

# THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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## NORFOLK FIRE CREWS WARN OVER FIRE SERVICE CUTS

Norfolk's fire crews are warning that the decision of Norfolk County Council Cabinet to approve the Fire Services new emergency response times to fires would allow a very high failure rate and lay the foundations for future cuts without further public consultation. Norfolk's Fire Brigades Union also warns that the more rural areas would be the first to be hit by the changes.

The proposals open the door to having fewer firefighters arriving later at 999 incidents and increasing the risk to the public and to firefighters. There is also a new response time of 45 minutes to non-emergency incidents although these incidents are not defined in any way.

The proposals include:

- \*having a blanket target response time of 10 minutes across Norfolk which could leave residents in high risk areas like Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth waiting twice as long for the first fire engine to arrive. At present they get a first engine arriving within 5 minutes and the second within 8 minutes.

- \*having a target allowing a one in five failure rate for responding to fires in the home is unacceptable in a modern society. It would be accepting that we would fail to properly respond to between 8 and 10 serious fires a week;

- \*the proposals open the door to future cuts by stealth and without further consultation.

Neil Day, FBU Norfolk Brigade Secretary said: "We are very worried by these plans. We are meant to tailor our speed of response and number of firefighters responding according to the risks in any particular area. All this does is have a single response time across the whole of Norfolk without any thought being given to the risks in specific areas.

"Instead of bringing a more modern and sophisticated approach Norfolk is being presented with the crudest approach possible. It leaves significant potential for cuts in the areas where fire risk is greatest and a poorer service in the most rural areas.

"People in Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth could see response times double without further public consultation or even being told it is happening. We do not find it acceptable to have a standard which says we can turn up to one in five fires when we like.

"That amounts to between 8 and 10 serious fires a week and the longer it takes to get to a fire the longer it has to spread and take hold. There is a very serious danger these proposals will significantly increase risk to the public and to fire crews."

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