

<p><b>Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel</b></p>
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**22nd September, 2014**

**at the Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

**Present:    Members of the Authority**

Councillor Clinton (Chair);  
Councillor Howells (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Douglas-Maul and Shackleton.

**Employees Side**

**Fire Brigades Union (FBU)**

S Price-Hunt.  
D Pitt.

**Unison**

V Mallabar.

**Fire Officers' Association (FOA)**

A Tranter - Conference Call.

**Officers**

W Browning-Sampson.  
Helen Sherlock.  
Sarah Warnes.

**Apology:    Councillor Collingswood.**

1/14

**Paul Cockburn**

Members and officers observed a minute's silence to mark the passing of Paul Cockburn, who had represented the Fire Brigades Union on the Panel.

2/14

**Notes**

The notes of the inquorate meeting held on 14th April, 2014, were received.

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**Dispute Resolution**

The Panel noted a report setting out the number, type and outcomes of disciplinary and grievance cases, collective grievances and other dispute resolution, including Employment Tribunal activity for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2014 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2014. The report also indicated a summary of lessons learned taking into account issues raised by representative bodies, line managers and human resource practitioners. Members also received a summary of the information which had been reported to the Panel on dispute resolution since March 2011.

The Panel noted that the number of disputes had increased in the last period, which officers attributed to an increase in the number of personnel who had not carried out appropriate breathing apparatus checks and some in relation to the ongoing industrial action. It was confirmed to the Chair that these personnel had received the appropriate breathing apparatus training.

The WMFS Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures had been recently reviewed and the Human Resources Service Support Team was currently working on a toolkit for managers, including template letters, to be discussed with Trades Unions and Representative Bodies. New bespoke training had been developed and would be rolled out commencing this week. A separate notification would be sent to Trades Unions and Representative Bodies advising them of potential dates. Members felt that the issue of ensuring that open-ended training for all persons involved in disciplinary and grievance procedures was essential. It was felt that managers should try to address potential disciplinary problems before issues escalated to gross misconduct.

The representative for Unison advised he had never been asked to attend a debrief following a disciplinary/grievance case. HR officers responded that occasionally debriefs had not been carried out for various reasons, however, teams were now being advised that debriefs should be carried out.

The FBU and Unison circulated documents expressing their concern at the unprecedented rise in disciplinary cases (21 in the latest period) and the probable cause for this involving the method in which officers in development were required to evidence competency against National Occupational Standards.

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Their views were also supported by the FOA, whose representative contributed at the meeting by conference call. He also reiterated the concerns expressed by the FBU of the high number of grievances which related to bullying/harassment and the length of time that disciplinary proceedings took, which was stressful for all involved and a strain on limited resources within the Service.

Members felt that officers needed to further research the claims of the Trades Unions and Representative Bodies. The Chair asked that a summary of the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures be circulated to all members of the Panel and that officers, with representatives of Trades Unions and Representative Bodies, present the key points of the process, together with the definitions of what constituted gross misconduct, to the next meeting.

(Proceedings ended at 1.55 pm)

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