

To: EMERGENCIES COMMITTEE		Subject: NATIONAL STRIKE BY THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION – CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS
From: CHIEF EXECUTIVE		
Date: 27 October 2002	Ref: CE/005/MC/PP	

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the contingency arrangements established to co-ordinate a response in the event of industrial action by fire-fighters and to seek approval to incur expenditure as necessary to prepare for, and respond to, any situation which occurs as a result of this action.

2. Background

On the 24 October, 2002 the Chief Executive issued all Elected Members with a briefing note (copy attached as Appendix I) which set out the proposed periods of strike action, the command and control structure for dealing with incidents and the contingency arrangements in place in North Lanarkshire.

3. Recent Developments

Over the weekend the Executive of the Fire Brigades Union announced the suspension of strike action planned for 29 – 31 October and 2 – 4 November, 2002 pending further talks with the employers side in relation to their pay claim.

However, they stated that if no progress was made strikes planned beginning 6 November, 2002 would go ahead.

4. Contingency Arrangements in North Lanarkshire

As requested each Department of the Council has considered the implications of the proposed industrial action and prepared contingency plans to reduce the risk of fire and provide business continuity in the event of an incident.

The co-ordination of the response to an incident will be managed by the Emergencies Planning Unit in the Chief Executive's Department.

The Council will also be required to send officers to staff the Joint Operations Co-ordination Centre on a rota shift basis at Police Headquarters in Pitt Street, Glasgow.

5. Financial Implications for the Council

In order to protect main Council assets or premises where there are high risk materials stored or where the contents are irreplaceable for example, archives it is recommended that staffing levels outwith normal working hours be increased. The exact costs of this are difficult to quantify, but estimates provided by the Department of Community Services suggest that to cover the 26 Secondary Schools, the Time Capsule and other major sports facilities together with providing additional cleaning services and bonfire removal would be around £200,000 for the proposed 32 day strike period.

Furthermore staff who will be either working in Pitt Street or on standby will also require to be paid. It is hoped that there would be national guidance on this issue just as there was to prepare for the Year 2000 contingency arrangements.

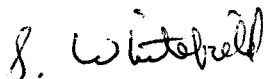
The Scottish Executive are expecting the Treasury to cover additional costs however, to date this is unconfirmed.

Consequently, all Departments have been requested to keep incident logs and record any additional spend which is approved by this Committee.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- a) note the contingency arrangements established to prepare for, and respond to industrial action by fire-fighters, and
- b) authorise Departments to incur reasonable and essential additional expenditure to prevent the risk of fire or to respond appropriately in the event of a fire incident.



Chief Executive
28 October, 2002

BRIEFING FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

NATIONAL STRIKE BY THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

BACKGROUND

This briefing note has been prepared to advise Elected Members of the contingency arrangements established at a National and Local level to co-ordinate a response in the event of Industrial Action by fire-fighters.

OFFICIALLY NOTIFIED PERIODS OF STRIKE ACTION

Strike action is scheduled to begin on 29th October, 2002 for an intermittent period of 36 days, ending on 24th December, 2002.

There will be 5 periods of strike action from:

29th October – 9.00 a.m. – 31st October – 9.00 a.m. (2 days)
2nd November – 9.00 a.m. – 4th November – 9.00 a.m. (2 days)
6th November – 9.00 a.m. – 14th November – 9.00 a.m. (8 days)
22nd November – 9.00 a.m. – 30th November – 9.00 a.m. (8 days)
4th December – 9.00 a.m. – 12th December – 9.00 a.m. (8 days)
16th December – 9.00 a.m. – 24th December – 9.00 a.m. (8 days)

COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURE

As this is a National Strike a strategic group has been set-up at the Cabinet Office to secure a co-ordinated response to the dispute. (COBR)

The Scottish Executive also has set up an Emergency Room in Edinburgh. (SEER)

In Scotland overall strategic command of fire cover provision will be handled by the Strathclyde Police Information Command Centre in Stirling. (SPICC)

There will be 8 Regional Joint Operations Co-ordination Centres (JOCC) for Strathclyde; this will be in Police Headquarters, Glasgow, staffed by the Police, Fire, Military and Local Authorities.

999 Fire calls and automatic alarms will be re-routed to Police Force Control. Following assessment, calls will be passed to Joint Operations Co-ordination Centre. The Firemaster and Lieutenant Colonels will determine and activate appropriate response.

CATEGORISATION OF INCIDENTS IS AS FOLLOWS:-

Grade 1 calls (Primary Fire) Where there is a threat to life/rescue requirement. This will involve attendance of military under Police escort.

- Grade 2 calls (Secondary Fire)** Where there is intimation of a fire and an assessment made that there will be no military response unless there is spare capacity. Police will attend and assess.
- Grade 3 calls** Automatic Fire Alarms – no response unless followed up by a 999 call.
- Grade 4 calls** Non fire related incidents such as road crashes and chemical or other hazardous materials. (Threat to life brings a military attendance).

EMERGENCY FIRE COVER ARRANGEMENTS

Military fire-fighting resources in the form of “Green Goddesses”, Breathing Apparatus Response Teams and Regional Equipment Support Teams will be deployed as necessary from local temporary fire stations established mainly at selected armed forces bases, including Territorial Army Centres. Police will assist with the deployment to incidents.

The overall provision of military supported fire cover is significantly lower than that currently provided by the Fire Service. Arrival of military fire crews will inevitably take longer in most circumstances and these crews will not have the detailed local knowledge of individual premises, hazards, access routes and water supplies possessed by local fire brigade personnel. They will also lack specialised equipment such as turntable ladders or other high reach appliances, heavy rescue equipment, and the means to deal with certain hazardous substances. Because of these limitations, the response to calls for assistance will have to be prioritised on the basis of risk to life.

NON FIRE INCIDENTS

Road Traffic Accidents

Road rescue will be provided by the military via a rescue equipment support team. Light rescue equipment will be available in all ambulances. Onsite medical assistance will be provided by a Doctor/Nurse Team, which can be mobilised at short notice. Police are currently considering the implications of using private contractors for road rescue.

Chemical and Hazardous Materials

The Joint Operations Control Centre will have access to the Fire Brigade Hazardous Materials Database.

Severe Weather

Limited military support will be available.

FIRE SAFETY PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

The start of an advertising campaign will be timed to coincide with strike action. Planned publicity activity is aimed at the general public and at businesses and the workplace. The duration of the campaign will be dependent on the nature of the strikes called.

CORE MESSAGES

The key messages are:

- **Get out, stay out and call 999.**
- **Don't be tempted to tackle fire yourself.**
- **Stop fire before it starts by paying extra attention to fire safety in the home.**

CONTINGENCY PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS IN NORTH LANARKSHIRE

The generic Emergency Planning arrangements in North Lanarkshire will be invoked supplemented by specific action by all Departments to:-

- Take precautionary measures to reduce fire risk
- Ensure continuity of service provision
- Provide support as requested by the Emergencies Planning Unit in the event of an incident

Each Department has been requested to submit contingency plans to the Emergencies Planning Unit which detail specific action in relation to that particular service.

The Departmental Emergency Co-ordination Group chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive which comprises representatives from all Council Departments and Morrison's Property Care met on 22nd October, 2002 to consider the implications for the Council. This Group meets quarterly to review existing emergency planning arrangements and to develop exercises to regularly test procedures.

A report is being prepared for consideration of the Emergencies Committee, which will be held on Monday 28th October, 2002.

All employees of the Council have been issued with a general safety notice which sets out advice on the need to observe all fire safety measures and to be extra vigilant about keeping premises as free as possible of waste paper etc., to minimise the risk of fire.

All Departments have been advised to test their fire evacuation procedures by the 28th October, 2002.

The message from the Police is that of "Business as Usual", and in this respect it is not intended to cancel any Council events, including the four fireworks displays, nor to restrict letting arrangements to any of our facilities.

Further briefing papers will be issued as required. If you wish further information, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Castles, Assistant Chief Executive on ext. 2350.

Chief Executive
23/10/02