

17 November 2017

Workforce report

Purpose

To update the Fire Services Management Committee on matters in relation to fire service industrial relations and pension matters.

Summary

This paper is for information and briefly describes the main industrial relations and pension issues at present.

Recommendation

Fire Services Management Committee members are asked to note the issues set out in the paper.

Action

Officers to proceed as directed by members.

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Pensions

Scheme Advisory Board

1. Malcolm Eastwood attended the Fire Commission on 13 October, to give an update on the work of the board. Members were also told about free-to-attend tax seminars, that had been commissioned by the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) in partnership with the Police Pension Scheme. Details of these events can be found [here](#). Members were encouraged to champion fire pensions to scheme members, and ensure that they were managing their delegation of scheme managers where appropriate. Members should be aware of the risks involved but should also proactively support their local pensions boards.
2. New members, Fiona Twycross AM (Labour) and Cllr Rogers Phillips (Conservative) have been welcomed to the board, and the Independent Group nomination for Cllr Ian Stephens has been passed to the Minister.
3. The Home Office consulted the SAB on their views on industry specific assumptions used in the 2016 valuation, which will form the GAD recommendations to government. The SAB engaged an actuarial firm to provide an independent review in order to form their response.
4. The 2016 valuation will:
 - 4.1. Calculate the employer contribution rate from 2019 to 2013.
 - 4.2. Determine whether the cost cap set at 16.8% of pensionable pay has been breached.
5. GAD expect to be able to provide details of any change to employer contributions from April 2019 around April 2018. It has been highlighted to GAD that this timescale is unhelpful to Fire & Rescue Authorities mid to long term financial forecasting.

Firefighters' Pensions (England) Scheme Advisory Board website

6. The SAB website recently launched at the Firefighters' Pensions conference. The site can be found at www.fpsboard.org and contains a wealth of information on the role and work of the Board.

LGA will regularly update the site with new content, including training materials and governance resources. Feedback welcome to Claire.hey@local.gov.uk.

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Key wider workforce issues

Pay claim and broadening the role negotiation

7. Both sides of the NJC remain fully committed to identifying a mutually acceptable resolution and negotiations are therefore continuing with meetings taking place to scope potential changes to roles and to explore how that could be reflected in terms of pay.
8. As members are aware the latter will be directly affected by available funding on a sustainable basis. Both sides of the NJC therefore remain committed to joint political lobbying in that regard.
9. To inform such lobbying, and building upon the independent evaluation of the medical-related trials undertaken by the [University of Hertfordshire](#), the NJC commissioned *New Economy* to undertake a detailed cost benefit analysis in respect of responding to category 1 cardiac arrests.
10. Arrangements have been made to meet with members of the All Party Fire Safety and Rescue Parliamentary Group on 15 November. On this occasion NJC attendees will include Cllr Nick Chard the Employers' Side Chair, Alan McLean the Employees' Side Chair, Employers' and Employees' Secretariats. Furthermore that group has agreed to sponsor a Westminster event early in January to which a wider group including all MPs will be invited. *New Economy* will be presenting their findings at both events.
11. Members will recall that the Employers' Side has suggested a 1.0 per cent uplift in basic pay and continual professional development payments be applied (with effect from 1 July 2017) while negotiations continue. At the time of writing discussion continues on that matter.

Inclusive Fire Service Group

12. Members will recall that the Inclusive Fire Service Group was set up by the NJC to assess the current position on equality, diversity, cultural and behavioural issues within the service and to identify guidance in relation to any further strategies that could be used at local level to further encourage improvement. Interested parties such as the National Fire Chiefs Council, Fire Officers Association and Retained Firefighters Union were invited to be involved. The group is chaired by the Independent Chair of the NJC, Linda Dickens.
13. One of the [improvement strategies](#) suggested by the group and supported at all levels in both the evidence gathering stage and since issue of the strategies to FRAs is that of a national awareness campaign about the role of a firefighter. The general view was that an

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information campaign to dispel perceptions was felt to be important in attracting people to the service who at present have no interest at all believing incorrectly that it couldn't be the job for them. Discussion with the Home Office in terms of supporting such an approach has been constructive and they have volunteered to attend the next meeting of the IFSG to explain about the work they currently have in hand and to hear more from the group on this matter.