



The Fire Brigades Union

GENERAL SECRETARY: MATT WRACK

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Our Ref: MW/sll

30 April 2014

Brandon Lewis MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

Dear Brandon

Thank you for your letter dated 25 April 2014.

I am obviously very disappointed that despite our clear commitment to the discussions for a period of almost 17 weeks, you have so far been unable or unwilling to formalise or present any improved position.

You state that you will now continue with the implementation (i.e. imposition) of your current proposals. Unfortunately, the risk is that many firefighters and other observers will conclude that this marks no change in your position. I hope that is not the case.

This difficulty is exacerbated by the other recent steps taken that have inevitably inflamed the situation:

- The imposition of a third year employee contribution increase (despite substantial evidence that such an approach risks undermining the viability of the schemes).
- The inaccurate suggestion that the union has not asked for further transitional protection for existing members.
- The failure (so far) to provide any firm guarantee that firefighters will not be sacked as their fitness declines due to age - despite previous assurances that such a risk 'is not on the cards'.

Significantly, despite these steps, which many have viewed as provocative, the FBU has never walked away from discussion and negotiation. I would hope that you would adopt a similar reasonable approach.

Our genuine engagement in discussion has been clear to yourself and to your officials. You have previously acknowledged this, including in your very clear statement to this effect in your letter of 23 April. The FBU position has also been clear throughout in seeking and keenly awaiting any improvement in your proposals.

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If you have alternative proposals to present, we hope that they will be presented. There is still time to avoid further conflict. We have made clear that our Executive Council stands ready to re-convene at short notice if proposals are made. It cannot be sensible to engage in further conflict if, as you suggest, Government is ready to make further proposals for our consideration. It is purely the *failure* to present any such revised proposals which has led to the current situation and to the calling of industrial action.

To avoid any doubt, the FBU Executive Council remains committed to a negotiated settlement and is still available to receive and consider any improvements. We remain available to discuss *at any time* (including at short notice), as has always been the case.

Both you and the Prime Minister have recently praised firefighters for their outstanding role during the winter floods. I urge you to take account of that work, as well as similar work carried out every single day in communities across the country, and work with us to avoid industrial conflict and urgently set out revised proposals for our consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Wrack". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MATT WRACK
GENERAL SECRETARY