



FIRE BRIGADES UNION SOUTH WEST REGION

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ALL FBU MEMBERS IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Dear all,

I am writing to you in my position as FBU Brigade Secretary to outline the opposition of the Union regarding the decision of the "Strategic Leadership Team" (SLT) to suspend the wholetime Duty System at Cirencester Fire Station.

The FBU believe that this decision is totally unnecessary. The SLT have stated that the primary reason for their decision to suspend the duty system at Cirencester is to ensure legislative compliance following a letter from the HSE, which, for clarity, was not addressed to Gloucestershire FRS. This letter was in regard to so called "Day Crew Plus" duty systems and highlighted their non compliance with Working Time Regulations. The view of the SLT was that this impacted on the duty system at Cirencester and they therefor made the decision to "suspend" the duty system and forcibly transfer all of our members working that system to different workplaces and different duty systems. However, the "suspension" of this duty system was not the only option open to the SLT. The FBU put forward other, obvious, options to the SLT which would have ensured compliance with legislation and also ensured that wholetime, day cover would have remained available at Cirencester. These solutions, which would have prevented members being forcibly transferred and maintained fire cover, were rejected by the SLT.

The FBU believe that the decision, and the manner in which it has been conducted, is outside the Grey Book and conflicts with agreed negotiating conditions of service. When the Service indicated that they were pressing ahead with the "suspension" of the duty system and the forced transfer of our members the FBU registered a formal dispute under the agreed negotiating procedure within the Grey Book. This procedure included the following section: *"While an issue is subject to discussion/ resolution under this negotiating procedure neither side will seek to take any collective action or introduce change."* - Despite acknowledging our formal letter of dispute the service has chosen to ignore this section and impose the change while the negotiating processes are still underway.

The FBU believe that the decision undermines the current public consultation being run into fire cover at Cirencester Fire Station and has pre-empted the decision that was properly the remit of the County Council to make. The FBU believe, as we have made clear in our ongoing campaign of opposition to the proposed cuts in Gloucestershire FRS, that the decision to suspend cover at Cirencester will serve only to increase response times in this area and will consequently compromise the safety of firefighters and the public.

Based on the intransigence of the Service in regard to this matter, the FBU has formally raised our objections and concerns with the national joint secretaries of the NJC. We have also sought, and are in the process of receiving, formal legal advice from our solicitors regarding several areas of legislation which we believe have been contravened as a result of the actions of the SLT.

By pressing ahead in this manner with the "suspension" of this duty suspension and the forced transfer of our members at Cirencester, the SLT have shown a contempt for industrial relations and agreed negotiating procedures at both a local and national level. I have made our views regarding this clear to principal managers within the Service and the Union will continue to pursue all options available to us, however I wish to make clear to all our members that when a Service shows itself unwilling to follow basic agreed negotiating procedures, the Union has no option other than to call on the Unity of our membership to make our collective voices heard.

Previous experience has shown that senior managers will be raising these and other, matters via a series of watch and station "visits" in due course. Knowing this, I wanted every member to be clear of the Union's opposition and actions over this period in regard to this issue. I will shortly be calling a Gloucestershire FBU Brigade Committee and I call on every member to organise and attend local meetings at every Fire Station and workplace in the build up to this.

In unity

SCOTT TURNER

GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRIGADE SEC

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