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**FIRE BRIGADES UNION****Brigade Secretary : Dave Williams**

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CFO S McGuirk  
Service Headquarters  
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Dear Chief,

**FBU Response to IRMP 2**

In responding to the draft second year IRMP document it remains the intention of the FBU in Cheshire to be supportive of improvements to the Fire Service and to help in improving the service we offer the public. We hope, therefore, that any changes can be approached in a spirit of partnership, where modernisation of the way we work and deliver our services can be guided by ministerial frameworks and remain within the spirit and intent of nationally negotiated conditions of service.

The changes proposed in the Cheshire documents IRMP and IRMP2 are considerable and extensive, so to avoid confusion, and to instil a sense of workforce inclusion in these proposals, we ask that all matters affecting FBU members be the subject of thorough consultation/negotiation with a view to reaching agreement prior to the implementation of changes to policies, practices or protocols.

In an effort to assist in this process we make the following observations to the points raised in the draft IRMP2 document.

**Cheshire Risk Categorisation and Cheshire Response Standards.**

We are unsure of the reasoning and methods you have used to categorise risks in Cheshire or of your methods of calculating response times for these risk categories. Initial observations would suggest that previously applicable emergency response times have been diluted. For example areas such as Warrington previously considered "B" risk demanded attendance times of 1 appliance within a minimum of 5 minutes and a 2<sup>nd</sup> appliance within a minimum of 8 minutes. This has been changed to 1 appliance within 10 minutes with no mention of a response standard for a 2<sup>nd</sup> appliance. We are unable to see how this can constitute an improvement either to the safety of the public or to the safety of firefighters.

We, therefore, request further discussion on the entire process of risk assessment and the setting emergency response targets.

We appreciate that the next stage of your change agenda will be to match resources to enable your new standards to be met and request that prior to entering this process full consultation is completed with regard to the applicable risk assessments and response standards for Cheshire.

## **Commentary on the section what we have achieved to date.**

1. Define new Cheshire standards. Our point is made above that it appears response standards are worse than previously applicable standards.
2. Develop a Medium Term Financial Plan. We wish to point out that resources are being removed from emergency response provision and put into back room bureaucracy, contrary to the principles of the Gershon review and the direction of the national framework document.
3. Introduce Mobile Incident Commanders. The draft IRMP2 document hails the MIC a resounding success, this is far from accurate. The FBU have pointed out that the officers are unclear as to their role in emergency response, are under-resourced and are situated in the wrong place.
4. Develop community risk profiles. The FBU remains supportive of the concept of risk assessed fire cover.
5. Introduce changes to the work routines. The FBU have complied in full with the 30% increase in productive working hours.
6. Develop a new staffing model. The FBU have questions as to how the optimum crewing is to be applied; either to the staffing of retained appliances or to task and cast analysis in the FSEC model process.
7. Introduce an Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS). The claim that the first stage of personnel appraisals is now complete is inaccurate if it is intended to mean that all staff have received their initial appraisal. Our retained staff have been allocated only 30minutes to complete their appraisal due to insufficient resources to allow whatever time is required. The management attitude of rushing to tick the right boxes rather than developing a long term method of developing staff has undermined confidence in the entire process.
8. Best Value review (BVR) of Service accommodation. The FBU requests a copy of the emerging findings.
9. BVR of shift working. This is the subject of ongoing negotiation.
10. BVR of Incidents that we respond to. The FBU urges that we continue to respond to all calls for assistance and that we do not impose charges for these services.
11. Review of overtime. The FBU requests a copy of the review of overtime.
12. Review and develop the Home Fire Safety Check policy. The FBU requests a copy of the policy review.
13. Develop a strategy to target communities that are farther away. The FBU has already responded to the use of Fire Safety advocates.
14. Develop and procure an outreach fire station. The FBU requests consultation/negotiation on details of the intended usage and staffing arrangements for these units.
15. Develop a volunteer strategy. The FBU has already responded to the volunteer strategy.
16. Develop a Road Traffic Collision (RTC) reduction strategy. The FBU requests consultation/negotiation on this matter.
17. Develop an Arson reduction strategy. The FBU remains in support of reducing incidence of arson.
18. Develop policy for installation of hard wired smoke detectors. The FBU remains in support of the provision of hard wired smoke detectors.
19. Develop a policy to meet the introduction of the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO). The FBU requests a copy of the policy being developed to meet the RRO.

- 20.. Develop a policy for installation of residential sprinklers. The FBU remains in support of the installation of residential sprinklers.
- 21.. Develop a policy for the reduction of Un- Wanted Fire Detection Signals (UWFDS). The FBU requests consultation on the policy for the reduction of UWFDS.
- 22.. Introduce a cardiac co-responder scheme in partnership with Mersey Regional Ambulance Service (MRAS). The national policy of the FBU remains opposed to such schemes.
- 23.. Develop new emergency response standards. The new standards appear to be a substantial downgrading compared to the previously applicable standard. The FBU wish to respond to this as a separate item.
- 24.. Develop the Fire Services Emergency Cover (FSEC) model. The FBU have already requested further information regarding this process.
25. Develop resource deployment. The FBU requests further information regarding this process, and asks for involvement at all stages of the process.
26. Review policy and procedures for Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH). The FBU requests a copy of the new policy and procedures.
- 27.. Develop our Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) team. The FBU requests negotiation regarding a policy for the (USAR) team.
- 28.. Develop the effectiveness of Local Performance Delivery Groups (PDGs). The FBU remains in support of this policy.
29. Develop a system of staff development based on job rotation. The FBU requests negotiation on this issue.
30. Review and develop our Integrated Communications and Technology strategy. The FBU requests a copy of this new strategy.
- 31.. Evaluate and enhance our Partnership working. The FBU remains in support of working with partners within national and local agreement.
32. Seek sources of external funding. The FBU requests details of this policy.
33. Implement a new Integrated Management System (IMS). The FBU asks for further information on this issue.
34. Develop a performance management framework. The FBU asks for further information on this issue.
35. Introduce an employee recognition policy. The FBU requests further information on this issue.
36. Develop delegated budgets. The FBU requests further information on this issue.
37. Implement new audit and review arrangements. The FBU requests further information on this issue.
38. Introduce improved levels of administrative support on fire stations. The FBU notes the substantial increase in size of the budget for support staff contrasting with the cuts in numbers of emergency response staff.
39. Restructure Corporate Services. The FBU notes this restructuring.
40. Fully participate in the Regional Management Board (RMB). The FBU requests (in the spirit of openness, inclusion and accountability) a dialogue with the Chair of the Regional Management Board concerning its policies, plans and projects.
41. Develop a communications strategy. The FBU requests further information on this issue.

There are a large number of changes contained within this section and we ask that it be noted that in no way do we wish to impede progress in the Fire Service, only that it be recognised that the resources of any representative body would be stretched by such targets. We appreciate the efforts made by the Fire Service in granting facilities to assist the FBU in fulfilling our role in consultation/negotiation. However, even with this assistance the sheer volume of matters requiring consultation/negotiation is proving difficult to keep up with and would ask for a degree of patience regarding this issue.

We hope that the aim of the Fire Authority is one of moving ahead together as a partnership rather than lurching from one area of conflict to the next.

## **SECTION FIVE OF YEAR 1 IRMP (FUTURE PROJECTS).**

We request full consultation/ negotiation on all the items in this section.

We do feel that in this response we must take particular issue with paragraph

*9. Review the number of supervisory officers necessary for managing operational incidents – The introduction of the Mobile Incident Command officers and a review of past operational activity in the context of officer usage under the Incident Command System (ICS), has enabled a reduction in the number of on-call (flexi-duty) officer posts on or shortly after April 1 2005. This optimum number of officers is sufficient to meet normal operation activity through IRMP, and to satisfy the requirements of the national Incident Command System. Resilience for spate and very busy conditions or significant incidents, has been catered for, in accordance with the recommendations of the National Framework, through mutual assistance on a regional basis and with our neighbouring brigades.*

The FBU do not consider this to be an accurate statement and challenges the premise that officer numbers can be safely reduced, furthermore we are not aware of arrangements with our neighbours to supply supervisory officers.

**In conclusion the FBU in Cheshire see the potential for continual progress in the way we deliver our services to the public based on a well balanced and managed partnership between the Fire Authority and stakeholders, we intend to ensure that we play our full role in this process and will use our best endeavours to do so.**

Yours sincerely,

Dave Williams.