

PRESS RELEASE

North Yorkshire FBU calls for change to protect failing front line.

The FBU have continually raised concerns regarding the constant cuts to Frontline Firefighters and Control staff which has left Services in North Yorkshire in crisis, consistently highlighting the need to stop the current direction of travel. The FBU have called for reinvestment in the Frontline as well as greater scrutiny over the Chief Fire Officers decisions.

Whilst North Yorkshire FBU have concerns about the PCC taking charge of the Fire Service, the greater concern is with incompetence shown by the current Fire Authority who have failed to scrutinise the Chief Fire Officers decisions and is failing to deliver an adequately resourced Fire Service to the public of North Yorkshire.

Brigade Secretary Steve Howley states *“ From the start we have engaged with the PCC in open positive discussions. It is refreshing to see that the PCC has listened to our concerns, and agrees investment is needed in the frontline. She has confirmed this publicly, to Councillors and in a formal correspondence to the FBU, clearly identifying her commitments to investment in the Frontline including Control and a much-needed increase in Whole-time Firefighter numbers.”*

“The Chief Fire Officer and Combined Fire Authority will not provide the same commitment to investment into the frontline. Unfortunately, he confirmed his long term plan is to further reduce whole-time firefighters to 2’s on Tactical Response Vehicles or alternatively he may have to reduce Whole-time numbers by other means should this option not be desirable.”

“With ongoing concerns over the retention and recruitment of part-time fire-fighters, with staff leaving faster than they are recruited concerns are turning into a crisis with large numbers of fire engines unavailable due to crewing shortages, something has to change.”

“The FBU has always found dialogue very difficult with most of the Conservative led Fire Authority, so when the new Chair of the Fire Authority invited us to a meeting last week we welcomed it, albeit late in the day. The meeting was helpful, however we failed to gain any commitment from the Chair to provide the same assurances as the PCC to reinvest and improve frontline services.”

“It was alarming that the Chair was not aware of issues within the service and went on record as saying, ‘This is a high performing fire authority’. We do not consider an average of 13 to 14 fire appliances unavailable every day coupled with only 1 control operator on duty to answer calls as high performing and this is just the tip of the iceberg”

“Considering all the information from the detailed discussions we have had with all sides and taking into consideration views expressed by our concerned operational staff, we have come to the difficult conclusion that the only alternative to the current chaos is the proposed change of Governance. We hope the PCC’s keeps her word and invests savings into the front line as it is failing fast.”

Ends

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