

SUFFOLK DISPUTE ENDS IN SUCCESS



Agreement sees significant improvement on original IRMP, emergency response capability and community fire safety

After 22 short, discontinuous strikes over an eight week period, a negotiated settlement has successfully brought the lawful Suffolk Trade Dispute to an end.

At the heart of the dispute was the Suffolk FBU's willingness to welcome real improvements in community safety provisions, but not at the expense of emergency response capability!

The fire authority's original IRMP sought to cut 12 wholetime emergency response firefighters that provided the 24/7 crewing of one of the county's two TTLs and accepted that alternative crewing arrangements would mean at best significantly delayed response times and at worst, no emergency response at all by the TTL or the frontline pump from which the crews would "jump".

The negotiated settlement focuses on 6 key areas:

- A reduction of the wholetime establishment from 256 to 253 rather than the cut of 12 wholetime posts;
- The purchase of a multi-role appliance (combining frontline pumping and aerial capabilities) that will remain primary crewed to replace the existing TTL and pump;
- The redeployment of 9 wholetime establishment posts from crewing the TTL into sustainable CFS roles with a dual commitment to improving frontline, emergency response crewing levels. All nine posts will be contracted to NJC conditions of service, requiring the agreed NJC Firefighter Role Map and

maintaining emergency response competency;

- A commitment to achieve and maintain the agreed wholetime establishment and to recruit to the full retained establishment on stations;
- A commitment to the key objective of five riders on all frontline pumps;
- A commitment to fully involve the FBU in future IRMP processes and the use of evidence-based methodologies including CAST.

"As with most negotiated settlements, the deal is not a 100% victory", says EC member for East Anglia Keith Handscomb. However, it does represent a significant improvement on the original IRMP and importantly, the Suffolk Membership believe that it means an overall improvement in emergency response capability and an improvement in community safety provisions. The Suffolk Members would like to share the lesson they have learnt: If we do nothing IRMPs will cut us down, but if we fight, we can change them.

Thanks to members and officials for supporting Suffolk members

The Suffolk Brigade Committee sends their thanks to all those officials and members who have shown their support both morally and financially and are particularly grateful to those

who arranged workplace donations and regular contact from Members on the ground.

Vince Jell, Suffolk FBU Brigade Chair said: "Once again, we thank you all for your support, it helped sustain us. Suffolk would like to be able to reciprocate your support in anyway we can, be it speakers, financial support, messages of support or just being there when you want us. Do not hesitate to ask. Your fight is our fight. Unity is our strength."

Council planners block new PFI fire station in blow to Northumberland closures plan

COUNTY plans to build a new fire station at Pegswood have been deemed 'premature' by Castle Morpeth Council planners.

The bid forms part of sweeping £10m changes to Northumberland's rescue services, which would see stations at Morpeth, Blyth, Ashington and Cramlington closed.

The existing stations would be replaced by two new stations at Pegswood and East Sleekburn under the Northumberland County Council Integrated Risk Management Plan, and Castle Morpeth's Planning Committee was asked to comment on the move.

The scheme is to create a new centre on 3.90 acres of agricultural land south of Pegswood Welfare Park and next to the proposed Pegswood bypass.

But Castle Morpeth planners agreed that the move should be put on hold until the specifics of the Pegswood bypass plan are confirmed.

Chairman, Coun Frank Harrington, said: "It's felt that the proposal is premature when funding for the Pegswood bypass isn't in place yet."

After the meeting, a spokesman for Castle Morpeth Council said: "The infrastructure for the Pegswood bypass, and the funding for it, are not in place. Members are asking to be consulted on the fire station plans again once this is in place."

The Union says that the IRMP would lead to a 20% cut in wholetime firefighter posts and undermine emergency response times, risking lives.

Sources include: Morpeth Today

Controls campaign: Reading MP slams SE centre plans

READING East MP Rob Wilson has blazed into the debate over "foolish" government plans to scrap local fire control rooms in favour of a regional centre.

After a summit with Berkshire's fire chief Iain Cox, Mr Wilson backed firefighter claims that the £72 million plan will put lives at risk.

Mr Wilson said: "Response times are critical when lives are at stake and the move to regional centres to save money puts safety at risk.

"The fire service and firefighters in my constituency know that I am supporting their campaign to stop this foolish centralisation drive."

Mr Wilson is also demanding an urgent "control and mobilisation" review - led by local fire and rescue authorities.

Mr Cox said: "My position remains clear, and it is that I will support anything that improves our services to the public.

"However, the success of a project is dependent upon its successful implementation and, while the authority will continue its involvement in the project, it will continue to seek authoritative responses to the legitimate concerns that have been raised."


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An announcement on the location of the South East regional centre is expected next week

Controls campaign: Dorset members petition public

Last Thursday 29th September a cheery band of control staff and firefighters from Dorset hit Blandford.

As it was market day, they took the opportunity of positioning themselves in the market place at the entrance to the covered market hall. Fortunately, as it was a lovely sunny autumn day, the public of Blandford were out in force. In just under 2 hours they collected over 300 signatures.



The FBU campaign team had overwhelming support from the public of Blandford who cannot see the sense in wasting public money on moving to a regional control. In a comment echoed by many others on the day, one member of the public said:

"We are more than happy with the excellent response we get now from our own emergency fire control. Why fix something that is not broken?"

New Dimension insurance cover: FBU to raise issue with Scottish Executive

The FBU in Scotland is to press Scotland's fire minister Cathy Jamieson on the lack of insurance cover for firefighters attending New Dimension incidents and will also be meeting MPs to discuss the issue. FBU Scotland will be writing to the minister.

Andy Fulton, a serving firefighter in Leith and chair of FBU Lothian and Borders, said:

"We believe that it is our right that, should our employer send us somewhere, where we are injured or killed, they should make sure that our families and next of kin are properly provided for. Someone will be injured or killed, then the issue will be brought into focus."

The Union argues that ministers have an additional responsibility to ensure firefighters are covered, as the Fire (Scotland) Act, which came into force in August, places a legal duty on firefighters to attend terrorist incidents.

As the issue is devolved, the Scottish Executive has responsibility north of the Border.

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