

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE DISPUTE – UNION OPTION SHOWS MORE SAVINGS, MORE TRAINING, MORE SAFETY IN LAST MINUTE BID TO HEAD OFF INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Representatives of South Yorkshire fire crews have set out an alternative option which could settle their dispute with the fire authority over shift changes and threats of mass sackings. The offer, put to fire authority councillors, would see shift changes which would provide more savings, increase productivity and provide more training time than those put forward by the fire authority.

The alternative option is based on a switch to 10 hour day shifts and 14 hour night shifts, from the current 9 hour days and 15 hour nights. Day shifts would start at 8am and finish at 6pm and night shift run from 6pm to 8am.

The option could see annual efficiency savings of £4.48 million. The union's own experts have discovered the fire authority's plans could not, in fact, achieve more than £3.84 annual savings.

The option improves on community fire safety targets, based on actual experience in West Yorkshire about the best times to visit homes. It improves productive working time and training time above the targets sought by the fire authority's own plans.

The fire authority's plans include 'savings' from an extra hour of training when the training centre is in fact closed, making the 'savings' impossible. Training centre staff have only just completed negotiations about changes to their working day which makes this clear.

Ian Murray, FBU regional secretary said: "Our alternative is more practical for the public, makes far more savings and provides more training time. It also addresses many of the concerns of fire crews.

"The fire authority wants to sack 744 firefighters on 1st January and re-employ them on new contracts to force through 12 hour day shift working. This is a better alternative to that and we hope the councillors can approach it with an open mind.

"If the option put forward by the FBU is rejected outright it does beg the question of what is the true motivation behind the need to introduce 12 hours shifts. Firefighters in South Yorkshire are convinced the 12 hour shift proposal is really a means to an end to reduce night time fire cover by taking fire appliances off the run at night.

"Our real concern is that the fire authority is so hell-bent on confrontation at any price they will brush this option aside. That approach is the road to considerable industrial action."

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