

EMAILS FROM COUNCILLORS

I am writing to let you know that the Authority this afternoon approved the recommendation to commence a 12 week public consultation process over the proposal to merge the Upton and West Kirby fire stations at a new station on Saughall Massie Road as an alternative to the outright closure of West Kirby.

The consultation process will commence on 2nd March and will consist of public meetings, deliberative forums and other stakeholder engagement events. As soon as the dates and venues are confirmed I will send them over to you. The outcomes of the consultation process will be reported back to the Authority for a definitive decision in June.

Many thanks for your continued support in this matter on behalf of me and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Sadly I think the last line of your email to and speaks volumes and tells me this has been nothing more than a set up by the LABOUR controlled Fire Authority and the LABOUR controlled Council. Done Deal? very much looks like it to me.....

To reassure you there is no done deal.

Without the support of the Council in allowing the Authority to consider the land at Saughall Massie Road the merger option would not be possible and West Kirby would have to close outright, hence me offering my thanks as that is something I want to avoid as I would hope so do you?

Not wishing to Labour this, (excuse the pun) but your thanks to the interim Chief Exec and the LABOUR Leader of Wirral Council says more than I could ever of wished for...

So thanks for that. See you on the battlefield

You shouldn't confuse good manners and being polite for anything other than what it is.

In that vein thank you for your suggestion over St Mary's Church Centre for a public meeting. I will pass that on to a colleague who will arrange the public meetings now that the Authority has approved my recommendation to engage in another 12 week consultation which without equally wishing to labour the point (no pun intended) might suggest to the neutral observer that this is anything but a done deal.

No need to thank me for anything. it's not about manners it's about protecting Green Belt and speaking up for residents I represent

There will be no neutral observers involved. People will either support or oppose.

Now while I welcome the 12 week consultation it is clearly only paying lip service, because as you recognise and acknowledge you have the support of the Council leader and the interim CX to progress the option to develop on Green Belt.

Nothing personal I am sure you know, but I will do all I can to stop Saughall Massie Green Belt being used as a dumping ground for Greasby's cast offs.

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Just a note I am sure you know but for clarity you are aware that all your consultation meetings are scheduled to take place in the election purdah period, with the last one in Hoylake only two days before the elections.

Officers of services such as yours are we are told are supposed to steer clear of political matters during purdah, clearly this topic is a political one by its very nature and it will be my intention to invite the Wallasey Parliamentary candidate to these meetings.

Personally I am happy to leave the dates as they are but given purdah you may wish to reconsider pushing the dates back to beyond 7th May. Entirely your choice.

Look forward to your response

As you would expect we are well aware of the election purdah period.

Prior to arranging the consultation meetings we sought a legal view as to whether there was any reason why we should avoid the period. I will ask to share that with you rather than try to repeat it now in an e-mail.

As far as I am concerned this consultation process is concerned only with emergency response cover on West Wirral. I will present at all of the meetings and as you know from attending the Greasby events I am steadfast in ensuring they are in no way politicised.

I will ensure that remains the case during this process.

To answer your question, as far as I am concerned the meetings will go ahead. The only way that will change is if I am directed to reschedule them by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

You will of course understand that I will do my absolute utmost to politicise all the consultation meetings and get the very best outcomes politically for the local government candidate in MW&SM ward and the Conservative Parliamentary candidate for Wallasey.

No need to share the legal view with me, your word is good enough for me.

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On Wednesday 1st & Thursday 2nd April 2015, surveyors will be visiting the Saughall Massie Road site to carry out a topographical survey. This is required in order for the architects to ensure the site is suitable for any potential development & to prepare initial designs of a potential new fire station for display & discussion at the forthcoming public meetings.

Please be assured that no decision has been taken by Wirral Borough Council to release this land to Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority and no planning application has been, or will be, submitted for any works at this site until the outcome of the public consultation process has been reported to the Authority for their consideration. The work is solely for the purpose of preparing initial design proposals for consideration at the public meetings.

The merseyfire website will carry a similar message & a Tweet will be issued explaining the purpose of the works on site.

Thanks for this but you don't convince me. Two words spring to mind are DONE DEAL

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I understand from my colleague, Cllr that while your presentation at Upton was much the same some of the issues relating to the Ambulance Service, Police and training building/tower were completely different to those expressed by you at the meeting at St Mary's Church Centre.

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> I find this changing evolving consultation therefore to be absolutely flawed with different groups of people being told different things therefore skewing the feedback you are receiving.

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> Given this along with the lockout of some 200 people I really do believe it is incumbent of you to hold a second meeting in Moreton and Saughall Massie in order that the people I represent are given the correct information, and more importantly be given enough time to ask questions and make their views known, unlike the previous meeting where the questions and debate were stifled by the the chairman in his efforts to protect you and the fire service.

Thank you for your e-mail.

While there was slightly more discussion over the extent of the inclusion of our partners from Merseyside Police and NWAS at the Upton meeting my position was constant which is that this consultation process is concerned only with the operational response implications of the proposal and that any matter relating to design is a planning issue. If following the consultation process the Authority take the decision to pursue the merger option they will submit a planning application. It will be at that point that our partners from Merseyside Police and NWAS will determine their exact requirements, none of which have any implications in terms of our operational response offer to West Wirral.

The substantive concerns raised thus far all relate to planning matters which as you are aware are the subject of a separate consultation process if any application is made. The residents you represent will therefore have ample opportunity to have their concerns considered in the appropriate forum if the decision is taken by the Authority to pursue the merger option.

There is a further public meeting in Hoylake next Tuesday following on from the meeting this Tuesday which was only attended by a small number of people. The Authority has already gone beyond what is reasonably required over public consultation. We do not therefore intend to hold a further meeting over the proposal for all of the reasons I have previously stated.

Clearly as I stated at the outset this flawed consultation is just giving lip service and it's clear a deal has been done between the Labour controlled fire authority and the Labour controlled council

The fact that you won't listen to local residents is really a disgraceful response and demonstrates yours, the fire authorities and the Councils contempt for local residents that I represent.

I appreciate that the consultation has closed, but I would appreciate if it was possible the points below could be added to the consultation or addressed at the Fire Authority meeting where the consultation is to be discussed.

Whilst as an Upton Councillor, I have an interest in the fate of Upton Fire Station and in my view the least worst option would be to close West Kirby and develop Upton. My concerns in this email however are with the people in the North Birkenhead area, an area in the main served by Upton Fire Station.

Most of North Birkenhead is covered from Birkenhead fire station with the next nearest response from Wallasey. There is a fairly significant area of Birkenhead where Wallasey makes the first response as the run times are quicker. The run times from the proposed Saughall Massie site to North Birkenhead are slightly slower than from the existing Upton station, but this station would not provide the first or second responses to incidents in the area. As was explained, the option to merge Upton and West Kirby at Saughall Massie was always the "least worst option" and effectively closing a station will always have an impact on response times. However, that option has always been the preferred one because it goes some way to equalising attendance times for both station areas. This would not be the case if West Kirby was to close and Upton was to be retained, as response times to West Kirby's station area would be two minutes longer on average, with some areas receiving a response in excess of 10 minutes.

If Upton was to close it is clear that response times to these areas is going to be much worse, especially during peak times where traffic coming off the M53 at junction 2 is especially heavy. I feel that to assist the Fire Authority in making a safe decision the following questions should be considered.

Does the density and construction of the housing stock in North Birkenhead lead to an increased risk of fire?

No. It is the occupant of the property and their behaviours rather than the property itself that determines the fire risk.

What is the geographical breakdown of incidents attended to by Upton crews? If a large proportion of incidents are to the east of Upton, then where is the sense in moving the fire cover further away.

The number of life risk incidents occurring on the Upton station area is thankfully low and are not any significant clusters in any area. The same can be said for anywhere on Merseyside largely as a result of our very successful community safety interventions. Because of the significant impact of the cuts to the Authority budget we can no longer afford to keep all 26 stations open. Allerton was closed on 1st April and the Authority have previously approved the merger of Huyton and Whiston fire stations at a new station in Prescot. The merger of Eccleston and St Helens fire stations at a new station in St Helens town centre will be considered on 30th June along with the West Wirral proposal. The Authority budget for 2015/16 only supports operating 24 appliances from 22 stations (Southport and Kirkdale are the only stations to have 2 appliances for geographic and operational reasons). The stations that remain need to be in locations that afford the best run times to the largest geographic area. That is the rationale underpinning the merger proposal which is an option widely accepted and adopted by Fire and Rescue Authorities around the Country as delivering the least worst outcome.

Is Heswall not better placed to provide fire cover to West Wirral?

No. The West Kirby station area extends from Thurstaston to Meols. The run times from Heswall to large parts of the West Kirby station area are in excess of 10 minutes.

Considering the people of North Birkenhead are potential going to be adversely effected by the proposal as it stands, why have there not been any consultation events or has any effort made to consult with people of North Birkenhead?

For the reasons stated previously North Birkenhead isn't materially affected by the proposals.