

SURREY HEATH RESPONSE

# PSP Response Document

**Professional Firefighters of Surrey Heath**

05<sup>th</sup> January 2011



This is a considered response by concerned Surrey Fire & Rescue frontline personnel to the release of the Public Safety Plan proposed by Surrey Fire & Rescue which is currently up for public consultation

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## Introduction

The Public Safety Plan (PSP) is a product of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service senior management, which proposes how the service should be operated over the next ten years, whilst achieving government targets for cost saving. This response to the PSP has been produced by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service frontline operational staff stationed at Camberley Fire Station. Its purpose is to clarify elements of the PSP as well as providing a frontline view on the ramifications to the public of implementing it.

## Response to PSP Proposals 1-13 (Pg 67-70)

### 1. Proposal 1: To revise the response standard.

- 1.1. It is proposed that the response times are increased by **25%** more than Surrey residents currently experience. Add to this the fact that Surrey Fire and Rescue Service already has one of the **slowest response times** out of Fire authorities in England. In fact, Surrey Fire and Rescue Services were ranked 34 out of the 46 fire authorities in England in 2006 ([www.firewontwait.com](http://www.firewontwait.com)), probably due to the fact that as page 9 of the PSP (section 3.19) states, there have already been significant cuts to Surrey Fire and Rescue resulting in the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest numbers of operational staff per 10k population in England. Given that Surrey is one of the wealthiest counties in the UK, you have to ask, are Surrey Council tax payers really getting value for money? If the proposals in the PSP are implemented these response times will be getting worse.
- 1.2. The response times for Surrey Fire and Rescue Service is currently, 8 minutes for the first Fire appliance and 12 minutes for the second for 75% of the *population*, including call handling times, to be in attendance at an incident. The PSP wishes to revise the response standard to 10 minutes for the first Fire appliance and 15 for the second for 80% of *occasions*, **excluding** call handling times. Therefore, response times will actually be increased up to 11.5 minutes for the First Fire appliance and 16.5 minutes for the second, given that the call handling time allowance for Surrey Fire and Rescue Mobilising Control is 1 minute 30 seconds. This provides Surrey Council Tax payers with an actual increase in response times of over **43%** for the First Fire appliance to be in attendance.
- 1.3. Surrey has one of the busiest road networks in the UK. Studies by the government highlight a direct correlation between an increase in traffic density and worsening attendance times.  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/frsresponsetimes.pdf> page 27 indicates a one minute increase in response times to dwelling fires over a ten year period as a direct result of increased traffic density on roads. Therefore, by the year 2020 response times for Surrey's first fire appliances could be as long as 12.5 minutes or over 50% of what is currently expected.
- 1.4. The new response time formula is based on response times being achieved on 80% of *occasions* rather than for 75% of the *population*. This will enable Surrey Fire and Rescue to remove many frontline appliances from the areas of high urban population and distribute to the more affluent rural areas. Roughly 80% of the Surrey population lives in urbanised areas (Please see review of Proposal 3).
- 1.5. A home office study commissioned in 1999 highlights a direct correlation between increasing attendance times between 11 and 15 minutes to raising the average number of fire deaths that occur within dwellings by 50%. Even leaving the call handling times out of the equation would result in response times greater than 10 minutes on 20% of occasions. ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ERORecords/HO/421/2/fepd/dwelfire.pdf](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ERORecords/HO/421/2/fepd/dwelfire.pdf) Page 7).

Increasing response times will result in 50% more fire deaths costing £4 million per annum.

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- 1.6. In real terms houses and buildings will be left burning for at very best an extra 2 minutes if the PSP is applied. Fires will have longer to take hold, which will inevitably increase damage to property, injury & death to the public. This could result in lost revenue to the local economy if businesses go bankrupt due to loss of earnings following a fire. Fire deaths also have a substantial cost to government.  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/55971/0014900.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/55971/0014900.pdf) page 6 states that government places the value of a human life as a cost to society at about £1 million. During the period 2006-2008 there were 24 fire deaths in Surrey, 60% of which occurred from 18:00hrs until 06:00hrs, exactly when the PSP proposes to reduce resources. Using this statistical data in section 1.4 of this document that number will increase to 36 fire deaths over a 3 year period following the PSP's implementation, costing society **£4 million per annum**. The £2.7 million per annum estimated savings that may be achieved by implementing the PSP are outweighed by comparison to this one area alone.  
[www.fbuserrey.co.uk/How\\_Much\\_is\\_a\\_Surrey\\_Life\\_Worth.pdf](http://www.fbuserrey.co.uk/How_Much_is_a_Surrey_Life_Worth.pdf) page 23.
- 1.7. Casualties involved in Road Traffic Collisions (RTC's) will have over a 43% increase in response time until crews from a fire appliance are able to start extricating them from vehicle wreckage and provide potentially lifesaving 1<sup>st</sup> Aid. Surrey Fire and Rescue's RTC manual states that a casualty's best chance of survival is to be receiving definitive care i.e. operating theatre, within the **first hour** of the incident occurring. With the complexities from continual innovation in vehicle technology already impacting that first hour, increased response times would further reduce survival chances of individuals involved in the most serious RTC's.
- 1.8. [www.dft.gov.uk/adobepdf/162469/221412/221549/227755/rrcgb2009.pdf](http://www.dft.gov.uk/adobepdf/162469/221412/221549/227755/rrcgb2009.pdf) (page 38) estimates that each RTC death costs society about £1.8 million. An increase of just two RTC deaths per annum due to increased response times will cost the UK more than the £2.7 million savings estimated by the PSP. Achieving local savings at the expense of costs borne by the national economy conflicts entirely with the governments 'big society' initiative.
- 1.9. An increase in response times has a direct impact on operational staff health and safety as Breathing Apparatus (BA) wearers on a second fire appliance act as emergency teams to BA wearers on a first appliance at dwelling fires, and in an RTC situation the second fire appliance would provide protection from oncoming traffic. For incidents on fast roads such as the M25, M3 or A3 Surrey Fire and Rescue deploy a 3<sup>rd</sup> appliance down the opposite carriageway as contingency for incorrect information passed to mobilizing control. This 3<sup>rd</sup> fire appliance also provides fend off protection for crews, casualties and oncoming traffic on fast roads. There are no response standards documented for 3<sup>rd</sup> fire appliances.
- 1.10. The PSP revised response times are for 'critical incidents' only and defines them in Appendix 9 as house fires, RTC's, commercial building fires. All other incidents will receive a 16 minute response time for 95% of occurrences. This includes wild fires, which account for a large proportion of Surrey Fire and Rescues incidents during warmer weather. These incidents are the most costly to Surrey Fire and Rescue Services budget due to hours of overtime incurred and charges from bordering Fire and Rescue Services. Reducing the response time for these incidents will allow such fires to take hold for longer resulting in increased costs and more damage to Surrey's heath lands and surrounding properties.

## 2. Proposal 2: To match resources provision to predicted demand levels.

- 2.1. The PSP states that the majority of incidents happen between 07:00hrs until 19:00hrs and proposes to reduce Fire cover from 19:00hrs until 07:00hrs. A closer review of the graph in Appendix 5 (Pg 22) entitled 'Average incidents per Hour 2004-2009' shows that this is not necessarily the case. In fact the average incidents per hour stays greater than those found between 07:00hrs to 08:00hrs until midnight, which means there will be a 5 hour period from 19:00hrs when the service is reduced but the number of incidents are still relatively high.

- 2.2. The graph in Appendix 5 (Pg 22) entitled 'Average incidents per Hour 2004-2009' also breaks down incidents by type. The key on the right hand side of this graph, lists from top to bottom, Chimney (Fires), House (Fires), RTC (Road Traffic Collision), False Alarms, SSC (Special Service Calls), Fire, AFA (Automatic Fire

60% of Surrey  
Fire deaths  
occurred at  
night.

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Alarms). This graph highlights the fact that there were greater numbers of house fires after 19:00hrs until 03:00hrs compared to 07:00hrs until midday. If the PSP is agreed there will be less appliances and Firefighters to deal with these house fires which are among the most dangerous to the public. The graph also shows that the main reason for reduced incidents between 03:00hrs and 07:00hrs is due to a reduction in AFA's. Other more serious types of incidents are less predictable by time of day.

- 2.3. When more severe incidents occur where will fire appliances come from? Presently, capacity exists through the 2<sup>nd</sup> fire appliances at Guilford, Woking, Camberley, Epsom and Reigate or by cover from the retained duty system fire appliances. Following the implementation of the PSP these already stretched resources will not be available for deployment. Towns and villages will be left without fire cover for longer whilst their local fire appliances are deployed elsewhere.
- 2.4. The statistical basis for the PSP's proposal to reduce night cover is based on the number of incidents *only* and not the severity. In other words a 5 day wildfire with 20 pumps and 1000's of man hours is counted as one incident, as is a 30 min response by one pump to an automatic fire alarm. Roughly 33% of house fires happen at night when people are less aware of their environment. This means that fires are often worse at night because they developed further.
- 2.5. There is no mention of seasonal demand levels in proposal 2. The largest incidents that Surrey Fire and Rescue Service have to deal with occur during periods of warmer weather.
- 2.6. The PSP implementation is reliant on the RDS (Retained Duty System) changing their current working arrangements with Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and agreeing to be on call from 19:00hrs until 07:00hrs on four consecutive nights. If the RDS reject the change to their working conditions the PSP will need to be amended.
- 2.7. The graph in Appendix 1 of this document shows the total number of RTC deaths by time of day that occurred in the UK in 2008. This data supports the fact that a high proportion of the most severe incidents occur outside the times that the PSP proposes to reduce resources radically.

### 3. **Proposal 3: To improve the balance of service provision across Surrey.**

- 3.1. The PSP is proposing to improve the balance of provision of service across the county in order to reflect the analysis of risk. A review of Appendix 5 (Pg 21) in the document shows incident locations mapped during a 2003 to 2009 sample period. This analysis highlights geographic areas of greater incident activity within Surrey. Camberley, Guildford, Woking, Chertsey, Epsom and Reigate have many more incidents than other areas. Given that this historical data has been used to plot where future incidents may occur it seems strange that the PSP is proposing to reduce cover more drastically for these areas than for Waverley, Mole Valley and Tandridge.
- 3.2. For example, the spreadsheet in Appendix 2 of this document highlights that Mole Valley has an 80k population but 2 whole time pumps available at night. Tandridge has 79k population and has 3 pumps available at night. Compare this to Woking and Spelthorne who both have about a 90k population and only have one pump per borough available at night. Waverley has a population of 115k and 4 pumps available at night. Reigate has population of 126k and has only 1 pump available at night. Camberley is a border town which has agreements with Hampshire and Berkshire for Fire cover. Camberley & Chobham Fire Stations currently look after around 114k population. Quite simply, Surrey Fire and Rescues' Service Focus is being relocated from the Urban areas where there are: higher quantities of the public, social housing, business parks, vulnerable people, shopping centres and is being redirected to the more wealthy areas of the county where there is far less risk.

### 4. **Proposal 4: To crew all fire engines with five firefighters.**

- 4.1. This document agrees with proposal 4 but not at the expense of losing the 2<sup>nd</sup> fire appliances at Camberley, Woking, Reigate and Epsom. Council tax payers living in these boroughs will be safer with the current situation of two fire appliances crewing four on each,

PSP proposes to dramatically cut 34% of daytime fire cover increasing to 40% at night to achieve a disproportionate budgetary saving of less than 10%.

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(worst case) arriving at the same time, than with the PSP proposed, one fire appliance crewing five with a second being deployed with a much increased response time.

## 5. **Proposal 5: To create capacity to improve firefighter and community safety.**

5.1. Proposal 5 will create resource for community fire safety but not increase capacity to train and improve FF safety. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Fire appliances located at Camberley, Woking, Guildford, Epsom & Reigate already provide planned resilience for single appliance stations by covering other geographic areas whilst crews located in that area are being trained. However, if these 2<sup>nd</sup> Fire Appliances are removed from operational duty at night, there will be little capacity for unplanned resilience. For example, if an incident occurs in Farnham between 07:00hrs -19:00hrs who will provide the Council Tax payers there the fire ground cover currently provided by Camberley and Woking's 2<sup>nd</sup> Fire Appliances or the RDS.

5.2. Although there is little change to pre-planned HQ organised training there will be a dramatic impact to local station training. All Fire stations in Surrey that have 2 Fire Appliances regularly run drills that are based on multiple fire appliances scenarios. This will be far harder to organise in future and will occur less often as there will only be one appliance available at night and during the day the 2<sup>nd</sup> appliance will be elsewhere providing pre-planned resilience. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service operational personnel will practice these critical situations on fewer occasions which counters the argument for proposal 5.

PSP proposed  
Frontline cuts  
remove all of  
Surrey's  
unplanned  
resilience.

## 6. **Proposal 6: To change the working arrangements for staff.**

6.1. The operational personnel based at Camberley Fire Station are not opposed to a change in working arrangements providing they are relevant and based on accurate statistical data. As previously discussed in sections 2.1 & 2.2 of this document there are changes recommended in the PSP that are not relevant to the statistical data available.

## 7. **Proposal 7: To increase the use of volunteers.**

- 7.1. Increasing the scope for the use of volunteers at emergencies must be dependant on these individuals understanding Surrey Fire and Rescue Service safe systems of work, them being professionals in their relevant fields and having been CRB checked.
- 7.2. When increasing the scope for the use of volunteers in community fire safety work it is imperative that these individuals are CRB checked, due to the demographic they will be dealing with.
- 7.3. These volunteers should be trained and managed by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service uniformed personnel to maintain service standards.
- 7.4. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service have a statutory obligation to provide the best Response, Protection and Prevention service it is capable of. It becomes harder to assure the public of this when using volunteers who do not have the accountability that operational personnel have.
- 7.5. It will be harder to guarantee turnover and availability of voluntary personnel compared to operation personnel. This will have an impact on the quality of work that will be undertaken by this group.

## 8. **Proposal 8: To ensure the most appropriate response to all calls for assistance.**

- 8.1. Call challenging has been trialled since 2008 which has resulted in reduction of turnouts to AFA incidents. However, the issue with this policy is that there is a risk in sending individuals located at an incident back into premises where an AFA has been actuated to check if there is a fire or not. It is possible that responsible persons at these locations could end up as casualties if there is a fire.
- 8.2. It should also be noted that in a fire situation Surrey Fire and Rescue is adding to response times by sending the locally responsible person back in to confirm that there is a fire. The fire will have longer to take hold which will increase damage, costs and risk to persons.
- 8.3. Another issue with the policy of call challenging is that of leaving individuals who may not be fire professionals to make a call on whether there is potential for fire or not. We would be

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leaving non professionals to interpret situations and conditions.

**9. Proposal 9: To increase income generation and cost recovery.**

- 9.1. In proposing to charge for responding to incidents such as animal rescues and domestic flooding we could be putting the more vulnerable members of the public in danger. These individuals may not have the resources to fund a Surrey Fire and Rescue Service response and take risks to intervene themselves. This could ultimately cost government far more in hospitalisation and rehabilitation.
- 9.2. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service have a duty of care to save live, property and render humanitarian aid.
- 9.3. Public perception of the Fire Service will be damaged by doing this.
- 9.4. There will be increased administrative costs and there is a risk of legal actions against Surrey Fire and Rescue Service.
- 9.5. Income generation through sponsorship on fire service vehicles, uniforms, initiatives and buildings should be considered.

**10. Proposal 10: To review governance arrangements.**

- 10.1. Rationale behind wanting to review governance arrangements has not been explained to Frontline personnel. There are obvious savings that could be made, such as merging the two one pump stations in Spelthorne, which are not being looked at in the PSP. This may have something to do with who would currently benefit from these budget savings.
- 10.2. It would be good to hear councillors' views on potentially losing one of their more high performing departments.
- 10.3. There are many benefits to working within the council just as there would be to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service becoming its own Fire authority. Frontline operation personnel who do not wish to see a degradation of their frontline service would require further consultation as to the ramifications from either option.

**11. Proposal 11: To review the provision and use of property.**

- 11.1. Sharing the use of fire stations with partner organisations carries a health and safety risk to Fire service personnel and partners due to systems of work.
- 11.2. Current facilities have been purpose built to operate as fire stations which may not have suitable welfare arrangements if numbers of personnel are increased on site. This would require substantial investment from the council.
- 11.3. There would be an impact on available training equipment, IT resources.

**12. Proposal 12: To maximise community fire safety activity.**

- 12.1. This is good idea provided there is equitable risk based targeting.

**13. Proposal 13: To continue to provide road safety advice for young drivers.**

- 13.1. This should be a statutory duty of care and budget supplied by government. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service attend far more incidents involving RTC's death than it does for dwelling fires.

## Conclusion

Following the comprehensive spending review in October 2010, the government provided guidance on the future direction for Fire and Rescue Services. This is highlighted on page 8 of the Public safety Plan. Government asks fire authorities to keep 'maintaining the quality and breadth of frontline services' a priority. It also makes recommendations as to where potential costs savings should be achieved, through shared services and regionalisation of fire and rescue authorities, which would be our recommendation. However, Surrey Fire and Rescues Public Safety plan recommends that these savings are primarily achieved through cutting of frontline services and lowering of frontline response times. In fact, the PSP goes as far as saying in Section 9.42 "We cannot guarantee how quickly we

Government recommendations for cost saving ask local authorities to prioritise maintaining the quality and breadth of frontline services.

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will reach you but what we can guarantee is that we will be there as fast as we safely can". Is this best endeavours approach a satisfactory response from an emergency service?

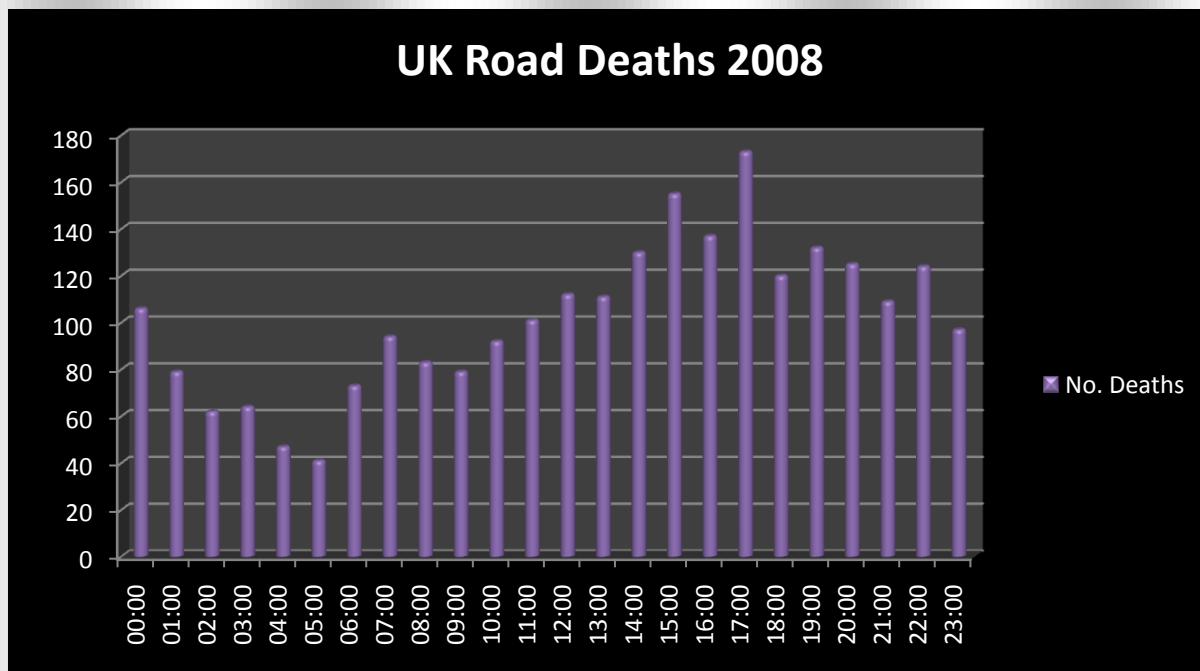
The estimated £2.7 million per annum savings achieved through this reduction of frontline services does not even offset the statically projected costs of increased deaths in fires and road traffic collisions, making this cost saving exercise a false economy indeed. Surely there is a far greater business case for the simplification of managerial layers within Surrey Fire and Rescue Service by reducing from three areas to one, or for merging with other fire and rescue authorities thus reducing the costs of back office staff and managers. The frontline operation personnel of Surrey Heath would urge both Surrey Fire and Rescue senior management and Surrey County Council to consider these options.

If you have the weighty responsibility of representing the 1.2 million residents and council tax payers of Surrey, in voting on whether the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Public Safety Plan should be implemented or not, we would urge you to keep an open mind to the points documented above. The views of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service personnel with decades of operational experience should not be ignored. Neither should the statistical data referred to in this document, sourced from recognized bodies, that directly contradicts the proposed recommendations in the public safety plan.

This response document has not been produced to prevent fire fighter job cuts or bemoan conditions of service for operational personnel. Our motivation is quite simply concern for the safety and welfare of Surrey's population, which will be placed at more risk by the implementation of the Public Safety Plan's reduction of frontline services.

If you have any questions regarding any of the points raised please contact us at [Surrey\\_PSP\\_Response@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Surrey_PSP_Response@hotmail.co.uk) and we will gladly clarify them for you.

### Appendix 1 – UK road deaths 2008 by time of day



<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8401344.stm>

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## Appendix 2 – Total Fire Appliances Per Borough

Borough	Fire Station	Current 24hr	Proposed Day	Proposed Night	Population
<b>Elmbridge</b>	Esher	1	1		121936
	Painshill	1	1	1	
	Walton	2	1	1	
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	4	3	2	
<i>Percentage Loss</i>		25%	50%		
<b>Epsom &amp; Ewell</b>	Epsom	2	2	1	67059
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	2	2	1	
	<i>Percentage Loss</i>		0%	50%	
<b>Guildford</b>	Gomshall	1			129701
	Guilford	3	2	2	
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	4	2	2	
<i>Percentage Loss</i>		50%	50%		
<b>Mole Valley</b>	Dorking	1	1	1	80287
	Leatherhead	1	1	1	
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	2	2	2	
<i>Percentage Loss</i>		0%	0%		
<b>Reigate &amp; Banstead</b>	Reigate	2	2	1	126523
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	2	2	1	
	<i>Percentage Loss</i>		0%	50%	
<b>Runnymede</b>	Chertsey	1	1	1	78033
	Egham	1	1	1	
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	2	2	2	
<i>Percentage Loss</i>		0%	0%		
<b>Spelthorne</b>	Staines	1	1		90390
	Sunbury	1	1	1	
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	2	2	1	
<i>Percentage Loss</i>		0%	50%		
<b>Surrey Heath</b>	Camberley	2	2	1	80314
	Chobham	1		1	
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	3	2	2	
<i>Percentage Loss</i>		33%	33%		
<b>Tandridge</b>	Godstone	1	1	1	79267
	Lingfield	1		1	
	Oxsted	2	1	1	
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	4	2	3	
<i>Percentage Loss</i>		50%	50%		
<b>Waverley</b>	Cranleigh	2		1	115665
	Dunsfold	1			
	Farnham	1	1	1	
	Godalming	2	1	1	
	Haslemere	2	1	1	
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	8	3	4	
<i>Percentage Loss</i>		76%	50%		
<b>Woking</b>	Woking	2	1	1	89840
	<i>Borough Total Pumps</i>	2	1	1	
	<i>Percentage Loss</i>		50%	50%	