

GS/EF

31 January 2018

Mr Michael Matheson MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
Scottish Government  
St Andrews House  
EDINBURGH

Dear Michael

I am writing in relation to the emerging crisis within the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service provoked by the action of the employer in bypassing agreed collective bargaining mechanisms.

In an action that can only be described as an attempt at union busting, the employer has overridden normal negotiating processes in order to attempt to force firefighters into accepting a position that is complicated and has potentially profound consequences for the delivery of fire and other emergency services.

Within 24 hours of delivering to FBU officials a new proposal requiring analysis followed by collective discussion with fire fighters – the real experts when it comes to fire and rescue – the employer has written directly to individual firefighters laying out a proposed wage increase and some vague detail about the proposed widening of their role. Many had not received the communication before they found out about the proposed changes in the broadcast media.

This approach sits outside the Services Partnership Working Agreements with the FBU and it also, in our opinion, breaches Fair Work Principles supported by the Scottish Government. The FBU represents 90% of all uniformed employees.



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We support the FBU's view which is as follows:

We are of the firm belief that the communication by SFRS, which was directly sent to our members asking them to "consider the proposal," is a breach of the Working Together Framework including the following areas:

Communications which states:

- "All parties agree that communications are an essential part of any partnership; communication processes will be open and transparent and conducted in accordance with our joint commitment to the success of SFRS"

Level at which collective bargaining processes are conducted which states:

- "All collective agreements that regulate or change contracts of employment are arrived at by negotiation between the relevant parties exclusively"

The key point is the word "exclusively" as the proposal SFRS had sent out to their employees would also have included members from other non-recognised unions such as Fire Officers' Association (FOA) and Retained Firefighters Union (RFU)

In this context, I am requesting that you urgently investigate this matter and I am happy to meet with you, along with the FBU at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grahame Smith', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Grahame Smith  
General Secretary