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TO: **ALL MEMBERS – SCOTLAND**

Dear Brother / Sister

Pay Discussions: Scotland

As you will be aware, discussions on pay and conditions with representatives of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have been ongoing for a number of months. We reported to all members in Scotland on 13 June that a proposal had been made by SFRS. Subsequently, that proposal from SFRS was clearly and strongly **opposed** by FBU members across Scotland. The level of that opposition was recognised by SFRS and, since then, there have been several further discussions, including various changes being made to the original draft.

During the discussion around the June proposal, FBU members in Scotland expressed concern to the FBU around a number of issues in the SFRS document. These points were also strongly made by FBU members to the Chief Officer and the Chair of the board of the SFRS at various staff consultation meetings. These concerns included:

- Lack of clarity over long term sustainable funding
- The proposed levels of pay and the link to additional work activity
- The loss of Additional Responsibility Allowances
- The introduction of work relating to health and social care (non- medical falls response)
- The capacity of SFRS to deliver training required to support the broadening role

The communication from SFRS to all staff on 29 June, after the staff engagement meetings, also acknowledged these areas of concern raised at those meetings. That SFRS communication went on to say:

*“We have reflected on the feedback we have received and, as a result, have formally invited the FBU to continue the negotiations with us through the NJC. **This is with a view to agreeing a mutually acceptable offer for Scotland that reflects the comments of our staff and the current and future requirements of the communities of Scotland.**”*

As a consequence of these concerns expressed by FBU members in Scotland, discussions have continued with the employer. There have been various versions of SFRS documents received and, in these discussions, FBU negotiators have attempted to address the concerns of our members which were raised with us in June. The SFRS has made several amendments to their starting document. The union is in receipt of a further revised document from the SFRS. It was considered by the Executive Council at its meeting on 27 November. Many of the concerns around the previous paper remain matters of concern for the Executive Council and we do not believe that the offer currently alleviates the concerns FBU members have raised.

General Election

A further factor in how we should approach discussions with the SFRS was shaped around the forthcoming General Election. The different potential outcomes of this election open up starkly differing possibilities in relation to public services, especially in regard to public sector pay.

Though fire policy is a devolved matter, pay is negotiated through the National Joint Council (NJC). The Executive Council was mindful of the following commitment in the Labour Party manifesto:

Our most valuable assets are the dedicated people who work in our public services, but under this government their pay has been cut in real terms. Labour will restore public sector pay to at least pre-financial crisis levels (in real terms), by delivering year-on-year above-inflation pay rises, starting with a 5% increase, to reward and retain the people who do so much for us all.

This pledge has major implications for firefighters' pay in Scotland and across the rest of the UK.

The Executive Council took the view that, regardless of other views and concerns about the current position of the SFRS employer (as set out above), it would be premature and unhelpful for any decisions to be made at any level on the Scottish employer's paper until after the General Election.

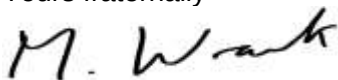
With this in mind, the Executive Council has agreed to meet in the days after the General Election with a view to there being a meeting of the FBU Scottish committee shortly after.

The Executive Council fully understands that members in Scotland are keen to know where matters stand. Nevertheless, you will appreciate that issues arising from the General Election, alongside the existing concerns set out above, require further detailed discussion and consideration.

We will continue to keep you informed of important developments.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally



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General Secretary

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