

# **FIRE BRIGADES UNION**

**Immediate release 24 April 2009**

## **SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE CREWS VOTE THREE TO ONE IN FAVOUR OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION OVER IMPOSITION OF 12-HOUR DAY WORKING**

South Yorkshire fire crews have voted THREE to ONE in favour of industrial action short of a strike against plans to force them to work 12-hour days. It is the first time a UK fire service has ever tried to impose such changes on fire crews.

As well as longer day shifts of 12-hours, up from the current 9 hours, there would also be changes to start and finish times. Firefighters say the changes would damage family life and cause problems with childcare.

### Ballot result

Number of votes cast in the ballot:	586
Number of individuals answering 'yes'	441
Number of individuals answering 'no'	143
Number of spoiled voting paper	2

Firefighters have notified the fire authority that from 00.01 on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009 they will only work to their contractual 9-hour days, including their start and finish times. In addition, no pre-arranged overtime will be worked.

The action is to be taken by wholetime firefighters in South Yorkshire up to and including watch managers. Further forms of industrial action short of a strike may be notified to the fire authority.

South Yorkshire FBU John Gilliver said: "South Yorkshire fire crews have shown the strength of opposition to being forced to work an extra 3-hours during the day shift. This explodes the myth peddled to councillors that there was little opposition and that the plans were popular.

"This damaging myth has led the councillors to support disastrous plans to impose changes without agreement on 4 May. I would urge them to listen to this clear message from fire crews and re-think those plans.

"Nothing is inevitable. There is still a window of opportunity to reach an agreement which is acceptable to everyone if councillors want to join us on that path.

"Any action South Yorkshire fire crews are forced to take is aimed at the fire authority, it will have no impact on the public. There is no reason for emergency cover to be affected by anything we are doing.

"If the fire authority decide to take action which reduces emergency cover then that is a matter for them. It will not be reduced by any action taken by South Yorkshire's fire crews."

The changes would have meant firefighters with children being forced to start at 8 in the morning and finish at 8 at night. That extends our days, but it also extends the day for our children to as much as 13 hours in childcare.

Under the proposals existing childcare arrangements would be disrupted and new arrangements would have to be found. Before and after school clubs can't fill the gap, and there is little formal childcare available at weekends or school holidays when firefighters are working as normal.

Those fire crews who work shifts do so in 48 hour blocks of two 9 hour day shifts (9am to 6pm) followed by two 15 hour night shifts (6pm to 9am). The proposals would introduce 12 hours day working and 12 hours night working.

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