



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

THE THOMAS REVIEW

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 16 December 2016

Purpose of Report:

To present to Members the 'Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England: February 2015', and suggest a process to consider the implications of the report.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : John Buckley
Chief Fire Officer

Tel : (0115) 967 0880

Email : john.buckley@notts-fire.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Therese Easom

Contact : (0115) 967 0880 therese.easom@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 During 2014 the then Fire Minister, Penny Mordaunt MP, announced that she had commissioned a review to be undertaken into the terms and conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England. Adrian Thomas was appointed and the review commenced in October 2014.
- 1.2 In October 2014, the Chief Fire Officer wrote to Mr Thomas on behalf of the Authority and invited him to visit Nottinghamshire as part of his field research. Unfortunately this invitation was declined, however the Service did submit a significant amount of information to the review and this was approved by Members at the Policy and Strategy Committee on 07 November 2014.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Thomas Review was commissioned by Government in 2014 and the process commenced in October of that year. This concluded in a final report (the Review) being submitted to Government in February 2015. Members will recall that this was during the period of national strikes regarding the ongoing dispute around changes to the firefighters' pension scheme.
- 2.2 The Review was published by the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, on 03 November 2016 and the Chief Fire Officer has previously circulated a copy of the Review to Members of the Authority. The accompanying covering letter from the Minister can be found at Appendix A and this contains a link to the actual Review document.
- 2.3 The Review recognises that twenty-one authorities were visited as part of the field research; however an invitation to visit Nottinghamshire was declined by the review team. The Authority did contribute to the review by way of a written submission which Members approved in November 2014.
- 2.4 What must also be born in mind is that the Review has been published some twenty-months after it was completed and presented to Government, and that during that intervening period a significant amount has changed within the sector; a point that is recognised in the letter from the Minister.
- 2.5 The Review is an extensive document and covers five main areas, namely:
 - The Working Environment;
 - Documented Conditions of Service;
 - Industrial Relations;
 - Retained Duty System; and,
 - Management of the Fire and Rescue Service.

- 2.6 The Review contains forty-five recommendations and the appended letter from the Minister states that he believes the majority of those are directed at the Local Government Association, the National Joint Council and fire and rescue authorities, and that the Review is ‘an important call to action’.
- 2.7 The Minister also recognises that some of the recommendations will have far reaching implications, and that Government is not going to be formally responding to the Review at this stage. However, the Minister has confirmed that Government has no intention of removing the right to strike from Firefighters.
- 2.8 The environment is also complicated by the announcement made by the previous Home Secretary regarding reform of the fire and rescue service, and the progress of the Policing and Crime Bill through parliamentary process.
- 2.9 Due to the far reaching implications of the Review, and the current complexities within the broader fire and rescue sector, it is proposed that Members of the Policy and Strategy Committee are asked to form a task and finish working group to consider the Review and provide guidance to the Authority on how any implications should be addressed.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from the contents of this report, however, the recommendations are comprehensive and could require the Authority to engage in activity. If this is the case any actions will be fully reported to Members, along with any consequential financial implications.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct Human Resources and Learning and Development implications arising from this report, however the majority of recommendations within the Thomas Review are directly related to the terms and conditions of staff, working practices and governance. Any actions arising from the review will require careful analysis to determine the potential future implications.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken as this report does not seek to alter workforce policy or service delivery provisions.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

It is clear that Government expect the sector to take action with regards to the Thomas Review, and approval of the recommendation within this report will demonstrate clear commitment by this Authority to fully explore the implications of the Review and its recommendations.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Request that Members of Policy and Strategy Committee form a Task and Finish Working Group to consider the Thomas Review and report back to the Authority.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



Home Office

Brandon Lewis MP
Minister of State for Policing
and the Fire Service

2 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

All Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England
All Chief Fire Officers and Chief Executive
Officers of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England

03 NOV 2016

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to inform you that the independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England – the Thomas Review – has been published and can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conditions-of-service-for-fire-and-rescue-staff-independent-review>

Reform of the workforce at all levels is a key pillar of the fire reform agenda. The Thomas Review is central to this agenda providing the hard evidence, gathered from and verified by people from within the fire and rescue service, of where change is needed. Indeed, the wider reform agenda already underpins many of the changes which are highlighted in the review, for example, the planned introduction of a fire inspectorate, professional standards and the ability of Police and Crime Commissioners to take responsibility for fire will all have implications for workforce reform.

As you know, the review was commissioned to consider whether conditions of service are a barrier to change that would otherwise deliver a more effective and efficient service to the public. Some recommendations will have far-reaching implications and the government is not going to be formally responding to the review at this stage. We wish to engage extensively with stakeholders and we will want to make good progress on many of the issues raised over the coming months with a view to issuing a formal government response at the appropriate time.

The report makes a total of 45 recommendations, the vast majority of which are not directed at Government but at the Local Government Association, the National Joint Council and fire and rescue authorities themselves.

The recommendations are broken down into 5 main themes:

- The working environment
- Documented conditions of service
- Industrial relations
- Retained Duty System
- Management of fire and rescue services

One issue which will be of particular interest is the recommendation that government remove the right to strike where this impedes the service from making an emergency response. I can confirm that government has no intention of removing the right to strike at this time. For the other recommendations for government action we will respond further in due course, following feedback from the sector.

We believe that the Review is an important call to action, both for Government and for everyone involved in the delivery of fire and rescue services. Whilst there are big challenges ahead, there are no real surprises and indeed many services and the sector more generally, challenged and supported by government, have not waited for publication and are taking action to reform.

The Home Secretary and I are clear that the momentum which has been established behind the fire reform agenda must be maintained. We are not willing to see things drift and expect all fire and rescue authorities to focus on considering and delivering on the recommendations.

I am copying this letter to Police and Crime Commissioners for their information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brandon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP

The published report can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conditions-of-service-for-fire-and-rescue-staff-independent-review>