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Employers' Secretary, Simon Pannell

FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES National Employers

Matt Wrack
General Secretary
Fire Brigades Union
Bradley House
68 Coombe Rd
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey, KT2 7AE

17th July 2017

Dear Matt,

I write in connection with your recent letter on the Employers' response to the Employees' Side claim.

As far as 2017 is concerned, I welcome your positive acknowledgment of the increases offered. An increase of 2.0% with effect from 1 July, is a figure that is double that set aside in fire authority budgets. This will mean authorities will have to look very hard at what they can do to balance such an increase at this time. As indicated, this is the start of a journey to meet our shared aspiration of increased pay for firefighters.

We thought very carefully about the date suggested for an increase of 3.0% at stage 2, which is also within the current pay settlement year. As is clear in the offer we are committed to applying such an increase, subject to it being fully funded by governments and an agreed NJC deal in place. We need to be realistic about current fire authority budgets and the time it can take to both agree a permanent deal for the future and to secure funding from governments across the UK. We wish to minimise any negative impacts that could immediately follow if an increase is not properly managed.

Turning to further in the future, we share the FBU's desire for certainty around future pay awards in 2018, 2019 and potentially 2020. We are fully committed to working with you and, as appropriate, governments across the UK, to be able to do so as soon as possible. The points above around the content of an agreed deal and government funding currently being unknown equally apply. Both will need to be known in order to be able to make informed decisions. However, as you are aware, the employers' aspiration is for increases to be above the level applied in recent years.

We note the reference to joint initiatives at local level agreed through the NJC potentially ceasing. For the avoidance of doubt, we are fully committed to continuance of such work. We believe it to be valuable to communities and a fundamental part in reassuring both governments and the partners that we work with that the fire service is a reliable partner in which to invest and continue to work with. Hence why our offer is linked to such continuation. We would urge the FBU not to do anything at this time which would negatively impact upon discussions with governments and where necessary other partners. But most importantly not to impact upon the communities for whom such work has proven to be extremely successful, including lives saved.

I have set out above the reasons why we believe the approach in the offer makes sense for both fire authorities and their employees covered by this NJC. We note the FBU Executive Council meets on the 24th July to consider the consultation process and look forward to hearing the outcome.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Simon Pannell', written in a cursive style.

Simon Pannell
Employers' Side Secretary