

Wirral Consultation

Public Meetings and Stakeholders Meeting

1. Promotion:

Four evening public meetings and a breakfast stakeholders meeting were held as part of the Wirral consultation process.

The initial public meetings were held in October 2014 in West Kirby, Upton and Greasby. Following the interest shown in Greasby, a second public meeting was held November.

These meetings were widely promoted in the local media, internet, social media, our own staff meetings and leaflet distribution to public buildings, businesses and local supermarkets.

The Liverpool Echo and Wirral Globe ran numerous articles when the consultation was launched and prior to when the public meetings were held.

MFRS Facebook page and the MFRS website carried information from the day the consultation was launched and there was frequent promotion of the process on twitter and social media generally.

A newsletter was widely distributed to the media and local people. Following the response from the first three public meetings a second newsletter was produced and distributed responded to some of the issues the public had raised.

The stakeholders breakfast meeting was attended by local business people and representatives from organisations and agencies that work with MFRS.

Meeting were also organised with all MFRS staff who work on Wirral and the same presentation was given.

Signers were engaged for all the public meetings and a hearing loop was also available to ensure any attendees with hearing impairment could participate. The signer was required at one of the Greasby meetings.

2. Feedback

The format of the public meetings and stakeholder meeting was a formal presentation by the Chief Fire Officer explaining the reasons for the changes being proposed and details of the actual merger process and its impact on MFRS operational activities.

This was followed by an invitation for people to ask questions of the MFRS senior management who attended.

Around 350 people attended each of the Greasby meetings while the Woodchurch and West Kirby meetings were each attended by more than 35 people.

The Stakeholders breakfast meeting was attended by 10 people.

Answers were provided by the Chief Fire Officer unless stated otherwise.

Public Meeting Questions and Answers

Question and Answers from Greasby Public Consultation Meeting held on Monday 27th October 2014

Q: How does having a station in Greasby differ from having one station in Upton?

A: The difference is 6 mins and 18 seconds from Greasby or 8 mins and 43 seconds from Upton to attend an incident in West Kirby.

I would not make these recommendations if there was any other choice. I've lobbied more than any other chief officer against the cuts. These cuts have gone ahead and they will continue to do so. We cannot employ more wholtime firefighters than we have a budget for.

Q: I understand you're in a very tight place, your budget has been cut but I find it very difficult to support anything about having a fire station on this site. I feel let down by the elected representatives if it is them who made the approach to offer the site.

There are issues about the way that site is used at the moment and the way people move across the site. There are issues about the community centre and any fire escape. There is nothing that will enable you to provide any kind of community facilities like what it has now. There have already been accidents with kids walking out. We have to look at this site as it actually works.

A: It is not the elected councillors who are offering this location it is Wirral Council officers.

Comment: (Local councillor) I can assure you that we have had no part in this at all. This has been done by officers with the full backing of the Labour administration.

Q: What the Chief doesn't say is two years ago West Kirby was manned of a day and now they have twice as many firefighters. They have a perfectly good station at Upton. There's no need to move a station 1.2miles at a cost to the tax payer. They also have the maritime rescue that is not needed when we have the RNLI.

A: West Kirby's crewing moved to full time last year when we moved from 42 appliances to 28. The reason is because of the reduction in appliances and the fact that they could no longer be covered in the evening. In terms of the Marine Rescue Unit, we received £150K income from other organisations. To save money we have cut the staff by half. It may also be one of the casualties of the cuts we have to make.

We have 25,000 people in West Kirby who may have a different view than people in Greasby.

Q: We know the best option for you is Greasby but what do we do in this consultation?

A: I give my professional opinion to the Authority based on operational response but ultimately you are not going to change my mind.

Q: Effectively our feedback isn't for you then it is for the Authority.

Q: There's nobody from the council here. They're a bit rubbish. Waitrose are already waiting to move to Heswall.

A: There has been a lot of commercial interest in Heswall but it is not for sale.

Q: One of the main concerns is the 8 mins. Have you been down Frankby Road because it will take a long time if you have to go down there to get to a fire?

A: Which is probably all the more reason to move the station to Greasby.

Q: There's no way a fire engine will get down there.

A: Fire engines move along more difficult routes every day.

Q: You said you save very few lives from domestic fires, the major fire in this area was Arrowe Park. There are thousands of patients there. Why don't you move there and be close to the M53?

A: Why would I do that when I have a station at Upton?

Arrowe Park is also extremely well managed.

We will end up with 4 stations in Wirral. The public sector is going to shrink irrespective of political party.

Q: Do response times equate to lives saved?

A: A fire in the room of origin can reach 100 degrees anyone in the room of origin will die. You have two toxic elements, cyanide and carbon monoxide. If you had something in your house that you know would kill you would you wait two and a half minutes for the police?

Q: My brother recently retired from a fire service and you don't save lives most of the time they get themselves out.

A: We do save people from fires but we save a lot more people from road traffic collisions.

Q: (Councillor) We have got your responses and we the elected members had nothing to do with the highlighting the site to the fire service. I was under the impression that the Authority would take in people's views.

A: I will give my recommendation to the Authority as their professional advisor and will also feedback the responses and views of every single one of you.

Q: It's a financial decision because the government has given you money for the rebuild.

A: The Finance for the rebuild doesn't make any difference to my recommendation.

Q: Find somewhere other than in the middle of the village.

A: My recommendation will be based on response times. With that report we will faithfully represent the views of the Greasby community, West Kirby community and Upton community. It's a matter of the Authority to make the decision. It is not within the scheme of delegation for me to decide to put the station in Greasby or not.

Q: Do you also service Moreton? How much is it going to cost to build this in Greasby?

A: It will be in the order of £3million. It would also cost £3million if we rebuilt Upton.

We are required to deliver a service across all of Merseyside and we are required to cover all of West Kirby and Upton. It makes sense to move closer to West Kirby to maintain the response time.

Q: If you do get planning permission will it have a smoke tower and a smoke house with chemicals.

A: There would be a training tower of around 40ft.

Q: I think your plans are very well advanced and I think this is flimflam. How quickly do you have to submit these proposals?

A: This is not a done deal. Do not judge us by what happened previously with other projects. The Authority may decide they don't want to pursue a station in Greasby. Even if we do, we will have to submit plans.

Q: I don't agree with the 2 minutes you have said it would take to get to West Kirby.

A: That is our predicted response time.

Q: You said you would be held to account for these proposals. You have already submitted a proposal for Upton.

A: They are not 2 equal proposals. In the event of an outright closure of West Kirby we would have to pursue redevelopment in Upton. We are directed to pursue efficiency savings in the first instance and if I can't achieve the best operational outcome I would look at increased interoperability at Upton (a new station in Greasby Area).

The proposals save us £860,000 through firefighter jobs.

Q: (FBU Official) If we go back to 2002/3 when the cuts started, when we got to 2010 we were already in a terrible predicament. We have been down to London as a joint delegation. They are not listening to us. It is over to you because we have done everything we can. If you can, express your anger to your local councillors and MPs. Unless you do they will carry on with the cuts. While you don't want it in Greasby, if it goes to Upton, people in West Kirby will be severely affected. In the UK last year 40,000 people were rescued, that's nearly

100 people a day. If you don't think 2 minutes is a long time to wait, try holding your breath for 2 minutes and see how difficult it is. Communities in other areas are in the same boat as you.

Q: We're talking about Greasby village, what makes this the best place to put this station?

A: I don't necessarily think the site is the best place in Greasby. If there were other places in Greasby and we could get planning permission I would take it in a heartbeat. The fact is there is no available land. It is greenbelt land.

Q: If you had to pay for the land, would the situation be the same?

A: I would hope that we don't have to pay for the land but this is the only land that has been made available to us. If Wirral Council decide to charge us for the land it is a matter of how much they would charge.

Q: You're not doing your job if you haven't done the cost analysis.

A: We have done the cost analysis. We will make around £860,000 in savings year on year.

Q: Who will staff the station if there's a strike?

A: There is a national strike on Friday and Upton will be staffed. Greasby station would be staffed.

Q: What guarantee have we that the shrubs will be in the finished product?

A: The plans just give an idea of what it possibly could look like. We would consult more widely to take on the views on what the expectations are in terms of the site.

Q: Will there be phone masts on the tower?

A: There will be no phone masts on the tower.

Q: Will you be recommending shutting Greasby in the future if you close Wallasey.

A: No it would not close.

Comment: (Labour Councillor) Our local MP should be made aware of your feelings.

Q: It would tear the heart out of Greasby, it would be like a bomb site for the next few years because it will take time to knock it down and build a new one.

A: The estimated demolition and rebuild would be a year.

Q: Couldn't you send out a Landrover to places like West Kirby, like the ambulance service has the response vehicle?

A: We previously used Small Fire Units, mainly in Liverpool because of the volume of small fires. A 2 person crew couldn't achieve a safe system of work at a road collision or house fire. They would only have to wait for a fire appliance to back them up which would put us in the same position as if we went for outright closure in West Kirby. We deal with small fires through intervention or by not responding, as in many cases that is what the people who set those small fires want.

Q: You haven't mentioned Morton.

A: The average response time to West Kirby will increase if you close Upton outright. The response times are based on real incident responses. A fire appliance doesn't just sit on a fire station.

Q: There is not enough room.

A: The plans would suggest that there is. This is an FRA consultation and has nothing to do with planning.

Q: (representative from the Library) My concern is if it takes a year to build what about continuity of use?

A: I can't speak for Wirral Council but with every build we have done we have provided temporary facilities which have been very good quality.

I'm duty bound to make operational recommendations. I have no desire to upset anyone in Greasby. You can be assured if this went ahead we would work with yourselves to ensure the best outcome achievable was delivered. I'm not convinced that there is sufficient land there to deliver what we need in a fire station. We haven't seen any final plans because they don't exist.

Q: But something would be given to ensure we continue the library service?

A: Yes.

Q: I'm more concerned there is going to be a fire station in the middle of Greasby and did you say it's going to cost £2.8million to build it?

A: Yes.

Q: I think you would be squeezed on that land.

A: If anyone here is able to offer us any other land in the vicinity where we can get planning permission we would look at that.

Q: I'm sure this area here was given to the Greasby people by someone.

A: My understanding is that the council own that land and they have leased it to the community centre on a 99 year lease.

Q: I think people of Greasby would say take an acre of land rather than put it in the middle of the village.

A: If anyone has land that they are willing to give us then that's something we would go with. The advice we have had from Wirral Council is that because it is all greenbelt and because they are offering us an alternative it would be difficult for them to offer us special circumstances to build elsewhere on greenbelt land.

Question and Answers from Public Meeting at Upton **Tuesday 29th October 2014**

Q: It's going to reach a point where you can't run the service and you will be held responsible for lives lost if we don't have enough fire engines.

A: Section 7 of the FRS Act says FRS must make provision to respond to Fire, it doesn't make specific reference to what that provision must be, that is to be determined locally. Where is the line – its miles behind me as we have already cut from 42 to 28 appliances. It would be for a judicial review to judge whether we have made enough provision.

We are the 3rd most expensive FRS but have one of the best response times. The Act is worded in such a way that it isn't prescriptive about the number of Fire appliances we must have.

I will make recommendations for a Council Tax referendum if required to increase funding to enable us to provide sufficient provision.

Q: Thank you for your comprehensive and honest presentation and responses so far, who owns the land at West Kirby and Upton?

A: Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority owns it

Q will the new building of station at Greasby be a PFI project?

A: It's not a PFI project

Q Why not keep Upton open?

A: Doing nothing is not an option, we need make cuts to meet our reduced budgets. Closing West Kirby is the best operational option, leaving Upton open would not give us the best coverage for West Kirby so building a station between the two station areas at Greasby gives us the optimum area coverage to include all of West Kirby

Q: Do we not have more fires in other areas?

A: We don't just respond to fires we respond to Road Traffic Collisions for example a recent fatal RTC involved an elderly lady at Thursaston

Q: I don't believe it's quicker from Greasby?

A: Try not to get hung up on the fixed locations of fire stations, those figures are based on actual incidents that have occurred in the past based on where the appliance was at the start of its journey to the incident.

Q: Your recommendation is clear, even if the people of Greasby barricade themselves to the site – it's a done deal!

A: I will make my recommendations to authority based on the best operational option available to me to maintain my FRS act requirements (section 7 etc) but I will also faithfully ensure your views are captured via the survey and these meetings and made clear to the Authority to take into account when they make decisions.

There is also an opportunity for you to have your views and opposition heard at the planning committee if the Greasby option is chosen by the Authority, your views will be considered then.

Q: why have the plans been completed at this stage if it's not clear decision, isn't a waste of money to instruct an Architect to make plans on something it could look like.

A: The plans have only just arrived on my desk recently and I have yet to sit down with colleagues and look at their merit. I was asked by people of Greasby Community Centre to provide details of what the station could look like. If when I look at the plans they don't deliver what we need, we will not be moving ahead on them. In the short time I've had to look at the plans /drawings they do look like they could work.

Q: I lived across the road from a fire station in Birkenhead it was noisy and had lots of wreckage of cars on the site. I moved away to Greasby to get away from that.

A: Cars are taken to our Training site at Croxteth where possible to be cut up. There are set routines for training on the station ground from 9.15 to 12.pm which may cause some noise. Appliances don't always turn out from stations they are generally out in the community in the afternoon so may minimise noise from the station then.

Q: Yesterday we had 600 to 700 residents of Greasby turn out to your consultation, they were encouraged to attend to have their voice heard but were not given direction on what to say.

If think it was clear that the people of Greasby are unhappy about the proposal of the building of a Fire station on the proposed site, it's not appropriate for our village, we don't see the difference in response times is worth it. Greasby won't accept this and we ask that you and your officers reconsider. We are happy to help find other sites in Greasby and want to say that Upton is the preferred site to stay open and close West Kirby

A: I will faithfully represent that view to our authority but response times are important. Let me ask my Colleague and Fire Brigade Union representative respond.

A: (FBU) We have to maintain the best response time, I'm not here in a political capacity but here to help save lives. I've been a FF for 41/2 years at West Kirby it is crucial to consider the importance that the reduction of response times makes to saving lives, even 1 minute 40 seconds would have made a difference between life or death on so many of my past rescues.

I urge you to consider who the villain here is, it's not the CFO /Authority. You should direct your concerns to the Government – it's not just current government either as previous governments have been attacking the fire service with cuts since 2004. Take your anger out on the politicians.

Q: Well who is looking after the people of Greasby in politics

A: The democratic process of consultation, the planning process is important and should consider your views. It's outstanding to see such a great sense of community with the turn out last night and today – in the past there has been no interest with these consultation meetings.

Q: Why are there no councillors standing with you tonight next to you to respond and listen to us?

A: It is right and proper that the Authority members /councillors remain impartial in this process tonight so they can make an informed decision

Counsellor for Wirral - Wallasey Ward and member of the Merseyside Fire Authority provided some feedback in answer to question above:

I believe that it is right and proper that councillors of the Authority aren't presenting to you tonight – I am the only conservative member of the Fire Authority – there are 18 of us in total and I am the only one who has joined you tonight. I came to hear your views so I could take them into consideration when making my decisions with other members on the CFO's recommendations in 2015, balancing your views with the need to keep people of Wirral safe.

Questions from West Kirby (Hoylake) Consultation Meeting – 30th October 2014

Q: People in West Kirby don't know about this station closure

A: This consultation has been widely publicised and when the cuts started the Echo ran a 6 day double page spread on MFRS and yet at the end only 3000 people signed the petition.

Q: Thank you for a straightforward and honest presentation. Main concern is response times, clearly there will be longer response times and taking into account road quality to Meols and Hoylake this will be verging on the unacceptable

A: Our average response time for all Merseyside is 5 mins 24 secs on 60% of occasions this is quicker. However there are outlying areas such as Billinge, Hightown, Cronton we will never get to in this time unless an appliance is already in the area. We recognise Hoylake will be at the top end of our response now. My recommendation gives the best attendance to all of West Wirral.

Q: Why no Authority Member here tonight?

A: Members have to consider the outcomes of consultations and avoid pre-determination

Q: You inferred that Authority could override your suggestions ultimately

A: Operational matters are delegated to the CFO who the Authority holds to account for such matters. A CFO cannot unilaterally close fire stations. A CFO is a professional adviser to Authority who will write a report offering options. The Authority has accepted operational recommendations pending the outcome of consultations, a decision to be made in February. I will make recommendations to propose mergers as nothing that has been heard so far has changed this view, however if something was suggested it would be considered.

We will faithfully represent your views, especially that Greasby people are fundamentally opposed.

Q: With the likelihood of fracking and nuclear waste being stored in West Wirral doesn't this mean that stations should be kept open.

A: We would like nothing more than 42 appliances and recognise the points raised, but the Government are committed to reducing the national debt and the long term financial sustainability of the UK which means public spending will continue to reduce.

Q: Why aren't we tearing down Upton instead of tearing down Greasby library because the library probably won't happen?

A: In all the meetings we have had with Wirral Council they have always said they will maintain Greasby library. This is the best chance of sustaining a library in Greasby.

Q: A couple of minutes on attendance times don't matter, remain at Upton and close West Kirby

A: Is it acceptable for people in West Kirby and Hoylake to wait 2 minutes longer?

Q: Is the ambulance site being researched? Surely it would be more economical to build both together

A: The only way to pursue this would be if we remained at Upton. Potentially if we sell Upton NWAS may be interested in the site.

Q: Your recommendation sounds viable financially but eliminates the library

A: This matter falls under Wirral Council who do not recognise the site at Greasby as green space.

Q: Cllr Rennie, elected representative on FRA attended Greasby and Woodchurch meetings. Considering the FRA is majority Labour it is a credit to her that she attended and had a go.

Q. I attended Greasby meeting but had to leave early. I am not here to represent Greasby but all of Wirral. Very competent presentation and understand that CFO inherited Sir Ken Knight report which stated there is an inbuilt resistance by FRA's and CFO's to reduce staffing, this is now beyond your control.

Looking at all Wirral and bringing Wallasey and Heswall into the argument. West Kirby is closing and if cuts carry on and Wallasey goes who will cover the areas of New Brighton, Egremont, etc?

A: Birkenhead can easily cover all of these areas within 10 minutes but Wallasey is not being considered for closure in this consultation.

Q: If training facilities are going to be so small at Greasby does that mean you will be buying more land on the site?

A: No this is 'the' West Wirral merger. I would accept another suitable site at any time and I have made this clear.

Q: Will there be a 4 storey brick tower?

A: No it will be metal

Q: I object to the 4 storey tower couldn't you keep the training tower at Upton?

A: No, that would mean we wouldn't be able to sell the land.

Q: This is small built up area

A: I have no control over Wirral Planning. This site would have to be refused before we could get another site.

Q: Do you think deaths and injuries will be avoidable in the future? Response times are critical. You have given us average response times but have you got

median and mode statistics so we can complain to Politicians. CFO is doing his best but we need to fight democratically.

A: These changes won't make anyone safer and I have said this to the DCLG select committee. In terms of median and mode some incidents can totally skew figures and example of this would be a late fire call. West Wirral doesn't have the same outlying areas as St Helens for example. We have made a number of submissions to DCLG which could be shared with you on request.

Q: Fire are our favourite service and the reason fire figures have gone down is due to the prevention work of MFRA. Surely the Council could offer some green belt land we wouldn't object. We should all write to the Council.

Comment: So it's OK not in your backyard but in someone else's! We would object.

A: We would take a site on Pump Lane or Frankby Road because they are nearer to our central point.

Q: Most people appreciate that the CFO is stuck between a rock and a hard place but shame on Councillors and MP's for not attending.

A: All local MP's have done a great deal of lobbying including Esther McVey. Sadly FRA's are way down the political pecking order.

Q: West Kirby will go we know that but it's a good thing that the 2nd pump will go to Greasby. You say West Kirby is not available some of the time at present. Does this also apply at Upton?

A: No. Upton is a key station and we will detach firefighters in from other stations to keep the station open. CFO explained 10 key stations.

Q: Would the wholetime retained crew at Greasby be all Greasby staff? Would there be enough response from crew to do it?

A: There is a good chance they would be. We are working with the FBU to secure sufficient staff to do wholetime retained.

Q: You quote that the station at Greasby will cost £2.8m. What will Greasby get as community facilities from that? Who will be funding the station? We don't want Greasby to have worse facilities.

A: £2.8m will come from DCLG money, sale of Upton and West Kirby sites and reserves. The station will have community rooms and a state of the art gym, which on all other Wirral stations is used by Wirral Heartbeat.

Q: Greasby specific as there is a community centre and library there already

A: The library and children's centre will be 10% smaller but there will be a large foyer. The current library is 400 sq m Wirral say new library would be 10% smaller but the lobby would make up the extra space.

Prefer the plan with the community centre and library as separate entities. They would be managed by Wirral and the Community Centre. FRA would meet with key local stakeholders to meet the needs of all users.

Highway costs would be covered by MFRA.

Q: Therefore Greasby won't get a library?

A: We will be guided by the community, but can't speak for Wirral Council.

Q: Did you say earlier that writing to MP's is a waste of time?

A: No I did not say that. We need to be realistic however on what can be achieved. According to the Treasury the long term financial sustainability of "UK PLC" trumps any lobbying argument.

Q: On the slide you estimate cuts of £20m by 2020. There is a lot of support from Government for fracking. This would have a large impact for fire and risks. How will that impact on FRS?

A: Fire safety is the responsibility of the risk manager e.g. Arrowe Park is very safe as it's well managed. In relation to fracking, renewable energy is one of the high priorities for the City Region. Economic growth works in favour of the Authority for funding. Anything that increases jobs is good it reduces deprivation and fire deaths so prosperity is good. If businesses do well income from rates increase.

Q: Roads from Hoylake and West Kirby can be very busy how would appliances get to an incident at these times?

A: This is no more challenging on Wirral than anywhere else on Merseyside e.g. terraced streets with cars double parked in Liverpool. Our data is based on real incidents attended, using historic data and maps real journey times.

Comment: If we had realised this was going to happen we should have taken a much larger piece of land for the Community Centre to prevent this happening. We fully support and understand the FRA's financial reasoning. Land is not up for grabs. Disappointed at Wirral Council offers and it is a horrendously long process to come. Couldn't they use the corner of a field? We must turn on Wirral now and would love to work with CFO. Greasby is at the whim of Wirral Council.

Comment: Cllr West Kirby Ward – West Kirby want to keep fire station, Greasby don't want one. This was a very good presentation and what FRA have done is very fair. Outcomes are what is important to West Kirby ward, anything that gets an appliance to West Kirby quickest is our main concern. FRA are dealing with this in a very open and honest way and work with committee very well.

Questions from the second Greasby Public meeting held on 10th November.

Q: Why has Heswall fire station not been included in these proposals?

A: Heswall already provides second response to parts of West Kirby but the issue we have is it covers Neston. It's day crewing and there is an agreement with Cheshire that that station covers Neston and Cheshire covers Cronton in Knowsley and Cheshire respond to that.

Q: Have you considered using a site near the Upton bypass towards Saughall Massie?

A: Consideration to other sites had been given but it was the land that he had been told was available which formed those which were looked at more closely to arrive at the Frankby Road placement for the proposal.

Q: What is the value of land at West Kirby and Upton? What is that value?

Q: This consultation seems more of a "dialogue". There are changes in laws coming in that allows people to say what they want and what they don't want in their communities. You have dismissed sites that will be more advantageous. You can build on green site land with heavy landscaping such as tree planting. What you said is if no site is available in Greasby that opens the door to look at other sites.

A: The Chief said that what he said was Pump Lane would be a better site than the one we have. But in order to receive the "exceptional" circumstances he had been

advised that this would not be available as long as there is an alternative (where the community centre is in Greasby).

Q: I completely understand what you are saying. If people do not want it in Greasby, it opens the other door.

A: There is “bureaucracy” to go through as part of the process and, if it was approved at the Fire Authority next year, it would then go to a planning application.

Q: It think it is a done deal.

A: To be clear I would welcome the opportunity to consider other sites.

Shouted Question: Is there anyone from the council to speak?

A: In relation to the value of the land – that information has been exempted under the fire and rescue services act. The reason it is exempted is it would “show the Authority’s hand” in land negotiations.

Q: How much is the Fire Authority going to have to pay and how much does the council make – what values is it?

A: It is ultimately that is not for me to say and Wirral Council owns the land.

Q: Are we going to pay Wirral Council for the land?

A: In my view there could be a “pepper corn rent”. The proposal assumes a library and children’s centre. The cost would be in excess of £3 million – the cost of the fire station only. Wirral Council may be charged for having the Children’s Centre and Library on the site or, if they made a capital contribution for those elements on the site, then we (Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority) may pay rent.

Q: In the report to the Fire Authority of 2nd October it said if there is opposition to the Greasby proposal then the alternative would be the outright closure of West Kirby and maintaining Upton.

A: That’s absolutely correct. They (the Fire Authority) need to consider their statutory duties. That’s a matter for the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Q: I have listened to you, like everybody else. I’m wondering why you are here. Why did you seek planning permission to build a tower in Greasby in January 2013?

A: Kieran Timmins was invited to the mic by the Chief and said - The Fire Authority has never applied for planning permission in Greasby

Q: The man then read a few lines from a planning permission notice about a new tower at Upton Community Fire Station in a “revised location”.

A: The chief explained that was for a new tower at Upton as the previous one had been “condemned” and was not to do with Greasby at all.

Q: I really don’t want to lose the library. Why would we want emergency vehicles coming out (of a station)? It’s just cheaper (land) in Greasby. It’s money.

COMMENT: There’s a RAF site which is “brown field” in Greasby (suggesting it could be used).

A: I am assuming that’s the Pump Lane (site).

Q: Is it true there is a Government incentive to take away community centre and build a fire station?

A: Previously there was funding provided for capital projects but this is no longer the case and funds had been bid for in view of potential station mergers that were on the horizon in Merseyside.

Q: Please don’t come into a meeting justifying response times when it’s (to do with) budget.

A: I am talking about capital spend and we don’t have another alternative. It is financially driven in the sense of revenue, not capital. I am trying to deliver the least worst outcome in an operational sense.

Q: You started this steam train – there is no turning back. Decisions have been made. You having conversations behind closed doors. Please be honest with the people. We all pay council tax. People have a choice. We have to trust you to go and do the right thing for these people.

A: It was a financial situation and savings are needed. There would be an increase in response times of 2 minutes 30 seconds in fire appliance responses to West Kirby from Upton a Greasby build did not go ahead.

Q: In your report of 2nd October you state if the Greasby proposal was “strongly opposed by the local community”. What do you mean by that? How much more do you think we need to do?

A: I will faithfully represent the views of the people of Greasby – in reporting back to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Q: Are you going to hold a referendum?

A: There is a questionnaire for people to fill in about the proposal and it had been advertised online. The views of people will be reported back but the Fire Authority has to consider the statutory duties. I do not make the decisions.

Q: What did you have in your mind when you wrote about “strong opposition”?

A: It is a matter for the Fire Authority to make a decision on that.

Q: Did the Fire Authority not ask you how “strong opposition” would be (measured/illustrated)?

A: I do not recall that question being asked.

Q: At the start of this consultation I had an open mind. I attended the meeting here and the one in Hoylake. I wrote to Wirral Council... the man went on to explain he had also contacted officers at Cheshire fire and rescue service to ask about the coverage and agreement over Neston’s response – they said if the agreement were to lapse they would build at Neston. Also the man referred to research saying there was little difference in death rates for a fire in terms of response times of 1 to 5 minutes and 6 to 10 minutes.

A: There is an agreement in place with Cheshire over the response to Neston from Heswall and that the research was out of date. More up to date research states there is a difference in terms of death rates between those response times. The Chief explained he could not favour West Wirral over any other areas.

Q: There are a lot of kids in Greasby and I cross the road over there and I’m scared there might be an accident because it’s so fast (a fire appliance). It’s an accident waiting to happen.

A: Due to the number of incidents that take place in the area there would be an estimated two to three incidents a day from a station in Greasby which was not a significant number. He also said the risk from a fire appliance was no greater than any other vehicle.

Q: You don't feel Greasby is adequate you would rather have Pump Lane. There are several Grade one buildings in the village (what about looking into that area and those for use)?

A: Until such a time when Wirral officers or the Fire Authority says the current Greasby site is not an option then other areas like that could not be considered, according to the advice and information I have.

Q: You said operational response times is your main criteria. Has anybody driven the route (through Greasby)? If you go at 8.30am... it would take you 5 to 10 minutes to get out onto the road.

A: Response times are based on operational incidents already responded to in those areas.

Q: FBU rep spoke about the importance of fast response times and the difference it can make and asked people not to let the politicians off.

Comment: Councillor spoke at the meeting and said that people do appreciate what the fire and rescue service does and the Chief had explained what needs to be done to keep people safe but people did not want that station where it has been proposed in Greasby. The councillor also talked about a petition that had been started by the councillors to ask the council not to give the fire and rescue service the land for the proposed station on Frankby Road.

Q: What effect do the operational changes have on Upton/Woodchurch extremities and how many houses we are talking about?

A: There is coverage from Birkenhead into Upton and that it would take longer to get to West Kirby (if no station at Greasby) and that it would not help response times.

Q: You keep saying you are responsible for (protecting the) people of Merseyside – we can appreciate that. Why can't you make a recommendation for the Pump Lane site?

A: In order to do that the Greasby library site must not be an option. I would need to recommend it in order for it to be rejected.

Q: Can you not recommend the Pump Lane site?

A: The people may be able to influence the outcome of whether the proposed site in Greasby goes ahead or not (as a result of the process any such site would go through – planning applications and so on).

Q: Why are you looking at “green field” options where there is brownfield available?

A: The Deputy Chief Executive was invited to the mic by the Chief and explained that the Champion Business Park did not have the access to roads that was required and its location was not ideal.

Comment: A person mentioned that an old RAF site near Pump Lane was not Greenbelt.

A: Deputy Chief Executive: That information supplied by Wirral Council indicated that this was Greenbelt land.

Q: A man spoke about a “dodgy document” that did not mention Pump Lane as a “green field” site.

A: It was explained that the Pump Lane site was not in the ownership of Wirral Council and the information the man had was in regards to land owned by Wirral Council.

Q: I have not heard what the average response time to West Kirby from Upton (is)?

A: It is 8 minutes 43 seconds and it was on a slide earlier in the presentation.

Q: How would you get to Moreton?

A: In the same way that fire appliances do now.

Questions from the Wirral Stakeholders breakfast meeting

Q: I could not argue with anything you said. I’m here representing Arrowe Park Hospital. In fact you have helped my argument. When you speak about response times of 5 minutes from Saughall Massie it does not sound bad. But that is 5 minutes to get on site (at the hospital). It is not like going to a fire at a property, as you know.

From Saughall Massie I think you will suffer more (in regards to response times) with the difference from Saughall Massie. The consultation seems to be taking fire response away from the largest sleeping risk in Wirral.

A: From Saughall Massie it is a faster route back to Upton. It is around 9 seconds quicker back to Upton. Arrowe Park did have the largest sleeping risk it was also the best managed. In West Kirby there are lots of properties where sleeping risk is not managed, as they were private homes and where management of sleeping risk could not be enforced. Arrowe Park is, much less of a risk because it is managed so well.

Q: The hospital understands the (financial) pressures you are under. The hospital is starting to get concerned. If Saughall Massie falls through where do you go?

A: If it fell through then Upton would be developed, but I would not recommend the closure of any fire stations if I had a choice. I have highlighted the drop in fire appliances and my concerns to a Select Committee on the impact of reducing funding from central government.

Q: To be honest you probably answered this in your presentation. Obviously this area has significant numbers of nursing and care homes. Has that been considered or does it present any greater risk?

A: The general age in West Kirby and the Thurlaston area is older. That is why I am not saying to close West Kirby outright.