

ACO Evans  
Employers Joint Secretary  
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service  
Service Headquarters  
Bridle Road  
Bootle  
Merseyside  
L30 4YD

Date: Thursday, 23 November 2006

Ref: Email Communication.

Dear Mr. Evans,

I have been made aware of an email communication circulated on your behalf, today's date, which you have stated that personnel are receiving text messages, allegedly sent by the FBU, claiming you have given permission for firefighters to drink tea whilst checking fire appliances and that is contained within the minutes of a fire authority meeting.

You are correct in that the issue of tea drinking was brought up during the industrial relations review meeting, the impression your that communication presents is that the FBU raised the issue. I acknowledge that may not be the intention of your email but it is the impression readers of the communication will get. For clarification, it was not the FBU who raised the issue, in fact you will recall that I stated at the meeting that the FBU would not raise this issue as we firmly believed it to be a petty issue raised up the industrial agenda by a number of emails and approaches from a number of your managers.

Again for clarification, when the matter was raised at the meeting the FBU stated that the issue was not one of tea breaks outwith the work routines but of members taking a hot drink whilst undertaking a number of tasks, usually but not exclusively, in the appliance room of a fire station. I agree with you this is a ridiculous issue but it is one being enforced by some of your managers with some enthusiasm. If you require further information on the names of those managers the FBU will gladly provide that information.

The FBU stated at the review meeting that we supported you when you confirmed that if watch managers wished to permit members to have a hot drink if it does not interfere with the work task, then that should be the case. To close this ridiculous issue once and for all, I ask that you re-iterate this stance and allow our managers to manage with that advice being relayed to station, group and area managers.

You will recall that AM Stephens when questioned on this issue at the recent watch managers forum, responded by saying that *'if you ask a stupid question, don't be surprised when you*

*get a stupid answer*, I presume Mr Stephens was referring to an previous email sent from him on this issue. The unfortunate fact of the matter at present within MF&RS, is that some middle managers view this *'stupid answer'* as policy, a fact that is creating this nonsensical situation.

Finally, I can confirm that the FBU have not been sending text messages out on this matter, a fact I am sure you will glean from the inclusion of the erroneous allegation that the claim may be included within some form of Authority minute. The FBU communicate in a number of avenues, all of which you are aware of.

The FBU have always maintained the position that managers should be left to manage, with watch managers left to manage the watch, I look forward to your re-iteration requested above, and to bring this issue finally to a close, which would allow us to concentrate on real issues with real outcomes.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

L Skarratts  
Brigade Secretary

cc Cllr Maloney