

# **FIRE BRIGADES UNION**

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## **FBU offers to resolve dispute and avert strike action**

The Fire Brigades Union says it will call off its strikes if South Yorkshire fire authority immediately withdraws its threat to sack 744 firefighters to force through shift changes. But the authority will only withdraw the threat of dismissal if the union immediately agrees to shift changes of 10.5 hour day shifts and 13.5 hour night shifts to start on 2 December.

A meeting of representatives from fire stations and workplaces across South Yorkshire unanimously rejected the proposals. They demanded the fire authority must also agree to seek the immediate assistance of either national employer and union representatives or ACAS to help broker a deal.

The union says this will mean compromise on both sides and will pave the way to a more rapid agreement. Crucially, this weekend's strikes would be halted.

The union says it will not attach any strings or try and dictate the terms or final outcome of further talks. It says the fire authority's attempts at limiting negotiations or trying to dictate their outcome have been the 'trip wires' on the path to an agreement.

Local MPs have also called for the immediate assistance of either national union and employer representatives or ACAS to help broker a deal. Those calls were repeated in Parliament earlier this week.

The FBU has set out its offer to the fire authority management team in a final attempt to avoid strikes.

The union has offered a two-step process in an attempt to break the deadlock in the dispute:

- 1) The fire authority to remove its threats to dismiss, without their demand for immediate acceptance of shift changes, with the union immediately calling off strike action;
- 2) To seek the immediate assistance of either national employer and union representatives or ACAS to help broker a deal.

Ian Murray said: "South Yorkshire fire crews have offered a simple and easy way of halting the strikes and moving towards immediate talks to bring a rapid end to the dispute.

“That move, which needs compromise from both sides, will clear the path for further talks. We’re making very clear that we are not trying to dictate the terms or place conditions upon negotiations involving the national employers and union or ACAS.

“We support the call by local MPs, made again in Parliament this week, for the immediate assistance of either national union negotiators or ACAS to assist both sides reach a mutually acceptable agreement. We have set out a reasonable way forward.

“The authority has given no convincing reason as to why they are opposed to seeking the immediate involvement of outside assistance. They will only remove the threat of dismissals if we agree to shift changes. Managers want us to immediately accept shift changes before negotiations even start and that is ridiculous.

“The fire authority must stop placing trip wires in the way of a successful resolution of this dispute. Both sides are then free to put forward their proposals and reach a mutually acceptable solution with assistance from those who are offering to help.”

### **EDM 2091 has now been signed by 22 MPs**

Betts, Clive

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.

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