

Mr A Harris
Fire Officers Association
Branch Secretary
c/o Merseyside Fire Service Headquarters
Bridle Road
Bootle
Liverpool
L30 4YD

14th June 2011

GM Lomax,
Merseyside Fire Service Headquarters
Bridle Road
Bootle
Liverpool
L30 4YD

Dear Ms Lomax

Consultation - Senior Officer Duty system

I write on behalf of The Fire Officers Association (FOA) with regard to the consultation on Senior Officer Duty systems.

Further to your letter of the 8th June requesting a final position statement regarding GM/SM duty system. I find it incomprehensible that the service requests a final position statement within such an extremely short time scale, without even discussing the proposed new duty system which has only been received by the FOA Officials 8 days ago. During recent discussion with Mr Hagen the Service Joint Secretary, I have indicated that consultation should be extended to allow for discussion on the Services proposed duty system.

The service entered into consultation with the FOA, and at the first meeting on the 29th March 2011 the service indicated that it wish to undertake the consultation in a series of single status meetings, where we discussed specific items. To date we have had only 2 meetings, the first to open consultation and to discuss the provided risk assessment, the second to solely discuss the amended

risk assessment provided by the service. A significant number of items from the FOA letter dated 8th April 2011 have still not been addressed such as -

1. the risk assessment does not take into account the current Service operation procedures regarding the mobilisation of Officers
2. all work undertaken by Senior Officers is not included in the risk assessment
3. the indication by ACFO Evans that any risk assessment will be required to indicate how the Service will be able to respond 'to simultaneous incidents of considerable size, and complexity spanning a period of 24 hours'
4. provision of data
5. the Equality Impact Statement

In addition, none of the areas of concern from the FOA letter dated the 24th May 2011 have been addressed and the FOA still await a response. The FOA currently find the risk assessment provided by the Service not suitable or sufficient.

With regard to the proposed duty system which was only received on the 6th June 2011, there has been no dialogue between the Service and the FOA. The FOA find it unacceptable to have been provided with a duty system and without discussion the Service require a final position statement.

With regard to the proposed duty system I would comment as follows -

1. the system does not appear to be 'Grey book' compliant as there are insufficient Officers on duty for Officers to be able to take 2 weeks continuous Scale A leave. Also, the proposed duty system does not provide the opportunity at times to take leave, other contractual leave or statutory leave either during a weekday or at the weekend when Officers are on duty
2. there is a plethora of reasons why Officers will be off duty, some of which will occur over a weekend. Examples are -
 - a. end of course leave
 - b. sickness
 - c. training
 - d. special leave
 - e. parental leave
 - f. maternity support leave

Nowhere has it been indicated how these shortfalls in staffing will be catered for.

It would appear to the FOA that the Service is unable to provide a 'Grey Book' duty system with the number of Officers proposed therefore, clearly there is a need to negotiate a methodology to provide a duty system. As expressed in previous correspondence the FOA has concerns regarding the ability of the Service to maintain the required number of Officers on duty, with a substantially reduced number of available Officers. This has been borne out, as on a number

of occasions recently the Service has been unable to provide the appropriate number of Officers on duty to comply with its own risk assessment.

Equally, the FOA has expressed concerns over the workload and working time of Senior Officers and the FOA's overriding concern is the Health, Safety and wellbeing of our members and the public. Previous correspondence from the Service has indicated that a system will be provided to manage and record Officers hours. This has yet to be provided.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

Allan Harris
Branch Secretary
Fire Officers Association