



# Reverse cuts to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Petition Response

4c

## The Petition:

“We the undersigned petition Surrey County Council to Reverse cuts to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service”

Fire SOS - Save Our Stations

For five consecutive days in August, Surrey Firefighters had to battle heat, dehydration and exhaustion to bring wildfires on our heathland and commons under control. You might think our firefighters have everything they need. They don't.

Since 2010, the Conservatives at Surrey County Council have cut 31% of our firefighters and control staff. This year alone, a further four fire engines have been removed and certain stations, including Chobham, the nearest to the Common, will be no longer permanently crewed. It will only be able to respond at night and weekends. A further three fire engines are scheduled to be cut in October.

In the face of cuts, our Fire Service is under further threat. It is time we repaid their commitment and unite against SCC's continuing cuts.

Submitted by Emma Kennedy

---

## Response:

The priorities for Surrey Fire and Rescue Service are keeping Surrey residents safe and the welfare, recruitment and retention of our staff. Our main objective is to ensure that incidents do not happen in the first place, which the Making Surrey Safer Plan addresses by rebalancing resources. In an emergency however we will always respond to an incident.

Staff welfare at incidents is always available. At any incident the initial response can be busier, faster moving and sometimes more stressful. This is especially so in incidents of the magnitude of Chobham Common, which was a major incident and was experienced during a one in sixty-year heatwave event. Even in these extreme events, welfare is always planned, available and appropriate to the scale of the incident. A Welfare Officer was allocated to ensure staff wellbeing. Initial food and drink was available, as is always, on frontline appliances and provisions were, and always are, in place to ensure refreshments continue to be provided throughout the duration of any incident.

The Making Surrey Safer Plan rebalanced our resources to where they are needed most. It is not about a reduction in resources. It makes changes that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) advised us we should do. SFRS's response model had not changed for 30 years and therefore no longer reflected or represented Surrey's needs.

We reviewed our 999 calls over the past five years, used predictive data which shows us where risk is and considered other emergency statistics. This showed us that we did not have enough investment in frontline appliance cover in the daytime and very little prevention and protection activities were being undertaken in the day. It also showed us that we had more frontline appliance availability at night than was needed. The Making Surrey Safer Plan rebalanced this so we had the right resources in the right place at the right time to keep our communities safe.

4c The plan has been scrutinised and assured by the National Fire Chiefs Council Advisory Group, reviewed by HMICFRS, externally verified by Cadcorp (data and modelling specialists) and independently given full assurance by Brunel University.

Whilst we know that the Making Surrey Safer Plan provides the best outcomes for residents by focusing our resources where we need them, we have asked Brunel University to 're-assure' the second phase of implementation. This is so that the impacts of COVID-19, the outcomes from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and new legislation can be taken into account. We anticipate receiving the outcome of this review shortly.

Our performance data shows that since the week commencing 23 September 2019 we have been exceeding our target of first frontline appliance to critical incidents within 10 minutes and have started to improve further since the first phase of the Making Surrey Safer Plan was implemented. This includes during the period when we were responding to the major incident at Chobham Common (and the tropical storm at the end of the same week) when our average response time was 9 minutes 29 seconds, well within our response standard.

**Ms Denise Turner-Stewart**  
**Cabinet Member for Communities**  
**29 September 2020**