

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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ESSEX FIRE DISPUTE – CHIEF REFUSES TO SIGN FULL AND FINAL SETTLEMENT ALREADY AGREED BETWEEN FIRE AUTHORITY AND UNION

The Fire Brigades Union are disappointed and bemused at the Essex Chief Fire Officer's refusal to formally sign-off the full and final agreement already reached between the Essex Fire Authority and the FBU to end the long-running dispute over last year's fire cuts.

Essex Fire Brigades Union officials were supposed to meet the Essex Chief Fire Officer at 11 am today to complete the formality. But instead, when they arrived at the meeting the Chief Fire Officer refused to sign the agreement and produced a revised document with a new clause already inserted without any prior notice or negotiation.

Keith Flynn, Essex FBU Secretary:

"We simply can't believe that yet another, last minute hurdle is placed in the way of a final agreement, especially when the Full and Final Terms of Settlement already offered by the fire authority have been formally agreed by both sides. We were given no prior notice of the new clause, there was no negotiation and inevitably we will now be faced with calls from angry members to reinstate our industrial action. It transpires that the chief had sent a letter late last night to elected members of the fire authority telling them what he was going to do. It's almost as if a trap was being laid for us to walk into today."

"It all should have been a formality. The full and final wording of the settlement document was agreed with the Chief Fire Officer on 22nd June. The fire authority formally offered that same document with a covering letter as their agreed terms to settle the dispute. Three weeks later on 13th July we confirmed those full and final terms were agreed by our members across Essex and last week the fire authority issued a statement expressing their delight that agreement had been reached to end the dispute."

"As far as we are concerned the deal was already done. We signed the original full and final settlement today but the Chief refused and handed us his revised version."

"In the end we were forced to withdraw from today's meeting to calmly consider the situation and the implications of the new clause dropped on us today. We shall now consult with our members and seek a face to face meeting with the elected members of the fire authority as soon as possible because we simply can't keep on doing business this way."

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