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Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
9 March 2006

Victory for retained firefighters

Part-time firefighters are set to receive pensions and sick pay for the first time, following a legal victory.

The House of Lords ruling will allow 18,000 retained firefighters to join the brigade's pension scheme.

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) leaders said it was a "momentous decision" which followed a five-year legal battle.

The case, brought by firefighters in Berkshire and Kent, could also pave the way to improved rights for part-time workers in other industries.

The case, backed by the FBU, went through an Employment Tribunal, and Employment Appeals Tribunal and the Court of Appeal before finally being accepted by Law Lords.

The union had argued that retained firefighters, who are on call for up to 168 hours a week, should be entitled to the same pension and sick pay rights as full-time firefighters.

Twelve retained firefighters originally brought the case - but the outcome will affect all retained workers in the service.

The government and local authorities which contested the case now face six-figure legal costs.

Matt Rack, general secretary of the FBU, said: "This is a momentous decision following more than five years of legal work and a longer period of campaigning by this union.

"We have now won equal treatment for firefighters working the retained duty system.

"They perform a hugely important service to their community but have been discriminated against.

"This decision now paves the way for an end to 60 years of discrimination."

Colin Elliot, a retained firefighter from Wokingham, Berkshire, and one of those named in the test case, added: "We live and work in the communities we serve and we feel very strongly about this issue.

"I have seen colleagues leave the service after 25 years without a pension and that is unjust."