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Circular: 2024HOC0446MR

Date: 05 December 2024

To: All Members

### **Social Media Posts: Legal Action Undertaken**

On 14 November 2024 the Assistant General Secretary Bro Ben Selby issued Circular: **2024HOC0425BS** 'Election campaigning: an appeal for decency - stop personal abuse'.

Bro Selby stated within the circular: *'I am aware of certain postings on social media which are simply the personal targeting of candidates, or the supporters of candidates, using personal abuse and, on several occasions, clearly false claims being made.'*

Bro Selby's appeal to members/officials to stop personal abuse and false claims being made also stated that: *These matters have become so serious that we are now seeking legal advice in relation to addressing specific social media posts.*

The personal abuse and false claims being made on social media did not stop.

The Executive Council discussed this issue, 21 November 2024, and agreed that an Executive Council Statement must be issued to address this.

All Members Circular **2024HOC0432MR** provided members with the Executive Council Statement: Social Media Posts.

The circular informed members that the Executive Council is alarmed to see officials and members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) liking and sharing posts from social media accounts that appear to exist with the sole intention of attacking, defaming, humiliating and undermining individual members, officials and employees of the FBU.

The circular identified a number of potential Fire Brigades Union Rule Book breaches stating that: *Our rule book, and the policies of our union, are clear that members should treat others with dignity and respect.*

Sadly, several social media posts were of such a serious nature, as they contained false allegations presented as fact, that legal action had to be taken as the social media posts were clearly defamatory both to the union and to an official of the union.

To avoid court action and the potential for significant cost to the individual, the individual has agreed to delete the defamatory posts they had made and undertaken not to repeat any of those false allegations.

This is an unfortunate episode that is now resolved with the individual in question.

The union is currently considering the content of several more social media posts made by other individuals that repeat or make fresh defamatory claims.

The actions addressed above are those of a tiny number of individuals and we are sure the vast majority of members will be shocked by such behaviour. Members and officials are asked to consider the seriousness of such actions and to help us to stop the personal abuse and the false claims being made on social media.

Yours in unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Rowe'. The signature is stylized with a large, looped 'M' and a cursive 'Rowe'.

**Mark Rowe**  
**National Officer**