

Performance Review Team
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service
Leigh Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire

Tuesday, 08 December 2009

Dear PR Team

Ref: RFU Response to HFRS Draft Consultation

Hampshire Retained Fire Fighters Union welcome the opportunity to comment on the published draft and after careful consideration would like the following points to be considered.

Discussion Chronology

We accept that it is hard to publish the consultation document and then discuss it with everyone in a short time frame. However, in future we would like to be considered to be invited along to the initial discussion stages as soon as possible after publication. This will then mean that we can answer questions from our members which arise from the plan authoritatively and quickly without either pre-empting the discussion.

01 - New risk based response standards

We recognise the reasoning and agree with this proposal.

The only area of note is that we have always maintained the desire to reach the 8 minute target should be very sensitively handled when considering the drivers of emergency vehicle who are already under a lot of pressure to drive with progress without taking undue risks. The desire to reach incidents within 8 minutes should not be passed on to them.

2 - Making best use of our firefighters

This proposal does not affect our retained members but we recognise the advantages of having a more flexible workforce.

3 - Tackling small fires in a better way

This proposal does not affect our retained members but we recognise the advantages of having a more flexible resource base.

4 - Getting to incidents in rural areas faster

We recognise that there may be a better way to respond in rural areas but we find the solution proposed expensive, complicated and logistically fraught with difficulties.

We offer an alternative in our discussion document "Getting To Incidents In Rural Areas Faster" attached with this response.

5 - Increasing our contact with the public

We support any improvement in getting in contact with the public but we do hope that the RDS will be included fully with this opportunity. With the pressures on spending we accept that RDS often look as a more expensive option than a WDS salaried

alternative; however we trust the service will be sensitive when planning on offering services within RDS station areas who will be affected morally if they become more and more sidelined in CFS activities.

In addition any Fire Fighters role map requires them to undertake Community Fire Prevention activities so we would expect the service to continue offering this opportunity to RDS fire fighters.

6 - Creating a dedicated fire investigation service

This proposal does not affect RDS members; however the creation of a skilled, dedicated team does make sense although we would want to ensure they were kept sufficiently busy to be economically viable!

7 - Reviewing our staff numbers

As founder members of the EFC scheme we are pleased to report that we are fully informed and feel part of the development of this scheme.

We are extremely disappointed however to see that this proposal also advises

“We will develop a salary scheme....for our retained staff”

We have been informed consistently and even have had clarified at SMT level in the last few months that a salary scheme is not a foregone conclusion.

We have agreed to be proactive and support investigations and desktop trials of different payment types for RDS fire fighters but it was mutually agreed that no conclusion should be made until the results of these trials have been properly analysed and reviewed. The tone of this specific sentence reads that a RDS Salary Scheme is a foregone conclusion.

HFRS should be under no illusion that to many, a salary scheme is anathema to many RDS employees and any short term financial gains may well quickly be lost when employees become demoralised and leave the service.

We brought this to the attention of the board during the presentation of these proposals many months ago and it was agreed that the wording would be changed. It is disappointing to see that this has not yet been actioned.

We recognise and look forward to working with the service in the creation of more flexible contracts for its employees.

We hope that these comments prove useful feedback to HFRS and hope our concerns when raised will be duly considered.

Yours truly,



Rikki Noble
Hampshire Retained Firefighters Union Chair