

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

IMMEDIATE MEDIA RELEASE: 23rd September 2010

Fire Brigades Union concerned about merger of Isle of Wight Fire Control Centre to Surrey

At the Isle of Wight Council Full Council meeting, held on Wednesday 22 September 2010, Councillors voted through plans for an 'in principle' decision to move the Island's emergency 999 Fire Control Centre to Reigate in Surrey.

The Fire Brigades Union are deeply concerned that these proposals are hastily being moved forward, to the extent that full public consultation and scrutiny is being pushed aside, with the issue of the Island's Fire Control not due to return to a Full Council Meeting (rather a delegated decision at a future Cabinet Meeting) for full, open and proper debate.

Andrew Cooper, Isle of Wight FBU Fire Control Chairman, "Councillors must provide the public with a full consultation process before making a decision which will affect the safety of all island residents, visitors and businesses. At present Island residents and businesses are being denied the opportunity for such a full public consultation on the issue their local Fire Control. We do not believe island residents will be happy to have their emergency calls to the Fire Service answered in another county. Councillors must now also listen to Firefighters and Firefighters (Control) before making any further decisions on the proposal to have emergency 999 fire calls answered in Reigate, Surrey.

If adopted the level of service received by Island Tax Payers will be inferior to the exemplary and resilient service they currently enjoy."

Ricky Matthews, Regional Secretary Fire Brigades Union (Southern Region) who also attended the Full Council meeting said "Cllr David Pugh, Cllr Barry Abraham, Cllr Roger Mazillius and this administration appear to be more than happy to accept awards to the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service, achieved by the work of Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service staff in moving the service forward and achieving ever higher standards. However, when those same professional Firefighters and Firefighters (Control) are of the strong professional opinion that moving the Island Fire Control Centre will provide an inferior level of service to that currently delivered and increase the life risk to Island residents, visitors, businesses and Firefighters, such views and serious concerns are being sidelined and cast aside."

Firefighters and Firefighters (Control) urge all Councillors to discover for themselves the true extent to which Firefighters rely on accurate and reliable emergency call information, only truly achievable with local knowledge, which fundamentally affects the safety of island residents, visitors and Firefighters.

Additionally, we urge Island residents and businesses to write to their local County and Parish councillors, as well as Island MP Andrew Turner, to express their views on this naive and ill-conceived proposal.

Councillors should be mindful that in a recent YouGov survey (13th September 2010) eight out of ten (85%) of the public oppose government plans to cut funding in the Fire and Rescue Service.

The proposed closure of the Islands Fire Control is a cut to the Fire Service.

It would appear that Councillors know the cost of everything but the value of nothing.

Ends

Notes to Editors:

YouGov surveyed 1,020 adults between 16 –27 August 2010. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from a YouGov Plc survey commissioned by The Fire Brigade Union. The survey was carried out online among a nationally representative sample of 1020 adults aged 18+ in the UK between 16-27 August 2010. Data is weighted to be nationally representative based on age, gender, social grade and region.

The Isle of Wight Council are proposing to close the Isle of Wight Fire Control Centre in Newport, Isle of Wight, with the calls answered by the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Control.

Councillors were only given twenty-four hours notice of the additional items on the agenda for the Full Council meeting, including the issue of the Island's Fire Control Centre.

The FBU understands the issue will now be subject to a 'full scoping study', which will take 3-4 months, before being returned to a future Cabinet Meeting (delegated decision). As a result, the closure of the Island's Fire Control Centre could take place within 8 months (April/May 2011).

Save Isle of Wight Fire Control Campaign website: <http://www.firewontwait.com>

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<http://www.isleofwightfbu.com>

<http://www.fbur12.org.uk>

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