

The Council and the Fire Brigades

Mr. FAIRBURN moved the adoption of the Watch Committee minutes, and spoke at some length upon the proposal of the committee that the Council should take the management of the fire brigades into their own hands. He considered that the way in which the brigades were at present managed was a scandal to the town, and he thought it was high time the Council put the management of them under one responsible head. The town now spent many thousands a year in paying a protective force, and it was not too much to ask that a few hundreds more should be spent in the protection of property against fire. The cost of the

Council undertaking the management of the brigades was so small a matter, only £300 a year, that the most rigid economist need have no fear, and he believed he should even have the sanction of Mr. Hutchinson to the proposal of the committee. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) However well the brigades were managed, they would never be able to work satisfactorily whilst there was a scarcity of water in the mains at night - (hear, hear) - and so long at that continued, the town would be at the mercy of any fire that broke out. The recent destruction of the Ragged Schools was another melancholy addition to the long list of property which might have been saved had a good supply of water been obtained as soon as the fire engines arrived. He could not state how long this state of things was to last, but he did feel that the town was in the most humiliating condition in reference to its water supply ... Alderman CROWTHER seconded the motion .. Mr. HUTCHINSON agreed with the proposal, and in reference to what Mr. Fairburn had said respecting the scarcity of water, he observed that the Water Company allowed more water to run down the Don each month than would drown the whole of Sheffield. Yet the town was prevented from having water when it was most urgently needed ... Alderman SAUNDERS differed from Mr. Fairburn as to the past management of the brigades being a scandal to the town, for the brigades had always worked well. He did not think the new management would result in any improvement, because the several fire offices had an interest in putting out fires as speedily as possible, whilst the new brigade would not have that interest. A scarcity of water had always been the greatest difficulty, and he very much wished he proposed some time ago to get the waterworks into the hands of the Council had been carried. - After a little further discussion, the motion was carried.