



# The Fire Brigades Union

GENERAL SECRETARY: MATT WRACK

BRADLEY HOUSE, 68 COOMBE ROAD, KINGSTON UPON THAMES, SURREY, KT2 7AE

Telephone: 0208 541 1765  
Facsimile: 0208 546 5187  
E-mail: office@fbu.org.uk

Our Ref: MW/sll

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Cllr Maurice Heaster  
Chair  
National Employers  
Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London, SW1P 3HZ

Dear Maurice

## FIREFIGHTER PENSIONS: NO JOB NO PENSION THREAT

Following your letter of 17 October, the FBU Executive Council decided to postpone the strike action scheduled to take place on 19 October in order to fully explore the principles set out and examine whether they do indeed replicate those discussed in Scotland. Yesterday (21 October), we met representatives of the National Fire Service Employers in order to address the issues raised in your letter.

Even a first reading of your letter reveals numerous differences with the proposals set out in Scotland. Nevertheless, we were clear that this did appear to mark a significant shift, not least by acknowledging that the threat of No Job No Pension is a real one, arising from the pension changes being introduced by Central Government.

At our meeting yesterday we sought to confirm whether or not the National Employers were in a position to give a firm guarantee that those Firefighters who, through no fault of their own, were unable to maintain their operational fitness levels would not be faced with dismissal without access to an unreduced pension. We have been entirely clear with the Employers and with Government throughout these discussions that we require such a clear and robust guarantee.

This discussion confirmed the Employers' view that the combined efforts of Fire Authorities and individuals to maintain fitness should mean the vast majority, if not all, Firefighters will not face a 'no job, no pension' situation. (It is important to note in this regard that the FBU does not agree with the Employers on this point. We believe the evidence suggests there may be *large numbers* of people placed in such a position).

In any case, the Employers' representatives clarified that *no such guarantee* could be given on behalf of all Fire and Rescue Authorities. There were two aspects to this. Firstly, the existing discretion means each individual employer would be likely to adopt their own approach to this issue and, secondly, the Employers' were concerned as to whether the pension scheme regulations would even allow such an agreement to be made. We understand you have taken initial legal advice on this matter.

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In these discussions, both yesterday and last week with CLG, your representatives have confirmed, that there is a risk that Firefighters who might not achieve the necessary fitness standards might be left facing dismissal on capability grounds (No Job No Pension). These discussions have been useful for this clarification at least since this is a matter on which our concerns have been very publicly dismissed as scaremongering at both a national and local level.

In view of the clarification you have given, it would clearly not be helpful for individual employers, or Chief Fire Officers, to continue to claim that there is no such risk. Any such claims would clearly contradict the position you have set out to us, apparently based on legal advice.

We welcome this important clarification provided by the Employers but feel that this ultimately means that our concerns around this issue remain unresolved.

One possible solution to this problem, which we discussed, is for the regulations of the proposed 2015 pension scheme to specifically address this issue. Both parties acknowledged that if a guarantee was to be put in place this was the most sensible and practical option for resolving this particular element of our trade dispute

We have already raised this option verbally with CLG and will be writing to them confirming the outcome of the meeting and presenting them with this suggestion. You have stated that the Employers do not wish to see Firefighters facing the threat we have outlined (No Job No Pension). In light of that we would hope that you would support such a provision being included within the pension scheme regulations.

Yours sincerely

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

**MATT WRACK**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**