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Circular: 2024HOC0443MW

Date: 2nd December 2024

To: All Members

Dear Brother/Sister

Fire and Rescue (England): Ministerial Advisory Group

The FBU has made consistent criticism of the level of localisation and fragmentation in the fire and rescue service. We have argued and campaigned for the (re-)introduction of national standards. The union has also argued for a new national advisory body to assist in the development of such standards and to advise on the major strategic challenges facing our service.

These demands were a feature of our work prior to the recent General Election, and we were able to convince the Labour Party to make pledges on these two important issues. I am therefore pleased to report that the first meeting of a new Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) will take place on Wednesday 4th December. This meeting is convened by Diana Johnson MP, Minister of State. It is important to note that since fire is a devolved matter, this advisory group relates to fire and rescue matters in England. Nevertheless, the FBU and others will need to assess and discuss the implications of policy developments for all services across the UK and for the devolved governments and their relevant ministers.

This is an initial meeting. I will attend as a full member of the new MAG, invited as General Secretary of the FBU. We shall circulate further details of the structure and areas for discussion in due course.

It is welcome that the new Westminster government has begun to implement this element of the pledges made prior to the election in relation to fire and rescue policy. No doubt there will be much debate and disagreement about the areas of policy which should be covered. However, this is an important opportunity and an important opening after two decades of 'localism' and the resulting fragmentation of our service. Fragmentation has helped to create a destructive 'race to the bottom' to emerge. The result has been the undermining of our profession and of the service provided to the public.

FBU members will appreciate that such meetings do not guarantee that any improvements will be delivered. Nevertheless, this meeting and the new MAG offers our union the opportunity to make our professional case in a new national forum which has been missing for two decades.

I will report further on the structure of the MAG and the issues to be addressed.

Yours in unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Wrack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matt Wrack
General Secretary