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FIRE BRIGADES UNION
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TO: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brother/Sister

JUSTICE FOR FIREFIGHTER PENSIONS - A POSSIBILITY OF PROGRESS

On 22nd January a debate took place in Parliament around the issue of ill-health retirements for Firefighters. The debate was a result of the lobbying which has taken place throughout the UK by FBU members. Everyone involved should be congratulated. Officials from Region 6 in particular have helped in this case as the adjournment debate was requested by John Heppell, MP for Nottingham East.

In his opening comments John Heppell outlined that recent CLG guidance had '*caused major changes*' and that it meant '*It is almost impossible to be declared unfit for the job.*' He went on to say '*It is terrible that those whom we expect to put their lives on the line every day should, if they are injured as a result of that, be told, "I'm sorry, but there's nothing we can do" and "The only thing that a Chief Fire Officer can do is sack them".*'

Fire and Rescue Service Minister, Parmjit Dhanda responded to the debate saying, '*I fully understand the concerns expressed by the Fire Brigades Union.*' In an attempt to reassure Members of Parliament he stated '*that it was never the Government's intention for an injured Firefighter not to receive an appropriate award or to be left with no job or recompense. It is really important to have that on the record so that Fire and Rescue Services are aware of that when they take these decisions.*' Clearly these comments are welcome and we hope that the Government will now take the opportunity to follow these words with action to address this major injustice.

Parmjit Dhanda then went on to announce the creation of a small Working Party to examine the data and the concerns raised by the Union. We are currently awaiting a formal invitation to participate in this Working Party and expect this within the next few days.

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It is clear that the Government has come under significant pressure on this issue. Everyone in the Fire and Rescue Service knows that our arguments are unanswerable and our case is extremely strong. The Government has an opportunity to resolve this matter reasonably and relatively easily. Unfortunately the issue remains clouded by a number of misunderstandings around the key issues involved. Therefore, although there is the possibility of progress on this vital issue, it remains at this stage just that - a possibility.

All members are therefore urged to maintain the current lobbying. Further advice will be issued shortly to Brigade Officials to assist in addressing the latest arguments raised by CLG officials. All Regions have been asked to arrange meetings on this issue and a number are already planned.

The other strand to our challenge is the legal one and we are now awaiting a Judicial Review on the matter. This case will be heard on 6th and 7th March. Members will be kept informed of further developments.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wrack', written in a cursive style.

MATT WRACK
GENERAL SECRETARY

MW/sll