



# Fire Brigades Union - South West Region

The Premier Trade Union for Professional Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff: Aug 2015

## **PAY RISE FOR FIRE CHIEFS - PAY CAP FOR US!**

**FBU slam "one rule for Management and one rule for Firefighters" as pay cap is announced!**



**Hypocrisy on pay - Huge rises for those at the top but "no money" for Firefighters as pay cap imposed**

The Fire Brigades Union has slammed the hypocrisy of politicians after a **further** 4 year pay cap was imposed on front line Firefighters across the UK.

The announcement of four more years of pain for Firefighters, teachers, nurses, police officers, members of the armed forces and other public sector workers was announced by the Government in their recent budget, which also included a further round of massive cuts to the budgets of frontline services. The pay cap means that annual pay rises in the public sector are set to remain well below the UK average of 2.7% and stands in stark contrast to the **above inflation** pay awards being made to Chief Fire Officers and principal management teams in the Fire & Rescue Service.

In March this year politicians on Avon Fire Authority agreed to increase the pay of the Chief Fire Officer and the "Service Management Board" by an incredible 10% despite recent austerity cuts which have seen 86 frontline firefighter posts within the Brigade cut in the last few years.

A further kick in the teeth to Firefighters followed in May this year, when Devon & Somerset Fire Authority decided to increase the pay of their Chief Fire Officer by an astonishing **£8,639** with knock on, above inflation, rises for other "principal officers".

The 6.3% award to the Devon & Somerset Chief comes on the heels of massive cuts made to the frontline of the service, which included downgrading Fire Cover, downgrading Fire Stations and cutting around 150 fulltime Firefighter posts, which were driven through in 2013 in order to "save" £5.5m.

The pay increases have seen the salary of the two Chief Officers jump dramatically. In Avon, the pay for the CFO has leapt from £130,000 to £142,000 and in Devon & Somerset the salary has shot up from £137,392 to £146,031.

This compares with a fully competent Firefighter who earns just £29,345 after a pathetic 1% pay rise this year - with more misery to come!

Responding to the pay cap, FBU Regional Secretary Trevor French said "Firefighters are furious that while our pay is being capped for years to come, the top earners in the Service are getting inflation busting rises. Firefighters have suffered real term pay cuts since the start of "austerity" and it is worse than insulting for us to see politicians shovelling out huge pay increases to top managers who have been driving through cuts in our frontline service. It is **sheer hypocrisy**. Its about time politicians started rewarding the people who risk their lives on a daily basis and run into burning buildings to save lives - not those who drive cuts!"

**Fighting for the Fire & Rescue Service**



**Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff**

## FBU takes Firefighters voices to Parliament!

Following the recent General Election the FBU is writing to all new Members of Parliament and setting out the importance of giving firefighters and the fire & rescue service a fair deal in the new Government.

We are in the process of arranging meetings with new MPs in the South West and have already arranged face to face discussions with some. South West FBU rep Tam McFarlane has asked for FBU members to



get involved in this process saying "we are determined that all new MPs in our Region have a clear understanding of the needs of Firefighters and the importance of proper funding and support for our Service.

"I have already raised this issue with several of the new intake and I am asking that FBU members get involved by coming along to the meetings and putting forward all the local issues that these MPs need to consider. If you have a new MP where you work please get in touch and drop us an email at [southwestfbu@fbu.org.uk](mailto:southwestfbu@fbu.org.uk)"

## FBU representing members as Dorset/Wiltshire merger approaches

FBU reps at a local and regional level have been meeting with senior managers and principal officers in the lead up to the merger of Dorset and Wiltshire FRS's.

Union Officials in both Brigades are liaising closely with the support of FBU Regional Officials, and have taken part in joint meetings with the Chief Fire Officers of Dorset and Wiltshire as well as representing the views of Firefighters and Control Staff in a series of negotiating meetings.



The Union has accessed the skills of John Arnold, the national FBU lead for workforce development, in order to achieve appropriate role maps within the joint control room, as well as receiving specific legal advice in regard to proposals for voluntary redundancy.

FBU members can be reassured that we will continue to access the best skills in order to represent their views in the build up to the merger!

## Union launches legal challenge to "discriminatory" pensions!

The FBU is launching a legal discrimination challenge against unfair changes made by the Government to Fire Service Pensions.

To be part of the challenge, all affected FBU members need to register via the Unions website. Unlike our recent legal victory which gave retired Firefighters (and Police Officers) tens of thousands pounds extra in commutation payments, this challenge is **only** open to FBU members.

To be part of the challenge, all FBU members who received no pension protection, or have only



tapered protection, need to register on the website. You need your Union membership number to do this. This number is on the letter we sent to all affected members, which should have been received by now. If you haven't received a letter, and you have no protection or only tapered protection, then contact your local FBU rep immediately! Remember, this legal challenge is also open to all FBU Control members!

Don't delay - register now! For further info, including a video which explains the issues involved, please go to the FBU national website at [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk):

## FBU slams "disgraceful" waste of taxpayers money!

South West Fire Brigades Union Officials have slammed the continued waste of **£1.9 million** of tax payers' money on the empty regional fire control building in Taunton.

The failed project, established by the Labour Government in 2004, has left an empty building in Taunton while national fire and rescue services are undergoing the most drastic cuts ever made.

The FBU warned from day one that the project would not work but the Government pressed on and wasted millions of pounds of tax payers money in the process. The most visible sign of this failure is the empty building, built at huge cost and very high spec, which has lain empty for years.



Tam McFarlane speaking out for Firefighters on the BBC

Tam McFarlane, of the FBU in the South West, told the BBC: "The continued waste of thousands of pounds a day on an empty building, whilst fire and rescue service budgets are slashed and jobs are cut, is nothing short of a national disgrace.

"In 2013 budget cuts led to full time fire cover at Taunton fire station being cut in half, whilst just down the road the Government was pouring almost 2 million pounds a year into an empty, unused building.

"Firefighters and tax payers need to see this waste come to an end

and somebody held to account. This disgrace has continued over 3 separate Governments, each of which has tried to ignore the problem.

"How dare politicians impose budget cuts on frontline services in the name of "austerity" whilst pouring tax payers money down the drain due to their own, failed, projects?"

## Learn the skills and be part of the team!

After a highly successful and popular training event for South West FBU members in March, the Union is running more sessions this year - and we want you to come!

The training event will be held over 3 days in Torquay and is aimed at FBU members thinking of becoming a local rep or just wanting to support their colleagues in the workplace. The course aims to help you to:

- ▶ understand what being a local FBU rep really entails;
- ▶ find and use relevant information/resources including union policies, procedures and agreements;
- ▶ improve practical skills including note taking; interviewing members, running meetings and reporting back to colleagues;



Fighting for the frontline

Fighting for the frontline

- ▶ develop a systematic approach to handling members problems and casework, including disciplinary issues and grievances;
- ▶ make use of agreements to take up issues and problems on behalf of workmates;

The course will take place between Mon 23rd - Wed 25th Nov 2015 with registration from 12.00 on 23rd and finishing with lunch at 1pm on 25th Nov.

All FBU members with an interest are welcome and we are especially looking for applications from Gloucestershire, Dorset and Cornwall. If you enjoy the training and want to continue, you can then attend a "part 2" course which is designed specifically for helping workmates through the discipline & grievance

process.

Why not come along and learn how to help you and your mates in the workplace? FBU - fighting for the frontline!

## We have to stand together



**The 4 year, 1% pay cap imposed on us by the Government, is worse than a disgrace: it is an insult to our profession and the skills, commitment and service that we bring to our role.**

It is unnecessary, hypocritical and stinks of political vindictiveness and extreme double standards. It comes from a Government that slashes frontline fire cover whilst seeming content to waste £7.6 million a year of taxpayers money on empty "regional fire control" buildings. It was voted through by politicians who lecture us on "austerity" and then pocket a 10% pay rise for themselves.

It condemns firefighters to four more years of pain, despite already suffering years of pay freezes, below inflation pay increases and massive hikes in pension contributions, despite receiving worse pension benefits in the long run.

All this against a background of firefighters delivering enhanced skills, taking on additional workloads, delivering innovative community initiatives, rescuing around 100 people **a day** in emergency situations and driving down fire deaths year on year. And our reward? To see our jobs cut, our service slashed and now, to add insult to injury, our pay driven down through the floor.

Worse still has been the double standards within our own profession. It simply beggars believe, at a time when frontline firefighters are being attacked so openly and viciously, to see Chief Fire Officers and "principal management teams" in some of our own Fire &

Rescue Services, being awarded **and accepting** pay rises at six and even ten times the rate of the firefighters who actually deliver the service they preside over.

Of course, the responsibility for these outrageous and provocative awards lies with politicians in Fire Authorities. However, those being offered these awards, do not have to accept them. It has been my experience, having served in both the Royal Marines and the Fire Service, that the best and most effective leaders are those who lead by example and set the standard. It is hard to see how teamwork based on shared values and aims can possibly succeed if leaders treat themselves one way and employees another way.

As our salary drops in real terms, we will need to be alive to additional dangers that this can bring to our working conditions and other pay rates. We have seen in the past that some managers try to exploit low pay by trying to get firefighters to sell out shifts, jobs and even overtime rates. As tempting as it may seem in the short term to accept a one off "bung" to sell off your shift system, or

**"Politicians lecture us on "austerity" and then pocket a 10% pay rise for themselves"**

take a cut in overtime rate in order to access more hours, my message is clear: **DO NOT SELL OUT LONG TERM GAINS FOR SHORT TERM PAYMENT!**

The negotiating rights and ability of the Union to fight for everyone can only work if we all stand together. Our hard won conditions and shift systems can all be undone, if individuals or groups cut everyone else loose by making "local agreements".

Now, more than ever, we need to stand together and deliver a strong effective Union to protect us all. The FBU has been fighting for firefighters since 1918, we have seen off Government attacks before and will have to again, but we will only succeed if we all unite.

Its time for all of us who value our profession and our service to deliver on our motto: Unity is Strength!

**Tam McFarlane**

## Contact Your Rep:

**Avon: Chris Taylor**  
chris.taylor@fbu.org.uk

**Cornwall: Stuart Pulley**  
stuart.pulley@fbu.org.uk

**Devon/Somerset: Trevor French**  
trevor.french@fbu.org.uk

**Dorset: Karen Adams**  
karen.adams@fbu.org.uk

**Gloucestershire: Scott Turner**  
scott.turner@fbu.org.uk

**Wiltshire: Brent Thorley**  
brent.thorley@fbu.org.uk

**Retained: Jez Rawlings**  
jez.Rawlings@fbu.org.uk

**Women:: Diane Critchlow**  
diane.critchlow@fbu.org.uk

**B&EMM: Enrico Temple**  
enrico.temple@fbu.org.uk

## FBU SOUTH WEST

The Fire Brigades Union is the premier Trade Union for professional Firefighters and Control Staff across the UK. The South West Region is the largest Region in England and we cover Avon, Cornwall, Dorset, Devon & Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire FRS's.

We represent over 85% of uniformed staff across the UK. Our members cover every role from Firefighter to Area Manager, including the retained duty system. We are committed to protecting our Members, their interests at work and to ensuring that the public receive an excellent and professional Fire & Rescue Service. Join the professionals, contact us at:

[www.southwestfbu.com](http://www.southwestfbu.com)



Follow us on our own Facebook page: Go to **South West Region of the Fire Brigades Union** and hit the "like" button. You will receive updates on our work and links to how we are fighting for you locally.



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