

FIREFIGHTERS-
The Frontline of
the Frontline!

YOUR UNION:

- It has never been more important that all members attend branch meetings than now! Brigade officials want & need to hear your opinions & concerns.
- Don't forget the **lobby** of Parliament on 17th November. This is your chance to express your concerns directly to our MPs at pre-arranged appointments. Speak to your branch official to book your places on the coach.

NOT RECEIVING FIREFIGHTER OR ALERTER MAGAZINE?

Make sure your all your details are up to date. Inform the service Membership Secretary, Steve Garraway at Chippenham, of a change of address or if you want to alter your nominated 'beneficiary'



**All Fire Stations
in Wiltshire will
be affected!**

Wiltshire FIREFIGHTER

ISSUE 1

November 2010

To all Wiltshire FBU members

Welcome to the first edition of Wiltshire *FIREFIGHTER*, written by the FBU in Wiltshire for our Members.

OUR SERVICE UNDER THREAT

Everyone will be aware of the governments recent comprehensive spending review. At time of writing, full details of the impact that the CSR will have on Wiltshire FRS is still unclear and it will take time to fully understand the devastation of the cuts outlined in George Osbourne's 'mission statement' of the 20th October. Wiltshire Brigade Committee do not accept that any plans can be developed until the full financial picture is known around mid November.

This begs the question -

Why are principal managers NOW attempting to cut 16 Firefighter's jobs, via the 'back door' on top of the GM, SM & WM posts already removed? This is in complete disregard to long established & officially laid down negotiation periods.

Management has formally proposed new Service Orders detailing annual leave & the downgrading of crewing arrangements to allow them to axe **8 jobs** at both Swindon & Salisbury: **16 Front Line Posts** in total!!



Before they have even chosen to discuss the actual job losses with the union!

So what does the spending review mean to WFRS?

Wiltshire receives an annual budget of approximately £25M. Around 60% (£15M) of this is received locally through council tax. The remaining 40% (£10M) comes through Central Government via a grant and it is this part that is subject to the ConDem CSR axe of a 25% reduction over four years. The CUTS will be implemented on a year by year basis with the final axe falling in the period covering 2014—15.

Time & time again the coalition has pledged that the frontline will not be affected. FBU Members know that the Fire & Rescue Service is the "Frontline" of the "Frontline"!

The FBU is fighting for our Service

Following two recent meetings of the full Brigade Committee and a further one scheduled for 4th November, the FBU has been developing our plans and timetables to oppose cuts and fight for our Service.

1) MP's and fire authority members are being engaged, through either one to one appointments, surgeries and of course the forthcoming FBU lobby of parliament on 17th November.

2) A formal letter of opposition has been sent in response to the job cuts at 1/1 & 3/1.

3) The press are being contacted to explain the consequences of the cuts, to ensure the people of Wiltshire are aware of the effects of the cuts.

4) A series of local Branch meetings is being arranged and we urge all Members to attend.



What we know so far...

The Brigade Committee is aware that many members have heard tales & rumours regarding shift changes, policy changes, job cuts etc!

This is what we **KNOW** following official meetings, both formal and informal, between the FBU & management:

The following two items have been officially tabled:

New annual leave policy which:

1) Reduces the number permitted to be on Annual Leave at both Swindon and Salisbury (to facilitate job losses)

2) Re-introduces enforced Bank Holidays

3) Forces you to take Bank Holiday leave if you are sick on the day of a bank holiday!

New crewing document which:

1) Formalises the reduction in turn out & attendance times of appliances at Swindon and Salisbury, via alternate crewing.

2) Reduces the number, from 4 to 3 at Trowbridge and Chippenham as the trigger to use full alert for 12 hrs of the day.

3) Removes acting up from CM to WM when it is less than 28 days (Yes WM's you are that valuable that you can be off for a month and apparently no one needs to do your job!)

4) Removes the grey book, nationally agreed, right to refuse pre-arranged overtime when detached to an out station!

What we know they are considering...

The brigade has made it clear that they will look at everything and (almost) anything to facilitate the cost savings.

At a recent informal meeting the following areas were identified by management as options:

- 1) Downgrade Swindon to go Nucleus Crewed
- 2) Downgrade Salisbury to go 'Day Crewed Plus'
- 3) Downgrade Stratton to go 'Day Crewed Plus'
- 4) Downgrade Trowbridge to go Nucleus Crewed
- 5) Westlea to go 'Day Crewed Plus'
- 6) Chippenham to go 'Day Crewed Plus'

Note: "Day Crewed Plus" is a management term for a new system that would mean Firefighters working for up to 96 hours continuously in return for a bribe to sell out our colleagues jobs.

The FBU is clear that the most appropriate name for this regressive, damaging and out dated system is:

"The Victorian System"!

Following these devastating cuts, any remaining left over staff, who still have a job will be relocated to facilitate the following:

- 1) Devizes to go 'Day Crewed Plus' (Victorian)
- 2) Marlborough to go Nucleus Crewed
- 3) Amesbury to go Nucleus Crewed
- 4) Warminster to go Nucleus Crewed

On top of this, following the CSR, CLG immediately published guidance to FRS's suggesting the following ways to cut costs:

- 1) 'Flexible' staffing arrangements
- 2) Improved sickness management
- 3) Pay restraint & recruitment freezes
- 4) Sharing Chief Officers/services & other senior staff
- 5) Improved procurement
- 6) Voluntary amalgamations with other brigades

"CLG immediately published guidance on how to make the cuts"

How the cuts will endanger the public...

As professional firefighters we are all aware of how much the service struggles on a day to day basis already.

There is barely a watch or station that is at full establishment and there hasn't been for quite some time.

There is no meat left on the bones!

The fire service's job is to be available 24hrs a day 7 days a week 365 days a year to provide immediate response in times when then public are in need.

The Wiltshire public see rows of shiny appliances lined up in stations, and are blissfully unaware that there is not enough people to sit on them....this situation can surely only get worse with the proposed cuts.

We need to ensure that the public know that to cut fire cover in the counties two largest towns, Trowbridge & Swindon to nucleus crewed is nothing short of madness!

Less firefighters working longer hours, slower response times in the critical early evening means a massively increased risk to both the public & firefighters safety.

Why is there such a need to make such drastic cuts?

The government has asked for spending levels to revert to those around 2007/8.

At that time WFRS had approximately 170 station based wholetime firefighters. The proposed cuts to the wholetime stations reduces this figure to 117.

Towns and cities are getting bigger, Wiltshire's population is growing with no sign of abating .As the more affluent along the M4 corridor are affected by the cuts, they will seek cheaper homes further away from London.

RISKS ARE AND WILL CONTINUE TO GET HIGHER.

We need to ask why our principal officers have immediately chosen to decimate frontline services with potentially 53 job losses rather than fighting politically for the funding to ensure a safe and effective service?

The FBU will not accept life threatening cuts to our Emergency Service.

***THE
PUBLICS'
SAFETY
IS
OUR
PRIORITY***

Wiltshire FBU:

Secretary: Paul Lawler

Email: paul.lawler@fbu.org.uk

Chair: Tony Littler

"The fire service's job is to be available 24hrs a day 7 days a week 365 days a year to provide immediate response in times when then public are in need".

Firefighters face pay freeze - Consultant costs soar!

While Firefighters and Emergency Fire control staff continue to provide a life saving emergency service our employers show how much they really value us by offering a Pay Freeze for 2010!

Our pay is decided at the National Joint Council (NJC) and this year the national FBU tabled a highly reasonable claim for a rise just in line with inflation.

Our "caring" employers responded by offering us a pay freeze; in other words a big fat zero!

In 2010/11 the service spent £1,050,800 on 'other employees' (this is consultants fee's etc). Again this figure rises over the next 4 years to £1,138, 800) Surely a large sum of money can be saved bringing this work in house instead of our people losing jobs

With inflation rising the truth is that a pay freeze = a pay cut! On top of this the chancellor has indicated that he expects the pay freeze to continue **and** for pension contributions to rise.

With all of these cuts and with rises in VAT the pay of Firefighters and Control Staff could potentially go into a steep decline while millions are being spent in fees for so called "consultants".

This shows how little value our employers really have for us and the job that we do.



FBU SOUTH WEST

WILTSHIRE-AVON-CORNWALL-DEVON & SOMERSET-DORSET-GLOUCESTERSHIRE

EC Member Tam McFarlane gives the view from the Region

The much anticipated Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was finally announced by the Government on the 20th of October and it reveals the biggest political attack on the Fire & Rescue Service and other public services in living memory.

The Government proposes to reduce the grant to Fire Authorities (which makes up around 50% of their funding) by 25% over 4 years and urges individual FRS's to attack our staffing levels, pay and Conditions of Service at a local level. This exposes as a lie previous promises to "protect front line services".

Perhaps the most galling aspect of this entire situation is the complicity of the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) in this attack on our Service. Instead of fighting for our Service it is now clear that CFOA have spent their time drawing up plans to decimate it. I have sat on behalf of the FBU at the national "Fire Futures" project and seen at first hand CFOA's plans to undermine our Service. Unlike Chief Police Officers, CFOA have pandered to political agendas instead of making the case for the Fire & Rescue Service.

Unlike CFOA, the FBU has been fighting for our Service. In the run up to the General Election and following the installation of the coalition Government the Fire Brigades Union has been continuously lobbying senior politicians making the case for our Service.

We have worked with others in offering a range of alternative proposals to reduce the deficit and deliver social justice without the need for public spending cuts. We have offered solutions for a fair taxation system on the Financial Sector: the very people who caused the deficit in the first place. We have worked tirelessly at a political, public and press level outlining the unique life saving service our Members provide at the cutting edge of front line public services.

We have stressed the key role that FBU members play in delivering a highly professional and effective service fit for the future against a background of rapid, complex and fundamental change. We have ensured that no politician can ignore the lives that we save and the safety and resilience our members provide on a daily basis in every conceivable circumstance; from flooding, terrorist attack, chemical incidents, road traffic collisions; the list is endless. We have highlighted the tragic and worryingly high levels of Firefighter fatalities in recent years who were killed in the line of duty. We have highlighted the community safety work that we deliver and the partnership working that we undertake all of which **is in addition** to our emergency response role and which offers a high value service to the overall community.

We have done this because it is our duty as the professional voice of the Fire & Rescue Service.

With the outcome of the CSR we now need to organise and campaign as never before in order to save our Service from politically motivated cuts.

In the South West we are now seeing the first wave of proposed cuts being rolled out and the scale is staggering. Wiltshire FRS is the first to break cover with proposals for cuts which are as disgraceful as they are dangerous. These proposals would see massive reductions in fire cover, huge job cuts and the downgrading of Fire stations across the County. They would increase the risk to both the public and Firefighters alike and we demand that the Fire Authority rejects them outright..

Proposals such as these are ill thought out, unprofessional and ultimately dangerous and **the FBU will not accept them.**

"The FBU will not accept cuts that compromise the safety of Firefighters or the public"

We need to be absolutely clear: the FBU will fight against any cuts that reduce fire cover and put public or Fire-fighter safety at risk and we expect ***all FBU members to stand and fight together for our future.***

Across the South West we are seeing plans for so called "Day Crewing plus" being proposed under the banner of "flexible staffing". Members should not be fooled: **these**

plans are about reducing establishment levels and achieving massive job cuts. These systems require Firefighters to spend days at a time on the Station and are more akin to the Victorian age than 2010. The FBU has experienced these proposals in other parts of the country where members have been bribed with substantial sums in an attempt to coax them into working these systems.

Be under no illusion: **these short term bribes are about selling out you and your colleagues jobs. Do not fall for these tactics.** If any member is approached regarding signing up to such a system then they should refuse and inform the FBU immediately.

We must always remember that our strength is in our Unity and every FBU member has to resist any management tactic designed to split us. These cuts will impact on us all: Wholetime, Retained, Officer & Control and we must all send the message that **an attack on one is an attack on us all.**

This is clearly a worryingly time for all of us in the Fire and Rescue Service but I want to reassure all FBU Members that the Union is going to fight back against cuts. In the South West we have a highly effective, very well organised FBU Region with trained Officials in every Brigade. We will continue to represent, organise and fight for all our Members at every turn but at this time every Member has a responsibility to stand alongside their Union. We will all need to play our part in fighting for our Service and rejecting unsafe cuts and this fight **starts now.**

Tam McFarlane

South West FBU

Find us on:

www.southwestfbu.com



South West Region of the Fire Brigades Union