

Notes of Decisions Taken and Actions Required

Fire Services Management Committee

11 May 2009

at Local Government House, London

Present

- Chair:** Cllr Anthony Duggan (Bedfordshire & Luton CFA)
Vice Chair: Cllr Fred Walker (Greater Manchester FCDA)
Deputy Chair: Cllr Jeremy Hilton (Gloucestershire CC) (Liberal Democrat)
Conservative: Cllr Richard Hobbs (Warwickshire CC); Cllr Peter Roffey (Leicestershire CC); Cllr Mac McGuire (Cambridgeshire CC); Cllr Joanna Spicer (Suffolk CC)
Labour: Cllr Fred Walker (Greater Manchester FCDA); Cllr Navin Shah (London FEPA); Cllr Sharon Sullivan (Merseyside FCDA)
Liberal Democrat: Cllr David Goddard (Stockport); Cllr Eddie Clein (Liverpool) (present for items 1 and 2)
Substitute: Cllr Phil Box (Shropshire) (Labour); Cllr Paul Shannon (Manchester) (Liberal Democrat) (for Cllr Eddie Clein from item 3 onwards)
Apologies: Cllr Jerry Wilmott (Wiltshire & Swindon CFA), Cllr Watts Stelling (Durham CC)
In attendance: Steve McGuirk (CFO Cheshire); Dave Webb (CFO Leicestershire); Fay Smith (DCLG) (for item 4 only); Helen Murray, Trish O'Flynn, Clive Harris and Paul Johnston (LGA)

The Chair welcomed Trish O'Flynn, Senior Policy Consultant, and Paul Johnston, Member Support Officer, to the Committee.

1. Update on current issues

The Chair introduced the item by updating Members on the Equality and Diversity Charter. It was noted that approximately 350 Members had signed up to the Charter, but that the level of sign up was varied amongst Fire Authorities. A request was made that a list of Member Authorities to have signed up to the Charter thus far be circulated.

Further to this, the first Equality and Diversity Network meeting for FRA members, chaired by Cllr Joanna Spicer, was held on 21 April 2009. Members noted that discussions arising from the meeting had been positive, and that a follow-up meeting was planned for September 2009. Cllr Spicer thanked LGA

officers for their efforts in preparing the meeting.

Cllr Duggan stated that, with talks on the European working-time directive having broken down, the European Parliament was at this stage no longer looking to progress this matter. Members did note however that this was an issue that may re-emerge in due course.

Cllr Fred Walker provided an update on pensions and levels of ill-health retirement. Following on from those discussions, it was agreed that further information on levels of ill-health retirement be prepared for the September 2009 meeting.

Action

- Officers to draw up a list for FSMC Members of members in their Authorities who have not signed up to the E&D Charter and this list be circulated. **Lucy Ellender / Paul Johnston**
- Officers to circulate information on the latest trends in ill health retirement from the CLG Pensions Committee when it is available (probably September 2009). **Cllr Fred Walker**

2. The role of Local Government Employers (LGE)

The Board welcomed Sarah Messenger, Service Director at the LGE to the meeting. Sarah introduced herself and outlined the activities and the funding routes of the LGE.

The work and remit of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) was detailed. It was noted that one of the significant recent achievements for the NJC had been to negotiate an agreement at the national level to allow more flexibility for employment terms and conditions to be made at the local level. The NJC was a national body covering more than just the scope of England, and as such, was not accountable only to the LGA, but had to take into account the perspectives of other Local Authority organisations in its negotiations.

Sarah stated that the general view remained that the NJC for Local Authority Fire & Rescue Services still served a beneficial purpose. The benefits of a national negotiating body included economies of scale and joint expertise.

In response to a query from the Board over dispute resolution, Sarah informed Board Members that the role of the NJC was to try and construct deals acceptable to both parties. In doing so, there was a need for acceptable parameters on such deals to be established. These parameters were drawn from the input of various bodies. Further to this debate, it was noted that officers on the NJC would never, in their negotiations, exceed the parameters set by politicians.

Sarah added that there was no specific mechanism on which the NJC could draw in the event of a dispute or pre-dispute to avoid negative media output, but noted that Fire Authorities and the trade unions were expected to abide by the principles contained within the Joint protocol on Good Industrial Relations'.

Steve McGuirk, Lead Advisor to the FSMC, mentioned the role of the Advisory Forum as a means of taking stock of what was happening across the full range of Fire Authorities, as well as examining the implications of negotiated pay deals.

The Board thanked Sarah for her contributions to the meeting.

Action

Members asked that LGE provide some materials for induction packs for new members to FRAs **Sarah Messenger**

3. FiReControl – LGA position

Discussions were held over the position held by the LGA on the FiReControl project.

Though various opinions were held on the current established position, Board Members broadly spoke in favour of maintaining the existing position with some amendments.

It was agreed that a draft resolution, incorporating the comments made at the meeting, be circulated to Board Members for their comments.

Action

Officers to draft and circulate a draft resolution to Board Members for comment
Trish O'Flynn

4. New Dimension Long-Term Capability Management

Fay Smith (Communities and Local Government) was welcomed to the meeting. She stated that the ownership of New Dimension equipment and vehicles was now being transferred from the CLG to Local Authorities, with various long-term arrangements in place. Fay added that 38 Fire Authorities had signed up to the project, with four further Authorities awaiting details prior to signing up.

5. LGA Annual Fire Conference 2009

Helen Murray (Programme Director) thanked the officers and Members for their work in making the Conference a success.

Cllr Jeremy Hilton stated that it had been helpful to have been asked to chair only one session, as it had left time to attend other events of interest. He added that it was positive that the last session of the conference had been held in the morning, and that it might be useful to consider introducing a timing device for speakers at the next conference.

6. NJC Update (oral report)

Cllr Duggan informed Members that pay for 2009 / 2010 was currently being negotiated by the Joint Working Party, with discussions ongoing at the secretariat level.

With regard to part-time workers, Cllr Duggan reported that the Tribunal was keen to reach a settlement, which would hopefully arrive in the near future.

Cllr Duggan stated that the NJC was looking to provide a system to resolve local disputes at the local level.

Cllr Duggan added finally that Steve McGuirk had recently been appointed to chair the Advisory Forum.

7. Note of the last meeting

The note of the last meeting was agreed.

Members noted that this would be the last Fire Services Management Committee to be chaired by Cllr Duggan. Members offered their thanks to Cllr Duggan for his work on the Committee, noting that he had helped in fostering an independence and confidence for Committee Members to go about their work.

Cllr Duggan thanked LGA officers for their support during his chairmanship.

Action

Officers to draft thank you letters to all FSMC Members who would no longer sit on the Committee after the 4th June Elections **Clive Harris**