



The Fire Brigades Union

GENERAL SECRETARY: MATT WRACK

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Our Ref: AD/sll

6 August 2014

Penny Mordaunt MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Communities and Local Government
4th Floor
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Penny

MEETING WITH FBU NEGOTIATORS

I write following receipt of your letter dated today in respect of the meeting which we have jointly arranged to take place tomorrow morning at 9.00 am.

Whilst you describe the meeting's status rather euphemistically as having "fallen" given the facts that are publicly available it is clear that you have cancelled this meeting with less than 24 hours' notice and with more than 72 hours before strike action is due to commence. We find this both disappointing and astonishing.

The chronology of events is as follows:

1. The meeting was scheduled by your Department with the FBU Head Office Secretariat on 31 July 2014.
2. On 1 August we obtained a copy of your open letter to all Firefighters in England, dated 31 July, in which you stated:
 - i. *"The only way progress can be made on the issues that are of concern to you is through engagement and constructive dialogue."*
 - ii. *"I know you want a swift end to this dispute and your issues addressed. In order to continue to do that I have departed with usual protocols and have made it clear to the FBU that I would be happy to receive any representations they wish to make to me even during industrial action."*
 - iii. *"... the FBU who I would have next met on Thursday 7th August they [sic] have sadly called off talks and announced a further round of strikes."*
3. To that end I wrote a letter to you later that day in which I made clear that the FBU had not called off the talks.

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4. Shortly after sending that letter, the FBU Head Office Secretariat sent DCLG Officials final confirmation of the details of the FBU negotiators who would be attending the meeting.
5. Today we received your letter wherein you have revealed that you have cancelled the meeting.

Your actions have the effect that a valuable opportunity for potential solutions to be found has been squandered. These solutions could have led to the cancellation of the planned strike action.

This puts the comment in your letter to Firefighters in England wherein you said *“My respect for you and what you do, the safety of the public and the future potential of the service will be my motivation for my actions in office, which can neither be increased nor diminished by strikes or threats to do so”* in a wholly different light to our initial interpretation.

I note from your letter that you still wish to meet with our NWC in order to discuss fitness issues. Having discussed this with our women’s officials they are more than happy to attend such a meeting but as you can imagine share the same concerns as all other FBU members in regards to pension issues. If you would care to suggest some dates for this meeting then I am sure arrangements can be progressed.

I note that you state in your most recent letter that you hope that we “will continue to correspond with my office”. We will, of course correspond when appropriate but this dispute, like any other, will be resolved through face-to-face meeting rather than correspondence.

In closing, the Union remains, as always, committed to finding a resolution to this dispute in order to bring strikes to an end. With that in mind, we urge you to re-consider your decision to cancel tomorrow’s meeting.

I look forward to a speedy response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Dark', with a stylized, cursive script.

ANDY DARK
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY