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To: All Members

Dear Brother/Sister

Fire Brigades Union Successful in Defending Against Allegations of Financial Irregularities in the Fire Brigades Union

We are pleased to report another success by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in relation to claims raised with the Certification Officer (CO) this time alleging that there were financial irregularities in the FBU.

The Certification Officer is an official appointed by the government to monitor and regulate trade unions. The FBU and other unions have no say in, or control over, the appointment of, or the decisions of the CO. The law on these matters is generally not favourable to trade unions following more than forty years of various anti-union legislation.

In the case concerned, five members made a claim (they all signed the one claim) of 'financial irregularities' in the union. These claims related to various officials or staff who had left the organisation by retirement or for other reasons. The allegations raised with the CO referred to cases going back several years. In some cases, these were even beyond the regulatory requirements for the storage of financial information.

None of these concerns raised with the CO had ever been raised through the normal structures of the FBU. The individual who initiated the complaint to the CO was formerly a senior official of the FBU but had never raised these questions or concerns during his time as an official. Nor had these issues ever been raised by any delegate at the union's conference, which is where our audited financial accounts and reports are presented each year and where any question or challenge may be raised. This financial information is provided in full each year in the FBU annual report. Questions raised at our conference are also reported verbatim in our record of decisions. Both of these documents are sent to all branches and are freely made available on-line. The entire process is completely transparent and open to scrutiny at every stage.

The claims made to the CO required Head Office FBU officials and staff to devote considerable time and effort in obtaining the necessary records, minutes and other documents to address the allegations that had been made since it is vital that accurate information is provided to the CO and errors are avoided. We were also obliged to seek legal advice on a number of matters raised.

We attach the letter from the CO which confirms that all allegations raised have been adequately answered by the FBU. Out of respect for the individuals concerned, we have redacted all the names, including that of the main complainant against the union.

The CO does suggest that the terms of reference for the Finance and Administration Committee are improved and recorded. This is a helpful suggestion and will be addressed by the Executive Council.

I am pleased that the FBU has been completely successful in answering these allegations made against our union.

All of the questions asked could have been raised through the structures of the FBU, as happens on most union matters. It is a shame that a handful of members chose to bypass the normal procedures and structures of the union to pursue such an ill-informed case. The main result has been to divert time, effort and resources away from our main task of seeking to defend the pay, conditions of service, pensions and health and safety of our members. Despite this, the FBU has, once again, been entirely vindicated and although there is a right of appeal we hope that will not be exercised allowing our Head Office officials to get on with their day to day work for the union.

Yours in unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Rowe', written in a cursive style.

Mark Rowe
National Officer

MR/jr