I am writing following the announcement of further industrial action taking place on the above dates, to clarify some of the issues associated with the strike and to remind you of the standards of behaviour required and the approach that is being adopted by the Fire Authority.

As stated in my previous correspondence this is a national dispute between the FBU and the Government and whilst it is regrettable that a resolution has not yet been found, I want to be very clear that this forthcoming period of industrial action must not undermine or jeopardise the positive culture and effective working relationships that currently prevail across the Service.

Deductions from Pay

You will be aware that taking strike action will result in loss of pay. I do not, however, wish to disadvantage staff engaging in official industrial action and have agreed that staff can work for part of their shift with a loss of 8 hours pay (Green Watch Days) and 1 hours pay (Blue Watch Nights) on 10th July 2014. There is no guarantee however that the same approach will be adopted for future periods of industrial action.

Pay deductions will be applied using the following calculation:

Annual salary divided by 52.143 divided by 42 = hourly rate

Pension

Absence owing to strike action will not count as pensionable service but you will have the option to pay both the employee and employer pension contributions if you want the period of industrial action to count as part of your pensionable service. This must be done within 6 months of the end of the absence period.

Access to Fire Authority Premises

Access to premises and stations will be restricted forstriking firefighters between 10:00 hours and 19:00 hours on 10th July. Access will be granted by exception in the event of a medical or welfare situation during this period.

Handovers

If you decide to take strike action, you will still be expected to cooperate with your colleagues who wish to work in relation to handover arrangements. A handover, where appropriate, will take place 30 minutes before industrial action is due to commence, for outgoing staff and 30 minutes following the conclusion of industrial action, for incoming staff.
Standards of Behaviour

It is my expectation that the conduct of all employees will remain in keeping with the Service’s Core Values before, during and after this period of industrial action. I will not tolerate any behaviour which is deemed to be threatening, abusive or inappropriate. I would also like to reinforce that any inappropriate and disorderly behaviour exhibited (in particular from a picket line) may constitute a criminal offence and will be treated accordingly.

It is my sincere hope that you will consider the role that you need to play in maintaining effective and professional working relationships with your managers and colleagues. To reinforce this please refer to the “Guiding Principles” that are published on the Intranet.

Picking

Should you wish to picket, you should comply with the Government Code of Practice on picketing, this provides that:

- You should only picket at or near your place of work.
- Picketing should consist only of peacefully obtaining or communicating information, or peacefully persuading persons to abstain from work.
- There should be no more than 6 pickets on a picket line.
- The picket should not be on Fire Authority premises and should not impede access to premises or for vehicles responding to incidents.

If you are intending to picket and for those of you who will need to be ready to commence work at the conclusion of industrial action, I expect that you may wish to wear your uniform. However, please be aware that I expect you to cover your uniform with a civilian jacket for the full period of industrial action, regardless of the weather conditions.

Communications

Finally, I wish to advise you that the following methods should be used for communication with the Service during any period of industrial action:

- Email to the following secure address – confidential@cheshirefire.gov.uk
- Telephone the confidential telephone messaging service on (01606) 868660.
- Telephone or text to mobile 07896 931830
Alternatively if you wish to make contact on the day of the strike, you can contact the Operations Room directly on 07896 931771.

If you have already confirmed that you are available to work during periods of industrial action you do not need to communicate again, however, if your circumstances have changed please use the communication methods detailed above to notify the Service of your changed circumstances.

Whichever way you use for contact, you must include your full name (it might not be obvious from a personal email address) and for those making a declaration to work, details of your specialist skills (e.g. EFAD, LGV Driver, HP Operator, Swift Water Technician and Other – please specify).

Paul Hancock
Chief Fire Officer