



LESSONS HAVE NOT BEEN LEARNT!



Exeter firefighters call for an end to cuts on anniversary of Cathedral Yard blaze

On the anniversary of the blaze that ripped through the historic Cathedral Yard area of Exeter last October, firefighters in the region are calling for an end to dangerous fire service cuts.

The fire caused massive damage before being extinguished, and also placed huge demands on the resources of Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service who sent 150 firefighters to put the fire out.

On Friday 20th Oct Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority endorsed a draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), the purpose of which the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) believes is to pave the way for more budget cuts. The firefighters who responded to the Cathedral Yard fire and their colleagues are fearful that the lessons from this horrendous fire have not been learned, and that the destructive nature of such fires has yet to be fully appreciated.

FBU brigade chair Scott Young said:

“Since the Cathedral Yard fire we have all witnessed the horror of Grenfell Tower, which is a wake-up call regarding the need for more effective fire and building safety, yet the draft IRMP makes no reference either to the demands put upon the service from major incidents like Cathedral Yard, or, even more significantly, the potential issues

arising from Grenfell. This despite 10,000 businesses in Devon and Somerset being identified as 'priority addresses'.

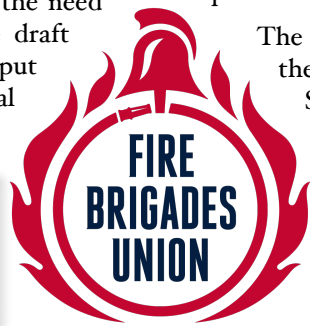
"Instead, the draft IRMP - which proposes how the fire service will operate in the coming years – calls for a review of how many firefighters crew an engine, making the completely unsubstantiated claim that 70 per cent of incidents can be 'fully resolved' with just two firefighters. **We believe this is an inappropriate and irresponsible statement to make.**

FBU health & safety and Exeter Rep Dave Chappell added:

"There are already significant problems trying to maintain fire and rescue cover, especially in areas crewed by on-call firefighters, where currently there are on average 15 out of 108 fire engines unavailable in Devon and Somerset at all times, due to crewing problems. The answer, clearly, is not to recommend fire engines turn out with crews of just two, but to provide better remuneration for firefighters to enable adequate numbers to commit to this important and potentially lifesaving work”.

The FBU is asking for members of the public to support them in their campaign to prevent further cuts to the Service.

FBU slam "inappropriate & irresponsible" IRMP statement



Fighting for the Fire & Rescue Service

Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff

Avon firefighters win fight over memorial to fallen colleagues



Firefighter Memorial statue will stay in Bristol - Thanks to the FBU!

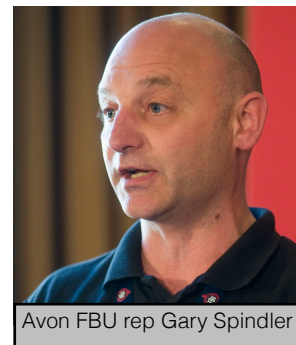
Firefighters in Avon have thanked the public for their support after a controversial decision to move a memorial to fallen colleagues was reversed.

Avon Fire & Rescue Service had previously agreed a controversial plan to dig up the memorial to fallen firefighters and move it from Temple Back fire station to a new 'Police and Fire HQ' based at a remote location near Portishead. Firefighters were outraged at the plan, saying that the new HQ, which is a high security site, is hard to access and would mean that hardly anyone would be able to pay their respects at the much loved memorial.

The Fire Brigades Union took the fight on and ran a high profile campaign to keep the statue in Bristol. At a meeting on Friday 13th October, the Fire Authority conceded and scrapped their plans after the FBU presented a petition signed by over 3,000 supporters demanding the memorial stay in Bristol City Centre.

The statue will now be moved only a few yards and placed outside the new Temple Back Fire Station.

Gary Spindler, brigade secretary of Avon FBU, said: "The statue is an important memorial for remembering firefighters who have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty.



Avon FBU rep Gary Spindler

"To have moved it out to a remote location in Portishead would have deprived the public of this important memorial and frankly would have been an insult to our fallen colleagues. It's great news that the statue is now going to stay at its proper home at Temple Back Fire Station and I want to thank the public who supported us in our campaign and the Fire Authority for listening. Our campaign, which included a petition signed by over 3,000 people, led to local politicians acting positively to the overwhelming public view on what is a really emotive issue".

Tam McFarlane, the senior FBU rep in the South West added "This is an important victory for firefighters, the public and common sense. Every year on Firefighters' Memorial Day (May 4th) fire and rescue service personnel congregate around the statue as part of this high profile event. This is when the value of its location is really appreciated by the public as well as firefighters. If the statue had been moved, this type of memorial event would have been virtually impossible to hold. The support that the public has given us in our campaign is hugely appreciated and it is fantastic news that the memorial will now remain in its proper city centre location."

FBU tell Gloucestershire: 'pay our firefighters the proper rate!'

The Fire Brigades Union has written to the political leader of Gloucestershire FRS demanding a local payment to firefighters be increased to what the Union calls 'the recommended level'. The FBU says that the payment, called 'Continual Professional Development (CPD)' should be set at a minimum level of £500 but Gloucestershire has only been paying £366, leaving local firefighters substantially out of pocket compared to colleagues elsewhere.

The CPD scheme was first set up in 2006 and is paid to all firefighters who have shown that they are developing within the fire and rescue service.

The complicated formula used to set up the payment resulted in different rates being set across different fire services, but to combat this discrepancy a minimum level of £500 per year was recommended by the national pay body who introduced it. Despite the minimum level being in place for over 11 years, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service still only pay their staff £366 - well below the recommended minimum £500.

The FBU is demanding that this situation be changed and has written an angry letter to Gloucestershire County Councillor Nigel Moor, who has responsibility for the County's firefighters. In the letter, from senior FBU official Tam McFarlane, the Union highlights the detrimental impact that years of pay freezes and pay caps has had on firefighters and demands 'a no strings attached increase of this payment to the minimum recommended level of £500'.



Tam McFarlane said "Raising the CPD payment to the recommended minimum level of £500 is a local decision and, against a background of national pay freezes & pay caps, it is a way that FRS's can show their staff that they properly value them. It is shameful that eleven years after a minimum level of payment was set, Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service is still refusing to pay staff the minimum rate.

"They are now the only Fire and Rescue Service in the South West to set this payment at a rate below the recommended level. They must address this matter and correct it as a matter of urgency. It's now time that this local employer steps up to the plate and gives the firefighters under their control the money that they're due."

In response, Gloucestershire Councillor Nigel Moor has told the Chief Fire Officer to present an 'options paper' for consideration.

Councillor Moor said "I fully recognise that the staff of GFRS perform highly in supporting the safety of the communities of Gloucestershire and that they contribute greatly to the wider health and wellbeing agenda of the County Council. Be assured I will give the options appraisal all due consideration once I receive it."

See the full letter from Tam and the response from Councillor Moor on our website: southwestfbu.com

FBU demand increased crewing levels after repeated system failures



The Fire Brigades Union has written to three south west Fire & Rescue Services demanding an increase to crewing levels in Emergency Fire Control. In the letter, South West FBU official Tam McFarlane raises 'serious concerns' over 'severe shortfalls' in crewing within fire controls covering Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire and Hampshire Fire and Rescue services. These services had previously formed a partnership called the 'Networked Fire Control Services Partnership (NFCSP)' which linked the three separate 999 Fire Control Centres meaning they could cover each others calls when a large scale incident hit one of the areas.

The stated intention of the 'partnership' was to "help to enhance service levels while improving public and firefighter safety". However, since its inception, staff have raised a series of serious concerns, including repeated system failures which have undermined operational effectiveness and caused high levels of stress to staff tasked with operating the system.

When the 'partnership' was set up the agreed **minimum** number of staff on duty across the three services was set at thirteen,

However, Control members have informed the Union that there have been 'numerous occasions' when crewing levels have fallen below this figure, further increasing the impact of system failures and the stress levels of staff at the sharp end.

In his letter to the Chief Fire Officers, Tam has demanded 'immediate action' to resolve the shortfalls, describing them as 'unsafe, unacceptable and unfair on emergency fire control staff'. Tam said "low crewing levels are creating an intolerable level of stress on our fire control staff. The minimum number of staff on duty is meant to be thirteen. The FBU has consistently argued that even this figure is too low, but there have been numerous occasions when even this low number couldn't be achieved.



FBU control rep for the South West, Kate Scott, added 'emergency fire control staff are being let down by a lack of urgency in dealing with low staff numbers. The people in charge of this 'partnership' need to get their act together quickly. Low staff numbers are compromising the operational effectiveness of the three Fire & Rescue Services involved and are putting additional pressure on our emergency fire control staff who have, frankly, already suffered enough.

'The FBU is demanding an immediate commitment to increase crewing levels across the partnership'.

FBU Control members and reps from across the South West will be meeting in late November to decide on further measures. For more information contact Kate Scott on kate.scott@fbu.org.uk

Local reps receive training to assist members

Over 20 local FBU reps were given specialist Health & Safety skills at a recent training event in Bristol. Reps from every Brigade in the South West were joined by colleagues from Surrey and Derbyshire at the event, entitled 'Introduction to Health, Safety & Welfare at Work' which ran over three days in Bristol City Centre.

The course is part of an education programme designed by the Fire Brigades Union to give our reps the skills they need to represent members effectively in the workplace. The course is accredited within the TUC Education Service/National Open College Network Programme, and the FBU reps who completed it will be able to claim the appropriate credit from the awarding body (NOCN).

The course helps our reps to:

- Find out more about Health & Safety legislation and their rights and duties as union health & safety reps;
- Be clearer about their employer's responsibilities in respect of health and safety at work;



- Develop relevant skills for union health & safety representatives;
- Be more confident in their role as a union health & safety representative;
- Discuss how to handle problems raised at work and build union organisation for health & safety in the workplace.

FBU Regional Chair Brent Thorley, who was one of the course organisers, said 'the course was an outstanding success and the feedback from the attendees was fantastic. Our region is determined that all our reps are given the skills to represent our members properly and this course will arm FBU reps with important expertise relating to Health, Safety & Welfare legislation. The Fire Brigades Union runs a wide range of courses and I would encourage all our reps & activists to check out our programme and take part. Not only do you get fully accredited skills but you also get to meet and network with colleagues from across the country."

For more information on all our courses please contact Brent on brent.thorley@fbu.org.uk

A new year, a continued unity.



This is our last bulletin before Christmas and I want to take this opportunity to send my very best wishes to you & your families over the festive period and into the New Year.

It's been another hard year of fighting back against budget cuts and political attacks to our service, and the attacks currently show no sign of stopping. But we can also take heart from our achievements throughout the year, including the high profile public support we have gained through our campaigning work and the impact the Union is having on the public & political narrative into the Fire & Rescue Service.



The massive, shocking fire at Grenfell brought home to the world the devastation that fire can inflict and our solidarity is with everyone affected by the inferno. Firefighters across the South West have been showing their unity with our London colleagues, who responded so magnificently, by raising money for the Grenfell firefighters support fund and organising a range of initiatives to offer support for those touched by the disaster. This is the firefighter 'family' ethos at its very best, supporting each other at times of need and uniting with colleagues & communities.

Not for the first time however, the response of firefighters stands in stark contrast with the reaction of politicians. The Government's Fire Minister, Nick Hurd, may say that Grenfell is a 'game changer' but there is absolutely no evidence of this where it matters - on the front line of the Fire & Rescue Service.



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In the months after Grenfell the FBU has been publicly campaigning to reverse the crisis in funding that has created dangerous crewing shortages across Fire & Rescue Services and left numerous fire stations and appliances off the run for long periods of the time. We have lobbied politicians locally and in Parliament demanding an end to cuts and for public safety to be put ahead of political 'austerity'. We have been demanding fair treatment for firefighters who have suffered years of disgraceful pay caps, returning us to an era of chronic low pay and family hardship.

At a local level we have exposed the impact of cuts in area after area. In Plymouth, for example, we have met with local MP's and Councillors making a fact based case and demanding support for additional wholtime crewing in a City hit harder than most by politically driven cuts.

Against this background it is no wonder that firefighters reacted with fury when the management of Devon & Somerset FRS published a so called 'IRMP' containing the statement, presented in bold, but with absolutely no supporting evidence, that "**over 70% of the calls we attend could be fully dealt with by a crew of two.**"

When Fire Service managers offer up cuts in this type of unprofessional manner, it not only undermines the hard work of everyone who is fighting for our service - it also undermines systems of work that are crucial to the safety of firefighters. ***It is appalling that, after an incident like Grenfell, a Fire & Rescue Service would make such a crass, unthinking statement and I call on them to withdraw it immediately.***

All of this reinforces the crucial role of the Fire Brigades Union as the genuine professional voice of the Fire & Rescue Service.

Whether it be lobbying politicians for extra funding, demanding professional national standards or fighting for proper pay and conditions for Fire & Rescue personnel, it is the FBU, ***and only the FBU***, who are standing up for our members and our service.

As an FBU member you are an integral part of an organisation that has developed our role as firefighters and supported individual members for 100 years. Through our network of trained, democratically elected reps we make sure that your voice is heard and you get the right help when you need it. But we all have a part to play, because at its heart, being a Union member is about looking out for your mates and standing up for each other when needed.

As firefighters, we have a duty to leave the fire service a better place than we found it and working together through our Union is the only way to achieve this. So, as we enter the New Year, that's exactly what we have to focus on and keep doing. ***We stand together, support each other and fight for a better, safer and more prosperous future.***

***Unity is Strength
Tam McFarlane***