

# Cheshire FBU News

*May 2008*

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## **1. Wilmslow**

The CFO turned up at Wilmslow recently to talk to the hordes of staff wanting to work 96 hours solid for an hourly rate not much short of the minimum wage. About 10 people turned up 5 of which were there anyway as they were on duty.

This is a downgrading of fire cover, a reduction in 12 staff, loss of 4 crew manager posts and a loss of a resource to Cheshire as a whole.

Remember they can only staff this station on the basis outlined if **YOU** volunteer to go on the system. If you do not volunteer then it will not happen.

Members need to wait for the FBU to conclude negotiations on this system before they show any interest. The Service will take a passing interest as an application to go on the system so don't give them the excuses to use you for the introduction of a downgrading of fire cover.

Officials checked the planning section of Macclesfield Borough Council's website and found that CFRS have applied for full planning permission, contained within the submission it states that "Agreed working practices" have been obtained in order for the refurbishment to proceed. This is false and no such agreement has been made. A letter has been sent by the FBU to the Case officer at the Planning department to set the record straight.

## **2. HR Issues**

Speak to most staff on Stations and the same theme comes through when the subject of HR is raised, chaos. It isn't possible to single out individuals but when the whole department seems to operate without direction and reason then surely something must be wrong. The reason for populating HR with qualified professionals was to modernise practices and bring greater clarity and control to an essential area of any employer. The evidence is somewhat different and the high turnover of staff would seem to indicate that all is not well within the walls of HR. This has to be a fault at the top of the management tree as they are the ones setting the tone, culture and climate that staff in HR work too.

### 3. Staff Survey

Some stations/departments will have been visited by a varied selection of managers from HQ in an attempt to find the reasons behind the poor showing in the staff survey. The overwhelming feedback from respondents was one of not feeling valued by the service. Many of you will remember a couple of years back when the CFO sent round a email stating that there was no such thing as low moral however we may have been demoralized. Well the results of the survey seem to show that actually we do have low moral and feel as though we are not valued. In order to address this managers have sought to eliminate all feeling of self worth by disciplining anyone for anything and indications are that this is primarily focused on the wholetime shift section of the workforce. It is deeply disappointing that management seem hell bent on treating staff in such an appalling way when we are the ones delivering on targets and making Cheshire a high performing Authority.

### 4. CPD Appeals

The mess called CPD rolls on with over 40 appeals lodged. Most members have only had an acknowledgment that the service has received their appeals. Well no one really expected the service to adhere to its own time scales did they?

One rule for them and one for us you know the script.

The Service has given a breakdown of who has and has not applied for CPD and no one from the RDS Staff applied. Why would the retained not want to have 25% of £677 (Approx £194) could it be they were not told they could apply? Or were the Watch Managers and Firefighters not trained to fill in the forms? Are the retained that well off and thought they would not apply so as to save money to downgrade their appliances with a TRV.

The national scheme says that the majority of staff should get CPD well Cheshire have a 100% failure rate for the retained. Maybe the service was too busy ensuring the removal and downgrading of their appliance to bother making sure retained staff got the reward for personally developing them selves. What a way to treat dedicated firefighters, but I suppose the fact they tried to stop the RDS having the same pension rights as Wholetime **but lost** speaks volumes for their attitude to this committed group of firefighters.

### 5. TRV Again

The Merseyside members are preparing to do battle with their authority if they plan to replace structural appliances with smaller vehicles with 3 riders. A Merseyside resolution that is being taken to FBU Annual Conference next week could if passed have National implications for all brigades where these types of vehicles are being introduced. Cheshire has made progress with these vehicles and at present the additional TRV at Nantwich turns out with 4 riders to limited incidents. The brigade officials have been promised that if these vehicles are used for calls other than small fires we will be involved in the capability trails. At the moment there has been no further work done with the vehicles capability. The brigade officials have written again for answers to very long standing questions and will report to reps as soon as they get answers.

## 6. Widnes

Widnes fire station has been swooped on by Service Management last week with BA log books and sets being impounded, this hostile and overly aggressive step by management and the treatment of staff cannot be allowed to go on.

Whilst the FBU fully understand the need for rigorous testing and recording of critical pieces of kit, the manner in which this area is being handled seems disproportionate to the actual alleged infringements.

Staff on wholtime stations are feeling under threat every time they walk onto a station to carry out their normal duty.

How much longer is this going to carry on? Is it not time to stand up and be counted next week it could be you?

## 7. Grievance Procedures

To the frustration of many members and officials the Service and in particular HR seem to be totally ignoring the Services own Grievance procedure. Quite why, this is the case we are not sure but all efforts are being made in order to make Senior Officers aware that their managers are operating in direct contravention of Service policy.....'Compliance Notice' anyone?? Any policy or decision made by the Service should be able to withstand scrutiny and challenge otherwise it shows that it has been ill conceived and poorly thought out. It is your right as an employee to use this procedure and full support will be given to any member wishing to do so. If in any doubt that the service are not sticking to the prescribed timeline or if a manager says he will deal with a grievance please contact your rep asap.

## 8. FBU/Management Away Days

Brigade committee members attended a SMT/FBU away day to try and get over some of the hurdles that have prevented meaningful consultation and also to mark the introduction of the new National industrial Relations protocol. Whilst the day itself went well and Officials felt positive about the protocol it appears that this has not been communicated to Middle managers by the SMT and they appear hell bent on conflict at every turn. This does not benefit the Service and again it appears that front line staff are facing the brunt of the attacks. Another day is planned for the end of May this time with Station Managers, it will be interesting to see how some SM's who are members of FOA act on the day without constant referrals to a GM or HRSU.

As we have seen on many occasions it is Managements inability to adapt and change that has caused issues for the FRS, we still serve the public and save lives in spite of their meddling.

**To contribute to further issues of Cheshire FBU News contact your  
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