

Item 10

Industrial relations update

Purpose of report

For noting.

Summary

This report outlines developing industrial relations issues affecting the Fire and Rescue Service.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the report.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Industrial relations update

Pay 2010

1. The Employees' Side of the NJC sought an across the board increase of 5.1% for 2010; the rationale for such a claim being it represented the Retail Price Index figure released on 15 June 2010.
2. The Employers' Side considered the claim in the context of what is affordable and sustainable and in the light of announcements made in relation to public sector pay in the most recent Budget and consequently advised the Employees' Side in June that the financial position is such that it was unable to offer any increase for 2010/11.
3. Fire authorities were advised of the position and provided with a model letter for use in communication with employees as well as information relating to media activity/interest in support of a consistent message across all fire authorities.
4. The Joint Secretariat relationship has provided the opportunity to pave the way for the Employers' decision as part of a 'no surprises' culture and to reinforce since then that this is not a negotiating position. There will be no further change
5. A formal reaction has so far not been received from the Employees' Side. It is highly unlikely that a union will jointly sign up to a nil pay award position therefore the continued silence could be taken as implied acceptance especially given there are no signs of industrial unrest at the present time.

General employer or joint secretariat activity with FRSs

6. Since the last meeting of the FSMC the Joint Secretaries have conducted a formal conciliation for one English FRS with a mutually satisfactory outcome. Informal work is currently being undertaken with three more English FRSs in order to avoid industrial unrest.
7. Considerable work has been undertaken by the Employers' Secretariat with various FRSs advising upon the interpretation of existing terms and conditions of employment and the flexibilities therein in order to assist local negotiations.

National Protocol for Good Industrial Relations

8. The NJC recently surveyed FRSs on a joint basis to obtain the perceptions of both management and unions on industrial relations at both local and national levels since the introduction of the joint Protocol.
9. The majority of respondents had jointly discussed the protocol locally. Most fire and rescue services have found the Protocol a useful reference tool to further

improve local industrial relations processes or it had been instrumental in starting a dialogue as a precursor to putting in place those formal processes.

10. The results also revealed that fire authorities were more confident in resolving local difficulties since the introduction of the Protocol.
11. Both management and unions felt that the industrial relations relationship at national level was largely good, or average. Only a very small number of respondents perceived a relationship below average.
12. A number of FRSs jointly indicated that they would welcome a session at local level facilitated by the Joint Secretaries in order to further embed the Protocol at local level and improve industrial relations. This is something that the Joint Secretariat has previously done, receiving good feedback from the participants on its usefulness.