

# CLIFFE AND CLIFFE WOODS PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of Public Meeting held at Memorial Hall, Cliffe, 7.30 pm,  
on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011

## PRESENT

Cllrs. Chris Fribbins (Chairman C&CW Parish Council), Mark Reckless MP (Rochester & Strood), Peter Rodberg (Strood Rural, Medway), Tom Mason (Strood Rural, Medway Vice Chair K&MF&RA), Mr Mark Simmons (Fire Brigade Union)

Parish Clerks: Mrs Alex Jack, Mrs Laura Farrelly

## APOLOGIES

Ann Millington (Chief Executive KFRS), James Finch (KFRS)

The meeting opened at 7.30 pm.

NO	ITEM	ACTION BY
1.0	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> Parish Council Chairman welcomed all present and introduced those on the stage to the audience. A brief outline of the work undertaken by the Parish Council followed accompanied by projector images of the area. An outline of the informal Agenda for the meeting was given and the lead up of events which had prompted its necessity.	
2.0	<b>ISSUES RAISED</b> Parish Council Chairman outlined the issues to be raised including the change of contracts for the retained fire fighters and how this will affect their working arrangements as from today. A briefing sent by KFRS was distributed to all present explaining their position as well as a copy of The Clarion that highlighted the meeting on its front page.	
3.0	<b>QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR</b> Many questions were raised and in the main centred on the lack of flexibility of the new part time contracts.  Fire fighters at Cliffe FS have been asked to sign a new contract by 1/6/11 stating that they can be on call for 24 weeks at one time. Many cannot commit to this new arrangement and so have had to leave. This raised the question of whether there will be enough fire fighters remaining to keep the Fire Station open, as a minimum of 4 are needed for each engine. Additionally, fire fighters in other areas have only been asked to commit to being on call for 4 weeks, an unfair inconsistency it was thought. Had Cliffe been given the 4 week call option they would have been happy to agree to this. There were also issues with the fitness and literacy tests that have not been asked of the full time workforce just the part time, another major and unfair inconsistency.  Mark Simmons (FBU) was asked for his comments and advised that no blue print was available across the country and that KFRS has looked at each station's requirements individually and the 24 week call up is what they felt was required at Cliffe. He did not feel that this could be changed. The FBU are happy to support fire fighters who may need extra literacy help or to maintain their fitness levels and this should not be a reason for dismissal.  Cllr Mason advised that he had been reassured by KFRS that Cliffe FS	

	<p>would not close as a result of the contract changes. He had attended a meeting recently with them where he pointed out the strength of feeling amongst the Cliffe fire fighters following the APM in April. He advised KFRS that they would not want the Fire Station to close. Many there have worked in the area for 10-20+ years and do not want to leave.</p> <p>The fire fighters further stated that they are not complaining about the pay conditions merely the flexibility in the new contracts that they cannot reasonably commit to and the inconsistencies between arrangements at different Fire Stations.</p> <p>Mark Simmons (FBU) further advised that he had been working closely with KFRS to improve fire fighters pay and conditions that is now reflected in the increase of their pay as from 1/6/11.</p> <p>Cllr Mason was asked what he thought KFRS intend to do if the new operational system does not work? As many of the fire fighters have now had to resign it means that the Cliffe fire engine is not fully manned. Will they use fire fighters from other areas or will they have to take on new staff and train them? This was not thought to be cost effective at all given that they already have trained and willing fire fighters available. Cllr Mason advised that he would speak to KFRS and is happy to take up any individual issues on behalf of the fire fighters. He was unable to comment on operational issues.</p> <p>Mark Reckless (MP) advised that he was surprised at what he had heard regarding the new contracts and would be speaking to Ann Millington, Chief Executive of KFRS about the inflexibility issues. He thought that a representative should have attended the meeting and been there to answer some of the questions that had been raised. He was also happy to take up any issues regarding the inconsistencies of contracts compared with other Fire Stations for the fire fighters including those who have had to resign.</p> <p>The issue of risk assessment was raised and all present stated that they would like some input before the recommendations from KFRS are finalised. The Chairman advised that KFRS would be coming to a meeting of the Parish Council either in July or August and that this could be an opportunity for further discussion then. The date would be publicised in another edition of The Clarion, issued by the Parish Council and delivered to all in the area. It would also be available on the website at <a href="http://www.cliffeandcliffewoods-pc.gov.uk">www.cliffeandcliffewoods-pc.gov.uk</a>.</p> <p>Mark Simmons (FBU) advised that following the risk assessment by the KFRS would be their recommendations in October and that any further input would be needed before the end of January. The FBU have asked for a meeting with them to review the situation following the changes.</p>	<p>Cllr Mason</p> <p>Mark Reckless (MP)</p> <p>Parish Council</p> <p>Mark Simmons (FBU)</p>
4.0	<p><b>SUMMARY</b></p> <p>Parish Council Chairman summoned up all of the above and asked everyone present to also ensure that they contact KFRS either by letter, email, telephone, facebook or twitter to put their message across and make themselves heard.</p>	<p>All</p>

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.  
02/06/11/ahj