



**GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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“Government believe that the dispute in the City Fire Brigade has been manufactured by staff and stands by management.”

The Government fully supports the actions of management at the City Fire Brigade, believes that the dispute has been manufactured, and considers that the behaviour of some employees is unacceptable and unlawful.

The City Fire Brigade is a uniformed, disciplined body. Its employees are subject to the Fire Service Act and the City Fire Brigade (Discipline) Regulations made thereunder. Both are laws of the land, which are not suspended during any industrial dispute.

Nevertheless, this is not an industrial dispute. Staff have no grievance about their terms and conditions of employment. They simply demand the right to decide how the fire service is run, how the fire station is managed, and what visitor regime should apply to the operational parts of the fire station. This is understandably unacceptable to management, and it is equally unacceptable to the Government.

The fact that certain practices have been allowed in the past, does not entitle employees to demand that it be allowed forever, especially in a constantly changing world in relation to such things as health & safety, training, productivity management and professional discipline.

All this said, certain of the main statements being made on behalf of employees of the City Fire Brigade are simply untrue. It is not true that retired firemen cannot visit the station or socialise in it. Nor is it true that social events cannot any longer take place in the fire station. All of this can continue to happen in the ample social facilities provided by the Government at the fire station for that very purpose. In addition, visitors (including retired fire fighters) may enter the operational parts of the fire station in compliance with a health and safety and other protocols which have been introduced by management to regulate such visits. This is what employees object to. They want unregulated and uncontrolled access, and that is simply no longer possible.

There is no point in employees arguing that management's actions somehow discriminate, or fail to understand the “firemen’s world”. These new rules in Gibraltar reflect modern

practice in UK and elsewhere in Europe, where firemen are also part of the “firemen’s world”.

No civil servant is entitled to complain that management initiates disciplinary action in accordance with proper, established procedure. This applies particularly to firemen, who in addition to General Orders are (like other disciplined, uniformed bodies) subject to statutory discipline laws. There can be no question of management withdrawing, or not initiating disciplinary procedures under threats from the very staff who are liable to those very procedures. This attitude is itself symptomatic of certain misconceptions that appear to prevail among employees of the City Fire Brigade. The fact that their job is sometime dangerous (as is the case with others) and that the Government and Society very much values their work, should not lead them to believe that they must be allowed to do as they please, or that the Government will always succumb to their demands.

The fire service, and its facilities will be managed by management, where necessary and appropriate in accordance with Government policy. Management has done no more than bring old practice in respect of access to and social use of the operational parts of the fire station into line with standard, modern health & safety and professional practices. Employees’ apparent dislike of these cannot be allowed to prevail.

The management has warned employees against any further abuse of fire department vehicles and equipment in any future ‘demonstrations’ or industrial action. Employees have been warned that instructions from their union in this respect will not protect them from the legal and disciplinary consequences of their actions. The Government supports the stance taken by management.

The new position on access to the station and the holding of social events in the operational parts of the fire station is not going to change. The Government therefore urges its staff to desist at what is, in essence, a non-existent dispute before it escalates further, escalation which cannot and will not change anything.