

Reject the proposal to cut 40 firefighter posts from Avon Fire and Rescue Service (AFRS)

This Branch notes that:

1. In 2023 UK Firefighters secured a national 12% pay increase for 2022/2024. This was presented as [‘a no strings attached’](#)¹ offer.
2. In October 2023, Avon Fire Authority voted through senior management proposals to cut 40 firefighter posts from the service by 2026. Chief Fire Officer Simon Shilton has [blamed the budget shortfall on the national pay increase!](#)²
3. Fire and Rescue services have suffered from years of austerity cuts. We have 20% fewer firefighters in the UK than in 2010.
4. [Since 2016 Avon fire and rescue service has had £2.6 million pounds cut from its central government grant, this equates to around 13.8% of its annual budget.](#)³
5. The people and workplaces of Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North-East Somerset and North Somerset rely on a well-resourced Fire and Rescue Service. AFRS responds to fires and road traffic collisions under statutory responsibility but also *attends water and flood rescue calls, animal rescue calls, rope rescue calls and provides entry assistance for ambulances*. These additional provisions are costly yet unfunded by government and are a strain on fire service budgets.
6. As effects of climate change persist and worsen, well-funded and well-resourced fire and rescue services are of increasing importance.
7. This branch further notes that the impact of these cuts will mean:
 - a) Incident commanders will need to request additional resources from other stations more frequently, depriving those areas of their immediate cover. Attendance times will increase.
 - b) In Scotland and Nottinghamshire, incidents were unattended during storm Babet as resources were exhausted, this will become more likely in Avon if cuts are made.
 - c) Firefighters require minimum numbers in attendance to set up important firefighting systems of work. Such safe systems are designed to speed up rescues, reduce property damage and increase firefighter safety. These options will not be available in a timely manner if firefighter numbers on engines are reduced in this way.
 - d) There are environmental and financial costs associated with more fire engines on the road because there are fewer firefighters riding them.
 - e) Many stations provide specialist capabilities. If their crews are out making up the numbers somewhere else, their special capability is unavailable if needed.

¹ [New pay offer – Executive Council assessment and recommendation | Fire Brigades Union \(fbu.org.uk\)](#)

² <https://avonfire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s2277/Budget%20Shortfalls%20Option%20-%20AFA%20Paper.pdf> Section 1 & section 3.3

³ [Key information for local authorities on the final local government finance settlement 2021 to 2022.pdf \(fbu.org.uk\)](#)

This Branch believes that:

1. Cutting front line staff **never** improves public safety.
2. Removing firefighters from fire engines is dangerous to firefighters, is an unnecessary strain on remaining resources and will increase attendance times, which will lead to worse outcomes for casualties and people's property.
3. It is not right for the Chief Fire Officer to say that by not closing stations, public safety is maintained, when these cuts result in fewer staff working at those stations.
4. The fire service are our *de facto* provider of flood and water rescue response.

Therefore, this Branch resolves:

1. That the University of Bath UCU must demand the following:
 - a. Avon Fire Authority members table the necessary motions and vote to reject these dangerous cuts as a matter of public safety.
 - b. Avon Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer publicly address central government and request that central government grant funding is restored to pre-2016 levels or higher.
 - c. Avon Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer write to the Home Office to request that Flood and Water rescue is made the statutory responsibility of the Fire and Rescue Service.
2. to support the Firefighters Manifesto as set out by the Fire Brigades Union.
3. to work together with local Fire Brigades Union representatives to campaign against firefighter cuts and campaign for increased government funding.
4. to call on other UCU branches to pass a motion rejecting the cuts to the AFRS and mobilise UCU members to support actions supporting the campaign by the FBU, including: leafletting, picketing Avon Fire Authority meetings, contacting councillors, and protests.
5. to demand that the University of Bath issue a public statement to the Avon Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer which includes the points outlined in *resolves 1a, 1b and 1c*.

Proposer: Tyrone Falls

Secunder: Sandhya Moise