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Circular: 2019HOC0400MW

1 August 2019

TO: **ALL MEMBERS**

Dear Brother / Sister,

TRADE UNION RELEASE AND CONDUCT OF SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

The Executive Council discussed this matter at its meeting on 31 July and agreed the following statement.

Trade Union Release of Senior Officials of the Fire Brigades Union

The Executive Council did not believe that this statement should have been necessary. The principles set out in it are so self-evident that they should not have required to be set out in writing. Nevertheless, recent events have highlighted the need to reiterate some basic principles around which the Fire Brigades Union operates and the expectations that are made of senior officials of the union.

The FBU is a Voluntary Organisation

The Fire Brigades Union is a voluntary and lay-led organisation. This means that the rule book only allows for five officials employed by the union. The overwhelming majority of officials remain employed by their fire and rescue service. As such the union has always relied on the voluntary activity of large numbers of officials. This work is overwhelmingly conducted outside of normal working time and depends on the demands of campaigning, negotiating and representing members. Without this voluntary effort by large numbers of voluntary lay officials across the organisation, the union could not function.

Trade Union Leave

The demands of trade union duties and activities on various officials within the FBU mean that employers agree to release some officials from normal fire service duties. Some of this release is covered by statutory rights, other areas may not be. There are various mechanisms by which release is organised; these may include a set number of hours up to full release. These arrangements have been under a great deal of attack in recent years in many fire and rescue services, making it more difficult for FBU officials to be given the appropriate time at brigade level to represent and negotiate on behalf of members.

National and Regional Arrangements

At national level (Executive Council members) and regional level (normally the Regional Secretary), it has sometimes become necessary to reach agreements with employers to pay reimbursement to the employer for the release of the relevant FBU official. This is a costly process using money from FBU members' union contributions. These issues have been debated several times at recent conferences and as a result, the Executive Council takes management of these costs and all related matters, extremely seriously.

Outside Employment or Paid Work by Senior FBU Officials

*The Executive Council is aware that due to the pressures of the cost of living and a decade long squeeze on real wages, some FBU members have had to undertake outside employment. The union campaigns to improve pay and conditions so that such additional earning should not be necessary. Nevertheless, the policy set out here does **not** relate to the activities of non-officials.*

*This statement does **not** address the activities of officials of the union other than those set out below.*

To be clear, the policy set out here applies only to FBU officials who are on trade union release where the employer is reimbursed by the FBU. It applies to all members of the Executive Council and all Regional Secretaries.

None of these categories of FBU official shall undertake any outside employment or paid work of any kind.

If any doubt arises as to whether this policy applies, the matter should be raised with the General Secretary and President.

If you have any questions about this matter, please raise them with your local officials who will be briefed by the local Executive Council member.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wrack', with a stylized flourish at the end.

MATT WRACK
General Secretary

MW/mr