



Fire Brigades Union Scotland

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All members
Region 1
Scotland

17th July 2013

Dear Brother/Sister,

Pensions: The ballot for Strike will take place between 18 July and 29 August 2013.

There is a wealth of information on the various proposals in relation to the future of firefighter's pensions in the many circulars and bulletins from Head Office. Such communications can be expected to be produced in order to inform member's consideration of this key issue. I urge you to keep yourself up to date with the current position by referring to these communications. www.fbu.org.uk/

The proposals on offer have been discussed as part of the union's consultation with all members by use of the branch structures; these are those of the UK government. The FBU has been represented at these discussions by our principal pension negotiators. Meaningful discussions continue to take place between with the FBU and Scottish Government in order to explore all and any potential solutions in an effort to find a way to elicit better proposals from the Scottish Government which would address our concerns and allow us to reach an agreement.

Accordingly, it may be possible that the Scottish Government advances proposals that markedly improve on those made by the UK government which now appears to have reached a 'final offer' that we could not advise members to agree to and in accordance with Conference, have instigated a strike ballot.

Should such proposals be brought forward they would be discussed with members to see if they amounted to a potential solution.

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As above, we are taking all measures to establish the Scottish Government's position. We know you would expect us to explore every avenue before having to move to the next stage. As with all disagreements, the matter will eventually be settled by talking.

Until now we have not asked you to contact your Member of the Scottish Parliament, (MSP). We instead have, as you will be aware, been concentrating on the Members of the UK Parliament, (MP) as this is where the negotiations have been focused.

In order to maximise our chances of success it is time now for the focus to also be applied to our own Scottish Parliament and our MSP's. I urge all members to make contact with your MSP as soon as possible. ; You can find your MSP's contact details at www.scottish.parliament.uk find MSP. I would urge branches to organise delegations to visit MSP's surgeries (remember that your MSP may be on leave) and make the case for your pension and for the future pensions of the members yet to come. I would advise you to inform the MSP or their office staff that you are wishing to attend as a delegation in advance.

We, the FBU members and officials, are the experts on our pensions and can inform and educate our MSP's on the key concerns regarding; contribution rates;

- the impact on Firefighters;
- and the impact on the public that we serve and their safety that operational Firefighters working beyond 55 would have,
- on the potential for large numbers of capability dismissals (which is the clear and undisputed implication of the findings contained within the UK Government's own independent report by Dr Williams) due to the impact of imposed fitness standards and the introduction of the proposed normal pension age of 60.

Members have expressed concern that the Scottish Government have still failed to implement the Modified Pension Scheme for Retained Firefighters. As you know the reference to the Modified Pension Scheme is to amendments to the rules of the NFPS to provide retrospective membership for retained firefighters who joined the fire and rescue service before 6 April 2006. The Scottish Government have the power to set the regulations for the RDS modified scheme and we call on them to bring these regs forward.

This failure to implement the Modified Scheme is in spite of the clear legal requirement to do so following the protracted litigation successfully

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fought by the Union to the House of Lords and subsequently the Employment Tribunal.

Trade Dispute Summary

The position, therefore, is that in relation to pension schemes in the fire service members throughout the country require the following eight provisions to be made concerning those schemes:

1. Protection arrangements which are a substantial improvement on the Proposed Final Agreement.
2. No further increases in member contribution rates.
3. An improved contribution ratio between employee and employer
4. Scheme provision so that any member above the age of 55 who, not being eligible for ill health retirement, is dismissed for reasons of fitness, efficiency or any other reason except misconduct, will receive immediate payment of an unreduced pension amounting to the full pension accrued at the date of dismissal
5. Flexible retirement with members being able to retire and draw their pension from the age of 55 and new scheme benefits taken before 60 being actuarially reduced with reference to the Normal Pension Age of 60 - the formula for that reduction being agreed with the FBU based upon advice the Union will obtain from its own independent actuary.
6. Commutation arrangements which are a substantial improvement on the Proposed Final Agreement.
7. The cost ceiling is set so that there are no reductions in pension benefits consequential upon the above provisions.
8. Immediate implementation of the Modified Pension Scheme for Retained Firefighters as negotiated with the FBU and sent by DCLG on 7 January 2013.

If relevant ministers are prepared to resolve the dispute as outlined above by making all of the provisions required to meet the above points, then once those provisions have been made there will be no need to proceed with a ballot or industrial action

For the avoidance of doubt, in light of devolved powers in relation to these schemes, although our members' requirements throughout the country are the same, these apply in each case only to the ministers in the relevant part of the country. So, for example, the requirements of members in England are addressed only to the relevant ministers in England and apply only to the fire service pension schemes in England etc. It follows that the same applies to resolution of the dispute. The union's intention is to get fair settlement and to avoid strike action so proposals which are fair and acceptable would have a major impact on the industrial action in each devolved area.

If members need any further guidance on the issues please refer to the information on the FBU website www.fbu.org.uk and also make contact with local FBU Officials. And remember;

VOTE and VOTE YES

We are now 3 months in to the single service and your local reps have been busy working with the new management team and fire board, amongst other things they have been discussing the current pensions issue as well as the opening of negotiations for standardisation of the 8 previous sets of policies and procedures. It would be fair to say that this has been more evolution than revolution and that we still have a bit to go.

We are close to publishing an internal structure which all of the 8 previous Brigade Committees in Scotland were consulted over, contributed to its development and was then endorsed by the Regional committee. This will allow you to feed your views in via the workplace branch and then through the recognised committee meeting structure. As a result of the planned changes the officials who were in post before the restructure shall continue as FBU officials but with some in different roles, so if you have a contact for a FBU official then still use this and if it's not their role any longer then they will direct you to the right official to deal with your issue. The structure will be sent to all branches and posted on the web site where contact details can already be found.
www.fbuscotland.org

We have discussed with the CFO and Chair of the Board the use of the service e mail systems in order to communicate more frequently on the issues affecting the membership, we have now agreed that the FBU will have access to this and we await confirmation of when this will happen, look out for your first FBU e mail on the SFRS Intranet.

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We are also in negotiations at this time to agree an ‘establishment’ figure for the service which will maintain the front line service delivery and protect the numbers of firefighter jobs in the long term. This process has been made more difficult due to the different ‘ridership’ levels and no previous service maintaining their agreed and funded establishment levels.

Incident command levels for the SFRS and the related development of an Officers Flexible Duty System for Scotland are currently the subject of ongoing negotiations and your FBU officer’s Scottish representative has been meeting with as many members as possible to gain their views on the initial SFRS proposals, Bro Frank Clayton can be contacted at frank.clayton@fbu.org.uk if you require advice or clarification on any issues.

The Future of Emergency Fire Controls in the SFRS (EFC’s) is another issue of concern that has been raised with your elected officials. You may be aware of the work done by former CFO Hunter of Tayside on the lessons to be learned from the Fire control project run from Westminster and proposed for England. Following this report key staff from the existing EFC’s in Scotland has been working on potential options for developing a resilient, future proofed and comprehensive future EFC’s model to enable mobilising interoperability across Scotland. We expect to be informed very soon of the outcome of this work and to engage soon over the details of any work done and to consult with FBU members on our options before entering any negotiations. Bro. Stephen Reid is your Scottish Control rep and can be contacted at stephen.reid@fbu.org.uk A visit from your National Executive Council member Sis. Sharon Riley is also being organised over the next few months, watch you notice board for details.

Branch representation and member participation is vital through the ongoing transition process to a single service. I am concerned that there are still a number of branches that have no recognised FBU official. You will appreciate that we need to ensure all members have the opportunity to contribute their views through the democratic structures of the Union beginning with the workplace branch on the many matters of concern that currently confront us . In order to achieve this we need active and well organised FBU workplace branches. I urge any FBU Member who is concerned that their FBU Branch is not meeting because there are no Branch reps or for any other reason to get in touch. I will ensure that a meeting is called and attended by FBU officials to update members and

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assist to organise a functioning workplace branch. I would also urge any member who is considering being the local branch rep to get in touch. region01@fbu-ho.org.uk This is a vital role and needs someone who with the support of other FBU Officials can organise the branch.

Branch participation, we are still looking to get members involved in being the local branch rep, someone who can give a little for the many. We have a number of important issues yet to discuss with the new service and we need as full participation of the membership as we can, that's democracy. To do this we need to use the tried and proven 'Branch' structure and to have that function we need volunteers., it is vitally important that the views of the members in all branches is heard and that reports can be given and issues raised at your local committee this allows your regional and area officials to take proper account of the concerns of all members and keep you up to date with current issues. If you are interested then please e mail gerry.mcleod@fbu.org.uk ,who is the education rep for Scotland and he can advise you of the next course available for basic skills to be a branch official in your local area/station. Or contact our team at region01@fbu-ho.org.uk who can put you in contact with your local district or area rep and organise a visit to the branch.

Finally, you are reminded that if you want accurate, truthful and relevant information then please use the official FBU media outlets and don't be fooled by lies, perjury and myths of keyboard cowards.

www.fbuscotland.org

www.fbu.org.uk

Yours fraternally



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