

## HRFU response to Hampshire Model RDS Salary Scheme

This document provides feedback on the recently proposed Salary Scheme for RDS Staff discussed by HFRS.

The first point to raise regarding the proposed scheme is that it is not in fact a salary scheme - RDS fire fighters will be paid different rates based on the activity of the station - this proposal is in fact a remuneration scheme and is based on the service's view of 'perverse incentive' in that calculations are still derived from turnout and attendances.

The proposal has been presented as the solution to many RDS issues; individual's availability, station availability, retention of staff and management of contracted hours. None of these are achievable within the specifics of a salary proposal. What it has done though is to highlight deficiencies across the service. The RFU believe these can be addressed in other ways and that the proposed salary scheme will not deliver the results promised. It will in fact add an additional problem to the mix and alienate even more the RDS workforce.

### Improved Recruitment and Retention

#### Recruitment

There is no evidence to suggest within this proposal that the scheme will improve recruitment. Indeed it is the RFU experience that suggests that monetary reward is the furthest thing from most applicants to the RDS duty system. The main driver in most cases is that persons wish to serve their community and are often surprised that they will get paid for it as well. That is not to say that RDS staff should not be appropriately paid and on a comparative rate to whole time.

#### Retention

The RFU doubt whether on any exit interviews the reason for leaving was the money and would invite evidence to suggest this. Issues are normally about persons having:

- A change of career outside of the RDS
- Change of availability
- Family commitments, which could include sick family member. Change of marital status/partnership
- Death of a family member

All these could be addressed possibly by a greater flexibility in career breaks for RDS. Allowing a break from service so that these external matters can be resolved and then individuals return to duty following an appropriate return to work programme.

## Improved Operational Availability

The proposed system is making unsubstantiated or researched claims that availability will improve. Personnel only have so many hours available. If they are not available it does not matter how you say you will pay them, they still will not be available.

The issue that has really been identified here is that HFRS are paying personnel for availability they are not giving. Simple solution, check personnel's contract against their availability and pay them the appropriate retainer fee. This is a performance management issue and not a pay issue.

The RMS system also needs to be set correctly so that individual contracted hours can be set and performance reports can be read. Having the RMS set at 119 hours for 75% cover does not reflect an individual's contract; it just reflects their retainer fee. The RMS system will allow individual hours to be set and then personnel should perform to that figure. A view here is also that the contracted hours are agreed with the individual and that the figure is a minimum to attain. HFRS would expect, (over whatever period is agreed) that individuals would reach that figure with an expectation to exceed it.

The suggested period to evaluate performance for retainer is one year as the retainer is an annual fee.

## Best Practise

The RFU would support the widely utilised business practise of identifying areas where things are working well and creating 'best practise'. HFRS need to look at their stations that are performing well and achieving 24/7 cover. What are these stations doing to achieve this and can we put this together into a 'Best Practice' document for other stations to use? Bearing in mind that what works on one station may not necessarily work on another. However, a combination of ideas might work.

This would have the additional benefit of only affecting those stations that require additional resources and help, leaving those alone that are working well, rather than a broad brush approach which would upset the majority of the RDS workforce.

## Rota Systems

A lot of mention was made of rota systems in the presentation however, such systems were not explained. Confusion reigned because of this and personnel perceived the WDS a system similar to WDs was to be used therefore taking away all the flexibility of the RDS. The RFU is sure this was not the intent, but it is the message that has been received.

HFRS have a number of rota systems out there and as above these should form part of the Best Practice document for RDS.

A forced rota system and the proposal of restricting riders to 5 will have the greatest impact on self-employed personnel. The idea behind this shows a shocking misunderstanding of how many RDS employees work - their work for the most part is not geared around a standard work pattern. In the most part their work drives their availability and has to be extremely flexible, but because of this flexibility the self-employed are the ones most likely to give day cover when there is none.

Once again a broad stroke approach runs the very real chance of affecting more fire fighters detrimentally than it will benefit others.

### **Improved Life/Work Balance**

The idea that only five persons would be available at any time required for an appliance is flawed as far as the RFU are concerned. These under the pretence that personnel could have more time off, still show available but not respond. The whole proposal that those who are booked to ride but need time off must phone around to get those who are available to cover, is a complete anathema to how the RMS system has introduced a more professional employee/employer benefitting system. It is much more robust, organised, interactive, multi accessed professional way of working. This would encroach more on family life and work life with constantly having to phone around to arrange cover as well as creating an additional management burden. The RMS system already gives the ability for individuals to see who is around and whether or not they have the ability to postpone booking off if the crewing will allow.

Limiting riders also ignores the dynamic crewing which OIC's have to undertake on a turnout. Turning in and finding out that the incident is a barn fire and likely to be of extended duration will mean different people may be able to ride than if it is an RTC. Or the OIC's may make a rapid decision on who is riding based on experience. The restriction of 5 riders is not needed.

If a salary scheme is introduced HFRS is already paying these personnel whether they ride or not. So if more turn in than is required it is not a problem. HFRS under the salary scheme will not pay attendances, so there is no additional cost however many turn in. So why not let all that are available turn in and the line manager at the time can pick the most appropriate crew, whether that is calculated on skills, a rota system or taking into account the length of the call and subsequent further availability of those who have responded whilst showing available.

If HFRS insist on only 5 riders, where is the incentive to remain available? Other than provide contractual hours the rest is just being messed about with constant phone calls for 'you are on call now, or now you are not'.

The service already have a WTD policy, that should be adhered to and reflected in the amount of cover individuals give, along with their commitment to their full time employment.

## **No Cap on Income and Guaranteed Monthly Income**

The RFU have to agree the proposal does fulfil this area, however all examples shown have realised a reduction in the income of our members and we cannot support that as a starting point for a salary negotiation.

## **Flawed Evidence**

The RFU felt that in the presentations many assumptions and anecdotal evidence was offered. We are not aware of any in-depth questionnaire to RDS employees which could support such allegations consequently the whole system on employee acceptance is still unpredictable.

The RFU also feel that the response rate and response ratio discussed within the model is flawed. These figures would work on a station that has a full compliment of fire fighters. However, many stations are below establishment so fire fighters will be responding to a greater number of incidents and actually turning out. Therefore claiming less attendance fees.

There was also no mention on how the pension schemes will be affected by a salary scheme, likely contribution costs and final pension payments (which would be different to how it is currently described in the pension scheme). We feel that this is an extremely important component of any change in salary to employees and were surprised by its omission.

## **Shared Experience Levels**

The service already has a service order on experience levels in the RDS and ensuring experience is shared out, why is this not being applied? Again this is an area of performance management, not a reflection of a salary scheme. Rota systems will give you the ability to share experience around on responding crews, it does not require it to be linked to a salary scheme.

## **Other Performance Management Issues/Suggestions**

### **Selective alerting**

HFRS has the ability to set selective alerting with their current alerters (no additional cost). Along with a rota system that gives priority to a proportion of the station personnel shared around, would give the potential for savings if a salary scheme were not adopted.

Even if a salary scheme were adopted, it would have benefits. If there were enough personnel available on the duty rota to respond and leave other personnel unaffected by the call out and in reserve, especially at a 2 pump station or a station with special(s).

## **Conclusion**

For all of the above the RFU rejects the proposed salary scheme as is. The proposal is detrimental to our membership, showing in some cases significant reductions in pay. It will fail to deliver on its claims and will create, in our opinion, a worse working environment than we currently have. This will result in a gross cumulative loss for the service in the longer term.

The RFU have offered two alternative schemes which have shown favour with our members. However, in support of HFRS desire and drive to create a more efficient RDS system, we would suggest they undertake a similar project such as the four station review which was driven by and fully involved the workforce and created some really tangible benefits with workforce buy in.