

SHOUT!

The magazine of Hampshire Retained Firefighters Union

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HRFU
Serving the local community

The View From Here

It is no secret that senior members of HFRS have said that they would like to consider offering a salary proposal to RDS Firefighters. This “Contracted Hours” payment system would mean that you would get paid a set amount for being available a set amount.

It is seen as being a budgetary controllable way of offering a service back to Hampshire. But what systems could they use? HRFU committee have enquired around the country and are able to describe the system used by Devon Fire and Rescue and South Wales. These systems have either been launched or are to be imminently launched in other counties. They give you an idea of what a RDS Salaried Scheme is. If HFRS do go ahead with this then obviously many elements from these systems will be the same. We have agreed with SMT that we will not comment on these systems in this edition but will print our thoughts (and any from SMT) soon. If you have any thoughts or experiences - **let us know!**

During this period whilst we are all considering the changes that could be introduced that affect RDS Firefighters it may also be a good time to consider and reflect on how HFRS are managing their RDS staff. It can be argued that some aspects of the modernisation agenda have been actioned ahead of many Fire Services throughout the UK. However, looking more fundamentally have things changed that much in the day to day running? The 51 recommendations from the crucial Retained Review Report seem to have stalled despite HRFU pressure?



They can't even get the RDS nomenclature right on new Service Orders. Some Officers still have little understanding of the motivation of RDS personnel, have not read the reports from Bain onward, or at the very best have not internalised the messages contained in the reports that are fundamental for the RDS to move forward.

SALARY SPECIAL

New Web Utility—online wage enquiry

Every month it seems that payment errors abound around HFRS, but how bad is the situation? In partnership with HFRS we ask **ALL** RDS Firefighters who experience a payment error, to come online to our home page, click on the link to the left and register the issue. We send the information direct to HFRS so that they can answer your question, but also collect anonymised data to log ourselves and keep track on how many problems occur. We will let you know the results in 6 months!!



PAYMENT ERRORS

Help us to help you, report your wage errors here, HFRS get advised and we can monitor the situation.

[Click here](#)

The RFU newsletter—designed to educate, inform and entertain.

RFU *part of the solution not the problem*



Salary Special



Devon Fire & Rescue Service

Background

Since 2004, Devon Fire & Rescue Service has been reviewing the provision of a Retained Duty System to address the growing problem of recruiting and retaining personnel. This culminated in the development and trialling of a salaried pilot scheme which was run for a 6 month period across 10 stations. During this period refinements were made to the scheme. Following the completion of the pilot, further improvements have been made following negotiations with the RFU.

Hours of Availability

DFRS will provide a salary package based on a maximum availability of 84 hrs per week which is 50% of a full 168 hour week. The availability is based over a rolling 8 week period for which the average hours of availability will be a maximum of 84 hours. There will be three contract options:

1. 84 hours of cover (For which a full 100% retaining fee - NJC rates will be paid)
2. 63 hours of cover (For which a 75% retaining fee - NJC rates will be paid)
3. Below 63 hours of cover. At the discretion of the Fire Authority and based on the business needs of the Service. These receive a pro-rata payment based on percentage of cover provided compared to 84 hours using NJC rates.

At each station a rota system will be established which is flexible enough to accommodate individual work and domestic commitments. Staff will know their duty periods and rota periods a week in advance. Should there be any shortfalls in crew then this can be identified and corrected in advance. The rota system will be managed locally to address crewing difficulties at short notice, as already happens on most stations.

These rotas will aim to ensure that all personnel have alternate weekends free from availability. (Weekend defined as 1800 hours Friday to 1800 hours Sunday). Alternatively, shiftworkers or staff with specific personal commitments at weekends may prefer to take the equivalent week day periods. During periods of availability, staff will be required to cover all calls. NB There has been an increase in the number of personnel who can receive the day premium allowance to introduce further flexibility during day time cover (see section 7).

Establishment

This system will require an increase in establishment from 12 to 14 on a 1-pump station and 20 to 24 on a 2 pump. An additional Crew Manager will be required on every station. The crewing levels are based on a "ridership factor" which is also used for wholtime stations. This salary scheme uses the same ridership factor of 1.4 thereby allowing for annual leave, training and sickness provision.

Salary

The salary mechanism is made up of 3 components A+B+C.

A - Annual Retaining Fee – This will be based on NJC rates at 100% for 84 hr and 75% for 63 hrs contracts and pro-rata for less than 63 hours.

B - 104 hrs for Drills nights per annum – NJC rates.

C - One hour's pay (NJC rates) + disturbance fee (NJC rates) x % of the average number of calls received at the individual station over the last 3 years ie 2002, 2003, 2004. This rate will be applied pro-rata to shorter duration contracts.

Although cover is provided for 50% of the week, the salary is paid at 60% of the average number of calls for Firefighters, Crew Managers and Watch Manager A. Watch Manager B and Station Manager A are paid at 65% of the average number of calls. A base line of operational activity will be agreed for all stations reflecting the average level over the last 3 years. If operational activity decreases in the future, the agreed activity rate will remain, ensuring that a decrease in station activity will not lead to a reduction in salary. The salary level is therefore guaranteed not to decrease.

In addition a minimum station activity level of 100 calls per year will be established to encourage recruitment and retention at quieter stations. This introduction of the minimum activity level will have a positive affect on nine stations in providing a higher salary level. This is in effect a minimum wage for stations who have low call volumes but provide a commendable commitment. Within the pilot scheme there was a reduction in the total average number of calls to compensate for the Automatic Fire Alarm reduction policy. Following negotiation the this reduction has been removed from the activity calculation thereby increasing activity levels and salaries at all stations. Calls occurring prior to the end of an individual's availability period would be paid at the hourly rate once the call duration exceeded the cut off period.





South Wales
Fire and Rescue Service



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
De Cymru

Background

During the later part of 2001 the senior management of South Wales Fire Service, like many other fire and rescue services, had observed a steady decline in the ability to recruit and retain retained firefighters. The CFO of South Wales recognised that the Service had to modernise and in an effort to make long term improvements initiated a project team. One of the fundamental factors for the development of the new scheme was to prevent the steady drain of resignations and also have a suitable recruitment tool to attract applicants. The result was a radical shift in thinking.

The Commitment

Essentially this is a monthly salary for a negotiated fixed commitment. The maximum commitment is 84 hours a week, crewing levels are set at 140% and a rota system is implemented. Where a station is operating at 140% each crew member will only need to provide 60 hours a week. This leaves 24 hours per week per firefighter to provide for leave, sickness and courses without exceeding the maximum 84 hours a week.

The Payment

Personnel are remunerated for the commitment and not for deed. In line with the W/T hourly rate RDS firefighters are paid 50 hours per month plus a 20% retaining fee. This works out to £8564 pa. JO's are paid 60 hours a month to take into account admin plus an enhanced flexi wage to provide a greater incentive to aspire to those ranks. Annual leave is paid at the same rate. This scheme removes the perverse incentive of the worse a time our communities have the more we are paid.

Attendance at Stations

Only the number required to crew the appliance will attend the station on actuation of the alerter. Those personnel on call are guaranteed a ride.

The Results

One year later, the scheme has met with remarkable success. In October 2004 there were more than 100 vacancies for retained firefighters in South Wales. Just twelve months later, one third of these posts have now been filled and retention has stabilised.

According to Kevin Barry, the head of the Retained Management Team in South Wales, much of this is down to the new payments system. "The new system offers greater flexibility," he explains, "our retained staff are able to choose the amount of hours they commit to, to better suit their personal circumstances.

"With a guaranteed source of income for reduced hours of availability, it really is a win-win situation."

In addition, wholetime firefighters can now supplement their salaries by working extra hours on the Retained Duty System. Keith explains: "We've agreed a new system whereby wholetime personnel can provide a 75 per cent contract on the Retained Duty System, on top of their wholetime duties, which allows them to earn an additional £6,637.50 per year as a Firefighter, or £10,584 per year as a Station Officer."

Since the introduction of the new contract system, the whole Retained Duty System in South Wales has also been reorganised to give crews the same level of operational support and development as wholetime firefighters.

One effect of this has been to allow RDS firefighters to train alongside their wholetime colleagues. "Retained crews all used to meet on the same evening of the week for training," Keith continues, 'now our retained crews meet on the same evening as neighbouring Stations, allowing them to participate in joint exercises."

Excerpts from the above article come from FRS Online the Government Fire Service portal



Scrap over Scrap

SMT have been assuring us for over two years that in recognition of all the changes currently being forced through Hampshire Fire and Rescue service front line operations and training would never be affected. Was anyone like us here at the HRFU surprised by the recent routine notice advising that you are now going to be severely limited to just 2 scrap cars per RDS station a year. 2!



We asked to meet up with SDO Bob Ratcliffe and SM Nick Davies to discuss this in more detail and whereas we acknowledge their willingness to discuss this and put their points forward we were came away very disappointed and concerned with the basis of their decisions. It is accepted that in this day and age every individual and purchase point on the fire service has to be accountable but when this decision is at odds with the training and developmental requirements of individual firefighters then an extremely dangerous precedent is set.

Whatever the cost of supplying scrap cars, they are a fundamental necessity for comprehensive and adequate training, The requirements of front line service provision should determine the budget required not vice-versa. Perhaps it is a failing at HFRS that they did not correctly identify the cost of handling scrap scars would increase so much, but this merely means that we are having to face up to our environmental responsibilities and should not be used as a reason to under resource stations.

We would be amiss not to acknowledge the fact that Nick did stress that additional vehicles would be supplied to those that put forward a valid business case (but who really has the time to prepare one of those) but it is still a step in a direction that sets the alarm bells ringing.

JOIN THE RFU - THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME

As a retained firefighter, and an RFU member, you're entitled to some key benefits that you need to be aware of when considering your finances and how best to plan your financial future:

- Firefighters Final salary pension
- **£20,000 FREE Accident insurance**
- RFU Money access and much more

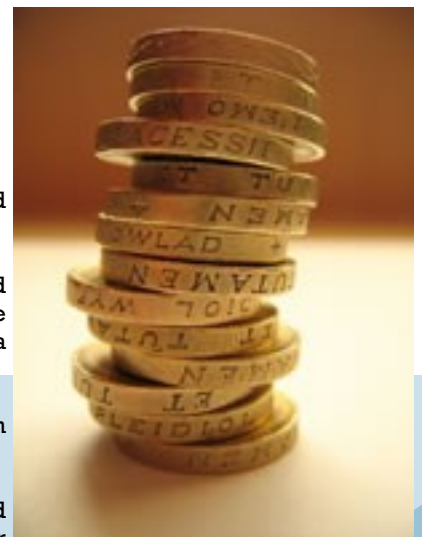
The RFU prides itself in understanding the issues that confront you in everyday life, and during your highly valued contribution as a retained firefighter.

To ensure that your needs and circumstances are catered for, RFU have developed these key benefits that you get free of charge within you annual membership fee. These member benefits have been developed as a result of feedback from our members via our recent survey:

- £20,000 Free Accident Insurance - provided by the RFU in addition to your death in service cover through the new compensation scheme.

- Access to independent financial advice regarding your FireFighters pension, and other pension arrangements to ensure your retirement is planned for and you and your family are properly safeguarded.

- Free access to RFU Money - To make your money work harder for you and ensure you have the leading deals available from the market as well as access to completely independent expertise and advice.



To join send an email to admin@hrfu.org.uk | contact your local representative | call 01489 893980 |