

Attention: Chief Fire Officer
Surrey Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters
Croydon Road
Reigate
RH2 0EJ

Councillor Robert Knowles
Leader of the Council

When calling please ask for: Cllr. Robert Knowles

Direct line: 01483 523208

Calls may be recorded for training or monitoring

E-mail: robert.knowles@waverley.gov.uk

Date: 15 February 2011

Dear Sir

**SURREY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
DRAFT PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN**

I am writing on behalf of Waverley Borough Council and the residents of our Borough in response to the publication of your draft public safety plan for 2011 – 2020.

Waverley has considered your proposals very carefully indeed, and, while we fully understand the need to drive efficiencies through your service in this challenging financial climate, we must express some serious concerns indeed about the impact of your proposed service changes on our Borough.

Waverley is a rural borough, and the challenges this poses are very different from those of a smaller, more densely populated area. Our first concern is that the model proposed for fire service cover across the County does not adequately take into account the challenges posed by our rural geography. We note that, taking the A25/A31 as a dividing line, there is only one full time fire station in Surrey to the south (Dorking), but an abundance to the north. We are concerned that the revised response standard leaves the residents and road users of the Borough at greater risk and do not balance service provision across Surrey

The plan proposes a reduction in appliance cover of 63% during the daytime (0700 – 1900) and 50% during the evening and night-time (1900 – 0700). Looking at the significantly increased coverage being imposed on the two appliances stationed at Guildford, and the paucity of full-time appliances stationed over our borders in Hampshire or West Sussex, we are not convinced that this level of service is anywhere near enough to keep our residents safe.

We welcome the two additional full time shifts at Haslemere (Saturday and Sunday 0700 – 1900) but have serious reservations about the ability of the service to provide a worthwhile and reliable service in the Borough with the greatly reduced appliance capacity. It is of particular concern in Cranleigh, Ewhurst, Dunsfold and surrounding areas, where there is no daytime cover at all.

We are also concerned at the availability of second pumps for any part of the Borough and the long delay in them arriving at an incident. The problems posed by the need for appliances to travel long distances on our rural road network have been seriously under-estimated. We note your proposed new target response times, but we fear that our Borough will be constantly in the 20% of incidents to which you do not respond within your target times. This problem will be exacerbated by the fact that our service is based on retained crews: your time-measuring system, we understand, does not count the additional time it takes to mobilise a retained appliance. We believe that lives could be put at risk if cover is not increased – particularly in the Cranleigh area of our Borough.

We understand the difficulties you have described in staffing the retained appliance at Dunsfold. We would urge you, however, instead of removing this service from Waverley that you reconsider and retain a 24 hour appliance at Cranleigh instead.

We are also deeply concerned about the level of cover that will be available to support the new tunnel at Hindhead. We believe that this aspect of service delivery has not been adequately planned for, and for this reason also there is, it seems to us, a clear need for increased availability of full-time appliances stationed in our Borough.

We strongly disagree with your proposals to revise your response standard, for the reasons outlined above (proposal 1 in your consultation questionnaire), and your proposal 3, to ‘rebalance’ the spread of service provision across Waverley, as we do not believe that the service provided for our rural Borough will be adequate to keep our residents safe or to guarantee service resilience.

I would strongly urge you to reconsider these plans, and to retain a 24 hour appliance at Cranleigh.

We strongly disagree with Proposals 1 & 3.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Robert Knowles
Leader
Waverley Borough Council

Copy: Councillor Andrew Povey
Leader – Surrey County Council
Councillor Kay Hammond
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety