

Joint Consultative Panel

26 July 2018
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Brackenridge(Chair)
Councillors Barlow, Edwards, Iqbal and Miks

Employees Side:
Steve Price-Hunt – Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
Sasha Hitchins – FBU
John Routley – Unison

Officers:
Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority
Wendy Browning-Sampson, People Support Services
Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler, People Support

4/18 **Apologies:**

CFO Andy Hickmott,
Association of Principal Fire Officers (APFO)
Kevin Rowsell, Fire Officer's Association (FOA)

The Chair queried the attendance of the Representative from Unison due to the nature of the agenda, as the only item to be discussed was the Cultural Review following the Trade Dispute with the FBU.

Sarah Warnes confirmed that representatives from all Unions were Members of the Joint Consultative Panel.

Cllr Edwards expressed surprise that Unison should be excluded from the meeting as the Cultural Review would be across the whole organisation.

All members agreed it was suitable for the representative from Unison to attend the meeting.

5/18 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

6/18 **Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 16 April 2017**

The notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 16 April 2018 were received.

7/18 **Update on the Cultural Review as an Outcome of Work towards the resolution of the Trade Dispute issued by the Fire Brigades Union**

Members were informed that any reference in the report to point 3 of the Trade Dispute was incorrect and should read as point 5 of the Trade Dispute wherever referenced in the report.

The Joint Consultative Panel (JCP) were informed of the progress of the cultural review identified as a requirement to resolve point 5 of the Trade Dispute.

The Members of the JCP were invited to offer their views and thoughts for the terms of reference of the cultural review.

It was resolved at the Annual General Meeting of the Fire Authority held on 25 June 2018 to hold an additional meeting of the Joint Consultative Panel by the end of July 2018 in order to provide Members with details of any progress in relation to the ongoing Cultural Review.

The Terms of Reference for this review were still in their initial draft stages and would be discussed by the Assistant General Secretary of the FBU and Chief Fire Officer during facilitated meetings of the National Joint Secretaries.

These conversations remained confidential to those parties in attendance. A further meeting was scheduled for the 31 July 2018 where it is anticipated that the Terms of Reference would be agreed.

The removal of the Trade Dispute was not dependent on the completion of the Cultural review.

The Panel noted that the Review will be Independently Chaired by an individual/organisation and will be reported to the Fire Authority on 17 September 2018. Councillor Edwards stated that some actions may be necessary following the Review rather than just being noted.

It was expected that an Independent Cultural Review would be expected to look at the circumstances around the dispute and be used as a learning experience. The Review should be widely focussed and obtain the views on Employee Relations Framework and the role it played. A review of this nature had never been conducted before and it was hoped that it would not be required again in the future, as many benefits as possible should be obtained from the Review.

The review should be wide and cover all the circumstances, both the Authority and all parts of the organisations. The Independent nature of the review would ensure that it is not compromised and all parts of the organisation would benefit from its results.

Sarah Warnes confirmed that the nature of a cultural review was to be independent and the breadth of the review was important and should provide positive benefits and learning. The Terms of Reference were hoped to be agreed the week commencing 30 July 2018.

Councillor Edwards hoped the review would consider the circumstances of the dispute and all Members would learn from the review.

Councillor Miks found the review interesting, particularly the number of points increasing from 5 to 20 was out of kilter and felt that a good strong review would be good. More communication would be appreciated.

The Chair confirmed this was the reason for his resolution to the Fire Authority to hold a special JCP meeting in order that Members would have some oversight. The Chair supported Councillor Edward's point of view about the whole Trade Dispute and how it evolved.

The Chair stated a root and branch review to get to the bottom of the issues and provide confidence that the Authority wanted to resolve and move on with industrial relations.

Cllr Miks stated that it appeared that there were 5 issues and these increased up to 20 issues. The Chair asked for clarification on the increased issues.

It was confirmed that more points were added to the initial 5 points. The Clerk stated against each item there were a number of elements within them and other areas that were not clear. The meeting arranged for the following week between the Chief Fire Officer and FBY Assistant General Secretary to work through the issues with a view to being able to close the dispute down.

Cllr Edwards stated that the review would continue following the Trade Dispute and there would be no time pressures.

Cllr Barlow said the fact that there were 5 or 20 points clearly illustrated the need for a review and it had to be transparent and independent. Cllr Barlow supported the review.

The Chair supported the review and stated that two reviews had been undertaken in Wolverhampton and they had been fully independent, thorough, open and transparent. He continued to state that it is important that members of JCP have an overview and they can hear information from all sides to do their job properly.

Steve Price-Hunt welcomed the Chair of the Authority's view that the Authority would be acting upon the outcomes of the Review and would not simply note it. The FBU welcomed the review and positive comments and wanted to resolve issues. This was the second Trade Dispute and he did not want there to be a third.

The Chair thanked Steve Price-Hunt for his comments.

The Chair understood the delicate nature of the discussions, but asked for an overview of the main points being discussed nationally. It was difficult to accept as a member of the Authority when the Trade Dispute was against Authority.

The Clerk confirmed that an update would be provided at the Authority meeting scheduled for the 17 September 2018.

Councillor Edwards stated that members of the Authority were all familiar with the 5 points as the details of the Trade Dispute had been discussed in private session. This had been requested and the FBU had acquiesced that the confidential information could be conveyed to the parent organisation.

The CFO had given a verbal update at the Fire Authority meeting and referred to the additional points and confirmed that an update would be provided to the Authority at the 17 September meeting.

Following the meeting on the 31 July 2017, a further meeting would possibly be held on 20 August and would provide a formal ending to the Trade Dispute.

The Chair of the JCP was very pleased to hear that by the 20 August 2018 the Authority would hope to have some good news and would move on with independent review. He looked forward to that time.

The Chair welcomed the JCP being fully briefed on issues in the future.

Councillor Miks felt that the Authority had been briefed as much as they could be and looked forward to working with the Unions and the future.

Steve Price-Hunt found the meeting incredibly valuable and important and looked forward to working with Members in the future. He felt that dialogue at the early stages of a dispute can provide intervention and looked forward to a productive year.

John Routley, Unison, welcomed the review and asked to be involved in the Terms of Reference.

The Chair stated that if the Unions agree to have a common approach he would be more than happy.

Councillor Edwards looked forward to an excellent working relationship.

Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting, the air had been cleared and thanked everyone for their attendance and looked forward to seeing everyone next time.

The meeting closed at 1350 hours.

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