

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 14th December 2016

Subject: Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Fire and Rescue Staff in England

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Author: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

For: Information

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) with a summary of the findings that have been published by the Home Office following the completion of the Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Fire and Rescue Staff in England.

2. Recommendations

The CFA is asked to note the contents of this report and the Appendix attached to it.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1. The Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Fire and Rescue Staff in England was commissioned by the then Fire Minister (Penny Mordaunt MP) in October 2014.
- 3.2. Adrian Thomas was appointed to complete the review and his findings were presented to the Government in February 2015 but they were not published until November 2016.
- 3.3. The report identifies forty-five recommendations that are directed towards the Government, the Local Government Association (LGA), the National Joint Council (NJC) and local Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs). This report provides a summary of the review findings and sets out an initial response to the recommendations (see Appendix).

4. Report Detail

- 4.1. In October 2014, Adrian Thomas was appointed to complete an Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Fire and Rescue Staff in England. The review took five months to complete and was confined to the forty-six FRAs in England.
- 4.2. This review of conditions of service represented the first full review in fourteen years, the last being carried out in 2002 by Sir George Bain.

- 4.3. In compiling the data/evidence, Adrian Thomas engaged with staff, elected members and trades' union officials representing twenty-one FRAs. In addition to this, he and his team also engaged with government officials, employers' representatives, employees' representative organisations, Skills for Justice, the Arbitration and Conciliation Advisory Service, the Fire Service College and diversity groups.
- 4.4. Conditions of service underpin the employment of the workforce. Conditions of service also affect people directly as most people end up living, organising their lives and spending in alignment to their work and income. As a consequence, responses to any proposed or material changes to these conditions are often resisted.
- 4.5. The review findings take account of these issues and the conclusions, findings and recommendations are based upon impact on:
- The working environment;
 - Documented conditions of service;
 - Industrial relations;
 - Duty systems; and,
 - Management of fire and rescue services.
- 4.6. It should be noted that the review was undertaken during a period of significant national industrial unrest within the fire and rescue service. Notwithstanding this, Adrian Thomas has focused the findings and recommendations in accordance with the key themes listed above.
- 4.7. It should also be noted that the final report was presented to the Government in February 2015 but it was not published until very recently (November 2016) and significant progress has been made since that date when account is afforded to compliance with the transformation and reform agenda.
- 4.8. At this time, the Government has made no statements about the report's findings and recommendations other than clarifying its position about restricting the rights of fire and rescue service staff to take strike action. In addition, the Government has not expressed any further expectations other than those that have already been stated in respect of the fire transformation and reform agenda.
- 4.9. A summary of the recommendations along with the identification of the 'owner' of the action in relation to each recommendation is attached to this report at the Appendix. In addition to this, the appendix also contains a short commentary about the local current position as applicable to the actions that are specifically directed towards FRAs.

5. Report Implications / Impact

5.1. *Legal (including crime and disorder)*

Not applicable at this time. However, some actions in response to the recommendations may have a legal impact and these will be managed during

any process of implementation that is agreed by the CFA.

5.2. ***Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)***

Not applicable at this time. However, some actions in response to the recommendations may have a financial impact and these will be managed during any process of implementation that is agreed by the CFA.

5.3. ***Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)***

The most significant risk the CFA faces is in relation to potential changes to conditions of service as applicable to firefighting staff. It is highly likely that change will be resisted and the response to change could potentially involve industrial action.

5.4. ***Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)***

In compiling the review findings, Adrian Thomas completed a thorough consultation process. Any changes resulting from the recommendations locally will be fully consulted on prior to implementation.

5.5. ***Environmental***

None identified.

5.6. ***Impact upon Our Plan Objectives***

Not applicable at this time. However, in reporting the findings of the review to the CFA, evidence of good governance has been demonstrated. Implementation of any of the actions in response to the recommendations will have an impact on future planning objectives but this will be addressed through change management arrangements as agreed by the CFA.

6. **Background Papers**

Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Fire and Rescue Staff in England (Thomas 2015) – available on request in electronic or hard copy format.

7. **Appendices**

Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Fire and Rescue Staff in England - Summary of Recommendations