

From: [Councillor Paul Hilliard](#)
To: [Councillor Mark Howell](#); [BCP Councillors](#)
Cc: [Democratic Services](#)
Subject: RE: Fire Authority Cuts
Date: 05 September 2024 16:28:54
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Members

As with many public sector organisations, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service are facing significant financial challenges. This has been exacerbated by our 6th consecutive single year finance settlement and an unsuccessful attempt to secure £5 precept flexibility for this financial year. Precept income constitutes 75% of our overall funding, the authority's income from council tax for an average band D property in Dorset and Wiltshire increased by 3%, or £2.52 to £86.95 for this financial year, less than the average for fire and rescue authorities which is now £90.32. Coupled with a lower than anticipated growth in tax base and a continued reduction in real terms of our grant funding we are forecasting a significant budget deficit.

The Service have a sound history of being an efficient Service with good governance. Over recent years, we have made significant savings to achieve a balanced budget, this includes restructuring our Prevention teams and ceasing Youth Intervention work, despite clear evidence of the societal value of this work, this difficult decision was taken due to the prevention activities not being a statutory duty and no longer financially sustainable to deliver without securing additional funding. We made further savings by extending the life of our fleet, reviewing our capital estates programme and reducing the number of wholetime and on call firefighter posts.

There is a requirement for all fire and rescue services to review their community risk profile to provide value for money services to our communities and we have carried out a comprehensive fire cover review in consultation with staff and FBU, looking at the position, the number and type of our resources to make sure these meet the changing risk profile across Dorset and Wiltshire so that we have the right resources in the right place, based on community need. We will continue to lobby for improved funding. A better funding position will enable us to invest in areas that return the highest societal value and mitigate the risks faced by our communities.

The fire cover review has identified a number of proposals for change across our entire Service area to ensure we can be sustainable for the future. Fundamental to the fire cover review is maintaining, and where we can, improving our response to emergency incidents, continuing to be there when our communities need us.

Specifically in relation to BCP the changes being made under the Chief Fire Officer delegation are to:

- to remove the second fire engine at Poole fire station, which is crewed by wholetime firefighters. **As a result, Poole fire station will have two fire engines, one crewed by wholetime firefighters 24/7 and one crewed by on-call firefighters day and night.**

- to change the crewing system at Christchurch from wholetime 24/7 to **day duty from 0730-1930 (wholetime crews will maintain one fire engine during the day) and on-call crews will crew one fire engine during the day and night.**

In addition to these fire engines our analysis provides evidence, that if required, we can resource an incident with 10 fire engines in approximately 20 minutes in the BCP area. It is usual practice to mobilise and move resources around our organisation to meet operational needs and respond to incidents.

To support these fire engines, there is an aerial ladder platform located at Westbourne fire station to ensure coverage in BCP for high rise incidents and this is crewed by wholetime firefighters 24/7. It is the tallest of our three aerial ladder platforms located strategically across the Service.

We also have agreement with neighbouring fire and rescue services, which is enshrined in legislation (the Fire Services Act) to mobilise their resources into our Service area to assist with our response to incidents if required. Our joint fire control with Devon and Somerset, and Hampshire and Isle of Wight fire and rescue services enables us to do this seamlessly.

If a resident of BCP calls 999, at any time of day or night we will respond with the appropriate resources.

Regards

Cllr Paul Hilliard

Member of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Authority

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