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Circular: 2022HOC0639AD
Date: 23 December 2022
TO: All Members

Dear Brother/Sister

Major Incident Agreements - during periods of strike action called in connection with pay dispute 2022 - voluntary attendance

In respect of the ballot and strike action which took place/ commenced in defence of firefighters' pensions, the FBU made agreement via NJC- led discussions that in the event of there being a major incident that FBU members could be asked to attend the call on a voluntary basis should they wish to do so.

Both sides of the NJC recognise that strike action will take place in 2023 subject to:

- a. A successful ballot outcome which meets legal requirements, and
- b. There being no negotiated settlement

In anticipation of that strike action, discussions have been taking place concerning a similar arrangement for 2023. Attached to this circular is NJC circular 2/ 2022 "FBU trade dispute - major incident agreements" which reports that both sides have reached agreement on that matter. The NJC circular is accompanied by four appendices - one for each of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

As with the previous agreement, there will need to be local discussions for local implementation, and advice has been provided to officials in respect of those local discussions with individual fire and rescue services.

The key elements within the agreements are:

- It is entirely voluntary for any individual to attend such incidents.
- The agreement only applies in respect of a major incident.
- The agreement recognises that firefighters need access to their appliances and equipment and PPE, and therefore access to the stations and other workplaces. There is no point fire and rescue services wanting these arrangements, but denying access to the fire stations.
- The FBU has not made an agreement for local contingency arrangements for incidents other than major incidents.

- Implementation of these agreements does not require new/temporary “contracts” or written agreements of any kind between members and the FRS, and any such requests or demands from FRSs should be declined.

Members will remember that in the previous national dispute, there was a great deal of mistrust amongst members that fire and rescue services would abuse the agreement and mobilise crews to calls which were not major incidents. Then, as now, it was generally acknowledged that abuse of the agreement would be likely to result in members not being willing to turn out on subsequent occasions as a consequence of the abuse of their trust. As a consequence, there was minimal abuse by fire and rescue services across the UK.

If you have any queries could I ask that you ask them of your brigade officials.

Please bear in mind that:

- No strike action has been called at this time. No strike action will be called before mid-February 2023.
- Local officials have been sent the information at the same time as you, and may not have had as early an opportunity as you to read and digest the information.
- Local officials will not yet have had the opportunity to discuss this with FRS management.
- Negotiations with management will not be rushed but will need to be done quite quickly.

Accordingly, rather than contact local officials at this time - please await further communications from those officials who will provide you with information regarding local discussions once they have commenced and develop.

In that same vein, it is not unknown for a fire and rescue service to promulgate NJC circulars with their own explanation/ interpretation.

Members are urged not to take any action of any kind at the request or suggestion of their FRS until you have received information from (or authorised) by your Brigade Secretary/ Chair (Regional Secretary / Regional officials / EC member in London Scotland and Northern Ireland).

We hope you all have a happy Christmas break and a safe and quiet one for those of you who will be on duty.

Best wishes, in unity



ANDY DARK
Assistant General Secretary