

# MERSEYSIDE MEMBERS VOTE 'YES' IN BALLOT OVER CUTS



## Three to one vote for strike over loss of 120 firefighters and cuts to fire engines

Merseyside fire crews have voted THREE to ONE in favour of strike action over cuts they say will compromise firefighter and public safety. (They have named 4 days of strike action).

Result - Yes: (71.4%) No: (28.6%). (Strikes have been notified to take place from Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> August at 10.00 am to Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September, 10.00 am.)

The strike ballot is in protest at plans to cut 120 emergency response firefighter posts - one in ten of the workforce - 15 emergency fire control operator posts and axe four fire engines at night time. There will be fewer rescue appliances, fewer firefighters on fire engines and

a longer wait for crews to arrive to all 999 emergencies.

The loss of one in ten fulltime firefighter posts - in addition to the 68 posts lost last year - will inevitably damage the overall operational capability of the Merseyside fire and rescue service. Fire crews say this will clearly compromise their safety and the safety of the public.

## Massive opposition to cuts

Les Skarratts, Merseyside FBU brigade secretary, said:

"Local fire crews have shown the massive opposition to these cuts and there is a clear mandate for strike action. We are happy to enter talks but we have not held a ballot and named strike dates just to get a seat at the negotiating table.

"Old fashioned budget cuts will see the loss of 120 frontline

firefighters - one in ten - and harm our ability to respond to emergencies across Merseyside. There would be fewer frontline firefighters arriving later at 999 incidents with less rescue equipment available.

### Firefighter and public safety at risk

"Fire crews could be left at emergencies with the choice of standing back and doing nothing until the necessary resources arrive and risking the public, or ignoring basic safety procedures and risking ourselves.

"That will clearly compromise our safety and public safety and it is unacceptable.

"Merseyside fire crews do not want to take strike action at all. But be in no doubt we are prepared to take short periods of strike action to secure the fire service and safety for the long-term.

"Senior managers have scared councillors into backing their panic measures but they do not impress us. If talks do not produce acceptable proposals then strike action is inevitable.

### No mood for posturing

"We are not in the mood for posturing, last minute stunts or negotiating gimmicks. If they have an offer to make then this is the time to make it when it can make a difference, not so late that it doesn't."

Donations to the Hardship Fund can be made to:

Merseyside Hardship Fund

HSBC Bank

Sort code: 40-29-28

Account number: 91320165

### **Cleveland members agree new fire authority proposals**


Cleveland members have agreed proposals on changes to the local fire and rescue service after the fire authority put forward significant safeguards to protect firefighters and the public.

The decision came after councillors amended their original proposals. Five firefighters will now crew the first fire appliance attending life-threatening emergencies from all fire stations in the county, including from Billingham fire station, where crewing levels had previously been cut.

### Improved emergency response targets

Furthermore, emergency response targets will now see the first appliance arriving in five minutes, the second appliance in eight minutes and the third appliance (with persons reported) in 10 minutes.

Steve Watson, Cleveland FBU brigade secretary said:



"Fire crews were determined to ensure that any changes to the local fire service would not compromise the safety of the Cleveland community or frontline firefighters attending emergency incidents.

"They were ready to take strike action if necessary.

"Negotiations following the 3:1 vote in favour of strike action produced revised proposals for change to the local fire service that the Fire Brigades Union recommended to its members. Cleveland fire crews have carefully considered them and have agreed them."

#### Proposals satisfied many concerns contained within trade dispute

"The proposals significantly amend the fire authority's original Safety Improvement Plan and satisfied many of our concerns contained within the trade dispute.

"We still have concerns about the fire safety implications of the de-staffing of a fire appliance stationed at Hartlepool.

"And we will be monitoring the implementation of the changes to the fire service to make sure that they do not adversely affect the emergency response capacity. We will continue to work with senior managers to tackle the issue of improving public protection.

"Cleveland members should be congratulated. It was thanks to the magnificent 74% mandate for strike action that Cleveland members gave the FBU brigade officials that it was possible to reach a negotiated settlement.

"I would also like to express the gratitude of the negotiating team for the advice and guidance provided by FBU national officer John McGhee throughout this dispute."

#### Victory for common sense, health & safety

John McGhee, FBU National Officer responsible for health and safety, said:

"This is a victory for common sense and health and safety. Cleveland management have avoided unnecessary strike action by putting the saving of lives above short-term financial savings.

"The agreement reached is a significant step in the Union's overall IRMP strategy of achieving attendance of the appropriate number of firefighters to incidents, thus ensuring their safety in carrying out their duties to protect the public.

"The priority of local officials was to have five riders at Billingham and on first line appliances at all other stations in order to ensure members carry out standards operating procedures safely and effectively.

"The agreement in Cleveland will have an important impact when officials elsewhere in the country are arguing over crewing levels."

For more information on the Union's IRMP strategy visit: [www.fbu.org.uk/workplace/irmp/index.php](http://www.fbu.org.uk/workplace/irmp/index.php)

## Corrections

The article entitled "Tooling up for FRS operational assessments" incorrectly stated that training for brigade negotiation and health & safety officials would be held on 24 and 26 August.

It should have read 17 and 24 August.

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**FBU freephone legal  
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For advice on personal injury, family law, wills conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.

## On the Move?

Members are reminded to advise their Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address.

Head Office should be advised of any changes of next of kin or nominations for benefits.

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