

THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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MERSEYSIDE DISPUTE: UNION ANNOUNCES MORE STRIKE DATES

Merseyside fire crews will be taking a further two four-day blocks of strike action. The first four days will start at 10.00 on 28 September and finish on 10.00 on 2 October and the second set of four days will start at 10.00 on 2 October September and finish at 10.00 on 6 October.

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. Les Skarratts, Merseyside FBU brigade secretary said: “No one should doubt our resolve to stop these cuts which risk our safety and the public safety in the long-term. You cannot have cuts of this magnitude and pretend it will not impact on the operational capacity of the fire service.

“These cuts will have a major impact on our 999 response. Fire crews will be much more thinly spread and will have to wait longer for support crews to arrive at incidents.

“We have dragged the fire authority kicking and screaming into talks over the last month. The reluctance to even enter talks is obvious and there has been a string of excuses for what now amounts to weeks of delays and feet-dragging.

“Three weeks ago we had positive talks which looked like they might be going somewhere. At the end of those talks the authority then refused to meet for five days and went into reverse gear.

“There are still no firm proposals that would resolve this dispute. There never has been anything which amounted to an offer, let alone one which would be acceptable.

““Fire crews do not want to take any strike action, we are open to further talks, but we will not sit back while our service is under threat. They want their threats of savage cuts to remain while they demand we withdraw our strike action. We can strike and talk at the same time even with the cuts they are still holding over our heads. They have no intention of withdrawing their cuts to enter negotiations.

“For months we have been willing to negotiate anytime and any place at short notice. The delaying tactics of the fire authority are those of people who want to prolong a dispute rather than resolve it and they are fooling no one.

“On Tuesday at the fire authority meeting the councillors demanded ‘immediate talks’ yet the feet-dragging remains. Exactly what part of ‘immediate’ do the senior managers of a 999 instant response service not understand?”