



FIRE BRIGADES UNION

SERVICE ★ STRUGGLE ★ SOLIDARITY

Matt Wrack General Secretary

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Circular: 2015HOC0359MW

TO: ALL MEMBERS

4 June 2015

Dear Brother/Sister

PAY: MEETING OF NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL, 3 JUNE 2015

The FBU met with our national employers at the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services on 3 June. The agenda included a discussion on pay. As you will see from the attached NJC circular, the employers made an **offer of an increase in pay rates of 1%** from the settlement date of 1st July. All members are now asked to discuss this offer through FBU branches. Regional and Brigade Committees will then discuss this consultation in order to provide a response to the Executive Council by 30 June.

Background: Discussions at FBU Conference and at NJC

The period since the recession of 2007/8 has seen a sharp fall in workers living standards and a failure for these to recover. This has been institutionalised in the public sector by the policy of the previous coalition government, which we can expect to continue under the new Conservative government. By cutting funding to public services and by declaring the need for pay to be frozen - or limited to 1% increases - the government has delivered an unprecedented attack on millions of public sector workers across the UK.

The union has discussed these attacks in the context of the huge and unprecedented cuts to our service and to the widening roles which firefighters have undertaken over the past fifteen years. The past two conferences of the union have discussed a strategy to identify these new areas of work; to discuss them with our employers; and to make the case for improved central funding to take account of the wider role of our service. A part of such discussions would mean the need to address the question of pay.

Through the NJC, a series of five work-streams has looked at various aspects of work of the Fire and Rescue Service. Each side was able to bring issues to these discussions and they included areas which are clearly seen as normal Fire and Rescue Service activity and other areas which are not agreed and which - in the view of the FBU at least - are outside firefighter role maps and contractual obligations. The work-streams have discussed; Multi Agency Response; Environmental Challenges; Emergency Medical Response; Youth and Social Engagement; and Inspection and Enforcement.

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This work has completed the first phase - the mapping of various strands of work. The next phase will discuss areas which each side may wish to pursue and the implications. This would need to address a range of issues, including training requirement, standards, contractual issues etc. it is important to note that no agreement has been reached on these discussions and they are **not** concluded.

These discussions are part of a longer-term campaign which, for the FBU, is about protecting our service and our profession for the future in the very difficult times we face and with a government committed to further rounds of cuts to public services.

Timescales and employers offer

It is expected that the next phase of these discussions would conclude in the autumn. During this time FBU officials will report in more detail to local committees and to local meetings of members. It is in the context of these discussions that the Executive Council considered the employers' offer of a 1% increase for 2015. The Executive Council considered all the options available, including the need for an industrial response in the case of a rejection. After considering the various options, the Executive Council **recommends to members that the offer is accepted.**

Pay - the slide must stop

Nevertheless, the Executive Council - and the union's Conference - have been clear to the employers. The attack on wages will need to be challenged and stopped. Over coming months this will need to be done in various ways. We will need:

Working with other unions

- To build a mass campaign against the cuts to public services which lie behind the attacks on public sector pay.
- To expose the devastating impact cuts to living standards have had - in our service and other public services.
- To expose the fact that the attacks on wages and on public services have slowed the recovery of the economy.
- To support all groups of workers fighting to defend pay.
- To discuss the possibility of a serious campaign of coordinated industrial action against pay restraint - and the timing of such a campaign.

Within the Fire and Rescue Service

- To develop our case for investment in the Fire and Rescue Service rather than cuts.
- To build our campaign explaining the wide-ranging work of the modern Fire and Rescue Service.
- To campaign for central funding that takes account of this wider role.
- To take these arguments to local Fire Service politicians, to local communities and to central government.

The attacks we have faced over the past few years - on pay, on jobs and on pensions - are unprecedented in recent history. Our task is to build a campaign within our own sector and with the wider trade union movement which challenges government policy on pay and begins to restore the ground lost in the past period.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wrack', written in a cursive style.

MATT WRACK
GENERAL SECRETARY

Att.

MW/sll