

6 March 2017

Workforce Report

Purpose

To update the Fire Services Management Committee on matters in relation to fire service industrial relations and pension matters.

Summary

This paper is for information and briefly describes the main industrial relations and pension issues at present.

Recommendation:

The Fire Services Management Committee members are asked to note the issues set out in the paper.

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Workforce Report

Pensions

Scheme Advisory Board

1. The board is moving forward and is establishing sub-committees to enable the board to support its work plan. One sub-committee will be established to look at cost effectiveness and administration and the other committee will look to establish good practice amongst Local Pension Boards. Councillor Darrel Pulk and Councillor Thomas Wright will be the employer representatives on the Local Pension Board group and Councillor John Bell and Councillor John Fuller will be the employer representatives on the costs and admin group.
2. At the last meeting of the FSMC, members agreed to nominate Councillor Jason Zadronzny to the Scheme Advisory Board. Councillor Jason Zadronzny has accepted this position and the Secretary of State has been asked to confirm the appointment.
3. The board's budget has been levied across fire and rescue authorities in accordance with the regulations. The Scheme Advisory Board has agreed that the levy for 2016/17 year will be collected from the 1 October 2016 to reflect the late start of the Scheme Advisory Board. Therefore the levy for the 2016/17 year will be £2.07 per active firefighter. From April 2017, the statutory levy will increase to £6.12 per active firefighter to reflect the full year plus the £2 technical adviser levy.
4. For information, I have provided the dates and venues for the 2017 Scheme Advisory Board meetings:
 - 6 March 2017 – Hilton, Gateshead
 - 14 June 2017 – London Fire Brigade, Union Street
 - 12 September 2017 – Greater Manchester Fire Training Centre
 - 12 December 2017 – Hampshire County Council, Winchester
5. All communications and minutes from the Scheme Advisory Board are published on the following forum: https://khub.net/group/firefighters-pension-scheme-local-pension-board-members-group-forum/forum/-/message_boards/category/27800196.
6. The next Scheme Advisory Board meeting is 6 March 2017.

Key wider workforce issues

Broadening the role of the firefighter

7. The FBU has decided to consult its membership through its branch structure on continued involvement in these discussions.

8. Feedback from the consultation will be the subject of debate at a recall conference on 21 March. A copy of the FBU circular can be found here:
<https://www.fbu.org.uk/circular/2017hoc0103mw/membership-consultation-national-negotiations-future-our-service>.
9. In the interim, agreement was reached at the recent NJC meeting to extend the trial period from the end of February until the date of the recall conference. This will also allow time for joint discussion on:
 - 9.1. The outcomes of the independent evaluation report currently being prepared by the University of Hertfordshire.
 - 9.2. Some of the concerns raised by the employees' side of the NJC around the operation of emergency medical response work.
 - 9.3. The potential to lobby ministers, governments, and others in respect of funding to support the fire and rescue service in developing such wider work.
10. However, depending on the outcome of the conference debate, it is possible that the FBU will instruct its members at that point to withdraw from work undertaken through the NJC trials either on a permanent basis or on a temporary basis while seeking continued discussion.
11. The broadening the role of the firefighter discussions also includes areas covered by the other NJC work streams, for example MTFA.

Inclusive Fire Service Group

12. This group continues to make good progress towards the development of improvement strategies for use at local level in areas relating to the recruitment, progression and retention of female, BME and LGBT employees as well as bullying and harassment in general. An update recently issued to FRAs can be found here:
http://www.local.gov.uk/search/-/journal_content/56/334162/3723707/article.

Employment Tribunal cases – pension scheme transitional protection arrangements

13. Insofar as FRAs are concerned, the defence of these cases is being handled on a cost-sharing collective basis through the auspices of the UK-wide National Employers. The other respondent in England is the Home Office. The judgement has now been received in respect of the test cases and the defence has been successful. The Employment Tribunal found on all points that the transitional provisions do not unlawfully discriminate against pension scheme members.
14. The FBU, who acted on behalf of the claimants, will need to decide by 28 March whether or not to lodge an appeal to the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

Advisory Forum

15. At the last meeting of the FSMC, members decided to nominate Lynne Major (HR Business Partner, Norfolk FRS) and Dany Cotton (Commissioner, London Fire Brigade)

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to fill two vacancies on the National Employers' Advisory Forum. Both nominations have been accepted and FRAs have been advised accordingly:

<http://www.local.gov.uk/web/workforcelibrary/fire-and-rescue-services-employers-circulars>.

Apprenticeships

16. At the recent meetings of the NJC for Local Authority FRS' and the Middle Managers Negotiating Body, members received an update on the increasing roll out of the level 3 advanced level apprenticeship in exercise and fitness (promoted in partnership with the FBU). Further information can be found here: http://www.local.gov.uk/search/-/journal_content/56/334162/3723707/article.
17. County Durham and Darlington FRS (CDDFRS) has introduced a Business Fire Safety Apprenticeship Scheme, which will see the appointment of apprentices on an employee basis from the point of recruitment and on the path to jobs as firefighters.
18. Following an approach from CDDFRS, the NJC will now progress working in partnership with the service both in terms of a level of external input as part of its own evaluation and in sharing information on the scheme more widely with other FRSs.