



HANDS OFF OUR CONTRACTS!

FBU SLAMS "ZERO HOURS CONTRACT" ATTEMPT & URGES FIREFIGHTERS' TO BE VIGILANT!

Voluntary casual arrangement

This letter is to confirm the arrangement with regard to your undertaking occasional work on a casual basis at Station.

The basic hourly rate will be for the role that you undertake. Your attendance to support crewing levels and other work will be as agreed by the Local Risk Manager.

While this arrangement is entirely separate from your RDS contract, your extra hours will, for administrative convenience, be paid under that employment. Please note, though, that hours should be claimed manually (ie using the attached form or photocopies) and not through Gartan. Please ensure, your manager signs them sends to Group Support for counter-signature and onward transmission to in the Pay and Conditions Section.

Please note that, for this arrangement, there is no mutuality of obligation between the Service and yourself. Consequently, the Service is not obliged to offer continuous, regular or indeed any work, and you are not obliged always to be available for work or to accept any work offered.

This is an informal non-contractual arrangement and consequently may be terminated at any time, without notice, by either you or the service.

The picture on the left is a photocopied section of a letter given to the Union by a Firefighter offered a "voluntary casual arrangement". The letter, written by HR, outlines the casual nature of the work and that it is "entirely separate" from a proper fire service contract.

We have blanked out the names and Fire Station of those involved but not amended any other text.

The FBU has slammed a so called "informal non-contractual arrangement" which had been introduced locally within Devon & Somerset FRS and which the Union has likened to a "zero hours contract" for Firefighters.

The self titled "voluntary casual arrangement" was being used to make up serious shortfalls at whole time Fire Stations and was introduced at a local level without any consultation with the Union, and without the apparent knowledge of principal officers. Under the "arrangement", which has now been withdrawn, Firefighters were offered an "informal non-contractual" agreement to work "on a casual basis" filling gaps on whole time shifts.

This "arrangement", which is completely outside of the Grey Book and severely undermines current contracts, only came to light when a Firefighter sent the Union a written copy of the "arrangement" offered to him *after his retirement from the whole time service!* The letter (extract above) confirmed the casualised nature of the "arrangement" and the Union immediately raised serious concerns about the "de-professionalisation"

of the Fire & Rescue Service. Trevor French, FBU rep for the Brigade, said "as soon as we were made aware of this so called "arrangement" we contacted senior management and demanded that it be withdrawn, which we are assured has now been done. The FBU has registered our serious objections that such an appalling arrangement was even contemplated within the Fire Service, let alone introduced. It should be obvious to every professional Firefighter that the sole aim of this "arrangement" is to put a sticking plaster on cuts in the cheapest, most casualised basis".

The situation was also condemned by South West Official Tam McFarlane who said "the introduction of such an arrangement shows a contempt for the professionalism of the Fire & Rescue Service and the employment status of the Firefighters who deliver it. It is very similar in nature to "zero hours contracts" which rob individuals of full and fair employment rights and severely undermines the national conditions and contracts of firefighters which we have fought so hard to achieve. I urge any member who is approached regarding such an arrangement to contact the FBU immediately."



Fighting for the Fire & Rescue Service

Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff

Wiltshire & Dorset FBU organise in face of combination proposals



Wiltshire & Dorset FBU with Tam McFarlane at joint meeting

The FBU has been organising and working hard in response to plans by Dorset & Wiltshire FRS's to merge the two Brigades. The Union is holding a series of joint meetings with reps from Dorset & Wiltshire to discuss the potential impact of a merger and organise the formal response when the expected proposals are put forward.

A recent joint FBU meeting, held at Gillingham Fire Station in Dorset, saw Union officials discussing in detail potential contractual implications for FBU members, implications for fire cover, emergency response, Fire Control, and a wide range of other questions which the Union will require answers to in the build up to the proposals.

The Union is receiving detailed legal advice on contractual, employment and consultation legislation and we have raised initial points and concerns on behalf of members to managers in both services. EC Member Tam McFarlane has written to both Chief Fire Officers and has recently met with Dorset CFO Darren Gunther to discuss initial issues and concerns raised by firefighters and control staff. An "all members" circular has been sent to FBU members in the 2 Brigades and regular updates have been given to FBU

Brigade Committees in Dorset and Wiltshire as well as the entire South West Regional Committee.

FBU Wiltshire rep Brent Thorley said "we have been working alongside our FBU colleagues in Dorset to ensure that we organise on behalf of our members across both Brigades. This has been very effective and if management ever thought they could play one of us off against the other, I can assure them they will fail!"

Karen Adams, FBU rep in Dorset added "we have concerns that recent plans to cut duty systems in Wiltshire could be carried into Dorset as part of the merger proposals, but, by organising in the way that we are doing, we can ensure that we will stand together in defence of our working conditions."

South West rep Tam McFarlane said "It is obvious to everyone that this merger is about making a Service fit a budget instead of, as it should be, providing a budget to ensure an effective Service. I want to send a clear message to everyone involved in these proposals that if they think a merger is a smokescreen to make cuts in the frontline, then they better think again. The FBU will defend our members, their jobs, their conditions, their duty systems and their working practices. We will defend our Service, our appliances, our Stations and our response times - and we will defend the public who rely on us. We will work with anyone who has a genuine motivation to protect the Fire Service in these unprecedented times of disgraceful cuts, but if any politician sees a merger as a means to drive through further cuts to the frontline then my message to them is clear - the FBU will fight you all the way!"

Cornwall & Cambridgeshire reps co-ordinate over shift plans

The FBU in Cornwall attended a specially arranged meeting with Union colleagues from Cambridgeshire to share information on proposed duty system changes. The meeting took place following proposals by Cornwall managers to review duty systems and consider changes made in other areas, including a new system introduced in Cambridgeshire over a year ago.



However, the meeting soon dispelled any suggestion that the system would be an appropriate or progressive move for Fire Crews in Cornwall. Cornish FBU reps listened intently as Cambridgeshire colleagues outlined the increase to working hours, cuts in leave, negative impact on family and deep unpopularity that this system has inflicted on firefighters in their Brigades. Cambridgeshire FBU rep Cameron Matthews said "This is a deeply detrimental duty system which was only accepted by firefighters because

they were told it would safeguard us from future frontline cuts. However, on the contrary, only 10 weeks after the system was introduced vital appliances were downgraded. It is no wonder that in a recent poll 83% of Cambridgeshire Firefighters said they would not recommend this system to other firefighters!"

Tim Edwards from Cornwall FBU said "this was a very important meeting and we thank the Cambridgeshire FBU for giving us the real facts behind this duty system. It is now clear to us that the only people who would benefit from its introduction is management: and they don't have to work it! Cornish firefighters will not compromise our working hours, leave, family and fire cover in Cornwall so that management can say they have delivered cuts and that is a message we will be delivering to them clearly!"

AVON FBU RAISE PENSION PROFILE IN MEDIA

The FBU hosted BBC crews in Bristol as part of a feature on occupational pensions, including fire service pensions. The feature had a "pensions expert" have a go at the jobs of different professions and speak with the workers involved about the individual issues they face.

Local Firefighter and FBU rep Gary Spindler put the expert through his paces cutting up cars, running hose and climbing the tower at Speedwell



Fire Station in order to show why a pension age of 60 is so unrealistic for Firefighters.

Retired Firefighter Al Dunlop

reinforced this point by giving an interview as part of the feature. All the points were made within the final programme which was subsequently broadcast on BBC Points West. Thanks to Avon Fire & Rescue Service for their assistance.

FBU & TUC raise flood issues

The FBU was a keynote speaker at a packed public meeting debating the recent massive floods in Somerset. The event, organised by Bridgwater TUC, was packed out with concerned members of the public and saw input from flood victims, the emergency services, the environment agency, local politicians and environmentalists. Following their presentation, each speaker took questions and answers from the room and the meeting ended with a full debate on all the issues raised.

Addressing the meeting on behalf of firefighters, FBU South West rep Tam McFarlane slammed the hypocrisy of politicians who praised Fire Crews during the floods at the same time as driving through massive budgets cuts in the Fire Service and pay freezes, pension attacks & job cuts for firefighters in the front line.

Tam demanded an end to cuts and invited the public to support the FBU campaign for proper



investment in order to provide the necessary equipment and firefighter jobs to deal with large scale floods in the future. The meeting proved so effective that further meetings are being considered and a pamphlet is now being produced to distribute to communities and politicians.

FBU = fighting for Firefighters & the Fire Service!

Union meets political leaders in Gloucestershire As County gets new Chief

The FBU has been meeting with political leaders in Gloucestershire as part of the campaign to stop cuts and provide a proper budget for the Service. The Union made the case for proper investment in the Service during a detailed meeting with Glos Councillor Barry Kirby, the shadow portfolio holder for Gloucestershire FRS.



Glos FBU Mike Tully (L) with Cllr Barry Kirby

firefighters during a series of meetings with the new CFO for the County, Stewart Edgar.

Further meetings with other political leaders in the County are being arranged and the Union will continue to press home our message of No Cuts with politicians of every party and the new CFO.

The Union has also been raising the concerns of

FBU = the professional voice of the Fire & Rescue Service!

WE ARE FIGHTING BACK!



South West EC Member Tam McFarlane

There is a growing sense of anger amongst Firefighters towards employers and managers who seem obsessed with delivering financial cuts, on behalf of politicians, by tearing up the contracts, duty systems and working hours of the people who deliver the front line Fire & Rescue Service.

There seems to be little understanding, or deliberate ignoring, of the fact that it is to firefighters and emergency fire control staff that the public turn to

in times of desperate need. It is our emergency fire control staff that take the calls from people in life threatening situations and give them support, guidance and often life saving advice; all while mobilising and organising fire appliances and fire crews to the incident.

It is firefighters who crawl through the smoke, heat and flames to rescue people trapped in fires or who deal with the carnage of road collisions, chemical incidents or any of the other myriad of different incidents that today's Fire & Rescue Service is required to attend. In short, it is firefighters and fire control

staff that **are** the Fire & Rescue Service and they should be treated with respect.

For too long, employers, and even some FRS managers, have been encouraged to believe that their role is to afford their staff the least respect they can get away with – the lowest possible pay, the worst possible conditions, the minimum of job security.

This is apparent not only in the shocking “zero hour contract” on the front page of this bulletin, but also in the growing trend amongst some employers to threaten and cajole firefighters to produce detrimental amendments to their own duty systems on the basis that, if they don't, management will “impose” something even worse. In other words, we are expected to deliver cuts to our own jobs, to our own contracts, to our own pay - or face the boot if we don't.

Our answer must be clear and unequivocal - We will fight to defend our future! Because the truth is, delivering cuts this year only feeds the appetite of politicians to demand even more cuts next year, and the year after that. Cuts to duty systems, far from making the situation “safe” only means that the bar

“Its time for firefighters and control staff to be treated with the respect they deserve”

is set even lower when the demand comes for cuts next time around.

Of course, there are many good Fire Service employers and managers out there, and they reap the benefits of motivated staff, good industrial relations and a highly effective service. Their example should motivate counterparts in other Brigades to understand that cuts are only “inevitable” if senior managers lack the courage to stop forcing them through. Until that time, however, it will be left to the FBU, as the professional voice of Firefighters, to send a clear and unequivocal message to those who want to cut our Service: You have a fight on your hands!

Unity is Strength.

Tam McFarlane, South West FBU



Follow us on our own Facebook page: Go to **South West Region of the Fire Brigades Union** and hit the “like” button. You will receive updates on our work and links to how we are fighting for you locally.



Follow us on Twitter at @southwestfbu



Keep up to date with our videos at ‘**South West FBU**’

You can also follow us on our website at: www.southwestfbu.com

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FBU SOUTH WEST

The Fire Brigades Union is the premier Trade Union for professional Firefighters and Control Staff across the UK. The South West Region is the largest Region in England and we cover Avon, Cornwall, Dorset, Devon & Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire FRS's.

We represent over 85% of uniformed staff across the UK. Our members cover every role from Firefighter to Area Manager, including the retained duty system. We are committed to protecting our Members, their interests at work and to ensuring that the public receive an excellent and professional Fire & Rescue Service. Join the professionals, contact us at:

www.southwestfbu.com

