

NORTH WALES FIRE AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE PANEL

20 MAY 2004

HEARING ON A FAILURE TO AGREE

Report by the Clerk

Purpose of report

- 1 To agree a methodology for the hearing and to outline the background to it, including a summary of the management and FBU's positions.

Methodology

- 2 I **recommend** that the Panel adopts the following methodology:
 - Deputy Chief Fire Officer to present the management position, followed by an opportunity for any questions from members and then the FBU;
 - FBU to present its position, followed by an opportunity for any questions from members and then the management side;
 - Short concluding addresses by Deputy Chief Fire Officer and by FBU;
 - Panel then considers its decision.

Background to the failure to agree

- 3 The FBU registered a failure to agree about the restructuring of the Skills, Learning and Development Centre in a letter dated 24 March. This was subsequently deferred by the FBU for 2 weeks from 2 April to allow negotiations to solve any outstanding differences. The FBU notified me on 21 April that the negotiations had failed and that the failure to agree was reinstated. The Panel decided at its meeting on 22 April that the hearing should be held on 20 May, and this was formally communicated to the FBU in a letter dated 26 April.
- 4 The sole issue of disagreement is how training posts in the Skills, Learning and Development Centre are to be filled following the restructuring. At present, there are 12 posts at Sub Officer rank, one Assistant Divisional Officer, one Divisional Officer II and one Divisional Officer I. In the new structure there will be 8 Instruction, Development and Facilitation Officers (IDFO), three Co-ordinators at Station Manager level, one Assistant Divisional Officer and one Divisional Officer I. Following negotiations with the FBU there have also been four part time IPDS Support Officers positions included in the proposed restructure.

Management position

- 5 The management position is that the posts in the new structure should be filled following advertisement throughout the Service area. Existing staff serving in the Skills, Learning and Development Centre will have the opportunity to apply, but would not be “slotted in” or given prior consideration for the posts. If any existing member of staff either did not apply or was not successful in securing a post in the new structure, he or she would be redeployed to other duties at the existing rank.
- 6 The mainstay of the Integrated Personal Development System is the realisation of a competent workforce through developing skills, knowledge and understanding pertinent to the role personnel are performing, and then applying these skills and knowledge in real work place contexts. Whilst the service has been assessing people in the past, through attending courses, examinations, etc they have not been assessed against nationally recognised standards. The need for a safe and competent workforce has led to the establishment of National Occupational Standards. The introduction of these standards to all personnel, the objective assessment of personnel, support in monitoring standards and meeting the development needs of individuals is a wholly new and challenging concept for North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
- 7 It is for this reason that these positions differ so significantly from the current Trainer/Student relationship experienced within the existing Training structure. The implementation of IPDS will require a robust support network which can only be delivered by identifying and selecting people with the necessary skills and capability. Those personnel currently in post were selected for their ability as Trainers to deliver pre-designed ‘one size fits all’ courses. In order to introduce and support IPDS and demonstrate the IPDS ethos of equality, fairness and opportunity, the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Management wish to give everyone, who feel they have the competence and ability to operate within this role, including the existing Trainers, an opportunity to apply.

FBU position

- 8 The FBU believe it is unfair for training instructors to have to reapply for their posts, when the new job description is very similar to the role and responsibilities they are presently undertaking.

Recommendation

- 9 That the Panel agrees the methodology for the hearing and, following consideration of the management and FBU’s positions, reaches a decision to implement either the management or the FBU’s position on the matter.