



Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 7AE

FIRE BRIGADES UNION
General Secretary: Matt Wrack
Telephone: 020-8541-1765
Facsimile: 020-8546-5187
E-Mail : office@fbu.org.uk

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TO: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brother/Sister

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

You will be aware of the current dispute in Merseyside and the strike action planned. Unfortunately it is becoming increasingly obvious that the current dispute fits into a wider pattern of poor industrial relations within the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority. The FBU Brigade Secretary, Les Skarratts has raised concerns about the state of industrial relations in the Merseyside F&RA and has called for both sides to support an independent inquiry as a way to try to resolve various difficulties.

It has now become increasingly clear that the current difficulties in Merseyside are very much part of a wider picture and it appears that the CFO, Mr McGuirk, has embarked on a confrontational strategy in relation to the Fire Brigades Union. The evidence for this grows day by day. The Union has been informed of comments made by Mr McGuirk to members of the Fire Service in New Zealand last year and these appear to support our concerns.

In October 2005 Mr McGuirk attended an Australasian Fire Service conference in New Zealand. Two National Officials of the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) were invited to meet Mr McGuirk as a part of his visit. A meeting subsequently took place between Mr McGuirk and Derek Best and Mike McEnaney from the NZPFU.

The comments made by Mr McGuirk give major cause for concern and serve to confirm that Mr McGuirk has developed a long-term strategy to build for a confrontation with the Fire Brigades Union in Merseyside.

Derek Best has reported that Mr McGuirk spoke disparagingly about FBU officials in Merseyside. Mr McGuirk went on to describe how he had already successfully enticed a number of Firefighters away from the FBU by introducing new teams involved in Emergency Medical Response.

He went on to describe the FBU policy on Co-Responding and that this had led to disciplinary action by the Union against the individual Firefighters.

"Mr McGuirk then stated that he was assisting those persons to fight the FBU's actions in the courts. Mr McGuirk further stated that this assistance went to the extent of funding those persons' legal costs.

It was quite clear that Mr McGuirk was making this statement as the CFO of Merseyside Fire Brigade. The cost was being met by the Merseyside Fire Brigade, not personally by Mr McGuirk,"

The comments made by Mr McGuirk to members of the Fire Service in New Zealand are obviously a cause for great concern. It appears that Mr McGuirk has a political hostility to the Fire Brigades Union. This cannot be conducive to good industrial relations. I am sure you will also appreciate that there will be public concern that the senior manager of the Merseyside FRA may have used public money to support a politically motivated legal challenge.

On the basis of the information above, I have today written to the Chair of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority asking for a response to the issues raised and again calling for an independent inquiry into industrial relation in the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Wrack". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MATT WRACK
GENERAL SECRETARY

MW/sII