

Workforce Board – report by Mayor Sir Steve Bullock (Chair)

Pensions

New LGPS project has commenced

1. The LGPS 2014 project continues to progress with discussions now taking place with government over a scheme design proposal put forward by LGA and the Unions. Should these discussions be successfully concluded then consultation on the outcome would take place with both employers and union members. Work is also underway on proposals for future scheme cost management and governance.

Heads of agreement for new Teachers' scheme

2. Talks continue over the Government's proposed Heads of Agreement (HoA) document for the Teachers' scheme although two deadlines for finalising those talks have now passed. The NUT is still opposed to the scheme set out in the HoA document and is considering mounting a judicial review based on the need to perform another valuation of the scheme before any changes can be made.

Local Government Services

3. The National Employers formally responded to the unions' pay claim on 23 February by saying that they were unable to make a pay offer for 2012. However, the Employers are keen to avoid a similar situation in 2013 and have therefore invited the unions to begin discussions immediately on a range of related issues covering pay, terms & conditions and reform of the national negotiating machinery with a view to reaching agreement for implementation on 1 April 2013.
4. The National Employers have also stated that they are not prepared to refer the matter to arbitration (as requested by the unions) as it would be irresponsible to leave councils exposed to potential expenditure that they have told us they could not afford. It would be equally unfair to raise the expectations of the workforce that there might be a pay award for 2012 when that is not the case.

Developing pay policy statements

5. Section 38.1 of the Localism Act 2011 requires English and Welsh local authorities to produce a pay policy statement from 2012/13 and each subsequent year. The LGA has developed joint guidance with Association of Local Authority Chief Executives (ALACE) and delivered a number of regional workshops to help local authorities to meet these new statutory obligations.

School teachers

6. The School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) received the remit for its 21st Report on 21 February. The remit covers:
 - 6.1 how the pay framework for teachers should best be made more market-facing in local areas;

- 6.2 how the pay scales, including the main and upper pay scales, should be reformed to more effectively link pay and performance, including arrangements for progression; and
 - 6.3 what other reforms should be made to teachers' pay and conditions in order to raise the status of the profession and best support the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers in all schools.
7. The STRB's report must be submitted to the Secretary of State for Education by 28 September 2012. Statutory consultees have until 20 April to submit evidence on these issues. The National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers (NEOST) will submit evidence, informed by a consultation with local authority representatives. A subsequent remit to the STRB will be given after the Government has considered the 21st Report and will include the matter of the pay award for 2013.

Fire

8. CLG recently issued a Heads of Agreement document setting out its proposals for reform of the fire service pension schemes for uniformed employees. The largest fire service union, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), has rejected its content and is consulting its members on 'a rapid move to prepare for a strike ballot'. However in the interim, talks which include the LGA, are continuing. Those talks are being held in a constructive manner and it is hoped that a ballot for strike action will be avoided. But should it proceed, it is most likely that strike action would commence in April. The LGA will continue to press the FBU to talk with the LGA and fire authorities locally on how an appropriate level of cover could be maintained in such circumstances.

An Institute for Youth Work

9. The LGA continues to be represented on a National Youth Agency forum which is exploring the possibility of an 'Institute for Youth Work'. The Agency co-ordinated a consultation on the establishment of such a professional body at the end of 2011 and found notable support for it, such a body would promote youth work, develop and maintain professional standards and could oversee a voluntary registration scheme for youth workers

Layers and Spans of Control

10. The LGA held a workshop to share the learning from the four pilot councils who have rolled out the Decision Making Accountability approach in their organisations. The approach enables organisations to determine more effectively the right organisational structure and number and levels of posts. It was extremely well attended, with over 70 delegates and the LGA is working on finalising a toolkit for councils to implement the approach.

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