.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Frontline personel Wholetime</th>
<th>Frontline personel Retained</th>
<th>Frontline personel Control</th>
<th>Total Frontline</th>
<th>Frontline personel year on year</th>
<th>Frontline Chang e since 2013</th>
<th>% Since 2013</th>
<th>All staff incl Supp ort staff</th>
<th>All staff Change since 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4,151</td>
<td>3,076</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>7461</td>
<td>-195</td>
<td>-297</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
<td>8,547</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4,001</td>
<td>2,940</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>7164</td>
<td>-297</td>
<td>-297</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
<td>8,125</td>
<td>-422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>3,856</td>
<td>2,950</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>7036</td>
<td>-128</td>
<td>-425</td>
<td>-5.7%</td>
<td>7,903</td>
<td>-644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3,690</td>
<td>2,870</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>-243</td>
<td>-668</td>
<td>-9.0%</td>
<td>7,591</td>
<td>-956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Headcount of SFRS Workforce by type of staffing
Job cuts and limited recruitment has also impacted on efforts to improve the diversity of the workforce. Although there has been a small increase in the proportion of wholetime women firefighters over the last five years, the situation for retained women has not improved and many of the job losses in control and support have been women. The proportion of women in operational roles does not compare favourably with other countries and brigades across the UK. Similarly, the proportion of minority ethnic people employed by the SFRS remains unrepresentative of the diverse communities we serve.

Within this context, it has taken the SFRS five years to finally provide an acceptable solution to the standardisation of firefighters’ terms and conditions. The FBU has negotiated in good faith to ensure our members get the benefits from long established conditions and do not lose out from efforts to bring the previous arrangements into harmony. Our members recently voted to accept revised proposals, which were affected by the involvement of lead officials from the FBU and employers’ side of the NJC. However members are understandably sceptical about new proposals from SFRS management in light of this experience.

This underlines the FBU’s fundamental point in this submission: the importance of listening to those who do the job. The union and its members are committed to improving the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. However we cannot accept ill-thought-through changes, dressed up as modernisation, which put the public at risk and worsen our conditions. Firefighters have no issue with change. They expect it and are more than willing to ‘adapt’ their role and always have been. What our members will not do is play Russian roulette with the hard won reputation of a proud profession. The best way to transform the service is to negotiate properly with the FBU.

The FBU gives permission for this submission to be published.