

Cheshire FBU News

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1. Draft Pay Policy

Consultation on this draft policy has been ongoing and there are still a number of areas that require agreement including; Job Sizing matrix for 'A+B weightings'; CPD criteria attendance at development days off duty; CPD 25% maximum not minimum 25% for RDS; CPD temporary promotion; Local Agreement on Overtime; Acting up – payment of full hourly rate; Acting up – part shift; Definition of 'Recall to Duty'; Out of the county payments i.e. HVP crew; USAR terms & conditions; RDS 2nd call payments; Day Crewing pensions; Promulgation of 'Out Staffing allowance policy'; Reclaiming training costs for Service drivers no longer wishing to drive.

As you can see a policy such as this has many possibly contentious issues contained in it and the brigade officials are working hard to ensure the best possible deal for members. If members or officials are asked to comment on this or any other draft policy then it is in the best interests of all members that full and honest opinions are given in order to achieve maximum benefit for FBU members.

2. Draft Attendance Management

This policy is out for consultation with a view of implementation of 1st October, the recent Middle Management instruction to supervisory managers to issue a pre-written record of informal discussion to staff with 2 absences within a 12 month period is being rescinded, at least until after consultation has taken place. Welfare should play a part in any return to work discussion following absence but this was totally overlooked. Looks like 2 absences will not mean informal record. But this is still an issue about 6 days being used as a trigger. If Officer members are unsure of what to do they must in the first instance abide by Service policy as it stands and if needed consult a brigade official for clarification on whether an issue has been consulted upon.

3. Day Duty Proposals.

Management has referred the matter for arbitration (TAP) as agreement can not be reached on the following points.

1. Overtime for out of hour's commitment Hot press, time and half as overtime or time off in lieu now sorted.
2. Annual leave allowance.

It may appear that this proposal doesn't affect a large number of staff but once Fire Protection, Community Safety, Trainers and some staff in ER have been added up it actually affects quite a few members who through their commitment have always been flexible with their approach to working hours. The Service have already conceded 1 more day but staff are still losing 6 scale days to rota.

Members working in the different functions have been fully involved and have given some useful feedback that will hopefully lead to a negotiated settlement.

Some issues surrounding these proposals could have been sorted over eighteen months ago had all Watch Managers been graded as B. The question is will an agreement be made before the last FP officer jumps ship to another Brigade, staff in increasing numbers in FP are voting with their feet, to work for employers, who value them more, can you blame them?

Given the proposals for trainers they may be the next to move on as management want to make them work longer shifts and take a pay cut!! The proposal is about making them more accessible to stations and hence flexible, as if under the current system they have been inflexible. Is this really how to get the best out of staff by cutting their pay and lengthening their hours?

4. Day Crewing Agreement

The FBU are progressing the matter through Thompsons and the National Officials. Management are seeking advice from Counsel regarding the ruling from DCLG and the status of the collective agreement.

If the worst happens and the pension arrangements are deemed unlawful it is hard to see what the Service is going to do and as the number of retirements from Day Crewing stations steadily increases the need for a solution grows.

Staff affected are quite understandably angered by the decision by Martin Hill, Pensions Adviser to DCLG but they should be focusing their attention on Service managers who offered this incentive without first checking out the validity of the details.

Members are asked to hold branch meetings to discuss this matter and feed back to the Brigade Officials any decisions.

5. RDS Holiday Pay Agreement

Are you an RDS Firefighter? Have you checked your backdated holiday pay secured by the FBU is correct? The FBU will continue to pursue any underpayments that may have occurred pre the electronic pay system and anyone with evidence of underpayments between 2000 and 2005 to contact a Brigade Official.

6. Recliners

The majority of staff will have heard by now of the latest attempt by some middle managers to show they have learned the lessons of the staff survey(not) by carrying out raids after midnight to try and find something happening on the 'Velvet Clams' that shouldn't be. These 'Recliner Rozzers' as one wit has called them have shown such contempt for the professional Firefighters of Cheshire that they took it upon themselves to travel tens of miles across Cheshire for one reason only, to try and discipline members for not using the chairs properly. Members are quite rightly outraged that they are being treated in this way and Brigade Officials have written to Principal Officer to express their disgust. This goes against everything that the Industrial Relations protocol stands for and the pathetic attempts to justify their actions by those responsible are falling on deaf ears.

If this is how some managers interpret 'Modernisation' then shame on them! They need a lesson in their services core values, but then they were only written with us in mind. They will only stop chasing when we stop running.

7. Sections.

It is important for members to understand the role that the sections play within the FBU in representing minority groups. Over the last twelve months we have lost the services of two Sectional reps who worked tirelessly for members, Terry Coe and Mike Ackah were active members of the Brigade Committee and represented Cheshire FBU members at Regional level and made sure their respective sections were taken seriously and functioned correctly in giving minority groups a voice.

Having both now retired vacancies now exist to take up Terry and Mike's roles on the Brigade Committee. If you are interested please feel free to speak in confidence to a Brigade Official who will give you all the support you need in order to carry out the position of sectional rep.

8. Strategic Standby's

Appliance movements are now more frequent than ever across the County for non-emergency reasons. Some of these standbys' assist the Service in maintaining it's resilience in order that crews can receive training on areas such as 'Incident Command' and First Aid. However a downside of these movements is that the available time for quality input on the new training forecast (which is welcomed by the FBU) is restricted.

When appliances are moved across the County to cover for CRR events then this really affects the operational capability to carry out the planned training in line with the forecast. If members are concerned that training is getting cancelled for such events then they should report it immediately to their line manager and the Resilience Unit as well as their FBU Rep who should table it at their LJCP. Don't wait for a tragedy before you speak up. It might be you!!!!

9. Rumour Central

1. Word is reaching the Editorial team that a certain someone has got his 'B' plan ready in case Halton becomes part of Merseyside next April and the sound of cider glasses clinking and a holiday home in Torquay is already in the bag, well if you are going to move to a top job one must consider location, location, location and where better than the South West! If only we all had an exit strategy.

2. Did she jump or was she pushed? That is the question that many have asked about the former head of HR. Was the manager too powerful, or did she want to do things the professional way? Who knows, only time will tell? The majority of staff in HR are helpful and genuine they are after all the professionals in that field, could it be that a general lack of people skills from some ex-FBU Middle managers is the root cause of most issues that HR get blamed for? Watch this space for more departures from HQ.

3. News just in from the south of the county is that two player are showing signs of terrorist activity with corpse possibilities.

4. Not enough resting chairs? Don't worry your health and safety is safe in management hands. Widnes with not enough chairs for staff to rest on, were told to share chairs, i.e. rest for 3 hours and then let your mate have a rest. Why because the great and the good forgot to order any spares, basics we know, but it did require someone to make a decision.

Widnes now have to hum an old song while resting on the chairs it goes like this and happens every 3 hours" and the little one said move over move over and the staff moved over and one fell off the chairs.

10. New Campaign

Reduce Firefighter deaths campaign lobby 12th November, we are looking for a rep from each branch to attend and meet their MP in Westminster.

The region will be putting on transport for this lobby and all off duty members are asked to attend Leaflets and material will be sent to your home but keep up to date by visiting the national website. This is a campaign you can help to make a difference, by attending the lobby, putting pressure on your MP and CFA\local councillor.

See your rep for local details of the date and transport arrangements.

To contribute to further issues of Cheshire FBU News contact your

Branch rep or email: cheshirefbunews@googlemail.com

Check out the website:<http://www.cheshire.fbu.org.uk>

