



Executive Council member Trevor French
Brigade Secretary James Leslie
Brigade Chair Scott Young

Region 12 South West
Fire Brigades Union
Devon and Somerset Brigade
15 Parkfield Crescent
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 ARX

CIRCULAR: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brothers and Sister's

Mismanagement of Reserves

Following lobbying by local officials, Karen Lee (Shadow Fire Minister) asked the following question to the Fire Minister Nick Hurd on the 4th July.

Karen Lee (Lincoln) - What assessment he has made of the potential implications the proposed cuts in Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service will have on the safety of the area the service covers; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Hurd - It is the responsibility of each Fire and Rescue Authority to determine the resources required to deliver fire and rescue service to local communities.

In 2019/20, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority will receive £75.6 million in core spending power. This is an increase of 2.6% compared with 2018/19. In addition, at March 2018. The authority held 37.3 million in reserves, equivalent to 50.4% of core spending power.

The answer is a typical politician's answer from someone who seems to be unwilling to take any responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service, for which he is accountable.

The FBU has also looked at the issue he has raised concerning reserves. What we have found is shocking and brings into question how our service has been run since combination. When we combined in 2007, we were all told this combination would protect the front line, but what have we fought against over the last twelve years?

Cuts, cuts and more cuts.

Senior Management and the Fire Authority have proposed and agreed to;

- Removal of primary crewing of Aerial appliances
- Closing one control room
- Removing the wholetime crewing at Plymstock, Plympton and Ilfracombe
- Cutting the wholetime establishment at Yeovil, Bridgwater, Taunton, Torquay, Barnstaple, Camelshead and Crownhill fire stations



Senior Management has always argued that these cuts had to be made due to central government funding cuts and a cap on the council tax precept. It has become clear that this reasoning is wrong, DSFRS has been mismanaged since 2007. It is now clear that DSFRS has the money to protect the front line but has chosen not to. This is clear from their handling of reserves which can be seen in the table below.

	2007	Year 2013/14	Year 2014/15	Year 2015/16	Year 2016/17	Year 2017/18	Year 2018/19	Total increase
Reserve s General	3,446,000	5,191,000	5,271,000	5,282,000	5,319,000	5,315,000	5,315,000	1,869,000
Reserve s Earmark ed	197,000	12,394,000	18,494,000	24,811,000	29,985,000	31,944,000	33,561.000	33,364,000

It is totally unacceptable that the general fund has seen an increase of £1,869,000 and the earmarked reserves has increased by £33,364,000, yes, over **£33 million** since we combined. How can this be acceptable management of our service, when over the same time period, 100s of jobs have been slashed? Don't believe it when Senior Management say that earmarked reserves can only be spent on what they have been earmarked for. Senior Management can propose to spend reserves, whether they are classed as general or earmarked on anything they wish to, and the Fire Authority can agree to it. At a meeting of one of the committees of the Fire Authority I attended on 27 June, the Clerk to the Fire Authority explained to members how money could be redirected from capital to revenue.

Can you imagine what service we would be working in today if this money had been invested in the front line?

Can you imagine what our response times would be?

Can you imagine what terms and condition we could have agreed for RDS members?

Can you imagine what crewing levels would have been like today?

It is clear to the FBU that DSFRS would have been fundamentally better than it is today, and Senior Management and Fire Authority have to take responsible for this. We are now calling on Senior Management to withdraw the latest cuts proposals and sit down with the FBU to agree a way forward to invest these huge amounts of money in the front-line fire service, something that we know the public will support.

The FBU feels it is not too late to improve our service after 12 years of what can only be described as mismanagement by our Senior Management and the Fire Authority.

In Unity

James Leslie

