



FAIR PAY *OR* FIRE STRIKE

Our control members are the backbone of our service. Without control there would be no fire and rescue service. Incidents like Grenfell, where fire control staff were part of a response that saved hundreds of lives, display this.

FBU control members are also an incredibly important part of this union and this pay dispute. The union is its members and our strength is in how organised we are, with firefighters and control staff standing shoulder to shoulder.

There are unique questions and concerns that control staff will have as well as some shared with firefighters. This briefing hopes to address some concerns and questions from both categories.

- Mark Rowe, FBU national officer with responsibility for control

What is the revised offer from fire service employers?

On 4 October 2022 fire service employers made a revised pay offer of a 5% increase on all Grey Book rates of pay, including CPD, from 1 July 2022.

The Executive Council considered the revised offer and, by unanimous decision, agreed the following:

- The Executive Council recommends that the offer is rejected, but this is a decision for our members to make.
- The Executive Council has agreed to commence a membership consultation on the revised proposals. This will consist of a period of consultation briefings and meetings followed by a consultative ballot.

Why did the employers make a revised offer?

When employers came forward with the initial 2% proposal, they told us that it was the final offer and they had no more to give. The only reason they came forward with a revised proposal is because you made your anger and your obvious determination to fight for fair pay clear.

The Fair Pay or Fire Strike campaign will continue until you decide that a pay offer is acceptable. The work to achieve a legally compliant strike ballot is still ongoing.

Why is the recommendation to reject the offer?

At a time of such high inflation, the Executive Council does not believe that the revised offer represents fair pay for the fire service. When inflation is taken into account, the 5% offer still represents a cut in real wages and follows years of austerity, pay stagnation, and falling living standards.

Firefighters and firefighters control have already lost pay worth 12% (£4,000) in real-terms over the last decade and, having worked on the frontline throughout the covid crisis, it is now time for the employers to deliver fair pay.

What is an acceptable offer?

You decide what is - or is not - an acceptable offer. One of the many strengths of the FBU is that we are a democratic union. That is why we will be launching a consultative ballot for you to have your say.

To be clear: the obligation to make an acceptable and reasonable offer lies with the fire service employers and government.

How do we make sure that any pay offer doesn't impact on control resourcing?

It cannot be denied that control resourcing is particularly vulnerable when it comes to cuts, owing in part to chief fire officers', local authorities' and governments' apparent complete lack of respect or proper valuing of the contribution that control makes.

The FBU and its members are committed to fighting for better pay for firefighters and control staff and more funding for the fire and rescue service. We will continue to fight on those grounds throughout the pay dispute and beyond. We have to do both – we have to fight for pay and we have to fight for funding.

FBU officials and members want funding to increase. That is beyond doubt. But members nor officials ultimately control that, and all that we can do as a union is have pay offers properly consulted on by members. The members will decide.

Over the last twelve years the fire and rescue service and the public sector in general have seen unprecedented cuts. There can be no denying that this will have impacted on our employers.

This, however, is not a problem that FBU members have created. Members deserve fair pay. They do an outstanding job every day of their working lives. The funding situation is not a cause, reason or excuse for low pay.

In control there are different unions with substantial amounts of members. Won't that present an issue when it comes to industrial action?

We are aware that there are different unions within control. FBU officials – including both control section representatives – are in the process of seeking assurances from other unions that control members will be asked to not cross FBU picket lines.

These discussions are taking place at a regional level, so if you would like to know more about the progress of these discussions please contact your regional, brigade or area level officials. You can find their details via these page: <https://www.fbu.org.uk/regions-nations>.

Control staff members receive 5% less than firefighters. Is the union still committed to trying to close this gap?

At FBU conference 2022 policy was passed to this effect, and so national officials are continuing working towards this goal. Active steps are being made to try and achieve parity for control staff and we will continue making efforts to make this a priority in pay negotiations.

What happens now?

On 31 October our consultative ballot of all firefighter and control staff members will open. This is a consultative ballot on the 5% offer. The executive council recommends rejecting the offer.

This is a consultative ballot so the anti-trade union laws don't apply. This means we can use both online and postal balloting.

We know that using an online ballot means a higher return, so please register your email address with the union as soon as possible if you haven't already done so. This way, we can send you a ballot paper electronically.

Please send an email to membershipservices@fbu.org.uk with your email address, your brigade and membership number (if you know it). Please also note we can only take your personal email address, not your fire service email address.

Government and employers have been telling us for over a decade that we either have to accept low pay or cuts - but then they try to force through both. Enough is enough.

We must win fair pay. The current situation cannot continue and only through standing and fighting together can we achieve a desperately needed pay rise.

It is not too late for the government to provide additional funding for a pay rise and for employers to make a substantially better pay offer for you to consider. We will keep you informed of all developments.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. VOTE *TO* REJECT.

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