

THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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MERSEYSIDE FIRE CREWS HOPEFUL IN ADVANCE OF TALKS

Merseyside fire crews say they are hopeful in advance of talks due to start on Saturday at 11am between Assistant Chief Fire Officer Bill Evans and Merseyside FBU brigade secretary Les Skarratts. The two are the leading industrial relations officials in Merseyside. The venue of the talks will not be announced to ensure the two can meet and concentrate on resolving the dispute free from public glare.

Les Skarratts said: “We’re optimistic in advance of these talks although we’re sorry they did not start 3 days ago. If both sides enter them willing and able to genuinely negotiate then there is no reason for them to fail.

“Our priority is securing the long-term future of the Merseyside fire and rescue service which is having additional demands being placed on it all the time. It is to ensure the safety of our members and that of the public is not compromised by job cuts and reduced fire cover. A crude slash and cut approach has nothing to do with modernisation or protecting our communities.

“We are not mindless militants, we are Merseyside firefighters and emergency control staff determined to protect the emergency service we provide. The public fully understand that and their support has been welcomed by those on strike.

“Every dispute ends with a settlement. We are willing to do what we can to ensure that happens sooner rather than later and equally determined to protect the long-term future of the Merseyside fire service.”

“We fully back the calls of councillors Joe Anderson and Warren Bradley for assistance to be provided at national level to help resolve this dispute. The intervention of both these senior councillors is timely, welcome and must not be simply dismissed out of hand.

“The strike remains solid and claims of a return to work are untrue. Those working at Formby worked yesterday at different stations, they were not on strike and so have not returned to work.

“We will get more of this spin and nonsense. It is also astonishing that office staff who have never been to a fire are dressing up as firefighters, but at least the fire authority has reluctantly admitted they are doing this.”

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