

Notes of Discussion and Actions Required

Fire Services Forum

16 October 2009

Local Government House, London

1. Membership of the Fire Services Forum, Office Holders and meeting dates 2009 / 2010

The Forum noted its Membership, office holders and the meeting dates for 2009 / 2010.

2. Update from the Fire Services Management Committee

The Chairman, Cllr Coleman, detailed the amended position taken by the Committee in relation to FiReControl and informed Members that, following an appointment process, Commissioner Ron Dobson (London) would be taking on the post of Principal Fire Adviser to the Committee.

Members asked that nominations to outside bodies made by the Fire Services Management Committee be circulated to Forum Members.

Action

Officers to circulate information on outside bodies appointments to Forum Members.

Paul Johnston

3. FiReControl update

The Forum received a presentation from Roger Hargreaves, Department for Communities and Local Government, updating Members on progress of the FiReControl project. Roger indicated that he was confident that the project was, following contract re-negotiations, being delivered at a higher tempo and that significant deliverables were now in place. Nonetheless, Roger acknowledged that significant political debates were being held over the future of FiReControl, and CLG were undertaking work to discuss what progress could be made on contingency options.

Members thanked Roger for his presentation. During discussion of the item, the following points were raised:

- Implementation schedules of the FiReControl project in areas that were directly affected by the 2012 Olympic Games were being kept under review and CLG were continuing to liaise with Fire and Rescue Services on this. The Chairman added that the position taken by LFEPA was that FiReControl would not be implemented until after the Olympic Games if not in place by August 2011.
- CLG was confident that budgeting concerns had been satisfactorily addressed. Fire Authorities were accordingly better placed to recruit and train staff for the new system to be put in place as part of FiReControl.
- CLG Ministers remained fully supportive of the project.

The Fire Services Forum will continue to monitor progress on FiReControl at future meetings and to convene a special meeting on LGA's contingency options the project if required.

4. Negotiations and industrial relations

The Forum received a presentation from Sarah Messenger on the work of both Local Government Employers and the National Joint Council for Fire and Rescue Authorities (NJC). Sarah outlined the value offered by the NJC as a national negotiating body, how its remit was established and went on to detail other possible options in the absence of the NJC in determining pay and conditions.

Members thanked Sarah for her presentation. The following points were raised:

- Concern was raised by Members over the UK-wide remit of the NJC when fire and rescue was a devolved matter. Sarah noted that this was a matter for Members to consider.
- The NJC would not involve itself in industrial relations disputes of individual authorities, unless specifically asked to.
- Following the UK firefighter dispute in 2003, the conditions set out in the Grey Book did allow for more local flexibility. The importance of local decision-making was reiterated by Members, with the Chairman noting that LFEPA had chosen to not follow the Gold Book in determining terms and conditions for Brigade Managers.

Discussions were thereafter held on what position each political Group would take on the Employers' side of the NJC for pay increases for fire service employees for the following year. ***Presumably there should be no mention of 0% at this stage?? Exactly***

5. Brigade Managers' National Joint Council

Discussions were held over the application by FRAs of the national NJC agreed pay award for Brigade Managers.

The Chairman agreed to write to Fire and Rescue Authorities to seek to establish their position on application of NJC agreed pay awards, the desire of Fire Authorities to stick with current arrangements and on future negotiating aspirations should the decision be taken to continue to current arrangements.

Action

Officers to draft a letter on behalf of the Chairman to FRAs. **Trish O'Flynn/Gill Gittins**

6. Note of the last meeting

The note of the Fire Services Forum held on 26 June 2009 was agreed.