



Dorset  
Fire & Rescue  
Service

# A new combined fire authority for Dorset and Wiltshire

Draft business case for consultation  
July 2014



Note: For the purposes of simplifying this document, references to Dorset mean the combined areas served by Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council and the Borough of Poole. Similarly Wiltshire means the combined areas served by Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council.

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## Foreword

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Thank you for your interest in reading this document. We are asking you for your comments on a proposal to combine Dorset Fire Authority with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority. This will create one combined fire authority which will oversee a single fire and rescue service covering both areas.

Both of the fire authorities are among the most cost-effective in the country and have been very successful in finding savings in the face of reduced funding from central government. However, the longer term financial forecast is still bleak and this could significantly threaten front-line services. We need to find very large savings that we cannot achieve without looking very differently at what we do and how we do it.

Dorset Fire Authority is proud of serving its communities and helping young and old alike. We believe we have looked at all our options to both solve our financial problems and strengthen the work we do.

We hope that you find this document informative and we look forward to receiving your feedback. The fire authority will be considering this in November 2014.

We will then consider your views when the fire authority meets in November 2014.

You can find more detailed documents on the options by either:

- visiting our website at <http://www.dorsetfire.gov.uk/working-with-us/about-us/strengthening-our-fire-and-rescue-service>
- phoning our consultation helpline **08000 352077**, or
- emailing us at [fire.consultation@gmail.com](mailto:fire.consultation@gmail.com)

We would be happy to provide you with paper copies or more detailed information if that would help you. We hope that you will take this opportunity to have your say on this proposal.

# Executive summary

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Dorset Fire Authority and Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority are both facing significant financial challenges. We both receive very low levels of grant from the Government and are among the lowest spending in England. We have made substantial changes to the way we deliver the life-saving services we provide. Further cuts to 'back-office' costs alone will not deal with the future budget situation.

Major change to our service is now needed to avoid large-scale reductions in firefighters and fire service staff working to keep our communities safe. After looking at a number of options, Dorset Fire Authority strongly believes the best way forward is to combine the two organisations and work more closely with local authorities, the police and other public services.

Working more closely with other public services will allow us to improve our efficiency by joining up our back-office or corporate functions. This approach will also improve the effectiveness of our services by using single points of delivery such as community campuses and hubs.

By combining the authorities and strengthening our work with partners, we can save in the region of £4million each year, more than twice as much as any other single option open to us.

This proposal will allow us to reduce the significant amount of money we spend on supporting and managing fires and complicated rescues. By combining the two authorities and working closely with our partners, the savings that we will make will not only be greater but be able to be delivered much quicker. This is important as Wiltshire is currently using its savings to support its budget and Dorset will soon be in a similar position. Regardless of this proposed combination, we would want to work more closely with local authorities, the police and other public services to see where we can save even more money.

The combination of the authorities will still leave us facing some difficult choices in the future but by being a larger organisation we will have more time and options before us. The proposed combination will not affect existing emergency response arrangements and we will be able to maintain and, in some areas, strengthen the important work we do with our partners in preventing emergency incidents and supporting vulnerable people who so desperately need our help.

## The main messages

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**Any complicated change will result in delays. And Wiltshire are already relying on financial savings to set a budget.**

**We can reduce a number of significant cuts to response services and community safety programmes by making best use of our savings.**

**Emergency response times will be unaffected.**

**Prevention activities will be increased under this proposal.**

**Partnerships will be strengthened by avoiding damaging cuts and combining resources.**

**If we combine the fire authorities we will still face some difficult choices in the future, but more time and options would be available to us.**



# About us

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## About the services we provide

We are very proud of the services we provide to our communities. We are well respected and active in our communities and achieve a great deal for the people we serve. We are mainly known for providing a highly professional response to emergencies and working with businesses to help improve the safety of commercial buildings such as shops and factories. However, we also do a great deal of work with vulnerable people in our communities.

### **Our work with our partners includes working with:**

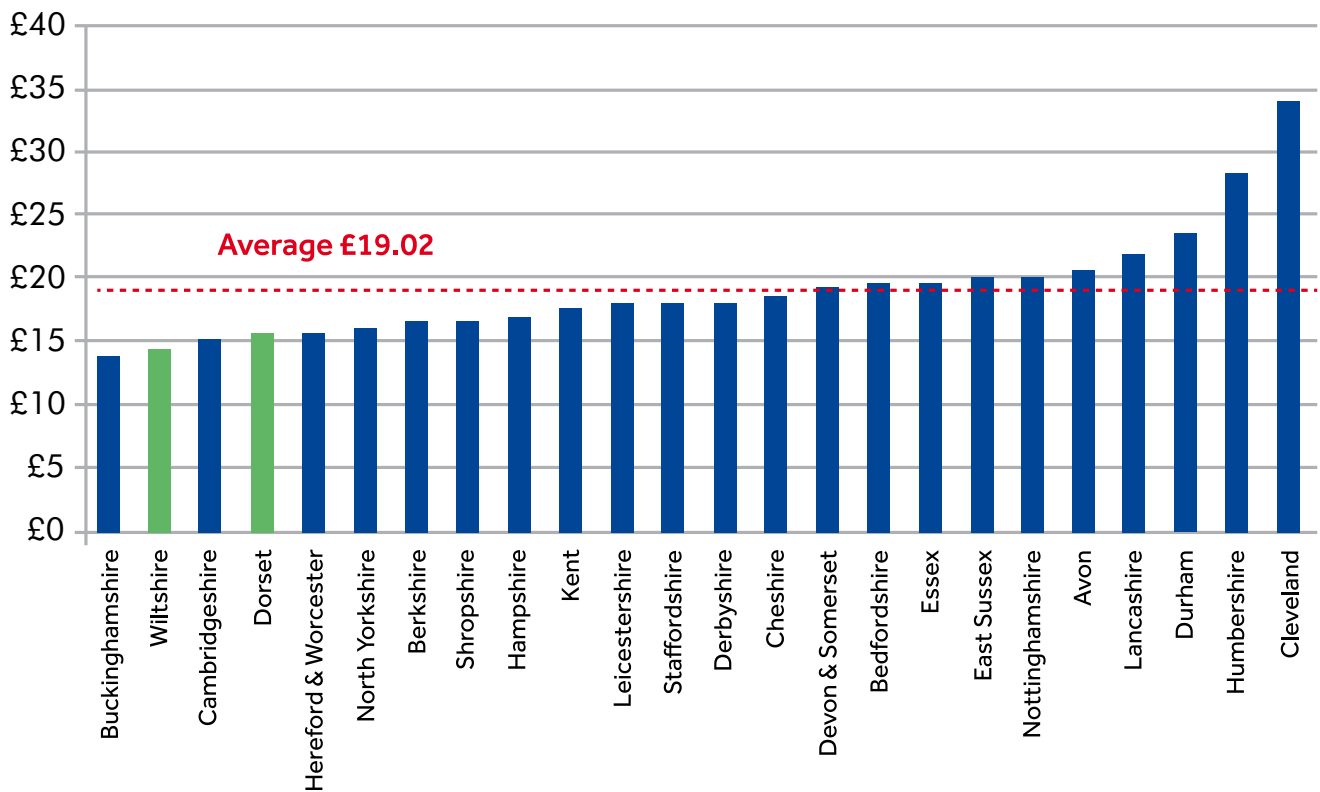
- **vulnerable people by doing home-safety checks, fitting smoke alarms, providing specialist equipment and safety advice;**
- **schools to promote safety and help them reduce risky behaviour;**
- **young people to keep them safe in the home and on the roads as both pedestrians and first-time drivers; and**
- **troubled families and young people to help reduce anti-social behaviour and improve their lives and opportunities.**

We are passionate about what we do. We want to solve our financial problems and continue to strengthen these services where we can.

# How we are funded

Like all fire and rescue services we receive our money from two main sources. We get a grant from the Government (40% approximately) and we receive money locally from the fire precept which is collected by councils through the council tax system (60% approximately). Both organisations receive considerably less Government grant than most others. If we received the average level of grant funding, Dorset Fire Authority would benefit by an extra £2.6 million a year and Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority would benefit by £3.2 million a year.

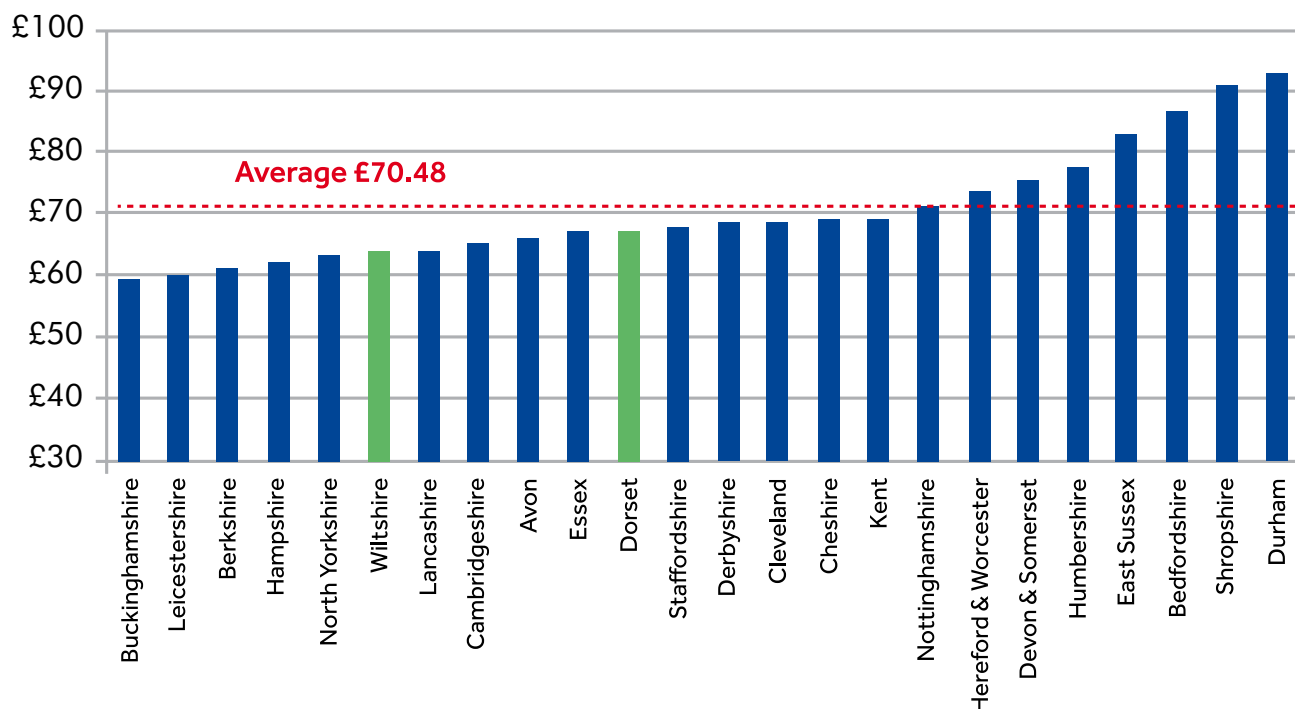
## Government grant funding per head of population



In spite of this low funding position, both services have consistently kept the amount collected through council tax below average levels. To keep within legally imposed Government limits, we have done this by making a lot of changes to the way we work to reduce our costs. Our fire precept for a band-D property in 2014/2015 was £66.60, and for Wiltshire it was £63.62. These are below the average for a combined fire authority (£70.48).



## Band-D council tax 2014-15 - all combined fire authorities



## Our financial outlook

We have looked carefully at our future financial needs and worked with others to help forecast the amount of income we may receive. You can find more detailed information on this in our medium-term finance plans (see section on More information).

We are both facing very significant shortfalls between the money that we may receive and the money that we need to keep our services running.

### By 2017/2018, the financial gap faced by:

- **Dorset means it will need further savings each year of between £2.3million and £3.2million from a £30million budget (this is equivalent to 61 to 84 full-time firefighters (Dorset currently has 210)); and**
- **Wiltshire means it will need yearly savings of between £3.1million and £3.9million from a £25million budget. This is equivalent to 83 to 103 full-time firefighters (Wiltshire currently has 144).**

Wiltshire is already using financial 'savings' known as reserves to set a balanced budget. Dorset will need to use its reserves in 2016/2017. Clearly savings can only be used for a limited period and once they run out they will not be available to bridge the gap between the money coming in and the cost of running vital services.

Like all change, it takes time to plan and deliver. The more complicated the change, the longer it takes before any financial benefits might be achieved. Time is of the essence. It is also important to have early actions in place if we are to avoid significant reductions in the number of firefighters, which would affect community safety, and the need for compulsory firefighter redundancies, as only a limited number of firefighters retire or leave each year.

# Our opportunities for saving money

## Corporate support and general organisational savings

Currently the amount of money spent on support departments, sometimes known as 'back-office' staff (for example, ICT, HR, finance, and so on), is around £2.95million (Dorset) and £2.71million (Wiltshire). Over the last few years, neither authority has filled jobs as they become vacant in support departments and both have introduced voluntary redundancy programmes. This has so far helped protect front-line services. You can find more details on what we have achieved on our websites. (See the section on More information.) We have now reduced support departments to the point where there are often only one or two people doing jobs that support the front-line staff. This causes problems when staff are on leave or when their workload increases. This creates a risk of disruption to the efficient running of the services being provided by front-line staff.

With a great deal more financial savings to find, this situation will only get worse. While we know there may be some savings through back-office and other corporate spending by working with others, this will not bridge the financial gap we are facing. Interestingly, following their combination, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service said that one of the main benefits of combination was a more efficient organisation. This has helped them become more sustainable and to work in new and more creative ways.

## Fire-specific costs

There are three forms of fire-specific costs where savings can be made.

- **Flexi-duty operational officers** make sure a safe and competent managerial response is provided to emergency incidents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All operational officers also have specific skills and national qualifications in areas such as fire investigation, hazardous materials, marine firefighting, water management, and so on. To maintain a safe response, these highly trained and competent officers follow a flexi-duty system (FDS) to allow for leave and training commitments. Both authorities have and need around 30 operational officers. By combining with another fire and rescue service there are considerable opportunities for savings while also maintaining the response needed to provide safe systems of work. The police and local-authority officers and other public services are not technically qualified to take command at complicated fire-related rescues and emergencies and so these savings would not be available with these partners.
- **Technical management support and functions**  
There are a number of technical specialists and departments that are also specific to fire and rescue services. These include fire control, technical policy officers (who develop and audit fire-specific response procedures), training officers (who develop and assess firefighters and officers), enforcement officers (who enforce specific fire safety regulations) and many others.

- **Crewing fire engines**

Like most fire and rescue services, there are two ways in which we crew fire engines.

Full-time firefighters provide immediate emergency response cover 24 hours a day.

On-call firefighters are firefighters who have another job and are released by their employers when incidents happen. This is in effect a 'pay-as-you-go' arrangement and is very efficient, costing around 1/10th of a full-time station (which usually cost between £1.3million and £1.5million each). On-call firefighters have to travel to the fire station from home and work and so response times are obviously longer than those at stations where there are full-time firefighters.

Unlike many fire and rescue services, Dorset and Wiltshire do not have many stations which are crewed by full-time firefighters. These are mostly in areas of higher populations such as Bournemouth, Poole, Weymouth, Salisbury, Trowbridge, Chippenham and Swindon where they are needed. A recent government report (Facing the Future, Sir Ken Knight 2013) suggested that in the future and to save money, 40% of operational firefighters could be on-call. We already have extremely efficient arrangements in place, with over 80% of front-line fire engines and 65% of operational staff working on an on-call basis.

To find large savings, initially full-time and day-crewed stations would need to be the main focus of further reductions.

## The main messages

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**By 2017/2018 in Dorset we need to reduce our yearly budget by between £2.3 million and £3.2 million.**

**By 2017/2018, Wiltshire need to reduce its yearly budget by between £3.1 million and £3.9 million.**

**Corporate support departments and spending have already been significantly reduced. Further savings will not bridge the financial gap being faced by both authorities.**

**Significant fire-related spending is a key area to save money.**

**By making the most of our saving opportunities, possible cuts to front-line services that would have mainly affected larger towns and cities would be avoided.**



## Our vision

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### A safe, strong and sustainable fire and rescue service

A main focus for this business case is of course to be financially secure. However, both authorities want to achieve more than just 'balancing the books'. We are passionate about protecting front-line response, prevention and protection services and the great work we do. Indeed we want to strengthen the work we and our partners do. In short we want to be a safe, strong and sustainable organisation. We have explained this in detail (see section on More information). In summary we mean the following.

<b>Safe</b>	We want to play a leading role in making our communities safer. We want to continue to keep staff and local people as safe as we possibly can by preventing incidents happening and protecting people against some of the risks they face. However when fire and emergencies do happen, we will provide an efficient and effective response to them.
<b>Strong</b>	We want to build on our work with key partners and communities to target our efforts on making a real difference to those people who need our services the most. We have a great deal to offer. We are trusted and have relationships with vulnerable groups that others could build on. We often have a unique presence in cities, towns and villages. We want to make the most of these relationships and our assets to make communities safe and stronger.
<b>Sustainable</b>	We want to make sure we are financially secure both for today and in the future. We will work in new and creative ways to reduce costs and make ourselves more effective and influential.

As a result, this business case needs to achieve three main aims.

### **Main aims**

- 1 Safe – we need to maintain and, where possible, improve organisational performance.**
- 2 Strong – we need to maintain and, where possible, improve operational performance to strengthen front-line services.**
- 3 Sustainable – we need to continue to be financially secure now and in the future to maintain front-line services.**

We have used these aims while exploring our options. Making sure that we continue to be an effective and efficient organisation and strengthening our relationships with existing and new partners must stay central to our thinking.

## **The main messages**

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**Building on our main strengths and resources will be essential if we are to make communities safer.**

**Working with local authorities, the police and ambulance service is essential to us and we want to do even more with them.**

**We need to continue to be financially secure and balance our books now and in the future.**



# Options appraisal

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## Our options

To achieve our vision and aims, we looked at a number of ways of doing things differently by doing a strategic appraisal (see section on *More information*). The choices facing us largely fell into seven main options, although from the start we recognised that a blend of options would offer stronger opportunities.

- 1 Each fire authority and service to stay and act independently including reducing support functions and front-line services.**
- 2 Each fire authority and service to stay independent and share some corporate and support functions.**
- 3 The two fire authorities and services to merge into a new authority and service.**
- 4 Each fire authority and service to stay independent and collaborate with their local authorities to make the most of savings made in corporate and support departments.**
- 5 Each fire authority and service to stay independent and collaborate with their individual police forces to make the most of savings made in corporate and support departments.**
- 6 Each fire authority and service to stay independent and collaborate with South West Ambulance Service to make the most of savings made in corporate and support departments.**
- 7 The two fire authorities and services to combine and work more closely with all of our local authorities, our police forces, South Western Ambulance and local public services.**

A summary of each option is shown on the following pages.

The following options have been assessed against their ability to meet the vision of the new authority and the ability of the option to meet the predicted financial gap.




**Option 1: Each fire authority and service to stay and act independently including reducing support functions and front-line services.**

This option would need to deliver savings of between £3.1 and £3.9 million for Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority and between £2.3 and £3.2 million for Dorset Fire Authority.

This would mean damaging cuts to front-line services and staff. Over 70 full-time firefighters in each of our services would need to be made redundant and stations would need to move from full-time to day-crewed or on-call only. There would be significant consequences on community safety, with longer response times for fire engines to arrive at emergencies and fewer fire engines available. We would both have problems supporting other front-line services such as our prevention programme. We may also struggle to meet our legal responsibilities. Our ability to work in partnership would be extremely limited as we would have to cut back our staff and funding.

Wiltshire and Swindon CFA		Dorset Fire Authority		New combined fire authority		Safe	Strong	Sustainable
Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range			
£3.1 million	£0	£2.3 million	£0					

**Key:**

-  = Likely to meet all the aims of the vision
-  = Likely to meet some of the aims of the vision
-  = Will not meet most of the aims of the vision

**Option 2: Each fire authority and service to stay independent and share some corporate and support functions.**

Although many councils and public services share management teams, there are many disadvantages to this type of arrangement. The main concern that we have is that the one management team would report to two political groups. This means that senior officers work less efficiently and differences in policy between the two groups can lead to complicated financial accounting and duplication of effort. An extra complication for us is that both counties are very large geographically and travel times are extended by single-lane rural roads. We would also not be able to take full advantage of reduced spending on things like corporate licences and democratic costs.

Initial work suggests that Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority will be able to save £864,000 and Dorset Fire Authority will save £930,000. Each fire authority will still face a significant gap in their finances by 2018.

Wiltshire and Swindon CFA		Dorset Fire Authority		New combined fire authority		Safe	Strong	Sustainable
Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range			
£864k	£2.236 – £3.036 million	£930k	£1.37 - £2.27 million					

**Key:**

- = Likely to meet all the aims of the vision
- = Likely to meet some of the aims of the vision
- = Will not meet most of the aims of the vision



### Option 3: The two fire authorities and services to merge into a new authority and service.

This option allows us to make the most of both corporate and technical collaboration associated with our legal duties. As well as making the most of our savings, it would allow us to more speedily take advantage of these savings to make sure that we can make positive changes rather than just use the savings to balance the budget. There are a wide number of fire and rescue partners available to both Dorset and Wiltshire to look to combine with. Following a high-level review, at their December 2013 meetings both fire authorities decided to use a more detailed examination of a formal combination between Dorset and Wiltshire.

This work has identified savings in the region of £4 million. It could also allow further savings of £1.5 million to be achieved by using more resilient and efficient crewing arrangements.

Wiltshire and Swindon CFA		Dorset Fire Authority		New combined fire authority		Safe	Strong	Sustainable
Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range			
				£5.5 million	£0 - £1.6 million			

#### Key:

- = Likely to meet all the aims of the vision
- = Likely to meet some of the aims of the vision
- = Will not meet most of the aims of the vision

**Option 4: Each fire authority and service to stay independent and collaborate with their local authorities to make the most of savings made in corporate and support departments.**

We work a lot with our local councils and must continue to do so. Some 'back-office' or corporate functions could be joined up, but as we have already reduced most of them, the amount of savings from corporate staff and spending would be limited. Preliminary work suggests that savings of £712,000 for Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority and £930,000 for Dorset Fire Authority could be achieved with this option. This could mean significant cuts to front-line services would still be needed. The significant funding gaps faced by councils and the pressures on budgets such as adult and children services would also continue to be a concern and could further threaten long-term financial stability.

Wiltshire and Swindon CFA		Dorset Fire Authority		New combined fire authority		Safe	Strong	Sustainable
Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range			
£712K	£2.388 - £3.188 million	£930K	£1.37 - £2.27 million					

**Option 5: Each fire authority and service to stay independent and collaborate with their individual police forces to make the most of savings made in corporate and support departments.**

We work with our police partners in lots of ways including sharing our fire stations. No matter which option is chosen, this will of course continue. Any formal combination with the police would involve a change in the law which would be time-consuming and cause further financial problems for each of us. Some 'back-office' functions could be joined up. However, as they have already been reduced, the amount of savings from corporate staff and spending would be limited. Preliminary work suggests that savings of £817,000 for Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority, and £915,000 for Dorset Fire Authority could be achieved with this option. This would mean significant cuts to front-line services would still be needed to balance the books.

Wiltshire and Swindon CFA		Dorset Fire Authority		New combined fire authority		Safe	Strong	Sustainable
Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range			
£817K	£2.283 - £3.083 million	£915K	£1.385 - £2.285 million					

**Key:**

- = Likely to meet all the aims of the vision
- = Likely to meet some of the aims of the vision
- = Will not meet most of the aims of the vision

**Option 6: Each fire authority and service to stay independent and collaborate with South West Ambulance Service to make the most of savings made in corporate and support departments.**

Again, we work with the regional ambulance service, including sharing our fire stations and responding to some medical emergencies on their behalf. Any future collaboration over support services would be complicated due to the fact that the ambulance service is a regional service. The savings that could be found would be limited. This would mean significant cuts to front-line services would still be needed.

Wiltshire and Swindon CFA		Dorset Fire Authority		New combined fire authority		Safe	Strong	Sustainable
Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range			
No specific savings identified	£3.1 - £3.9 million	No specific savings identified	£2.3 - £3.2 million					

**Key:**

- = Likely to meet all the aims of the vision
- = Likely to meet some of the aims of the vision
- = Will not meet most of the aims of the vision

**Option 7: The two fire authorities and services to combine and work more closely with all of our local authorities, our police forces, South Western Ambulance and local public services.**

We believe that this would give us the best of both worlds. We could make the most of the opportunities from a fire-to-fire combination and do so relatively quickly to make sure that we gain financial savings more quickly. In doing this, we would want to explore all opportunities for closer working or integration of some functions within local authorities, the police and other public services. This would open up areas for further savings and improved economies of scale. It would also mean that we could continue to share our properties and corporate staff. Work carried out so far has identified savings in the region of £4 million. It could also allow further savings of £1.5 million to be achieved by using more resilient and efficient crewing arrangements.

There would be opportunities to reduce the number of senior management positions and there are strong relations already between officers at all levels to make this work. By combining our corporate and technical support teams we would be able to improve overall capacity and organisational strength. By working with our local authorities we would be able to enjoy the benefits of working with a larger partner and so strengthen our approaches in areas of support and delivery.

We would be better able to support Wiltshire Council’s community campuses and other initiatives elsewhere in Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole, Wiltshire and Swindon where public services are provided in a joined-up way and really focus on the needs and wants of local people. By working more closely together we would be able to share our buildings, expertise and information to deliver better services in a more efficient way. This would mean that local people have more straightforward and immediate access to local services, information and advice to help keep them safe and improve their well-being.

Wiltshire and Swindon CFA		Dorset Fire Authority		New combined fire authority		Safe	Strong	Sustainable
Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range	Savings	Remaining deficit range			
				£5.5 million	£0 - £1.6 million			

**Key:**

- = Likely to meet all the aims of the vision
- = Likely to meet some of the aims of the vision
- = Will not meet most of the aims of the vision

We could also largely avoid duplication of systems, processes and transactions and benefit from some economies of scale from buying equipment and services in the future. When compared to other options we estimate that we could make at least twice the financial savings from this option. While this would not fully bridge the financial gap we face, it would at least allow us to significantly reduce the effects on front-line services and give us more time to help avoid compulsory redundancies which could have a negative effect on our staff and communities. A combination between our authorities would also unlock a number of other benefits. We would be able to:

- **work better at a local level with the police and ambulance and other partners by being a more effective service with greater resources to offer;**
- **have more of an influence as we would be the fourth largest combined fire authority in England by station, and the sixth largest by budget;**
- **deal with an ageing workforce by recruiting more new firefighters; and**
- **have a wider view and ability when it comes to managing our risks.**

Both Dorset and Wiltshire fire and rescue services are similar and it is widely recognised that a combination would be a partnership of equals. We would also enjoy the economies of scale which would help make us a safe, strong and sustainable partner. By combining the fire authorities and working more closely with local authorities, the police and other public services we would be a more viable partner.



The new combined fire authority (CFA) would:

- **be the 4th largest CFA by station, and the 6th largest by budget in England;**
- **have 50 stations within local communities throughout Dorset and Wiltshire;**
- **attend nearly 15,000 incidents per year;**
- **have over 1,000 firefighters;**
- **have a fleet of around 330 operational and non-operational vehicles;**
- **maintain over 37,000 items of equipment;**
- **carry out 28,000 home safety checks in vulnerable homes;**
- **work with over 48,500 commercial premises to help make them safe; and**
- **look after over 28,500 fire hydrants.**

We would not only enjoy increased size and resilience, but also through innovative democratic arrangements be able to strengthen local accountability (see section on Governance). In short we would be able to get the best of both worlds, further benefiting the local communities of Dorset and Wiltshire by having a fire and rescue service that is safe, strong and sustainable. We would be a better, stronger and more influential partner to help deliver our partners' agendas.

## The main messages

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There are a wide range of options that have been explored to meet our joint vision and aims.

There are advantages and some cost savings for all options.

An integration with the police or local authorities alone saves less money and creates a complicated and less-efficient way of working for managers.

A combination between Dorset and Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authorities and closer working with local authorities, the police and other public services is the favoured option for Dorset Fire Authority.

Combining both authorities saves us more than twice of any other single option. In the region of £4 million per year can be found by using this approach.

Combining both authorities means that we could be a more viable partner and deliver more efficient joined-up services with our partners.



# About Dorset and Wiltshire

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## Common factors

To support this draft business case, we carried out a strategic assessment of the challenges facing Dorset and Wiltshire. (See the section on More information.) There are striking similarities between Dorset and Wiltshire and our fire and rescue services.

### Social and economic

- Dorset and Wiltshire are similar sized counties with broadly similar populations.
- Each has a large number of villages, towns and areas of high populations. The number of residential and commercial buildings is very comparable.
- Although there are some geographic differences, there are very similar risks for us in both counties, such as an ageing population.

## Operational and organisational resources

- We both have a similar number of fire stations with an almost identical balance of full-time and on-call firefighters.
- We also have similar organisational approaches towards balancing prevention, protection and response activities so that we are of most value to the public.
- We will soon share a joint command and control centre that will manage 999 calls from our counties that will be based in Wiltshire. We are both members of the sub-regional command and control project. This project is aiming to bring together the way in which we receive information on and deal with fires and rescues across Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Devon and Somerset. We are also part of a wider partnership aiming to bring together our main operational policies and procedures.
- Much of our fleet and equipment is very similar if not the same.

## Financial and political

- Financially we are both in the bottom 25% of fire and rescue services in terms of the levels of government grant payments. We receive very similar levels of income through the council tax system and need to become and continue to be financially secure.
- The difference in the money we raise locally from the council tax system between us is less than £3. This could be made equal across both services via a single amount that we would collect locally.
- Our fire authorities have a very similar political make up.
- See over the page for an overview of both services and see More information for medium-term finance plans.

## The main messages

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**Dorset and Wiltshire are similar operationally, politically and financially.**

**It is a potential combination of equals with the same needs and desires.**

**We are already working together in many areas, including setting up a joint command and control centre.**

**We can continue to have a community focus working with local partners.**



<b>Dorset and Wiltshire</b>			
<b>Socio-economic</b>	<b>Dorset</b>	<b>Wiltshire</b>	<b>Total</b>
Population	774,338	684,028	1,458,366
Area (in hectares)	276,365	348,000	624,365
Number of domestic properties	336,103	280,868	616,971
Number of non-domestic properties	29,331	19,243	48,574
<b>Operational and organisational</b>			
Number of fire stations	26	24	50
On-call fire stations	19	18	37
Number of incidents attended 2012/2013 within county	8,509	6,139	14,648
Total fires	1,870	1,486	3,356
Total accidental domestic property fires	487	322	809
Number of full-time firefighters	210	144	354
Number of on-call firefighters	375 (64%)	337 (66%)	712 (67%)
Number of corporate staff, non-uniformed service delivery and Fire Control	180	145	325
<b>Financial</b>			
Budget 2014/2015	£29.847m	£24.804m	£54.651m
Predicted deficit in 2017/2018 best case (See More information)	£2.3m	£3.1m	£5.4m
Worst case (See More information)	£3.2m	£3.9m	£7.1m
Council tax band D 2014/2015	£66.60	£63.62	Ave. £70.48
Grant per head of population 2014/2015	£15.57	£14.83	Ave. £19.02
<b>Political (as at 30 April 2014)</b>			
Unitary authorities	3	2	5
Number of councillors on the CFA	15	13	28
Political make-up of the CFA	10 Con	9 Con	19 Con
	3 Lib Dems	2 Lib Dems	5 Lib Dems
	1 Labour	1 Labour	2 Labour
	1 Indep.	1 Indep.	2 Indep.



# Future benefits

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## Community

### Response

Combining the authorities, creating a new fire and rescue service and working more closely with our partners, we could find more than twice the savings arising from any other single option. We could achieve in the region of £4million savings each year without any negative effect on front-line services. Indeed, we believe that we could save money and improve the way we do things. At this time there are no plans to cut front-line stations or numbers of firefighters. Under these proposals, response times for fire engines would not increase meaning that fire engines will arrive just as they do now.

### Preventing fires and incidents

By combining expertise and resources, we believe it is possible to do much more and improve our community safety programmes. This proposed combination between us would allow us to do the following.

- With government support, extend to Wiltshire and Swindon the idea of the nationally acclaimed safety centres operating in Bournemouth and Weymouth. Currently 20,000 young people in Dorset visit the two centres each year from across the area. Young people can learn in a safe and controlled environment and become aware of potential everyday dangers and reduce the chance of accidents happening. Communities in Wiltshire and Swindon would then have a significant resource that is not currently available to them at the moment. This will help us deliver wider agendas that our partners such as the police and health service have.
- Increase the number of home safety checks in vulnerable homes across Dorset and Wiltshire from 15,000 to 28,000 (within five years) by restructuring and being more efficient. We would also aim to extend our network of community volunteers who are providing excellent support for us.
- Increase the amount of work we do on fire safety with commercial properties and landlords across Dorset and Wiltshire.
- Strengthen our partnership working by having improved organisational resilience and drawing upon a wider pool of resources and expertise.
- Help attract more funding by being a larger and more influential organisation and being able to work with the private sector to draw in more sponsorship and support for technological improvements.

## The main messages

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Response times would be maintained.

Our work with young people would be strengthened and increased.

The number of safety checks in vulnerable homes would double to 28,000 a year.

Our work with vulnerable people would be strengthened and increased.

Our partnership working would be strengthened.

Our joint bid to the Government would bring new educational safety centres to Wiltshire and Swindon.

Our fire stations would be further opened up to communities to support prevention programmes and local action.

# Partnership working

## General benefits

We enjoy excellent relationships with our partners. We work with a wide variety of organisations in the public, private and voluntary sector to deliver our protection, prevention and response services. It is essential to us that we continue to do this and that this proposal supports this. We believe that by combining fire authorities and working more closely with local authorities, the police and other public services, we would be a stronger partner. In particular, we would want to better allow for and deliver the wider public safety and well-being agenda by working in a more joined-up way with partners. Sharing buildings, expertise and information must be a central part of this. Initiatives such as Wiltshire’s community campuses, Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole’s 'Better Together' and Swindon’s 'One Swindon' agenda would be strengthened by fire-related programmes and services being at the heart of these initiatives. In this way we can really add value and focus on the needs and wants of local people.

## Prevention

We have very wide-ranging programmes of work to help keep communities safe. Like any organisation, the amount of money and number of people that we have is limited. Without radical change to bridge our funding gap, there will be cuts to our resources. By combining with another fire and rescue service we would be able to more than double the savings from any other partnership or 'back-office' integration with our partners. This combination would not exclude the exploration of sharing corporate functions with our partners. This allows us to protect the resources we need to continue the great work we do with our partners.



By combining expertise and resources, we would also be able to better overcome the difficulties that we have by only having a limited number of people who are often juggling too many priorities. By combining our political authorities, we would become the fourth largest stand-alone fire and rescue service in England by station and the sixth largest by budget. This would give us more say and influence and allow us to put more time and effort into getting a government grant and making best use of commercial and sponsorship opportunities. We firmly believe that this proposal would allow us to be a stronger partner, able to do more for the communities we serve.

### **Protection**

We work a lot with local businesses, shops, factories and private landlords to help make these buildings and the people who visit and work in them as safe as possible. Again, our limited resources are often stretched by being two relatively small organisations. By becoming one larger organisation we would be able to improve our efficiency. This would help us deliver more fire-safety activity and to support our partners better.



## Response

We have a wide range of partners that support the planning, management and recovery associated with emergency incidents. We work a great deal with our local resilience forums (LRFs) in planning for major incidents and, where necessary, we set up strategic co-ordinating groups where agencies need to respond in a very co-ordinated way. These relationships must and would continue under this proposal.

As we have said earlier, we often have limited resources, particularly in terms of middle management and strategic management. By making our operational rota more efficient by becoming a larger organisation we would have more resilient arrangements. We would also be able to better share specialist resources such as our high-volume pumping appliances, our technical rescue teams and training and expertise across the two counties.

We would also be able to be a more efficient partner to better support the planning and training activities associated with responding to multi-agency incidents.

To help us work across a larger area, we plan on setting up a small central multi-agency hub in the Salisbury area, central to both services. We have made a bid to the Government to help us fund this. We would use this as a central venue to meet and provide desks for staff to work from to reduce travel costs. Our aim is to offer this as a multi-agency facility to further support our partners. We are already working to create more multi-agency offices on our fire stations for our partners such as the police, ambulance and local council officers. We want to do more with this.

## The main messages

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**By being a small service we do not always have the fall back of lots of resources.**

**By being a larger organisation, we would be able to strengthen our involvement in planning for and managing major incidents.**

**We plan to strengthen our partnerships in community safety working.**

**Our partners would have a more effective fire and rescue service to work with.**

**We would be able to better share specialist vehicles and teams across the two counties.**

**We would be a partner who can significantly support the community agendas and priorities of our constituent councils.**



# Main issues going forward

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## Governance

### **A new combined fire authority**

Combining would mean creating a new combined fire authority (CFA) with legal responsibilities for providing the new fire and rescue service. This would involve a combination order under the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004. This is a relatively quick and easy legal change overseen by the Government.

A new CFA could have the same number of elected members of the two fire authorities that currently oversee our two services. This would mean a membership of 28 councillors. Most CFAs in England have 25 elected members. The political balance of the two existing CFAs overseeing our two services is strikingly similar. The existing number and representation of elected members from Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole, Swindon and Wiltshire on the new CFA will stay the same.

### **Strengthening local accountability**

Creating a new CFA could give rise to opportunities to strengthen the local responsibilities of the new fire and rescue service. Organisational issues such as finance, managing assets and audit could be looked at by a general purpose Audit Committee. Assessing operational performance

and effectiveness could be linked to local areas and communities through localised performance and scrutiny committees. This would mean that the integrated risk-management planning could be more closely matched to local communities and needs. We could strengthen the involvement of our partners by designing our new command structures to fit with local-authority boundaries, area boards and locality teams. Local people, elected members and community groups would have a closer involvement in the work of the new fire and rescue service. People at the local level will be involved in our decision-making and create more local opportunities to reduce risks. This way we would benefit from the insight of local people to develop more focused and creative solutions.

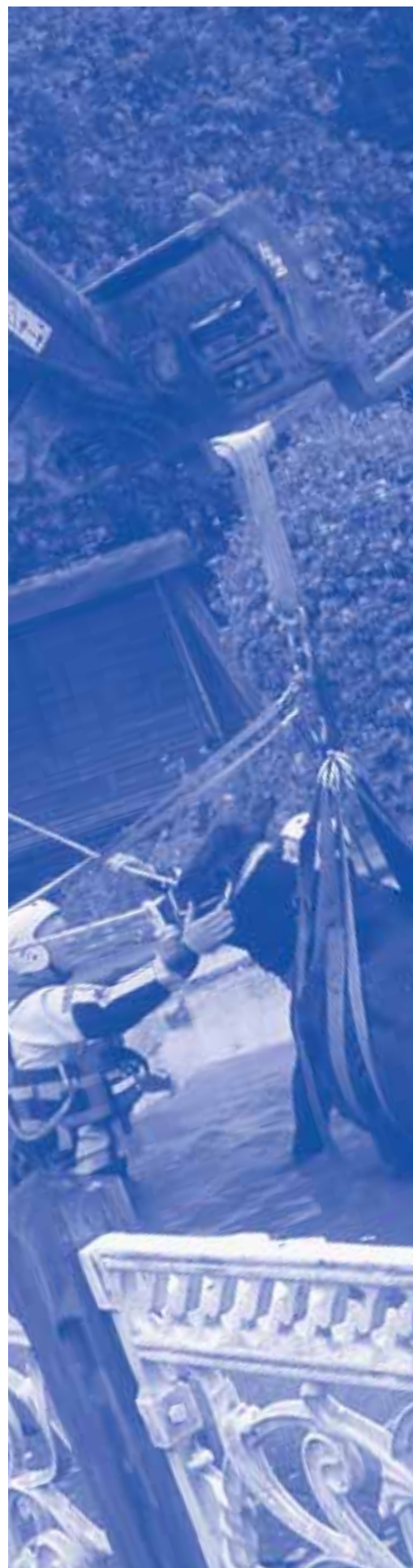
## **Moving to a new combined fire authority**

### **Combination order**

Any formal combination will need a scheme to be agreed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to allow us to create a new combined fire authority. This scheme is put in place using a combination order under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The Secretary of State effectively makes the order if the new combined fire authority increases economy, efficiency and effectiveness, or public safety. Before getting Parliamentary approval, they must consult anyone affected by the order. The process itself is relatively straightforward. The scheme deals with all aspects of creating a single new fire authority out of two existing ones. In particular it must set out:

- **governance and financial arrangements;**
- **the transfer of staff, property, rights and responsibilities;**
- **buying and disposing of land; and**
- **the transfer of contracts and legal agreements.**

The new CFA would be set up by 1 April 2016 to coincide with the new financial year and allow time for the Government to agree to the legal changes. As part of moving towards the new CFA, we would need to put





shadow arrangements in place by creating a shadow CFA. This committee would develop all future policies and plans for the new CFA once it is established. The shadow arrangements would not undermine the existing Dorset and Wiltshire fire authorities. All proposals would need to be approved by our respective combined fire authorities.

As part of the move to the new CFA, the main areas of work that would be needed include:

- **forming the shadow CFA;**
- **agreeing the audit and scrutiny arrangements;**
- **creating a single set of standing orders, constitutional arrangements and other important documents;**
- **agreeing a name for the new CFA and the service; and**
- **appointing a shadow senior management team.**

While the combination order would largely be a matter for government officials, we would need to start working on these local issues soon after it was agreed to combine. The aim would be to have the shadow CFA familiar with the new arrangements and able to propose a budget and integrated risk-management plan ready for 1 April 2016.

### **Transferring corporate-level contracts**

Even though all contracts would be transferred to the new fire authority, any savings that might arise from having single corporate licences and contracts would need to be negotiated with local suppliers. This may involve getting legal and contractual advice during the transition period.

### **Property rights and responsibilities**

Both services have long-standing maintenance programmes with similar maintenance requirements (see Assets and liabilities). When the new CFA is created, all existing property rights and responsibilities would be transferred as part of the formal combination order.

## **The main messages**

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**Creating a new combined fire authority is a relatively straightforward legal change.**

**There are opportunities to strengthen local accountability and involve local partners.**

**Shadow arrangements would need to be put in place to allow for a smooth transition to the new combined fire authority.**

**The new combined fire authority could be made up of the same number and representation of elected members.**

# Staffing

## Current position

Dorset currently employs 765 staff and Wiltshire employs 626. Staff are our most important resource and they will be central to the successful transformation to the new organisation.

## Main issues

### Creating the new organisation

Creating the new organisation would involve developing a detailed structure to achieve the new organisation's vision. The work to identify possible savings for this business case would need to be refined during the detailed planning stage (see section on Managing the change). Over the long term this would involve developing new job descriptions and person specifications with each job evaluated for pay purposes.

### Transferring staff to the new combined fire authority

All staff would transfer to the new employer and be covered by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, commonly referred to as TUPE. Under these regulations an individual's current terms and conditions which form their contract of employment transfer to their new employer. The new organisational structure would need fewer posts than the total numbers currently employed by both services. Managing effectively all staff affected by this is important and needs care and attention. It is anticipated that there will still be a need for internal selection processes to be arranged. We would need processes and support mechanisms to manage this in a timely, considerate and sensitive way. We would also need to support our managers to manage this change.



## The main messages

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**All staff would transfer to the new combined fire authority.**

**We will involve and work closely with representative bodies.**

**Staffing issues will be complicated and we will manage these in a considerate and sensitive way.**

**We need to take a long-term view to developing and maintaining the new culture.**

### **Culture**

To build a new safe, strong and sustainable organisation we would need to develop and maintain an effective and unified culture. Central to the whole process would be the issue of supporting the workforce and keeping them motivated during the change. To get the support of staff and trade unions, they would all be closely involved with this work. We will consider putting in place a staff forum to provide a sounding board for ideas and concerns connected with the change programme. This would also provide an opportunity for elected members to get involved to help lead and support staff through what some will find a difficult period of change.

### **Systems and processes**

Both services use different systems for HR and recording training. The new organisation would need to move towards a joint systems approach. Similarly both services use different providers for payroll, pensions and occupational health services. While these contracts would transfer to the new employer, we would review these providers when the contract is reviewed. We would also need to think carefully about the new organisation's performance management framework which would set out how we plan to manage our workforce. As well as the organisation clearly setting out our expectations of staff, we would also need to advise staff about the conditions in place for them to be able to raise any issues they may have to do with their employment.

# Accommodation

## Current position

Dorset has 26 fire stations, an area office, a service headquarters and a workshop for maintaining its fleet and equipment. In Weymouth there is also a safety centre used mainly by the local community. Dorset has a long-standing arrangement with the Ministry of Defence at West Moors which allows the fire service to provide real-fire training in exchange for providing wider fire cover at the site. We share some of our premises with the police and ambulance services. Dorset has plans to do more with them and local councils and is involved in a strategic group looking at this. Fire stations are open to the public to use on a supervised (and sometimes unsupervised) basis if there is a need in the community.

Wiltshire has 24 fire stations, a service headquarters, an occupational health building and a workshop for maintaining its fleet and equipment. It has a training centre in Devizes and a real-fire behaviour training facility at Kemble, where firefighters can practise putting out fires in a safe environment. Wiltshire has a number of fire stations that it shares with the police and ambulance service. A large number of stations are open for the public to use and there are plans for more community access and support for local partners.

Currently we both have a fire control centre that receives emergency calls and sends staff and fire engines to incidents. In December 2013 we agreed that a joint command and control centre would be set up in Potterne, Wiltshire. The move to the joint centre is expected to be in 2015-2016 depending on a wider project called the Networked Fire Control Services Partnership (NFSCP) project that involves us and the fire and rescue services in Hampshire and Devon and Somerset.

## Main issues

### Property rights and responsibilities

Both services have long-standing maintenance programmes with similar backlogs (see the section on Assets and liabilities). When the new combined authority is created, all existing property rights and responsibilities would be transferred as part of the formal combination order. As part of the shadow arrangements (see the section on Governance), we need to develop a property asset plan to support the integrated risk-management plan.

### Strategic multi-agency hub

Dorset and Wiltshire are both counties with large rural areas. Although there are some faster journey times, road and rail links are often hampered. To improve the efficiency of the new authority, we want to look to the future in two ways. Firstly, we would like to invest in mobile working and technology such as video conferencing to reduce staff travel costs and time. Secondly, we are exploring the possibility of building a small centre in the Salisbury area which would have five main purposes. It would:

- **be a headquarters for key staff to lead and co-ordinate the new authority;**
- **be a meeting place for the new combined fire authority and for staff who could meet more centrally to avoid long travel times;**
- **be a place to support our joint working and partners who may want to use this building (this would also help to improve partnership working between agencies across the Dorset and Wiltshire border);**



## The main messages

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All existing property rights and responsibilities would be transferred to the new combined authority.

Investments in a modest central building would improve efficiency and support a new safety centre for Wiltshire and Swindon.

Dorset's PFI is fully funded and any unused space may be leased.

A property plan would need to be developed to support future needs.

- be a co-ordinating centre where we could deal with large incidents (this might also benefit our partners involved in the local resilience forums); and
- provide a new safety centre for young people and others (see Future Benefits – Community).

### Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

Most of the buildings are owned by the respective fire authorities. Dorset has a private finance initiative which means that it has a contract with a private company who provide its headquarters, area office and two fire stations. This is paid for by a long-term government grant and by Dorset Fire Authority. In 2034, Dorset Fire Authority will then own the majority of the buildings which will become an asset. The financial arrangement is not a cause of concern for Dorset or our auditors. However, one downside is that it does mean we are somewhat restricted if we want to change the use of the buildings or make major adaptations. Discussions with government officials have shown that any empty space can be leased to bring in some income.

# Information and communications technology (ICT)

## Current position

Although we are both fire and rescue services, we have developed in different ways and our information and communications technology (ICT) reflects this. We have carried out an assessment of our infrastructure (in other words, network, servers and specialist software) and the user systems (the software we use to manage our staff, finance and assets).

Most of our infrastructure is the same. In fact, many important elements such as our network were bought together. We also have a number of projects that are helping us to come together. These include the sub-regional Network Fire Control Services Partnership which aims to develop a network of fire controls that operate in the same way and so can support one another when we have technical or operational issues. Other projects include the regional information security project.

The main difference between us is the software we use. While we both mainly use Microsoft products, Dorset has developed a number of in-house systems using IBM, while Wiltshire relies more on commercial systems. There are many commercial systems that we both have but we are using them in subtly different ways or only using some of the available modules.



## The main messages

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**Much of our hardware and software is the same but there are still significant differences.**

**We are both involved in significant projects helping to bring together our ICT.**

**We need to develop a detailed plan if the combination is approved.**

### Main issues

#### Improving our ICT infrastructure

While our infrastructure will need to be brought together, we also need it to help make the new authority as efficient as possible. We want to make sure that our staff make best use of technology to reduce unnecessary travel or processes. To do this we would need to bring the two infrastructures together and, in some cases, improve our ICT infrastructure. We have submitted a funding bid to the Government to help us on this issue.

#### Different software

The differences in our overall software mean that we have a different mix of in-house systems and commercially bought systems. In itself this is not a problem as we can use both. However, as we join together and bring together our teams, they would need to be using single systems to be efficient. We would need a detailed programme of prioritised work if the decision to combine is agreed.

#### Networked Fire Control Services Partnership project

This existing project is aiming to bring together the way in which we receive information on, and deal with, fires and rescues across Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Devon and Somerset. We would need to bring together these systems in line with this existing contract. This would need to be carefully managed to make sure that both the needs of this project and the wider combination are brought together.

# Fleet and equipment

## Current position

Both authorities have a similar type and size of vehicle fleet. We each have around 85 operational response vehicles that are crewed by firefighters and around 80 further vehicles. Both fleets are in good condition as they are both repaired and maintained to the same standards. Both services have effective systems in place to manage their vehicles to support front-line services and organisational needs.

Both authorities provide firefighters with a wide range of operational equipment, and personal protective equipment, to make sure they can deliver a safe and effective service to the community. The equipment provided across both counties is all very similar and much of it is identical. The equipment is all in good condition and it is repaired and maintained to very similar standards. We both have systems in place to manage equipment. Dorset has 20,000 items and Wiltshire has 17,000 items. There are many thousands more disposable items that are needed and issued.

Both have a network of fire hydrants in place to make sure firefighters have access to an adequate supply of water for firefighting when needed. Systems are in place to manage these hydrants with Dorset managing 13,500 and Wiltshire managing 15,000.





## Main issues

### Resilience

Both organisations are managing assets reasonably well and providing good value for money. However, it is true to say that both organisations are struggling to manage assets effectively. The possible combination offers the opportunity to improve effectiveness without increasing costs that would usually be associated with this course of action.

### Moving to a more strategic approach to managing assets

We do need to make sure we adopt one way of managing our assets. The work to develop a new, larger organisation will allow for a completely fresh look at how we manage assets. We may decide at a later date to adopt standards recommended by the Institute of Asset Management. The size of the new organisation should offer the possibility of further efficiencies, from economies of scale that are currently not available.

### Further standardising opportunities

Combining the two authorities would allow us to reduce our assets and move to a situation where there is even greater similarity between the vehicles and equipment being used. This has many advantages including improved working at incidents leading to increased operational efficiency and firefighter safety, savings from a reduction in the amount of time needed to train firefighters and savings from a reduction in the cost of purchase, repair and maintenance.

## The main messages

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**Both services have similar-sized fleet and comparable equipment.**

**Both have effective maintenance systems in place.**

**There are opportunities to be more effective in managing our assets.**

**There would be opportunities to reduce costs by standardising what we buy.**

# Finance and audit

## Current position

By law, each combined fire authority must appoint a treasurer who is a qualified accountant. Dorset has an independent treasurer provided through Dorset County Council who works closely with the Head of Financial Services. The council also provides a number of other financial support services including payroll, pensions and accountancy support and treasury management. Wiltshire has a Brigade Manager of Finance and Governance who oversees all aspects of financial management, although payroll and pensions are provided by another organisation. We each use different financial systems.

## Main issues

### Moving to a single finance system

In Dorset, the current computerised finance system is provided by Dorset County Council but it will not be able to support it after 2016. We have held back from replacing this system while we develop this business case. (See the section on Managing the change.) There is an opportunity to move to Wiltshire's finance system with a very modest financial investment.

### Single financial policies

The new combined fire authority must have clear financial policies and associated governance arrangements (See the section on Governance). The shadow authority would need to decide on a single set of financial and contractual standing orders and constitutional arrangements for the new CFA.

### Financial providers

We need to have a single financial management system in place. Given our need to invest in a new finance system, realistically this would mean the authority adopting Wiltshire's financial system. The existing financial support services provided by Dorset County Council would need to be transferred to the single management team. By merging financial departments and having one approach, we believe that there are considerable ongoing savings to be made.

### Insurance

Like all organisations we need to have insurance. Our current insurance arrangements are different, with different levels of cover and insurance excesses in place. As part of the combination, we would need to bring these arrangements together. We would also need to make sure we involve the existing providers about the transition phases and associated arrangements for managing risk.

## The main messages

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### Auditors

Each treasurer must put in place internal controls to help make sure that their organisation is well-managed. The treasurer appoints internal auditors to monitor and test the effectiveness of these controls. Dorset's internal audit service is currently provided by the South West Audit Partnership and Wiltshire's is currently provided by Swindon Borough Council. A single internal audit provider will be needed for the new combined fire authority. Each authority also has an external auditor, appointed by the Government, to oversee financial and governance arrangements. Both authorities currently have the same external auditor.

### Pensions and payroll

We both currently have other organisations providing pensions and payroll services for us. As part of the combination, we would need to move to a single provider to make sure that we have the most cost-effective contracts

### Procurement

As a combined authority, we would be able to increase our buying power and offer much larger contract opportunities to our suppliers. This should allow us to gain from better prices and better customer service. Over the past few months, we have developed a single contracts register and a forward procurement plan. This may allow us to take advantage of opportunities to buy things together and to make sure that we do not invest in doing things differently.

**We would need to set up a single finance system to support the combination. Dorset needs to move from its current system in the near future.**

**We need to agree on one set of financial, contractual and procurement policies and procedures as part of the shadow arrangements.**

**Contractual arrangements for things such as insurance and managing pensions need to be brought together.**

**Corporate savings may arise both from having single arrangements and more opportunities for buying goods and services.**

# Assets and liabilities

## Introduction

All assets (such as fire stations, fire engines) and liabilities (debts) would be transferred to the new combined fire authority. Audited balance sheets show that Dorset have £20.3 million worth of assets and £11.5 million of debts (not including pensions and the private finance initiative) and Wiltshire have £20.4 million of assets and £5.2 million debts (not including pensions). Dorset have comparatively higher levels of borrowing which have been allowed for in the medium-term finance plan. Dorset has set aside some money to use in the future to reduce its capital borrowing. Dorset's private finance initiative is a joint contract with Dorset Police and a private company which provide its headquarters, area office and two fire stations. This is paid for by a long-term government grant and by the fire authority. In 2034, all these buildings will become owned by the fire authority and Dorset Police. The level of borrowing and the PFI are not a cause of concern for Dorset or the auditors.

## Fleet

Both fleets are in good condition as they are both repaired and maintained to the same standards. Both services have systems in place to manage their vehicles. The average age of the fleet is set out below.

Type of vehicle	Dorset average age (years)	Wiltshire average age (years)
Fire engines (including reserves)	8.6	5.7
Off-road light vehicles	6.7	8.0
Cars for officers	4.4	2.2
Special vehicles	7.7	8.2
Support vans and cars	11 (will be 8.5 later this year)	4.7



## The main messages

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**Operational assets such as fleet and equipment are well looked after with no significant debts.**

**Property is fit for purpose with similar levels of property maintenance needs for both services.**

**Both authorities have no significant debts or unexpected liabilities.**

**Dorset's PFI is fully funded and any unused space may be leased.**

### Equipment

The equipment is all in good condition and it is repaired and maintained to very similar standards. Both services have systems in place to manage equipment with Dorset actively managing 20,000 items and Wiltshire 17,000.

### Property

Both estates are fit for purpose in that they are operationally effective, safe and keep to the law. Both services have systems in place to manage their estates and, among a range of many other things, they record the work needed to be done at each site. Currently Dorset have identified that £1.75 million needs to be spent on the estate over the next five years, while the figure for Wiltshire is £2 million.

### Insurance, legal action and employment claims

There are no significant insurance, legal or employment claim issues for either authority at this time. Like all fire and rescue services we are currently preparing our final accounts. Any changes to our financial assets and debts will be reflected in the final business case that we will consider in November 2014.

Our accounts for 2012/2013 (that are audited by the same auditor) provide assurance that both authorities have proper arrangements in place for being financially efficient and effective. Over the next few months we will be working with our auditors to make sure that the new authority will not be taking on unexpected or unsustainable debts without appropriate financial reserves or insurance cover. Our work so far shows that there are no major concerns in this area.



# Financial appraisal

## Revenue savings

### Response

The work so far has identified that the combination could find savings of in the region of £4 million each year. These savings arise from reducing duplication in management and support areas; changing the way we do things and from other corporate savings such as having one software licence instead of two. A summary of the estimated total savings is set out as follows.

	Dorset & Wiltshire baseline cost	Idea of the new authority cost	Likely mid-point saving	Likely upper-point saving
Senior management	£1,215,000	£865,000	<b>£350,000</b>	<b>£402,500</b>
FDS and technical management support	£8,644,666	£6,319,821	<b>£2,324,845</b>	<b>£2,673,572</b>
Corporate departments	£15,776,928	£14,804,166	<b>£972,762</b>	<b>£1,118,676</b>
Other corporate savings	£940,600	£857,500	<b>£83,100</b>	<b>£95,565</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£26,577,194</b>	<b>£22,846,487</b>	<b>£3,730,707</b>	<b>£4,290,313</b>

## Capital savings and opportunities

Between the services there are plans for more than £20 million of capital investment over the next five years. We expect to make savings going forward as we reduce the number of assets we have and take advantage of our increased buying power to buy the same things at lower cost. For instance we have already agreed common specifications for fire appliances and other specialist vehicles. We should save up to £20,000 on each fire appliance. So, as Dorset's capital programme alone includes 30 of these over the next six years, this will save as much as £600,000.

## Investments

In some cases we can make these savings quickly but most may take up to two or three years to deliver as we need to be realistic on how quickly new arrangements can be put in place. We need to balance the savings needed to prevent the financial reserves running out, with the speed of change and need to maintain important services. Changes in ICT systems, time for legal processes to be followed and the money that we have available to invest will be important limits on the speed of change.

We are currently talking to government officials and politicians about how we create a single fire-precept (which would be the part of the council tax raised locally which pays for our services) across Dorset and Wiltshire.



The main costs are related to such things as:

- **managing the change programme;**
- **changing the software systems and ICT infrastructure;**
- **creating a single financial charge (fire-precept) between us that is collected locally;**
- **rebranding of such things as fire stations, work wear and fire engines;**
- **redundancy, redeployment and retraining;**
- **designing and evaluating jobs;**
- **protecting pay and the costs relating to staff reductions; and**
- **developing a new culture.**

There are four main sources to help fund this change.

### **1. Financial reserves**

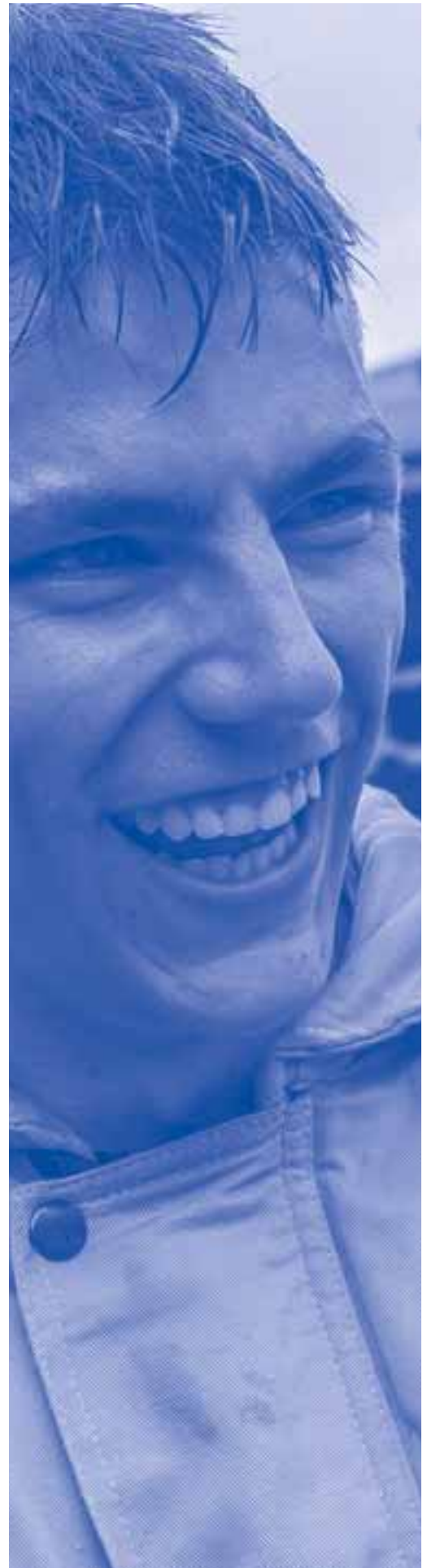
Both services have set aside savings (reserves) of approximately £1.5 million (depending on the year-end outcome as at 31 March 2014) to help pay for this change. As well as using our reserves, we would also aim to reinvest any savings from early action to help pay for this change.

### **2. Reinvested savings**

Depending on the speed of change, we would reinvest any savings to support further change.

### **3. Using existing spending**

Both services have existing budgets to pay for our existing services. These budgets can be brought together to help fund things together to achieve the aims of the combination.





## The main messages

**One-off savings could be considerable. For example in Dorset over £600,000 could be saved on fire engines over the next six years.**

**Some investments will be needed to support the combination. A funding bid to the Government has been submitted to help pay for some of this.**

**In the region of £4 million each year can be saved by combining and working more closely with local authorities, the Police and other public services.**

### 4. Government support

Both services sent a significant bid to the Government to help us meet some of these early costs. The bid includes bringing together important elements of our ICT, accommodation and programme-management costs. We will know the outcome of this in November 2014. We are also in discussions with the Government to look at how we can make the amount of money we collect locally the same for Dorset and Wiltshire.

During the summer we will be developing an investment and savings plan which will be considered by the fire authority in November 2014. In doing this, we will look carefully at our assumptions used for planning for the workforce to make the most of the opportunities to move forwards without spending unnecessarily.

We will follow HM Treasury guidance to make sure that we give the best and worst case savings and investment estimates. We will also produce a high-level risk register linked to the risks related to delivering the combination.

### Future opportunities to make further savings

We have begun a prioritised approach to assessing how we could bridge the remaining financial gap we expect. In the first stage we have carried out a broad analysis to see if we could make financial savings by making best use of crewing efficiencies of full-time firefighters while also maintaining fire engines in all of their current locations and making sure that they are still immediately available during the same periods of time as they currently are. With a larger pool of full-time firefighters who would be under the same contractual arrangements, we should be able to develop and deliver more resilient and efficient crewing arrangements. Depending on more detailed analysis over the coming weeks, early indications suggest savings of up to £1.5 million could be available.



# Managing the change

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## Overview

Even though it is a combination of equals, like all significant organisational change, the process of making this change will not be straightforward. It will need detailed planning and careful management. There will be three phases to this combination.

### Phase 1 – Detailed planning (2014/2015)

If the combination is agreed, a lot of detailed work will be needed. A programme team from our existing staff will need to be created to oversee the change. This change will involve a large number of projects which all depend on each other. Because of this, we will need to put in place effective arrangements for managing the programme and project. This team will need to work together and communicate the change. There may also need to be dedicated specialists to add capacity to existing teams during this period of change.

Although the new combined fire authority would come into force on 1 April 2016, it will not be possible to have everything in place by then. The aim will be to have everything we need to run the new service from this date. The pace of change would also need to balance the need to make savings against the need to maintain services and deliver major projects.

Some of the things we need to do in the early stages will be creating the top team and arrangements for overseeing the change. During this phase there will also need to be some high-level policy decisions made in important policy areas such as HR and service delivery.

There will be some legal, contractual and financial restrictions that we will need to carefully consider. We must also develop a prioritised programme to bring together our changing ICT systems to make sure that the new service runs smoothly. This plan will also need to line up with wider projects such as the Networked Fire Control Services Partnership project.

### Phase 2 – The move itself (2015/2016)

Once the arrangements are in place for overseeing the change and there is a clear and fully costed action plan in place, we can transfer staff and introduce new ways of working. This will involve working closely with staff and managers and their representative bodies. A range of options will be discussed with staff and their representative bodies to reduce staffing levels. The priority will be to keep enough skilled staff to meet the requirements of the new fire authority. During this period, we will develop a new corporate plan, integrated risk-management plan, medium-term finance plan and a number of important strategies. These will all set out how the new authority will prioritise the work of the new service and deliver the necessary change from 1 April 2016 onwards.

### Phase 3 – Consolidation (2016 onwards)

Following the legal transfer of staff, there will be a period of perhaps two to three years where new systems and ways of working will be introduced. We will also need to deal with any cultural differences between us through such actions as creating a common leadership and management programme. To help make sure that the performance of the new service is as consistent as possible, we may want to follow quality standards and assessment frameworks. These may be in such areas as operational assessment, health and safety, asset management and equality and diversity.

## The main messages

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**We will need to carefully plan for and prioritise how we manage the change.**

**Not all of the change will be completed by the time the new combined fire authority is set up on 1 April 2016.**

**Change will often need to be matched to other factors such as contractual commitments and wider projects.**



# Summary

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## Overview

Like all public services, we are facing extremely challenging times. By 2017/2018, Dorset needs to find further savings each year of between £2.3 million and £3.2 million from a £30 million budget. This is equivalent to 60 to 86 full-time firefighters. Wiltshire needs yearly savings of between £3.1 million and £3.9 million from a £25 million budget. This is equivalent to 83 to 105 full-time firefighters.

Without large-scale change, there will be very substantial cuts to our emergency-response arrangements. Fire stations and appliances may need to be significantly downgraded or lost and we will need to considerably reduce the work we do to educate and keep vulnerable people safe.

We work a great deal in partnership with local authorities, police and other agencies and we want this to continue and be built on. Corporate and 'back-office' savings cannot solve the financial problem. By including some of these functions within local councils or the police, we will only find half of our available savings. This will leave us still facing very difficult and damaging choices.

By reducing our joint spending on management, corporate costs and cutting out the duplication in fire-specific functions, we can find over twice the savings than from any other single option available to us. After exploring a range of options, we believe that by combining the political combined fire authorities and working closer with local authorities, the police and other public services we will be a safe, strong and sustainable organisation for partners to work with. This proposed combination will still leave us facing some difficult choices in the future, but by being a larger organisation we will have more time and options before us.

Our work so far in developing this draft business case has shown that we can best meet our aims by combining the two existing fire authorities and working more closely with local authorities, the police and other public services. By doing this we could be an effective partner working with these organisations to deliver joined-up services focused on the needs and wants of local people. By working with larger organisations we can share support costs, draw on expertise that they may have and continue our programme of sharing our buildings. We could be a stronger partner by avoiding large-scale cuts to front-line services and by working with others to share our expertise, enthusiasm, information and advice to make a real difference to the people that need our services the most.

We want to do much more with our partners to help deliver innovative and exciting new programmes to improve the safety and well-being of the people we all serve. A combination of the authorities would allow us to better support community campuses in Wiltshire, Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole's 'Better Together' and Swindon's 'One Swindon' agenda, that are bringing together agencies around the needs of local people. In forming the new combined fire authority there is a real opportunity to strengthen local responsibility and community involvement. The performance and local design of the new service could be scrutinised through local performance and scrutiny committees. These committees could involve elected councillors from the combined fire authority as well as co-opted members from the political parties. Local community groups and agencies could become more directly involved and given the power to help shape the service to help develop local solutions to local problems.



The following benefits arise from combining our political fire authorities and creating a single fire and rescue service for Dorset and Wiltshire.

<p><b>Safe</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>By making the most of our saving opportunities, front-line services will be further protected from otherwise very damaging cuts.</b></li> <li>● <b>The number of home-safety checks across Dorset and Wiltshire will rise from 15,000 to 28,000 each year.</b></li> <li>● <b>The amount of work that we do with private landlords and those that own and manage factories, shops and other commercial buildings will be increased across Dorset and Wiltshire.</b></li> <li>● <b>By investing in safety education centres in Wiltshire and Swindon, a further 20,000 young people will be able to learn about home and road safety.</b></li> <li>● <b>We will be able to continue to build on our work with troubled families and young people who need support to make better life choices to reduce antisocial behaviour and help them get a job.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Strong</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>By avoiding large-scale cuts, we will be a stronger partner for local authorities, police, ambulance and other agencies.</b></li> <li>● <b>We will be able to build on our unique presence in local communities to work in a joined-up way to protect people from fires and other incidents such as flooding.</b></li> <li>● <b>We will be a larger and much more influential organisation with a stronger voice for our councillors from Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole, Swindon and Wiltshire.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainable</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>We will be able to find in the region of £4 million savings each year without affecting response services. This is more than twice the amount from any other single option available to us.</b></li> <li>● <b>Our support departments will be better able to cope with staff absences or negative events.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Our larger size will help us improve our economies of scale, giving us better buying power.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>We will have more, and potentially less damaging, options to meet any financial shortfalls which are left.</b></li> </ul>

Over the next few months we will be looking to develop a detailed investment plan to achieve these savings. We will also be developing an outline implementation plan and risk register. We will continue to work with the Government to ask for their support to help us find some of this investment. We will also continue to work with our auditors and have experts check and confirm our assumptions and plans. The final business case will be considered by the separate combined fire authorities in November 2014.

To support this decision, we will run a wide-ranging consultation exercise between 21 July and 20 October 2014. This will be widely advertised across Dorset and Wiltshire and involve a large number of public focus groups, surveys and meetings with business and voluntary sectors. We will also be further involving our staff and their representatives. You can get more information on this from our websites and through public buildings such as libraries.

## The main messages

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**More than twice the savings arise from a combination between fire services than from any other single option.**

**Combining fire authorities and working closer with local authorities, the police and other public services is our preferred option.**

**Any complicated change will result in delays. And financial savings are already being relied on in Wiltshire to set a budget.**

**Significant cuts to front-line services can be avoided by finding twice the savings.**

**Emergency response times will be unaffected.**

**Work partnerships will be strengthened by avoiding damaging cuts and combining resources.**

**Public consultation will be between 21 July and 20 October 2014 and involve local people, partners, business and voluntary sector leaders.**

**If we combine fire authorities, we will still face some difficult choices in the future, but more time and options would be available to us.**



## Glossary of terms

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<b>Back office</b>	This is a term sometimes used to refer to the important work done by supporting departments.
<b>Capital finance</b>	A budget to buy a specific item or asset.
<b>Combined fire authority</b>	A stand-alone fire authority not forming part of a county or metropolitan council. Membership is made up of councillors from county and borough councils who are chosen by them.
<b>Combination order</b>	This is a legal document agreed by Parliament to create a combined fire authority.
<b>Dorset</b>	All references to Dorset refer to the area served by Dorset Fire and Rescue Service. This covers the area served by Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council and Borough of Poole.
<b>Financial reserves</b>	One-off savings that have been put aside to fund specific issues or unexpected events.



<b>Flexi-duty officers</b>	These are specialist operational fire officers who oversee complicated fires and rescues.
<b>Fire-precept</b>	The amount of money that our CFAs need local councils to collect through the council tax system to run fire and rescue services.
<b>Front-line services</b>	Firefighters and fire service staff working to protect people in their area. They can be uniformed or non-uniformed.
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communication technology. ICT refers to technology that provide access to information through telecommunications. It is similar to information technology (IT), but also includes the internet, wireless networks, mobile phones, and other communication methods.
<b>Integrated risk management plan</b>	A legal requirement placed on fire authorities to produce a plan to prevent, protect and respond to all risks in their area which could be expected.
<b>Local resilience forums</b>	A group of emergency responders and specific supporting agencies. It is a requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
<b>Networked Fire Control Services Partnership project</b>	This existing project is aiming to bring together the way in which we receive information on, and deal with, fires and rescues across Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Devon and Somerset.
<b>On-call firefighter</b>	A firefighter who responds to incidents and supports prevention work as they are needed. They return home or to their employers after the incident.
<b>Organisational resilience</b>	The ability of an organisation to maintain services during periods of difficulties.
<b>Private finance initiative</b>	A method of providing funds from major capital investment where firms are contracted to complete and manage projects. Public services are leased to the public and government who make a yearly payment to the private company.
<b>Revenue</b>	Ongoing financial income that a fire authority normally receives from either the Government or that it collects locally.
<b>Wiltshire</b>	All references to Wiltshire refer to the area served by Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service. This covers Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council.

# More information

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The following documents are available on our website or you can ask us for a copy.

- 1 Safer 2020 A strategic assessment of Dorset and Wiltshire**
- 2 Expanded vision statement**
- 3 Public consultation leaflets for Dorset and Wiltshire**

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All comments on this draft business case should be emailed to [fire.consultation@gmail.com](mailto:fire.consultation@gmail.com) or sent to the relevant contact.





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