



# FIRE BRIGADES UNION

SERVICE ★ STRUGGLE ★ SOLIDARITY

**Matt Wrack** General Secretary

Fire Brigades Union  
Head Office  
Bradley House  
68 Coombe Road  
Kingston-upon-Thames  
Surrey KT2 7AE  
0208 541 1765  
office@fbu.org.uk  
www.fbu.org.uk  
@fbunational

Circular: 2015HOC0395AD

**To: ALL MEMBERS**

16 June 2015

Dear Brother/Sister,

## **MTFA: THE CURRENT POSITION**

Members will be aware of the NJC workstreams looking at possible future areas of work for fire and rescue services. A summary of the status of this work was reported in NJC circular 07/15 which was notified to branches via head office circular 2015HOC0360MW on 5 June 2015. The extant position in respect of MTFA is that the union is prepared to actively engage in the processes, which could result in this being an agreed activity for the fire and rescue service and, as a consequence of that, an activity for firefighters. However, there are a number of complex and important issues which need to be addressed before the FBU could agree this. The need to address these issues in respect of this potential area of future work was identified by both sides within the workstream and was acknowledged by the NJC itself. This is reflected in the NJC circular, an extract of which is reproduced below:

(ii) **Multi Agency Response**

- a) *Whilst the workstream considered a number of potential multi-agency work areas, due to its complexity it mainly concentrated on Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack (MTFA), recognising that sight should not be lost of those other areas and most would be picked up by other workstreams in any case.*
- b) *The workstream defined MTFA as a terrorist attack involving the use of firearms in a way designed to inflict large numbers of casualties and would represent a major incident for the Emergency Services. The rapidly changing and unique features of this type of attack require a more dynamic and collaborative approach to that adopted in standard major incident response planning.*
- c) *Acknowledging the confidentiality issues surrounding government policies, tactics and operational capacity it would not be appropriate to provide details in this report.*
- d) *The workstream also acknowledged the need for assurances including those referred to in paragraph 10 above.*
- e) *Potential funding - it was felt this fell into the realms of 'New Burdens' and thus the most appropriate approach on funding would be direct funding from governments for all training, equipment, operational capability, insurance and additional automatic compensation payments. A joint approach to the respective bodies would be appropriate.*

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- f) *There was acknowledgement that firefighters are most likely to be first on the scene of any major terrorist incident, with that in mind there is willingness within the workstream to explore this activity in more detail but the genuine and serious risk to firefighters lives' and safety are paramount for employee representatives in agreeing to sign up to this work in future.*

For members, this poses the question “*what in the meantime?*” and in particular, “*what is the current contractual status in fire and rescue services where members have volunteered to undertake such activity if called upon?*”

The answer to the question is simple: there is no national agreement for this work to be undertaken; and there are no local agreements for this work to be undertaken. Some members have expressed a willingness to do so at some stage, including receiving some training, but there is no contractual requirement and no contractual commitment by any member. Advice has been given to members previously to bring this to the attention of their employer as a courtesy. In short: the situation has not changed, albeit that it may in the future.

It has been brought to the attention of the Executive Council that some fire and rescue services have entered into agreements with other agencies or bodies which may commit that service to providing resources to an MTFA incident. Where a fire and rescue service has done so, that is a matter for them. Entering into such an agreement does not comprise obligations upon employees.

The Executive Council is mindful that some fire and rescue services continue to attempt to create an illusion of a contractual requirement. This is not the case. It is not within the rolemap of any uniformed employee who holds the rank/role of Area Manager or below.

The union cannot prevent managers from asking firefighters if they are willing to undertake the activities. Our policy as a union is that members should refrain from doing so. Previous circulars explaining the reason why are available from the website or your local officials. Until and if national agreement is reached, where members have previously indicated that they would be willing to undertake the activities and remain of that view, our advice remains as previously - those members should advise management, certainly verbally and preferably in writing, that they do so voluntarily, and that you reserve the right to withdraw from doing so.

It is unfortunate that some service principal managers seem intent on creating an issue over the matter which can only serve to complicate negotiations and jeopardise the potential for progress.

As with all other outcomes from the next phase of the NJC work, the Executive Council will keep members informed of developments.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally



**ANDY DARK**  
Assistant General Secretary

AD/jh