

Union demands urgent Government action on pensions as branches consider ballot

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Axed: London firefighter Martin Marriot was left without a job or pension

ILL-HEALTH PENSIONS

The Union has called for urgent action on a change in guidance for recent amendments to the Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS) that has already seen three firefighters in London denied a job and pension. It has put the government on notice that if the situation is not quickly resolved it will be looking to ballot on industrial action.

FBU branches up and down the country have been discussing the issue and meetings so far have indicated support for a “model resolution” issued by the Executive Council (EC) which calls on the EC to “prevail upon the Ministers within CLG to ensure that the current advice is amended in line with that originally provided in 2004” and, failing this, to “initiate a political campaign aimed at highlighting this disgrace and an industrial campaign aimed at bringing such an amendment into being.”

The Union accuses the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, that was in charge of firefighters’ pensions until recently, of misleading parliament – and stakeholders including the FBU – on changes to the FPS regarding ill-health retirement and redeployment.

New guidance issued in September 2006 by the

Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) means that a pension will not be paid even if no such job exists. The new guidance affects all firefighters and the Union has had strong indications that anyone who has retired on grounds of ill-health in the last five to 10 years will

have their pension reviewed.

General Secretary Matt Wrack said in a letter to minister Parmjit Dhanda: “This matter could be resolved relatively easily by a revision of the CLG guidance and a return to the position which existed immediately following the change in 2004.”

The three London members’ pensions were cut off in August. Matt Wrack said: “The Union cannot accept that this is an appropriate way to treat former firefighters.”

As part of the campaign, the FBU has sent out guidance letters to current and retired members explaining the position. A letter has also been sent to the National Association for Retired Firefighters informing it of the situation and seeking its support. Brigade secretaries have received assistance from head office for advising members with pending pension appeals. The FBU plans a meeting on 22 November to discuss the industrial campaign.

→ For more information, visit www.fbu.org.uk

Members with individual queries should contact their local official in the first instance.