



## The View From Here

It is undeniable that the senior management of HFRS are working extremely hard and under great pressure to complete the many changes required of them to modernise the Fire Service as required by the ODPM. The recent full recognition of HFRU is a reflection of this.

HFRU recognise that many changes are required; not least to the culture, and that not all of these changes will be beneficial to RDS firefighters. However, we are concerned that all of these changes will come to nothing if the management do not practise good project management. Inside this month's issue you will read in-depth our thoughts on the Retained Management System (RMS). We have been getting many enquiries from concerned firefighters who have been introduced to the system and many of these enquiries stem from deficiencies in project management control.



The briefing of Officers delegated to introduce the new RMS on stations seems to be inadequate for the task. Officers are admitting to not having the answers to questions that would obviously be asked. The introducing Officers are telling personnel that the Service Order has not

been issued and that basic operational questions had yet to be addressed.

This model of forcing out incomplete systems will simply not work in this day and age. The 'because I am telling you' mentality is not conducive to good employee relations and will only make personnel more and more nervous and less accepting of future projects and changes whatever the benefits. The new Retained Management System typically has failed so far to get buy-in in its introduction, holds limited advantages for personnel and just adds to the administrative tasks expected. We are not arguing against the necessity for a new RMS, we discuss the merits of the metrics that identify the importance of such a system, our arguments is solely aimed at the design and implementation.

Many, many changes are expected over the coming years and HFRS will find itself facing a steeper and steeper hill of acceptance if it cannot roll these projects out to HFRS employees in a controlled, consistent and high quality format. If personnel can identify that these systems are well thought through and of global benefit they will help iron out the rough spots and ensure success. Failure to recognise the basic tenets of change management will ensure that negativity increases for each new project and so mean collapse of change as personnel become disenfranchised.

This month we are going to dedicate a large section of our newsletter to the new RMS that is being rolled out to all stations throughout Hampshire. Over recent weeks opinions on the system have highlighted issues that concern you, so we thought a discussion within this newsletter a good forum. In this section we present the points for and against the Retained Management System. In the conclusion we will outline what we consider to be the way forward.

## Working Time Regulations

All of you should now have received the WTR information pack. We have written plenty about this and as mentioned think it is a well presented and user friendly resource.

Do not ignore the pack—you can either fill in the time sheet or the opt out form, just make sure you respond one way or another.



## Coming soon

Stay in touch with Hampshire Retained Fire and Rescue Service Activities. Get the facts not the gossip and let us know how changes are affecting and being felt at your station.

Very soon we will be rolling out a great new resource for you to use. Make sure you look out for next month's newsletter for the big launch!



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



## Retained Management System

For those of you who have not had the opportunity to be introduced to the new RMS, it consists of a weekly planner that you complete to advise your availability for the following week, using a system of coloured lines in a gant chart format. The results are an individual's weekly commitment in hours and stations availability.

HRFU have been included in two presentations dealing with the RMS and have consistently expressed our concern about the additional administrative load. This has been partly solved by the collation of statistics being devolved to Group HQ. We have consistently expressed the view that technology should be utilised to resolve the logging of time committed on station. Nevertheless, after the trial, mainly in A Div, the SMT gave the go ahead to roll the system out Service wide by the beginning of April 2005.

It would be inexcusable for us not to recognise that the old system for measuring commitment was well past its point of usefulness. It would also be inexcusable not to recognise that it is sound business sense on behalf of HFRS to have a good system to enable it to know what its staff are doing and when. The officers who recognised the need for a new system could have ignored the signals and taken no risks to their reputations. Apart from the need for a management tool they recognised that firefighters were often being judged unfairly within the old percentage A's and T's system, they recognised that hours committed to the Service had to be a better benchmark.

### FOR

- Provide up-to-date statistics for local manager – ensures fair and consistent management of personnel.
- System ensures consistent application of commitment criteria across the Groups.
- Enables personnel to meet contractual requirements in a flexible family friendly way.
- Information is current and accessible by all station personnel – open and transparent.
- The information is accurate – avoids disputes over commitment and capability support issues.
- Personnel will know what is required of them.
- Provides evidence to increase cover to full cover.

### AGAINST

- Often difficult to predict availability seven days ahead – booking out “just in case” could give a misleading picture of availability.
- Legal position of personnel attending stations to change data.
- Requirement by HFRS to attend your station to change availability.
- In the event of an accident on the way to the station or on the return you would be deemed off duty and not entitled to pay, compensation etc.
- Not contracted to attend the station at any other time other than for drill or fire calls.
- Widespread confusion on actions to take if information provided on drill night changes.
- Open to creative accounting leading to worthless data for station management and HFRS – would discredit the whole concept.

The system that we have been shown is confusing and just adds to the administrative duties of all.

## CONCLUSION

A solution being provided without really considering the whole issue. A properly implemented Retained Management System would be a benefit to all of us, not least HFRS and be something that firefighters would want to use. RMS has huge potential; it could take a massive slice off individuals and group administrative tasks and could enable control to see instantly what exactly is available and what is not in real time. It could provide accurate information. How do we achieve this now? The solution is simple, technology. For relatively small sums of money and relatively quickly a system to enable remote changes to data can be achieved. We invite HFRS to contact us to discuss the way forward for the benefit of all.

Any new development introduced into Hampshire Fire and Rescue should be properly researched, thoroughly tested and incorporate a structured and well-prepared roll out.

The Retained Management System is evidence of a



## Regionalisation Of Control Centres

Regionalisation of our Fire Control Centre is still going ahead. As is well known the reduction of 46 controls to 9 is being progressed despite much concern at all levels in the fire Service and indeed from the employers. The RFU does not support the regionalisation of controls, however, the RFU does see the benefits of some rationalisation.



PRIVATE EYE

An article in Private Eye magazine on what it calls **privatisation** of Fire Controls adds to the feeling that all is not well.

The article in Private Eye says that a Government report from the ODPM indicates that the Firecontrol Project has a very high risk of total project failure at a possible cost of £754 million.

Private Eye said that it has obtained the government's list of possible bidders for the running of regional control rooms. The idea of private enterprise running control rooms in itself is not a pleasing thought. And they then stated that American bidder, SAIC, who had the contract for the Iraq Media Network removed from them because, as the Pentagon said, it wasted money and was amateurish. Private Eye went on to mention another American firm; Northrop Grumman that is on the list of bidders, this company's subsidiary, Vinnel, performed badly in Iraq and was subsequently replaced by the Jordanian Army. Northrop itself has been repeatedly fined by the US government, \$20 million for supplying defective equipment and \$60 million for overcharging for warship work.

The Private Eye article may be correct in part or in its entirety. However, it seems to be contradicted by the information from the Regional Management Board (RMB). The RMB is currently considering the type of Governance appropriate for managing Regional Control Centres (RCC), Company limited by shares (CLS), Company limited by guarantee (CLG), Unlimited Company, Partnership.

The information that our Fire Authority members are receiving seems disposed towards a corporate structure with RMB members as directors. There is even a mention of a **not for profit** clause, I hope that this is not too big a disappointment to the capitalist bidders for our control rooms. As Private Eye would say, "perhaps we should be told".

### Preventing Domestic Fires

RDS Personnel are piloting new initiatives to allow them to visit vulnerable people in their communities and provide fire safety advice and the supply and fitting of smoke detectors. HFRS personnel have fitted 7195 smoke detectors in domestic properties since April 2004. RDS personnel have a vital part to play in the safety of their communities.

Hampshire RFU have for several years been pushing for the remit to be extended to RDS stations. It is a shame that it has taken this long for this strategic resource to be recognised. The culture of the RDS firefighter being second-class is being eroded at an ever increasing pace.



### IRMP Key Elements



- Our aim is every home will have a home safety visit by 2010.
- Our aim is for every pupil to be educated in fire safety by Key Stage 3.
- Our aim is that every household in Hampshire will have at least one smoke detector by 2010
- In partnership with the police we aim to reduce hoax calls by 5% by 2008.
- We will seek to drive down false calls from fire detection systems by 10% by 2010.
- We will offer fire safety protection advice to builders and developers, but will also enforce compliance with regulations.
- Our target is to attend all emergency calls within 8 minutes 80% of the time.
- In partnership with Hampshire Ambulance we aim for our personnel to be available as co-responders. By the end of 2005 we will have three schemes running in New Milton, Romsey and Bordon.

### Banging on—600 Retained Firefighters...who?

Following our comments on the Retained Management System and project management, we would like to further illustrate our observations on HFRS project management.

I was welcomed to SAP and advised that my Employee Self Service module was operational. I didn't have a clue what this was all about so contacted a very helpful lady in HR who informed me that all firefighters had been forewarned about this (I have not found one retained firefighter who was) and that it was a great new module which will allow us to view our payments online and book leave etc. A great development, but with one exception "At present this service cannot be accessed over the Internet - only through the intranet, so you need to be able to log into a Fire Service PC."

So 600 retained firefighters can only access this through the slow single pc at their stations on drill nights. Furthermore, with regards to accessing these details over the Internet there is "nothing imminent at present" apparently because of security issues. Please don't fob me off! SAP is designed to allow access from multiple portals and consider that the web is secure enough to make purchases worth thousands of pounds but HFRS cannot ensure security for its retained employees—or were we, once again just not properly considered?





## FEEDBACK

To operate efficiently and ensure we are providing the correct feedback for you our members we want to encourage you to give us more feedback. Tell us what *you* think. We assure you at all times that your correspondence to us will be anonymous.

### Retained Management System

Is this up and running at your station? If so tell us what you think? Is this a storm in a tea cup or do you think it benefits you and the fire service.

- Does the system work for you and do you think it is a reasonable management introduction?
- How much administrative time does it personally take you?
- Do you think there is a better way that management can monitor the availability of its employees?

### Co-Responders Scheme

This has been up and running for a number of months now. If you are involved with it let us know your thoughts.

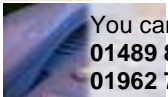
- Is it a great advantage to your community?
- How does it affect your fire cover?
- How do you manage the time for this new service?
- Have you got any thoughts in how to develop the service?

### CONTACT US

You can contact us through any of the following channels;



Our preferred means of contact is by email. You can



You can phone the RFU chairman, Rikki Noble on **01489 893980** or the RFU secretary, Andy Needham on **01962 723020**

### Consultation Budget 2004—2005



On the 14th January 2005 Hampshire RFU Chair and Secretary joined representatives from the Fire Officers Association (FOA) and the GMB to consult on the draft budget 2005/6.

We sought clarification that specific funding for recruitment and retention initiatives would continue into and beyond 2005/6. This was confirmed. Clarification was sought on the funding formula for RDS firefighters pay, specifically, whether the budget allocation would determine or constrain the filling of vacancies.

Assurances were given that while the budget is

not directly set by the fixed costs of maintaining full establishment, there is sufficient flexibility in the total budget allocation to accommodate in year increases in the number of RDS firefighters in post.

We expressed concern about the deterioration in the condition of particularly the older RDS stations. We asked whether there was any increase in funding proposed to meet the perceived shortfall in the maintenance budget. We were told that there was no proposed increase, however, Members and officers felt that there was scope to allocate some funding from general contingencies and this proposal will be put to the Finance and general purposes committee.

Our colleagues asked further question on the re-location of workshops to the Eastleigh HQ site. Decisions on this await the outcome of the Best Value Review of Workshops.

The FBU did not attend this statutory meeting.

### FBU DEPUTATION TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

Our RFU observer at the recent Fire Authority meeting witnessed a deputation of one from the Hampshire FBU executive committee. The subject of the deputation was the objection to the full recognition of Hampshire RFU. The FBU whipping boy, Eddie Burrows, gave what can only be termed a mumbled apology of a representation of their views against the RFU. He also took a swipe at the FOA.

A deputation? Where was his support? Where were the FBU Chair and Secretary?

Needless to say the arguments were those of an organisation stuck in the past and trapped by their own dogma.

Hampshire RFU look forward to the reconstruction of this last dinosaur union. A fruitful future is before us, together representing our members and ensuring that our communities have the best Fire Service possible.



### From the RFU website...

It is clear to us that modernisation of the fire service was inevitable and we support the process of change. However we must remember that while policies may have changed, few of the people have. Restrictive practises still abound.

There is however light on the horizon; there are a few forward-thinking fire and rescue services that are leading the way in providing a modern fire service which has RDS at the heart of its plans. These F&RS realise that flexible use of Retained personnel is the most efficient way of providing a first class service to their communities.