



FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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BERKSHIRE FIRE BRIGADES UNION CONDEMNS MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT TO OUTSOURCE ITS CONTROL ROOM FUNCTION TO SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE

The Fire Brigades Union has expressed serious concerns over management plans to outsource the control room to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. The control room based at Dee Road in Reading, houses 35 firefighters (control) working 24/7 split into four shifts. They handle in excess of 10,000 emergency calls per annum, mobilise the appropriate resources to incidents and coordinate all operational activity throughout the County ensuring firefighter and public safety.

Laura Fellows the RBFRS Command and Control Branch Representative of the Fire Brigades Union said: "Firefighters and Control members in the Royal Berkshire Fire Control Centre wish to express their disappointment and concern at hearing this news.

Furthermore, we are also alarmed by the comments made by Mr Baars, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Dr Paul Bryant, Chair of the Fire Authority in recent interviews.

"Both of them have made statements which expose a lack of comprehension to the limitations of caller location technology and the importance of local knowledge in dealing with emergency 999 calls to the Fire Service.

"The role, knowledge, professionalism and exemplary level of service delivered by Firefighters (Control), in Berkshire, is integral to the safety of the public and Firefighters.

Sharon Riley, FBU Executive Member and Control Operator said: "Local knowledge is becoming more, not less important in dealing with emergency calls to the Fire Service, with rapidly changing methods of making telephone calls increasingly exposing the weaknesses in automated caller location technology.

"Mr Baars is making comments about a first class frontline emergency service delivered to the residents and visitors of the Royal County of Berkshire. We believe his proposed changes would deliver an inferior level of service to the public and Firefighters in Berkshire, with little or no savings in the short to long term being delivered to local council tax payers (as experience with 5 years late, vastly over budget proposed Regional Fire Control Centre is showing).

"The Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government have repeatedly stated such services would not be cut or undermined by the strategic spending review. Mr Baars and Dr Bryant are implying that the local austerity cuts will contradict this national position of the Government.

Ends

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