

Scottish Budget 2007

Implications for Scottish Fire & Rescue Services

On 14th November 2007, John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, presented his Scottish Government Budget Report to the Scottish Parliament.

Concordat

A significant part of the Report, was the announcement of the new Concordat, agreed between the Scottish Government & CoSLA.

The Concordat means that Local Government will now decide on the financial allocations to local Government departments. This will include the Fire & Rescue Service.

Ring Fencing

Previously, monies allocated to Local Government for the Fire & Rescue Service, through Grant

Aided Expenditure, was protected. This protection, however, has now been removed. Fire & Rescue Services will now have to compete with other Local Government departments for their necessary funding.



Interestingly, the Police have retained their protection.

On top of this, all public Services have been told that year on year efficiency savings of 2% are required to be made.

This is very bad news for Fire &

Rescue Services.

CUTS

For the past 4 years, the Service has been subjected to continuous demands to make financial 'efficiency' savings. The very real consequence of further demands would be CUTS to Front Line Life Saving Services.

This cannot be allowed to happen. The safety of the Communities we serve would be directly compromised.

In light of the increased responsibilities placed on the Service, it is imperative that the Service is properly funded in order to meet the ever increasing demands faced by Firefighters & Emergency Fire Control Operators every day.

NJC Joint Protocol for Good Industrial Relations in the Fire & Rescue Service

The Fire Brigades Union in Scotland is calling on Fire & Rescue Boards to enact the Joint Protocol for Good Industrial Relations in the Fire & Rescue Service.

The Protocol is designed to develop and improve upon industrial relations across the UK. In agreeing the Protocol, all parties are expected to adopt its Principles and Commitments, with a view of working together to ensure efficient & effective industrial relations.

So far NO Scottish Fire & Rescue Board has approached the FBU to formalise the agreement locally.

PRINCIPLES

- Joint Commitment to the Success of the Organisation;
- Joint Recognition of each others Legitimate Interests and Responsibilities;
- Joint Focus on the Quality of Working Life;
- Joint Commitment to Operating in a Transparent Manner;
- Joint Commitment to Continuously Improve Industrial Relations;
- Joint Commitment to Reaching Agreement within Appropriate Timescales;
- Joint Commitment to Ongoing Dialogue and Exchange of Views including Face-to-Face Meetings;
- Joint Commitment to a 'No Surprise' Culture.

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FIRE BRIGADES UNION SCOTLAND

BULLETIN BOARD

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Fire & Rescue Service Pensions Crisis

Changes to Pensions Guidance Results in Firefighters being SACKED for being Ill

Recent events affecting three retired Firefighters from London is sending a wave of shock and anger through the UK Fire and Rescue Service.

Pensions Terminated

The individuals, previously medically retired from London Fire & Rescue Service, had their awards removed under new guidance, which states that if a Firefighter can perform a single element of a Firefighter's role, they are not entitled to receive an 'ill health' pension.

That single element, even if it doesn't translate into an actual job that a Firefighter can be re-deployed to, is being used to block payment of an Ill Health Pension.

Consequently, as is the case with the three London Firefighters, Fire & Rescue Services are sacking Firefighters and leaving them & their families destitute.

THIS IS BOTH IMMORAL AND SCANDELOUS

New Guidance

This issue has been the result of a change to the Guidance for Medical Examiners, issued in September 2006, which removed a key phrase. Previously, the guidance allowed a Fire & Rescue Authority who did not have alternative employment for a sick or injured firefighter, to retire the individual with an Ill Health Pension. This is no longer the case. The Fire Brigades Union has written to the UK Fire Service

Minister to raise the concerns of Firefighters.

Scotland

Scottish FBU Officials have also discussed this matter with Scottish Ministers & Officials. There appears to be a consensus across the whole of the Fire Service community in Scotland that this change is inherently unfair and must be rectified as soon as possible.



Campaign building in fight to protect pensions for sick and injured firefighters

Firefighters throughout the UK have been astonished and outraged at recent developments that have seen a change in their Pension Scheme make it effectively impossible to retire from the Service with an 'Ill-Health' pension.

Imposition

The newly imposed guidance states, "3.16 A firefighter is permanently disabled if he/she is medically unfit to carry out all the duties expected of him/her as listed in the role map for his/her role (rank). Provided the member can carry out one of the duties of the role he/she cannot be permanently unfit."

It is difficult to imagine circumstances in which an

individual could not perform a single duty of what is a very detailed role.

However, the situation now exists where a serving firefighter who gets injured in the course of their duty and cannot continue to perform those tasks that involve Firefighting, will no longer be able to receive a pension if they have the ability to perform any single element of the firefighters role map.

The effect of this change in the guidance is to end ill health and injury retirement in the Fire Service.

Scotland

Whilst the Fire Brigades Union is raising concerns at UK Government level, here in Scotland,

FBU Officials are looking to Scottish Ministers, the Scottish Parliament, CoSLA and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service Boards to intervene.

Campaign

A campaign is building in Fire Stations across the country under the **Justice for Firefighter Pensions** banner.

Scottish FBU Officials are looking for ways to prevent this detrimental change from affecting members here.

Whilst it is hoped that a solution can be quickly found, one thing is certain, Scottish Firefighters, who will today be putting themselves in danger, will not tolerate this attack on the security of themselves and their families.

The Fire Brigades Union is the Voice of Professional Firefighters & Emergency Fire Control Operators Throughout Scotland



Fire & Rescue Service Pensions Crisis

Politicians Mislead by Government Department Scottish Parliament Urged to Intervene

The Fire Brigades Union is calling for urgent action on a change in guidance for the Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS) that, as a consequence, has already seen three Firefighters in London denied either a job or a pension.

Mislead

The Union accuses the then ODPM of misleading Politicians and Fire Service Stakeholders, including the FBU, on changes to the FPS regarding ill-health retirements and redeployment. If the situation is not resolved the Union will be considering a National Ballot for Industrial Action.

The aim of the original change to the scheme (made in July 2004), as explained in the consultation with the UK Parliament and Fire Service Stakeholders, was to allow greater flexibility into the scheme by introducing a re-deployment option to non-operational posts, for those Firefighters who can no longer carry out active firefighting

duties.

However, the new guidance, issued in September 2006 by the Department of Communities & Government (DCLG), has used this alteration to impose a further detrimental change resulting in pensions not being paid on the basis of a theoretical job and not the existence of an actual job.



Limbo

The effect of these changes is that Firefighters will be placed in limbo.

They will not be able to continue in their profession due to ill-health or injury; they will not be entitled to a pension; they will not be guaranteed any employment since there are few, if any, such

(non-operational) jobs in existence within the Fire and Rescue Service.

Firefighters pay a very high level of contribution (11%) to allow for the possibility of early retirement due to ill-health and are now facing a future of poverty as a result of a concerted effort by a UK Government Department to save money at their expense.

Resolution

This matter could be resolved relatively easily by a revision of the CLG guidance and a return to the position that existed immediately following the initial change in 2004.

FBU Scotland Officials are calling on Councillors of all parties to raise this unfair issue with Scottish Ministers as a matter of urgency.



Industrial Consequences of Attack on Firefighters' Pensions

It is clear that Firefighters value the protections that their Pension Scheme provides themselves and their families.

Now that that protection has been eroded, they have no choice but to fight to restore it.

There has been enough industrial unrest within the Service in recent times. The last thing that any Firefighter wishes to have to consider is yet again taking Industrial Action.

However, that is the ultimate option should this matter not be resolved politically.

Assist us to do everything possible to find an amicable solution to this inherently unfair change to our Pension Scheme and ensure the futures of Firefighters and their families

EMERGENCY FIRE CONTROL ROOMS

Decision to Retain all Eight Emergency Fire Control Rooms in Scotland Comes After 4 Long Years of Doubt

The future of the Emergency Fire Controls in Scotland was in doubt for over 4 years.

Mott McDonald

In 2003, the then Scottish Executive commissioned Mott McDonald Consultants to review the Scottish Fire Control Rooms.

The Fire Brigades Union registered strong objections at Mott McDonald being asked to do so, as they had already undertaken a similar exercise in England & Wales, where they concluded that the 45 Emergency Fire Control Rooms there should be reduced to 9 Regional Control Centres.

Recommendations

Unsurprisingly, when they published their Report in January 2004, they recommended a reduction from the current 8 to either one, two or three.

These recommendations were widely condemned with the Report itself being criticised and discredited.

In the Consultation process that followed, CoSLA, Fire Boards, Local Authorities, Chief Fire Officers, as well as the Fire Brigades Union, submitted responses all of which indicated concerns and issues with the Mott McDonald proposals.

Petitions

In September 2004, Tayside FBU and H&I Fire Board both submitted petitions to the Scottish Parliament's Petitions Committee, calling for Eight Control Rooms to be retained.

During a Scottish Parliament debate on the 1st Stage Report of the Fire (Scotland) Bill, in November 2004, the debate was dominated by the issue of Fire Control Rooms. The vast majority of MSPs who spoke, indicated their support to retain all eight.

Since then FBU Officials have been involved in intensive lobbying of MSPs and Ministers.

Meetings

In the past 6 months, Scottish Officials have had numerous meetings with Ministers, MSPs & Justice Department Officials. Documents were produced & submitted to compliment these discussions (see FBU Scotland website).

Congratulations

The long hard work has now paid off. The Union wishes to thank all who assisted in keeping the profile of this issue so prominent.

Local Authorities now in Control of Controls

Due to the Concordat, agreed between the Scottish Government & CoSLA, Revenue Funding allocations for Scottish Fire & Rescue Services will now be determined by Local Authorities.

Now that the Scottish Government have decided not to centrally reduce the number of Emergency Fire Control Rooms, it is now down to Local Authorities, the majority of whom have consistently & publicly argued that all eight Emergency Fire Control Rooms should be retained. We call on all Authorities to ensure that the required Funding is secured in order to maintain all eight local Emergency Fire Control Rooms in Scotland.

Profile



Ken Ross
Scottish
Regional Secretary

Over the summer, Ken was re-elected for a second term to the post of Scottish Regional Secretary.

Background

Ken joined Strathclyde Fire Brigade in 1988 and was stationed at Polmadie Fire Station, in the south side of Glasgow, where he works to this day.

He has been an Official for 18 years, and has represented Firefighters & Emergency Fire Control Operators at Branch, Divisional, Brigade and Scottish Levels.

As the Scottish Secretary, Ken plays a key role in the Scottish team, and is committed to working in partnership with all in the Service to the benefit of FBU Members and the Communities we serve.

Support Your Professional Firefighters

