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Circular: 2024HOC0448MW

Date: **09/12/2024**

To: **All Members**

Dear Brother/Sister,

<u>Pay discussions 2025: letter to fire service employers</u>

After years of attacks on our pay, the past three years (2022, 2023, 2024) have seen some improvement in the settlements achieved and in addressing wider pay issues (maternity pay and the annual RDS retainer). For 2024, we were also able to ensure that the pay settlement was delivered in time for payment when due i.e. by 1 July.

The three settlements **do not make up** for the losses during the austerity years and there is still much to do. Nevertheless, the unity shown by FBU members in 2022 and 2023 has put the FBU in a much better position for the discussions to address pay for 2025. By rejecting the 5% offer in October 2022 and then by voting overwhelmingly for strike, you demonstrated the determination that is necessary to deliver for the future. We were able to avoid strike action at that time and, hopefully, this puts us in a good position for the next round of discussions.

Please find attached the letter on pay to the employers' side Joint Secretary. This follows the issue of pay being raised by the FBU at a recent meeting of the National Joint Council. We look forward to further discussions with the employers at the earliest opportunity. I will keep all members informed of progress.

Yours in unity,

M. Wrack

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2024/NJC/MW

6th December 2024
[redacted]

Ms S Ward
[redacted]

Dear Sarah,

The Fire Brigades Union seeks to commence discussions immediately on pay for the settlement due on 1 July 2025. At the National Joint Council in October 2024, the FBU set out our concerns regarding pay and now formally asks that these discussions continue as set out at that meeting.

The FBU wants to build on progress made for 2022, 2023 and 2024.These settlements were the result of intense negotiation at the NJC. The working groups were generally a positive exchange of ideas, with a number of areas of common interest. The new arrangements for the RDS retainer and for maternity pay have set a much more positive tone. They demonstrate the value of collective bargaining and the success of the NJC and its processes, including avoiding strike action.

The FBU believes with a new government at Westminster, fire employers need to be more ambitious in tackling the long term issues that have accumulated under past administrations. After years of austerity and pay caps, firefighters and emergency control staff need to make up lost ground. Fire employers need to ensure that firefighters do not suffer any further fall in living standards. Instead, there needs to be sustained increases in real wages.

The FBU wants the NJC to address the issues of control staff pay. Our members are doing more and different work compared with the 2003 settlement, but this is not fully recognised in their pay. The increase in the RDS retainer was welcomed by our members, but has not fully resolved the low earnings of many RDS firefighters. Similarly, the move to 26weeks maternity pay was seen as a positive step, however it falls short of the maternity claim made by the FBU.

The FBU is concerned about pay rates at lowest end of the pay scale, for trainee firefighters and control. The union notes that from April 2025, the national living wage will increase to £12.21 per hour, and the national minimum wage for 18-20 year olds to £10 per hour. The rates of pay for trainees within the fire and rescue service need to be addressed in light of these forthcoming changes, to make the service attractive to new entrants.

The NJC has previously discussed apprenticeship pay. The FBU is clear that once an individual moves to operational training, nationally agreed rates of pay must apply. The service cannot have apprentices riding fire engines and facing the same risk as their colleagues, but not paid the appropriate Grey Book rate of pay.

The FBU is also seeking to resolve longstanding issues around the role of the fire and rescue service and the role of firefighters. These matters stalled under previous Westminster governments, which refused to provide the necessary funding and conditions for additional work. The FBU has demonstrated our willingness to resolve MTA issues through negotiation with two fire and rescue services. However further negotiation and funding are necessary to ensure resilience to terrorist attacks across the UK.

The FBU wants to negotiate a new pay progression system through the NJC, to resolve issues of risks and skills payments, which the current 'flat' pay structure does not account for.

The FBU is committed to resolving these matters promptly through further negotiation, in time for new payments to be paid by 1 July 2025.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Wrack
General Secretary

MW/pw