

Industrial Relations Report

Purpose of the Report

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

Summary

This paper briefly describes the position in respect of the current key industrial relations issues as at the date of issue of the report.

Recommendation:

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

Action:

Officers to be directed as appropriate.

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DCLG/FBU Pension Scheme Reform Dispute

1. Members will be aware that this dispute remains unresolved.
2. Since the last meeting of the FSMC there have been various short periods of strike action by Fire Brigades Union (FBU) members in England and Wales (excluding control members). Periods not covered by strike action are covered by action short of a strike involving matters such as refusal to undertake voluntary overtime.
3. At the time of writing, the Fire Minister is due to meet with members of the FBU's leadership on Friday 22 August.
4. We remain in close contact with both parties to the dispute and available to further assist in identifying a resolution to this eight-point dispute in any way that it is appropriate to do so.

NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services - commitment to joint work

5. On a more positive note, the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services has been engaged in constructive discussion through its commitment to work jointly on 'changes identified by each Side to ensure that there is a pay framework alongside terms and conditions in the fire and rescue service which reflect the responsibilities of, and current and future demands on, the service and the profession'. This includes the increasing need to consider how the workforce's skills and commitment can best be utilised and the type of activities undertaken. To support this discussion a joint survey of fire and rescue services was undertaken to map out what currently happens on the ground and to identify the types of activity felt to be of additional value for the future. A number of work streams have been identified by lead members to take this work forward.
6. Members will be aware of the Independent Review, to be chaired by Adrian Thomas, recently announced by DCLG. The NJC will now need to consider what impact that announcement will have on this piece of work.

Pay

7. Agreement has been reached on an across the board increase of 1.0% effective from 1st July for employees covered by the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services. This NJC covers employees from firefighter to middle manager levels. While Employees' Side expectations were higher than this figure, citing the rising cost of living and pension contributions, and the general atmosphere given the pensions dispute not conducive to smooth negotiations, agreement was secured without industrial relations problems.
8. Agreement on pay has also been reached within the NJC for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, which covers senior uniformed managers such as Chief Fire Officers, Deputy Chief Fire Officers and Assistant Chief Fire Officers. The claim was for 1.9%.

- 8.1 An increase of 1.0% on basic salary applicable to brigade managers earning a basic salary of £99,999 or lower (as at 31 December 2013).
- 8.2 A flat rate increase of £1000 on basic salary applicable to brigade managers earning a basic salary of £100,000 or more (as at 31 December 2013).

Local assistance

9. Over the last year we have, through the NJC, undertaken conciliations for five fire and rescue services covering a number of issues. All were successfully resolved. We are currently putting in place arrangements for referrals from three more fire and rescue services.
10. Over the last year we have also worked with a number of fire and rescue services, through the NJC, to provide joint industrial relations training for managers and trade union representatives within an FRS so that they can review their industrial relations relationship and commit to specific improvements (and how and when they will be achieved) where necessary.