Community Risk Management Plan Consultation Analysis

Introduction

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) are preparing their statutory service plan, the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), for 2025-2030. This five-year plan sets out identified fire and safety risks in Surrey as well as how resources will be implemented to meet and mitigate these risks.

A key aspect of this plan was to present elements of the CRMP to Surrey's residents, those travelling through/working in and SFRS staff so that they can help shape the plan as part of a statutory consultation.

As part of the CRMP timeline, the final analysis of the CRMP Consultation Survey was completed by the Research Intelligence Unit (RIU) for a Service Leadership Team workshop in September.

Methodology

The consultation survey was hosted on Surrey County Council's (SCC) Surrey Says survey platform and remained open for a 3-month period.

Initially launched on Tuesday 7 May 2024, the consultation survey was paused between midnight on Monday 27 May 2024, until midnight Thursday 4 July 2024, due to legal and governance advice following announcement of the 2024 General Election. Public responses were not accepted during this period, however, SFRS staff were able to provide their feedback during this period via a staff only duplicate consultation survey. This resulted in the deadline for all consultation responses was subsequently extended to midnight on Friday 6 September, to ensure a full 3-month consultation for the public.

A mixed methods approach was undertaken to capture residents' feedback using numbers (residents' ratings, levels of agreement) and words (residents' open text comments) for greater rigour, deeper insight, and more robust findings.

A total of **511 residents and staff** took part in the SFRS CRMP 2024 consultation.

Survey completion rate

A survey's "completion rate" compares the number of respondents who completed the CRMP consultation survey with the number of residents who started but abandoned the survey before completion. Whilst these figures are only indicative (e.g. it's not possible to identify returning respondents) the surveys' completion rates (below) are highly favourable when considering research industry standards (e.g. surveys of 15+ questions typically obtain 41.9% completion rates, Survicate, August 2024) and positively reflects on consultation survey quality, and its ease of completion for participating residents and staff.

The main CRMP consultation survey (for both public and staff) saw a completion rate of 51.4% (511 complete surveys to 484 incomplete survey responses).

The staff-only CRMP consultation survey (for SFRS staff only) saw a completion rate of 56.4% (93 complete to 72 incomplete).
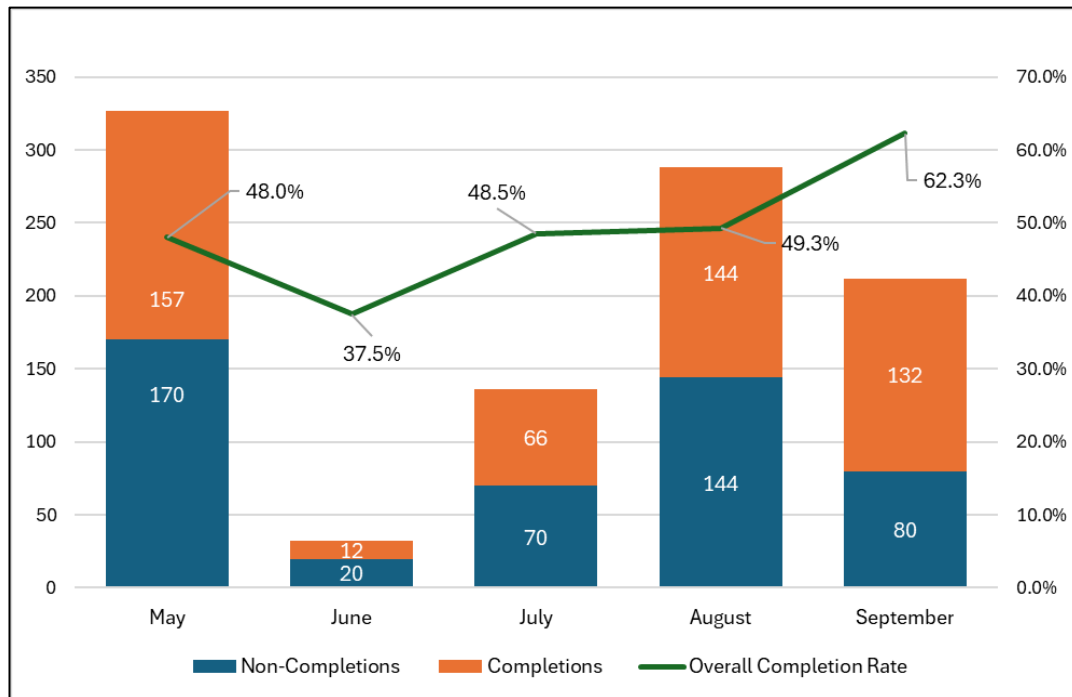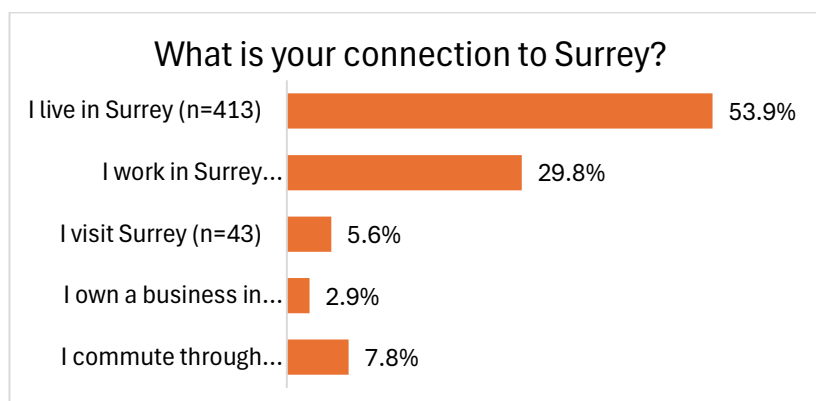

A survey's "response rate" compares the number of responses obtained with the size of the population of interest. The SFRS Staff response rate was 20.4% (143 responses from ca. 700 employees) which is deemed acceptable according to research industry guides of 5-30%, and approaches an excellent response level (Kantar, n.d.). For the overall CRMP Consultation (public and staff) response rate estimates were not feasible because of sample parameter fluidity. However when compared to other Surrey County
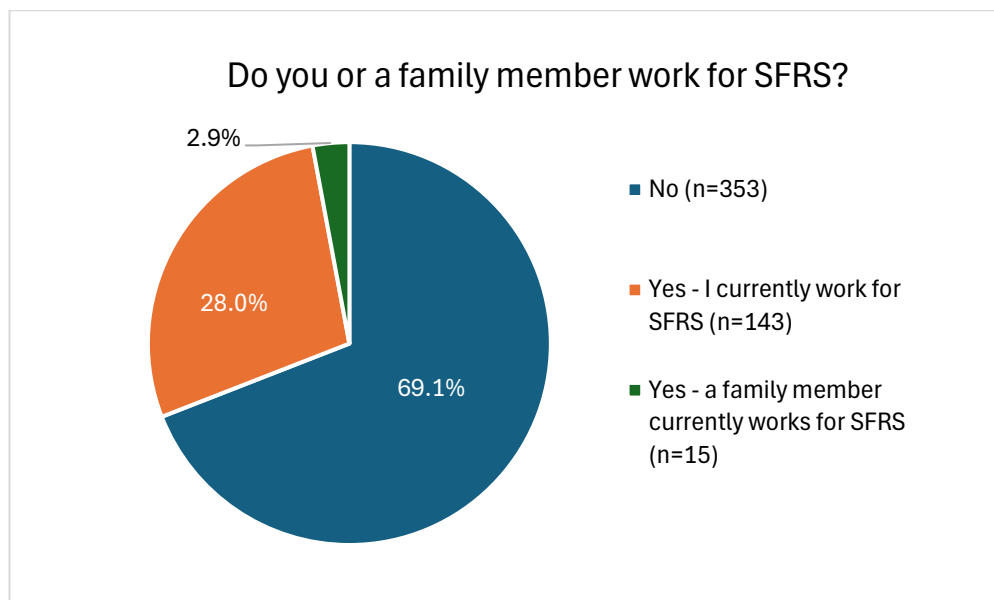
Council (SCC) county-wide surveys (e.g. the 2023-2024 Draft Budget Survey), the response level is good.

Who we heard from

In answer to the question 'what is your connection to Surrey?' residents were invited to select more than one answer to capture cases where an individual might both work and live in Surrey.
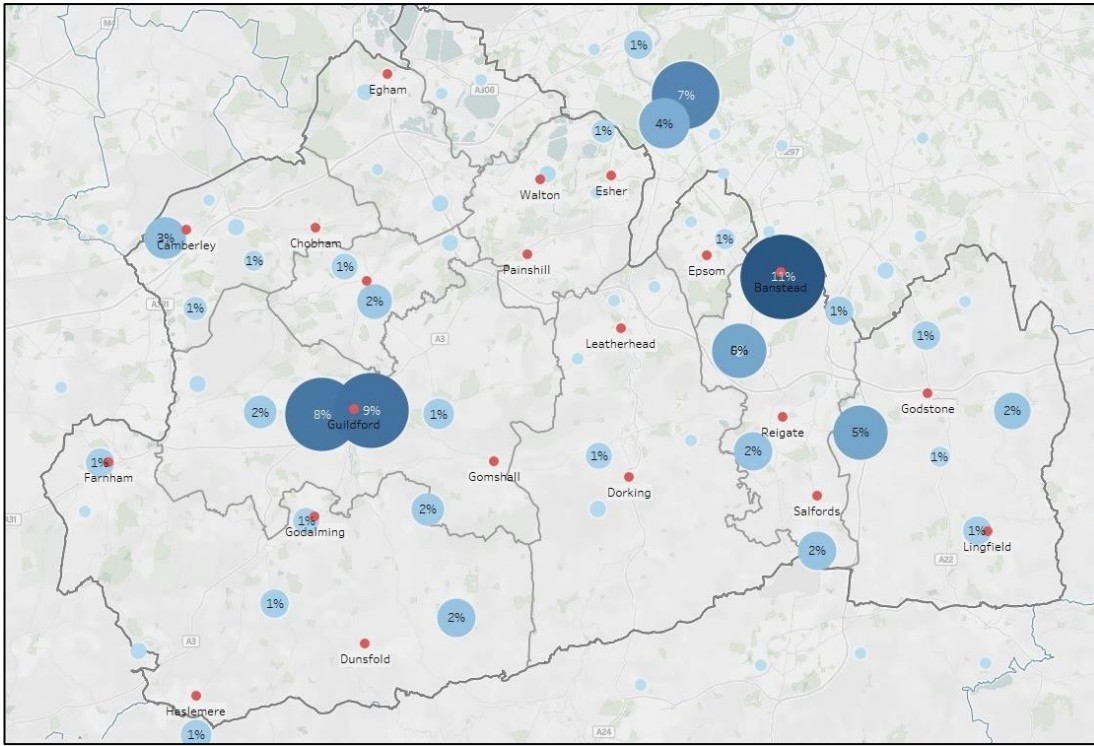
What is your connection to Surrey?

I live in Surrey (n=413)	53.9%
I work in Surrey...	29.8%
I visit Surrey (n=43)	5.6%
I own a business in...	2.9%
I commute through...	7.8%

In answer to the question 'do you or a family member work for SFRS?':

Do you or a family member work for SFRS?

- No (n=353) — 69.1%
- Yes - I currently work for SFRS (n=143) — 28.0%
- Yes - a family member currently works for SFRS (n=15) — 2.9%
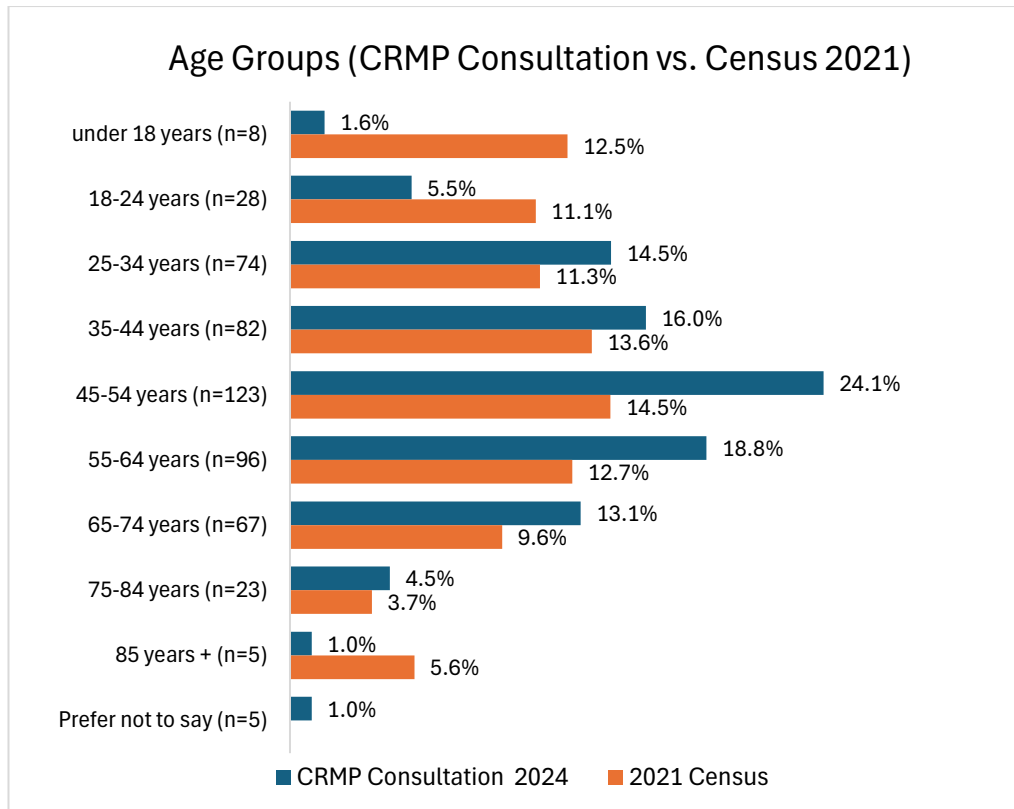
In answer to the question relating to the respondents post code we found:

- 17.2% from Guildford
- 11.1% from Banstead
- 11.1% from Kingston-upon-Thames
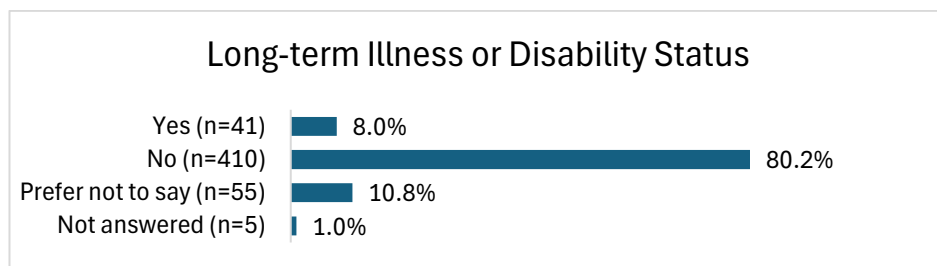- 6.9% from Redhill and Reigate

- 4.6% from Tadworth
- 2.7% from Camberley
- 2.3% from Cranleigh
- 2.3% from Horley
- The remaining 41.7% were from post codes below 10 responses.

In relation to age, we saw the below responses:

Age Groups (CRMP Consultation vs. Census 2021)

Age Group	CRMP Consultation 2024	2021 Census
under 18 years (n=8)	1.6%	12.5%
18-24 years (n=28)	5.5%	11.1%
25-34 years (n=74)	14.5%	11.3%
35-44 years (n=82)	16.0%	13.6%
45-54 years (n=123)	24.1%	14.5%
55-64 years (n=96)	18.8%	12.7%
65-74 years (n=67)	13.1%	9.6%
75-84 years (n=23)	4.5%	3.7%
85 years + (n=5)	1.0%	5.6%
Prefer not to say (n=5)	1.0%	

Respondents with a long-term illness or disability status saw a response rate of:

Long-term Illness or Disability Status

- Yes (n=41): 8.0%
- No (n=410): 80.2%
- Prefer not to say (n=55): 10.8%
- Not answered (n=5): 1.0%

In terms of sexual orientation, we saw responses from:

Sex / Gender (CRMP Consultation vs. Census 2021)

- Female (n=195): 38.2% (CRMP Consultation 2024), 51.3% (Census 2021)
- Male (n=263): 51.5% (CRMP Consultation 2024), 48.7% (Census 2021)
- Other (n=3): 0.6%
- Prefer not to say...: 9.8%

■ CRMP Consultation 2024 ■ Census 2021
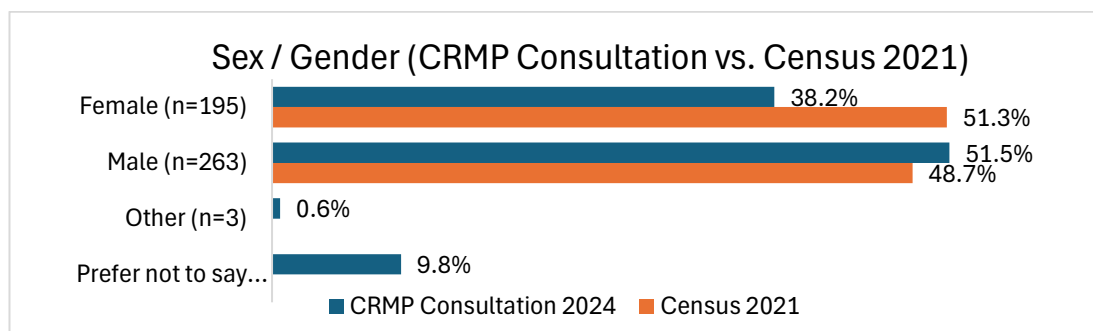
Ethnicity saw the below response rate:

- 76.1% White – British, English, Northern Irish, Scottish or Welsh
- 1.4% White – Irish
- 0.4% White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- 3.1% other White background
- 1% any other mixed or multiple ethnic background
- 0.4% White and Asian
- 0.2% White and Black African
- 0.2% White and Black Caribbean
- 0.8% any other Asian background
- 0.8% Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
- 0.6% Asian or Asian British – Indian

Communications and engagement activity

To encourage resident participation with the CRMP Consultation a range of communication and engagement activities were conducted both online and in the community at roadshow events across Surrey. The campaign, in numbers, is outlined below:

38 roadshow events with the public and other stakeholders throughout all 11 District and Boroughs, specialist sessions in the areas named within the proposals.
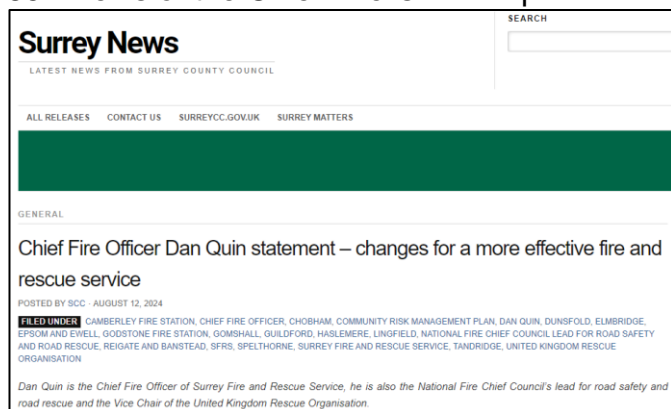
86 organic (not paid-for) social media posts via Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter), which resulted in:

- 57k people reached
- 6.4k video views
- 995 link clicks

8 targeted social media adverts via Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, which resulted in:

- 67.6k people reached
- 20.2k video views
- 2.3k link clicks

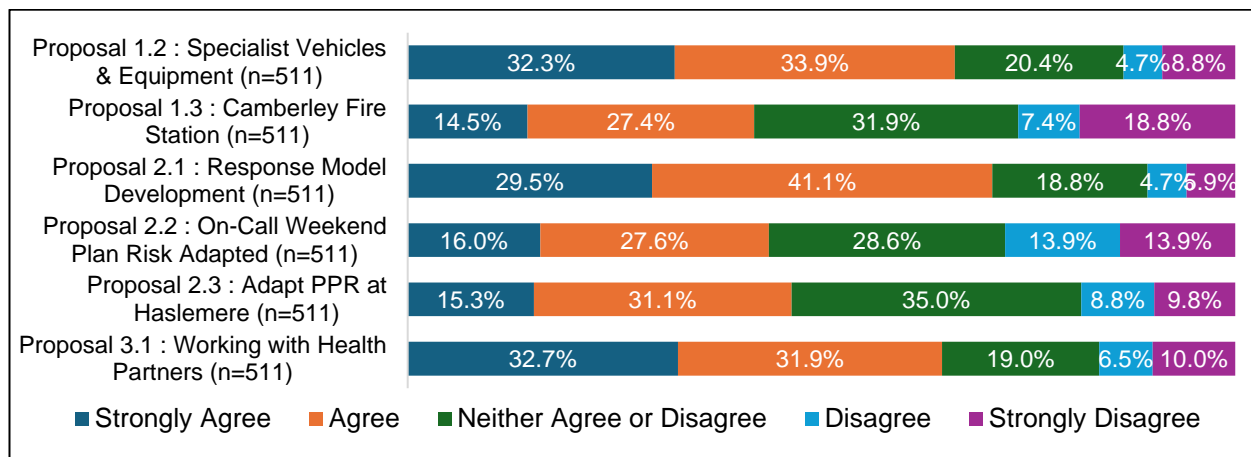852 views of the Chief Fire Officer's press article.

91 mailing list sign-ups.

3 interview requests.

730 animation views via the Surrey Says webpage.

What we heard

Proposal	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Proposal 1.2 : Specialist Vehicles & Equipment (n=511)	32.3%	33.9%	20.4%	4.7%	8.8%
Proposal 1.3 : Camberley Fire Station (n=511)	14.5%	27.4%	31.9%	7.4%	18.8%
Proposal 2.1 : Response Model Development (n=511)	29.5%	41.1%	18.8%	4.7%	5.9%
Proposal 2.2 : On-Call Weekend Plan Risk Adapted (n=511)	16.0%	27.6%	28.6%	13.9%	13.9%
Proposal 2.3 : Adapt PPR at Haslemere (n=511)	15.3%	31.1%	35.0%	8.8%	9.8%
Proposal 3.1 : Working with Health Partners (n=511)	32.7%	31.9%	19.0%	6.5%	10.0%

The bar graph (above) shows the proportions of respondents' levels of agreement using a five-point Likert scale. The further to the right the bright blue coloured bar is positioned the more respondents either approve, or are neutral, to that proposal.
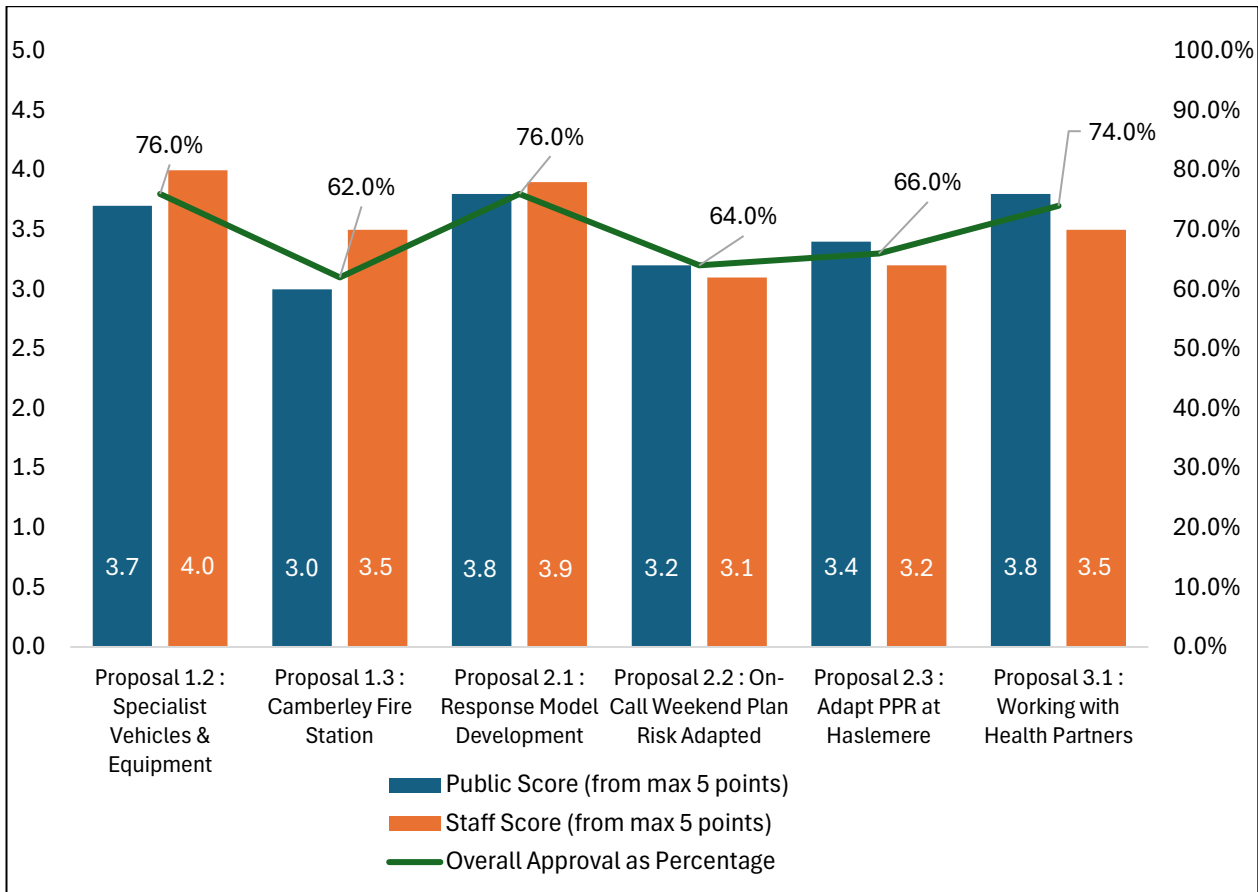
The CRMP Consultation survey's eight fixed-response formatted questions each represent respondents' ratings, or their scores, for the CRMP's different proposals.

All of these questions measure respondents' levels of agreement using a five-point Likert scale ("*Strongly Agree*", "*Agree*", "*Neither Agree Nor Disagree*", "*Disagree*" and "*Strongly Disagree*").

When each Likert scale response is converted into a numerical score (e.g. a numerical score ranging from 1 for '*Strongly Disagree*', 2 for '*Disagree*', 3 for '*Neither agree or disagree*', 4 for '*Agree*' and "5" for '*Strongly Agree*'), and averaged for all respondents' ratings, for that specific proposal, comparisons and an overall impression of proposal approval is possible. This therefore results in the neutral ratings (e.g. 'Neither agree or disagree') becoming a positive rating for the proposal.

The bar graph above compares public and staff average scores (from a maximum of 5.0) alongside an indicator of overall approval, or popularity (obtained by averaging scores for all responses on each proposal and then converting to a percentage).

Proposal 1.1: Banstead Fire Station relocation to Godstone Fire Station

From 424 comments (16,312 words of content), Copilot assisted thematic analysis identified the following themes:

- Response time and safety: This theme encompasses concerns about increased response times and the associated safety risks.
- Alternative solutions: This theme includes suggestions for other locations and solutions to avoid the proposed relocation.
- Community and social impact: This theme captures the perceived importance of the fire station to the community beyond emergency response, here the fire station is seen as a vital part of the community, providing not only emergency services but also community engagement and safety education.
- Transparency and consultation: This recurring theme within the data reflects the demand for more transparency and better public engagement in the decision-making process.
- Operational feasibility: This theme addresses the logistical and operational challenges of the proposed relocation.
- Financial and strategic rationale: This theme includes and covers scepticism about the financial and strategic motivations behind the relocation.
- The lease issue: There were around 50 references to the expired lease covering Banstead Fire Station framed around many questions such as who owned the lease, why couldn't it be extended.

Staff feedback:

- Asked to consider Reigate or Oxted as alternatives.
- Request to extend the lease – explained that it will still end during this CRMP period as the site is being sold and not appropriate for a fire station anymore.

Engagement session feedback:

- Confusion around the Banstead proposal: could the station stay where it is?
- A considerable amount of suggestions that the additional year lease is accepted and more effort to look for land in Whyteleafe is undertaken during this time.
- Some questioning as to whether this was to save money as have seen consultations previously from other services that were based on savings.

- Misconceptions of how SFRS responds to incidents, not 'nearest, most appropriate resource' and that crews are not sat on fire stations all day (prevention and protection activity is undertaken).
- Criticism that the Banstead proposal wasn't a standalone consultation.

# Proposal 1.2: specialist vehicles and equipment

Approval rating: 76%
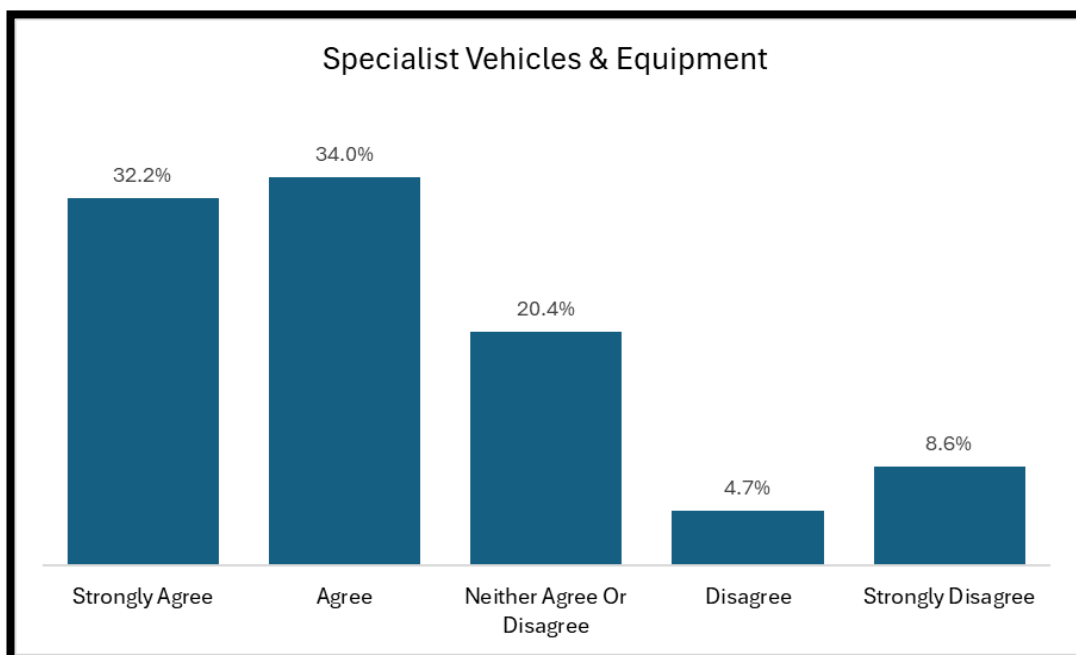
Key feedback:

- **Equipment modernisation:** This theme encompasses comments linked to the necessity for modern and functional equipment to ensure effective firefighting.
- **Response, accessibility and traffic:** This theme covers residents' concerns that relocating services will lead to slower response times, potentially endangering lives, with comments possibly confusing this proposal with the previous (Proposal 1.1: Banstead Fire Station), and an awareness of increasing traffic on Surrey's roads.
- **Specialist equipment placement:** This theme relates to suggestions for placing specialist vehicles and equipment in areas most at risk, such as flood-prone or wildfire-prone regions.
- **Learning and development:** Relates to issues and concerns raised about the cost and practicality of training crews at different stations and the impact on service quality.
- **Evidence-based decision making:** This theme addresses dissatisfaction with the consultation process, alongside an emphasis

for making decisions based on data and evidence rather than assumptions or incomplete information.

# Proposal 1.3: Camberley Fire Station

Approval rating: 62%
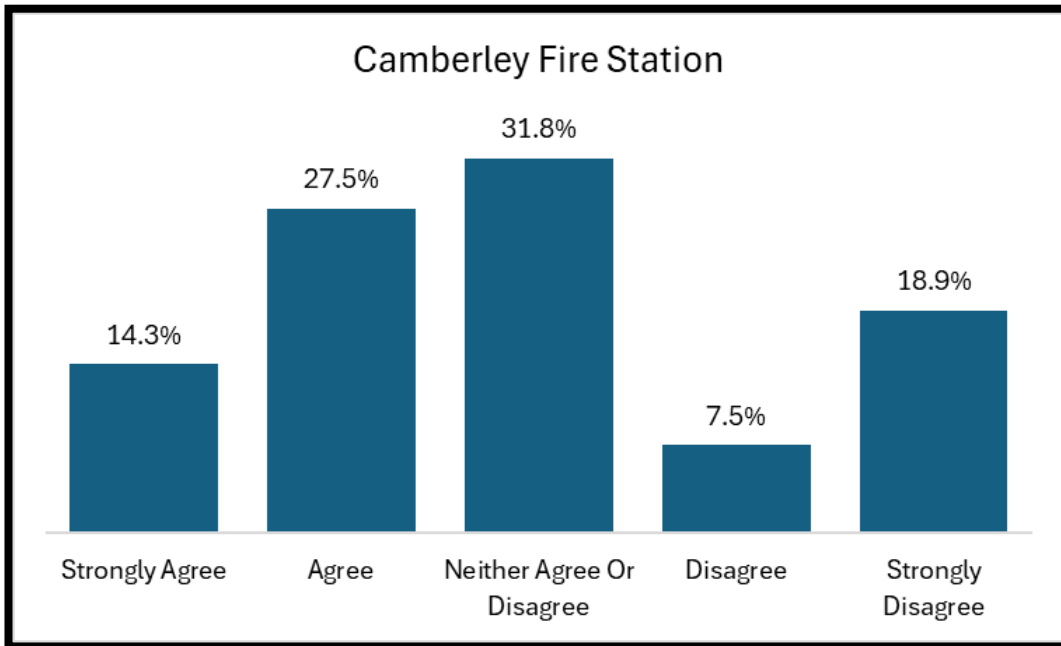
Key feedback:

- **Concerns about response times, particularly during wildfire season:** Theme relates to residents being worried that relocating fire engines will increase response times, especially during emergencies like wildfires.
- **Impact on community safety:** highlighting fears that reducing fire cover will compromise community safety, particularly in areas with extensive woodland and busy roads.
- **Perception of cost-cutting:** Some residents believe the proposed changes are driven by cost-cutting rather than improving service efficiency, potentially putting lives at risk.
- **Support for data-driven decisions:** A portion of the community supports the relocation if it is based on data showing higher risks in other areas, emphasising the need for efficient resource allocation.
- **Suggestions for alternative locations inc. Runnymede (Egham):** Residents propose various alternatives, such as increasing staffing levels, developing partnerships with neighbouring counties, or relocating to other locations.

Proposal 2.1: Seasonal response model
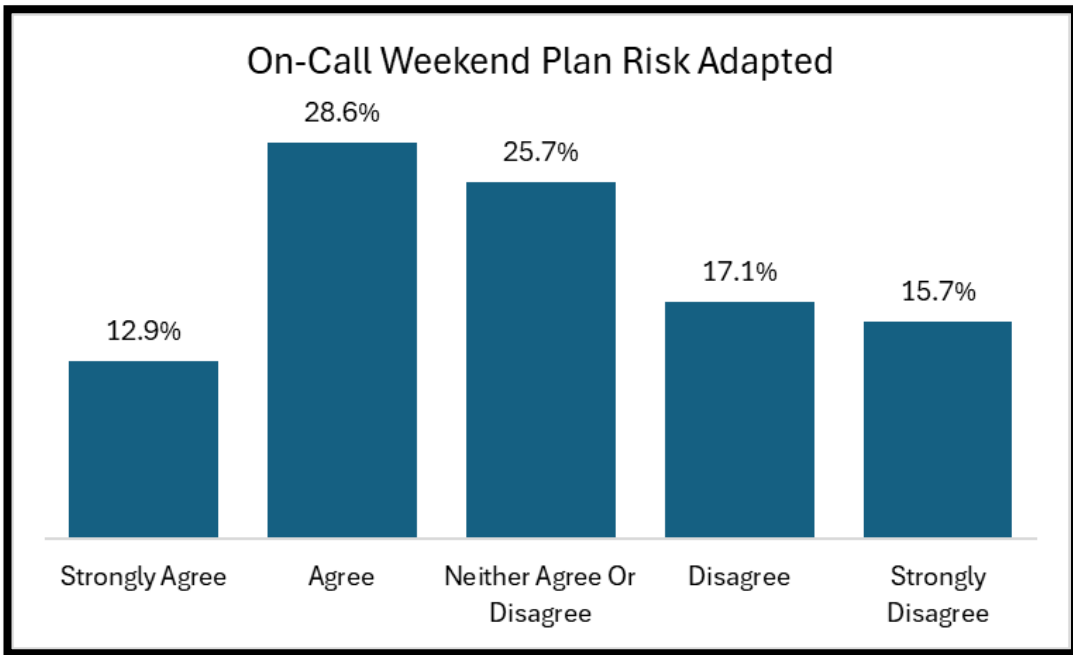
Approval rating: 76%
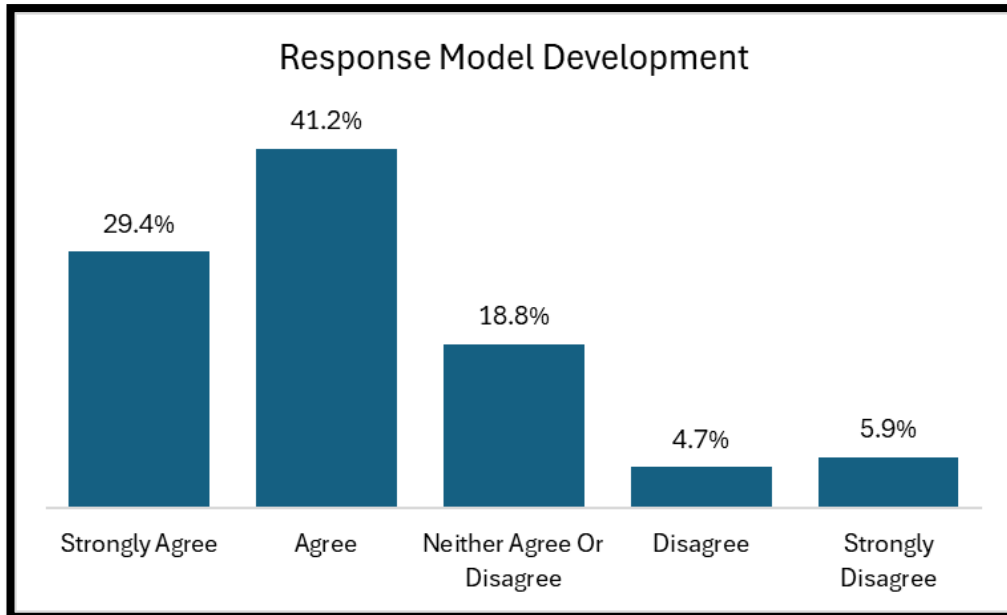
Key feedback:

- **Concerns about resource for this:** There are concerns about whether the proposed changes will lead to a reduction in fire cover and whether resources will be adequately allocated to meet all risks.
- **Perception of cost-cutting measures**: Some residents believe the proposed changes are driven by cost-cutting rather than improving service efficiency, potentially putting lives at risk.
- **Seasonal model fitting environmental factors:** A number of comments relate to how modelling may not meet changing environmental conditions due to climate change and/or would need to be able to accommodation unexpected events such as travel collisions.
- **Lack of understanding around how this works:** An emergent theme relates to residents not fully understanding what a response model is and how it works in reality.

Proposal 2.2: On-Call weekend plan

Approval rating: 64%

On-Call Weekend Plan Risk Adapted

- Strongly Agree: 12.9%
- Agree: 28.6%
- Neither Agree Or Disagree: 25.7%
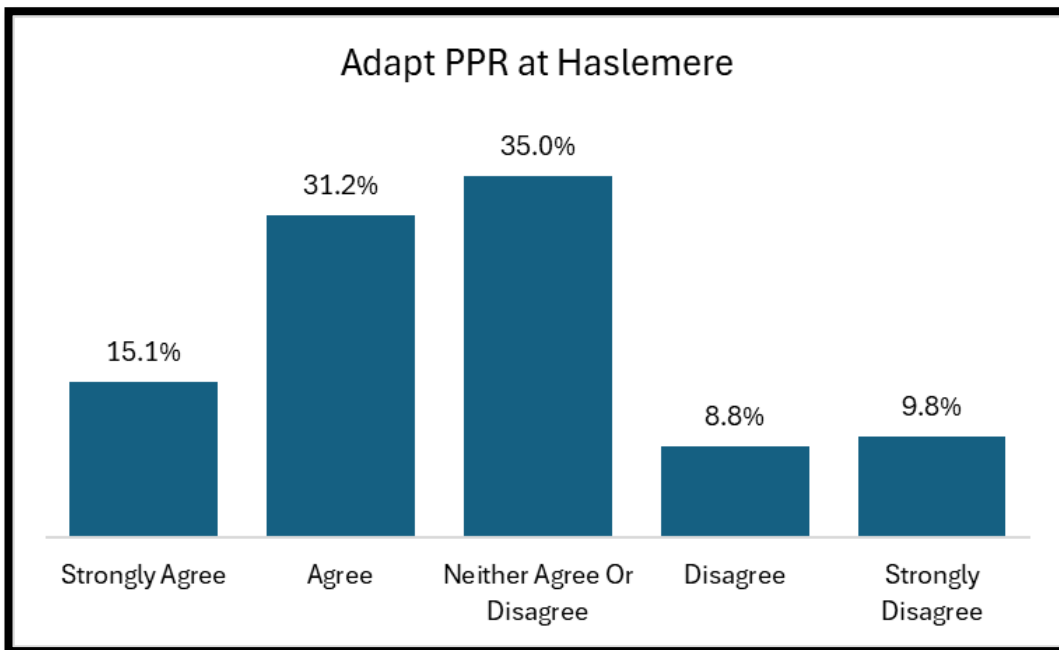- Disagree: 17.1%
- Strongly Disagree: 15.7%

Key feedback:

- **Impact on On-Call firefighter availability for evenings and morale:** Many comments highlight concerns about the availability of on-call firefighters, especially if weekend daytime cover is removed. There is a fear that this change could lead to a loss of firefighters who cannot meet the new requirements, thus affecting morale and retention.
- **Cost being low:** There are mixed opinions on the financial implications of the proposed changes. Some believe that reducing weekend cover could save money, while others argue that it is a cost-cutting measure that compromises safety.
- **Data and evidence-based decision-making:** As with other proposals, this one is generally supported if it is based on accurate data and evidence. However, some comments express distrust in the data provided, questioning its validity and the assumptions made about on-call availability.

Proposal 2.3: Review of Haslemere Fire Station

Approval rating: 66%

Adapt PPR at Haslemere

| Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15.1%	31.2%	35.0%	8.8%	9.8%

Key feedback:

- **Concerns about response times**: Many residents are worried that changes to staffing or station closures will lead to longer response times, which could be critical in emergencies.
- **Support for maintaining 24/7:** There is a strong belief that full-time, highly trained staff are essential for ensuring safety and effective emergency response.
- **Skepticism around on-call staffing:** Residents express doubts about the reliability and effectiveness of on-call staff compared to full-time crews, fearing it may lead to gaps in coverage.
- **Impact on community safety:** There are concerns that reduced staffing or station closures will negatively impact overall community safety, particularly in remote or high-risk areas.
- **Need for local knowledge and presence:** Residents emphasise the importance of having local fire stations staffed by personnel who are familiar with the area and its specific risks.
- **Suggestions to close cluster of stations and build one in the middle:** a couple of suggestions to close two or three stations within this area and create one in an area such as Milford.

Proposal 3.1: Health partners

Approval rating 74%

Working with Health Partners
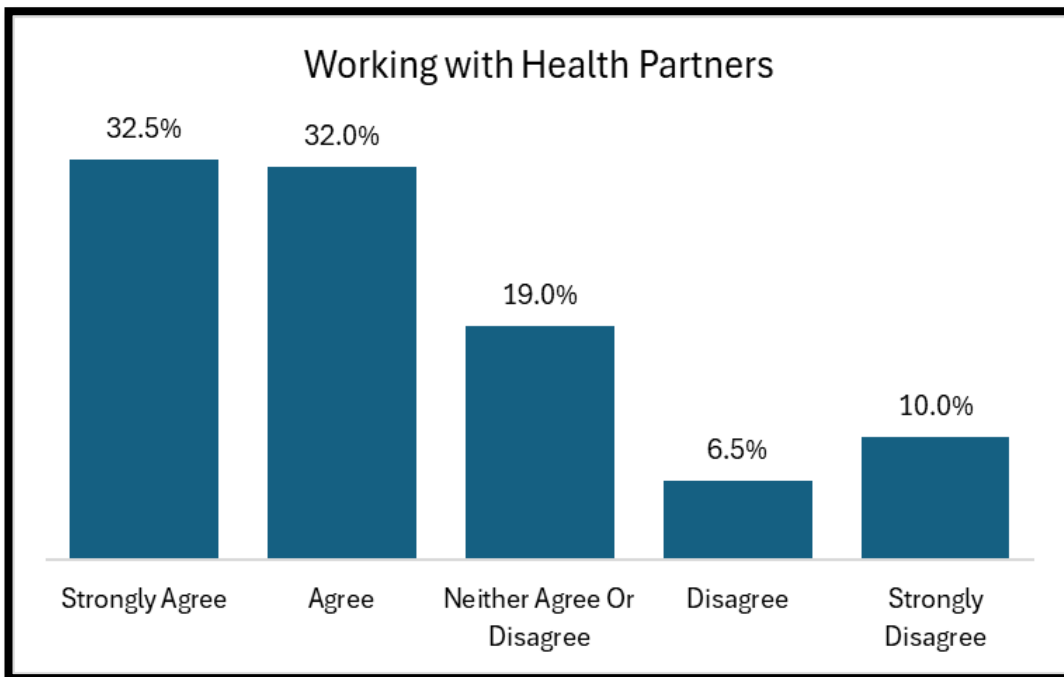
Key feedback:

- **Resource - should be a prevention team responsibility:** Respondents generally support the idea of the fire service working with health partners, but they emphasise that it should not detract from the fire service's primary responsibilities.
- **Training:** There are concerns about the allocation of resources and the need for proper training if firefighters are to take on additional roles in medical emergencies. Residents reported being worried that without adequate training and resources, the fire service might be stretched too thin, affecting their primary duties.
- **Support for vulnerable:** There is support for the fire service's role in assisting vulnerable individuals, particularly in ensuring home safety for those discharged from hospitals. Residents appreciate the fire service's involvement in community safety and support for vulnerable groups, provided it does not impact their main duties.
- **Category A co-responding and welfare:** The comments reflect mixed opinions on the fire service's involvement in medical emergencies, with some supporting co-responding to critical incidents and others expressing concerns about the impact on firefighters' workload and mental health. While some residents see the value in co-responding, others are worried about the additional stress and workload on firefighters.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Prioritise Proposal 1.1 - the proposal with the highest 'visibility' within the public eye concerns the planned closure of Banstead Fire Station with much qualitative data providing a range of critical views, questions, and preferred solutions (e.g. relocation to more proximate locales). "Balance" being an important consideration for this proposal given that the CRMP consultation represents and serves the entire county.

Recommendation 2:

A key concern amongst residents is how transparent and "fact based" the CRMP consultation process will be. This will be relevant to follow-up communication campaigns that inform residents and staff of the engagement efforts that were conducted (e.g. qualitative data contain comments indicating residents' belief that the consultation was run without engaging communities, regardless of the 38+ roadshow events).

Recommendation 3:

Another key concern amongst residents and staff alike is that the CRMP is part of a money saving scheme – simple communications that reassure and inform residents/staff of the financial background is recommended (e.g. if the SFRS budget has not been reduced, share).

Recommendation 4:

Other important factors raised: some respondents raised other issues of concern that are not directly named or mentioned within the proposals themselves such as climate change, unique needs of vulnerable residents and specific areas, and prioritisation of resident and staff well-being. It is advised to discuss these in the final CRMP document.

Alongside the above three recommendations, there are recurring themes across all comments submitted by residents in relation to the proposals. These are less prominent than the themes highlighted in Recommendations 2 and 3, however, they are important because of their content and recurring nature (albeit less so that Recommendations 2 and 3). These recurring themes include (i) concerns over climate change and how the SFRS's proposals can and will accommodate changing weather patterns, increasingly severe weather patterns, and associated risks. (ii) The importance of recognising the unique needs associated with vulnerable community members and their diverse needs (e.g. retired populations with limited mobility), and the unique needs associated with specific areas of the county associated with geographical (e.g. presence of vulnerable heathland and woodland), and transportation (e.g. presence of specific road networks and airport facilities), and cultural factors (e.g. the role that SFRS serves as a member of the community by its presence in both rural and urban locales). And (iii) residents concern that all proposals take into account the well-being of both SFRS staff members (residents expressed a high degree of appreciation and caring for SFRS staff and their work) and residents alike.