



MERSEYSIDE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

THE PEOPLES CENTRE, 50-54 MOUNT PLEASANT, LIVERPOOL, L3 5UN.

PHONE 0151 702 6915/6,

FAX 0151 708 5901

Cllr T Newman
Chair - MF&CDA
20 Martock,
Whiston.
Prescot.
L35 3JZ

Fire Brigades Union
The Peoples Centre
50-54 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool
L3 5UN

Tel: 0151 702 6915
0151 702 6916

Fax: 0151 708 5901

Email: les.skarratts@fbu.org.uk
mark.dunne@fbu.org.uk

Website: www.merseysidefbu.co.uk

Date: Tuesday, 12 September 2006

Dear Cllr Newman,

Thank you for your letter dated 8th September 2006, replying to my previous letter of the 7th September 2006.

I refer, however, to the proposal that you had decided to release through the media before formally writing to the Fire Brigades Union; disappointingly I am yet to receive any communication as an elected representative of the FBU, but it is indicative of current relations that I have received a home address communication from the chief fire officer as an employee of MF&CDA.

I am aware that the principal officers were committed to the member's seminar of the 8th September 2006, so I presume the detailed 7 page letter all employees received on the morning of the 9th September 2006, may have been prepared earlier than at the end of the seminar and certainly prior to the members of the Policy and Finance Committee agreeing to the proposals.

You are aware that on the 8th September 2006, I received notification regarding the current proposals on the Roger Phillips radio show at around 12 20 hrs from the presenter himself. If you include the time I had to take to receive a call from the shows researcher and travel time from the FBU office to the radio studio, it would place the time that the presenter received the information at being around 12 noon. I can also confirm that the details of the proposal, which do appear to be in a different format were also posted on the MF&RS website around that same time, I notice that report is still available on the MF&RS website.

I have also been contacted by the FBU National Press Officer who has confirmed that he started to log calls from 10 17 am until around 12 25 hrs regarding the very same press release put out by the fire authority, the early contacts made by Radio Merseyside and North West Tonight. That seems to place the release of the press statement significantly before the 12 00 hrs time frame that the group leaders and principal officers appeared to allude to.

It seems reasonable to presume that the press release and detailed website posting were also prepared some time previous to the Policy and Finance Committee meeting, in fact I recollect that point being verified at the meeting. It can only be surmised how early the release, report

and if utilised the detailed power point presentation or similar used at the members seminar were prepared.

I also note that on several occasions elected members and principal officers mentioned that due to the release of the details of the proposal that the FBU should suspend the imminent period of strike action.

Given that the evidence and confirmation that the communications had been prepared prior to the meeting, and given that the assessment of the service managers on the proposal was such that they recommended requesting the Union to suspend the action, then the Union believe it perfectly reasonable that the information should have been exchanged to the Union at the earliest convenience. I am sure the elected members like the FBU officials would have met at any time to enable resolution proposals to be discussed and decided if you suggest that the issue required member's agreement before formal proposal could take place.

It was also disappointing that within the timeframe the information needed to be compiled into a report/presentation format, there remained ample opportunity for further local talks to take place, it may also become evident that some of the details were known at the time of some or all of the talks, although no details with the exception of the City Centre Station and at the Bromborough Fire Station were discussed. It seems to the Union almost incredible, that whilst talks were ongoing to attempt to resolve strike action in Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, that the fullest details were not discussed. Those details could possibly have progressed dispute resolution at an early stage of action. I trust as Labour Chair to the Fire Authority, along with being a committed trade unionist that you were not privy to any such information with the compilation of any such information being undertaken only by service managers. I also trust that the employer's local joint secretary was unaware of those details, as if the local joint secretary was in possession of the details and felt it unnecessary to divulge it to progress resolution talks, that would appear deficient.

You will recall that I have made many requests for talks to take place immediately after the last local talks held on Tuesday 5th September 2006, and that I have made repeated requests for the national fire service negotiators to enter Merseyside to assist progressing to early resolution, it has been frustrating that you have not agreed for the employers side to assist and have attempted to remain of the position that the earliest you will contact the employers side of the NJC would be after the resumed P&F Committee meeting Wednesday 13th September 2006. The reason for your reluctance in allowing the NJC joint Secretaries to assist can only be surmised by the Union and our members but it clearly could have the impact of lengthening rather than shortening a trade dispute.

It also concerns me that some firefighters were made aware of the Bromborough details of the proposal whilst picketing Birkenhead Fire Station. It has been reported that DO Stephens divulged details possibly as early as Wednesday 6th September 2006, I will naturally leave it for yourself to investigate this matter as you feel fit.

As to your evident reluctance for the NJC Joint Secretaries to assist these talks in the quickest manner possible, I again remind you, as I did at the most recent Policy and Finance Committee meeting and in my correspondence to you dated 7th September 2006, that the local procedures permit either party to request the assistance of the NJC Joint Secretaries, the request for assistance is made direct to the Joint Secretaries and not to the other party. In frustrating the NJC involvement in this manner you are in breach of the very procedures you and the other fire authority members have recently reaffirmed your commitment to. Simply put, no side can veto or frustrate the others request for NJC intervention, a fact I am sure the clerk to the authority can confirm as the clerk was the employers representative whom the FBU negotiated with, negotiations which resulted in the present local procedures encapsulated in collective agreement.

Given the aforementioned points and your clear reluctance for early NJC involvement which would provide the speediest resolution prospects, the brigade committee have recently met and unanimously rejected the fire authorities' proposals as they stand.

As such the FBU expect immediate contact be made with the NJC Joint Secretaries for urgent intervention, again I can confirm that I have informed the employees joint secretary of that request.

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

Yours sincerely

L Skarratts
Brigade Secretary

cc M Wrack
A Dark
D Mills
Elected Members
MP's
All Members