

## **Industrial relations**

### **Purpose of the Report**

To update the Fire Services Management Committee on current industrial relations issues.

### **Summary**

This paper briefly describes any current industrial relations issues.

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note the issues set out in the paper.

### **Action**

This report is for information.

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### **National Joint Council issues**

1. The information below provides a brief update on a selection of current National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services issues.
2. Pay, terms and conditions review - a second workshop for members of the Employers' Side and its advisers was held recently to continue formulation of Employers' Side aspirations as part of this joint piece of work.
3. Mileage rates review - negotiations are continuing in respect of the separate review on car mileage rates.
4. Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations - what is intended to be the final batch of offers have now been issued to all eligible retained duty system employees/ex-employees under the Employment Tribunal settlement agreements reached with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and Retained Firefighters' Union (RFU) on behalf of Fire and Rescue Authorities. The process to date has been hampered by delays in the provision of fire authority data but it is hoped that all authorities have now ensured that a full and correct set of data has been provided to Popularis (the independent company handling the data). Apart from this, there are a small number of associated issues to be dealt with for example the HMRC position on the tax and national insurance status of the payments and further queries in relation to application of the Regulations themselves.

### **Local issues**

5. Since the last meeting of the FSMC there has been one referral from a Fire and Rescue Service for formal Joint Secretaries conciliation assistance, which is on-going.
6. The NJC's Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) has also met once. TAP deals with referrals from local parties on the introduction of a new shift system only. Whilst agreement was not reached on the day, both parties subsequently accepted the recommendation of the Independent Chair.
7. Outside of the usual LGA support to authorities, and on request, the Employers' Secretariat can provide an industrial relations session for local management teams. This session covers negotiating skills and tactics and is useful particularly where a senior management team has changed or is relatively new to negotiations. We are in the process of arranging such a session with one FRA.

**Item 5**

**Pension scheme reform**

8. The Government's pension reform proposals are continuing to progress, bringing focus again on two of the most contentious issues – further increase in the employee contribution rate and publication of the Normal Pension Age Review recommendations.
9. Should the unions remain aggrieved the risk of potential industrial unrest will return. As such, authorities will want to make sure appropriate business continuity arrangements are in place and refresh their knowledge, for example, on matters such as the industrial action process and pay implications.
10. We have already, at an earlier stage in the pension reform discussions, provided authorities with guidance on pay issues as they relate specifically to employees covered by the National Joint Council Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book), given the earlier risk of industrial action:

[http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=d3b1714d-f3a9-426c-8407-8faefb7fc924&groupId=10171](http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=d3b1714d-f3a9-426c-8407-8faefb7fc924&groupId=10171)

11. In addition, further general advice in respect of industrial action can be found on the website:

[http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/employment-relations/-/journal\\_content/56/10171/3510449/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/employment-relations/-/journal_content/56/10171/3510449/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE)

12. This guide enables authorities to assess the impact and implications of an industrial dispute and to decide upon the appropriate response, mindful of employment law.