

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Human Resources Committee

Item 6

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RDS Strategy Project Progress Report

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the progress to date within the Retained Duty System (RDS) Strategy Project.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That Human Resources (HR) Committee continue to support the work of the Service to introduce new and more flexible contracts for RDS Firefighters.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 Responding nationally to increasing concerns relayed from Fire and Rescue Services throughout the country, the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) established a national review to examine Retained Duty System Issues in England and Wales. Under the direction of ODPM, the national Retained Review Team (RRT) was established, producing its final report in February 2005.
- 3.2 The report made 51 recommendations of which 35 were considered to fall within the remit of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services. As a result an RDS Review Project was completed, reporting to the Service Management Team (SMT) in June 2007 with 6 recommendations, see App A. These were carried forward to the RDS Strategy Project to implement and with regard to recommendation 1 to make proposals for change to SMT.
- 3.3 The overall strategy was to introduce agreed changes and improvements to maximise support and efficiency of the current Retained Duty System. The project was divided into four interlinked phases, with the developments in each feeding into the next. Phase one revisited the earlier Review Project recommendations and developed the six high level recommendations (appendix A).
- 3.4 Phase two initiated the procurement and implementation of a computerised retained management system (RMS), support for the RDS and research followed by initial

development of an annualised salary scheme.

- 3.5 Phases three and four were combined to progress the proposals for an annual remuneration scheme and the introduction of tighter contracts.

4 Progress to Date on Contracts and Annualised Salary Proposals

- 4.1 Recommendations 35 and 38 of the RRT document suggested that FRS reviewed contractual provisions and remuneration systems.
- 4.2 The RDS system has always been viewed as a flexible and efficient system. There is no doubt that it is flexible, however there is scope to improve its efficiency.
- 4.3 There are a number of key factors to be considered:
- Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service (HFRS) currently has 726 (FTE 580.25) RDS staff employed. This equates to 89% of the authorised establishment.
 - HFRS continue to experience operational shortfalls during the day with up to 10 appliances unavailable.
 - In line with 'Grey Book' conditions there are currently 2 types of RDS contract. Full cover is designed for those offering 120 – 144 hours cover per week. Partial cover requires performance of the same range of duties but with a 25% reduction in cover by offering 119 hours or less.
 - A review of the data held on the RMS has highlighted that not all of the staff are consistently providing the level of cover required of them.
 - Data obtained from the RMS has identified that the average hours of available offered are between 80 and 100, but this does range between 20 and 160.
 - As a result of tighter management procedures, the performance has improved since the last report.
- 4.4 It is clear that we have sufficient firefighters to provide high levels of availability. However due to a number of factors consistent levels of cover is not provided across the county at all times of day.
- 4.5 The project managers researched a number of pay models utilised by FRS's across the country. Although interesting and useful, these models all proved to be more expensive in the long term than the current system.
- 4.6 As a result of this research a pay model was developed using some of the most innovative and effective elements of these pay schemes.
- 4.7 Negotiations were undertaken with the RB's to progress the HFRS salary model. Briefing sessions were also held with staff across the county to explain the new system proposals.
- 4.8 Following feedback from the briefing sessions and the negotiations we moved away from this option towards a banded retaining fee that rewarded employees for the cover that they actually provided.

- 4.9 There was differential levels of acceptance and agreement with our Representative Bodies (RB's). All RDS staff were informed of the revised proposal and their acceptance sought via an individual letter.
- 4.10 Following discussions with Trade Union representatives and feedback from staff it became clear that although the principle behind the banded retaining fee was acceptable there were issues regarding certain aspects, such as migration from the conditions of service
- 4.11 An alternative option involving a job share was presented to the Trade Unions. After some joint development, the proposal received general acceptance.
- 4.12 This proposal is an adaptation of our current remuneration system that has minimal financial impact on employees, remains within the confines of the 'Grey Book' national terms and conditions and accurately reflects the requirement placed on the project board by the senior customer of the delivery of a more flexible system on a cost neutral basis.
- 4.13 In short the proposals can be summarised as follows. There are 3 options available on this system. This is to provide cover equivalent to 100%, 75% or 50% (on a role share basis) of the full-time equivalent (FTE) availability requirement. Considering the effect on current employees the hours required for each options are as follows:
- 100% equals 120 to 144 Hours. Employees currently offering this cover will see no change
 - 75% equals 119 to 83 hours. This will impact on some employees that currently provide less than 83 cover per week.
 - 50% (role share) equates to 82 to 35 hours per week. This will impact on those employees that are unable to provide the minimum of 83 hours per week.
- 4.14 All other aspects of the retained salary package will remain unaltered. This includes the payments attributable to turnouts, attendances, disturbance and the hourly rate.
- 4.15 The hours, and days on which people are contracted to provide cover will form part of the new contract. This will enable managers to be better manage their stations availability by being better informed as to crewing levels at all times of the day. However, there will remain high levels of flexibility for the RDS Firefighters and that is seen as important aspect of the arrangement.
- 4.16 The 'role share' proposal has received verbal agreement from Hampshire Fire Brigade Union (FBU) (HFBU). However, some resistance is being experienced from National FBU level. We are awaiting confirmation from the FBU as to the specific grounds for their concerns. The Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) do fully support the proposals and are content to proceed.
- 4.17 HFRS are currently encouraging HFBU to return to discussions and with the goal of signing a collective agreement . The Project is continuing with the RFU participation

and progress will continue to be made to deliver the project outcomes.

- 4.18 A statement will shortly be issued to staff providing information surrounding the proposal. This will be followed up with an individual letter to all staff affected.

5 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

- 5.1 This project supports the Resources and Community priorities outlined in the Service Plan 2010-2013
- 5.2 By offering more flexible options for employment to RDS staff and rewarding people for the operational cover availability they give, the Service will be able to more readily manage the level of appliance availability we have across the county.

6 Risk analysis

- 6.1 Failure to adapt the way we manage the resources provided within the retained service will result in HFRS not being in a position to provide the best possible service to residents and businesses in Hampshire.
- 6.2 There is a risk that the introduction of the additional role share retaining fee will result in the resignation of a number of firefighters.
- 6.3 There is also the risk that as a result of currently only providing day cover, a number of existing firefighters will fall into the 50% band and consequently leave the service. However, options to mitigate that risk are being put in place.
- 6.4 The proposals could have an impact on some RDS firefighters with regard to their salaries, although 6.3 serves to minimise this risk. There is a risk that some may seek grounds for legal redress or feel sufficiently disaffected as to seek redress through industrial action.
- 6.5 There is a risk that staff will opt for a 'work to rule' due to any actual or perceived increase in workload, obligation or reduction in flexibility.
- 6.6 If we cannot obtain a collective agreement from both trade unions and all staff do not accept the change to their contract we will be in a position where we are working from 2 types of RDS contract. Whilst there is no legal or procedural problems with this, it will require a change in management practice. Some areas of HFRS have not had wide experience of this within the same staff group in the past. However, we are very used to working with differing contracts across different staff groups (ie Grey & Green Book staff).

7 People Impact Assessment

- 7.1 A People Impact Assessment (PIA) has been completed for the banded retaining fee proposal. The impacts presented within that PIA remain unchanged for this proposal.

- 7.2 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

8 Resource implications

8.1 Human Resources

There may be a reduction in the number of RDS firefighters, particularly those within the lower retaining fee band as the new scheme roles out. This may require a renewed recruitment drive in these areas to bring staffing levels back to an acceptable level.

8.2 Physical Resources

There are no immediate physical resource requirements.

8.3 Information and Communications Technology Resources

There are no immediate ICT resource requirements. However, the continued access to a RMS will be critical to the continued drive for efficiency and effectiveness with the RDS cadre.

8.4 Financial Implications

The delivery of the banded retaining fee is predicted to deliver an approximate saving of £20K based on current staff in post. The requirement for the project remains to deliver the change in order to improve appliance availability and to achieve this on a cost neutral basis.

9 Consultation

- 9.1 The current project board includes members of the RB's of those staff affected by the work. There was significant engagement with RB's as part of the process to implement the new scheme.
- 9.2 There have been regular project updates provided to SMT and the HR Committee during the project.

10 Background papers

- 10.1 The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

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Note: The list excludes: (1) published works; and (2) documents that disclose exempt or confidential information defined in the Act.

APPENDIX A

RDS Strategic Review Project, SMT Agreed Six High Level Recommendations

1. Further annualised salary scheme developments should be progressed and overseen by an implementation project team to include a specified trial, with review and evaluation prior to any final implementation decision. SMT should give agreement in principle to the development of an annualised salary scheme. An implementation project board should comment on preferred model variables utilising the one hour pay comparison model developed, the method and frequency of future payment methods, in order to inform any future implementation project team.
2. A new IRMP objective should be considered that establishes a risk profiling project team. This area of work should both quantify and qualify risk within station grounds across the county.
3. A new IRMP objective to strategically review operational resources and their distribution should be considered. This should align to meet identified risk with strategic resilience and capacity integral to its conclusions. It should consider the adoption of new or modified resources such as combined appliances, enlarged crew appliances, new rural concept appliances and dedicated specialist RDS appliances as examples.
4. Prior to any introduction of an annualised salary scheme, an electronic Retained Management System should be trialled, evaluated and successfully introduced across the RDS locations for fair, equitable and consistent performance management. Following the Project Manager's lead role on behalf of the South East HRDG sub group (RDS) researching into availability systems, HFRS have entered into collaborative discussions with *Sophtlogic* to facilitate national development trials of an eagerly awaited new product. It is recommended that this collaboration is now progressed in conjunction with the Workforce Strategy Management Information Group project and the RDS availability and WTD related aspects are scoped by a consultant analyst.
5. The holistic provision of support to the RDS should be evaluated by an implementation group to ensure adaptation or developments where necessary achieve efficient delivery at the point of most effectiveness.
6. A Project Manager and project team should be appointed for the implementation of agreed proposals. SMT should comment on the timeframe desired for the implementation strategy. Consideration should be given to the adoption of short, medium and long term objectives and where this implementation project should sit within the revised Service Delivery structure.

Note:- recommendation 2 and 3 have been adopted by Service Delivery for progression and are now considered core activity. Recommendation 6 has been implemented and is the mandate for the RDS Strategy Project.