

# FIRE BRIGADES UNION

10<sup>th</sup> August 2009

## **CASH STRAPPED ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY SAYS IT HAS SO LITTLE CASH IT NEEDS TO CUT FRONTLINE FIREFIGHTERS – BUT WANTS A HELICOPTER!**

An Essex fire authority plan to buy a helicopter has been branded as “toys for boys” by the Fire Brigades Union. The union says any available money should be spent on frontline fire services threatened with £3 million of cuts because of a budget squeeze.

The fire authority plans to cut one in ten frontline station-based firefighters because it says it needs to save £3 million. But plans to buy a helicopter were set out at a Fire Authority meeting on 24 July and the meeting approved spending on a feasibility study.

Essex Fire Brigades Union chair Keith Flynn said: “Frontline crews are furious the fire authority is demanding major cuts to the 999 emergency response, while taking steps to buy a helicopter. This is the worst kind of “toys for the boys” spending in the middle of a budget squeeze.

“No other fire authority in the UK has a helicopter. It is totally unnecessary and especially so in the middle of a budget squeeze.

“Every penny of any available money must go to protecting the frontline 999 emergency response service. The fire authority needs to get its head out of the clouds and come back down to the real world where the rest of us live.”

### Helicopter Feasibility Study Report: EFA/082/09

Fire Authority Paper EFA/082/09 – tabled at the last fire authority meeting on 24 July - committed the FRA to finding additional funding to carry out a feasibility study into the purchase of a helicopter. The paper is available from the fire authority website.

\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*

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