



Fire Brigades Union Scotland

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All FBU Members

Monday, May 19, 2014

Dear Comrades,

The recent periods of strike action called in England and Wales has created particular hardship for FBU members in Buckinghamshire.

Their Chief Officer's proposals subsequently endorsed by their Fire Board has resulted in all firefighters on strike being instructed not to attend for duty until the commencement of the next day or nightshift following any period of strike action.

This means that the loss of pay to members for any period of strike action shall be increased to up to 9 hours for any period that ends before 6p.m. and to up to 15 hours for any period that ends after 6p.m.

FBU members taking strike action to achieve a workable and affordable Firefighter's pension scheme are also being vilified by their Chief who in an open letter to firefighters defending these tactics has accused them of "bloodlust..." of being "half informed idiots'.." and most alarmingly of all of indulging in "fascist behaviours" simply for protesting against the draconian measures he has implemented; this from a Chief who receives a pensionable salary of £140,000 and has been paid bonuses on top of over £6,000 in recent years.

No other Fire Authority or Chief Officer has acted in this provocative manner and in fact some are openly sympathetic to the aims of the FBU pension campaign as they recognize that as the evidence from the Governments own independent report shows, it shall be impossible for the overwhelming majority of Firefighters to maintain what is the currently accepted safe fitness standard up until age 60.

In response to the 12 periods of strike action I know many FBU Branches in Scotland have been collecting donations from members to send to FBU Brigade hardship funds in England and Wales to show our solidarity, financial support and in recognition that any improvements to the Scottish offer achieved through further negotiations with the UK Government will also benefit members in Scotland.

I would urge all branches to meet and agree to request all members voluntarily contribute to Brigade hardship funds and to consider focusing on Buckinghamshire's currently and twinning with a FBU branch in England or Wales.

Their Bucks Hardship Fund details are:

HSBC

Account No:71603124

Sort Code:40:33:33

Bucks FBU Welfare Fund

Member Ashley Brown

A member in Hertfordshire with 25 years unblemished service Ashley Brown has been dismissed from his Fire and Rescue Service due to allegations over inappropriate tweets (the content of them would not be regarded as offensive by a reasonable person) he had made, despite these not referring to any individual or identifying Ashley as a serving firefighter and nor did these tweets lead to any complaints.

Nevertheless Ashley was charged and found guilty of gross misconduct as his tweets allegedly “may bring Hertfordshire County Council into disrepute” and he was instantly dismissed without pay 2 weeks before Christmas, incredibly this grossly unfair and disproportionate decision was upheld at the appeal hearing . Local FBU Reps. report that the discipline process was clearly flawed and also failed to take account of Ashley’s previous record and his extremely difficult personal circumstances due to the ongoing severe ill health of family members that has also created considerable financial difficulties.

The FBU Reps and members locally have been supporting Ashley financially throughout the appeal process but now recognise in light of the failed appeal that a ballot for strike action to re-instate Ashley needs to be considered and also to secure a commitment that Herts. FRS will abide by the agreed disciplinary process outlined in the grey book and will also agree to support the joint protocol on good industrial relations.

I also urge you to consider contributing some of any donations raised to assist Ashley.
The account details are:

Unity Trust Account: Ashley Brown Family Relief Fund,
Sort Code 08-60-01,
Account No. 20322302

It is clear that there are rogue Chief Officers and Fire Authorities in England who are intent on exploiting our industrial action over Pensions to undermine the FBU and attack our officials and members.

Pensions are the key element in most members financial planning for the future to ensure they and their families have a degree of financial stability after a lifetime of public service. We need to, continue to campaign for a fair deal on pensions and to also protect the fundamental right of workers to take industrial action in pursuit of our just aims free from intimidatory tactics and the threat of dismissal. Please ensure your branch organises to assist our members and Officials who are being attacked for taking a leading role in our campaign.

Best regards



John Duffy
Scottish Secretary