

REPORT TO:	POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE
DATE:	13TH SEPTEMBER 2006
REPORT NO.	CFO/173/06
REPORTING OFFICER:	ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER EVANS
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SUBJECT:	SUMMARY OF JOINT SECRETARIES MEETING OF 11TH SEPTEMBER 2006

Summary

1. This report details the outcome of the most recent (4th) meeting of the local joint secretaries in relation to the continued industrial action taken by FBU members on Merseyside.

Recommendations

2. That:
 - i. Members note the outcome of the meeting in respect of areas where the Authority and FBU can, in principle, agree issues relating to the settlement of the current dispute.
 - ii. Members note the disputed items that can not be agreed by the local joint secretaries.
 - iii. Members agree to seek support and assistance for the local joint secretaries from the national secretaries, and that this assistance is requested, at the NJC's joint secretaries earliest convenience.

Background

3. Members will be aware that the Fire Brigades Union commenced their industrial action on 31st August 2006 and returned to work for 2 hours on 4th September 2006 and recommenced strike action at 1200 hours on 4th September 2006 until 1200 hours on 8th September 2006. A further 8 day strike action was notified to the Authority late afternoon on 5th September 2006, and commenced at 1000 hours on 12th September 2006 and will conclude at 1000 hours on 20th September 2006.

4. During the first period of strike action 3 meetings between local joint secretaries (2nd September 2006, 4th September 2006 and 5th September 2006) took place. At the first of this sequence of meetings a request from the FBU for NJC assistance was made. However, it was felt that all attempts at resolving the dispute locally had not been explored and further meetings took place in an attempt to resolve the dispute.
5. At its meeting of the 8th September 2006 members requested that the local joint secretaries meet on 11th September 2006 to determine those issues that it was thought could be agreed and in addition to detail those issues that could not. The meeting between local joint secretaries took place and the following outcomes should be noted

- i. Part Time Contracts

There exists a general disagreement on the use of Part Time Contracts with the FBU maintaining that any additional hours over a firefighters contractual 42 hours, should be at premium rates.

The Authority's position remains that Part Time Working was previously agreed to and is incorporated in the Grey Book. Any advertisement for part time working can not and should not preclude existing firefighters from applying. This issue has been dealt with through the agreed local and national disputes processes.

- ii. LLAR

This matter is subject to a general disagreement between the FBU and management. The FBU maintain that the Technical Advisory Panel recommendations, recommended a move to providing the 'new accommodation' blocks at each location, and that commencement of LLAR without the accommodation being in place is a breach of the recommendation. Management maintain a full commitment to providing the new accommodation and that existing LLAR staff are fully supportive of that position and have accepted interim arrangements pending any new build.

This matter has previously been dealt with through the locally and nationally agreed procedures.

- iii. MACC

Subject to Authority approval of a full business case there could be agreement on both sides based upon the following principles.

- Those wishing to leave the Service would be free to do so subject to a suitable business case.
 - Part Time Contracts would cover the hours of peak demand between 1700 – 2300 hours.
 - That there would need to be an efficiency of 6 whole time equivalent savings.
 - That temporary contracts would be made permanent for those who stay.
 - Remaining staff (outside of Part Time Staff) would remain on their present shift patterns.
6. The main concerns of the FBU would be in the area of confirmation of minimum staff levels, which is a matter of detail to be dealt with through further discussion.

iv. Retained Pumps

The FBU would in principle accept the following:

- The principle of providing a CPP (combined pump platform) at City Fire Station, to replace the pump and aerial appliance. That transitional arrangements would leave the pump at that location until the CPP is provided.
 - An acceptance of the Hazmat response concept at Bromborough, but that shift patterns and staffing model for this concept would be subject to further qualification.
 - That subject to further qualification; a further review over the next 12 months in relation to the pump at St. Helens may form the basis of an agreed outcome but that the FBU would seek further consultation following that review.
7. The FBU would not agree or accept the retaining of the pump at Bootle/Netherton.
8. The FBU noted that the elected members had requested that management's joint secretary had been requested to take an 'outcomes' report to the reconvened P&F meeting on 13th September 2006.
9. It is recommended that given the current status of discussion, the involvement of national officers supporting a local process, might assist in resolving the dispute.