

Date: Monday, 08 November 2004

ALL MEMBERS **UPDATE ON LOCAL DISPUTES/TRADE DISPUTE**

Dear Brother/Sister,

As reported in previous all members I provide a full update on the current disputes registered by the Fire Brigades Union.

The Fire Authority at their meeting of the 4th November 2004, decided to support the implementation of the co-responding scheme which did not resolve the trade dispute letter received from the General Secretary on behalf of Merseyside FBU members.

The Authority has now been informed of the Unions intention to ballot our members on this issue and more detailed information will be circulated as soon as possible. It is extremely disappointing, however that the Union has now learnt that the co-responding policy has now been implemented despite the trade dispute being registered between the Union and the Authority.

I understand that the SRT is currently undertaking co-responding duties and the Unions fears are being recognised with one incident that the team responded to was to a 4 month old infant.

The dispute regarding the TRV has now progressed slightly. Management have now agreed to abide by the Grey Book rates of pay, but has taken the decision only to offer overtime working to members of the role of firefighter or leading firefighter. That appears to stand outside the Authorities equality of opportunity policies. The Clerk to the Authority has requested the Union now hear this dispute before the Joint Consultative Panel, which we have agreed to do in order to process this matter as quickly as possible. An early hearing is expected and the decision will be circulated immediately.

I was informed on Friday 5th November 2004 by management that MF&RS themselves have registered a dispute on the matter of the proposal from the Service to alter the Grey Book '9 day fortnight' to what they term as a 42 hour working week system – a '10 day fortnight'. It is unusual that management themselves have taken the step of registering the dispute, but welcome that they recognise the disputes procedure. I sincerely hope that they now abide by the status quo provision until resolution of this dispute.

It was surprising, however, to receive a letter from Human Resources, looking for individual members to voluntarily accept the change to our conditions of service that they themselves have disputed. This I believe is wholly indicative of a rapid deterioration of industrial relations within MF&RS at this moment in time, and an issue that we will now pursue.

I will keep all members informed of all developments on the above issues.

Enclosed are letters of support from GMC and Lancashire for your information.

VOTE YES IN THE BALLOT-SUPPORT FBU POLICY

Yours in unity

L Skarratts
Brigade Secretary