Justice Committee
Fire and rescue service reform

Written submission from Fire Brigades Union

Further to the oral evidence given by myself on Tuesday 11 March to the Justice Committee I wish to clarify the response to one question in particular. Alison McInnes MSP raised a question in which she quoted from a control room member in Inverness regarding local knowledge, and further referred to comments made by members in Aberdeen. In her question she accused me of not representing our members in the north east. My response was that members will of course make the strongest case in support of their location but that as a Scottish official I must consider the overall Scottish situation. I had earlier answered that in terms of the local control room campaigns I cannot set one group of members against another, Aberdeen V Inverness V Dundee for example. At that point she asked specifically about the concern that she had quoted earlier, asking whether I had underestimated the importance of local knowledge. I completely disagree that either I or the FBU have underestimated the importance of such local knowledge as this had formed part of the report submitted to the SFRS Board. I did not get an opportunity to further expand on my reply of "That is simply down to a difference of opinion", that being whether I had or had not underestimated local knowledge rather than the importance of that topic. Following [the Convener's] comments on the point Alison McInnes moved on to another question. The difference of opinion is that I do not believe we have underestimated the importance of local knowledge but must consider the fact that local knowledge is a skill of the operator rather than being determined by location, it is a relative term as many who currently work in control rooms do so at very great distance from some of the territory they cover, yet due to the professionalism they bring to the job, they do so well - again a point I made earlier.

A fuller explanation is contained within the attached report. [a copy of that report is available here: http://www.fbuscotland.org/sites/default/files/FBU_Fire_Control_Project_report_2014_.pdf]

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FBU
14 March 2014