

## Press Release

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

### **States of Alderney chooses combined Fire and Ambulance Service**

Alderney is to have a combined Fire and Ambulance Service and its elected Members have asked for plans to be drawn up to switch from a subscription ambulance service to one paid for from property taxation.

The States of Alderney has been running the Ambulance Service since taking emergency interim measures in December 2019 when the Board of Alderney Ambulance Service Ltd (AAS Ltd) declared its intention to close following an independent review that raised questions about safety standards, and a subsequent industrial dispute.

Three options were put before the full States meeting on June 10:

- Replace AAS Ltd with a new company but keep the same volunteer and subscription model
- An Ambulance Service run by the States of Alderney
- A combined Fire and Ambulance Service

After hearing that the Island's medical professionals were overwhelmingly in favour of the combined service, Members voted 7-3 to bring together the States Fire Service with trained ambulance volunteers into an integrated emergency service with an aligned contact centre and shared policies and procedures.

St John Ambulance, the Island Medical Centre (IMC) and Mignot Memorial Hospital (MMH) will provide support with management and leadership coming from the States of Alderney.

James Dent, Chairman of the Policy & Finance Committee, said a key consideration was that the combined service would improve operational effectiveness, vital in times of potential emergencies such as the current Covid-19 pandemic.

"Our ambulance service together with the fire and rescue service have recently been at the forefront of strategy planning and have already had to work closely together," he said. "A separate company or charity running a part of the service would find it difficult to provide the rapid responses necessary and they would also be sourcing expertise separately."

In addition, other jurisdictions with an integrated fire and rescue service have reported major cost benefits, Mr Dent said.

Funding the service through tax receipts was an inherently more efficient way of running the service than relying on subscriptions, he added, and would make it more inclusive and available to all island residents.

“It’s evident that those least able to afford the subscription are least likely to subscribe and these are among some of our most vulnerable residents,” he told the States meeting.

The estimated annual cost of the combined service is £136,550 – the States of Alderney currently pays an annual grant of £40,000 for the Ambulance Service while the Fire Service budget is £62,400; £33,830 is raised from subscriptions. A combined service will provide substantial cost savings.

Patient transport requiring no first aid will no longer be provided by the combined service. Instead individuals or the care home will use taxis or other volunteer organisations if an ambulance is not needed.

Additional training for the 17 volunteers together with exercises on land and water has delivered a high-quality service which can deal with emergencies including suspected Covid-19 cases. Crews have continued to train in order to be able to cope with the additional risks during the pandemic crisis.

**Ends**