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NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

**To: Chief Fire Officers
Chief Executives/Clerks to Fire Authorities
Chairs of Fire Authorities
Directors of HR (Fire Authorities)**

Members of the National Joint Council

13th October 2017

CIRCULAR NJC/10/17

Dear Sir/Madam,

Meetings of the National Joint Council and Middle Managers Negotiating Body 5 October 2017

At the above meetings members considered a number of issues.

Broadening the role

1. Members of the NJC recalled the following commitment:

'Both Sides commit 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.'

2. It was recognised that this would include consideration of how the workforce's skills and commitment can best be utilised, including the type of activities undertaken and the potential to build upon, and expand, this piece of work to encompass a more wide-ranging and strategic look to the future.

3. Five workstreams had been set up under that commitment to explore potential new areas of work:

Environmental challenges
Emergency medical response
Multi agency emergency response
Youth and other social engagement work
Inspections and enforcement

4. In order to support joint political lobbying on funding the NJC commissioned *New Economy* to build upon the work undertaken by the University of Hertfordshire in its independent evaluation of trials undertaken in a number of FRSs. It is developing a detailed cost benefit analysis in respect of emergency medical response. Members

noted that whilst *New Economy* has been provided with access to all the data gathered by the University of Hertfordshire, it is also currently undertaking analysis of further information recently provided by FRSs.

5. The NJC's joint Technical Working Group has undertaken a substantial amount of work on a number of learning points from the trials to inform this negotiation:
 - (i) Mental wellbeing, including temporary withdrawal from such work – an in depth survey of counselling and support services available through FRSs has been conducted
 - (ii) Inoculations – further research is taking place
 - (iii) Training – work has included discussion on routes to ensure that appropriate training, which may when appropriate be above the current expected levels, is in place
 - (iv) Common data standards and data sharing between ambulance services and fire and rescue services – work has explored the kinds of data that are, or should be, available.
 - (v) Local Technical Working Groups – a survey to identify the existence/use of such groups or appropriate alternatives at local level
 - (vi) Mobilisation – issues around mobilisation and related concerns have been explored

Pay claim

6. Both employer and employee sides of the NJC reaffirmed their commitment to identifying a mutually acceptable resolution as soon as possible.
7. Therefore negotiations on pay are actively continuing. Work such as that being undertaken through the joint Technical Working Group and *New Economy* is also continuing. In addition work will continue around joint political lobbying, the next step being to hold a parliamentary event in Westminster in November.
8. The employers' side had suggested, that while those negotiations continue, the NJC could agree that basic pay and continual professional payments are uplifted by 1.0% with effect from 1st July 2017. The employees' side is considering its response and indicated that it will seek further written clarification from the employers' secretariat before responding.

Inclusive Fire Service Group

9. Improving diversity, inclusion, and issues around behaviour is a high priority for fire and rescue services across the UK from both an employer and employee perspective. .
10. The Inclusive Fire Service Group was set up by the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services who invited a number of other fire service related organisations to work with it in developing ways to secure this improvement. Accordingly the following bodies are represented on the group - NJC employer and employee interests (covering the Local Government Association, Welsh Local Government Association, Board of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Board of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Brigades Union); the National Fire Chiefs Council; Fire Officers Association and the Retained Firefighters Union.
11. A key objective for the group was to identify and develop a number of strategies to support improvement at local level. In order to do so the group has engaged with all levels with the service and special interest groups from within or outside of the service. That part of the group's work has now concluded and the strategies were issued in June.

Members were pleased to receive a report indicating the very high level of support for this work and noted that the group will now move into more of a monitoring role. However it will retain the remit to adapt the improvement strategies as necessary depending upon the monitoring outcomes or to develop new strategies. A copy of the report will shortly be issued to everyone who has contributed to this work and to interested parties more widely.

Cars and taxation

12. With effect from 6 April 2017 new legislation applicable for the tax year 2017/18 onwards included a change to the previous position which means employers are not permitted to make a reduction to the benefit in kind tax liability calculation to allow for business mileage in the cases of provided and lease cars fitted with audible and blue light devices. Accordingly affected employees will no longer be able to claim tax relief on business miles.
13. The employees' side requested that *'the national employers at the NJC, and indeed all fire and rescue authorities/boards would wish to join with us in seeking modifications to the appropriate legislation/regulations to find a remedy that ensures that affected employees do not face the financial losses that they now will incur'*.
14. This is a matter of mutual interest. Employer members were content to support this request and indicated it had undertaken early discussion too with the NFCC.

Yours faithfully

SIMON PANNELL
MATT WRACK
Joint Secretaries