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Surrey Fire service workshop needs maintenance check

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The garage that keeps Surrey's fire engines safe and running is "no longer fit for purpose", according to a new report

Surrey County Council has admitted that the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) main vehicle workshop in Reigate needs important maintenance work.

Without urgent work, the service "will no longer be able to continue to carry out critical safety checks" on its fire engine, a new report has revealed.

The Wray Park site, which looks after more than 140 fire engines and other vehicles, has been running on fumes for years. A council report says the buildings are riddled with problems, such as they are difficult to heat in winter and cool in summer, the ventilation system "inefficient", and the roof too low for newer, taller fire engines to fit inside.

Surrey's council cabinet, meeting on October 28, is being asked to sign off spending for a full refurbishment between 2025 and 2028, using money already set aside in its capital budget.

Officials describe the investment as "essential" to ensure Surrey's fire engines can keep rolling and protecting residents. The report says the overhaul will deliver "fit for purpose facilities to enable the maintenance, repair and servicing of the SFRS vehicle fleet".

Without it, the council warns, the fire service's ability to keep its engines roadworthy will be at risk – a situation that could impact optimal Fire Service provision and the protection of Surrey residents.

The revamp has been a long time coming. A decade ago, the county council had hoped to build a joint "blue light" maintenance centre with Sussex Police. But the plan collapsed when the shared site proved too cramped and too costly.

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Instead, the council has now decided to invest in its existing Reigate site, which it says is “centrally located, easily accessible, and well-connected to major transport networks”.

An alternative site study found nowhere better, with other options ruled out for being “unsustainable” or too expensive.

If approved, the rebuild will literally raise the roof to fit newer fire engines and include solar panels, insulation and new automated doors.

The report says the work will reduce the carbon footprint and environmental impact on neighbouring Surrey residents and ensure compliance with Health and Safety legislation. It will also mean “a secure and healthy working environment” for fire service staff.

As part of the upgrade, the fire service also plans to start servicing its smaller “white fleet” vehicles (like cars and vans) in-house for the first time, instead of paying private garages.

The council insists the project is viable and affordable within its current budget, though the exact figures are being kept under wraps for commercial sensitivity. It will be paid for through a mix of council borrowing and Home Office funding for ‘Blue Light Collaboration’, the report states.

But officials admit money is tight. The report warns the council “continues to operate in a very challenging financial environment, with significant budgetary pressures and limited financial resources”.

Cabinet members are being urged to “have regard to fiduciary duties to residents in utilising public monies” in other words, make sure taxpayers get value for money.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Surrey Fire Service Wray Park aerial view Google Maps

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