



FIRE BRIGADES UNION

Scotland *Newsletter*

THE PROFESSIONAL VOICE OF YOUR FIREFIGHTERS

November 2020

Welcome to the November edition of FBU Scotland Newsletter. This month we will be aiming to address many of the concerns members have been raising in response to the Chief Officers latest broadcast. We continue to emphasise that the FBU is the only professional voice representing firefighters and firefighters (control) in all roles and all duty systems, and this must continue to be recognised and accepted by the SFRS when negotiating any changes to uniformed pay, terms and conditions.

Members have been raising concerns, on what they believe to be, a series of mission creep criticisms towards the FBU membership. Criticisms on the democratic decisions our members make and criticisms on our right to negotiate on uniformed pay, terms and conditions. The FBU are our members and any challenge to that will be seen as an attack on trade union principles and the ability for our members to have their voices heard through the democratic structures of our union, which will not be tolerated.

The latest video broadcast discusses a wide range of areas, where concerns have been raised, from our membership, on the direction of the SFRS. Terms are being used to soften the language such as “bringing stations together” which is historically known as a term for station closures, a direction which the FBU will robustly challenge. Decisions like this ultimately result in fewer firefighters, slower response times and the potential to impact on firefighter and public safety. Firefighters will not accept the argument that response times are irrelevant, it is built into a firefighters DNA the desire to intervene swiftly, to make the difference as to whether someone lives or dies. Response times matter because people and their lives matter.

To lose jobs in this current climate does not make economic sense, we cannot cut ourselves out of this crisis. We need to invest in jobs to support the economic recovery from COVID as more jobs equates to more taxes paid which, contributes to the government’s economic stability. We need that stability to support investment in our public services, including the fire and rescue service.

The broadcast goes on further to discuss our choices to evolve or fight change. The FBU have no issue with evolving or changing, in fact the FBU have been the drivers of some of the key changes to our profession in the past. However, there is a significant difference if that evolution and change involves cuts to our service, this is something we will challenge at every opportunity possible.

The FBU accept that the risks in our communities are always changing and the job of a firefighter changes with them. However, it is vital to nationally assess these risks to ensure the Fire & Rescue Service remains suitably resourced, with enough firefighters who have the skills, equipment and infrastructure to respond, and the FBU will continue to be a committed and critical voice in assessing this.

In previous Newsletters, we updated members on the FBU challenging the SFRS decision to reduce crewing levels from the agreed safe crewing model of five on primary appliances, down to four. We have heard some reports that this decision had been agreed with the FBU and we can confirm that this is not correct, from the outset, the FBU has challenged this reduced crewing. We share our members concerns of the potential impact to response times, firefighter and public safety and the risk of burning out our members. If the vision is to do more for our communities at a time when there are cuts to our service, then the potential impact will be a burnt out workforce. We can assure our members that we will continue to challenge any cuts to our profession.

Your concerns are our concerns and it’s our priority to make sure they are heard at every level of the SFRS.

Q - Can you commit to continued consultation with the FBU on any further transformation and the broadening of the role? The last offer was not far off being accepted and I believe that most of us are still committed to and willing to work towards a future vision you have highlighted.

SFRS - The Scottish Government had been clear, not just in the time that I have been, but in the couple of years before that in meetings with the previous Chief and the previous Chair of the Board, and with the officials from Scotland and the UK

that were involved in the negotiations. That transformational change had to be demonstrated in year something had to be done, the agreement had to be signed and something had to be done about delivering it. It could have been OHCA, it could have been any element of that.

FBU - There was no real issue with OHCA and some of the other aspects of the offer. We could have delivered on that if the Service had not deviated away from what was discussed in the initial negotiations. OHCA plus and STF’s were only to

be “signposted” that was what was said in the initial meetings, confirmed by those in attendance. The Service then changed the position from “signposting” to responding to those activities. The FBU were clear throughout negotiations that this was not acceptable, at this time. If those activities had been removed, there was a very high chance that members would have accepted the offer, which was evident in our feedback from our consultation. There is still an opportunity to deliver OHCA and MTA, if there is a will from both the SFRS and the Scottish Government.

SFRS - We regularly go out to people who have cardiac arrests, whether that's gaining entry on behalf of the SAS or whether that's through specific OHCA calls and that's something Stuart Stevens, the ACO of service delivery, is working through with SAS colleagues to see where they are anticipating additional demand that they could do with our support and support from 3rd sector partners. Once we understand that then we'll have a discussion with those stations whether that's through a conversation with the FBU, with other unions or whether we look for volunteers, or whether we look at unaffiliated to deliver support services in those areas.

FBU - The FBU continually raise with SFRS the concerns our members are raising in relation to requests to attend 'out of role' incidents and will continue to do so. OHCA is part of broadening the role negotiations and it's welcomed that the service is still committed to those discussions with the FBU. What is concerning is the reference "other unions" when the FBU is the only union with collective bargaining rights to negotiate on uniformed terms and conditions. To challenge that is to challenge the eligibility of our member's voices which is unacceptable.

SFRS - That is the type of thing that we do every single day. We will be doing more of that and again it's one of those 'Watch this Space'. In terms as part of the discussions we have about what the vision could be, should look like, if that's what you think we should be doing then please build it into the feedback so that we can actually as we talk about the operational impact of the vision for Scotland.

FBU - We would encourage all FBU members to feedback to the service to commit to negotiating any broadening of the role of a firefighter with the FBU

Q - The HM Inspectorate was very critical of the FBU influence on workplace culture and the general influence of the FBU dealing with fire services. Is this something that needs to be addressed?

SFRS - I am really keen to hear your voice as to what we should be doing with the SFRS Elements of the broadening role that you still think they are relevant and what we should be doing it's my job with the Board to find a way that we can deliver that. Whether that's negotiating with another union or whether that's looking or seeking volunteers for a survey, or commissioning it out someone else, who is not a member of staff but could deliver to this.

FBU - During the FBU pay ballot consultation the majority of feedback from members suggested they are not opposed to MTA inclusion within the broadening of the role proposal and this was relayed to the service throughout the negotiation meetings. The areas that were seen as not acceptable within the future broadening of the role proposal was co-responding to slips, trips & falls and OHCA+ elements. The FBU are the only union with collective bargaining rights due to the size of our membership, circa 5000 in Scotland. Commissioning out work to someone who is not a member of staff would appear that the service are considering privatisation of a public service. The FBU would robustly resist any consideration to privatise our service.

Q - Is it right that our negotiation process allowed a relatively small group of people to vote down on the pay offer? What, if anything can be done to stop this and staff in any future negotiation.

FBU - The FBU is a collective membership of firefighters & firefighter (control) who are all SFRS staff. We are a democratic union with our members making decisions through the democratic structures of their union. The only negotiating body for a firefighter / firefighter (control) within SFRS, on terms and conditions, is the FBU, as the FBU is a collective membership of the majority of SFRS firefighters/firefighter control staff who were collectively balloted and voted to reject the SFRS pay proposal earlier this year.

Q - We need a total modernisation package across all of our functions and if the FBU won't get on board then we need get our views and their outrageous political positioning.

SFRS - One of my commitments is go beyond the minority that are the FBU membership, so about 8000 people and I see it as 8000 people not just FBU members, there are just under 3000 who affect the T&Cs; which is wrong, it shouldn't be like this. I have made it clear I would like a modern staff engagement process for the SFRS so that we can deliver what Scotland need and we can actually move forward.

FBU - This is an inaccurate statement. The FBU membership is not under 3000. This view also undermines collective bargaining rights, the role of the National Joint Council (NJC) where our Grey Book Terms and Conditions are negotiated and agreed, and also the Fair Work principles supported by the Scottish Government. The Grey Book protects our terms and conditions and stops FRS's from imposing new activities. Firefighter's voices must be heard through democratic structures. The FBU have those democratic structures where "modern staff engagement processes" do not. There is no accountability, no election process, no ballot for decision making, as there is within trade unions. If firefighters want their voices and views to count, then we would urge them to join the FBU where we can assure your voice will be heard and it will count.

SFRS - The service should be driven by the risk patterns that we have. It should not be driven by any of the Unions. That's a very outdated view.

FBU - This is contradictory to what has previously been said. It's been stated that the voices of employees is vital in having a say on the "vision of the service" the union is the voice of the firefighters & firefighters (control) we take forward the members views through speaking and listening to our branches and ballot processes. If those views are not supported by the Service, then it is not acceptable to then criticise the union for that and say our members voices are outdated. Would this have been the position of the Service if our members had accepted the pay offer in February. This appears to be a clear attack on the democratic decision of our members and a clear attack on the principle of trade unionism and collective bargaining.

Don't forget that a comprehensive list of legal services are available to members and their families.



Information leaflets are available and details can be found on the legal services website

**Contact the FBU Legal Service on
0808 100 6061
www.thompsonstradeunion.law/fbu**

Q - Do I anticipate any change to the current 5 watch duty system?

SFRS - The 5-watch duty system, if resourced correctly, works really well for the organisation

FBU - Why is this system not being resourced adequately? If it is known that not resourcing it correctly causes issues, therefore, why are SFRS not recruiting to the levels to have the resources in place that supports the duty system working well? The FBU have continually raised concerns with SFRS on appliances being placed off the run across all three areas due to crewing and under resourcing, against agreed safe crewing models to crew first appliances with a crew of 5. The FBU will continue to challenge these practices as firefighter safety is our priority.

Q - How can we progress transformation if the FBU remain opposed to broadening the role? Surely any change to T&C's would require the union's agreement?

SFRS - I will not be stopped in my tracks by not being able to do something. MTFA is a brilliant example of us being stopped in our tracks.

FBU - The FBU do not oppose broadening the role. This has been FBU conference policy for many years. This is why MTA must not be negotiated as an ARA, as this activity is included within the discussions of the broadening of the role for ALL firefighters across Scotland. If this was an ARA only a certain few would receive that payment, yet it is highly likely that a station with no MTA capabilities would initially be mobilised, as the incident may come through, for example, as an RTC and develop. The FBU have formally notified the service to re-open discussions on the broadening of the role for all firefighter/firefighter (control) across Scotland, which includes discussions on an MTA response.

SFRS - I am as sad as you are that that was rejected, however, I still have a responsibility to deliver those things, by direction of the Scottish Government

FBU - Direction from the Scottish Government has been consistent in referencing the requirement for a fire service response to OHCA and MTA, throughout their communications, and Scottish Government Fire and Rescue Service Framework reports. The FBU have informed the service they are willing to meet to discuss this further, with a view to reaching an agreement in Scotland, to broaden the role to include both these activities. There has been a lot of work on both MTA and OHCA by both FBU Working Groups and SFRS, which would imply these areas of work are almost complete and ready to implement on agreement.

Q - Not every employee is in the Union, will future options be put to vote to all staff, not just FBU members. As a non-union firefighter I had no say in the broadening of the role last February and would have voted in favour of accepting the offer, yet my view was not taken in to consideration, simply because I did not want to be in the Union.

SFRS - At the moment T&C's negotiations is only through the NJC, only through the FBU. One of the things we would like to have in place is an employee committee of some kind which reflects how we do things. We have to find a way to negotiate with whichever the responsible Union is for those T&C's. At the moment I have to negotiate with the FBU, over T&C's. Until something alternative is put in place, however, there is nothing to stop a non-union firefighter or any member of staff, volunteering to undertake an element of what could be termed as looking at the broadening role. That's certainly something I am considering, how we look at a non-affiliated member of staff across the whole of the service. How do we look at asking for volunteers, how do we look at people who aren't traditional operational people?

FBU - The FBU question the meaning of this statement? It appears that the SFRS support leaving the NJC and do not want to negotiate with the FBU, with the alternative being an undemocratic "employee committee" An employee committee undermines the role of trade unions and goes against the Fair Work principles supported by the Scottish Government.

Q - So the FBU members democratic process is how the officials are elected and they act for us but if you don't feel properly represented demand changes to our union?

SFRS - I completely agree though if you don't like the way your officials are representing you then demand change.

FBU - Officials are elected by the membership to represent the views of the membership. That's the role of FBU officials and the views of the membership is carried through the democratic structures of our union.

Q - It sounds like you are keen to push authority further down the ladder, it would be helpful to have a simple mechanism for all employers to make suggestions for improvement especially in RDS where a vast amount of non-firefighting experience is not being tapped into.

SFRS - I'm looking at how we develop or how we or ask Liz to look at how we develop a skills bank so that we can draw on the resources of the organisation rather than bring people in from out with the organisation to do some interesting and exciting things.

FBU - In relation to uniformed staff, a 'skills bank' refers to those skills which could be outside the current firefighter's role map, Grey Book and current Terms and Conditions. For SFRS to utilise these 'out of role' skills they should be negotiated with the FBU and agreed by our members with remuneration as appropriate. To seek volunteers would see a few individuals carrying out this work, out with their terms and conditions, which would undermine any further negotiations to broaden the role and increase the pay of ALL firefighters to meet the elements of work the Scottish Government are seeking.



**FIREFIGHTERS 100
LOTTERY**

THE GOOD CAUSES

The Firefighters 100 Lottery Fund shall be administered appropriately by the Fire Brigades Union for the future benefit of all firefighters and their bereaved families in accordance with the following good cause criteria:

<https://www.firefighters100lottery.co.uk/support/firefighters/buytickets>

Q - The HM Inspectorate was very critical of the FBU influence on workplace culture and the general influence of the FBU dealing with fire services. Is this something that needs to be addressed?

MB - The task for me is with my strategic leadership team and the Board is to deliver the modern fire and rescue service and whether that's negotiating with whichever union it is, the collective agreement with whichever union it is or whether it is we are bold and look for volunteers to deliver services externally from us or actually using another part of our workforce, the conditions of the grey book. There are a number of options.

FBU - There is only one union with collective bargaining rights for fighters and firefighter (control) within SFRS and that is the FBU. The FBU have advised the service they are willing to meet to discuss further the areas the Scottish Government have advised, they are seeking, to broaden the role of a firefighter in Scotland, with a view to reaching an agreement. There has been a huge amount of work on both MTA and OCHA by both FBU Working Groups and SFRS, which would imply these areas of work are almost complete and ready to be implemented when an agreement is reached for all firefighters in Scotland not just a select few.

FBU Executive position Covid 19 - Testing, Tracing & Isolating

The central ethos of the Fire and Rescue Service is to protect safety and reduce risk - and not to jeopardise public safety and introduce or increase risk. If operated effectively, testing, tracing and isolating can help to protect FRS personnel and the wider public by helping to control the rate of reproduction, reduce the spread of the infection and save lives. If operated effectively, NHS Test and Trace can help to control the rate of reproduction, reduce the spread of the infection and save lives.

The FBU understands that current PHE guidance allows for very specific circumstances where an FRS worker may be exempt from being considered a close contact for the purposes of contact tracing and isolation whilst providing front line duties. These circumstances are strictly limited to times where the appropriate clinical grade PPE can be confirmed to have been worn for the duration of the contact and the appropriate IPC training has been delivered and maintained. An FRS worker will be considered a close-contact for the purposes of contact tracing and isolation, if they have had close-contact with a COVID-19 case in all other circumstances.

Any decision to exempt an FRS worker from being considered as a close contact for the purposes of contact tracing and isolation, can only be made by a local health team Tier 1 contact tracer (equivalent in Scotland) and never

by self-assessment or FRS managerial assessment. The process of escalating decisions to Tier 1 contact tracers, including the provision of information, should be agreed jointly through local joint safety committees. Following escalation to the Tier 1 contact tracer by the employer, any information provided to inform the decision of the tracers should be done so directly by the individual involved, not relayed second hand by an FRS manager.

The member should immediately seek contact with the Tier 1 contact tracer and remain isolated until they are satisfied that all the required information has been provided and an exemption has been confirmed on this basis. Members should be free to do so without any fear of reprisal by employers. Any decision to exempt should be taken on a case by case basis and no 'blanket approaches' should be adopted.

Periods of isolation will be recorded separately and not count towards any absence management policy triggers. In circumstances where local FBU Health & Safety officials are satisfied that suitable and agreed risk assessments have been implemented, and provide for the correct level of clinical grade PPE and appropriate IPC training, it is acceptable that mobile phones containing a tracing app are not taken onto the incident ground or are turned

off, effectively 'pausing' the app for the duration of the activity for which the individual is wearing the correct PPE. The app is to be re activated once the individual has left the incident ground. Whilst the app is not being used, all other methods of contact tracing and any notifications received must be adhered to.

It is intolerable that any Fire and Rescue Service employer would seek to abuse the guidance for first responders. Accordingly, in order to protect the health and safety of fire service personnel and the public alike, the FBU will provide full support to all members who are confronted by a hostile and unprofessional managerial approach or any other failure to safely and adequately apply the protections within the test, trace and isolate regime.

KEEP UP TO DATE

With the latest news on the FBU Scotland website www.fbuscotland.org
Twitter - @FBUScotland
Facebook - Fire Brigades Union Scotland

Contact Us

**4th Floor,
52 St Enoch Square
Glasgow, G1 4AA
TEL - 0141 221 2309
E-mail - region01@fbu.org.uk**

FBU Scotland - Officials

Listed below are the contact details for the Regional Committee which includes Area and Sectional Officials. Area Officials ensure the Branches/Sections, within their area, are kept up to date with all FBU business via communication and at regular Area Committee meetings with Area Branch/Sectional Reps. Sectional Officials also keep their respective sectional members up to date on FBU work. Any member queries/concerns should be raised via the Branch/Sectional Rep in the first instance. If your Branch/Section does not currently have Branch/Sectional Reps in position, please contact one of your Area Officials in the first instance (Branches should aim to have a minimum of three Branch Reps in place - Secretary, Chair and Health and Safety Rep). Any membership queries should be directed to the relevant Area Organiser.

The Regional Committee currently have vacant positions within the following Sections - Officer, RDS, LGBT and B&EMM. Area Officials have been liaising with Branches to fill these sectional positions as it's vital that all our sections have representation. We would welcome interest from members who are looking for further information, regarding these positions. Full FBU training, education and support will be given. Any members who are interested in these sectional posts should contact their Area/Sectional Official for further information.

**EC Member - chris.mcglone@fbu.org.uk
Regional Secretary - denise.christie@fbu.org.uk
Regional Chair - brian.cameron@fbu.org.uk
Regional Treasurer - seona.hart@fbu.org.uk**

**North Area (Interim) Secretary - colin.brown@fbu.org.uk
North Area Chair (Interim) - simon.leroux@fbu.org.uk
North Area Vice Chair - siana.hughes@fbu.org.uk
North Area Organiser (Interim) - scott.macrory@fbu.org.uk**

**West Area Secretary - john.malcolm@fbu.org.uk
West Area Chair - alex.muir@fbu.org.uk
West Area Vice Chair - jamie.mccallum@fbu.org.uk
West Area Organiser - ian.sim@fbu.org.uk
West Area 5th Official - angus.young@fbu.org.uk**

**East Area Secretary - john.mckenzie@fbu.org.uk
East Area Chair - gus.sproul@fbu.org.uk
East Area Vice Chair - ian.mcgregor@fbu.org.uk
East Area Organiser - davey.strachan@fbu.org.uk**

**Regional Health & Safety Rep - david.hart@fbu.org.uk
Regional Control Rep - donna.donachie@fbu.org.uk
Regional Women's Rep - rachel.rogers@fbu.org.uk
Regional Fairness at Work Rep - melanie.gibb@fbu.org.uk
Regional Education/Learning Rep - ian.mcgregor@fbu.org.uk
Union Learning Fund Project Organiser - kim.ferguson@fbu.org.uk**