



The View From Here

With the current developments going on at Hampshire Fire and Rescue, we could all believe that a stronger, leaner service will result. However, with all the changes going on I still question whether they have truly internalised the idea of change. My particular bugbear is HFRS love for collecting data. We are getting more and more complicated sheets to complete, these take up more and more time and result in no positive benefits for the firefighter but rather feed the vast data requirements of HFRS to showcase its improvements. I do not knock any of these individual projects, each being important in its own right, but do feel it is time for HFRS to properly manage the changes underway, consolidate its data gathering into a few powerful utilities which look throughout corporate HFRS for data and only use firefighting staff as the last possible means to collect their data. Use the correct applications for data gathering, link your data sources together so replication does not occur and design the inputs to be friendly to me – not useful to you - I want to fight fires not paperwork!

Where's £0 Bonney!



Anyone who has physical proof of his existence should let us know!

RFU *part of the solution not the problem*

FAMILY FRIENDLY WORKING SO/1/2/3

For retained firefighters who are finding it difficult or even impossible to juggle retained commitments with family responsibilities this Service Order Appendix would seem to offer a working solution. Hampshire RFU welcomes this potential flexibility.

Currently retained firefighters work under differing conditions. Those who joined relatively recently are required to cover 75% of all calls during the contracted period. Those who have been in the Service some time are



required to cover 70% of all calls during the contracted period. This difference only came to light recently and has not to our knowledge been negotiated or even discussed with any representative body. The implications for retained firefighters applying for flexible working is that a new contract will be issued and the retained firefighter will be required to cover 75% of calls during the contracted period irrespective of the previous contract.

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RFU PINUP!

Please pin this newsletter up on your notice board and give others the chance to read it. If you want a more copies (or even some in colour) please contact Rikki Noble on rikki@office-home.demon.co.uk or Andy Needham on 01962 723020



CONTROL ROOMS

The proposed changes to the HFRS control room have been discussed at length recently. It was outlined that a final decision on the site will be made late 2004 early 2005 with an proposed completion early 2008. It was stressed that the project timescales are unrealistic and are causing considerable confusion, as phases of the project appear to be running into one another. ODPM will fund the information and communications technology and its replacement but not the long-term maintenance costs. These will be borne by the constituent authorities.

Hampshire RFU Comment

We can see the logic in combining the smaller counties control rooms with those of neighboring counties but the formation of regional control rooms on the scale proposed seems to defy all reason. The argument that technology will resolve all the perceived problems does not give any confidence to those of us on the frontline. There seems to be widespread confusion surrounding regional control rooms mostly generated by the imposed timescale but there is also a significant amount of confusion generated by the resistance to these changes. Before matters get too far advanced there should be a reassessment by the ODPM of the views expounded by the most senior officers and the leaders of the fire authorities. Dogmatic views in respect to modernisation on either side are dangerous.



Working Time Regulation Update

Before too long you will be receiving a pack from HFRS on working time regulations. This is being sent to you so that HFRS can conform with the Working Time Regulations (1998). It is a European ruling to ensure that you are not being overworked either through one or the sum of all your employers. We are happy to inform you that HFRS have gone to great lengths to ensure that all representative bodies have been involved and informed throughout its development and recognise that this is something which has been pushed on all Rescue Services rather than created from within.

The pack will request you to complete a log of your working hours for probably four weeks to show that HFRS are properly informed of your hours, this is a clumsy procedure (again with the correct data systems this could have been harvested automatically for HFRS employees) however it does seem to be the only available solution.

This pack will be released to you around January 2005, Please make sure you read the information provided with the pack carefully, it is your legal duty to do so.

Remember you do not have to complete the log so long as you complete and return the opt out agreement.

Family Friendly Working cont....

HFRS are initiating discussions about the possibility of reducing the retaining fee (outside of the Conditions of Service) for those that do less than full cover. This reduction we assume will be in proportion to the cover provided (e.g. provide 50% cover and get 50% retaining fee). This has implications for those providing day cover only etc. This is against the background of our Conditions of Service that provide for a 75% retaining fee for any thing less than 120 hours per week. The new contract for flexible working will indicate that the retaining fee will be reduced at a future unspecified date; the amount of reduction is also unspecified.

Often retained firefighters provide cover outside their contractual requirements; this cover will not be taken into account when individual statistics are compiled or decisions on flexible working applications are being taken. One Station Officer stated recently, after the question was asked whether he wanted the individual to respond outside the contractual obligation and keep a pump on the run, "It's your community." This amounts to moral blackmail and does not leave a good taste in the mouth.

This is an 'area of development' for HFRS and as such the specifics have not been totally determined. Please contact Hampshire RFU Secretary (Andy Needham on 01962 723020) or Chair (Rikki Noble on rikki@office-home.demon.co.uk) before proceeding with an application for Flexible Working or preferably before discussions surrounding cover become formal so we can ensure that the correct procedures are followed and benefits revealed, not just for you but for all retained firefighters who may wish to be employed within this duty system.

IRMP RFU comment

Before long everywhere you look you will see the HFRS public facing document for making Hampshire safer. It is a powerful document and no one can really argue with the policy of making Hampshire a safer place to live or visit. However, we would like to comment on a few points detailed in the document.

Spreading to thin?

Perhaps the most important point is the movement of HFRS resources from response to prevention and protection. The benefits of this cannot be ignored. However, it should be noted that our yearly budget has not been increased. HFRS state that these new areas will be funded from cost savings. The Hampshire community charge payer cannot fault this but HFRS has been identified as an efficient Service compared to other counties in the recent past. We must be sure that this funding comes from cost savings-not cost cutting at the front line. For Hampshire RFU to do this we need your help, if you have or perceive any signs of reduced funding for your station which result in your stations efficiency, cover, safety or appearance falling we want to know about it.

False Alarms

We all hate them, and it is recognised that repeated false alarm calls to the same premises or several premises are not treated as urgently as they could be. HFRS wish to reduce false alarms by 10%, we say this is not nearly enough-reduce them by 50% or more! Technology in automatic fire alarms is improving, intelligent sensors etc. By pressurising manufacturers huge reductions in AFA's could be achieved.

Just Fires?

RTA year on year increase for 2002/03 was 15%. Since 1990/91, overall totals have risen by 28%. Yet, with the exception of 8/80 no mention is made of attempts to reduce traffic accidents. We in no way feel that this is the sole responsibility of HFRS, but as front line operatives we are in an excellent position to support joint venture accident prevention schemes in our communities.

Resource relocation

We welcome HFRS having a more flexible service but do note that in the section in the leaflet referring to relocating resources the single word 'test' has been dropped ("..we will pilot two test schemes..") nothing is mentioned about the schemes stopping after the trial period to evaluate the data.

Multi talented?

Our partnership with Hampshire Ambulance utilising retained firefighters as co-responders is fully supported by the RFU. We recognise the benefits of having trained professional co-responders available to our communities. However efficient a regional ambulance service is, they cant be everywhere, yet retained fire fighters, because of the retained duty system, are. It is interesting to note that the FBU (who currently accept retained firefighters in their union) have expelled their members saying that the use of fire engines for medical emergencies is a breach of union rules and policy. Hampshire will use dedicated vehicles only. For more information on this see [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/lincolnshire/3665088.stm>]



MAKING HAMPSHIRE SAFER

DIY anyone?

We recently had a discussion with Graham Stark, Property Services in HFRS. This followed questions about how the property services division worked and what timelines they worked too. The following are notes from the discussion we had.

On Exhaust Extraction

Measurements were made at all stations and all came under legal requirements. However, to ensure a good clean atmosphere it was decided to install exhaust extraction systems at all stations. Systems are now installed at all wholtime and day crew stations and they are now working through retained stations in order of need. The ones left are the more major projects. It will be a couple more years before all stations are completed (another 8-10 stations to go).

Raising a fault

If an issue is reported a defect number is issued, a job card made up and the job carried out depending on priority. The station then reports back when completed to complete the

audit trail.

General maintenance schedule

HFRS aim for 5 years external redecoration but slippage does unfortunately occur.

Internal redecoration is carried out as required.

DIY

Fire Station self-redecorations are 'supported' by property services. If approved they will pay a fee to your social club and will normally define colours and supply paint. Obviously if all retained stations requested this the budget would be used up very quickly so it is offered on a first come/most needed basis and dependent on available budget. If required discuss through your Group Manager. (Tell him you read it in the RFU newsletter!)





We Need You!



We are currently looking for some new skills to help us here in Hampshire RFU—maybe this could be you!

- Press officer (reviewing all Hampshire RFU publications, establishing links with local media and ensuring the RFU views are properly presented.
- Data analyst—we currently have a one off requirement here—have you got time to help us go through some source data and establish some opinions?
- Station representatives—we must have a RFU rep in every station to stick a colour copy of this newsletter to your stations notice board, provide us with feedback of views and opinions at your station and to receive news updates from us. Note, although you are welcome, you will not be expected to attend meetings so this position should not take up much of your time.

Carrying Over Rank

At the last consultative meeting Hampshire RFU argued that the policy for carrying over rank as explained on the routine notice did not give a true reflection of the reality. DCFO House requested that we put to him the form of words that would explain the true position and consequences for stations and personnel. To enable us to do this we submitted several questions to the Human Resources department, we are still awaiting their reply.



These same questions were asked in December 2003 to no avail.

We are refusing to let this matter drop, as there are serious consequences for retained morale and retention.

Got something to shout about?

We would welcome your comments, opinions or thoughts, good or bad in our next issue. Just forward them to HRFU Secretary (Andy Needham on 01962 723020) or Chair (Rikki Noble on rikki@office-home.demon.co.uk).



19 - 25 July 2004
FARNBOROUGH

Wage Check

It has come to our attention that some firefighters who attended the Farnborough Air Show 2004 have not been paid correctly. Wholetime and Retained firefighters should have been paid 1.5 times the hourly rate. Wholetime pay is correct but some retained have not been paid at the correct hourly rate.

HFRS state that; "for some reason *SAP holds the hourly rate for retained as £1.63" HFRS, knowing this is incorrect, have to manually override the SAP information and put in the correct hourly rate.

Unfortunately when we advised HFRS of this issue they advised us that they would deal with any "callers who queried the matter"!

Frankly, we are shocked by this attitude, although it is the

employees duty to check their wages, if an error is known about by the employer they should immediately advise all concerned and carry out their own auditing to assess who has been affected. Not see what they can get away with.

Considering this and the recent debacle of paying us only half our wages in a month, it only highlights the fact that HFRS treat retained pay as second class and of low importance.

We are now trying to compose a dossier of all payment errors made by HFRS and would welcome your submissions.

* SAP—an IT business solutions used by Hampshire County Council

PERSONNEL No		
3000001		
ND ALLOWANCES		
PERIOD	RATE	AMOUNT
WT		199.57
RT		505.46
PF		18.97