

# Merseyside Fire



# & Rescue Service

## Allerton Fire Station Consultation

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) is responsible for providing fire and rescue services for Merseyside's 1.4 million people. This currently includes delivering fire and rescue services in Liverpool from 10 stations: Aintree, Allerton, Belle Vale, Liverpool City, Kensington, Kirkdale, Croxteth, Old Swan, Speke / Garston and Toxteth.

Over the last four years MFRA has had to make savings of £20 million as a result of Government cuts. MFRA is required to make a further £6.3 savings in 2015/16. It is possible that future savings required as a result of ongoing Government cuts –whichever party is in power - might reach £9.1 million in 2016/17 and up to £20 million in total by 2020. We now have to make more changes to meet this new financial challenge.

MFRA has already had to make significant reductions in its management structures, support services, and back office staff. The number of firefighters MFRA employs has reduced from 1,400 to 764, with fire appliances reducing from 42 to 28 across the county. All but two stations have only one appliance. What has not changed in more than 20 years is the number of community fire stations (26) and this cannot continue in the future.

To save £6.3 million in 2015/16 the Authority has assumed it will be able to deliver £2.9 million savings from support services such as Finance, Human Resources and Estates management as well as technical areas such as debt financing. The remaining £3.4 million will have to come from our emergency response and this will require at least four station mergers or outright closures.

Three proposed mergers have been identified as an alternative to outright closure which offer an opportunity to replace old buildings with new facilities in locations which offer the best incident coverage possible in the circumstance: 1. Huyton/Whiston at Prescot; 2. Upton/West Kirby at Greasby instead of outright closure of West Kirby; 3. Eccleston/St Helens at St Helens Town Centre.

### **Allerton proposals**

Consideration was given to a fourth merger in Liverpool but after detailed analysis it is proposed that outright closure of Allerton would be the most sensible option.

Merseyside has a greater density of fire stations than any other fire and rescue service and this density is most evident in Liverpool which has ten stations in a relatively small geographic area.

The analysis demonstrates that neighbouring stations are so closely located together that they already provide good cover for Allerton. Merger of other stations would also be less beneficial as there are no pairs of older stations which could be closed and a new one built to replace them.

Subject to consultation, the proposal is the closure of Allerton Fire Station and the relocation of the Allerton appliance to Old Swan Fire Station to be crewed on a wholetime retained basis.

Over the last ten years, incidents across Merseyside have reduced by 55% (18,428 incidents). Allerton has seen a fall of 64.6% (from 791 incidents in 2004 to 280 incidents in 2014).

Allerton is one of the Service's older buildings and would require significant expenditure (over £340,000) to bring it up to the standard of our newer fire stations.

The closure of Allerton station would see the average response to a life-risk incident in its station area increase from the current 5 minutes 10 seconds to a predicted 5 minutes 59 seconds. The national average response time for life risk incidents is 7 minutes 24 seconds.

New building and furniture design has greatly reduced the risk from fire over the last 20 years. Merseyside has also undertaken one of the most comprehensive fire prevention strategies in the country and now focuses on helping the elderly and most vulnerable members of our communities who are most at risk from fire.

The proposal, therefore, is to close Allerton Fire station and relocate the appliance to Old Swan Fire Station where it will be crewed on a wholetime retained basis. This will involve our wholetime firefighters also providing cover to enable the appliance to be mobilised to major incidents or during periods of exceptionally high demand.

The Authority is interested in how reasonable the public and other stakeholders consider our plans for Allerton are given the major cuts we continue to face. We are now embarking on an extensive consultation programme in Allerton before any final decisions are made.

This will involve a public meeting at 7pm on 9<sup>th</sup> December to be held at Bluecoat School, Church Road, Allerton L15 9EE. There will also be a focus group, a meeting of our Liverpool consultation forum and a stakeholders meeting. In addition, representatives from the Fire and Rescue Service will be attending the Allerton Farmers Market on Saturday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, to provide information.

An on-line survey is on [www.merseyfire.gov.uk](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk) .