

Visit to Berkshire Fire and Rescue

On Friday Berkshire MPs and others were invited to a presentation by the Berkshire Fire service about the planned new Emergency services facility for Theale and about their future budgets. Laura Farris and I were the two MPs who joined the meeting.

We were told that Berkshire Fire service has recently been placed in the lowest quartile for local tax levied to help pay for it, and in the top quartile for performance. I congratulated them on these achievements.

We were asked to support a 7.5% increase in the local tax to pay for the service next year. The government is proposing a 2% cap, with the need for a referendum of taxpayers for a larger rise. We were told that the 7.5% increase would raise an additional £1.7m implying a base budget of £22.7m a year.

We were not given the budget figures or an explanation of what the extra money would buy so I suggested they sent me the details so I could consider it properly. They did say the new Theale facility soon to be built would be more efficient offering savings on budgets like energy which should help keep the tax down.