



UPDATE ON CAMPAIGN IN DEVON AND SOMERSET FBU May 2013

PUBLIC SAYS “NO CUTS IN FIRE SERVICE”!

FBU tells management to “think again on Fire Cuts” after massive public campaign

“Hands off our fully crewed fire engines! Don’t compromise our emergency fire cover!” That’s the message more than 25,000 people – and rising – are sending to Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) and local politicians over cuts proposals now being considered.

The £5.5M cuts package includes slashing **by half** emergency fire cover provided by full-time firefighters in Plymouth, Taunton and Torquay, and removing **all** full-time firefighters at Ilfracombe. Overall, 20% of all full-time firefighter posts in the whole of the DSFRS would be axed, in what are the worst cuts proposals ever to fire and rescue in Devon and Somerset, even including the 1980’s Thatcher Governments.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) warns the cuts would have a very damaging effect on the fire and rescue service in Devon and Somerset, increasing emergency response times, compromising emergency cover and increasing the risk to local communities and firefighters.

FBU Chair Bob Walker said “These proposals are a kick in the teeth for local people, as well as staff, and it is therefore no surprise our campaign against the cuts has won massive support from local communities and politicians.”

The FBU has held public meetings, used Facebook, Twitter, leafleting, and even taken out “Don’t Let Them Squeeze Your Fire Service Dry” adverts in local newspapers to alert citizens of the threat posed by the cuts proposals. Local newspapers have launched petitions and politicians, including MP Adrian Sanders, MP Alison Seabek,

MP Jeremy Browne and numerous Councillors and candidates across the two counties want the DSFRS to withdraw the proposals to cut fire cover.

The FBU has now published its official response to the cuts proposals and distributed it to every politician in Devon & Somerset. This report does not just condemn the latest, unprecedented central Government cuts in funding, but also charts Service management’s skewed spending priorities since the (previously separate) Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Services combined in 2007.



FBU Secretary Trevor French said, “Before combination, we were told savings would be made from economies of scale in support services, with the frontline protected. But since the two fire services merged in 2007 we’ve lost 40 frontline firefighter

jobs, and they are now after another 149 more. Meanwhile there has been a massive switch from the frontline to the backroom and consultants, with an extra 67 employed, and while the cost of firefighters has actually **fallen** by over £600k since 2007, the cost of support services has **increased** by over £4 million.”

The FBU are demanding that DSFRS management and Fire Authority politicians think again on these flawed proposals. The union will continue its opposition to the cuts beyond April and have called on local residents and businesses to join them by speaking out to help stop these cuts to their frontline fire and rescue service.

Fighting for the Fire & Rescue Service



Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff

FBU CAMPAIGN KNOCKS CUTS FOR 6!



Marcus Trescothick with FBU members

The campaign against the cuts has achieved massive support from the public and celebrities alike! The latest to offer support is Somerset Cricketer Marcus Trescothick who met with local fire crews at the County Ground in Taunton. Marcus posed with FBU anti cuts banners and he and his team mates signed the petition and even tweeted their support to thousands of followers!

The FBU is now engaging with politicians at every level and has even asked every candidate in the local elections to sign a pledge against cuts to the Service. In an attempt to get politicians to understand how dangerous cuts would be we have highlighted several large scale incidents which have occurred in the areas most effected.

This included the recent major fire in a Plymouth car workshop which shows why planned cuts to frontline fire cover in the city are “folly” and should be withdrawn immediately.

Five pumping appliances from the city attended the fire which took place at a range of industrial units in Miller Court, Millbay, Plymouth. One unit measuring 15m x 15m, used as a car body repair workshop was severely damaged by fire. The spray booth was reported to be well alight, with heavy black smoke and possible cylinders involved.

Police declared the fire a major incident because some of the smoke was believed to be toxic.

Pumping appliances from Greenbank (two), Camels Head and Crownhill plus Crownhill’s aerial ladder platform were on the initial attendance. Using first water and then compressed air foam, the fire was subdued but concern over possible spreading of hot spots saw crews employ the aerial ladder to check using thermal imaging cameras along the roof area. The fire crews who dealt with the incident have been praised by the fire service for their “aggressive firefighting action”, which got in “close quarters with the fire and got to grips with it”.

This incident is a stark reminder of the reality of our work and how the cuts would impact on the job that we do. The cuts would mean that the amount of frontline firefighters covering Plymouth in the future would be cut almost in half. The city would have three fire engines, an aerial appliance and two entire fire stations downgraded from full time cover.

Trevor French, FBU brigade secretary in Devon and Somerset said: “This incident is a powerful example of why fulltime fire cover is so necessary in a city like Plymouth and shows the folly of the cuts that are being proposed.

“This was a dangerous and difficult incident, which required a significant and immediate response from fulltime fire crews in order to deal with it properly and safely. We were able to do so on this occasion, because of the level of cover that is currently in place. But if the planned cuts go through, it would drastically reduce our ability to respond and deal with incidents in the way that we currently do. This example was in Plymouth but its lessons apply equally to every other area under threat including Torquay, Taunton, Ilfracombe, Yeovil and every area across our Service.

“It’s now time for the politicians involved to understand the real damage that cuts in frontline cover would cause and, on that basis, withdraw these damaging proposals and think again.”



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