



# CHOBHAM PARISH COUNCIL

The Clerk, Chobham Parish Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Station Road  
Chobham, Woking, Surrey GU24 8AJ

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The PSP Team  
Surrey Fire and Rescue Service,  
Croydon Road,  
Reigate,  
Surrey RH2 0EJ

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019

Dear Sir /Madam,

## Chobham Parish Council response to the Making Surrey Safer Consultation

I am writing on behalf of Chobham Parish Council regarding the "Making Surrey Safer" on-line consultation that is due to close on 26th of May 2019. The Parish Council convened a working group to review and complete this consultation, but the group decided to send a letter rather than complete the on-line document for the following reasons;

1. There are only five questions about the proposed changes to the service. That would seem to be totally inadequate and an exercise to meet the legal obligation to have a consultation.
2. There are 10 questions about the respondent. The group was surprised that the personal details of the respondent required twice as many questions as the subject of the consultation and very surprised that the sexual orientation of the respondent required only one less question than the subject of the consultation.

At a time when Home Office figures show the number of incidents the Fire Service attend is increasing (see Appendix A) and when HMICFRS described the performance of Surrey Fire and Rescue as inadequate, the Council is acutely concerned that SCC are proposing to reduce their Fire and Rescue resources further. Question three of the consultation states SFRS are "maintaining the number of fire stations and fire engines in Surrey but changing how Banstead, Camberley, Egham, Fordbridge, Guildford, Haslemere, Painshill, Walton and Woking are crewed at night?". The nett effect of these "changes" is there will be NO night time cover in Banstead, Egham and Painshill, night time cover in Camberley and Woking will be reduced by 50%. The Council considers this totally unacceptable at a time when deaths from fires and the number of non-fire emergencies that the Fire Service must attend is increasing (see appendices A and B).

County Councillor Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire and Resilience stated in an email "There are no redundancies or station closures in our proposals." This is semantics, there will be no cover in Banstead, Chobham, Egham and Painshill stations so they will be effectively closed during these shifts.

**County Councillor Denise Turner-Stewart also stated "Our crewing levels and number of fire engines remains above the national average." We have checked the data for all 14 Fire and Rescue Service assessments performed by HMICFRS and found that at 0.54, Surrey has the lowest number of FRS personnel per 1000 of the population and the coverage is falling faster than all of the 14 authorities except Cambridgeshire. See appendix C.**

In response to your five relevant questions in your consultation;

3. **To what extent do you agree or disagree that SFRS should adopt a risk based approach and focus resources where they are needed, and when they are needed?**  
The Council agree that SFRS have to focus resources where they are needed however leaving stations unmanned for more than 35% of the time is unacceptable.
4. **To what extent do you agree or disagree that SFRS should spend more time on community and business safety to help prevent incidents occurring in the first place?**



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The Council agree that SFRS should spend time on prevention efforts but it does not negate the need for adequate Fire and Rescue Services. Will the safety officers be appointed from additional budget and new headcount or do you intend to take out frontline fire-fighting staff and therefore reduce the number of fire crews in order to fund the new safety officers? If the latter then the Council would like to understand the projected numbers of how many fires will be avoided by the safety work and the potential reduction in the need for fire fighters and by when? If the fire crews are swapped out immediately for the safety work without extra budget to maintain coverage until the transformation into this safer environment is assured then fire fighting coverage will be insufficient endangering lives and the environment/common land. What effect will this change have to response times to fires and to the increasing number of non-fire call outs?

5. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with SFRS maintaining the number of fire stations and fire engines in Surrey but changing how Banstead, Camberley, Egham, Fordbridge, Guildford, Haslemere, Painshill, Walton and Woking are crewed at night?**

The Council agree with maintaining the number of Fire Stations but totally disagree with your plan to close some of them at night and some during the day.

6. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with increasing the catchment area for on-call firefighters to aid recruitment?**

The Council has no opinion on the catchment area, if the personnel can meet the criteria for being on-call and if this does not significantly increase the response time (whilst waiting for fire fighters to arrive from further afield), then the catchment area is not an issue.

7. **To what extent do you agree or disagree that the service recovers costs from some non-emergencies to re-invest in SFRS?**

The Council has no concerns about SFRS recovering costs from fraudulent or malicious call outs but charging for other costs is a stealth rise in rates and as three of the highest rates per household in the country are in Surrey, the Council believe we are already paying enough.

## Chobham Specific Concerns.

Chobham and the surrounding area is unusual in the large acreage of protected common lands it contains, therefore one could argue that the coverage should be among the highest in the country (not the lowest) or alternatively it could be measured in terms of protected acreage in addition to the coverage per 1000 residents, which would likely increase the coverage required. Of particular concern to this Council is the plan to remove the day shift from Chobham Fire Station. The plan shows that, at present, there is no day shift in Chobham but this is incorrect as evidenced by the fact that the Chobham Fire Station crews were the first to respond to the two recent day time fires on Chobham Common. (SFRS had to call on resources from resources from London Fire Brigade, Hampshire, Berkshire, West Sussex, East Sussex Fire Services to deal with the first of these fires due to lack of resources within their service to deal with the larger of these two fires.)

The "Surrey Fire and Rescue Public Safety Plan 2011 – 2020", states that Chobham will have "Provision of 5 day a week Wholetime day crewing; weekend and night cover provided by revision to on-call duty system" (See appendix E. ) and that is the situation today. Therefore, the consultation document that shows that Chobham Fire Station does not have day cover is incorrect and that this consultation is flawed. The documentation provided may mislead the respondents into believing there are no proposed changes to the Chobham Fire Station which is incorrect.

Can you please advise exactly how much you expect to save by closing the Chobham Fire Station Day shift ?



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## In conclusion

The consultation is designed to support the decisions and not to elicit opinion. Two thirds of the questions are not relevant.

The plan uses semantics to say there will be no Fire Station closures. This is correct but at least seven stations will be closed at night and Chobham Fire Station will be closed during the day if this plan is enacted.

Chobham Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, is a Special Protection Area and is a National Nature Reserve. SSC are duty bound to protect it. How will removing the nearest Fire Crew during the day time, the time when most non-deliberate common fires start, impact that duty.

What happens when there is another Chobham Common fire (and there will be, having recently had two fires within two days) but the crew that were first on the scene are no longer available during the day under these proposed plans. The prompt attendance of the Chobham Fire crew most likely ensured that homes were saved as their local knowledge on how to access the Common is key to a fast response.

HMICFRS stated that SFRS was inadequate and to reduce services further at a time when the requirement is increasing is unconscionable.

This consultation is flawed in it's construction and in the data contained within it. We believe it is designed to justify the changes needed to meet the SCC budget cuts, not the safety requirements of Surrey residents. Both the consultation and the plan should be revised to reflect the safety needs of Surrey and not just to meet the budget cuts that SCC are demanding.

**I attach a copy of the presentation given to the Parish Council by a resident and ex firefighter of Chobham as Appendix F. This presentation gives an insight of the serious concerns of the residents of Chobham.**

I would very much appreciate your assurance that the contents of this letter will be fully considered and included in your analysis of the results of the Fire and Rescue Consultation. I look forward to receiving a response to the points raised in this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Annette Barber  
Parish Clerk



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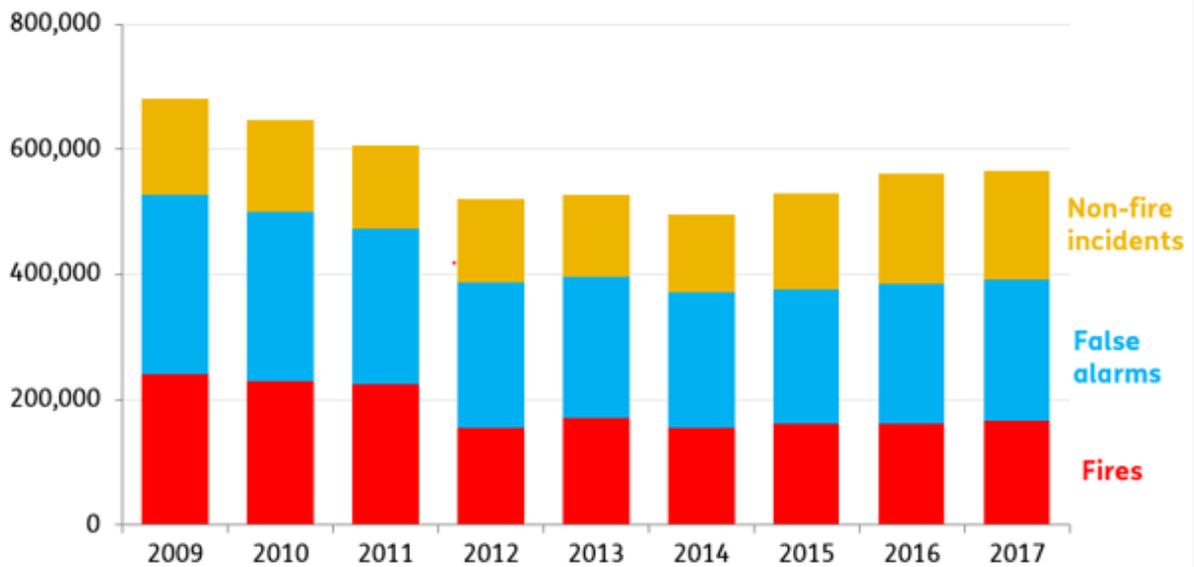
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## Appendix A

### What type of incidents do firefighters attend?

Types of incidents firefighters attended in financial years beginning 2009 to 2017\*



Source: Home Office, Fire statistics data tables, Incidents attended, FIRE 0102





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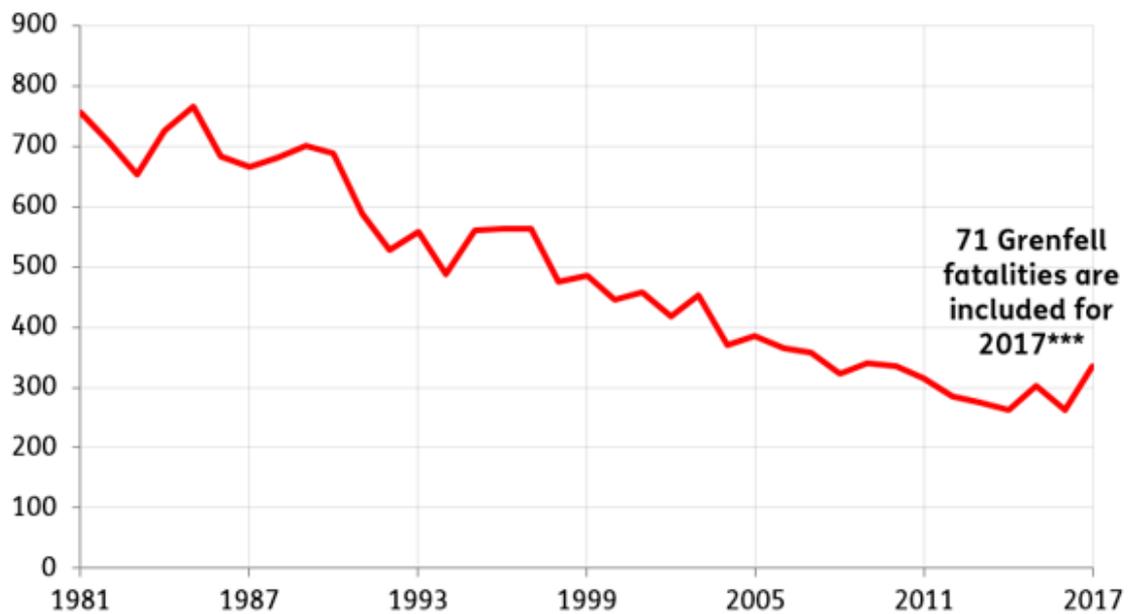
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## Appendix B

### How many people die in fires?

Fire-related fatalities\* in England, financial years 1981 to 2017\*\*



\*Fire-related fatalities are those that would not have occurred if there hadn't been a fire and includes deaths where the role of the fire was not known \*\*Deaths during industrial action in 2002/3 not included \*\*\*The Home Office says the death toll was 71, although many count it as 72

Source: Home Office, Fire statistics data tables, Fatalities and casualties, FIRE0501





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## Appendix C

### Key facts table from HMICFRS assessment of SFRC

SERVICE AREA 	<b>642</b> square miles	
POPULATION 	<b>1.19m</b> people	<b>3%</b> local 5 yr change
WORKFORCE 	<b>84%</b> wholetime	<b>16%</b> on-call
	<b>0.54</b> per 1000 population local	<b>1</b> national level
	<b>22%</b> local 5 yr change	<b>17%</b> national 5 yr change
ASSETS 	<b>26</b> stations	<b>77</b> appliances
INCIDENTS 	<b>2.0</b> fire incidents per 1000 population local	<b>3.0</b> national
	<b>3.6</b> non-fire incidents per 1000 population local	<b>3.1</b> national
	<b>4.5</b> false alarms per 1000 population local	<b>4.1</b> national
COST 	<b>£22,730</b> Firefighter cost per 1000 population per year	<b>£22,380</b> Firefighter cost per 1000 population per year (national)



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	Workforce Per 1000 population	Pop Millions	Area Sq. Miles	% Reduction Over 5 years
Avon	0.69	1.14	512	17
Bedfordshire	0.81	0.66	477	8
Cambridgeshire	0.64	0.85	1300	26
Cheshire	0.69	1.05	905	18
Cornwall	1.24	0.56	1300	8
Hampshire	0.8	1.84	1210	12
Hereford and Worcester	0.74	0.78	1510	22
Hertfordshire	0.67	1.18	634	12
Isle of Wight	1.24	0.14	147	15
Lancashire	0.72	1.49	1180	20
Lincolnshire	0.88	0.75	2293	9
Surrey	0.54	1.19	642	22
Warwickshire	0.7	0.56	763	12

Source: [www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/frs-assessment/frs-2018/](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/frs-assessment/frs-2018/)

Isles of Scilly are not included in the table as they have a unique profile due to the population size registered in the data as 0.00 million with 5.75 workforce members per 1000 of the population. The population of the Scilly Isles is estimated at 2,300.



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## Appendix. D

### Proposed crew and vehicle placement

We propose that crewing and vehicle placement across the county would change in order to ensure the right resources are in the right place when we need to respond to emergencies.

This will allow us to re-focus some resources to life saving community prevention activity instead.

Station	Current crewing	Proposed crewing	Station	Current crewing	Proposed crewing
Banstead			Godstone		
Camberley			Gomshall		
Chertsey			Guildford		
Chobham			Haslemere		
Cranleigh			Leatherhead		
Dorking			Lingfield		
Dunsfold			Oxted		
Egham			Painshill		
Epsom			Reigate		
Esher			Salfords		
Farnham			Walton		
Fordbridge			Woking		
Godalming					

#### Wholetime

Crews are located at a fire station, ready to respond 24/7.

#### Day crewed

Crews are based at fire stations during the day, ready to respond to incidents.

#### Variable crewed

Crews are based at fire stations between 0700 – 1900 hours. During the night time, on-call firefighters respond.

#### On-call, available 24/7

A response is provided by on-call firefighters. They may have other employment but are alerted when an incident requires them.

#### On-call, available nights and weekends



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## Appendix E

### Surrey Fire and Rescue Authority Public Safety Plan 2011 – 2020

#### Summary of Revisions to the Public Safety Plan

The revisions to fire engine deployment are based upon the results of the review of the consultation feedback and further analysis of the emergency response cover model. The revisions are as follows.

Station/System	Revision	Rationale
Reigate	Addition of fire engine at night, resulting in 2 immediate response fire engines 24hours a day.	Reigate provides strategic location and covers large area. Feedback highlighted concerns over change at Reigate when considered with changes to Horley and Epsom. Also provides increased number of Wholetime appliances at night which recognises feedback.
On-Call Duty System	Availability of on-call firefighters at weekends in addition to nights.	Feedback from staff indicated that availability at weekends is reliable and enables additional training and community safety activity.
Dunsfold Walton Guildford	Provision of one on-call fire engine at these locations at night and weekends.	Additional resource provides further resilience, additional cover at night and capacity to crew special appliances from on-call resource. Feedback from staff indicated commitment to maintaining availability.
Cranleigh	Availability of one on-call fire engine on a 24hour a day basis.	Feedback from residents and local councils expressed concern at the ability to meet the response standard. Feedback from staff indicated commitment to maintaining availability.
Chobham Oxted Godalming Haslemere	Provision of 5 day a week Wholetime day crewing; weekend and night cover provided by revision to on-call duty system as described above.	Provides additional capacity as required in proposal but takes account of feedback regarding use of on-call staff and from existing Variable Crewing staff. Additional day crewed fire engine at Chobham provides enhanced cover for Surrey Heath and Woking and also reflects concerns of local residents.
Operational Assurance Reserve	Staff dedicated to training, development and community safety reduced to fifteen per shift from twenty.	Requirement to deliver Operational Assurance remains a primary objective but with revision to deployment may be delivered through both the reserve and front line fire engines. Additional numbers available at weekends will enable significant training events/exercises and community safety events to occur.

The table at annexe 1 describes the current, proposed and revised deployment of fire engines across Surrey.



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## APPENDIX F

### **PRESENTATION TO CHOBHAM PARISH COUNCIL ON THE SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE REORGANISATION PROPOSALS BY ROB SEARLE – May 16<sup>th</sup> 2019**

First of all, any facts and figures I mention have come from my own research or from the Fire Brigades Union. Nothing has come from the Chobham fire crew.

I was a part-time firefighter at Chobham for 20 years and was officer in charge of the station for four years.

I joined in 1970, recruited after Chobham lost half its crew due to the brigade lowering the firefighter retirement age to 55. As a consequence of the staff losses, the station could manage to only be on call evenings, nights and weekends from 1970 to 1987.

Under strong pressure from senior officers, I and others managed to restore day cover in 1987. I worked mainly from home so could turn out and we recruited others who worked in the village and local shift workers who were available during the day.

I had been told that the station was urgently needed to fill a gap in day-time cover. During my time we answered a lot of calls between 6am and 6pm on weekdays, including attending many incidents on the Chobham station ground.

The station has continued to provide a good level of day-time cover for the last 30 years.

Now Surrey Fire and Rescue Service intends to close Chobham during the day, as part of an exercise it has called Making Surrey Safer. The reorganisation will, in my view, and that of many serving and former firefighters, make Surrey a lot less safe.

The brigade has experienced brutal financial cuts since 2010, with a reduction of 131 full-time firefighter posts. The recent report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services voiced serious concerns about the brigade's effectiveness and efficiency in keeping people safe.

Each of the brigade's four full-time watches, or shifts, is currently short of 18 to 20 firefighters. Appliances are being kept available through staff doing overtime. But the two-engine stations – Woking, Camberley and Guildford – often have only enough firefighters to crew one appliance. One-engine stations such as Egham, Painshill, Staines and Esher often cannot crew their appliance and are therefore closed for a shift.

Two of the part-time, or on-call stations, Dunsfold and Gomshall, struggle to crew their appliances at any time of the 24 hours and others often have gaps in their availability. Chobham does not have the full complement of firefighters it is entitled to and needs recruits, but it gets calls when it is available during the day. On Tuesday this week, there were several daytime calls.

The Making Surrey Safer proposals mean there will be seven fewer full-time engines covering the county at night, including Woking, Camberley and Guildford each losing one of its appliances on the night shift. Incredibly, the brigade claims it could safely cover the whole county of 1.1 million people with just 16 engines at night, when it currently has 30 day and night.

The brigade says that the 13 full-time engines available at night will be backed up by 10 on-call engines, but it cannot guarantee this unless it puts a lot more effort into ensuring the part-time stations are fully staffed.



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Coming to Chobham, the consultation documents are being economical with the truth about the station's availability. The chart says the station is currently on-call nights and weekends, when it actually provides 24-hour cover. This untruth also applies to several other part-time crews said not to be available during the day, including the Guildford crew.

The Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Public Safety Plan 2011 – 2020 accepted by the county council's cabinet clearly shows Chobham Fire Station providing 24/7 cover.

The plan suggests that the 24/7 cover would be provided by a full-time crew providing day cover and a retained crew providing nights and weekends cover.

The fire cover deployment map clearly shows that 24/7 cover would be provided by a full-time crew during the day and a part-time crew evenings, nights and weekends.

Despite the report accepted by the cabinet, the part-time crew has continued to provide 24-hour cover over the last eight years. Three day-time cover crew members have been recruited in the past two years, underlining the intention to keep day cover at Chobham.

Chobham has proved its worth through being the first to arrive at the recent serious weekday fires on Chobham Common – at times when, according to the brigade, the station is not on call.

Worryingly, Making Surrey Safer does not take into account that Chobham will be the nearest station to 1,700 homes to be built at Longcross Garden Village and the 1,000 home Fair Oaks Garden Village if it receives planning permission.

The proposed cuts would see a significant slowing of emergency response times for back-up and second and subsequent-attendance pumps in Surrey at night, when most fateful fires occur. Last year, 75% of fire deaths happened during the night shift, between 6pm and 9am.

Four fire engines are sent on the initial attendance to a fire if there is a known life risk, as firefighters are needed in numbers if a rescue is required. Under the proposed reorganisation, engines will be travelling from further afield to get the required number of crews to a what is known as a "persons reported" incident. Those arriving first will have to work a lot harder than they do now before back-up arrives.

It is obvious to Surrey's current and former firefighters that the brigade is merely rearranging its current resources to create less-than satisfactory fire cover rather than attempt to fully crew its stations to provide genuinely safe emergency cover.

Despite what the county council says, recruitment of firefighters is not keeping up with the loss of staff through retirements, resignations and transfers to other brigades. The brigade is struggling to keep its current insufficient manning levels.

Under Making Surrey Safer, full-time night-shift firefighters will be redeployed to day shifts, and weekdays on-call firefighters will probably be made redundant, possible so that more evenings, nights and weekends staff can be employed.

Now to some scenarios to imagine if Making Surrey Safer is implemented:

A fierce fire breaks out at 3am on the 20th floor flat of a tower block in Woking town centre, in a flat occupied by a family of two parents and two children.

Woking Fire Station responds with one engine with a crew of four, instead of the current two with a total of eight. Chobham is also sent but will probably take 15 minutes to arrive. Full-time crews from



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Guildford and Camberley are also sent, along with a turntable ladder but will take longer to get there.

The Woking crew of four will face an impossible task in initiating effective rescue procedures. It would also be difficult with eight, but they would stand a better chance of getting a breathing apparatus team to the fire and saving the family.

No amount of sprinklers and fire-proof compartments will prevent the post-Grenfell disaster chaos and panic that will ensue if fire breaks out in one of the Woking tower blocks. But it is proposed to cut night-time cover at the town's fire station.

In Chobham, imagine a serious fire breaking out in one of the big houses or blocks of flats at 3pm on a weekday. It could be a gas explosion in a house just down the road from the fire station. These type of incidents all occurred during the day in the village while I was serving

Chobham's fire crew would get to the incident in 10 minutes or less, but the nearest appliance – likely to be Woking – will take 15 minutes or more. This alone shows that it does not make sense to chop the Chobham day crew.

And how embarrassing for Surrey Fire and Rescue Service will it be if a building in the village burns to the ground because the local fire station had an un-manned fire engine sitting in it and the nearest available appliance came from a distance.

Our fire brigade does not have enough money to properly crew its fire stations and badly needs an increase in funding from the county council. Surrey Police similarly faces an acute shortage of officers, but it has resisted spreading its resources ever more thinly.

The Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner has persuaded the public to pay an extra £2 a month in council tax, which will enable the police to employ 100 more officers.

The fire service should be an insurance service, with resources ready at all times to cope with major disasters, from factory fires to aircraft crashes, around the clock.

Surrey County Council, which serves one of the most affluent counties in the country, should be making the same plea to tax payers on behalf of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. It should be more innovative in combining full-time and part-time crews to keep stations open, as happens in other counties.

Instead, it is proposing a reorganisation plan that is pure folly and even dangerous.