

Supporting our fire service

2.10.08

Our fire crews in Gravesham have threatened to strike in protest over plans to axe emergency control rooms which will see the closure of 46 control rooms to leave just 9 for the whole of the UK. Many of us will be very disappointed if they do.

The government claims it will save £850m but the Firefighters' Union claim the cost of setting up - which is now running 3 years late - is £868m and could rise to £1.5m.

Here in Gravesham we will be covered by one regional centre covering Kent and nine other counties in the south east. Was that Park Road Gravesend, or Park Road Brighton?

When you need a fire crew you call 999 and at present that person answering the phone will have some local knowledge of your area. Additionally, here in Kent we have a set of unique circumstances in that we have the Channel Tunnel, Dover port, the main arterial roads into London and out to the continent that need fast reaction if there is an incident. It is vital that we keep our services locally.

There is a similar system in operation in France and Belgium which has been extremely successful. Our illustrious MEPs – led by Britain – have suggested that this scheme could be put in force across the EU. At last, a sensible piece of legislation.