



The Premier Trade Union for Professional Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff: August 2013

CONSULTATION SHAM!

FBU SLAMS "SHAM" CONSULTATION AS "BAD DAY FOR DEMOCRACY"!



"Bad day for local people and democracy" say firefighters as cuts are passed.

Devon and Somerset Fire Authority have been accused of running a sham consultation and pushing through frontline cuts after a series of close votes. The FBU has now been in contact with Principal fire service officers demanding urgent talks regarding the decision. The union has expressed its anger at local approaches made by managers to individual stations which the FBU has condemned as "unacceptable" and "potentially damaging".

Reacting to the fire authority's decision, FBU executive council member for the South West Tam McFarlane, said: "It was a bad day for the fire and rescue service, a bad day for local people and a bad day for democracy. "It's clear that a majority of those who rubber stamped the proposals weren't there to represent the views of

their constituents or the fire and rescue service, but to implement cuts."

"The consultation process they ran was clearly a sham. Local Firefighters had collected over 27,000 signatures from the public against these cuts, yet still they were pushed through. These cuts do not have the support of either the public or professionals in the fire and rescue service. Quite simply, we believe that these changes will put lives at risk."

FBU Brigade Chair Bob Walker said: "Our members are furious that these cuts have been put through in this manner. The cuts will result in full-time cover being downgraded at many stations with the loss of around 149 frontline posts. We had received assurances that views expressed during the consultation would be listened to but that didn't happen in any meaningful way. (CONT PAGE 2)

Fighting for the Fire & Rescue Service



Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff

FBU slam “sham” consultation and pledge to keep up fight

(CONT FROM PAGE 1)

“Instead, a majority of councillors simply drove through the cuts without any regard to the massive opposition that had been shown.”

The union held a lobby of local people to voice their concerns at the meeting. After the meeting a number of members of the public expressed their extreme anger at the Fire Authority. Torbay campaigner Susie Colley said “They should be ashamed of themselves, it was obvious that they weren't here to listen to people's concerns. I hope that they can sleep at night knowing that people are going to die.”

FBU Brigade Secretary Trevor French said “Immediately after the Fire Authority meeting the FBU



contacted the CFO on behalf of all members and demanded urgent talks regarding this decision. Despite receiving assurances that these talks would take place we have received reports that managers are opening up talks at a local level

in order to implement these cuts as quickly as possible.

“I want to make it clear that this is unacceptable and if members at individual stations are approached in this way they should refer managers to the FBU at a Brigade level.

If cuts are quickly forced through at a local level it will undermine the Union's ability to negotiate for everyone and can only be bad for the Service overall.”

For more updates and details please see the SW FBU website at: www.southwestfbu.com

Avon job cuts will create "serious flaws in fire service set up"

Avon Fire and Rescue Service is set to make cuts that could mean the loss of up to 84 Firefighter posts and will see the closure of Speedwell fire station!

The Service claims response times would not be affected, the FBU warns that resilience and safety would be compromised.

FBU Brigade Secretary in Avon, Chris Taylor, said: "We totally condemn these cuts which are being driven from Westminster. The Government is cutting £11m from the fire service resulting in frontline cuts which compromise our ability to do our job properly and risks the resilience of the service overall.

“It's all very well to say the response times will be unaffected but the facts are that less firefighters will affect the delivery of vital services crucial to the safety of the community. If we are unfortunate to have more than one major incident at one time there will be serious flaws in the set-up. These cuts have been forced on the Authority by Government policy and enough is enough - it is time for all stakeholders within the service to force that message on Government.

"I want to reassure FBU members in Avon that your Union is involved in detailed talks at the highest possible levels in order to protect our Service.”

Details published for FF Stephen Hunt memorial fund

Details have now been published of the memorial fund which has been set up for Firefighter Stephen Hunt following his tragic death tackling a large fire in Manchester City Centre.

The Memorial Fund account has been set up for anyone who would like to send a donation in memory of Stephen. Its details are:

- **Name of Fund:** Stephen Hunt Memorial Fund
- **Name of Bank:** Unity Trust Bank
- **Sort Code:** 08-60-01

- **Account No:** 20314381

Cheques can also be sent, for more details go to www.southwestfbu.com

We encourage all Fire Stations, Emergency Fire Control Rooms and Fire Service workplaces to hold collections and send in donations to Stephen's fund. Our solidarity and deepest condolences remain with his family, friends and colleagues at this tragic time.



“UNWORKABLE” PROPOSALS FOR PENSIONS PROVOKES STRIKE VOTE! UNION URGES ALL MEMBERS TO VOTE “YES”

Firefighters will vote during the summer on strike action over an ‘unworkable’ pension scheme proposal that could lead to thousands facing the sack as they get older. The Union’s decision to hold a strike vote after almost two years of negotiations was prompted when the Government set a 12 July deadline for firefighters to accept proposals — or face imposition of the changes.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: “Expecting large numbers of 60 year olds to fight fires and rescue families is dangerous to the public and to firefighters.

“The government is simply ignoring the evidence about the physical demands of firefighting and has been unable to answer our concerns during two years of negotiations.

‘None of us want a strike, but we cannot compromise on public and firefighter safety. We hope common sense prevails, and the government returns to the negotiating table.’

The government’s own figures have shown that thousands of firefighters could face the sack without access to a proper pension because they are getting older.

A recent government review found that half of firefighters between the ages of 50 and 54 are no longer able to meet fire and rescue service fitness standards for fighting fires. Beyond the age of 55, two thirds fail to meet the standards.

And although the government has claimed that older firefighters would be moved to less physically demanding roles, FBU research found only a handful of ‘redeployment’ opportunities in fire and rescue services, meaning mass sackings would be inevitable.

Alongside the changes to retirement age, government is threatening significant reductions to firefighter pension benefits. Under current proposals, firefighters who retire or are forced out of work at age 55 will lose around 50% of their pensions.

Firefighters already pay some of the highest pension contributions in the UK public or private sector and have seen increases for two concurrent years. With further increases due next year, some firefighters now face an increase six years in a row.

Although the government’s financial projections are based on a prediction of a 1% decline in pension sign-up, their own information suggests that over 25% of wholtime firefighters recruited last year chose not to join. The FBU has warned these figures demonstrate that changes to the scheme are already having an impact and, if the trend continues, that the financial viability of the scheme will be seriously undermined.

The ballot will take place between 18 July and 29 August and the Union is urging all members to use their vote and send the Government a message that - ***its time to listen!*** South West FBU Regional Secretary Phil Jordan said “For over two years we have been campaigning on pensions. The union has shown why the government’s proposals are unacceptable – because they make the new pension scheme unaffordable, unsustainable and unworkable.

“Government is ignoring the evidence and ploughing on regardless. We cannot let this happen - doing nothing is not an option.

“As a result the FBU has had no choice but to ballot for industrial action. You will shortly receive a ballot paper for national strike action and we urge you to vote YES in that ballot.”

The Union has set up a special webpage which gives members all the facts and details the work so far. This can be accessed at: www.fbu.org.uk



It is vital that you support the FBU’s position. Here are a few simple ways that you can help us to help you:

- VOTE YES in the ballot
- Convince your work mates to VOTE YES
- Make sure you are well versed on the key arguments, by reading all the FBU materials, bulletins, briefings, circulars and Firefighter magazine
- Make sure your workmates are also well versed, by discussing the issues and encouraging them to read the information
- Make sure that if you have any questions or want clarity that you ask your local officials – if they don’t know, they will know where to find out
- Make sure a meeting is arranged to discuss the issues and encourage members to attend
- Write to your MP/councillor to explain the key arguments
- Follow this up with a visit to their surgery or an invitation to your workplace to discuss it further.

**ALL WE WANT IS A WORKABLE,
SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR PENSION
SCHEME**

STAND TOGETHER – VOTE YES

UNITED WE MUST STAND



South West EC Member

Tam McFarlane

The time has come for all of us to stand together, unite and fight back against unsafe cuts in our Service and the disgraceful robbery of our pensions.

The government wants firefighters and other public sector workers to pay more, work longer and still get less for our pensions. The FBU says this is daylight robbery and, after 2 years of talks and an ultimatum by the Government, we have had no choice but to ballot for national strike action.

Throughout the whole pension process the Union has taken a professional and measured approach. We have used our role as the professional voice of the Fire Service to gather detailed and thorough evidence which has been submitted to Government as part of the consultation process.

We have proved beyond doubt that the Government proposals are unsustainable, unworkable and would leave vast numbers of firefighters with no option other than to leave the service without a pension or face the sack under capability.

Every firefighter, in all duty systems, in every role, is being attacked in this way and the FBU is the only body standing up to defend them. We remain ready for real talks. But we have to act to protect our

pensions and our members. If the Government isn't prepared to listen then we have no choice other than to stand together and, if necessary, fight together, in order to achieve justice and a fair and sustainable future for firefighters.

There is another, more local group of politicians who have also shown an unwillingness to listen and refuse to put the sustainability and safety of the Fire & Rescue Service ahead of politics.

I attended the recent meeting of Devon & Somerset Fire Authority and witnessed a group of local politicians vote through proposals to make massive cuts despite overwhelming opposition from the public and the professionals. To vote through cuts in this way makes a mockery of a consultation process which saw over 27,000 members of the public sign petitions against cuts and mobilised overwhelming political and civic opposition to the plans.

In the face of such "sham consultations" we need to send a clear and unequivocal message to politicians: **We are as united, determined and organised as never before.**

Cuts in our pensions and cuts to our Service will hit us all: Wholetime, Retained, Officer & Control and we must all send the message that **an attack on one is an attack on us all.**

The FBU is sending a clear message to transient politicians who put politics before the needs of the Fire & Rescue service: We stand ready to fight against dangerous cuts to our profession and our Service!

I am calling on every Member to play their part and unite in the campaigns that are coming. Doing nothing is not an option; join with the FBU and fight for our future. Unity is Strength.

Tam McFarlane

FOLLOW THE PROFESSIONALS!

The FBU in the South West is committed to keeping our Members posted about news, updates and the work we are doing on their behalf. By using modern communication tools we can keep you up to date quickly, no matter where you work.

Follow us on our Facebook, Twitter and YouTube sites.



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.



Follow us on Twitter at @southwestfbu

Keep up to date with our videos at 'South West FBU'



You can also follow us on our website at: www.southwestfbu.com

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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

