

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	17 April 2023
Lead Officer	Dawn Docx, Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Dawn Docx
Subject	Firefighter Pay Awards and Potential Industrial Action



PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update Members as to the progress of the firefighter pay dispute and the prospect of industrial action.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) has regularly briefed Members of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) as to the progress of national pay negotiations for firefighters, and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) preparation for potential industrial action.
3. During talks on 7 February 2023, The National Joint Council (NJC) on behalf of the fire service employers, put forward a revised offer. This offer included a 7% pay rise backdated to July last year and another 5% from July 2023.
4. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) then balloted its members with a recommendation to accept the pay offer. The outcome of this ballot was an overwhelming acceptance, with a turn-out of 84% of all eligible members, of which 96% voted to accept.
5. On behalf of the Service, the CFO welcomed the settlement which brings to an end the immediate threat of industrial action. She then officially stood down all preparations for business continuity.
6. It should be noted that there is no additional central funding linked to this pay offer, which means the money will have to be found from the Service's budget. Consequently, the focus this year will be to provide Members with options through the Emergency Cover Review; to find the appropriate balance between the challenges we face as a fire and rescue service to protect the people of North Wales and ensuring that we have a sustainable budget.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL OR AUDIT COMMITTEE

7. A verbal update by the CFO was given to Members of the Executive Panel on 20 March 2023, as part of matters arising from the previous set of minutes. On the same day the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) updated Members of the Audit Committee in a similar manner.

RECOMMENDATION

8. Members are requested to
- i) note the acceptance of the NJC pay offer to employees on grey book terms and conditions;
 - ii) note the cessation of preparations for industrial action; and
 - iii) note the financial implications.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	The Service can now concentrate on delivering its Well-being objectives, including providing options from an emergency cover review.
Budget	The pay award was greater than budgeted for 2023/24. The £1 million deficit will be met from reserves for this year but will need to be factored into budget negotiations for 2024/25.
Legal	Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) the Fire and Rescue Authority had the duty to plan for disruption to Service provision, which includes the impact of industrial action.
Staffing	In accordance to national terms and conditions, all employees on grey book terms and conditions from Firefighter to Area Manager level received the new salaries and backdated pay in March 2023
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Nil
Risks	Reduction in the risk of a deterioration in industrial relations. Increase in financial risks.