

# CORNWALL: NO CUTS IN KERNOW



**Cornwall County Council has voted to refer its cuts proposals back to the CFO for further risk assessment. Any future package will be referred back to the full county council. The campaign continues.**

Cornwall County Council voted Tuesday 19 June to refer its cuts proposals back to the chief fire officer (CFO) for further risk assessment. Any future package will be referred back to the full county council. The FBU-led campaign to protect communities in Cornwall continues.

The cuts proposals - driven purely by financial considerations - would have seen the loss of 35 wholetime firefighters, one in six of the wholetime workforce of 206.

The proposals would have also seen night time cuts at Camborne and Falmouth fire stations that would have meant that between 6pm and 8am the fire service would take longer to get to 999


incidents. This would have reduced emergency response capability across the whole of Cornwall and would mean Cornwall would be the only county in England without any around-the-clock, immediate response fire crews.

The FBU has been campaigning against these cuts since January and on Tuesday June 19 firefighters and emergency fire control staff from all over Cornwall joined local and regional FBU officials to witness the decision making process.

#### FBU members lobby councillors

As county councillors entered the building, FBU members lobbied them heavily.

Councillors were shown a petition - gathered by firefighters from across Cornwall and signed by thousands of members of the public - which underlined that the cuts had no support and that, if consultation meant anything, must be rejected.



Says Terry Nottle, brigade secretary, Cornwall:

"FBU members in Cornwall have worked tirelessly and selflessly to ensure the profile of the campaign has been as high as possible and reached as many people as possible. If it was not for the organised and effective campaign run by FBU members the outcome would undoubtedly have been different."

#### Campaign not yet over

Terry added: "The campaign is not yet over but if we continue in the same way that we have up to now then we will stop these cuts completely.

"But our fight should not end here! It is time that the same county councillors that wanted these cuts, the same ones that love to be photographed with local fire crews before an election, wake up to the fact that the fire brigade in Cornwall has been underfunded for years.

"The eulogies given by councillors at the meeting were welcome but what firefighters and control room staff want are not kind words, but better equipment, better training, more firefighters on the ground and of course good working conditions."

#### **Councillors ignore fire control cuts protests**

Mid and West Wales fire authority councillors have ignored protests from FBU members and pushed through cuts plans to

the local control. The plans were passed with two councillors abstaining and a request that the position is reviewed at all future personnel meetings.


Simon Jenkins, FBU Wales regional official said the Union was disappointed at the outcome and warned the councillors any review would have to be looked at very critically. The FBU has called for negotiations to start on the issue, including the assistance of negotiators from the national employers and the national union if necessary.

#### Naive

Simon Jenkins said: "Of course we are disappointed with the position the fire authority has taken. Councillors who think that the management who pushed these plans through are going to highlight the problems that arise in the future are naïve, of course they are not.

"It's a recipe for the usual clichés of 'teething problems' and 'needing time for changes to bed down' when things go wrong. What is needed now are proper negotiations with the FBU if necessary calling in the national employers and union negotiators to assist."

FBU members lobbied the meeting in protest at the plans, warning the cuts will damage the service's ability to respond to emergency incidents. The plans centre on reducing the number of firefighters in control between midnight and noon.



Simon Jenkins said: "The emergency fire control room is at the heart of everything the brigade does. It is the command and control centre, and if you weaken its ability to operate, you weaken the entire fire service in Mid and West Wales.

"Major incidents do not conveniently turn up at noon and go away at midnight. These cuts might make sense to an accountant or management consultant, but not to anyone who knows what the fire service has to respond to.

#### Service must be ever-ready

"Major incidents happen at all times and the key 999 emergency response service must be able to cope with everything that is thrown at it, when it is thrown at it. We can't wait hours for staff called in from home, and major incidents tend to cause traffic and communications problems anyway.

"You cannot run an emergency fire control room as if it were a call centre with an ebb and flow of routine calls. It's a 999 instant response service and needs to be staffed that way."

[www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)

### **GMC crews mull industrial action over bullying and harassment**

Manchester fire crews are mulling industrial action among other options following what they describe as a programme of

corporate bullying and harassment.

This peaked over the near-sacking of three Bury firefighters two weeks ago for allegedly resting on the floor rather than on reclining chairs.

As a consequence, the following resolution was passed at a Greater Manchester brigade committee meeting:

*The Greater Manchester Fire Brigades Union brigade committee are appalled at the treatment of FBU members, as evidenced in recent GMF&RS disciplinary cases which it considers as nothing less than corporate bullying.*

*These actions are clearly in contravention of GMF&RS policies as well as agreed procedures and, despite the endeavours of the Fire Brigades Union, brigade management is determinedly continuing this process.*

*The brigade committee has therefore decided that consultation with members begins immediately. This consultation, via a series of branch meetings will consider their recommendation that a ballot for industrial action, up to and including strike action, is commenced.*

Emergency meetings are currently taking place at fire stations across the brigade.

## Cheshire FRS takes TRVs off the run

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has taken its targeted response vehicle (TRV) off the run and will not be carrying out the pilot in Halton until it has fully consulted with the FBU on all the Union's concerns.

The FBU feared the TRVs - mid-sized appliances fitted with a small amount of equipment, limiting their firefighting capability - would replace fully equipped, fully staffed appliances, leading to a 25% reduction in fire cover in Halton, and eventually undermining fire cover across the county.

### Health and safety risk

Their deployment would also risk the health and safety of firefighters mobilised to incidents.

The plan was for firefighters working the retained duty system and volunteers from wholetime stations to crew the TRVs under secondary contracts.

Senior brigade managers had indicated that in addition to responding to "small known fires", they wanted the TRVs to be used for response to automatic fire alarms and road traffic collisions.

The decision to take the TRVs off the run follows a sustained campaign by the FBU.

### Good result for members

Andy Price, chair of FBU Cheshire, said: "This is a good result for FBU members who united in their refusal to ride the TRVs on second contracts and who fought an effective political campaign.

"FBU retained and wholetime firefighters worked in unity to achieve the same result - protect the level of service the communities of Cheshire have a right to expect.

"Well done to all our members for resisting the carrot of extra cash.

"Retained members made a particularly important contribution to this campaign. Their steadfastness under sustained pressure from senior management is to be congratulated."

"All our concerns are still there but we are prepared to sit down and openly and frankly try to find a solution that is acceptable to the FBU and the community. Hopefully common sense will prevail."

Cheshire Fire Authority, said: "Both the authority and the FBU have agreed that the consultation will be open and constructive with a view to finding the best solution for the local community. The consultation will include representative bodies, such as the FBU, together with Halton Council and the local community."

## **Windsor night-time fires are closure wake-up call**

Firefighters from Windsor fire station, Berkshire, were called to two potentially disastrous night-time fires recently, weeks before their bosses decide whether to shut their station down overnight.

The first call came on Monday 18 June at 9.30pm to a flat in Springfield Road, occupied by a mum and her two teenage daughters. One of the girls spotted flames coming out of the insulation unit. Firefighters from Windsor's St Mark's Road station got there in time to save the family's home.

### Matter of life and death

Borough councillor Eileen Quick was driving by at the time. She said: "I understand Windsor firefighters got there three minutes ahead of the Slough engine. That can mean the difference between life and death, Windsor must keep its 24-hour cover."

Then at 2.45am on Wednesday morning firefighters were called to a first floor flat fire in the Grassmere block at Sawyers Close.

It was a major fire attended by one pump from Windsor and two from Slough.

One firefighter said: "Windsor being near enough to get there so fast stopped it turning into a very dangerous blaze that could have engulfed the entire block."

Mike Rowley, who as Windsor FBU rep as been playing a leading role in the campaign against the cuts, says:

"Normally, the brigade will give such dramatic incidents a high media profile. But during this period of proposed night cover downgrading, they have been conspicuously silent."

Berkshire Fire Authority chiefs are known to be planning to either shut Windsor station at night, or crew it with retained firefighters.

The Fire Authority is expected to make its decision on July 25.

### Councillors to attend public meeting, July 2


Meanwhile, a public meeting has been called at Homer School in Testwood Road, Windsor, on Monday, July 2, at 8pm, at which key members of the Fire Authority will put their case and answer questions.

Borough councillor, Cynthia Endacott, who represents Clewer East on Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Council, said: "It is vital as many people as possible go to this meeting. We must get it across to them how we feel."

icberkshire.icnetwork.co.uk

## **Firefighters receive death threats**

Firefighters received death threats after responding to reports of a rubbish fire, a



report obtained from North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has revealed. The report, obtained by a local newspaper, shows that crews in the county have come under attack on five occasions this year.

In one incident, firefighters were sent out to a rubbish fire near Rawdon Avenue in Tang Hall, York. When they arrived, they were met by youths who threatened to kill them.

Green Watch crew manager Kevin Caulfield, who was leading the firefighters, said that three young men jumped in front of the fire engine.

"We were threatened with being shot because we called the police," Mr Caulfield said. "You don't like to be threatened with being shot, but this is becoming the norm now. This kind of thing has definitely been on the increase in York over the last two or three years."

[www.thenorthernecho.co.uk](http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk)

### **Public sector pay strikes move step closer**

The prospect of nurses, dinner ladies, teachers, police and postal workers all sharing a picket line has moved a step closer.

Delegates at last week's national conference of UNISON in Brighton voted unanimously for a motion demanding the government abandon its 2% public sector pay freeze.

The move commits UNISON to mounting a vigorous campaign for fair pay across the public sector, which could involve lawful strike action. Action will be coordinated with other public sector unions.

Said NEC member Jane Carolan, introducing the debate at Unison's conference: "If this government truly wants 21st century public services, then it will have to pay 21st century pay rates. But unions cannot fight these battles alone. This composite commits us to a united front, to work with the PCS, the GMB, NUT, UCU, CWU, Unite and other trade unions."

### Co-ordinated fightback

The government had not treated workers with respect, said UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis, stressing that it is important to unite to co-ordinate the fight back.

"This year, the government and the employers have miscalculated," he said. "They have rewarded the delivery of first-class public services with a kick in the teeth.

"We won't have it. We will work with our sister unions. We are prepared to fight. We are prepared to strike. We will coordinate action locally and nationally, and we will win."

[www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)

## **Royal Mail set to strike**

Communications Workers Union (CWU) has announced the first national postal strike in 11 years, which will take place Friday 29 June. Further strike action will take place within two weeks from the 29 June. Action will involve all workers in Royal Mail and Post Office Limited, which includes people who work on counters and cash services.

Royal Mail has offered a 2.5% increase in "basic pensionable pay". CWU has responded by saying that "with April inflation at 4.8% we will not accept a pay cut in real terms". The union, which remains committed to reaching an agreement with their members' employers, says Royal Mail is "intent on cutting services, cutting jobs and cutting pay."

### Solidarity

*FBU members and officials are urged to offer their solidarity to our colleagues in the public sector in their struggles over pay by visiting pickets lines and sending messages of support.*

## **Brother Paul Mallaghan - Memorial Fund**

Following the tragic death of Bro. Paul Mallaghan, a member of Blue Watch, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, a memorial fund has now been set up:

The Paul Mallaghan Fund

Cheques made payable to -

The Paul Mallaghan Fund  
Nat West bank  
Account no: 14021943  
Sort code 60-10-39

Cheques or cash can be paid into this account or cheques sent to the service accountant at:

Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service  
Old London Road  
Hertford  
Herts  
SG13 71D

## **Attempt to block London living wage for cleaners defeated**

The London Living Wage of £7.20 an hour is to be paid to fire station cleaners, a meeting of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority agreed. The fire authority voted, at a meeting on Friday, by nine votes to eight in favour of paying this wage to cleaners of fire stations and other premises.

Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, said that the decision showed that progress on this issue depends on continuing to build support for the Living Wage.

Labour and Liberal fire authority members voted in favour of the Living Wage while the Conservatives voted against.

A decision about whether to pay fire station cleaners a minimum of £7.20 an hour was referred to last Friday's meeting after three members of the fire authority's

Finance, Procurement and Property committee, voted against paying the London Living Wage to contract cleaners, whilst three voted in favour.

### Paying London Living Wage "ridiculous" says Tory

Following his vote against decent pay for fire station cleaners, Brian Coleman, Conservative AM, said that paying the London Living Wage of £7.20, "is just ridiculous."

The FBU, together with a number of other unions and organisations, supported the call for fire station cleaners to be paid the Living Wage.

An Early Day Motion proposed by Brent South MP, Dawn Butler, in the House of Commons has already gained the support of 61 MPs.

The current figure of £7.20 per hour as a basic London living wage is significantly higher than the national minimum wage because of the high cost of housing in London.

[www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

### **FBU B&EMM: councillors should reflect community FRS serves**

The Black and Ethnic Minority Members (B&EMM) National Committee of the FBU has applauded the "principled stance" taken by London Mayor Ken Livingstone in insisting that the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)

Assembly should be made up of a diverse range of members truly representing London's ethnic and gender diversity.

In a statement, B&EMM National Committee said: "All seven of the Conservative nominees to the fire authority are white including one woman, and all three Liberal Democrat nominees are white men.

"The LFEPA claims to be an equal opportunity employer. This declaration permeates throughout most of the Authority's policy documents and indeed London can boast of the highest proportion of ethnic minority and women firefighters in the country, not to mention Europe.

### Equality principle should be consistent at all levels

"However, the principle should be consistent throughout the organisation at all levels, with leadership being shown at the highest political level. This is why it is unacceptable for the make-up of the Assembly members to misrepresent the diversity of the London population that the fire service caters for on a daily basis.

"We believe this principle should be followed throughout the UK fire service, especially in metropolitan fire services where there is a greater diversity in our communities."

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