

## Kilmac Fire Service Unable to Respond to Main Street Accident

DUE to ongoing staffing issues, a County Waterford fire service was unable to respond to a road traffic accident which occurred just metres away from the local fire station.

On Saturday night September 8th a serious road traffic incident took place outside Bank of Ireland on the Main Street in Kilmacthomas. As Kilmacthomas Fire Station was 'off the run' at the time (and has been for a number of months) two units from Dungarvan and a unit from Portlaw had to respond to the incident instead. The roof of the car was removed and one person was cut from the vehicle due to suspected head and back injuries. One member of the Kilmacthomas Fire Service passed by while work was taking place at the scene.



Kilmacthomas Fire Station was unable to respond to a road traffic outside Bank of Ireland on the village's Main Street – located just metres away from the Fire Station.

However, his unit was unable to respond to the incident due to new staffing requirements which has seen the local station declared 'off the run' on many occasions. On a number of occasions, Portlaw Fire Station has also been 'off the run' at the same time as Kilmacthomas. There has been ongoing controversy and growing anger in the area over the lack of a fire service for a large section of Mid County Waterford. Rural stations such as Kilmacthomas and Portlaw have generally employed eight staff members and, traditionally, four members were required to be 'on call' while four were 'not on call' at any given time. However, the current requirements seek a fifth person to be 'on call'.

When numbers fall below five, the service is declared 'off the run' which means that crews cannot respond to an emergency call-out. Concerned retained firefighters in County Waterford say the numbers required to be 'on call' at any given time are "not practical" due to current staffing levels. Fire stations such as Dungarvan and Waterford City are more likely to have the resources to meet the criteria – however it proves more difficult for smaller stations such as Kilmacthomas. Retained firefighters in Kilmacthomas say four members have been accepted on some occasions by Waterford City & County Council but say that this ongoing uncertainty is adding to the strain and is unsustainable.

A recent statement issued by Waterford City & County Council stated that issues had been resolved and that all fire services in County Waterford were fully operational.

However, firefighters in Kilmacthomas, who have been available and willing to respond to recent incidents, maintain that the situation has not improved and say they continue to be 'off the run'.

When contacted last week, Director of Services with Waterford City & County Council Ivan Grimes said: "As the issues affecting the availability of individual retained Fire Brigades have been referred to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) for conciliation, Waterford City & County Council will not be commenting further on the matter until the conciliation process has concluded."

The issue is due to come before the WRC on September 26th.