



The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

27<sup>th</sup> June 2017

### **Motion of No Confidence in Surrey's County Council's Fire Authority**

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Surrey, are appalled at the budget cuts being forced upon Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) by Surrey County Council's (SCC) Fire Authority (FA) and extremely concerned that the safety of the public and Fire Fighters will be subjected to a totally unacceptable level of risk.

Despite the FBU formally raising such concerns to the FA over several years, the FA appears resolute in imposing even more budget cuts on the service, without concern for the consequences of its actions.

Since 2010, SCC's FA has imposed budget cuts on SFRS annually, which has so far resulted in;

	2010	2017	Posts Axed	% Reduction
Fire Fighters	378	252	126	33%
Emergency Control Staff	31	24	7	23%
Incident Command Officers/Management	64	36	28	44%
Non-uniformed Support Staff	101	59	42	42%

- Whole-time Fire Engines crew reduced from 5 to 4
- A Fire Stations staffing establishment reduced from 26 to 20 Fire Fighters
- No improvement on approximately 40% On Call Fire Fighter understaffing
- Failing to meet the revised (slower than previous) Emergency Response Standard
- Failing to meet both Whole-time and On Call Fire Engine availability targets
- 66% decrease in the number of Fire Protection audits carried out
- Of all England's FRS's, Surrey already has the lowest number of staff per head count of population

SFRS's FA has now set a 4 year budget plan which will result in another £10m in cuts. If these cuts are implemented, it will leave the public of Surrey, with nothing more than a false sense of security.

All this during a time when fire deaths are rising, Emergency Response Times are worsening and demands on SFRS are increasing.

The budget set by SCC's FA for the next 4 years will result in a much greater degradation to service, enforce Fire Fighters and Emergency Control Staff to be made redundant, reduce Incident Command capability, replace Fire Engines with 2 seater vans (IRV's), close some fire stations, reduce availability of crews at others and introduce yet another revised down Emergency Response Standard.

By enforcing all these cuts, the risk to the public and Fire Fighters will soar upwards to a totally unacceptable level.



**The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters**

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

FBU Surrey's membership, therefore declares this Motion of No Confidence in Surrey County Councils Fire Authority and demands that the FA members either halt all planned cuts to SFRS, reinstates a fit for purpose budget in agreement with the FBU to restore an adequate level of safety for the public and Fire Fighters in Surrey or SCC relinquishes its governance of SFRS.

The SCC's FA is in a race to the bottom, which we believe the people of Surrey would not want to compete in and it's certainly not one Fire Fighters will tolerate.

FA members need to get their heads out of the financial spreadsheets and into the real world, where real people live or die as a result of ill thought out decisions.

Ends.

Contacts:

Richard Jones, FBU Regional Secretary, South East Region  
07769 249097 [richard.jones@fbu.org.uk](mailto:richard.jones@fbu.org.uk)

Lee Belsten, FBU Surrey, Brigade Secretary  
07717 571726 [lee.belsten@fbu.org.uk](mailto:lee.belsten@fbu.org.uk)

Asif Aziz, FBU Surrey, Brigade Chair  
07769 249098 [Asif.Aziz@fbu.org.uk](mailto:Asif.Aziz@fbu.org.uk)



**The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters**

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

## **Appendix to the Motion of No Confidence**

**The budget set for the next 4 years will result in the following;**

### **Spelthorne**

We are aware that the FA is currently deliberating that when the new station is built, if it will have the On Call Fire Engine as well as the 1 x Whole-time one, as the FA originally pledged in 2014.

FBU Regional Secretary, Richard Jones wrote to Cllr Richard Walsh (the then portfolio holder for the Fire and Rescue Service) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2016, explaining in great detail how the FA's proposed cuts in Spelthorne would detrimentally affect both public safety and why it did not make economic sense either, as the cost resulting from a single fire death costs on average £1.4m, which is paid by the tax payer.

Cllr Walsh replied on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017 with the following reply;

*"Dear Mr Jones*

*Thank you for your email detailing your views on the proposed changes to fire cover in the Spelthorne area.*

*We will include your comments within the consultation which as you know finishes on 20 February 2017.*

*I will be reviewing the results after this time, as will Members on the Resident Experience Board.*

*The final report will then be considered formally with Cabinet colleagues on 28 March 2017.*

*Thank you once again for taking the time to get in touch."*

But the consultation was brought to end ahead of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and to date, the final report has still not been shared or published.

Unlike the FA, the FBU is not considering a U-turn; our view is clear, Spelthorne needs as a minimum, 2 x Whole-time crews available 24/7, 365 days a year in Spelthorne. We say minimum because currently the Water Rescue capability, stationed in Spelthorne (for ease of access to the River Thames), is only available when the crews are not already committed to an incident. Spelthorne also houses a significant proportion of its residents in high rise accommodation which in our opinion, requires a dedicated Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP), as is currently stationed at Leatherhead. Spelthorne needs 3 x Whole-time crews to allow the Water Rescue and an Aerial Ladder Platform to be available in the borough, 24/7 as well as the 2 Fire Engines.

With the Grenfell catastrophe fresh in everyone's minds, we find it incredulous that the FA would consider not just halving the fire and emergency cover in Spelthorne but in doing so, halving the number of Fire Protection audits carried out in the borough. Providing a third Whole-time crew would allow a 50% increase of audits to be carried out; we think Spelthorne needs that given the high rise and building density in the borough.



**The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters**

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

In the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, most FA's are investing more resources in carrying out Fire Protection audits to ensure that in particular, high rise properties in their area are fully compliant with the relevant legislation. The FBU are dismayed that SCC's FA is continuing with its fire and emergency cuts in Spelthorne without even as much as a review of the impact of the impending cuts.

The £900k the FA was hoping to save by closing Staines ahead of the new station being built has been left as a service saving to be made this year despite the FA deciding to keep Staines open. This is totally unacceptable and shows that the FA is forcing monetary savings on SFRS without any consideration of how or where the savings would be made or the impact on community safety that such cuts will inevitably impose.

FBU Brigade Secretary, Lee Belsten wrote to the Leader of SCC, Cllr David Hodge on the 9<sup>th</sup> June, requesting for this saving to be removed from the budget.

*Cllr Hodge, replied on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017, with the following answer;  
"The Council has tasked Surrey Fire and Rescue Service with identifying alternative compensating savings in the financial year 2017-2018."*

So Staines remains open until the new fire station is built but a Whole-time crewed Fire Engine somewhere else in the county must go to make the FA's £900k savings target. And then when the new fire station is built, Spelthorne still loses 1 x Whole-time Fire Engine.

If SFRS implement the £900k cut this year, the FA will have axed not 1 but 2 Whole-time fire engines by the time the new station opens.

### **Emergency Control Centre – Restructure**

The recent restructure of the Emergency Control Centre (ECC) has resulted in an establishment which is not fit for purpose.

FBU Regional Secretary, Richard Jones wrote to Cllr Richard Walsh on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017, laying out in a 4 page letter detailed concerns and 8 clear and concise questions relating to the £330k saving that the council was imposing on the ECC.

Cllr Walsh finally got round to replying on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2017;  
However, of the 8 questions asked, in the reply only one was clearly answered. The reply contained no comment or reply to the numerous concerns raised.

The FA has imposed a budget cut on the ECC which requires 4 members of staff to be made redundant by removing a crucial layer of Incident Command.



The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

The new staffing level set, forces staff to either work outside of the Working Time Regulations 1998 or take their rest breaks knowing that they are leaving the ECC understaffed to effectively deal with emergency incidents. No-one should be forced into making such a choice.

This is totally unacceptable and shows once again, how little understanding the FA have in the Fire and Rescue Service and how little regard they have for their employee's wellbeing or public safety.

The ECC needs to be staffed as a minimum, with 4 Emergency Control staff 24/7, 365 days per year.

Anything less will lead to delayed call handling, operational crews not receiving the specialist advice and backup they require quickly to resolve emergency incidents safely. It will also prevent the Officer of the Watch not being able to take rest breaks. Inevitably, this will lead to staff suffering unacceptable levels of pressure which is likely to lead to long term occupational stress, which has real potential to lead to mental health detriment. Such sickness absence will compound the understaffing problem even further.

FBU Brigade Secretary, Lee Belsten wrote to the Leader of SCC, Cllr David Hodge on the 9<sup>th</sup> June, asking 3 questions relating to the impacts of the cuts on staff and emergency call handling.

Cllr Hodge replied on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017 with the following reply to all three questions;  
*"The Formal Consultation on the proposed changes to the Mobilising Team Structure and Ways of Working ran from 11 April 2017 to 10 May 2017.*

*The responses to the consultation process, which include comments received from the Fire Brigades Union [Surrey], are being analysed with formal responses, conclusions and actions to follow. The draft consultation outcomes have been shared with the Fire Brigades Union [Surrey]."*

The reply does not make sense as redundancies are already progressing.

### **Reduced Crewing levels**

The budget cut imposed by the FA in 2014, forced the crewing levels of Whole-time fire engines to be reduced from 5 to 4. This reduction is crucial as it prevents Fire Fighters using Breathing Apparatus (BA) until backup arrives at the incident as the use of BA requires a minimum of 5 Fire Fighters to implement the BA procedure. This now means that crews cannot commit to search and rescue or internal firefighting in a compartment fire, until a second fire engine arrives. This reduction has forced an obvious delay in commencing rescue operations in compartment fires. Add to this the number of fire engines to be cut in Surrey and the number that will be replaced by IRV's and you don't need to be a Fire Fighter to understand how the risk to the public will shoot up as a result of these budget cuts but clearly the FA members have failed to understand the severity of risk they have created, despite it being explained to them on many occasions.



The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

### **Whole-time crewing - Compulsory Redundancy**

It has become clear to both the service and FBU that if the budget set by the FA for SFRS, (with or without the £900k savings held against Staines fire station closure), will force redundancies before the financial year 2018-19 starts as the budget for 2018-19 cannot pay approximately 45 existing whole-time Fire Fighters salaries, even after predicted retirements have been taken into account.

From 2018 onwards, further redundancies, in addition to lost posts through natural wastage, would also be necessary in frontline crewing, Incident Commanders and specialist functions. The budget for SFRS over the coming years is woefully unfit for purpose and shows no concern of the heightened risk it will impose on Fire Fighters and the public alike.

Note: 2010: Whole-time Fire Fighters = 378 2022: Predicted Whole-time Fire Fighters = 117, that could mean there will be 69% reduction in Whole-time Fire Fighters from 2010.

FBU Brigade Secretary, Lee Belsten wrote to the Leader of SCC, Cllr David Hodge on the 9<sup>th</sup> June, requesting the following;

2. Will the current SFRS MTFP budget be revised to prevent any compulsory redundancies being made in SFRS over the period covered by the current MTFP?
3. I request from you, a written assurance that the Council will not impose a budget on SFRS that results in compulsory redundancies of any Grey Book staff.
4. If the MTFP budget is to remain unchanged, how will SCC reduce the existing Grey Book establishment to meet that reduced budget?

Cllr Hodge replied on 21<sup>st</sup> June with the following;

*"The Cabinet as Surrey's Fire and Rescue Authority has set the budget for Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and this is published on Surrey County Council's website – pages 72 to 74.*

*Every effort will be made to avoid compulsory redundancy. The Fire and Rescue Authority recognises the very positive developments leading to good industrial relations made jointly by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Brigades Union [Surrey] in accordance with Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and would wish this protocol to continue to be followed."*

So, finally some clear answers.

Will the budget be revised;	No.
Can you provide a written assurance of no redundancies;	No.
How will the staff be cut to fit the budget;	Don't know.

We doubt the public will feel any more assured about their future fire and emergency provision from the FA's reply, than our members do about their future employment.



**The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters**

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

### **Replacing Fire Engines with Immediate Response Vehicles (IRV's)**

The vastly reduced budget has forced SFRS into seeking cheaper ways of responding to emergency incidents. The proposed introduction of IRV's will mean that fire engines are to be replaced by 2 seater IRV's which we can only liken to window cleaning vans carrying a small ladder, toolbox and pressure washer; they certainly do not resemble or in any way replace a Fire Engine packed full of equipment crewed with 5 Fire Fighters. Crews of 2 responding to incidents rather than the required crews of 5, with rescue capability, is a recipe for disaster.

FBU Brigade Secretary, Lee Belsten wrote to the Leader of SCC, Cllr David Hodge on the 9<sup>th</sup> June, requesting the following;

8. IRV's will not be used as a first response to emergency incidents involving fires or ones occurring on the highways.
9. IRV's will only be used as a method of providing additional backup to emergency incidents and ones where no breathing apparatus is required to be used.
10. No selective alerting system will be introduced into the service which would prevent a crew of 5 be alerted to all emergency incidents.

Cllr Hodge replied on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017, with the following;

*"The IRV concept will be piloted in the Financial Year 2017-2018. The initial two vehicles are on order but the pilot has not yet commenced. It is too early to state whether these units will be deployed as "a first response to emergency incidents". The Fire Brigades Union [Surrey] has agreed to evaluate the veracity of the whole concept and assist in the development and assessment of any safe system(s) of work associated with the operational deployment of IRVs. The IRV concept and any proposed implementation plan will be fully described in the Integrated Risk Management Plan which Surrey Fire and Rescue Service will consult upon later this year."*

We have been clear from the start that a crew of 2 cannot possibly maintain safe systems of work in a compartment fire or on a public highway. Without the guarantees that the vehicles will not be used for such purposes, we are now reconsidering our involvement in the IRV evaluation.

Cllr Hodge has been clear in his reply to the selective alerting question from Lee Belsten;

*"The Service will be working to produce viable and affordable proposals which aim to ensure continued compliance with Surrey Fire and Rescue Authority's Statement of Assurance whilst simultaneously remaining within the reduced budget as stated in the Medium Term Financial Plan."*

Selective alerting means only calling some of the available On Call Fire Fighters in to the fire station to answer an emergency call. It beggars belief that the FA would consider calling in for example just 2 Fire Fighters when 5 are available for nothing more than saving a few pounds.



**The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters**

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

There is no doubt that a crew of 2 cannot carry out the same work of a crew of 5, neither can they work effectively to resolve operational incidents putting the public at much greater risk. Crews will face a regular moral dilemma; whether to work outside of laid down safety procedures to risk making a rescue before backup arrives or to risk losing public lives and maintain safe systems of work. This is a totally unacceptable position to impose on anyone and it's totally avoidable.

The FBU are appalled that the FA would force the service into seeking such dangerous methods of crewing with no regard to public or Fire Fighter safety.

### **On-Call Duty System**

SFRS has historically struggled to recruit and retain On-Call Duty System (OCDS) Fire Fighters and despite many recruitment drives, this remains a major challenge the service has been unable to overcome. With the introduction of IRV's, the retention of OCDS staff is likely to get far worse.

The OCDS establishment is currently approximately half of what is required to deliver 24/7, 365 availability. But with the FA's imposed budget cuts, reaching the full OCDS establishment is now impossible and therefore, so is achieving full availability of ODCS fire crews.

### **Restructure of Incident Command**

The restructure of SFRS's Incident Command capability, will result in less Incident Command Officers being available to take command of operational incidents. The FA should know that failures in Incident Command have been attributed to virtually every Fire Fighter fatality in the UK during recent years.

Due to FA's imposed budget cuts, the Incident Command capability was cut in 2015 and as a result is currently inadequate as it relies on Incident Commanders working additional hours to maintain full cover. To impose further reductions is dangerously foolhardy and failures in Incident Command would become inevitable.

### **Fire Protection**

It is essential that SFRS has a fully staffed specialist Fire Protection Team as well as enough operational Fire Fighters to carry out regular Fire Protection audits of buildings in Surrey. Without a robust and regular audit process in place, the fire protection measures applied to buildings will inevitably deteriorate if allowed to go unchecked.

We have all recently seen an extreme example of the tragedies that can occur when such Fire Protection is not maintained.

But the FA's budget cuts are expected to reduce the number of Whole-time Fire Fighters in Surrey by over 50%. These are the same Fire Fighters that carry out these Fire Protection audits on a day to day basis, therefore the number of audits will reduce by a higher percentage, as the few that are left will have far less time for audits.



The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

Nationally, the number of Fire Protection Audits carried out by the Fire and Rescue Service's has dropped on average by 20% from 2010 to 2016, which is in line with the drop the number of Fire Fighter posts that have been axed over the same period. But in Surrey, due to more extreme FA cuts since 2010, axing more than 20% of Fire Fighter posts, the audits have vastly reduced as the summary table below, compiled from Government Statistics shows;

SFRS Fire Protection Audit Comparison			
	2010-2011	2015-16	Reduction
Total Audits	1520	519	<b>-66%</b>
Article 30 Enforcement Notices Served	48	11	<b>-77%</b>
Article 31 Prohibition Notices Served	8	2	<b>-75%</b>

It's a simple equation;

Insufficient number of Fire Fighters = Insufficient number of audits being carried out

Right now, FRS's need to be carrying out urgent inspections of cladding panels used on tower blocks. But as it's doubtful the cladding will prove to be the only Fire Protection failure at Grenfell Tower, there will likely be a need for more regular audits of such buildings and a knock on to Fire Protection audits of many other types of buildings.

All this will require enough Fire Fighters being employed to carry out this large number of regular audits and dedicated Fire Protection teams to carry out enforcement and prohibition, when and where required.

It's clear to see from the table above, that SFRS is not currently adequately staffed to do this.

Furthermore, the service is currently considering outsourcing its dedicated Fire Protection function in an effort to reduce cost even further, to accommodate the FA's imposed budget cuts. We question how it can be possible for a company that needs to make profit to carry out a robust Fire Protection audit program more effectively and efficiently than the non-profit making Fire and Rescue Service. We are extremely concerned that this could lead to corners being cut to meet profit demands or even less audits and enforcements.

As this is being considered to save money, the alarm bells are already ringing in our ears.

Once again, the FA's drive to save money is rolling the dice with public lives.



The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

## Summary

The FA's drive is to save money without concern for the service it provides. Within the replies from Cllr's Walsh and Hodge, there is virtually no mention of public or Fire Fighter safety but there are reams of text about budgets, savings and blaming the government for cutting funding.

The FBU is certainly no fan of the government's austerity agenda which has caused financial challenges for all local authorities including SCC. But SCC must own responsibility for its part in its current financial turmoil. There can be no denying, SCC was pre-warned in good time;

*"We see the overall approach and assumptions that are being made as ambitious and different to those of most other councils, with this generating risks. However, the council is very confident about its approach and that it has adequately considered all of the risks. The council also has a good track record in relation to the financial assumptions it has made subsequently being proved to be accurate. It is important though for the council to ensure that variations from what is being assumed can be responded to in a timely manner, because any assumptions that subsequently prove to have been incorrect risk a major financial gap suddenly emerging for the council that there will be little time to respond to in anything other than 'fire-fighting mode'."*

Source: Local Government Association (LGA), Surrey County Council Peer Challenge Report - 2013

It's hard to escape the irony of the choice of words used in the LGA's report 4 years ago. Could this be the reason why Cllr Hodge has given written notice of SCC's withdrawal from the LGA in April 2018?

And then there was the absolutely necessary 15% Council Tax Referendum that was suddenly not deemed necessary and cancelled just before the Surrey County Councillors election.

FBU Surrey reiterates its statement in FA's Public Safety Plan 2016-2025 for SFRS;

*"FBU Surrey knows that the collaborative approach described here is the only viable option to secure a safe future of not just the people and firefighters in Surrey, but the whole of the south east. Therefore we fully support the collaborative approach outlined in this Public Safety Plan and are fully committed to jointly working towards realising these savings and investment opportunities with the all emergency services concerned. We are open-minded to opportunities to reform to protect frontline delivery, as long as we are engaged in the process. However, we will oppose any cuts in frontline services that cause any loss of safety for the people of Surrey or its firefighters, which may have been avoided by realising collaborative options."*

As referred to in the reply from Cllr Hodge on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017, SFRS is now in the process of drafting a new Public Safety Plan, despite the FA only agreeing the 2016 -2025 plan in December 2016. This new plan is will not be about Safety, it will purely be a cuts plan to show how and where another £10m worth of cuts will be made across Surrey. We will work with the SFRS to show the public what another £10m of cuts looks like but as stated in the 2016-2025 plan above but we will oppose its implementation.



**The Professional  
Voice of Your  
Fire Fighters**

**Fire Brigades Union**  
South East Region

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire,  
Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service has suffered 7 years of continual ruthless cuts to its budget under the governance of Surrey County Council's Fire Authority. 7 years of a Whole-time Fire Fighter recruitment ban and losing countless posts through natural wastage has led to vastly reduced and older workforce. The average age of a Surrey Whole-time Fire Fighter is 44 years old.

These cuts have gone way to deep. It's time for money to be reinvested in the service to bring it back to a level that we would all expect a 21<sup>st</sup> century Fire And Rescue Service could and should provide for the people of Surrey.

It's clear to the FBU where the Surrey County Council's Fire Authority priorities are and they do not align to ours and we doubt they align with the people of Surrey either. We have lost all confidence in the FA's governance of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and therefore demand change before these cuts lead to preventable deaths occurring.

Contacts:

Richard Jones, FBU Regional Secretary, South East Region  
07769 249097 [richard.jones@fbu.org.uk](mailto:richard.jones@fbu.org.uk)

Lee Belsten, FBU Surrey, Brigade Secretary  
07717 571726 [lee.belsten@fbu.org.uk](mailto:lee.belsten@fbu.org.uk)

Asif Aziz, FBU Surrey, Brigade Chair  
07769 249098 [Asif.Aziz@fbu.org.uk](mailto:Asif.Aziz@fbu.org.uk)