



**HAMPSHIRE
FIRE AND
RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Purpose: Noted

Date: 5 December 2018

Title: **Retained Duty System (On Call) Update**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. Information sought from our Retained Duty System (RDS) staff, through a number of channels, highlighted the need to improve a number of elements and how HFRS is established to support our RDS teams.
2. HFRS has recognised that our RDS has changed over the last decade in terms of a decrease in interest in joining the role. This has had an impact on availability of appliances particularly in rural areas during the day.
3. The Chairman has appointed Councillor David Simpson to act as RDS Champion for the Authority. This role has helped to further identify opportunities to support our RDS teams.
4. A project has been initiated to help focus HFRS to improve. This project incorporates seven areas of focus:
 - Availability
 - Recruitment
 - Retention
 - Training
 - Recognition
 - Contracts
 - Innovation
5. The purpose of this report is to provide the Authority with an overview of the improvement objectives and an update on the activities to date.

BACKGROUND

6. HFRS has 1200 frontline operational staff of which 684 are contracted within our RDS teams, making up 57% of the HFRS operational headcount providing response within our communities. Our RDS people are based

from 47 of our 51 stations across the county. Our RDS teams play an important role in responding to incidents quickly especially in rural areas and are crucial for HFRS resilience. Additionally, they undertake roles including Community Safety, Community Resilience and local emergency plans and medical response.

7. Following HFRS' Risk Review in 2015 a project focussed on changes to the Retained Duty System was established. This featured within the Service Delivery Redesign programme. The identified work streams were:
 - A reduction in overall headcount of RDS staff
 - Balancing the capacity needs in specific locations
 - Medical response opportunities
 - Improve the recruitment process
8. A passionate presentation to the People Committee in early 2018, by one of our RDS Watch Managers, raised his perception of a lack of a strategic direction for our retained duty system (RDS), a lack of value and recognition for our RDS staff and a feeling that HFRS does not function always for the benefit and support of our RDS teams.
9. Councillor David Simpson was appointed by the Chairman to act as RDS Champion. Councillor Simpson has visited numerous teams and managers since his appointment. The intelligence he has gained has allowed HFRS to shape a new project to improve our arrangements and support to our RDS teams.
10. The information HFRS now has because of the above, have changed the needs of the original RDS project. The existing project has been closed and a new project commissioned by the Director of Operations. The scope of this new project will incorporate the Risk Review objectives yet to be realised, together with the additional elements raised throughout 2018.

ON CALL PROJECT

11. The new project is named the On Call project. This reflects the national development to rebrand RDS staff, to better describe what they do to the wider public.
12. The On Call project has seven areas of focus:
 - Availability
 - Recruitment
 - Retention
 - Training
 - Recognition
 - Contracts
 - Innovation

13. The following sections set out the objectives for each, along with an update on progress.
14. Eight RDS Support Officers have been placed and support our RDS teams. They provide management support by linking to the support functions of RDS outside of normal drill night times. They support the recruitment processes of HFRS. And they provide training to improve RDS teams and develop new Firefighters quicker. These eight staff are currently funded until 2020, when further analysis of our RDS needs will be completed.

AVAILABILITY

15. This is our greatest challenge. Our availability has decreased in recent years, following a trend experienced over time locally and reflected nationally.
16. The planned improvement presented through the risk review was based on better recruitment practises, and the successful delivery of the new vehicle strategy.
17. Our recruitment during 2018 has seen 114 new recruits join HFRS. Our RDS Support Officers have facilitated initial training courses to bring on our new team members. This figure is more than the 80 people we have lost, showing a growth in our establishment. However, we are still awaiting the full impact of these new starters, as they are yet to complete their full development training, which takes some time.
18. The replacement of new vehicles continues, and a tender process is underway to procure 10 new Intermediate Capability (IC) vehicles, following a successful trial. The new technology makes variable crewing arrangements viable. Whitchurch Fire Station has seen an improvement of 18% in its availability at night and 39% in the day since the IC was stationed locally. We expect similar improvements to be shown with the roll out of further IC vehicles.
19. Some of HFRS' support functions have moved location to be based at our RDS stations. Notably, the HFRS Resilience Team have relocated to Botley Fire Station. This has seen a 13% improvement in daytime availability. Our RDS Support Officers regularly supplement shortfalls in skills and numbers at stations and are tasked with promoting this new approach to other HFRS teams.
20. Better analysis of information is also benefiting managers. We have developed our reports to show when our vehicles are not available and the detail as to why this has occurred. This will help managers makes decisions and support our teams to be more available.

RECRUITMENT

21. Our goal is to attract the right mix of people into our RDS areas to support local availability. This is to be underpinned by a lean recruitment process, which gets people from the point at which they are interested, to contributing towards the availability of a station, as soon as possible.
22. Our improved workforce planning has given managers the information to know when and where to recruit. All of our stations have a red, amber, green status setting out the recruitment needs.
23. A new national campaign for “On Call” Firefighters has been led by HFRS www.oncallfire.uk. This is a targeted approach to recruitment, targeting in specific areas and using social media to target characteristics to help improve HFRS’ diversity. Our own Communications and Media team was commissioned and funded by the Home Office to design the campaign. HFRS are utilising this as our primary source of attracting new starters and has seen a stream of enquiries.
24. We have streamlined our recruitment process with help from shared services. The process now takes 7 days for initial contact and 5 to 8 weeks (dependant on candidate availability) to complete the process of obtaining a conditional offer.

RETENTION

25. We must slow the rate of people who leave HFRS RDS teams. We firstly need to understand the reasons for people leaving before we can address the reasons.
26. Exit interviews have now been introduced as a mandatory requirement. This will allow HFRS to capture data to establish the reasons why people leave. We are also attempting to contact those already left, to compile a useable database for analysis of the issue.

TRAINING

27. The provision of flexible but thorough training is our ambition. This area is a challenge as our traditional approaches to training staff can be time consuming and require RDS staff to be away from their primary employment often or for extended periods.
28. Training courses have been conducted on local Fire Stations. This more local approach has been well received. Our Academy have been able to

provide more flexible dates with the inclusion and support of RDS Support Officers.

29. Our management teams provide a more consistent approach to pre-course learning. This prepares new starters better and reduces the centrally led commitment. The alignment of development programmes at the time of learning also supports our new people better.
30. Development schools are now common place. These learning schools bring together development Firefighters to develop their skills and share their learning. This has seen a positive effect on Firefighters skills and enjoyment of operations.
31. We are developing e-learning packages that will give greater flexibility to our On Call staff in terms of accessing lecture packages from outside the station and outside traditional training times.
32. We are now consistently achieving a 100-day target from initial recruitment to completing a MOD A course (initial training). This timescale keeps the newly recruited individual engaged, motivated and provides critical availability to their home station within 100 days of joining.

RECOGNITION

33. We want to better recognise the commitment our RDS staff, their families and their primary employers give to HFRS and their community. We want our RDS staff to feel supported and proud to work for HFRS.
34. The Chief Fire Officer has written to a number of RDS primary employers to thank them for their support in releasing their staff to respond for HFRS.
35. The first ever RDS graduation ceremony for RDS Firefighters took place on 18 October 2018. This event allowed RDS graduates to demonstrate their skills to family and friends and is planned to continue in 2019.
36. On Call support functions such as IT and training admin has been set up, to allow RDS colleagues access to these support functions on their drill night hours. Additionally, this helps our support staff understand the role of an RDS team better.

CONTRACTS

37. Our contractual arrangements should reflect the commitment of RDS staff and allow HFRS to manage our RDS workforce well.

38. Research in consultation with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is being conducted to ascertain the best arrangements for HFRS. This includes pay and rewards.
39. HFRS have aligned the PayScale of RDS Watch Manager to that of wholetime colleagues. Previously RDS has been paid at a lower scale.
40. Performance management is a key focus and we are developing information to be available to managers, to allow them to manage within the scope of contractual arrangements better.

INNOVATION

41. We are seeking to develop new ways of working to maximise the service provided to the public by RDS staff.
42. We are exploring the thoughts and ideas of RDS staff to co-design new ways to work. Our colleagues at NFCC help to share ideas. We will also be receiving a peer review of our RDS by Hereford and Worcester FRS in 2018. We hope this will present new thoughts and ideas to develop our RDS arrangements.

SUPPORTING OUR SERVICE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

43. The development of our retained duty system supports our priority of improving the way we respond to incidents.
44. Our aim for people is for them to feel motivated and equipped to perform. This work will help us to improve this area.
45. The key metrics which will measure our progress with our Retained Duty System will be included within the performance report to HFRA.

CONSULTATION

46. HFRS RDS teams have been included in discussion on the formation and development of our improvement work through discussion with the project lead and the RDS Support Officers. This consultation is planned to be ongoing.
47. Councillor David Simpson has visited RDS teams and management meetings. These two-way discussions have assisted our engagement with RDS teams.

48. The plans for the On Call project have been consulted upon with a group of HFRS experienced Retained Watch Managers.
49. HFRS presented both our improvement plans and progress to the Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA). The FRSA describes itself as an “independent trade union representing the interests of employees working the retained duty system (On Call).” Our discussions were positive, and we remain close to the FRSA local secretary.

COLLABORATION

50. HFRS are part of the NFCC National On Call groups at strategic and operational levels. This has allowed for a collaborative approach with many improvements, which includes the national recruitment campaign.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

51. A small dedicated team has been established to drive the On Call project forwards. This team has been funded from the SDR budget previously agreed with the Authority.
52. The RDS Support Officers are funded on an interim basis until 2020 when a full review and future resource plan will be established.

RISK ANALYSIS

53. The RDS System of working is outdated due to modern ways of living. Innovation to seek opportunities with technology and new ways of working help to mitigate this risk.
54. The absence of performing RDS teams, jeopardises the performance of HFRS in our ability to attend incidents quickly and with resilience.
55. Costs as a result of high turnover of staff are substantial.

CONCLUSION

56. There are significant challenges with providing an effective Retained Duty System. However, without this staffing model, HFRS’ performance would be significantly reduced.
57. We have identified seven work streams which are planned to alleviate some of the pressures and to support the provision of a more effective and efficient Retained Duty System.

RECOMMENDATION

58. That plans and progress with supporting the Retained Duty System be noted by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

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