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Circular: 2020HOC004MW

07 January 2020

TO: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brother / Sister

Support FBU Members in Surrey

Following the registering of a Trade Dispute and a ballot for industrial action short of strike FBU members in Surrey commenced industrial action 9am 24 December 2019.

The dispute is in relation to a number of points which include:

- Inadequate provision of front-line crewing and staffing in Control rooms
- The Casual Out-Duties guidance
- The allocation of overtime
- A bullying management culture
- Unsafe working practices and the 2019 IRMP.

The fact that 94% of Surrey FBU members (of the 72% turnout) voted in favour of action shows the anger that our members in Surrey feel in relation to the matters set out above. Surrey FBU members have legitimate public and firefighter safety concerns in relation to cuts to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) imposed by Surrey politicians and the chief. The cuts, which include removing seven fire engines at night-time and cutting 70 firefighter posts, were approved by Surrey County Council at a Cabinet Meeting on 24 September 2019. These cuts were approved despite 68% of respondents to the official consultation opposing cuts to fire cover, with just 18% approving.

Last year, 2019, saw the steepest rise in fire deaths in Surrey in over a decade. Staffing shortages have left fire engines unavailable to respond to emergency calls resulting in slower response times as crews often have to travel from neighbouring counties.

Following the official notification to Surrey FRS by the FBU of commencement of industrial action, Surrey FRS management, who already stand accused within the trade dispute of operating a bullying management culture (and despite the trade dispute being lawfully convened in accordance with the Trade Union Act 2016) issued notification of their intent to investigate, under discipline, any FBU member who in taking industrial action by refusing to transport their PPE in their own vehicle or to undertake pre-arranged overtime to transport their PPE. A number of those preliminary discipline investigations have now been undertaken with discipline hearings and sanctions possibly to follow. Surrey FRS management have also notified FBU Officials that they are considering pursuing FBU members under partial performance.

It is worth noting that whilst the threat of partial performance remains and that whilst discipline investigations continue, Surrey FRS management have still not provided the FBU with any contractual documentation that shows our members have done anything more than refuse to carry out what the union believes to be voluntary elements of their role.

Fire Brigades Union members across the UK will take a very dim view of any attempt by politicians or managers to undermine our democratic right to defend our communities, and ourselves, by taking lawful industrial action. The council and fire service bosses have ignored the concerns of residents and the professional advice of their firefighters for far too long.

FBU members stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Surrey and reassure them that the union is watching developments in Surrey very closely.

We will continue to keep you informed of important 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/mr