

FIREFIGHTERS' PAY CLAIM 2022**REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER****For Information****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Elected Members of the Cleveland Fire Authority (CFA) of the current status of the negotiations between the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Employers' side of the National Joint Council (NJC) with regard to the 2022/23 Firefighter Pay Claim.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are recommended to:
- (i) note the Employers' side of the National Joint Council (NJC) improved offer on firefighters' pay. That offer was 5% on all basic pay points and continual professional development payments; and
 - (ii) receive additional reports, as appropriate.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The National Joint Council (NJC) is responsible for the national pay, terms and conditions of uniformed fire and rescue service personnel across the UK, from firefighters through to middle managers. Pay negotiations for 2022/23 remain on going which has consequently led to an emerging risk of national industrial action. During the negotiations the NJC has also approached Ministers with a view to seeking additional, sustained central funding to support negotiations on a reasonable pay settlement.
- 3.2 Circular EMP/1/22 advised Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) of the employees' side pay claim and the employers' response to the claim. The employers' side pay offer was a 2% pay uplift on all basic pay points and continual professional development payments.
- 3.3 On 19 July 2022, the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) unanimously rejected the employers' side pay proposal.

- 3.4 In the absence of an improved pay offer, the Executive Committee of the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU), at their meeting on 2 September 2022, decided to put in place preparations for a ballot of members for strike action, The FBU have announced that it is their intention to ballot members for strike action w/c 12 October 2022. This now sets the timelines that could bring industrial action mid November 2022. The current risk of national industrial action occurring within fire and rescue services in England was assessed as being **medium – high**.
- 3.5 On 2 August 2022, the Chair of the Employers side wrote to the then Home Secretary (EMP/3/22 refers) asking for consideration of additional funding to support an increased pay offer for Grey Book employees from the Home Office as it had supported the police service pay award. On 12 August 2022 the Chair, Cllr Nick Chard, raised the matter of the letter again with the Home Office and has consequently been advised that the Home Secretary is still considering the issue and they will get back to us at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.6 On 20/21 September 2022 the employers' side of the NJC conducted further pay consultation sessions with FRA Chairs. The purpose of these sessions was to bring Authorities up to date on where things stand at that point in time and to explore FRAs capacity and desire to improve upon the 2% offer, should it transpire that additional funding is very limited or not forthcoming.
- 3.7 On 30 September 2022, the Chair of the Employers side, Cllr Nick Chard, received a response from the Home Secretary. In respect of the National Employers request for additional funding or other forms of suggested future financial support the Government highlighted that the Home Office neither funds nor agrees fire pay as the responsibility sits with Authorities through the NJC mechanism. As such, Ministers have taken the decision not to take the unusual step of providing funding support towards a pay offer.
- 3.8 As the National Employers now had clarity on the funding position in respect of the Home Office, they undertook a short consultation process to establish the maximum percentage pay offer that Authorities would now wish the employers' side of the NJC to consider. As a result, on 4 October the National Employers made an improved pay offer of five per cent on all basic pay rates and continual professional development payments. In doing so, the National Employers are clear that they believe a higher offer, more in line with those made to other public sector employees, is appropriate.
- 3.9 On 5 October 2022, the Executive Council of the FBU recommended that the offer is rejected but agreed to commence a membership consultation on the revised proposals.
- 3.10 The outcome of the consultation process is envisaged to be early November 2022.

4. SUMMARY

- 4.1 Cleveland Fire Authority allocated 2% within its authorised budget 2022/23 based on affordability. The Authority have been clear throughout the pay negotiation process that, while it supports a fair and reasonable pay award that is reflective of the heightened levels of inflation and increases received by other UK public sector bodies, any unfunded uplift beyond two percent would mean that this Authority would need to find additional efficiencies with a significant risk to services and/or jobs next year.
- 4.2 Whilst the full details of the financial settlement for 2023/24 are not yet known, the forecasted budget pressures arising from the current Green and Grey Book pay awards and non-pay inflation is significant and will have a substantial negative impact on the Authority's current medium-term financial plan, changing the budget deficit from £0.547m to £1.521m.

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