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FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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TO: ALL MEMBERS WILTSHIRE

27th September 2010

Dear Brother / Sister

RUMOURS REGARDING FUTURE BUDGET PROPOSALS

The FBU has recently been contacted by several Members who have expressed deep concern regarding rumours that they have heard on the above issue. In order to reassure all Members I wish to set the record straight in regard to this issue and the role of the FBU in protecting our Members and our Service in the forthcoming budgetary round.

We are all aware of the current budget deficit and the recent announcements by the Government in regard to plans to cut public spending. Against this background the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) set for 20th October will be key in setting the budget for Wiltshire Fire Authority. Clearly in the build up to the CSR there has been great speculation in the media and elsewhere as to the potential for cuts in the budgets of public services. However the reality is that until the budgets are announced and set any proposals are simply speculative and not based on fact.

Against this background the FBU Brigade Chair and I were asked to attend a meeting with Principal Management on Friday 24th September. At this meeting Principal Management set out a series of proposals for cuts in the service based on a speculative budget reduction of 25%. It was and is the view of the FBU that these "proposals" are not based on fact, remain speculative and in any event would be totally unacceptable. We will not accept dangerous cuts in front line provision or the introduction of working practices more suited to the Victorian age.

The FBU wish our position to be absolutely clear. Our priority is to protect the front line Fire & Rescue Service which the public rely on in times of need. We will not tolerate cuts in the numbers of Firefighters, appliances or Stations which would compromise public and Firefighter safety. The current Government has consistently stated that front line services will not be affected by budget cuts. We, and the public, are clear that the Fire & Rescue Service represents the cutting edge in front line services and we will be lobbying politicians at all levels to ensure that they do not renege on their promises to the public.

We are very disappointed that plans have been developed within Wiltshire FRS on a basis of speculation. The proposals have caused Members a great deal of concern and will do nothing to ensure public confidence in the future.

In summary I want to reassure Members that the FBU is committed to representing them and protecting their interests and the interests of the Fire service at all times. The budget for Wiltshire FRS has not been set, but when it is the FBU will be fully involved in resisting any attempt to implement cuts which would compromise public and Firefighter safety.

This is clearly a difficult time for everyone within the Fire & Rescue Service but the situation requires mature, fact and risk based decision making. The FBU will be contacting Principal Management and demanding that they desist from political kite flying and speculation which serves only to cause unnecessary concern within the Service and wider community.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally,

Paul Lawler
FBU Brigade Secretary
Wiltshire FBU