

Fire station cuts on the cards for St Helens



Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens

Monday 22 June 2015 / News

FIRE stations in the St Helens borough could be cut from three to two under proposals submitted to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

The report on a proposal for a 12-week consultation over the plans affecting Parr Stocks and Millfields stations were released tonight, ahead of an authority meeting on June 30.

Two options have been drawn up which include:

1. The proposed merger of Eccleston and St Helens Fire Stations at a new station to be built on Canal Street, St Helens and the re-designation of one of the two existing wholetime fire engines as “wholetime retained” (with a 30-minute recall).

2. The closure of Eccleston Fire station at Millfields as the alternative to the merger.

Announcing the proposals tonight, Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens said: "The 12-week consultation, if approved by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority on June 30, will include a newsletter document on www.merseyfire.gov.uk , as well as being distributed in the areas affected by the proposals, outlining why changes need to be made and details on the impact on fire cover across the St Helens district.

"The consultation will also involve public meetings at locations in Parr, St Helens town centre and Eccleston, a stakeholders' meeting in St Helens, three focus groups and a joint forum.

"The proposals are intended to minimise the impact of the cuts and maintain as fast a response as possible to all parts of St Helens district.

"Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) is responsible for providing fire and rescue services for Merseyside's 1.4 million people at 25 stations across five districts. This currently includes three St Helens stations: St Helens (Parr Stocks Road), Eccleston and Newton-le-Willows.

"Over the last four years, MFRA has had to make savings of £20 million as a result of Government spending cuts and now the Authority is required to make a further £6.3 million savings in 2015/16. The Authority will face very significant further financial challenges over the course of this Parliament which will become clear following the emergency budget in July."

According to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, the current average response time to a life risk incident on the St Helens station area is 5 minutes 51 seconds.

The current mean average response time to life risk incidents on the Eccleston station area is 5 minutes 40 seconds.

A statement added: "This is significantly quicker than the MFRA 10-minute response standard and the maintain mean average response time of 7 minutes 24 seconds which is only for dwelling fires and does not include traffic collisions.

"If St Helens and Eccleston fire stations closed and a new fire station was built on Canal Street then the mean average run time to life risk incidents on the St Helens station area would be 5 minutes 26 seconds.

"The mean average run time to incidents in the Eccleston station area from Canal Street would be 4 minutes 47 seconds, 1 minute 57 seconds quicker than the alternative outright closure of Eccleston fire station.

"Over the last 10 years, incidents across Merseyside have been reduced by 55%.

"St Helens has seen a fall of 51.75% (1,888 incidents attended in 2005/6 to 911 in 2014/15). Eccleston has seen a reduction of 47.21% (841 incidents attended in 2005/6 to 444 incidents attending in 2014/15).

"While the number of fatalities across St Helens district in that decade is low (4), the level of risk is still high as the worst outcome from a fire or RTC is a death."

Further information will be provided about the consultation, if the proposal to hold one is approved on June 30 by the Authority.

COMMENTS TO ARTICLE

It's a shame that budget pressures have made this necessary but the risk profile has changed considerably over the years. House fires are much rarer now, building regs have improved and fires do not spread as quickly or produce as much toxic smoke as they did in the past. Five minutes is a very good response time really and means that they are likely to be in attendance at RTC's well in advance of when they are likely to have to cut anyone out of wreckage.

In a perfect world we'd have a fire station on every street and response times measured in seconds, but we don't live in a perfect world.

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One less fire station for militant, stuck in the dark age ,union sheep to stand outside manning picket lines.

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I agree with radman this is a time of budget constraints and this seems a sensible suggestion given its 2015 not 1955 I would also add the fire service have not done themselves any favours in recent years in terms of public sympathy.

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Eccleston fire station could close as fire chiefs look for cutbacks across St Helens

St Helens and Eccleston fire stations could be merged instead, under plans being considered by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority

Google Street View



Fire station in St Helens

Eccleston fire station in [St Helens](#) could close under plans being considered by the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

The move could increase response times to incidents by more than a minute.

Or St Helens and Eccleston fire stations could merge, with 22 firefighter jobs cut as fire chiefs try to find £6.3m of cutbacks by next year.

Either move would leave St Helens with only two fire stations, in St Helens and [Newton-Le-Willows](#).

A 12-week public consultation on the shakeup across St Helens is set to start on August 3.

The draft proposals were revealed in a report released last night, and the consultation will go ahead if agreed by fire authority chiefs at a meeting on June 30.

A new station could be built on Canal Street in St Helens if the option of a merger between the current St Helens station on Parr Stocks Road and the Eccleston station at Millfields went ahead.

Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens said the authority faced “significant financial challenges” after government spending cuts.



Merseyside fire chief Dan Stephens

He said average response times for incidents where life is at risk would become quicker and not slower if the stations merged - 14 seconds faster in the Eccleston area, and 25 seconds faster for St Helens.

But if Eccleston fire station closed, the average response time would fall from 5 minutes 40 seconds to 6 minutes 43 seconds.

The report said a staff saving of 22 whole-time equivalent firefighter posts in merging Eccleston and St. Helens stations was anticipated.

Dan Stephens said: “The proposals are intended to minimise the impact of the cuts, and maintain as fast a response as possible to all parts of St Helens district.

“Over the last four years, the authority has had to make savings of £20m as a result of government spending cuts, and now is required to make a further £6.3m savings in 2015/16.

“The consultation document will be distributed in the areas affected, and also involve focus groups, a stakeholders’ meeting public meetings in Parr, St Helens town centre and Eccleston.”

He added that average response times to incidents where life is at risk in both St Helens and Eccleston both are and will remain quicker than the Merseyside average

ARTICLE ST HELENS REPORTER – 26TH JUNE

Station closures up for discussion



CONTROVERSIAL proposals to close a St Helens borough fire station will be discussed by service chiefs later this month.

As a result of budget cuts, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) is considering two options which would have implications for fire cover across the town.

One option is an outright closure of Eccleston station, the other is to merge it with St Helens and build a new site on Canal Street.

The proposals will be subject to a 12-week public consultation period following a MFRA meeting on June 30.

Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens said: “The proposals are intended to minimise the impact of the cuts and maintain as fast a response as possible to all parts of St Helens district.

“Over the last four years, MFRA has had to make savings of £20m as a result of government spending cuts and now the Authority is required to make a further £6.3m savings in 2015/16.

“The Authority will face very significant further financial challenges over the course of this Parliament which will become clear following the emergency budget in July.”

The consultation will involve public meetings at locations in Parr, St Helens town centre and Eccleston, a stakeholders’ meeting in St Helens, three focus groups and a joint forum, the fire authority added.

An MFRA spokesman added that the proposals will not have a significant impact on response times.

Adding: “The current mean average response time to a life risk incident on the St Helens station area is five minutes 51 seconds.

“The current mean average response time to life risk incidents on the Eccleston station area is five minutes 40 seconds.

“This is significantly quicker than the MFRA 10-minute response standard and the maintain mean average response time of seven minutes 24 seconds which is only for dwelling fires and does not include traffic collisions.

“If St Helens and Eccleston fire stations closed and a new fire station was built on Canal Street then the mean average run time to life risk incidents on the St Helens station area would be five minutes 26 seconds.

“The mean average run time to incidents in the Eccleston station area from Canal Street would be four minutes 47 seconds - one minute 57 seconds quicker than the alternative outright closure of Eccleston fire station.”

Last year stations in Whiston and Huyton were closed with crews now based at a new site in Prescot in a similar move as has been suggested for Eccleston and St Helens.

The meeting of the fire authority next week will determine whether the consultation period will go ahead.

If approved, the 12-week period would then start on June 30.

The fire authority said: “Following the conclusion of any consultation, a further report would be submitted to the MFRA detailing the outcome and any operational implications.”

Adding: “St Helens has seen a fall of 51.75 per cent (1,888 incidents attended in 2005/6 to 911 in 2014/15).

“Eccleston has seen a reduction of 47.21 per cent (841 incidents attended in 2005/6 to 444 incidents attending in 2014/15).”

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Wish FM, which covers the St Helens area carried an interview with the Chief on the St Helens consultation on July 1. Story mentioned on the 11am news bulletin on July 1. The news line on the bulletin was the

Service was launching a 12-week consultation. It included a clip from the Chief explaining how much funding came from Council Tax and how much from Central Government.

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WISH FM NEWS SITE – 1ST JULY

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has agreed that a 12-week consultation into proposed changes to fire cover across the St Helens district will be held later this year.

A report was submitted to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority for their consideration at their meeting on June 30, 2015.

The consultation will start on August 3, 2015.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority considered the following two options at its meeting on June 30. Both draft proposals are now subject to the 12-week period of public consultation from August 3.

The proposals are:

1. The proposed merger of Eccleston and St Helens Fire Stations at a new station to be built on Canal Street, St Helens and the re-designation of one of the two existing wholetime fire engines as “wholetime retained” (with a 30-minute recall).
2. The outright closure of Eccleston Fire station as the alternative to the merger.

Following the conclusion of the consultation, a further report will be submitted to the Authority detailing the outcomes of the consultation and any operational implications.

Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens said: “Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has now approved the recommendation to hold a 12-week consultation starting on August 3 this year.

“The consultation will include a newsletter on www.merseyfire.gov.uk, as well as being distributed in the areas affected by the proposals, outlining why changes need to be made and details on the impact on fire cover across the St Helens district. The consultation will also involve public meetings at locations in Parr, St Helens town centre and Eccleston, a stakeholders’ meeting in St Helens, three focus groups and a joint forum. Further information, including the newsletter and the precise meeting dates and locations, will be provided when the consultation launches on August 3.

“The proposals are intended to minimise the impact of the ongoing cuts to the Authority budget and maintain as fast a response as possible to all parts of St Helens district.

“Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) is responsible for providing fire and rescue services for Merseyside’s 1.4 million people at 25 stations across five districts. This currently includes three St Helens stations: St Helens (Parr Stocks Road), Eccleston and Newton-le-Willows.

“Over the last four years, MFRA has had to make savings of £20 million as a result of Government spending cuts and now the Authority is required to make a further £6.3 million savings in 2015/16. The Authority will face significant further financial challenges over the course of this Parliament which will become clear following the emergency budget in July.”

The current mean average response time to a life risk incident on the St Helens station area is **5 minutes 51 seconds**. The current mean average response time to life risk incidents on the Eccleston station area is **5 minutes 40 seconds**.

This is significantly quicker than the MFRA **10-minute response** standard and the maintain mean average response time of **7 minutes 24 seconds** which is only for dwelling fires and does not include traffic collisions.

If St Helens and Eccleston fire stations closed and a new fire station was built on Canal Street then the predicted mean average run time to life risk incidents on the St Helens station area would be **5 minutes 26 seconds**. The predicted mean average run time to incidents in the Eccleston station area from Canal Street would be **4 minutes 47 seconds, 1 minute 57 seconds** quicker than it would be with the alternative outright closure of Eccleston fire station.

Over the last 10 years, incidents across Merseyside have been reduced by 55%.

St Helens has seen a fall of 51.75% (1,888 incidents attended in 2005/6 to 911 in 2014/15). Eccleston has seen a reduction of 47.21% (841 incidents attended in 2005/6 to 444 incidents attending in 2014/15).

While the number of fatalities across St Helens district in that decade is relatively low (8), the level of risk is still high as the worst outcome from a fire or RTC is a death.

Moving to the Canal Street site and converting one wholetime appliance to wholetime retained would save 22 wholetime firefighter posts, which equates to a £864,000 annual saving. The firefighter posts would be lost through natural turnover and reserves would be used to avoid compulsory redundancy.

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LIVERPOOL ECHO ARTICLE – 1ST JULY

Consultation to start over fire station closure in St Helens

- 11:41, 1 JUL 2015
- BY TOM BELGER

Merseyside's fire service want your views on plans to close Eccleston fire station - or merge it with the St Helens station

A consultation over plans to close or merge fire stations in St Helens will start next month.

Fire chiefs are considering closing Eccleston fire station, which could increase response times by more than a minute as they seek to find £6.3m budget cuts by next year.

But the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority is also considering merging the St Helens station on Parr Stocks Road and the Eccleston station at Millfields at a new site on Canal Street.

A 12-week consultation will begin on 3 August to seek the public's views on the plans, after the authority signed it off at a meeting yesterday.

Only two fire stations

Either proposal would leave the borough with only two fire stations, in St Helens and Newton-Le-Willows.

The fire service said the merger would see 22 firefighter jobs cut and save £864,000 a year, but natural turnover and reserves would be used to avoid compulsory redundancies.

And the new site could actually reduce response times in both St Helens and Eccleston because of its strategic location.

The fire service said average response times for incidents where life is at risk would become quicker and not slower if the stations merged - 14 seconds faster in the Eccleston area, and 25 seconds faster for St Helens.

But if Eccleston fire station closed, the average response time would fall from 5 minutes 40 seconds to 6 minutes 43 seconds.

He added that under either option, average response times to incidents where life is at risk in both St Helens and Eccleston would still remain quicker than the Merseyside average.

Send your views

The fire service will consult the public through a newsletter distributed in areas affected and online, public meetings in Parr, St Helens town centre and Eccleston, focus groups and other measures.

Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens said: "Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has now approved the recommendation to hold a 12-week consultation starting on 3 August.

"The proposals are intended to minimise the impact of ongoing cuts and maintain as fast a response as possible to all parts of St Helens district.

"Over the last four years, the authority has had to make savings of £20m as a result of government spending cuts, and now is required to make a further £6.3m savings in 2015-16."

Eccleston Lib Dem councillor Michael Haw said: "Myself and my ward colleagues will ensure Eccleston residents are kept up to date. If any residents have questions, do not hesitate to get in touch with us."

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Consultation into fire station cuts will take place

Millfields Fire Station in Eccleston

Stephen Mather / Thursday 2 July 2015 / News

A 12-WEEK consultation will take place later this year into proposed changes to the fire service cover in St Helens which could see the amount of stations cut from three to two. A report outlining the plans was submitted to the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority at their recent meeting at the end of June.

Under the terms of the proposals two options are under consideration. The first is the merger of St Helens and Millfields fire stations with a new station built on Canal Street in the town centre. The second proposal involves the closure of Millfields in Eccleston while maintaining St Helens fire station on Parr Stocks Road.

Following the conclusion of the consultation, which starts on August 3, a further report will be submitted to the authority detailing the outcomes and any potential implications to how the service will operate.

The fire service say that the plans would save £900,000 a year and cost 22 jobs. They insist savings have to be made in light of further government cuts and claim operating costs of St Helens and Eccleston is £2.1m. The forecast cost of a merged station would be £1.2m, a saving of £0.9m.

Chief fire officer Dan Stephens said: "The consultation will include a newsletter on merseyfire.gov.uk as well as being distributed in the areas affected by the proposals outlining why changes need to be made and details on the impact on fire cover across the St Helens district.

"The consultation will also involve public meetings at locations in Parr, St Helens town centre and Eccleston, a stakeholders' meeting in St Helens, three focus groups and a joint forum. Further information, including the newsletter and the precise meeting dates and locations will be provided when the consultation launches on August 3.

"The proposals are intended to minimise the impact of the ongoing cuts to the authority budget and maintain as fast a response as possible to all parts of St Helens district

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BBC RADIO MERSEYSIDE COVERED THE LUNCH ON 3RD AUGUST

Public meetings will debate fire station proposals



Millfields fire station could close

DATES for a series of public meetings to discuss proposals to reduce the number of fire stations in St Helens have been announced after a 12 week consultation opened this week. Millfields fire station in Eccleston would be axed under the suggestions by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) that were unveiled in June.

St Helens fire station at Parr Stocks could also shut, with the two bases replaced by a new community fire station on Canal Street, St Helens.

Another option is to merge the two stations at Parr Stocks.

Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens said the service in Merseyside has had to make £20 million in savings over the past four years and has to cut another £6.3 million.

The plans would save £900,000 a year and cost 22 jobs, according to a consultation document. Operating costs of St Helens and Eccleston is £2.1m. The forecast cost of a merged station would be £1.2m, a saving of £0.9m.

The borough's third fire station, in Newton-le-Willows will remain under the proposals.

If St Helens and Eccleston fire stations closed and a new fire station was built on Canal Street then the predicted mean average run time to life risk incidents on the St Helens station area would be 5 minutes 26 seconds.

The predicted mean average run time to incidents in the Eccleston station area from Canal Street would be 4 minutes 47 seconds, 1 minute 57 seconds quicker than it would be with the alternative outright closure of Eccleston fire station.

Public meetings will be held on: September 29, starting at 6.30pm at Cowley International College, Hard Lane, St Helens, October 1 starting at 6.30pm at St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School, Boardmans Lane, Blackbrook, St Helens, October 6, starting at 6.30pm at St Helens Town Hall, Corporation Street, St Helens.

A consultation document with information on the proposals

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ST HELENS COUNCIL WEBSITE – 14TH AUGUST

Consultation launched for proposed changes to fire cover across St Helens

A 12-week consultation into proposed changes to fire cover across the St Helens district launched on August 3.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) is proposing to close Eccleston and St Helens fire stations and build a new community fire station on Canal Street, St Helens. The alternative to the merger of the stations is the outright closure of Eccleston fire station.

Both proposals include the re-designation of one of the two existing wholetime fire appliances as "wholetime retained" (with a 30-minute recall).

Public meetings will be held on:

- Tuesday, 29th September, starting at 6.30pm at Cowley International College, Hard Lane, St Helens, WA10 6PN.
- Thursday, 1st October, starting at 6.30pm at St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School, Boardmans Lane, Blackbrook, St Helens, WA11 9BB.
- Tuesday, 6th October, starting at 6.30pm at St Helens Town Hall, Corporation Street, St Helens, WA10 1HP.

A consultation document with information on the proposals can be found at http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/asp/pages/opsResponse/pdf/St_Helens_Consultation_Document.pdf and an online questionnaire can be found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/sthelensmerger>. Focus group meetings, a stakeholders' meeting and a joint forum are also being arranged as part of the 12-week consultation, which runs until October 25.

Following the conclusion of the consultation, a further report will be submitted to the Authority detailing the outcomes of the consultation and any operational implications.

Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens said: "Over the last four years, MFRA has had to make savings of £20 million as a result of Government spending cuts and now the Authority is required to make a further £6.3 million savings in 2015/16. It is also clear the Authority will face significant further financial challenges over the course of this Parliament.

"The proposals are intended to minimise the impact of the ongoing cuts to the Authority budget and maintain as fast a response as possible to all parts of St Helens district.

"The consultation includes a document on www.merseyfire.gov.uk , as well as the document being distributed in the areas affected by the proposals, outlining why changes need to be made and details on the impact on fire cover across the St Helens district. The consultation will also involve public meetings at locations near Parr, St Helens town centre and Eccleston, a stakeholders' meeting in St Helens, three focus groups and a joint forum.

"I urge people who may be affected by the proposals and who live and work in the St Helens district, to read the consultation document, fill in the consultation questionnaire and attend the public meetings."

The current mean average response time to a life risk incident on the St Helens station area is 5 minutes 51 seconds. The current mean average response time to life risk incidents on the Eccleston station area is 5 minutes 40 seconds.

This is significantly quicker than the MFRA 10-minute response standard and the maintain mean average response time of 7 minutes 24 seconds which is only for dwelling fires and does not include traffic collisions.

If St Helens and Eccleston fire stations closed and a new fire station was built on Canal Street then the predicted mean average run time to life risk incidents on the St Helens station area would be 5 minutes 26 seconds. The predicted mean average run time to incidents in the Eccleston station area from Canal Street would be 4 minutes 47 seconds, 1 minute 57 seconds quicker than it would be with the alternative outright closure of Eccleston fire station.

Moving to the Canal Street site and converting one wholetime fire appliance to wholetime retained would save 22 wholetime firefighter posts, which equates to a £864,000 annual saving. The firefighter posts would be lost through natural turnover and reserves would be used to avoid compulsory redundancy.

The forecast cost of a new station is £4.8 million. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has been successful in securing some grant from the Government to contribute towards its programme of station mergers. In addition the sale of the old fire station sites would contribute towards the cost of the new station. The remaining balance would be met from reserves already ring-fenced for the merger process. As a result, the Authority would be able to avoid borrowing to build the proposed station.

Over the last 10 years, incidents across Merseyside have been reduced by 55%.

St Helens has seen a fall of 51.75% (1,888 incidents attended in 2005/6 to 911 in 2014/15). Eccleston has seen a reduction of 47.21% (841 incidents attended in 2005/6 to 444 incidents attending in 2014/15).

While the number of fatalities from fires caused by accident in homes across the St Helens district in that decade is relatively low (8), the level of risk is still high as the worst potential outcome from a fire or Road Traffic Collision (RTC) is a death.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) is responsible for providing fire and rescue services for Merseyside's 1.4 million people at 25 stations across five districts. This currently includes three St Helens stations: St Helens (Parr Stocks Road), Eccleston and Newton-le-Willows.

Fire boss admits station merger would affect residents' safety



Millfields fire station faces the axe

Paula Morris / Wednesday 9 September 2015 / News

RESIDENTS will be less safe in their homes in five years' time if plans to close and merge stations in St Helens go through, Merseyside's chief fire officer admitted.

At a safer communities meeting at St Helens town hall, Dan Stephens spoke to councillors about the implications of potential plans to close Parr Stocks (St Helens) and Millfields (Eccleston) stations and build a large station at spare land on Pilks' Watson Street Works off Canal Street.

Given that the authority is obliged by central government to make budget cuts, Mr Stephens supports the plan to merge the two stations into a new-build rather than closing Millfields and operating from Parr Stocks.

He said response times from Canal Street would better serve the borough than from Parr Stocks. However, he added that response times to secondary incidents will suffer as there will be fewer engines and back-up will come from further away.

Emphasising that it was the "least worst" option, he said the new-build would not involve any borrowing as the authority will receive a government grant, which will be used alongside capital receipts from the sale of the two old stations and reserves.

Mr Stephens said: "Let me make it clear: I have never advocated the savings measures; I've argued in the strongest terms against the cuts. The fact is that there is a political view around austerity – there's nothing anyone can do to change that. We just have to manage outcomes."

Asked whether, after the changes, residents will be as safe in their homes as they were five years before, Mr Stephens said: "No."

He added: "The first response is not so impacted; it's the second response. We can't predict when incidents will happen concurrently."

He said the Millfields engine would be kept on "retained recall" and support would be given to and from services in Cheshire, Wigan and other surrounding areas.

He said: "We having to lose more and more engines. Over the last five years the budget has been cut by 35 per cent, savings of £20 million made. We expect very extreme, severe further cuts for 2016-17."

He said: "In no way am I trying to say this is an improvement; it's not. We will have one less engine. But Watson Street Works is the optimum location and it does give us quicker response times.

"Because of the arterial network we will get a quicker response. That has not been the case in Knowsley and Wirral, where similar plans have been approved."

Proposals for the stations remain open to consultation and a series of public meetings begin later this month and run through to October.

Share article

Public meetings will be held on:

- Tuesday, **29th September**, starting at 6.30pm at Cowley International College, Hard Lane, St Helens, WA10 6PN.
- Thursday, **1st October**, starting at 6.30pm at St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School, Boardmans Lane, Blackbrook, St Helens, WA11 9BB.
- Tuesday, **6th October**, starting at 6.30pm at St Helens Town Hall, Corporation Street, St Helens, WA10 1HP.

A consultation document with information on the proposals can be found at :

http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/asp/opsResponse/pdf/St_Helens_Consultation_Document.pdf
and an online questionnaire can be found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/sthelensmerger> .

Focus group meetings, a stakeholders' meeting and a joint forum are also being arranged as part of the 12-week consultation, which runs until October 25.

Following the conclusion of the consultation, a further report will be submitted to the Authority detailing the outcomes of the consultation and any operational implications.

LIVERPOOL ECHO – 28TH SEPTEMBER

St Helens fire station closures: have your say at public meetings this week

Merseyside's fire service want your views on plans to close Eccleston fire station - or merge it with the St Helens station



Dan Stephens, Chief Fire Officer

The public can make their views heard on proposed fire station closures in St Helens at two consultation meetings this week.

Fire chiefs are considering closing Eccleston fire station, which could increase response times by more than a minute as they look for £6.3m spending cuts by next year.

But the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's other proposal is a merger of the St Helens and Eccleston stations at a new site on Canal Street.

The first public meeting this week will take place at 6.30pm on Tuesday September 29 at Cowley International College on Hard Lane, St Helens.

A second meeting will be held at 6.30pm on Thursday October 1 at St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School, Blackbrook.

There will be a third and final public meeting at St Helens Town Hall next Tuesday October 6 at 6.30pm.

Only two fire stations

Google Street View



Fire station in St Helens

A 12-week consultation began at the start of August on the plans, which come after significant cuts to the fire service's budget from central government.

Either proposal would leave the borough with only two fire stations, in St Helens and in Newton-Le-Willows.

Both proposals would also see one of the two full-time fire engines staffed instead by off-duty firefighters on a 30-minute recall.

But the fire service said a new Canal Street site could actually reduce response times in both St Helens and Eccleston because of its strategic location.

A spokesman said average response times for incidents where life is at risk would be 14 seconds faster near Eccleston, and 25 seconds faster near St Helens.

But if Eccleston fire station was simply closed, the average response time would fall from 5 minutes 40 seconds to 6 minutes 43 seconds.

He added that under either option, average response times to incidents where life is at risk in both areas would still remain quicker than the Merseyside average.

22 fewer firefighters

The merger would also see 22 firefighter jobs cut and save £864,000 a year, but natural turnover and reserves would be used to avoid compulsory redundancies.

Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens said: "Over the last four years, the authority has had to make savings of £20m as a result of government spending cuts, and now is required to make a further £6.3m savings in 2015-16."

The [consultation document](#) and [questionnaire](#) can also be accessed online.

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ST HELENS REPORTER – 30TH SEPTEMBER

Fire chiefs are holding a series of public consultation meeting over plans to merge two of the borough’s station.

Bosses want to shut Eccleston and St Helens fire station and build a new community hub in Canal Street.

They say the alternative to the merge is the outright closure of Eccleston fire station and that call-outs have dramatically reduced over the past decade.

Chief Fire Officer Dan Stephens said: “I would encourage people to join in and be a part of this consultation and submit their views on the consultation as well as attend the three public meetings.

“Over the last four years, MFRA has had to make savings of £20 million as a result of Government spending cuts and now the Authority is required to make a further £6.3 million savings in 2015/16. It is also clear the Authority will face significant further financial challenges over the course of this Parliament.”

Fire chiefs estimate moving to Canal Street would save the brigade £864,000 every year.

The forecast cost of a new station is £4.8m.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has been successful in securing a grant from the Government to contribute towards its programme of station mergers.

Over the last 10 years, incidents across St Helens have fallen by around 50 per cent.

The public meetings will be held on Thursday, October 1 starting at 6.30pm at St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School, Boardmans Lane, Blackbrook, and Tuesday, October 6 starting at 6.30pm at St Helens Town Hall in Corporation Street.

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ST HELENS STAR – 2ND OCTOBER

'I'm not trying to put lipstick on a pig,' says fire chief as he outlines St Helens fire station cuts proposals



Merseyside chief fire officer Dan Stephens

Simon Mulligan / Friday 2 October 2015 / News

MERSEYSIDE'S chief fire officer Dan Stephens has admitted he will not try "putting lipstick on the pig" when explaining proposals to close fire stations in St Helens.

But he has stated that the creation of a new super station at Pilkington's Watson Street Works would be his preferred option to respond to government cuts.

The first of three public meetings to discuss proposals over potential fire station closures took place at Cowley School on Tuesday.

In the face of central government cuts, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority needs to make savings of £6.3m, of which £3.4m will come from emergency response including station mergers or closures.

Two options were presented at the meeting, one which would see the existing Parr Stocks and Millfields stations close and the two bases replaced by a new community fire station on Canal Street.

The alternative would be to merge the stations at Parr Stocks. The plans would save £900,000 a year and cost 22 jobs. The operating costs of St Helens and Eccleston is £2.1m and the forecast cost of a merged station would be £1.2m.

Speaking at the meeting in Cowley International College, chief fire officer Dan Stephens said the Canal Street option was his most preferred due to transport links.

"That's an optimum location," he said.

"Ordinarily to close two stations and build one doesn't give faster response times but this actually does give faster times simply due to the proximity to the Linkway."

However, he admitted that there was nothing he could do to prevent response times to secondary incidents being affected, with back-up potentially coming from further away and fewer fire engines.

"I'm on record saying I'm not trying to put lipstick on the pig. What I'm not trying to suggest is this will improve the overall service.

"The second response won't be faster and it will take longer. It's the second fire that will take longer and there's nothing we can do to change that."

He added that whatever plans go ahead will take up to two years

The borough's third station in Newton-le-Willows will be unaffected by the proposals and a merged station on Manchester Road, Prescot has already been approved.

The final public consultation takes place at St Helens Town Hall on Tuesday (October 6) at 6.30pm.

COMMENTS TO ARTICLE

Ironic that Pilks Fire Station used to be in Canal St and they used to respond to fires with the Borough Brigade ,based in Parade St (under the Town Hall!) Now they are talking about building a new Station back in Canal St! This Station area will cover from Mill Lane(near Widnes) to Billinge on one direction and from Newton Road (Parr) to Rainford in the other! A massive area for 1 full time Appliance to cover! Residents of St Helens need to attend these Meetings and fight these cuts because they will not realise how bad this situation is until they need the Fire Service in the future and it will not be there for them! Maybe the can ask CFO Stephens how he can justify his £202,000 a year salary whilst running one of the smallest Met Brigades in the Country! Used to have 1500 Firefighters and 42 Fire Appliances ,now less than 600 and 24 Appliances,and fire deaths are again rising on Merseyside,10 last year! Many of them in St Helens!

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The final public consultation takes place at St Helens Town Hall on Tuesday (October 6) at 6.30pm. I urge residents of St Helens to attend this Meeting and fight these proposals because if they go ahead Public Safety will be put at risk and more lives will be lost!

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THE MEETINGS BELOW WERE ATTENDED BY THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

28th September:

12:15 hrs – BBC Radio Merseyside – Tony Snell

13:15 hrs – Wish FM – Michael Gaffney

6th October:

Cllr Barrie Grunewald – 14:30 hrs at St Helens Town Hall

The Chief and Chair met Cllr Davis (Leader of Wirral) at 10:00 hrs on 6th October regarding Wirral.

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SOCIAL MEDIA

St.Helens Council [@sthelenscouncil](#) [Aug 3](#) St.Helens Council retweeted Mersey Fire [@MerseyFire](#) have opened their consultation on proposed mergers and closure of some fire stations in St Helens.

On Twitter a person Tweeted on August 3 in response to the Tweet on the launch of the consultation:

A person Tweeted: [@MerseyFire](#) the Eccleston station is a lifesaver for the local community. Closing it down would endanger lives in the area. Please leave it

Another person replied: [@MerseyFire](#) don't think the public's views come into it Stuart. All about the money these days.

Original Tweeter replied: [@MerseyFire](#) - would be short-sighted, irresponsible and dangerous to close the Eccleston station Stephen

The person who replied to the Tweet then wrote: [@MerseyFire](#) i agree. Only round the corner from me. They'll shut Eccleston, plans collapse for Canal St leaving Parr only!

On Twitter a person Tweeted on August 6, in response to a Tweet on the St Helens consultation:

[@MerseyFire](#) right, if its going to save 22 firefighter posts by moving then yes