

# HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY – EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

FRIDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2022

## PRESENT:

### Members

#### **Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:**

Councillors Abraham, Davison, Fox, Green, and West

#### **Representing Hull City Council:**

Councillors Belcher, Chambers, Dad, McMurphy and Nicola

#### **Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:**

Councillors Lindley, Patrick and Swinburn

#### **Representing North Lincolnshire Council:**

Councillors Briggs (*Chairperson*) and Waltham MBE

### Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

Chris Blacksell - Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Christine Cooper - Executive Director of People and Development, Kevin Wilson - Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer, Niall McKiniry - Assistant Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Service Delivery, Matthew Sutcliffe - Area Manager of Service Improvement, Jon Henderson - Area Manager Prevention and Protection, Lisa Nicholson - Monitoring Officer/Secretary, Samm Campbell - Committee Manager and Alison Finn - Committee Manager.

The meeting was held at Service Headquarters, Hessle.

**124/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** - Apologies for absence were submitted from Jonathan Evison (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Councillors Dennis, Grant, Jefferson, Neal, Shepherd, Sherwood and Smith.

**125/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - There were no declarations of interest.

**126/22 OPTIONS TO INCREASE BUDGET FOR FIREFIGHTERS' PAY** - The Chief Fire Officer and the Chief Executive officer submitted a report regarding options available to the Fire Authority to increase the budget set aside for firefighters pay.

Both HFRS Officers and the Fire Authority had stated on many occasions that all the staff deserved higher pay as their remuneration has been falling behind cost of living increases over several years. That position was compounded by the high level of inflation currently, particularly for essential living costs such as food, heating, and lighting.

The report highlighted the work that had been done to try and review existing budgets, to enable an increase in the current budget for pay rises, and to present options for consideration by Members.

As the Authority's budget was not linked to pay rises agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC) in any way, any increases not supported by additional funding would reduce the Authority's ability to invest elsewhere and could in time impact upon the number of people employed.

Both the Chair of the Authority, and the Chief Fire Officer had been lobbying for additional central funding, and local precept flexibility, to enable higher pay rises. Regardless of decisions around variation of existing budgets, lobbying would continue, particularly given the additional finances provided by Home Office to part fund the recent Police Officer pay increase.

Staff on Green Book Terms and Conditions had been offered a flat rate pay increase of £1925 per annum by their NJC, regardless of grading. Although that offer had not been accepted by their Representative Bodies, if it was accepted then existing budgets would have to be reviewed as that pay rise would actually be around 5.9 per cent on average across all staff groups. Although the impact of pay rises for Green Book staff was smaller than for Firefighting staff, due to the lower numbers, that offer, if accepted, would create a budget deficit of £240k per year.

The NJC offered 2 per cent to staff on Grey Book Terms and Conditions and that was rejected. The NJC had made no subsequent offer and the FBU stated they were planning to ballot for strike action as a result.

Other staff groups, that had independent pay review bodies rather than National Joint Councils had been offered larger amounts. For example, teachers would receive between 5 per cent and 8.9 per cent and Police Officers would receive a flat increase for all roles of £1900. In the Police example, the average increase was 5.5 per cent but Forces received funding from the Home Office for three years for any expenditure above 3.5 per cent.

It was reasonable to assume that Firefighters would not accept a pay rise of 2 per cent and the likelihood of Industrial Action as a result was high, unless there was an increased offer. Large pay increases without additional funding would require savings to be made. Staff pay was the largest expenditure for the Service accounting for 75 per cent of the total spend, every 1 per cent pay increase for staff, conditioned to both Grey and Green Book Conditions of Service, added almost £400k to the annual pay bill.

The Authority might wish to increase the budget for Firefighter pay increases for a number of reasons. Firstly, if the NJC offered a pay rise higher than 2.5 per cent, and it was accepted, then the Authority would have to pay that increase, so it was prudent to take that decision early to start implementing any savings as a result. Secondly any increase by Fire Authorities might encourage the Home Office to provide additional funding, in the same way they have done for the Police. It was not known whether the same pay rise given to the Police would be accepted by Firefighters, but it would seem a reasonable starting point and if it was accepted then a flat increase of £1900 would equate to a 5.9 per cent increase for competent Firefighters. A 5.9 per cent increase in that way for competent Firefighters would cost the Service around £1m a year, in addition to the £240k cost if Green Book staff accepted their pay offer, if no additional funds were received.

**Resolved -** (a) That the Authority agrees with the Fire Brigades Union that firefighting staff should receive an immediate and significant pay rise;

(b) that the Authority acknowledges that budgets will need to be realigned to contribute, along with any other funding available, to the eventual figure settled upon nationally; and

(c) that the Chair and Chief Fire Officer will continue to lobby for additional funding.