



DORSET FIRE AND
RESCUE SERVICE

SUB BRANCH

Consultation on the Proposed Combination of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Services

Dorset Fire and Rescue Service Unison members recently met to discuss the proposals for the future of Dorset (DFRS) and Wiltshire (WFRS) Fire & Rescue Services. Members acknowledge that detailed information on the various proposals has been made available however there is a general feeling that their views will not have any effect on the two Fire Authority's final decision. Once a decision has been made staff will naturally become more engaged when more detailed proposals will be available i.e. will they have a job, what will that role entail, where will that role be based, will pay grades change, etc. The idea of a staff forum was also supported.

There is a consensus that Dorset appears to be totally behind a full combination with WFRS but Wiltshire Fire Authority are not, and where would this leave DFRS if they reject a full combination. Dorset members are concerned about the perceived reticence from Wiltshire.

DFRS Unison acknowledges that a merger with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority, to create a single Combined Fire Authority, while also collaborating with other Local Authorities is the preferred option for support staff. A fire-to-fire merger is the only way that significant savings can be made without implementing drastic cuts to both support staff and front line service delivery (fire stations/appliances).

Travel distances across the two Counties are referred to on a number of occasions in the consultation documents and this is a significant concern amongst members. The implementation of better ICT systems, used by both Services, must be a priority as this will have a major impact on staff.

Whatever decision is made in November senior managers must have a realistic expectation of staff workloads as this will be an extremely stressful time for support staff with team numbers likely to be decreasing. Unison would also like to see detailed proposals of how changes will be implemented as quickly as possible, once a decision has been made, and this should include clear guidance on how structural changes will be implemented.

Unison opposes any compulsory redundancies amongst support staff, as well as any erosion of current terms and condition's, however we look forward to working together with DFRS to secure the best future for our members.

Please be aware that these are the views of Dorset Unison as we have been unable to make contact with Unison representatives in Wiltshire. The fact that WFRS do not have a dedicated 'in-house' Unison representative is also a concern to us.