

THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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NO BREAKDOWN AND NO BREAKTHROUGH AT TALKS SAY FIRE BRIGADES UNION BUT AUTHORITY BACKTRACK ON KEY ISSUES

There was no breakdown and no breakthrough at talks aimed at resolving the Merseyside fire dispute and they will resume on Tuesday. But the fire authority position has hardened with them backtracking in key areas and are close to insisting on pre-conditions which may de-rail the process.

Les Skarratts, Merseyside FBU brigade secretary said: “There was no breakdown and no breakthrough at the talks and we intend to meet again tomorrow. It is now also clear managers are backtracking on some issues on which we had made progress on Saturday.

“Both sides should be free to enter talks with their own negotiating positions and views. The fire authority appears to be close to moving back to a position of only having talks if they restrict us to talking about where £3.5 million worth of cuts will be.

“There is no question of us demanding pre-conditions or agreeing to them. It is this demand which kept them out of talks for weeks and which fell apart on them last week.

“We know they want to make massive cuts across the fire service in Merseyside and are grown up enough not to refuse to talk to them unless these cuts are withdrawn. Merseyside fire crews are happy to negotiate but the days of dictating the outcome of talks before they begin are over.

“Everyone on Merseyside knows our strike is taking place to stop the massive cuts the fire authority is proposing. It is difficult to comprehend what bit of that the fire authority fails to understand.

“Our morale is high, our determination to stop savage cuts across the Merseyside fire and rescue service is unwavering. We have tremendous support from a public which has rumbled managers who claim they can improve a public service by cutting it.”

The strike is in opposition to proposed cuts which include:

Cutting 120 firefighter posts – one in ten of the workforce –in addition to the 68 posts cut last year;

Introducing a 96 hour week at some fire stations;

Cutting 15 emergency fire control operator posts –one in four of the workforce

Axing four fire engines at night time;

There will be fewer rescue appliances, fewer firefighters on fire engines and a longer wait for crews to arrive at all 999 emergencies.

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