

THERE WON'T BE ANY CUTS IN KERNOW!



Cornwall County Council's swingeing cuts proposals have been rejected and an additional £3.6m will be ploughed into the fire and rescue service in the coming three years.

The decision represents an important victory for the Union's 14 month campaign and will lead to Cornwall initially taking on 12 firefighters in April and returning to full establishment over the 3 year period. There will be funding for a pilot RDS salary scheme and threatened Falmouth and Camborne fire stations will continue to maintain 24/7 fire cover for local communities.

The council agreed on Wednesday 20 February to add £1.1m to the budget for 2008/9, £1.6m for 2009/10 and £1.9m for 2010/11. This returns the money that was taken from the budget in 2007 and led to the "IRMP" proposals to end 24-hr cover in the county.

Says Terry Nottle, FBU Cornwall brigade secretary:

"The Council is now a firm believer in the principles of risk-based emergency cover and we await their full support and investment in the service that will be required when the risk review is completed later this year.

Adds Mike Tremellen, FBU Cornwall brigade chair:

"Thanks to all FBU members for their support during the 14 month campaign, especially those who engaged with the public, local politicians and media - a crucial part of the campaign. Also, thanks to those who attended the demonstrations and marches we organised during that time and to FBU South West regional officials who have all helped, supported and encouraged us throughout the campaign."

Cuts fightback: Devon and Somerset

The Union is upping the campaign against cuts to services in Devon and Somerset after the fire authority voted to axe 24 wholetime posts and allow dual-crewing of aerial platforms to deal with a £1.3m budget shortfall.

The FBU has described the cuts as "disgusting" and said they could cost lives.

The fire authority has claimed the decision taken was the option that would have the least adverse impact on the service. The FBU says there was an alternative option that was

put forward by ourselves, one that didn't involve frontline services being cut!

The fire authority voted to axe 24 posts in Exeter, Torquay and Barnstaple and said the post cuts would not result in job losses.

Bob Walker, FBU Devon and Somerset brigade chair said: "We say that cuts cost lives and we want to keep the services as they are, and as the public expects them."

The FBU is seeking an urgent meeting with the brigade to reverse the proposed cuts and will lobby all councillors on the fire authority about its concerns.

Cuts fightback: Cleveland

The FBU campaign against £1.85 million, 3-year cuts package in Cleveland is gathering pace with public support increasing all the time.

On the morning of Saturday 9 February a number of FBU officials, FBU members and some of their partners petitioned and leafleted in Middlesbrough town centre, and in less than 4 hours collected over 2,300 signatures. Members of the public queued up to sign the petition, and at least one member of the Fire Authority, other local councillors, and the Chair of Cleveland Police Authority signed it.

Says brigade secretary Steve Watson: "2,300 signatures in 4 hours is testament - if any was needed - that the general public still hold the Fire and Rescue Service in the highest esteem and do not wish to see any further cuts to their service.

"We will be continuing our petitioning and campaigning up to the end of the formal IRMP consultation process in the hope that Cleveland Fire Authority acts upon the wishes of the people who elected them."

Cuts fightback: Humberside

Two councillors have resigned from East Riding Council's Scrutiny Review Panel to be free to actively campaign with the FBU

against proposed cuts. After hearing 1 day's evidence, with presentations from management, the FBU, MPs and other councillors, Paul Robinson and Caroline Fox were unconvinced by the fire authority's arguments and stood down from the Review Panel, which is scrutinising the fire authority's proposals to close 4 fire stations (Sledmere, Waltham, Kirton Lindsey and Hull Central) remove a fire engine at another (Immingham West) and end the immediate response capability of a fire engine at another (Goole). The cuts will see the loss of 1 in ten frontline firefighter posts. If the plans go ahead we would have between 100 and 110 fewer frontline firefighters to deal with all the emergency incidents the fire and rescue service needs to respond to.

Paul Robinson said: "After taking evidence on the first day of the panel hearings last Friday, it became apparent that Caroline and I could better represent our local residents by resigning from the panel so that we could publicly oppose the cuts.

"FA members would be playing fast and loose with safety of local communities"

We believe that members of the Humberside Fire Authority will be playing fast and loose with the safety of our local communities if they vote through the cuts as proposed. Goole Fire Station provides much of the cover for Howdenshire."

Caroline Fox added, "The evidence we heard on the first day of the panel was so convincingly against the cuts that I personally felt that as my own ward would be deeply affected by the proposals.

"I find it bizarre in the extreme that in just a couple of years the Humberside Fire Brigade has gone from designating parts of rural East Yorkshire according to different risks to designating practically all of our rural communities as low risk. Given the new housing and development that is taking place in our communities I would have thought that the Fire Authority would be looking at improving the fire cover locally, not reducing it."

The two councillors added: "We feel so strongly about these proposals that we've decided we need to speak out on behalf of our local communities. We will now join with councillors of all parties who have opposed these cuts and we hope that our opposition will act as a warning to councillors on the Fire Authority that our communities will not take proposals to cut our local services lightly. We must all continue to work together to ensure that the fire authority sees sense and listen to the massive opposition to these cuts."

The news came a fortnight after Humberside fire chiefs were forced to delay a meeting about cutbacks because so many protesters turned up - breaching fire regulations. The meeting only went ahead after half of the 400 concerned villagers and placard-wielding opponents of the plan to axe the village fire station begrudgingly agreed to leave.

Waltham Parish Council had moved its meeting - usually held in the library - to the biggest venue in the village, Waltham Leas Junior School Hall, because they had expected many to attend. But even that was too small to cope with the angry hordes desperate to save the 80-year-old retained Waltham fire station. The frustrated residents who left called for another meeting so everyone could have their say against the cuts.

Parish councillors had earlier voted to oppose the cuts and invited fire chiefs to present their case for closure.

When the meeting eventually started residents applauded successive calls to keep Waltham Fire Station. One resident said: "Are we going to put lives at risk to save a few quid?"

More info:

http://www.thisisgrimsby.co.uk/displayNode.jsp?nodeId=181505&command=displayContent&sourceNode=231723&home=yes&more_nodeId=151458&contentPK=19789805

Attacks

Just over a week after the Union published its new report on attacks on firefighters, moves are afoot to make an attack on a public service worker carry a bigger punishment.

The Sentencing Guidelines Council has issued a definitive guideline stating that violent offenders who carry weapons to the scene of a crime and use them on victims should face severe sentences.

Sentences for such offenders who inflict particularly grave injuries should be in a range of 10 and 16 years imprisonment, it said. In the guideline to be implemented on March 3, the Council sets out a series of factors that will specifically aggravate assaults and should result in greater sentences. These include:


- Offenders operating in gangs or groups;
- The deliberate targeting of vulnerable victims or choosing isolated places for carrying out an attack;
- Attacks on victims working in the public sector or providing a service to the public.

Council member Judge Michael Mettyear said: "Assaults on public sector workers and those providing a service to the public including members of the emergency services and transport workers cause harm to the individual and to wider society.

"They can result in reduced or cancelled services, discourage people from working in certain jobs and undermine public confidence. The sentence handed down by the court should reflect that.

"Furthermore, where an offence is committed against someone providing a service to the public and that worker is also particularly vulnerable...this will constitute further aggravation."

Attacks on fire crews – from physical abuse to missiles thrown to verbal abuse – continue to be a significant hazard in the fire



service, according to a new report produced by the Labour Research Department for the Union. There are few signs of improvement in recent years.

New figures collected from every fire and rescue service in the UK under the Freedom of Information Act suggest that officially there are more than 2,000 attacks on fire crews every year, over 40 a week or six a day. However under-reporting is rife and FBU representatives estimate that the figure is at least twice as high – and quite possibly far higher than that.

For more information on the new FBU/LRD *Easy Targets?* report visit www.fbu.org.uk

Cuts fightback: Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Executive has agreed to add £14-15 million to the Fire Service budget following heavy lobbying by the FBU of politicians from all political parties. The Service had been faced with swinging cuts due to a shortfall of funding.

Jim Barbour, FBU Executive Council member for Northern Ireland, welcomed the move to increase the budget, which was announced by Finance Minister Peter Robinson. Jim Barbour described it as a “significant win” for FBU members and for the safety of communities in Northern Ireland.

The Union mounted a major political lobbying effort – including with the minister responsible for fire, Michael McGimpsey - after it was revealed in December that a funding shortage could jeopardise 26 fire stations.