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Circular: 2025HOC0068MR

Date: 13 February 2025

To: All Members

Dear Brother/Sister

Certification Officer report into the financial affairs of the Fire Brigades Union

The Certification Officer (CO) – the statutory body responsible for overseeing trade unions – has received a report from its investigator into the financial affairs of the Fire Brigades Union.

The FBU welcomes this report. It is the product of a thorough investigation, with which we have complied proactively from the start.

The report investigates a series of complaints made by those named in the report – which alleged that the union had made ‘secret’ payments to employees without the consent of the Executive Council.

The investigator could find “...no conclusive evidence that any of the matters referred to in section 37B (2) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (the 1992 Act) have occurred.”

The CO also finds that, contrary to the complaints, it has not seen evidence of a culture of bullying.

The CO concluded that the union’s use of settlement agreements, which the investigator stressed are not uncommon in any sector, did not arise as a consequence of the union acting with malice or with any fraudulent intentions but simply as a result of operational practices that had developed to manage the end of employment relationships.

The report sets out problems with the union’s rules and the lack of an agreed consensus of their meaning among Executive Council members and full-time officials. It also criticises weaknesses with the FBU’s record-keeping and concludes that the union is “troubled with factionalism.”

It argues: “...governance shortcomings appear to have amplified pre-existing disagreements within the Union. The effect has been to provide a catalyst for disputes that, in truth, appear to have as much to do with factionalism as with substantive concerns about financial irregularities.”

We are pleased that the report does not find any evidence that we have acted in breach of statute.

However, it outlines a series of issues which we must take very seriously to address our internal governance structures. The Executive Council will consider the report in full in due course; examine its conclusions and recommendations; and look at how we can improve.

The report is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/certification-officer-latest-decisions>

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 'R'.

Mark Rowe
National Officer