

# FIRE BRIGADES UNION

IMMEDIATE RELEASE 20 October 2009

## NOW ACAS OFFERS TO HELP IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE DISPUTE

The conciliation and mediation service ACAS has contacted both sides in the South Yorkshire fire dispute offering to help as the first day of strike action came to a close. The Fire Brigades Union has welcomed the move, but does not know the view of the fire authority, which has previously turned down offers of assistance to help resolve the dispute,

Ian Murray, FBU regional secretary said: "We have no problem with offers of help which may resolve this dispute and we welcome the offer from ACAS. The fire authority will have some explaining to do if it continues to reject offers of help while claiming it wants to meet the union.

"We hope the authority can withdraw the dismissal notices, then we can call off the next strike which is set to start on Friday at 6pm. If 744 South Yorkshire firefighters are still being threatened with dismissal then the strike will go ahead.

"We have been heartened by public support who clearly understand why we are taking strike action and that we are reluctant to do so. They understand that the authority can't threaten to sack firefighters and expect them not to respond."

Earlier today South Yorkshire fire crews welcomed an intervention by local MPs in their dispute with the local fire authority. The MPs called for immediate moves to resume talks, withdraw dismissal notices and for the union to call off its strike action.

The MPs called for the assistance of national negotiators from the employers and union and no preconditions being set by either side before the talks start. Changes, they said, are best achieved through agreement.

National employer and union negotiators – known as the Joint Secretaries - are regularly brought in to assist in local disputes. They have recently been brought into Lincolnshire – a neighbouring fire service - to help broker agreement in a dispute over shifts.

Ian Murray, FBU regional secretary said: "The MPs don't let either side in this dispute off lightly, so this is not the MPs intervening on behalf of one side or the other. This is a welcome intervention by MPs who are rightly concerned.

"South Yorkshire fire crews would be happy to enter talks without the fire authority demanding we agree the outcome before they start. If the threat of mass sackings is lifted then the strike action will be halted.

"The chief officer keeps claiming the dismissals are some sort of technical move of little importance or impact. If that is so then that is even more reason to drop the threat and we can call off the strike.

“It’s now down to the fire authority if it wants to enter genuine negotiations to reach an agreement. The ball is now on their side of the court and we hope to know their view of this by the end of the day.”

EDM 2091 was first put down on 19th October 2009 by Clive Betts

It has been signed by 5 people.

That this House expresses great concern at the current dispute between South Yorkshire Fire Authority (SYFA) and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) which can only put the public of South Yorkshire at risk and cause damage to both parties in the dispute; believes that while ultimately there will be benefits to the public from a change to existing shift patterns this will best be achieved by an agreement which also recognises the potential disruption to the personal lives of firefighters concerned; and therefore calls on both sides to agree to refer all relevant matters immediately and without preconditions to the Joint Secretaries with the SYFA withdrawing its dismissal notices and the FBU withdrawing its threat of strike action to allow the Joint Secretaries to consider the matters in the most appropriate way.

On 19/10/09 it was signed by:

Mr Clive Betts

Mr David Blunkett

Ms Angela C. Smith (Sheffield, Hillsborough)

Mr Kevin Barron

Mr Eric Illsley

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