SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Thursday 1 February 2018
2.15 pm
Room 1
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
Pirehill

A Chairman’s Preview (for Mrs K M Banks and Mr S J Tagg) has been arranged for 1.45 pm

Howard Norris
Secretary to the Authority
23 January 2018

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2017
4. Performance Report
   Report of Kath Bourne, Business Intelligence Team Corporate Manager
5. Retained Duty System
   Report of Tim Hyde, Director of Response
6. Response Standards
   Report of Tim Hyde, Director of Response
7. **Items for Future Meetings**

Members are asked to consider any possible items for future Scrutiny and Performance Committee consideration.

To be reviewed by Members:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 April 2018</td>
<td>Impact of the Safe and Well Visits, including Information given to residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scrutiny Training Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retained Update (Standing Item on the Agenda) including Retained Pilot review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Items date not yet specified</td>
<td>Outcomes of the EXIT Programme once the University of Exeter report is received</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. **Date of Next Meeting** – The next meeting of this Committee will be held on Tuesday 3 April 2018 at 2.15 pm

9. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairman to move:-

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below”.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

PART TWO

10. **Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2017**
    (Exemption paragraph 3)
MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE
HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2017

Present: Banks, Mrs K M (in the Chair)

James, A K  Jellyman, D M

Apologies: Atkins, P E B, Cooper, J, Powell-Beckett, Mrs J, Tagg, S J and Winnington, M J.

Also in Attendance: Mr T Hyde, Director of Response, Mr D Hogan, Group Manager Business Transformation and Mr S Ruckledge, Fire Engineer.

PART ONE

Documents referred to in these minutes as schedules are not appended but will be attached to the signed copy of the minutes. Copies, or specific information in them, may be available on request.

Quorum for the Meeting

36. Mrs Banks advised Members that the meeting was not quorate.

37. RESOLVED – That, although the meeting was not quorate, they would proceed with the meeting as there were no decisions to be made.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 October 2017

38. RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee held on 17 October 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Membership of the Committee

39. As discussed at the last Meeting, Members were advised that Mr Simon Tagg had replaced Mrs Gill Burnett and would assume her duties as the Vice Chairman of the Committee.

40. RESOLVED – That the change in Membership/Vice Chairmanship of the Committee be noted.

Business Transformation Team – Work Programme Overview
(Schedule 1)

41. For the benefit of new Members, Mr Hogan outlined his background with the Fire and Rescue Service to date, prior to his current role with the Business Transformation Team. Working with him on the Business Transformation Team was Mr David Steele who had also experienced a number of different roles within the Service, with his latest role being with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. He explained that Business Transformation was around how the Service looks at what it does to meet the challenges in the future. It was about ensuring that there was a purpose for each of the processes that were undertaken by the Service.
Mrs Banks asked Mr Hogan to given an example of where Business Transformation had made a difference. He advised that for many years each office had been asked to compete a P1 form for all individuals which outlines which days people were in the office, which days you were on holiday, or off sick etc. On looking into this a bit further it was discovered that no one used the information that was contained within the P1 form. Now that the Service had moved to the Firewatch system this does all of the things that the P1 did, across the whole Service. The Service would ensure that it did not collect data that it did not need. Mr Hogan advised that systems thinking was used in the development of the Community Safety Options.

Mr Hyde advised that a good example were Home Fire Safety Checks that were introduced in 1999. At that point in time these involved just putting up a smoke alarm with a brief discussion about the need to be safe. The “measure” of success for that was that we had fitted a smoke alarm. The fitting of the alarm was only part of the issue. The Service then decided to add more specific fire safety advice. Then they looked at whether the Service could make people safer from other things eg medical issues. The Service then decided to look at the whole intervention and developed the Safe and Well visits, which incorporated all of these aspects. This was a good example of where the continual review process has worked well.

Mr James advised that a lot of communication in his area was dealt with by the Parish Council. He asked whether his local Service Delivery Group officer would attend the Parish Council meeting to give a presentation to advise them of the work of the Fire Service, perhaps in the New Year. Mr Hogan undertook to liaise with Mr Broadhead on this matter.

Mr Hogan gave a presentation which outlined the Terms of Reference of the Team, explained Systems Thinking and outlined the work programme.

Mr Hogan advised that they were two and half weeks into the work programme and both he and Mr Steele were having refresher training. They were looking to bring an additional person into the Team from a Support Staff background, as both he and Mr Steele were operational. It would be valuable to have someone on the Team with a Support background to give a different perspective and to ensure that they explored all of the options. Business development and transformation had been running since 2010 and was progressive in developing the Service and continuing with the systems thinking process across the Service Delivery Groups. The Team would support the efficiency programme – the Service had a four year efficiency plan where savings were outlined and had been realised. The Team would assist in identifying opportunities. The Team would also support departmental reviews. The Service had recently reviewed the Learning and Development Department and was also trialling the reduction in the number of delivery groups from three to two. This would be reviewed in 6 and 12 months time.

The presentation outlined – “What is a System” - A set of interrelated processes/functions in which we work to achieve a set outcome or result, a purpose.

It also outlined - “What is Systems Thinking” - The study of interrelated processes/functions in which we work to achieve a set outcome or result, a purpose.

Mr Hogan advised that in 2010 when the Service first started looking at business transformation they employed “Vanguard” to train up officers in systems thinking. Both the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Deputy Chief Executive had previously been involved with business transformation.
The Team would look at what we are here to do, what measures do we have to help guide us in our attainment of purpose and the way we design our work. They would look at how we do things, identify where there was duplication, whether it adds value and whether we could eliminate waste.

The presentation outlined the test of a “good measure”. The Service collected a lot of data and needed to make sure that this data guided the Service in the work that it does, ensuring that the skills were in the right places etc.

Mrs Banks gave an example of the Service identifying issues and then acting to reduce the demand. She advised that it had been identified that small fires increased over school holidays (which was the “measure”). The Service identified that they could do something about this and had launched various initiatives.

Mr Hogan advised that the Team would review previous Systems Thinking work. The focus would be on Service Support functions/departments. The work would be linked to the Service’s efficiency programme. The work would be used to inform the redesign of services where appropriate. He advised that it was not about “doing this” to our staff but about doing transformational things with our staff. The solutions quite often came from individual suggestions. He advised that they had been asked by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Deputy Chief Executive to concentrate on Headquarters departments. They were currently working with estates and would then move on to look at the Human Resources Department. The Team would also be supporting Service Delivery Group changes.

Mrs Banks enquired as to whether the Service involved trade unions in the process. Mr Hogan advised that the trade unions were fully involved.

Mr Hogan advised that it was difficult to predict the exact timescales for the work as it was time consuming. The Team would sit with staff to ensure that they knew the roles. There was an expectation that the Team would be able to report their progress to the Principal Officers and Directors in the New Year.

Mrs Banks thanked Mr Hogan for his presentation.

42. RESOLVED – That the Business Transformation Team Work Programme Overview be noted.

Items for Future meetings

43. Members held a discussion on possible future items for scrutiny.

Mr Hyde advised that they were not in a position to report the outcomes of the Exit Data until the report had been produced by the University of Exeter. The University had released some information to the Service around the treatment of casualties ie keeping the casualties warm with a hat or space blanket during extrication, getting them to hospital as quickly as possible and administering oxygen as quickly as possible. He advised that some doctors carried out interventions at the scene. Mr Hyde advised that in the past lengthy periods of time were taken to stabilise a patient at the scene before being transported. In some cases it would be necessary to get the patient to the operating table as soon as possible to save their lives. He advised that there was a great deal of learning to come out of the report and they needed to see the full picture. He advised that the report would be presented to the Committee in due course.
Mrs Banks advised that the fire service were frequently first on the scene. Mr Hyde advised that all firefighters were trained to “first person on scene level c” and so were adequately trained to deliver the first interventions in these cases.

Following discussions Members concurred that the following items be brought to future meetings of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 February 2018</td>
<td>Retained Duty System, recruitment and retention – a review of the RDS crewing system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Items date not yet specified</td>
<td>Impact of the Safe and Well Visits (early 2018 - April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcomes of the EXIT Programme once the University of Exeter report is received</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Date of next Meeting

44. Members were advised that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday 1 February 2018 at 2.15 pm.

### Exclusion of the Public

Upon the motion of the Chairman it was:

45. **RESOLVED** - “That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below”.

### PART TWO

**Community Sprinkler Project – Phase 2 Update**

(exemption paragraph 3)

46. – 47. The report gave Members an update on Phase 2 on the Community Sprinkler Project, the content of which was noted.

CHAIRMAN
Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Scrutiny and Performance Committee

1 February 2018

Performance Report

Report of Kath Bourne, Business Intelligence Team Corporate Manager

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the Scrutiny and Performance Committee with information regarding Service performance to December 2018. The report presents key performance measures for the organisation in Statistical Process Control (SPC) format and some additional statistical information as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the contents of the report are noted and that performance issues are discussed.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Legal Implications

The Service has a statutory obligation to improve performance.

Equality and Diversity

There are no equality and diversity implications.

Risk Implications

Failure to perform to expected standards has serious implications for the Service and therefore all underperformance should be discussed and actions to address agreed and understood.

Consultation and Engagement undertaken

Not applicable
Other implications

There are no other implications.

Background

The report shows performance on a range of indicators in Statistical Process Control chart format. Supplementary data is provided where appropriate to provide context for some of the indicators. Most of the indicators are within control limits, with many showing performance which is better than mean expected performance. Attention should be particularly focused on any areas where performance breaks through either of the control limits, shows a high degree of variability or is significantly moving toward either control limit.

Report Author: - Kath Bourne
Telephone: - 01785 898606
Email: - k.bourne@staffordshirefire.gov.uk
Scrutiny Performance Report December 2017

SPC Key Points:

- Performance is on a downward trend year to date, with performance since August operating at or below expected performance levels
- Performance in December 2017 is trending towards the lower control limit indicating unexpectedly low numbers of incidents occurring

SPC Key Points:

- Accidental Dwelling Fires have been at or below expected performance levels since the relatively high numbers in April 17
- In December 17 performance is just above expected performance levels
Deaths and Injuries in Accidental Dwelling Fires

SPC Key Points:

- December 2017’s performance is slightly above expected levels
- Low numbers make small shifts in performance appear volatile

Safe and Well Checks

SPC Key Points:

- Numbers of visits saw a decline in December 17, as they did in December ‘16

*Please note that Safe and Well visits replaced HFRCs in December 2016
**SPC Key Points:**

- During the latter half of the year performance has been at or below expected levels of performance.

**SPC Key Points:**

- Prison fires this year have been on a downward trend.
- Most months have been at or below expected levels of performance indicating that there has been a causal impact resulting in lower numbers of incidents experienced.
**Comments:**

- All Attended Incidents are on a downward trend for the year to date. Comparative to the same time last year there have been more incidents this year (6830 compared to 6598). Secondary Fires are the most common type of incident attended this year so far with 1500 incidents (22% of all incidents attended). This is followed by False Alarm Good Intent with 1359 incidents (20% of all incidents attended). Compared to last year, during 2017/18 we have attended a higher proportion of Secondary Fires and Special Service Calls. The number of Special Service Calls has increased particularly for incidents to support Police and Ambulance and these will be monitored to establish the incident requirements.

- There have been 394 Accidental Dwelling Fires this year to December. There has been 9% fewer incidents than this time last year, when the number of these incidents was 431. This reduction is due to fewer low severity fires occurring this year. The main cause of Accidental Dwelling Fires continues to be Cooking, which is also the main cause of Low Severity fires. High Severity Accidental Dwelling fires continue to be most often caused by Fault in Equipment. The location of fires is most commonly in the kitchen, because of the effect of Cooking but also because the most common appliances causing Fault in Equipment fires are those appliances found in the kitchen (tumble dryers are the most common ignition source this year to date). All fires continue to occur in rented accommodation to a disproportionate rate.

- There have been 4 Accidental Dwelling Fire fatalities and 16 injuries this year to date. This is the same number of casualties as this point last year. Of the three households where a fatal incident occurred, all lived as lone adults (including lone parents). Of the 15 households where an injury occurred, 9 lived alone, 8 were smokers and 6 had a health or medical condition. Nine of the fifteen households experiencing a casualty had a person of over 65 resident (with an average age of 84). The predominant risk characteristics for these households were living alone (8 households) and having a disability or health condition (5 households).

- This year to date 18241 Safe and Well Visits have been carried out. Numbers dropped during December as they did during 2016 due to the Christmas period. Priority Gold, Silver or Bronze households have had 4059 visits and 1870 referrals have been made for households needing additional assistance. The top type of referral this year has been for hearing issues, followed by mobility. Visit coverage for Staffordshire populations at 1 December 2018 is: Gold households 64.12%, Silver 56.53% and Bronze 16.74%.

- Business Fires have a relatively static trend this year to date, operating at expected performance levels for the latter part of the year. The main type of business having a fire this year is retail shop, although still only accounting for 1% of incidents experienced. The biggest proportion of fires are accidental (70%), with the main cause of accidental business fires being Fault in Equipment or Appliance. 45% of accidental business fires (59) this year required no firefighting action.

- Prison fires have been on a downward trend this year, with only 2 incidents occurring in December '17 (from a high of 14 in April ’17). Year to date there have been 64 incidents, with 58 of these being deliberate and 55 requiring no firefighting action on arrival. Work has been undertaken to deliver education packages on the risks of fires in prisons, and the issue of criminal charges for setting fires in prison cells has been explored. The smoking ban in prisons is also thought to be having an effect.
**SPC Key Points:**

- Numbers of RTCs have been at a relatively stable level for most of this year, although mainly operating just above expected performance levels

**RTC Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>RTC KSIs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SPC Key Points:**

- Data for Killed and Seriously Injured are awaiting an update, delays are due to issues with collation of information by Staffordshire County and Stoke-on-Trent City Councils
SPC Key Points:

- Unwanted Fire Signals are now operating closer to expected performance levels, having peaked in September this year

‘Incident Data Mart’ Data Confidence

Comments:

The incident data on which this report is based has over 99% coverage of incident records.

The Service continues to proactively identify and resolve all issues which lead to late or inaccurate data.
Comments:

- RTC’s which the Service has attended are on an upward trend this year to date, and have been operating slightly above expected performance levels for the last quarter. There have been 486 incidents, 18% of which required extrication (88 incidents). In those RTC’s attended there have been 14 fatalities and 447 injuries this year so far. County wide Killed and Seriously Injured information is only available until December ’16 due to the issues of fully collating data for Staffordshire County and Stoke-on-Trent City Councils. Numbers for the year ending in December 2016 were relatively volatile and operating above mean expected performance

- All Unwanted Fire Signals year to date stand at 2912. Of these 65% (1878) are not attended, 22% (626) are to domestic properties, 12% (349) are to other policy exempt (for example hospitals and residential care), and 2% (59) to commercial premises. The longer term trend for attended Unwanted Fire Signals is down
Attacks on Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Attacks by SDG 2017/18

- ESDG
- NSDG
- WSDG
- HQ

Number of Attacks by Quarter/Year

- Q1
- Q2
- Q3
- Q4

Comments:

**July 2017** – Crews were verbally abused whilst trying to gain access to the rear of a property following the report of a fire.

**July 2017** - Whilst attending a fire on a farm, the farmer became verbally abusive to a Station Manager when he was asked to move some bales.

**August 2017** – Assault on a firefighter by a member of public at a fire station.

**September 2017** – Whilst completing a Safe and Well visit a Community Safety Officer was inappropriately touched by a resident.

**September 2017** - A Business Support Adviser was verbally abused during a telephone call by a community room user.
Injuries at Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Operational 2016/17</th>
<th>Operational 2017/18</th>
<th>Routine 2016/17</th>
<th>Routine 2017/18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Injuries by SDG 2015/16

Number of Injuries by Quarter/Year

Comments:

Operational Injuries Q2

Four minor injuries reported; one report of a pulled/strained muscle whilst attending an RTC, one arm injury caused by falling through a floor, one bruising to hand from a falling beer keg whilst wearing BA, attending a fire at a public house and one cut elbow caused by slipping on a gravel driveway at a house fire.

Routine Injuries Q2

One RIDDOR reportable injury; the injured person dislocated their knee while picking up a helmet. Thirteen minor injuries were reported;

Six manual handling related; one back pain and one shoulder discomfort when drilling with ladders, one back pain using the gym, one back pain training using a hose, one back pain lifting minors in and out of an appliance and one back pain lifting stationary out of a supplies container.

Three slip/trips; one over a trailing vacuum lead, one while taking a short cut through the old house back gate and one while running with hose during the rural test.

One report of ear discomfort following accidental activation of two tones on station, one report of a chipped tooth while using gym equipment, one foot puncture injury during water training and one report of an insect bite leading to pain and swelling during a training session.
# First Appliance Response Standard & Retained Availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Appliance in attendance</th>
<th>12/2016</th>
<th>12/2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84.16%</td>
<td>84.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of life risk incidents attended within target at month of reporting
(high risk areas = 8min, medium risk areas = 10min, low risk areas = 18 mins)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle Available</th>
<th>Available Total</th>
<th>Vehicle Unavailable</th>
<th>Unavailable Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No BA</td>
<td>Pump</td>
<td>TRV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biddulph</td>
<td>BID1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewood</td>
<td>BRE1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbots Bromley</td>
<td>BRO1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burslem</td>
<td>BUR1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannock</td>
<td>CAN2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase Terrace</td>
<td>CHA1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheadle</td>
<td>CHE1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codsall</td>
<td>COD1</td>
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<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eccleshall</td>
<td>ECC1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnosall</td>
<td>GNO1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanley</td>
<td>HAN2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipstone</td>
<td>IPS1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidsgrove</td>
<td>KID1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinver</td>
<td>KIN1</td>
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<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leek</td>
<td>LEE1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leek</td>
<td>LEE2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lichfield</td>
<td>LIC1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loggerheads</td>
<td>LOG1</td>
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<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longnor</td>
<td>LON1</td>
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<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longton</td>
<td>LTN2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercia</td>
<td>MER1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barton u Need</td>
<td>NEE1</td>
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<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>NEW2</td>
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<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penkridge</td>
<td>PEN1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising Brook</td>
<td>RIS1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugeley</td>
<td>RUG1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>STO1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burton on Trent</td>
<td>TRE2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutbury</td>
<td>TUT1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uttoxeter</td>
<td>UTT1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>59%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Comments**

First pump in attendance within target time has increased in December 2017 to 84.95%, compared to December 2016 when this was 84.16%.

Non availability of pumps is largely due to insufficient crewing. The RDS service remains under capacity.

---

**Finance Assets and Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
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<td>Invoices Paid Within 10 Days</td>
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<td>Invoices Paid Within 5 Days</td>
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**Comments:**

The Service implemented a new financial accounting system, Integra, which went live on 1st September 2017. This has initially had an impact on the Resource Control Report target dates due to the department resources in the development, delivery and training of the new system. All the management accounts reports needed to be redesigned. This has now been done and I do not foresee a delay in the publication in the future. All Budget Managers now receive a monthly automated email which provides their budget monitoring statement and they all have access to the budget monitoring tools on Integra.
Human Resources

Absence

Total Shifts Lost 2017/18

Shifts Lost breakdown

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Comments:

There are no specific issues relating to the variability seen in monthly absence patterns. Absence issues are handled by the Service on a case by case basis in order to assist people back to work

Please note data in this report may be subject to change and figures may differ in later reports
SUMMARY

The Service operates three operational duty systems, wholetime shift which provides a rotating shift pattern of full time staff and provides 24/7 cover at eight stations; day duty that is staffed with wholetime fire crews between 0800 and 2000 every day and retained duty system. The latter is the subject of this paper. This system is sometimes referred to as part time or on call but for this paper it will be termed retained duty system (RDS).

The RDS was formally implemented nationwide in 1948 and then it provided a response to areas of low population density where the risk level and incident demand did not justify a permanently staffed response. It also embraced a local community desire to protect itself and this aspect prevails to this day. The system has a fire appliance stationed within a community and staffed by part time staff who are on call, via pager, 24/7. In order to provide a fast response to incidents the time set for the staff to turn in was five minutes; this has changed little over the last 60 years, except for a few particularly rural locations. Members are advised to note that prevention did not gain the standing it rightly deserves until the late 1990’s so until then speed of response was regarded as the best defence against loss of life and property.

Until 2003 retained staff nationwide were paid for their time on call (120 hrs per week attracted the full retaining fee) and also an amount for responding to station (now known as the disturbance fee) and another amount for actually responding. It is interesting to note that until 2003 the hourly rate of pay for RDS staff was less than that for wholetime staff. Bluntly, the RDS was a fire service in areas of low demand that was cheaper than the wholetime service and the training, development and pay reflected this situation.

In 2003 a national judgement was made that “a firefighter is a firefighter” and this gave equal status in terms of pay for RDS and wholetime staff. Officers reflected on this new adjudication and concluded that as RDS firefighters could attend exactly the same incidents and be subject to the same risks we should train RDS staff as we do wholetime staff. In addition to this an element of the firefighters role is risk reduction so RDS staff were paid to undertake risk reduction work within their communities.

The Service reflected now on a situation with the payment mechanism and a situation of conflict that was possibly detrimental to public safety was identified. RDS staff were paid an hourly rate per incident attended but the Service was also paying them to undertake risk reduction work. Their own payment scheme was discouraging them from reducing community risk. The response to this was that in 2004 a new retained payment scheme was
introduced. This sought to protect earnings by ensuring that availability was appropriately paid for but that staff had an incentive to reduce risk within their communities.

By 2014 retained recruitment and, particularly retention, was becoming a significant issue with leavers regularly outstripping the Service’s ability to attract and train new staff. One reason for this was falling earnings due to ever decreasing operational demand; a success for the Service and communities but which had a depressive effect on total earnings for RDS staff.

In 2016 the Service negotiated a new payment scheme which reflects the value of on call time but also seeks to appropriately compensate staff when they do work positive hours. At the same time as the implementation of this policy (Appendix 1) the Service negotiated and agreed a 20% reduction in RDS staff levels as part of the medium term financial strategy savings.

The Service has an operational RDS establishment of 384 and actually has 290 RDS staff. For information, the wholetime watch based cohort numbers 236. RDS staff crew 29 of the 39 pumping appliances and so, therefore, form the majority of the response capability in Staffordshire.

Members may note that around 90 RDS positions are currently vacant and, though we aim to train 48 RDS staff in 2018, leavers will mean that the increase in total numbers may be marginal. Possible reasons for this are:

Societal changes:
- When the RDS was designed rural communities tended to work within that locality and in many houses only one adult worked full time – there was a pool of available people from which to recruit. This has changed as many of our rural villages have large sections of the population with most adults working and many away from the locality – there are fewer people to recruit from.
- Increasing affluence and a demand for more leisure time means that the relatively low earnings from RDS for the time during which activity is restricted (we expect 84 hrs as a norm and the person must be within 5 mins of the station and teetotal during this time).
- Ageing populations and general rise in affluence – our rural population, from which we recruit, is ageing faster than in urban areas and the rural areas tend to be more wealthy so the people there do not need the top up in household income that they once did.

In addition to this there are many aspects of the RDS that have been examined by the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) nationally. The report attached as Appendix 2 contains the analysis of the RFU’s national survey on recruitment and retention within the Retained Duty System. Members are asked to note this report but also consider for whom and the context within which it has been produced.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Authority Members are asked to note the contents of this report and the appendices and are invited to ask questions which may arise.
Financial Implications

The Service invests around £5M pa in the retained duty system and in return receives a theoretical coverage of the County from 29 pumps. A growing issue with RDS staff who are more cost effective in terms of cost per hour on call is that RDS staff tend to serve far less time in service than wholetime staff so the cost of training and equipping one RDS post is in excess of the equivalent wholetime post. When these repeating costs are taken into account the cost advantage of RDS over wholetime staff begins to erode significantly.

Legal Implications

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 Part 2, Section 7 requires the Fire Authority to make provision for the purpose of fighting fires and protecting life and property in its area.

Equality and Diversity

Whilst the contents of this paper do not impact directly on any protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 Members are asked to note that difficulties in recruiting any new staff to the RDS means that positive action and the Service’s desire to increase the proportion of under represented groups within the workforce are less effective in predominantly RDS areas.

Risk Implications

Like many F&RS’s across the Country Staffordshire is subject to changing society and the needs of the workforce. There is no doubt that changing lifestyles, demographics, community make up and falling operational demand has had an impact on the F&RS’s ability to attract and retain RDS staff. Ultimately this has an effect on appliance availability and response standards (call response times).

Consultation and Engagement undertaken

None for this paper.

Protective Security

The contents of and appendices to this paper are being kept in line with the Service protective security standards.

Social Value and Procurement

None for this report.

Report Author: - Tim Hyde
Telephone: - 01785 898509
Email:- t.hyde@staffordshirefire.gov.uk
INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE
The purpose of this document is to detail the working arrangements and management of the retained duty system.

This document applies to all staff who are conditioned to the retained duty system.

AVAILABILITY AND ROSTERING
2.1 If Supervisory managers identify areas where there is the potential for the Appliance to be unavailable, they will ensure the stated availability is consistent with the employee’s agreed declaration of availability.

2.2 Individuals may make themselves available over and above their stated declaration of availability, but payment will only be received where the individual is required.

2.3 Managers must use Firewatch to monitor and ensure all rostered riding systems and allocation of duties, as far as possible; provide fair and preferably consistent working patterns for employees.

2.4 During periods of high demand the Service have the ability to suspend maximum numbers on call (rostering) to be able to use all available staff, particularly on Stations that also have special appliances. This may involve people on protected hours being stood up to enable all appliances to be crewed when required.

PAY ARRANGEMENTS
3.1 Payment will be based on the number of actual on call hours and training activity and will comprise of the following elements:

Retaining Fee
3.2 The retaining fee will be a percentage of the salary aligned to the whole-time duty system. Rates will be reviewed annually by the NJC.
3.3 Staff will be paid a percentage of the retaining fee proportionate to the number of agreed hours they are declared on call each week. The full retaining fee will be 18% of a whole-time salary if the declared number of on call hours is 100. i.e. 100 hours = 100% of the retaining fee. The percentage of the full retaining fee will be equivalent to the number of declared on call hours on a sliding scale. i.e. 80 hours will attract 80% of the retaining fee, 115 hours, 115% and so on. This recognises that commitment should be rewarded in a fair and proportionate way.

3.4 Payment for the retaining fee will be monthly in arrears to ensure this accurately reflects the hours provided.

Payment for work activity

3.5 Employees will ensure their availability is recorded in Firewatch, giving sufficient time for Supervisory Managers to plan and roster crewing. Crewing will be selected based on skill levels up to the appropriate crewing level for the station, utilising rostering to ensure that no individual or group is disadvantaged.

3.6 Whilst the Service endeavours to ensure that the correct number of employees are on call and are not called in unnecessarily, we recognise that sometimes even with rostering that employees may be called in and be surplus to requirements. We also recognise that this activity should be rewarded. Therefore an employee who has been called out and attends the station but does not form part of the crew shall receive payment for 30 minutes at positive hourly rate.

3.7 All employees responding to the station will receive a Disturbance Allowance at national rates of pay. Currently this is 3.90. The Allowance is only payable on the initial response to an alerter, it is not payable for any subsequent incidents once they have formed part of a crew or are on station.

3.8 An employee who attends station to form part of the crew that is immediately mobilised shall receive a minimum of 1 hour’s pay. This applies where the appliance has booked mobile and left the station. If a Stop message is received prior to the appliance leaving the station or the crew are called in to be standby at their own station, then a minimum payment of 30 minutes will be made to the crew.

3.9 If the incident continues beyond 1 hour 16 minutes (or the crew is mobilised to subsequent incidents), then 2 hours will be paid. Where the employee remains on duty for more than two hours he or she shall then be paid for complete periods of fifteen minutes. No additional disturbance allowance is paid for subsequent calls.

3.10 If subsequent calls are received and the already mobilised appliance is required to attend a further call – a “proceed to” instruction, then this and any further mobilisations will attract a further hour’s pay. No additional disturbance allowance is payable.
OFFICIAL

Standbys

3.11 If a crew is on a pre-arranged standby at either their home or an alternative station, positive hours will be paid from the commencement of the standby. If the crew are subsequently mobilised to an incident, then no additional allowances will be paid but the payment of positive hours will continue.

3.12 If a crew is standing by at their home station and are mobilised to an incident, this will be deemed to be a “proceed to”.

3.13 If a crew on concluding an incident is required to standby at their own station then this shall constitute a “proceed to” if a further incident number is issued. If however, they return to their station under the same incident number as first mobilised then the payment of positive hours will continue until the crew are released.

Employees rostered off

3.14 It is recognised where employees are rostered off during their declared on call hours (pink hours) this means at times they may be financially disadvantaged. Therefore in order to provide some recompense for this, when employees who have been rostered off have missed a total of 4 fire calls, they will be given the opportunity to undertake structured training for 2 hours and receive payment for 3 hours.

3.15 Protected hours do still attract the retaining fee and rostering off should only be undertaken when the crewing level is above the number of rostered riders for your station (this will be a minimum of 6 riders). Personnel who are not required to maintain appliance availability and are rostered off do not need to remain available for recall.

Employees attending courses

3.16 Where an employee is required to attend a course but are due to be on call, staff should book off 4 hours before the start of a course i.e. 05:00 hrs for a course starting at 09:00 hrs. From the time the individual books off until the time they are due to come off call as per their declaration, they will be deemed to be stood down from crewing and this period will still attract the retaining fee. This should be logged as “pink time” with a comment that its due to a training course. Employees may book off for more than the 4 hours described above but this will not attract the retaining fee for any time in excess of the 4 hours.

3.17 Where the course covers consecutive days, then candidates should book off for 4 hours before the start time on Day 1 but should not be on call between course days. Therefore if someone is on a 4 day course, they should not book back on until the course finishes on day 4. Again if they have declared hours during this time, then they should book “pink” time with a note that it is due to being on a course. Retaining fee will be paid for this time. This will not accrue the “missed calls/rostered off” training allowance outlined in 3.14 above.
Employees rostered onto Special appliances

3.18 When employees are rostered to crew special appliances and do not attend any incidents but as a result are not available to crew other station appliance(s) which attend calls, then individuals will be subject to the “Employees Rostered Off” arrangements outlined above.

Drill payments

3.19 Payment for attendance at the weekly 2 hour drill period will be made in addition to the retaining fee. This will be paid at the positive hourly rate for the role undertaken and will be paid monthly in arrears.

3.20 Supervisory Managers who are whole-time/retained should attend a minimum of 12 drill periods per year. Firefighters who are whole-time/retained should attend a minimum of 6 drill periods per year. This applies to all whole-time/retained staff irrespective of which Service is their whole-time employer.

3.21 If a call is received during a drill period, then payment for the drill period shall cease and payment for the activity for the call will commence. However there is no intention to reduce the earnings potential of staff or reduce their training time and therefore the portion of the drill period that is missed can be utilised for further training and payment claimed for this. If the element of the drill period missed is less than one hour, this time should be added to the start or end of another drill period.

Routines

3.22 A station budget of 3 hours per week for the station will be allocated for routines. This to be utilised by local arrangement.

3.23 Stations with special appliances will have their allocation of hours adjusted accordingly.

Supervisory duties

3.24 Hours for supervisory duties will be paid as follows:

- Watch Managers to receive a payment equivalent to 10% of a whole-time Watch Managers’ salary, paid on a monthly basis, at the appropriate rate (Development or Competent).

- Crew managers to receive a payment equivalent to 5% of a whole-time Crew Managers’ salary, paid on a monthly basis, at the appropriate rate (Development or Competent).

This payment is made as an allowance for all duties, including admin, appraisals and management meetings. Where the meeting is held away from the home location, then travelling may be claimed. Any additional payment will only be made in exceptional circumstances and by prior agreement.
Training for Firefighters In-Development

3.25 New employees have the opportunity to undertake 4 hours training per week in addition to the drill period. This training is available to support them to complete their development. Additional hours are available for experienced staff to access to undertake structured training exercises to assist in-development firefighters where authorised by the Service Delivery Group. The funds for this training should be claimed under the Station budget and clearly marked as “training” to enable it to be identified. The budget will be monitored by the Delivery Group Lead.

Appraisals

3.26 1 hour’s payment annually will be afforded to the individual receiving the appraisal, including the appraisals for supervisory managers where they are the appraisee.

4 ANNUAL LEAVE
4.1 From January 2017, annual leave entitlement may be taken in either hours or days. Stations must agree on the system that they wish to adopt and only one system per station will be in operation.

Leave in hours:

4.2 Entitlement is based on the Declaration of Availability. Annual entitlement is 4 weeks, increasing to 5 weeks for an employee who, at the start of the leave year, has at least 5 years continuous service.

4.3 Entitlement will be calculated by taking the number of declared hours multiplied by the number of week’s entitlement.

Example:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declared hours</td>
<td>70 per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave entitlement</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual leave in hours</td>
<td>70 x 5 = 350 hours</td>
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Hours can be taken in any multiples to suit the individual, subject to the usual leave approval process. For example: If you wish to take leave for the evening, then you only need to book off the hours required maybe 19:00 hours to 23:30 – 4.5 hours leave booked. Leave entitlement will only be adjusted if a change to the Declaration of Availability is agreed part way through the holiday year.

4.4 The minimum period of leave that may be booked is 30 minutes.

4.5 Payment will be made at an hourly rate based on the previous 12 weeks earnings. Staff may book on during periods of leave to keep their appliance available if they wish to. Any hours worked will be credited back into their entitlement.

Leave in days:

4.6 Entitlement will be allocated on a pro rata basis based on the usual 4 or 5 weeks entitlement.
Example: No of days hours are declared: 5 per week
Leave entitlement 5 weeks
Annual leave in hours 5 x 5 = 25 days

4.7 Rotating Declaration:

Where staff have a rotating declaration (a different number of hours/days are declared over a set pattern of weeks due to their primary employment shifts) entitlement may be adjusted on a case by case basis on leave that is pre-stated to ensure that they are not disadvantaged.

4.8 Leave may only be taken in units of full days.

Leave year

4.9 The annual leave year runs from January to December.

Arrangements for taking leave

4.10 The approval of leave is subject to the needs of the Service, with particular reference to ensuring that crewing levels are such that appliance availability is maintained.

4.11 Where any request for a period of leave is as a result of the employee’s primary employer requiring him or her to take leave, this will be taken into account. Employees should make every effort to pre-book this as early as possible to avoid appliances becoming unavailable and reducing the Service ability to protect the community.

4.12 Each Watch is to agree a system which ensures an equal opportunity for pre-stated leave. Employees should endeavour to pre-state as much of their leave as possible. Once established the system shall be maintained so as to provide a fair and equitable rotation of choice in succeeding years. **Leave will be subject to appliance availability.** Any non pre-stated leave will be granted on a first come, first served basis and approval may not be granted if crewing levels are insufficient. No holiday arrangements should be confirmed until the period of leave is approved. The Service will not be liable for any costs incurred due to holidays being booked prior to leave being approved. Leave will not be considered to be approved if the relevant system was not adhered to and confirmation of approval is not obtained.

4.13 Leave requests submitted prior to the beginning of the leave year as a part of the agreed Watch system or applications made 3 or more months in advance of the dates required, will be considered as pre-stated leave and once approved are not cancellable by the Service.

4.14 Leave requests submitted within 3 months of the dates required will be considered as non pre-stated and will be subject to crewing.

4.15 Leave may be granted at short notice at the discretion of the station management.
4.16 Employees should ensure their leave is booked and utilised as any leave remaining at the end of the year will be forfeited. The Service reserves the right to allocate leave if it is not booked by employees to ensure that adequate breaks from the workplace are taken.

4.17 Watch/Crew Managers are responsible for ensuring the appropriate Managerial, Driver and specialist skill levels are maintained at their station. All leave requests must therefore be submitted to line managers using Firewatch and ensure that they receive approval prior to making any leave arrangements. Records must be maintained for audit purposes and to enable where necessary the cancelling of leave.

5 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

5.1 All employees have an allocation of public holiday leave. For Grey Book staff who work full time, this is 11 days. Retained staff are entitled to a pro-rata allocation of public holiday leave based on their declaration. The formula for calculating this is as follows:

No of days or hours declared per week / 7 (number of days in the week) x 11

For example:

If the declared hours are 70, this would be 70 / 7 x 11 = 110 hours public holiday leave.

If the number of days on which hours are declared is 5, this would be 5 / 7 x 11 = 8 days public holiday leave.

5.2 Public holiday leave will be recorded in Firewatch in the same way that annual leave is recorded and should be booked and taken in line with local arrangements.

Payment for public holiday working.

5.3 Employees who give cover on a public holiday will receive the following:

- Double the usual pay rate of their retaining fee for the hours of cover given
- Double time for any positive hours worked in responding to an incident.

5.4 Employees should only give cover on the statutory public holidays if this day forms part of their declaration of availability; or the cover is required to support Appliance availability. For clarity, the statutory public holidays are:

- New Year’s Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- First Monday in May
- Spring Bank Holiday.
- Late Summer Holiday.
- Christmas Day.
- 26th December.

Christmas Day, 26th December and New Year’s Day will be treated as public holidays on whichever days of the week they fall, irrespective of alternative days announced by the Government.
For the purposes of this policy a public holiday means the period of 24 hours from midnight to midnight.

5.5 Where an employee is required to be available on a public holiday (because this day forms part of their normal declaration) and the employee requires the day off, they will be required to book this day as leave.

6 BOOKING OFF
The Service accepts that some flexibility is required in the management of declared hours and that arrangements are often made locally to suit both the individual and the Service. However, in order to ensure some consistency and fairness in the way this is managed, there will be some parameters for the arrangements of booking off as follows:

- Staff should not book off if it takes the appliance off the run or is showing that it is off the run at the time of booking off.

- The Service will give a tolerance of 10% within the declared hours. Staff should ensure therefore that the average total hours cover given do not fall more than 10% below their declared hours. This means that employees can book off (providing it doesn’t affect appliance availability) and put hours in at an alternate time(s) during the week providing the total hours cover is at least 90% of the total declaration. i.e. if the declared cover for the week is 80 hours and an individual wishes to book on/off during the week, the total hours declared cover showing on the Firewatch totals must be at least 72 hours for the week. Managers should monitor this to ensure that the average number of hours is maintained and use their discretion over the period to be considered but it is suggested that this should be monthly.

7 DECLARATIONS OF AVAILABILITY

Minimum hours

7.1 The minimum declaration that will be accepted by the Service is (an average of) 50 hours per week. Service Delivery Group Leads have the discretion to deviate from this in exceptional circumstances. The rationale for this decision should be recorded on the declaration for future reference. Any temporary changes should also record the period to which they apply.

Breaks between shifts

7.2 It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they have had adequate rest between shifts and are fit to carry out their role when reporting for duty with due regard to their own health and wellbeing.

7.3 Watch management teams are responsible for ensuring the health and wellbeing of their team and to manage the situation appropriately if they feel any of their crew are experiencing any detrimental impact on their wellbeing as a result of being on duty.
7.4 Whole-time retained staff or retained staff undertaking a temporary whole-time contract should ensure that if they have committed to undertaking positive hours operational cover following a period of on call hours, that they have a break prior to commencement of this additional shift. This may entail them being released from a retained incident to enable them to be fit to attend the start of the whole-time shift.

8 STANDBY ARRANGEMENTS
8.1 When crews go to standby at other stations, they are expected to make appropriate use of the time during the standby. This should include carrying out any CFS activities which may have been booked by the local crew or which are available to be carried out. This time can also be used to do appliance routines or training activities, including LearnPro/PdrPro. It is the responsibility of the Watch management team to ensure that this time is used effectively and that the crew has the appropriate Service issue workwear to carry out the required duties.

8.2 Watch management teams are responsible for ensuring the health and wellbeing of their team and to manage the situation appropriately if they feel any of their crew are experiencing any detrimental impact on their wellbeing as a result of being on duty.

9 ABSENCE AND MODIFIED DUTIES
9.1 During periods of absence, employees who are entitled to full pay will receive an average of their last 12 weeks earnings. Where the entitlement reduces to half pay, the above payments will reduce by 50%.

9.2 Employees who return on modified duties will receive their retaining fee, plus positive hours for training time (e.g. drill period if attended) or other duties as required by the Delivery Group. Where there is an entitlement to full sick pay remaining, positive hours equivalent to 10% of the declared hours should be worked in order to maintain full pay. If the drill period is attended, these hours will be included in the 10% required.

10 COMMUNITY SAFETY WORK
Delivery Group Leads will allocate their community safety budget to groups/personnel where work is outlined that is targeted and meaningful. Employees may undertake prevention activities by local arrangements. A simple template is available for requesting monies from this budget.

11 POLICY CHANGES
This document will be reviewed at least annually to ensure that it remains current and fit for purpose.
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<td>794</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Tim Hyde 10/03/2017</td>
<td>Amendment to sections, 3.15, 3.16, 3.21, 3.24, 3.26, 6 and 9.2</td>
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Recruitment & Retention of Retained Firefighters

A survey of Serving RDS Staff
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Introduction

Following our previous survey back in 2014, which received national attention, we were asked if we would undertake a follow-up review to analyse whether matters had improved in the area of recruitment and retention of Retained/On-Call firefighters. As before, the survey was specifically aimed at serving Retained/On-Call personnel who were able to provide their experiences anonymously.

Two years on, with even more national events having taken place, more warm words from local and national governments, we had high expectations that there might be positive signs that things were starting to improve, if not nationally, then at least within pockets across the country.

Whilst the RFU Executive has its own view as to the nature and depth of the ongoing problems with recruitment, retention and treatment of Retained/On-Call staff and the knock-on effect this has on appliance availability, it is important to obtain the views of the members serving on the frontline, who directly experience managerial practices and communication skills that all too often create issues which contribute to low morale and the associated problems of retaining and recruiting suitable staff.

Our original intention was for this survey to substantiate or quell our fears that in some services the impression was that the Retained/On-Call component of the fire service is still being left to deteriorate without any acts of investment.

Appliance availability should never be allowed to be seen as an insurmountable problem until all possible measures to resolve the issues are put in place and exhausted. The obligation to commence such a piece of work clearly rests with the individual FRA and for it to evidence the fact that they have done so.

The findings of this survey and the comparable elements with the previous survey are analysed at the end of this document.

Tristan Ashby
Chief Executive Officer
Q1 Where do you serve?

We had hoped for a broad response across the country and we were not disappointed. A number of services actively promoted our survey and we are very grateful for their support. The result of which was that almost every fire service made a contribution to our survey to ensure the final result encapsulated the views of a broad range of firefighters. The percentage figure for each service displays the contribution the service has made to the total number of responses.
Q2 Which terminology do you prefer as a job title?

What’s in a job title? Well when it comes to explaining the role of a Retained firefighter to the public, quite a lot. The question of what a ‘firefighter working the Retained Duty System (RDS)’ should be called has been discussed at national level for over a decade.

It is clear that serving personnel prefer the term ‘Retained Firefighter’, with an increase on the 57% in favour during our previous survey. However, there has also been an increase in the number of serving personnel who support the use of the name On-Call Firefighter, raising from 19% to 26%. It appears that the terms Community Firefighter and Part-time Firefighter, totalling 5% of those who responded, are neither popular with operational staff nor do they fully represent the uniqueness of the role.

The responses for both the terms ‘On-Call’ and ‘Retained’ were spread across the UK with no particular area having a preference. Of the suggestions under ‘Other’, the vast majority were simply ‘Firefighter’, again spread over a number of difference services.

From an external point of view, the terminology ‘On-Call’ better describes the role of a ‘firefighter working the Retained Duty System’, as it encapsulates the nature of the contract. We would recommend that any future national campaign focused on this job title which is more self-explanatory that the use of the word ‘Retained’ and is likely to remove some of the ambiguity from the public to better understand the role being undertaken.
Q3  What is your current Retainer Fee?

Last time the response rate for the full retainer was 52% so there has been a notable reduction in the last two years. This is likely to be due to more services moving away from the restriction of only issuing 100% and 75% retaining fee contracts toward a more flexible sliding scale that takes account of the individual’s level of cover being provided.

Of those who responded that they received a full retainer, 68% stated that they provided +120 hours availability per week and 18% provided between 100-120 hours availability. Those on a three-quarter retainer were primarily made up of 40% who provided 80-100 hours a week, 30% providing 100-120 hrs, 15% providing 60-80 hrs.

Another probably reason is that individuals are choosing to reduce their own level of cover from 100% to 75% due to the pressures of having to provide so many hours of cover every week. Anecdotal evidence suggests that due to the rigidity of local practices, anyone unable to provide 120 hrs per week is subjected to the threat of disciplinary action.
Q4 On average, how many hours availability do you provide each week?

As with the previous survey, over a third of the respondents provide over 120 hours per week commitment to their local fire station. While this is admirable on behalf of the individuals concerned, it demonstrates a reliance on a minority of the workforce to provide a huge level of commitment to keep an appliance on the run. If you include those that provide between 100-120 hours that is over half the workforce providing over 100 hour’s availability per week. A heavy reliance on these individuals demonstrate a lack of resilience within the workforce.

Our view is that this is simply not sustainable and is likely to lead to personnel choosing to cut their service career short due to the constant built up of pressure of feeling compelled to maintain appliance availability.

We also question local processes that either allow for individuals to regularly provide such large periods of availability on a regular basis, or raises the question as to whether services are unaware of the levels being provided by their staff. Services should undertake a regular review of the level of commitment being provided by their staff and ensure that there is opportunity to allow for a work/life balance while still maintaining appliance availability.
Q5  What type of cover do you provide? (tick all that apply)

The response to this question mirrored that in our 2014 survey confirming that the greatest period of availability was provided in the evenings, both during the working week and at the weekend.

Availability provided during the day, Monday to Friday continues to be a cause for concern. We believe the reason behind this is the continuing lack of community and business engagement by local fire services.

Historically, we would expect day cover during the working week to be the lowest of all the cover that is provided, due to appliance availability during this time being poor in general, however, it was only 1.3% behind evening weekend availability.

This would suggest that either day cover during the working week is improving (unlikely, based on the responses to previous questions) or that cover at weekends is also deteriorating.

While day cover during the working week has been an issue due to firefighters working outside of their communities, if availability problems are being experienced at evenings and weekends it would suggest to us that the management of availability continues to be poor.
Q6 Over the last 12 months has your station suffered with appliance availability problems?

The response to the question on appliance availability was almost identical to that over two years ago (15% and 85%) which suggests there has been little if any improvement as a whole regarding appliance availability.

The response demonstrates a continuing problem with appliance availability that simply is not going to go away unless radical action is taken at a local level. In our view too many Services continue to bury their heads in the sand, trotting out the same old excuses that they have tried everything to recruit Retained staff but that it is not possible anymore.

The question remains, who is going to be brave enough to admit that there has been a lack of focus on Retained staff locally and come up with a ‘SMART’ strategy to overcome the problem? The status quo is not an option and with the ongoing reductions in council budgets, maintaining or increasing Wholetime establishments are not a financially viable alternative.

As has been the case for over a decade, the RFU strongly believes that there needs to be some direction from central government, as there doesn’t seem to be an appetite or even acknowledgement by local Fire Authorities (in general) to tackle the problem head on.
Q7 What are the main reasons for your appliance being unavailable? (tick all that apply)

We then moved on to questioning what were the causes of Retained appliances being unavailable. Four options were provided with the opportunity for the respondent to add further comment under the ‘Other’ option.

Responders could choose all that applied to their local fire station with almost 90% stating that a lack of crew numbers was the local problem. However, more interesting was that 50% claimed a lack of an Officer in Charge (OiC) was the issue. This bears out our anecdotal evidence that due to the pressures and workload placed on OiCs by the local employer, fewer and fewer people are willing to take on the role of OiC.

Our belief is that it is not just the Watch Manager role that has become less appealing, firefighters are also becoming less willing to apply for Crew Manager vacancies for the same reason.

Another problem with a lack of available Crew/Watch Managers is that promotion is often being given to applicants who do not necessarily provide the best (or good) cover. Through a separate piece of work the RFU undertook last year, we can confirm that there is now a large number of Wholetime staff who are also junior officers on Retained stations compared with that of 10 years earlier. While their knowledge and experience gathered from their Wholetime role can be an asset to a Retained station and helps to overcome ongoing barriers between the two duty systems, the limits on their availability is unlikely to be of great use in terms of being the OiC of an appliance.

Services need to look at the availability of their junior officers and the level of workload being placed upon those in post so that the position becomes more attractive than is currently the case.

We also believe services need to review the efficiencies and effectiveness of having full-time firefighters as officers on Retained stations as this might on occasions restrict appliance availability due to a lack of OiCs being available to crew Retained appliances.

Further work needs to also be undertaken locally to assess why there are a lack of drivers on stations. This could be due to a number of reasons including course availability, training and a willingness to undertake the role, which currently provides no additional financial remuneration but involves an increase in responsibility.
Q8 In your opinion is your Fire Service doing enough to overcome the availability issues at your station?

Unsurprisingly only 21% of those surveyed believed that their FRS were doing enough to overcome the availability issues at their station. If the majority of Retained personnel have the perception that their employers can’t be bothered if an emergency appliance is on the run or not the question is, why should they? The fact of the matter is that they do, the pride that local On-Call firefighters have regarding the availability of their fire appliance within their local community is second to none, which makes it all the more frustrating when their line managers and senior officers do not share this commitment.

Apathy runs riot in a number of fire services principally due to a lack of accountability when a frontline fire appliance is unavailable. If nobody is held to account when an emergency vehicle unavailable, over a period of time it simply becomes the norm.
Q9 In your opinion what needs to be done (and by whom) to improve appliance availability at your station?

There were hundreds of written responses to this particular question, of which a selection is contained in Annex A for your reference.

To broadly summarise within two paragraphs it is clear that more needs to be achieved at local level. New practices are being implemented that hinder rather than assist appliance availability. For example, not being able to respond when on leave, lengthy and complicated recruitment processes and increasing minimum rider levels.

Retained recruitment and retention is the problem that nobody seems to want to resolve, local FRS blame a lack of direction from central government, Home Office expects local solutions to come from the sector and in the meantime the problem grows further.

In our opinion management at service level have the opportunity to have the greatest positive impact on improving Retained appliance availability. Every policy (new and old) needs to be tailored to suit the needs of Retained staff, just because something has always been done in a certain way to suit the needs of Wholetime staff doesn’t mean it has to be this way for all staff. Service managers need to start thinking outside of the box and be more Retained friendly; they also need to start to listen more to those who do the job rather than being of the opinion that because they have a higher profile in the service that they know best.
Q10  Has the appliance availability at your station worsened over the last 12 months?

The following graph demonstrates a lack of activity to ‘stop the rot’ in terms of appliance availability. We believe most services that suffer with availability problems have chosen to believe improving availability by recruiting Retained staff is now an impossibility. A mind-set that has led to inaction causing the problem to escalate. To prove this point we have seen a number of FRS who now state that their local aim is to achieve 90% availability of Retained appliances, not what you might call an overly ambitious target that will rally everyone into bouts of optimism.

If Retained staff witness such a defeatist attitude by their superiors it is not hard to see why morale in the service is so low.

Service management need to be challenged on a regular basis to identify exactly what initiatives are currently in place to overcome the recruitment problem, without any scrutiny it is impossible to analyse what activities work and what do not.
Q11  Does your station currently have vacancies for firefighters?

Establishment levels at Retained stations seem to have an air of mystery about them. In past years, before the impact of the Working Time Regulations (WTR) and the sixth edition of the ‘Grey Book’, it was understood that a one-pump station would use an establishment of 12 personnel while a two-pump station would increase to 20.

Over the last ten years or so there has been an expectation that the number of hours personnel made themselves available would be reduced to more family friendly levels. It is therefore a reasonable expectation that if personnel were providing fewer hours of availability that establishment levels needed to rise to ‘fill the void’. However, our anecdotal evidence and the responses to this particular question would appear that the opposite was true.

We are aware of some FRS where the establishment level for a one-pump station is 10 with all personnel providing 120 hours (or less) availability per week. Obviously the knock-on effect of such a policy is poor appliance availability.

It is incomprehensible to us why any FRS would refuse to recruit on a Retained station which suffers with availability problems simply because the authorised establishment level has been reached, yet we know this to be the case.

This again demonstrates where the organisation creates barriers to improved appliance availability rather than breaking them down.
Q12 As a member of the Fire Service how do you feel you are treated by:

There is nothing new in the connection between a happy, productive workforce and how they are perceived by their employers. The graph below provides a clear trend in terms of how ‘valued’ staff feel by their peers compared to their managers further up the chain of command.

The viability of Retained Duty System is fundamentally the transferability of ‘goodwill’, Retained firefighters by their nature will accommodate the needs of the station to their detriment so long as it is reciprocal when the individuals need arises. Unfortunately we are witnessing all too often Service management using the ‘stick’ approach without a ‘carrot’ in sight.

Retained firefighters will only take this for so long before removing their goodwill and taking a more rigid work to rule approach.

It is our view that the ethos of Service management needs an overhaul to gain the respect of its Retained staff and for the goodwill to come back to the benefit of all concerned.
Q13 Relating to your role in the Fire Service has any of the following changed over the last 12 months?

Keeping on the subject of the need for goodwill and Retained friendly policies, the chart below demonstrates that while station call levels and in turn, earnings have reduced, the expectations by the FRS has significantly increased.

We have heard on numerous occasions that FRS are claiming that the Retained role has changed due to the part-time workers legislation, using this as a means of expecting more from its Retained staff.

This is of course complete nonsense. The Retained Duty System is a unique working environment due to the need to be on-call for large parts of the week confined within a 4-5 minute radius of the local fire station.

By its very nature the employee has to demonstrate a level of flexibility alien to any other worker. To then increase the expectations on these individuals while reducing their earnings will ultimately lead them to question their future role in the service.

Our view is that attitudes toward Retained staff has to change, if improvement to Recruitment and Retention is to be achieved.
Q14  How do you view your future with your FRS?

The results contained in this graph are indicative of the previous responses where by staff feel undervalued, with unrealistic expectations placed upon them by the Service.

The responses by those who are committed to the job as ever, were from a mixture of FRS providing a variety of hours so it is not clear why their commitment is greater than almost two-thirds of respondents.

The results should also be a real concern to all FRS, for if they truly believe the recruitment of Retained staff is a massive challenge it will become even harder if our survey is a fair reflection of just how many are either unsure about their fire service future or are looking to leave within the next 12-24 months (46% combined).
Q15 Regarding recruitment and retention of On-Call/Retained staff, what do you think the main barriers are?

To confirm our view that flexibility is an issue, our next set of results put a lack of flexibility as being the main barrier, which tops the list with over half of the responses.

There still remains a lack of awareness in local communities both of the existence of the local fire station being crewed by Retained firefighters and station vacancies. If eligible residents aren’t aware of the vacancies at their local fire station they won’t apply! More needs to be done to interact with the public and ‘sell’ the role of a Retained firefighter to members of the local community.

A number of responders also used the comments box (under ‘Other’) to raise their concerns over the time it takes to recruit new staff. In some instances it still take 18 months from the application stage to riding an appliance. It is no wonder so many lose interest after their initial enthusiasm.

Recruitment processes need to be speeded up, recruitment initiatives need to be devised to engage the public and entry standards need to be realistic, Retained friendly and proportionate to the local risk.
Q16  Do you think that partnerships with any of these local groups would help overcome problems with recruitment and retention?

When posing the question regarding forging partnerships to aid recruitment the clear winner was local businesses. The response to ‘None of the above’ was similar to that for County/District councillors which suggests that there is not a huge amount of confidence that local elected members have the answer, especially as they don’t appear to even realise that there is a problem.

If we all broadly agree that improved, regular communication with local businesses will go some way to aid recruitment and retention why are FRS not doing something about it?
Q17  Looking at your primary employment, what are your views on the following?

Continuing with the primary employers’ theme, we then asked what transferable benefits are there between employers and the FRS. Consistent with the previous question, almost two-thirds said that their local FRS should improve communication links with their primary employer. We believe this would be higher, recognising that in some cases firefighters do not wish their employers to know too much about their fire service duties for fear of being questioned over how much time is spent away from the workplace.

The two most notable responses were that over half of responders were of the view that their FRS believed that their primary employment was secondary in importance compared to their fire service role. This concurs with the responses to question 11 which stated that 81% believed the expectations from the service had increased.

Another surprise was that almost 40% didn’t think that their FRS role was of any benefit to their primary employment, yet just over 60% thought that their primary employment bought benefits to their FRS role.
Q18  Fire calls are reducing due to many factors, are you agreeable to have a wider community emergency role, i.e. helping the old and the vulnerable at risk in their home etc.?

When posing the question over whether their operational role could be broadened to include such things as helping the old and vulnerable etc. the response was positive with 77% agreeing to take on other duties.

The employees working the RDS have always had a ‘can do’ attitude, viewing their role less like a job and more like a moral responsibility. We believe that it would aid recruitment and retention if the role of a firefighter was broader to include additional areas of protection; this would go some way to fill the void of reduced call levels.
Summary

The RFU does not wish to be seen solely as a critical commentator; we actively encourage and will support where possible measures which promote the interests of a duty system that with some welcome innovation and consideration would function much better than it clearly does now. Not only for those who serve within it but also the communities that it serves.

During a debate on Future Reserves 2020 in the House of Commons on 8th November 2012 The Secretary of State Philip Hammond MP made the following point regarding the creation of the Army Reserve.

“If we are going to make this process work, we must draw out the benefits for employers, in the general management and personal skills that reserve service will bring to their work force, and given the specific vocational training that the Army can give to reservists”

It would not be difficult at all to see the similarities between On-Call firefighters and Armed Forces Reservists in the context of reducing full-time posts at a time when activity on full time stations is reducing year on year and the strengthening of the role of On-Call accordingly will require renewed focus on this duty system.

In terms of recruitment and retention the method in which the RDS is operated can no longer be seen as a two party arrangement, between the employer and employee, when it clearly isn’t.

We believe the key is to consider:

1) A closer relationship with and an improved understanding of the needs of the primary employer so as to remove any barriers to releasing staff

2) Greater involvement of elected members and MP’s at a local level to publicise and endorse this flexible duty system and those who work within it.

3) An ‘Open for Business’ attitude from FRS to any local employer who releases a member of staff for duty including a better understanding of the duties and commitment expected of both the retained firefighter and the primary employer when agreeing to release their employee for duty.

4) Improved use of social media to promote and inform on the merits and benefits of becoming an On-Call firefighter

Notwithstanding the doctrine of localism there is a need for challenge from the centre, effectively a reasonable level of expectation that services and elected members will reflect on the many reports on this duty system and recognise that they must put in place steps to address the long standing issue of appliance availability.
Written responses

While the multiple choice options within the survey are extremely informative and helpful in ascertaining a national picture on specific areas, we also felt that it was important to include the comments from those questions that provided an opportunity for the responder to provide even greater clarity on their views.

We strongly advise that managers with the necessary responsibility for RDS recruitment and retention (i.e. ALL managers), read the comments irrespective of how hard they might be to digest.

There is a theme across all comments from all firefighters across the UK that cover the perception of being deemed a ‘second class’ (i.e. under valued as an employee), inferior to their Wholetime colleagues, and the removal of flexibility/goodwill from their role which has replaced by more draconian managerial practices.

We were taken aback by the sheer volume of comments relating to a breakdown of relations between On-Call and Wholetime firefighters. Our understanding was that the negative issues that previously existed between the two duty systems (which largely were due to the fallout from the previous national strike in 2002/3) had greatly reduced, and that relationships had improved. This may still be the case but if our survey is an accurate reflection of the current situation, there is still a huge amount of work still to do.

The primary barrier between On-Call staff and effective management (from an On-Call perspective), seems to stem from the lack of understanding of how the On-Call system works and the commitment required to fulfil their contract. This has been a problem for decades and doesn’t appear to be improving which could be overcome (in part) by allowing On-Call staff to apply for positions above that of an On-Call Watch Manager. Something Sir George Bain spoke about in his review some 15 years ago!

It is clear to us that in general the problems of 15 years ago still exist today. There is undoubtedly some really good managerial practice out there but it appears to be the exception rather than the rule. We hope that those with the necessary responsibility to drive forward change (for the better) will stop navel gazing, thinking it is someone else’s responsibility and take positive steps to improve matters.
Written comments from questions relating to ‘Improve Availability’

**Pay and conditions**

- Pay staff who have to travel and lose a day’s work to participate in promotional tests rather than expect them to do it for free.
- Pay a bonus to staff who have not failed to respond when booked as available for that month.
- Provide more opportunities to increase earnings by checking hydrants.
- Pay staff for the actual hours they work completing administration and running the station rather than a minimal set amount which never covers the actual amount of time worked.
- Pay staff for every hour they cover rather than either full or three quarter retainer, thereby encouraging them to give as much cover as possible.
- Re-introduce the bounty.
- Review the pay system so that it rewards availability and commitment.
- Greater flexibility of contracts will make the role more attractive to a wider group of people.
- More perks offered to businesses to encourage employers to release staff, plus change the initial training, using smaller blocks and include weekends, this would reduce the impact on having to take so much annual leave in the first year which has a knock-on effect on the individuals family holidays.
- Increase turnout payments to encourage employees to turn up and be available more.
- Introduction of a bonus scheme that every member of the station would receive a further bonus payment should you record full appliance availability over a 24 hour period.
- Reduce the minimum number of hours that is required to qualify for a full retaining fee, 120 hours is impractical in modern society.
- Local employers who release their staff to respond to emergency calls should receive tax relief/breaks to compensate for a loss in work rate/productivity.
- A more flexible pay structure that incentivises increased availability levels. At present a trial is being held where a premium is offered for providing day cover, £3.00 ph & £2.00 ph at night time with only a crew of five on duty at one time.
- Reward those who work above and beyond their contracted hours.
Flexibility

- Most people are self-employed and their business comes first, it’s very difficult to balance both work and retained, most people give as much cover as they can when they can, I’m a plumber and sometimes I’m 3 weeks giving cover around the station but then 3 weeks off station working out of town. I know that a rota system would definitely not work on our station. The needs of most stations are different.

- Work/Life balance as an On-Call firefighter is virtually non-existent. Middle managers need to understand that this is not a full-time job, we don’t get paid a full-time wage yet they want full-time commitment.

- Find an electronic availability system that works and is fit for purpose rather than rappel which encourages people to not book available for short periods as it will not allow you to book off again later.

- More flexible working by using RDS staff who are willing/able to travel to other stations to keep appliances on the run.
Management

- As many of the middle managers and principle officers are from WT backgrounds, they have little perception of what it actually involves to be committed to the RDS. This is frustrating when they are clearly working to two separate codes of practice. When it comes to their operational employees, they continually send out subliminal messages of inequality by the very nature of their policy and instruction. With a lack of knowledge comes a lack of interest, this is evident that the majority (but not all) of middle/senior managers, have no interest in the RDS workforce.

- My line manager changed 6 times in 8 months.

- We seem to go through managers very quickly, they soon get promoted and move on.

- Most officers have never been On-Call so have no concept of how difficult it can be.

- HR do not understand fully how the retained service works.

- I do feel that the principal officers value us but do wonder if they have any comprehension of how much commitment it takes and pressure it puts on your home and working life.

- Management throughout the ranks should be planning ahead sooner for losses of skills on stations. We are affected by both crew numbers and OIC’s. The former is being addressed with new recruits coming through the door but there has been no support in filling crew manager vacancies or getting firefighters onto incident commander courses.

- Large turn-over of station managers with no continuity.

- As a station we are affected by a lack of command and control skills. In my opinion, some individuals on station do not care if the appliances are available or not. This is as a result of feeling let down by Senior Management in recent years and being surrounded by whole time stations who have taken a very large percentage of call outs which has had a negative impact on morale.

- Senior managers shouldn’t assume they know best and what is good for the retained, they should listen to what we tell them time and time again over many years.

- Permit bank crewing on retained stations and not just wholetime ones.

- Recompense staff who have a course cancelled on them at short notice.

- The current selection process for JOs doesn’t take into consideration the applicant’s availability, the service prefers to promote someone who scores well in an equality and attribute test.

- The quality and style of personnel management within middle management is woeful and tantamount to bullying. A different management style will improve retention and get the best out of Retained crews.

- RDS employees must form part of the management structure, not a member of staff who by default is detached from the duty system.
• Senior managers do not lead or manage anymore they just dictate. This doesn’t get the best out of staff.

• Having the right type of Watch Manager on a station is pivotal to whether a station works well and keeps the pump on the run. Get the wrong type with the wrong attitude towards the job and everyone else will mimic the attitude towards the role.

• Establishment levels are lower now than when people provided more cover, no wonder appliances are regularly off the run.

• Retention of staff is very poor. Look after the boots you’ve got, value and appreciate their commitment and you’re less likely to lose them, meaning you won’t have to recruit and train so many additional personnel at much greater expense.

• Recruiting staff for periods when we do not have shortages just about sums up the level of management within the service.

• Allow retained to actually earn money, stop using whole time pumps at every opportunity and strangling the retained trying to save pennies, the commitment the retained have to give to the brigade is FAR greater than whole time, and the financial reward does not match what is required! It is degrading to know whole time pumps are being sent longer down the road to fire calls that retained pumps should be picking up just to save money.

• Remove the strict rostering system and allow the station to manage the hours of availability on an individual basis. All stations have a different dynamic and trying to manage with a one size fits all policy does not work. Flexibility is the key to better appliance availability and try to understand how an on-call fire fighter lives his or her life.

• More recruitment incentives to help keep the present crew before we lose them as well, stop trying to prop up the whole time service with retained. We are constantly off the run because management are using the retained on a temporary contract to keep the whole time at minimum crewing. It’s diabolical that out of 18 retained appliances in the county nearly all of them are off the run during the day.

• The retained crews are constantly used to cover the shortfall in whole time staff within the county. Staff are called in using the same alerting procedure and will drop everything to respond and are then made to stand by either on their own station or cover neighbouring stations for hours on end with no opportunity for preparation or making arrangements for family or simple things like refreshments.

• Look at the way the station is affected when personnel are integrated onto a dual contract, or go completely. One third of our crew are now on a dual contract, so their availability per week ranges from 9 to 50hrs.
Training

- Review the amount of training that is expected to be undertaken, some of which is unnecessary and could be managed better at a local level, reducing the amount of time off required from primary employment.

- A lack of people being put forward for EFAD training which leads to appliances being off the run, not due to crew numbers but a lack of a driver.

- Retained recruits courses are rarely run and often cancelled due to low numbers. The process needs to be reviewed so that courses are run regularly and organised on demand. This could be achieved through a bank of staff with a lead trainer all of whom are On-Call to respond to demand.

- For new recruits concentrate more on core practical skills rather than bombarding them with unnecessary facts & figures.

- Assessments are a little too rigid & too directed at individuals - much learning is done over a long time period & as part of the team. It must be realised that all firefighters, even experienced ones, are less skilled in certain areas but strong in others.

- The training department are supposed to be active in our training, I've never worked with people who want you to fail so much.

- There is no incentive to apply for promotion any more, the difference in pay is minimal, yet the added workload and pressures are ten-fold. The service treat Retained Officers as though this is their full-time job, culminating in too much pressure towards the individual and they leave or go back to being a firefighter.

- Recruitment process is to protracted. It usually takes 6 to 12 months from initial interest to basic training. All the pre-course stuff (interview, academic, physical, medical) could and should be done on one day.

- BA requalification needs to be more easily accessible and more flexible on which days they are done, as with other core training. Expecting a RDS FF to work 5 days a week in their primary work, give up all weekend for a requalification and then do another 5 days primary work, without any days off is not acceptable in my opinion.

- Study time to undertake Junior Officer qualifications needs to be paid for. None of the FF’s at my station are prepared to give up their time for free to study for the exam they need to pass to be promoted substantively.

- Lack of accredited training.
Operational

- Permit a crew of 3 to attend minor incidents.
- Extend response time to 10 minutes.
- Consider sending partial crews from one station to standby at another neighbouring station that is short staffed that puts an appliance on the run.
- Too many whole time firefighters are now joining the retained, and most are not committed and only there for the money. They bring all their FBU bully boy issues with them.
- Increase turnout time to 6 or 7 minutes so new employees are more accessible.
- Improve communication with local employers who release staff for duty so that they know how long they are likely to be unavailable to them and the nature of the call.
Recruitment

- Do away with application forms that can be intimidating and off putting to some and speak to potential recruits face-to-face. Local Watch Managers could undertake these meetings and identify those who could fulfil the role with the necessary support by asking the right questions and teasing out relevant information.

- Speed up the recruitment process and minimise the need to take so much time off from their primary employer. Upsetting primary employers at the outset will reduce the likelihood of flexibility in the future.

- Send annual newsletter about calls the station has dealt with and thank employers along with a certificate to display so that they can be proud to participate.

- Thank an employer whose staff member has been away from work all day and even consider paying them something.

- Ensure the station has input into those who apply to join. Local knowledge when choosing suitable people is invaluable and could save the service time and money by identifying early those who are not suitable.

- Seek out those who are self-employed as they are likely to have greater flexibility in their employment.

- Allow more practical people and less theoretical ones, we need people who can solve a problem, learn from mistakes and do as they are asked in challenging situations.

- Carry out medicals on station rather than send people away from the area as this increases the likelihood of the appliance going off the run.

- Switch to Birthday to Birthday for Annual leave usage rather than 30th April when all want to use up their allowance and put the appliance off the run.

- Bring back the title ‘Station Officer’ for the person in charge of station as the public know what that is and bring back the Sub Officer on 2 pump stations.

- RDS provide the majority of fire cover yet the management are focused on Wholetime issues – why?

- Reward local fire crews for providing 90-100% availability per month.

- Employ a dedicated recruitment officer.

- Recruit firefighters who give good cover and not those that merely ticks boxes.

- Increase awareness of the RDS in the public eye - put into place what they keep preaching about being equal to WT, etc and resource advertising.

- Retained firefighter availability is not spelt out clearly enough by management when recruiting, the commitment that is required for this job is so much more than that of wholetime firefighters.
• Recruit to the needs of the station and not have an arbitrary limit that causes the appliance to be unavailable at times while rejecting willing applications from members of the public.

• Open the channels for joining the whole time service through the RDS.

• Clearly the service needs to recruit more On-Call staff but overall the On-Call service needs to be managed better. During our last recruitment campaign, the service has chosen to take on regular fire fighters in On-Call positions instead of taking on someone new. Because of the primary obligation and rest periods (before and after a shift) the amount of availability they can provide our station is minimal. However, the service sees this approach as a cheap, easy fix without realising that it can actually block someone from outside the service joining and providing much better cover.

• Targeted recruitment drives using ‘Mosaic’ to identify areas to leaflet drop, then have a well-advertised "have-a-go" day at the station. To be achieved jointly by the district team & station personnel.

• Succession planning, currently there isn’t any, leading to long term skills gaps.

• The recruitment process needs to be streamlined, the current procedure can take around 18 months from expression of interest to the commencement of a training course, by which time people can become disinterested and withdraw their application.

• Run a national awareness campaign similar to the Reservists.

• A national retained working group of people who work the retained duty system NOT Flexible Duty System Officers.

• The service needs to provide applicants with genuine information about the role of an On-Call firefighter, too many are given false impressions leading them to leave the job after a short period of time when the commitment required becomes too much.

• More on high street recruitment, advertising in local newspaper or local papers website.

• Improve establishment, 12 is not enough to run a modern retained station. Not many people live and work in the town anymore.

• The new fitness standard will lead to fewer people being able to enter the service and more leaving the service. There is currently no underpinning support to attain or maintain fitness levels. Females are likely to be hit disproportionally too. While the service is now safer and more risk averse than ever, why do I need to be fitter?

• The catchment area needs widening to increase the pool of people to recruit from. This would still be quicker than the nearest appliance responding to our area.
- The entry level requirements can be a barrier, why firefighters need to have GCSE’s at grade C or above is completely beyond me. There isn’t a qualification for hard work and common sense that I’m aware of and that is what you need to be a firefighter.

- Officers should be visiting local businesses and individuals to make them aware of recruitment, also adverts in local papers, gazettes etc. and radio & tv.

- Greater autonomy to be given to WC /CC to run their station to get best results from individuals and in turn deliver a better service to the people we serve.

- A more proactive recruitment drive should be conducted by the station officer, reaching out to local people and businesses. A simple advert or poster doesn’t seem to have any effect.

- Myself and crew members encouraging good people to apply. However the recruitment process is extremely discouraging and inflexible. Applicants who fail marginally (i.e. the fitness test) are not being supported and advised what they need to put in place to pass next time. No feedback from training centre. A number of interested parties have lost interest because of the way they are treated during the recruitment process.

- Currently our station local recruitment is undertaken by myself and a couple of other individuals, holding recruitment evenings and trying to gather interest ourselves, there is no assistance by the service. We have succeeded in gaining interest and now have to wait for the long process of getting through various checks and assessments, which seem to take months to get completed. So before we actually get new recruits on station it will have taken almost a year. This is obviously helpful long term but the sooner we can get them on station and riding the appliance the better.

- Recruiting needs to be done at a local level utilising modern methods, not just by advertising on ‘myjobsscotland’.

- No full time career progression.
National Issues

- The minimum amount of hours needed to be a RDS firefighter needs to be reduced. We recently lost a competent FF with 5 years’ experience because his cover dropped to 62 hours per week, while we were already understaffed.

- Recruitment is slow to organise and the physical test is geared towards the young, life experience seems to count for nothing.

- Better incentives for potential and existing employers. I think this needs to come from the service themselves. Better station management and understanding from everyone on station.

- More support from managers for the people who work out of town. Some people are not lucky enough to live and work in the town. Retained firefighters are here for the community not the money yet management have made it about the money and not the heart anymore.

- I recently completed a project on retained sustainability and discovered that there were about 130 operational / Grey book staff working at SHQ when they could be working out of retained stations.

- Stop expecting us to volunteer for free for station visits and CFS work.

- More needs to be done in educating local businesses for the need to allow employees time to attend fire calls. Fire Service having an open mind to allow Retained firefighters to respond to other Retained stations rather than just your home station.

- Appliance availability is becoming harder to maintain due to the service capping numbers at levels where you can just manage, once someone is on leave or books sick it leaves the station off the run, along with this the reduction of managers coupled with the never ending testing for incident command is not helpful in encouraging staff to undertake the OSCA process to allow them to take an appliance as an OIC.

- We need more autonomy to recruit and encourage potential recruits to be part of an organisation that should be an honour and a pleasure to be part of, not a chore. We spend far too much time doing things that are non-productive; admin, recording proof of actions and booking courses. There is absolutely no support from Group.

- We need more recruits, the onus is on firefighters to handle their own recruitment when we have a HR department that should be experts. The trouble with being chronically understaffed then asking us to recruit is we are not the most enthusiastic about the job. We know people want to be firefighters as hundreds apply for whole time posts, so there is something wrong with the way retained is portrayed to the potential recruits.

- It would be nice to feel appreciated. Since our ‘Personnel Dept.’ became ‘Human Resources’, that is exactly what we have become, a resource. We are no longer a
person and we are no longer treated like one. We are considered in the same way that you might consider any other piece of equipment on the fire engine.

- Having the right Watch Manager in charge of the station crew is fundamental, he/she needs to lead by example, demonstrate commitment, flexibility, respect and operational competence. There aren’t many like that around anymore.

- There needs to be an understanding that cover can vary over the years during certain circumstances such as the birth of a child (first few years), pressures of primary occupation, family commitments, impact of partner’s changes in circumstances etc. All too often management is dictatorial and adversarial when better man-management is required.

- More fire fighters should be involved with the recruitment process as we usually aren’t told or even involved in attending the open days even though we’d be the one’s working closely with the public and the individuals should they join our stations.

- Once a new recruit has been successful in application they should spend 1 month with an alerter and they have to realise every time it activates they have to drop everything and respond to the station. This will filter out the ones who can and cannot do the job.

- The requirements that are put on people has grown vastly over the years i.e fitness standards, online learning, frequency of courses for very few calls compared with 30 years ago when you actually did the job in question.

- A blame culture has emerged, where the last person to book off, resulting in the appliance going off the run has to complete the relevant documentation, this is wrong. Their reason is just as valid, if not more valid than any other person booking off. Everyone that is booked off during that time has shared responsibility for this.

- Retention of employees is just as important as recruitment, as such morale needs to be maintained across the station, staff need the belief that they are performing well, praise needs to be given as well as the support for career development.

- There is still a culture issue at management level, RDS cannot corporately be trusted. Brigade management need to listen to the RDS management, and make an effort to understand the issues rather than continually provide a flat NO to every solution presented by the RDS staff. Brigade is currently reviewing the RDS system, but very little if any consultation, without the RDS personnel buy in, the system probably won’t improve.
Written comments from questions relating to ‘Values’

- When you take the appliance off the run you get quizzed but when you book on because you’re back early from work nothing gets said.
- As retained I think sometimes or more often than not we are viewed as expendable or undervalued by the service in general and they forget that we have a full time job as well. Our time needs to be shared with our main job, the family and the fire service.
- Overall I enjoy what I do but feel HR and senior management are out of touch with the front line staff. It feels like we are top heavy and run by politicians.
- Experience counts for nothing and they tend to let staff go when they should try harder to hold on to them. Feel undervalued and as if my loyalty does not matter.
- No support or appreciation from any of my watch or crew mangers or station commander. There’s a feeling of unease as they are poised ready to discipline but not help or support.
- There is a bully culture in the fire service mainly at management level.
- HR is terrible. No consistency, lack of long-term planning regarding issues such as transferring serving personnel from other wholetime brigades.
- There’s always a lot of talk about “Work / Life” balance but the perception on stations is that very little is done or accepted that actually backs this up. The pressure to keep appliance availability is always expected to take precedence over anything else, including family and primary employment.
- Last year our chief tried to shut three retained stations, fortunately the CFA stopped it but I think that is a fair reflection on our perceived worth by management.
- Hardly any contact from middle and higher managers let alone HR.
- I think middle managers and above say what we like to hear but really don’t understand how much time some of us do put in to protect our communities for very little reward (pay) on a station that averages 100 calls a year.
- Retained staff are all treated like third class citizens.
- Have never spoken with current CFO and don’t even know what he looks like. Previous 2 CFO’s not much better. Older CFO’s would remember your name, which station you were from and one used to remember how many children you had, but he was an exceptional leader.
- There would appear to still be some full time staff that do not value on-call crews, this is not restricted to people who have been in the service decades, but also those recently joining.
- The higher the ranking of officers the less you feel appreciated, as for HR you are a number to them.
- I have been retained for over 30 years and feel that I am treated just as a pay code number, I feel that most officers that attend call outs are only there to pick fault and
more interested in the red tape/paperwork side than seeing if a safe good job is being carried out.

- **HR haven’t a clue who we are or what we do. Too much running round departments to get anything done. Lack of assistance to get training when people are available without having to take time off from primary employment. No straight answers from Senior Managers, no real interest in people from HR.**

- **We had a HR manager (been in this position for 10+yrs) visit the station for the first time, and didn’t realise the commitment required until he had a conversation with myself and other retained staff.**

- **Those who appear to abuse the system get away with it, while those who genuinely want to be there and work get taken advantage of and pulled up for minor oversights.**

- **Worst organisation I have ever worked for when it comes to appreciation and engagement of staff.**

- **Not enough credit for the job we do. Never remembered for the good things you do, always the things you do wrong.**

- **As a long serving member of the service and with previous opportunities i.e seconded to SFRAU for two years I’m reasonably well known at all levels of the service, and to that end I feel happy with how I’m treated.**

- **The HR department is one of the worst that I have ever come across. They just treat us like we are nothing. I would never recommend this job to anyone.**

- **The perceived value of my role has decreased dramatically in the last year as my service now pay staff to provide cover on retained stations at a hugely inflated rate compared to retainer whilst these staff have none of the issues surrounding availability.**

- **The problem is not enough praise for those that spend a lot of hours in station area to be on call. It is a very hard job to do especially for those that have families.**

- **I think that the commitment given by retained staff is often overlooked by Senior Officers. 75 + hours per week cover isn’t just the FF’s commitment. It’s a commitment from the FF’s entire family! Senior Officers would do well to remember that!**

- **Above local watch level individuals are of no consequence as the service is driven by fiscal objectives.**

- **Feel used, to the point I am thinking of leaving after 4 years.**

- **In general I feel the service as a whole is aware of the value of the retained duty system. There are one or two individuals who have little or no respect for us as firefighters, and have voiced this in so many words. This I find unacceptable.**

- **Still a ‘them and us’ mentality between whole time and retained, seen as a threat to whole time, especially in a county where retained make up majority of workforce.**

- **HR and some middle managers do not understand how difficult it is to balance our primary employment with our retained duties and the problems caused with obtaining leave to go on weekday courses. Also it is expected that we give our time freely to do**
things like study for ADC when whole time firefighters get to use their duty time to study and therefore don’t have to give up their family time to the same extent.

- You’re only a number on a pay sheet. As long as the truck goes out of the door the brigade doesn’t care who’s on the truck or what you’ve given up to go on the truck. There is no thanks to you or your employer. They just expect all the time.

- I feel very valued and I’m a very positive person. There are a lot of great people in my service who speak openly and pat others on the back with positive feedback and encouragement.

- Whilst there are several vacancies, my service is not recruiting, although whole time have transferred across and become RDS Crew Managers.

- Management have imposed strict response conditions and are instigating disciplinary action if three fire calls are missed during a three month period, and are also demanding unrelated work is undertaken when in attendance for fire calls along with other conditions.

- HR won’t listen to the problems that we have on running an On-Call station, they are trying to manage and recruit in the same way as is the case on a whole time station, it just doesn’t work.

- Top tier management have no idea the mess they have caused over the last 5 years. What used to be a proud and fantastic RDS section has now been decimated. If it carries on as it is there will be no retained left in 10 years’ time.

- Can’t work out if retained service is deliberately being held down or senior management do not have the answers to move the service forward.

- Our station is considered ‘junior’ to another slightly larger station - with no official reason or mandate. As a result we receive less input, training and resource on a regular basis than our colleagues in the other station. This has a knock-on effect on morale and commitment to the job.

- To higher ranks you are just a number. They do not understand the job we do or appreciate the commitment. Yet they make all the decisions that affect us.

- The general consensus on station is ’as long as the pump goes through the door the management are not bothered’. We are just a number that is replaceable.....

- As very few within middle management and above served in the retained service, I feel that when they come out with stupid requests they show little or no understanding of what they are asking us to undertake.

- Not sure if HR know who we are sometimes. However things are better than they were a few years ago.

- I feel valued but perhaps not all are aware of the commitment actually required and the impact on home/ work life.

- I hate working for my fire service due to the management style, but I have no choice as my family needs the income.

- As a Watch Manager I receive very little feedback from senior management.
• **Demeaning, autocratic approach by some middle managers.** This to most is a second job which isn't essential for their livelihoods. Personnel will leave when they feel undervalued.

• **Managers who work day to day with RDS seem to fully support them and value their commitment.** The job is so much more professional now compared to 15 years ago, but senior managers still view us as ‘hobby’ firefighters.

• **Serious lack of leadership and imbecilic meddling with people's roles seems to be the order of the day,** leading to widespread belief that the 'men in white hats' have all had a lobotomy.

• **No one is ‘accountable’ for the lack of FF’s.** If this was a private sector somebody would be sacked for gross misconduct. There is no other priority than for the appliance to be on the run yet no one takes responsibility – why?

• **There is an over reliance on email to disperse information but as we cannot get emails at home or do not have time on drill night the information is lost.**

• **I feel valued but too much is expected of us and we cannot have enough time to keep on top of everything.** I am a Watch Manager but that is also relevant to firefighters.

• **Definite 'them and us' culture.** RDS viewed as second class firefighters by some whole time firefighters and managers.

• **After 30 years in the service I still feel that many managers do not appreciate the commitment Retained firefighters give.**

• **I've answered don't know to the last 3 questions as we never ever see anyone on Drill Night other than our WM/CM or if they do visit us they don't come and speak to us lowly minions (FF's).**

• **It’s racism and discrimination within the fire service culture which sadly is endemic and fast becoming a serious unchallenged issue.**

• **Only current RDS understand the commitment, the brigade are always looking at taking money out of your back pocket.**

• **Being both WDS and RDS (WDS ten years after joining RDS) and working from HQ for periods of my career I know an Officer would trust a WDS manager but not an RDS one - even though RDS managers pick up far more calls than their WDS counterparts.**

• **Some whole time stations (not every watch) still occasionally call the RDS goons.** This is reducing steadily though as our CFO is ex RDS and respects and knows the values of the RDS.

• **Always feeling pressure to do more and more hours.**

• **We have such a rapid turnaround of supervisory officers following regular restructures that there is no continuity.** Each new supervisory officer promises to do this and that, and then they get moved on and nothing ever happens.

• **Mainland management fail to engage with station issues for the islands and very rural areas. SOP’S in cities sometimes lack relevance in the sticks.** Access to internet/intranet is a big issue.
• Shocking morale no awareness of commitment all goodwill gone.

• More and more work is being cascaded down to retained officers. It is impossible to complete those tasks within the allocated time.

• We have a station manager that has demoralised the station to a point people have left the service and a brigade management team that are working with another service to modernize our systems in readiness for an unofficial merger. Morale within the service is at an all-time low as wholetime are used on retained station ground, thus reducing RDS turnouts and people look at their pay each month and ask is it worth it.

• HR are terrible along with middle and senior managers who would rather look into your contracted hours than look at the quality of cover given.

• There is still a very strong stigma of "us and them" from the whole timers. In my personal experience the RDS are always accepting of any input or guidance from whole time both in training and actual working incidents, but there are still large numbers of whole time who don't even speak to RDS!! In this time of ever decreasing calls we are seen to be taking work away from the whole time almost as a direct threat to their existence!

• Feel valued by the CFO and the like purely because we are propping up their proposals - but if a new agenda comes along I'm sure their attitudes will change.

• Unfortunately in the FRS you are a number not person. I can't remember the last time I got thanked for keeping our truck on the run and sacrificing my free time.

• Officers treat you like dirt, you can work 12 hour day in your primary employment, book on to put the pump back available and they will be having a go at you about minor facial stubble.

• HR seem to rule the way all of a sudden, managers used to be senior officers now appear to be unwilling or unable to make decisions away from the fire ground.

• The service seems to look after the Wholetime before the retained, we are classed as second class citizens.

• No consistency within area, too many temporary positions.
Other general comments

- A two-hour drill night is not enough time to train, undertake equipment maintenance, paperwork and fill computer records.
- Demands on individuals are increasing while wages are reducing due to lower call levels causing people to become less committed.
- The RDS needs to be modernised to reflect changes in society and modern day lifestyle.
- Increased flexibility needs to be employed to match the dynamics of retained employees’ lifestyles to create a balance between resource availability and work life balance.
- You shouldn’t feel restricted or tied to the retained duty system, you do it as you value your community and will always make every effort to be available. However you shouldn’t be made to feel guilty for wanting to book unavailable if your resources are either already unavailable or have more than sufficient crewing levels, which is currently the case.
- Resources on retained stations also need to change to reflect the modern day availability levels to ensure a resource of some variation is available at all times. This will also offer an incentive for personnel to stay available when crewing levels drop.
- I do not believe we should become a blue light social service team because we are desperate to give staff something to do.
- We should do more around working with age concern / after school groups / youth centres and every station should run a cadet unit even if it’s 5 people.
- More home visits, more mixed crewing. All special appliances should be at RDS stations.
- FRS expect too much from RDS. Much of the system is run on goodwill with no flexibility given by management.
- The pay on offer doesn’t match the expectations which are very high. My other job pays much, much more and expects considerably less.
- The fire service has absolutely no flexibility or understanding with regards to retained personnel and the difficulty they have being released by primary employers to attend training courses.
- Some Retained firefighters actually take annual leave from their primary employment to attend fire service courses. This is completely wrong & the fire service shouldn’t allow it to happen! Annual leave is for holidays & leisure time, not training courses! If the fire service told the whole time firefighters that some of their annual leave allocation was to be used for training courses, I can only imagine the response that the service would get in return!
• There should be incentives for crew members who perform over and above contracts. 10% more cover on contract should be rewarded financially.

• Recruitment process is far too slow and cumbersome putting off a large number joining who ultimately become disinterested.

• More work needs to be done regarding diversifying our role within our local community.

• Greater flexibility should be encouraged, lower contract hours to allow for varying lifestyles but allowing firefighters to do above their contracts as and when they can.

• Expecting RDS firefighters in an entirely Retained service to attain the same levels of fitness as wholetime counterparts (who are paid and given time to meet and maintain those levels) does not seem to be equitable or proportional.

• Be more flexible with hours, i.e. - if you book on extra hours can you book off without conflict as long as the pump stays on the run.

• Demotion under the auspices of ‘rank to role’ from Station Officer to Watch Manager and being paid less to do more work. The constant assumption that we will work for free and that this job is more important than family or our normal work.

• We are still regarded as a second fire service to whole time. Promotion in the retained is granted to whole time/retained over retained personnel even though they cannot give enough cover when it should be for the station needs.

• We need to have a fairer pay system as a retainer per hours on call, not a block amount which is the same if you give 120hrs as if you give 90hrs.

• Possibility of tax free retaining fee to improve retention of staff due to more reliable wage.

• Lack of promotion opportunities within the service, limited to the role of Watch Manager only.

• After over 20 years I now realise that I am only a number, which was the view of the more senior members 20 years ago when I joined!

• Retention of staff is a major problem. I believe personnel are leaving because:
  o Lack of calls leads to lack of interest.
  o No flexibility of availability. This is managed locally which leads to inconsistency.
  o Low pay.
  o No whole-time opportunities. This is a reason for people joining and then realising that it is not a ‘back door’ in and then promptly leave.
If you would like to discuss the contents of this report further please contact:

**Tristan Ashby**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Retained Firefighters’ Union (RFU)**  
Firefighter House  
Station Road  
Attleborough  
Norfolk  
NR17 2AS

t: 01953 455005  
e: tristan.ashby@therfu.org  
w: therfu.org

@rfunion  
facebook.com/RFUHQ
SUMMARY

The Fire and Rescue Authority is required to assess the level of risk within the communities of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire and then to plan to mitigate those risks. Over the last 20 years Staffordshire has been one of the fire and rescue services at the forefront of the shift in focus from a reliance on response to minimise the impact of incidents to a focus on prevention and protection. This has led to huge benefits for communities and firefighter safety however, though significantly reduced in both numbers and severity, incidents requiring an operational response are still required. A significant impact of this work has been that homes are far more likely to be fitted with smoke detection equipment and, increasingly, following successful campaigns, with domestic sprinklers. Where homes are fitted with detection equipment the outcome in the event of a fire is that the residents are alerted early and able to evacuate unaided. This clearly has benefits for both resident and firefighter safety.

Of particular note is the impact of increasing traffic levels across Staffordshire. The total time taken from time of call to the arrival of fire crew on scene has increased marginally but the factor within this timeline that has seen by far the greatest increase is the travel time, close to a 50% increase. Members are asked to note that the Service has increased the number of fire stations over the last ten years and some have been relocated to place them nearer to growing communities such as Loggerheads and Belgrave so this increase is not due to greater distances being travelled by crews. Driving standards of our drivers continue to improve and our vehicles are more stable and powerful than ever so the reduction in average speeds must be due to external factors such as traffic levels.

When this response is required the outcome in terms of damage and loss is often influenced by the time taken for fire crews to attend the scene. This time is known as the “response standard” and is the time between the fire control operator answering the 999 call and the first fire crew booking in attendance on scene and commencing operations. Members are asked to note that whilst property damage can often be mitigated and salvage operations can remove goods at risk of damage the same cannot be achieved for people directly involved where the person can only bear conditions such as heat, smoke or water for a very limited time. The only truly reliable way for a person to survive a life risk incident is to avoid them being subject to the conditions in the first place either by avoiding the development of the conditions or having them detected so that the person can move to a safe area. Rescue is never a preferable solution.
Evidence to reinforce the point made above regarding rescue can be found in the Service Fatal Fire Matrix which relates directly to the communities of Staffordshire. This has been developed since 2007 to collate the results of a Service led multi agency inquiry into all fire related deaths in Staffordshire. On each occasion the outcome in terms of loss of life was determined before the attendance of fire crews so the only certain way for the persons life to have been saved would have been to prevent the fire developing. Of course fire crews saved many lives over recent years by arriving quickly and taking decisive action but the fact that all fatal fires over this period were not directly influenced by fire service attendance times reinforces the point that prevention is always preferable to relying on a response once people are in peril.

In 2005 the first Fire and Rescue Framework document required Fire and Rescue Authorities to assess the levels of risk within communities and determine acceptable levels of response standard. In Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire this led to response standards depending on the level of risk within an area. The risk ratings and the response standard are set out in the table below and the Service was set a target of meeting response standards on 92% of all turnouts to life risk calls these include special service calls such as road traffic incidents, industrial accidents and chemical spillages and fires and other incidents where the presence of people at risk is identified including rescues from water. Broadly the risk level is determined by the risk to life within an area and high is urban, medium is extra urban and low is rural.

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<td>8 mins</td>
<td>13 mins</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Low</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Service performance over 2017 is 84.6% (pass target is 92%). Each attendance that is below the standard is examined within the following month and where a controllable factor is identified (e.g a person not fulfilling their contractual obligations) action is taken. Where trends are identified (e.g the recent bridge closure across the River Trent in Burton) bespoke mitigating actions are put in place beforehand.

**OPTIONS**

1. Accept the reduction in performance in relation to the target of meeting the response standard on 92% of all life risk calls due to the identified changes over recent years.

2. Scrutinise plans to mitigate negative influences on the response times achieved against the current standard. Members are advised to examine officers response to missed attendance times (response standards).

3. Reassess the standard using appropriate statistical analysis techniques and identify the level of achievable performance and that which the Fire Authority deems acceptable in the environment of 2018.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Option one is effectively a “do nothing” option and is not recommended. This would result in a missed opportunity to examine the risk levels across the City and County in light of changing demographics and localities and the way that the Service responds to those levels of risk.

Option two and three are recommended to Committee members. Option two may be appropriate as a standing item on future Committee Agenda so that Members can scrutinise activity and option three will require a project team to meet the needs of a full review of risk across the City and County. This risk is likely to have changed since 2005 and Members will be informed about how the Service structures are able to meet these risk levels and, in turn, identify an appropriate, acceptable response standard.

Financial Implications

The Service seeks to use the financial resources provided by the Authority to provide the best response coverage for the County and City. Revenue budgets have reduced significantly over the last seven years and most of the savings made to date have been made from the most expensive area of the Service, operational response. Members are asked to note the significant decrease in the total numbers of incidents attended largely because of the Prevention and Protection work delivered over a number of years.

Legal Implications

Since the removal in 2004 of the nationally determined standards of fire cover the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 Part 2, section 7 requires the Fire Authority to make provision for the purpose of fighting fires and protecting life and property in its area. The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 (updated in 2014) makes similar requirements of Fire Authorities. There is no national response standard that Fire Authorities are required to adhere to but an obligation to determine suitable standards for each Fire and Rescue Authority area.

Equality and Diversity

None of the protected characteristics contained within the Equalities Act 2010 are specifically impacted by the contents of this report.

Risk Implications

If a Service fails to provide an adequate response arrangement in relation to the risks assessed within its communities then there may be an increased risk of harm to members of the community or firefighters.
Consultation and Engagement undertaken

Business Intelligence Team

Protective Security

All data and information relating to this report has been kept in line with the Service Protective Security Strategy.

Social Value and Procurement

Not applicable.

1. Background

1.1 From the graph below it can be deduced that since 2005, when the current response standards were decided upon the three elements that make up response times have changed as follows:

**Call handling time:** Increased by 26 seconds, from 51 seconds to 1 minute 17 seconds. It should be noted that much of this increase coincided with the move to the shared fire control but this time is now decreasing again as control operators become familiar with the geography across Staffordshire.

**Turn out time:** the time from the alert being raised on station to the appliance booking mobile to incident. This has reduced slightly since 2005 and variations are most likely to be due to changes in the proportions of wholetime or retained crews being mobilised. Wholetime staff respond from station and typically take around a minute to dress in fire kit and turn out whereas retained staff have five minutes to travel to the station and then don fire kit before turning out so a typical retained response is five minutes slower than a wholetime crew. An increase in the proportion of wholetime mobilisations, indicated by a reduction in turn out time may be indicative of the reduction in retained crew availability that is being experienced by Staffordshire and many other Services across the Country.

**Travel time:** This has increased by 1 minute 41 seconds, from 4 minutes 35 seconds to 6 minutes 16 seconds and this, therefore, accounts for most of the overall increase from 7 minutes 4 seconds to 9 minutes 1 second. Investigations have identified that most of this increase is caused by higher levels of traffic, particularly in urban areas which is where most incidents occur.
1.2 Retained availability has reduced over recent years and the picture in Staffordshire is one which is mirrored across the UK. In response to difficulties in recruiting and retaining retained staff the Service implemented a new pay scheme in January 2017 following an in depth consultation process. The impact of a reduced retained availability results in the next nearest available appliance having to be mobilised and the increased travel distances will impact on the total travel time and the response standard being missed.

1.3 Appendix A is a document produced by DCLG (Now Department for Housing and Local Government) and this identifies that Staffordshire is typical of similar fire and rescue services that have seen similar increases in response times (response standards) over recent years.

1.4 Fire Control staff continue to reduce the call handling times and the Author is confident that this improvement will continue over the short to medium term.

1.5 The Service is continually developing the recruitment and retention of retained staff to increase retained appliance availability so that the nearest appropriate response is mobilised on every occasion.

1.6 Travel times, primarily as a result of traffic volumes, appears to be the factor that is having the greatest impact on total travel time and, hence, response times against the standard. It is important to note that increased traffic levels also impact on retained staff travelling to the fire station so although they were initially employed based on their ability to respond to station within five minutes this may have been stretched over recent years as traffic impacts them disproportionately on their turn in compared to the turn out as the latter is aided by being a blue light response.
Report Author: - Tim Hyde
Telephone: - 01785 898509
Email:- t.hyde@staffordshirefire.gov.uk
Key findings

1.1. Response times by type of fire attended
- Overall, response times to fires have increased gradually over the past 20 years, but did show slight decreases for some types of fire between 2014/15 and 2015/16.

- The average response time to primary fires (more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property) in England in 2015/16 was 8 minutes and 47 seconds, an increase of 3 seconds since last year and an increase of 31 seconds since 2010/11.

- Two types of primary fires showed a slight decrease in response time (dwellings, other buildings) in 2015/16 (Figure 1).

- Response times to secondary fires (can broadly be thought of as smaller outdoor fires, not involving people or property) have increased by 11 seconds, to 9 minutes and 13 seconds since last year. This is an increase of 38 seconds since 2010/11.

1.2. Response times by type of fire and rescue authority (FRA)
- Fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in predominantly urban areas had the lowest average response time, of 7 minutes 46 seconds in 2015/16. This was an increase of 2 seconds and 24 seconds since 2014/15 and 2010/11 respectively.

- This compares with 10 minutes 44 seconds response time in predominantly rural areas, a decrease of 6 seconds since 2014/15 and an increase of 33 seconds since 2010/11.

- Response times in significantly rural FRAs was 9 minutes and 45 seconds in 2015/16, an increase of 13 seconds and 48 seconds since last year and five years previously, respectively.

2. Distribution of response times
- In 2015/16 for most fire incident types the majority of incidents were responded to within 7 minutes. However, for other outdoor fire incidents, the majority were responded to within 8 minutes.

3. Response times and outcome measures
- The average response time to dwelling fires involving casualties and/or rescues in England in 2015/16 was 7 minutes 34 seconds. This is unchanged compared with 2014/15 and an increase of 26 seconds since 2010/11 (Figure 5).

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1 For more detailed technical definitions of different types of fire, see the Fire Statistics Definitions document.
2 This excludes chimney fires. For a full definition of chimney fire, please refer to the definitions document.
3 Other outdoor fires are fires in either primary outdoor locations, or fires in non-primary outdoor locations that have casualties or five or more pumping appliances attending. For a full definition of other outdoor locations, please refer to the definitions document.
Introduction

This statistical release presents Official statistics on fire incident response times between April 2015 and March 2016. It focusses on trends in average response times in England, at the national level.

This publication defines response time as the duration from time of call to time of arrival of the first vehicle at the scene of the incident. Other sources, such as the fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) themselves, may use different definitions.

This publication is accompanied by reference data tables. All fire statistics tables can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables

The following tables have been updated as part of this publication:

*FIRE*: 0204, 0305, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1403.

These tables include data on FRA areas. When attempting to compare response times between different geographical areas, it is important to consider that there are a range of factors that affect average response times, for example, population density and firefighter crewing arrangements.

Each time a fire and rescue service (FRS) attends an incident in England, details of that incident are uploaded to the Home Office’s Incident Recording System (IRS) by the FRS. The IRS is used as the source for all the statistics in this publication. More information on the IRS can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/incident-recording-system-for-fire-and-rescue-authorities

It should be noted that because records of incidents are added and edited constantly throughout the year, revisions to the details of incidents occur regularly. As such, the figures for 2015/16 in this publication and supporting tables are deemed provisional and some figures for 2014/15 have been revised since the last publication. The data in this release is consistent with the IRS as at 4th August 2016.

Around 15% of incidents were excluded for the purpose of analysis. For more detail on these exclusions, please refer to the technical note.

Definitions for terms used throughout this publication can be found in the accompanying Fire Statistics Definitions document on this page:


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1 Response times

1.1. Response times by type of fire attended

The average response time to primary fires (more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property\(^1\)) in England in 2015/16 was 8 minutes and 47 seconds, an increase of 3 seconds since last year and an average increase of around 6 seconds per year since 2010/11.

Response times to secondary fires (can broadly be thought of as smaller outdoor fires, not involving people or property\(^5\)) have increased by 11 seconds, to 9 minutes and 13 seconds since last year. This is an average increase of around 8 seconds per year since 2010/11.

Overall, response times to fires have increased gradually over the past 20 years. A range of possible factors could contribute to this. These may include changing traffic levels, health and safety policies, ‘drive to arrive’ policies and control staff typically asking more questions of the caller to better assess the risk and attendance needed. However, it is difficult to isolate the impact of any of these individual factors, and there may also be other factors, locally or nationally, which affect response times.

Some response times did show a decrease for some types of primary fires (dwellings, other buildings) in 2015/16 (Figure 1). It’s too early to say whether these decreases are a one-off fluctuation or a change in the longer-term trend. Table 1 provides a summary of the trends in the last year for response times to fires.

Table 1\(^5\): Response times to fires by type of fire\(^6\) in 2015/16, with a summary of trends; Source table FIRE1001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Fire</th>
<th>2015/16</th>
<th>Change since 2014/15</th>
<th>Change since 2010/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>8 minutes 47 seconds</td>
<td>3 seconds</td>
<td>31 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling</td>
<td>7 minutes 41 seconds</td>
<td>4 seconds</td>
<td>17 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other building</td>
<td>8 minutes 29 seconds</td>
<td>1 second</td>
<td>30 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road vehicle</td>
<td>9 minutes and 46 seconds</td>
<td>2 seconds</td>
<td>47 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other outdoor</td>
<td>10 minutes and 54 seconds</td>
<td>28 seconds</td>
<td>1 minute 8 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>9 minutes 13 seconds</td>
<td>11 seconds</td>
<td>38 seconds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) For more detailed technical definitions of different types of fire, see the Fire Statistics Definitions document.

\(^5\) This excludes chimney fires. For a full definition of chimney fire, please refer to the definitions document.

\(^6\) Arrows in this table are not to scale. Arrows pointing upwards indicate an increase and arrows pointing downwards a decrease in response time. None of these figures have been tested for significance.
1.2. Response times by type of fire and rescue authority (FRA)

Of the 46 fire and rescue authorities (FRAs), 24 showed a decrease in average response time to primary fires between 2014/15 and 2015/16, 21 showed an increase and one showed no change.

FRAs can be split into rural-urban classifications defined by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). As shown in figure 2, average response times are lower in predominantly urban areas. The difference in average response times between predominantly urban and predominantly rural fire authorities has been around two to three minutes every year since 1994/95. All three types of FRAs, as defined by the DEFRA classification, have shown gradual increases in average response time over the past twenty years. Significantly rural and predominantly urban areas recorded their highest figure over twenty years in 2015/16. Predominantly rural areas showed their highest figure over this time in 2014/15 and had a slight decrease in 2015/16.

The average response time in England during 2015/16 in:

- Predominantly rural FRAs was 10 minutes and 44 seconds, a decrease of 6 seconds since 2014/15 and an increase of 33 seconds since 2010/11;
- Significantly rural FRAs was 9 minutes and 45 seconds, an increase of 13 seconds and 48 seconds since last year and five years previously, respectively;
- Predominantly urban FRAs was 7 minutes 46 seconds, an increase of 2 seconds and 24 seconds since 2014/15 and 2010/11, respectively.

As defined by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authorities and other geographies.
2 Distribution of response times

Figures 3 and 4 show the distribution of incidents by one minute response time bands for fires in dwellings and other buildings. The shapes of the curves reflect both the long-term reduction in the total number of fires between 2005/06 and 2015/16 (decrease of 32% and 45% for dwelling and other buildings, respectively) and the increasing response times to these fire incidents. In 2015/16 for most fire incident types the majority of incidents were responded to within 7 minutes. However, for other outdoor fire incidents, the majority were responded to within 8 minutes.

- In 2015/16 41% (22,500) of primary fires were responded to within 7 minutes or less. This compares to 42% (22,000) in 2014/15 and 46% (31,700) in 2010/11.

- Secondary fires were responded to within 7 minutes or less in 35% (27,700) of incidents in 2015/16 and 37% (27,100) of incidents in 2014/15. This compares with 42% (49,500) of incidents five years previously.

- For dwelling fires 51% (10,700) of incidents were responded to within 7 minutes. This is unchanged since 2014/15 (10,700) and compares to 56% (13,400) five years previously.

- 43% (5,200) of response times to other building fires were within 7 minutes in 2015/16, compared with 44% (5,000) the previous year and 49% (7,600) in 2010/11 (Figure 4).
• In 2015/16 33% (5,300) of road vehicle fires were responded to in 7 minutes or less. This compares to 32% (5,000) in 2014/15 and 39% (8,400) in 2010/11.

• The proportion of other outdoor fire incidents responded to in 7 minutes or less was 25% (1,300) in 2015/16, 27% (1,200) in 2014/15 and 32% (2,200) five years previously.

**Figure 3**: Number of incidents in one minute response time bands for fires in dwellings, England, 2005/06 to 2015/16; Source table FIRE100

![Figure 3](image1.png)

**Figure 4**: Number of incidents in one minute response time bands for fires in other buildings, England, 2005/06 to 2015/16; Source table FIRE1004

![Figure 4](image2.png)

*Please note that in these figures each incident is recorded by the midpoint of each response time band.*
3 Response times and outcome measures

It is difficult to isolate the impact of a change in response times, as there is not a straightforward relationship between response times and the outcomes of a fire. However, some measurable outcomes include fire fatalities, fire casualties and the extent of fire damage. This section compares the trends in these outcomes with the trends in response times.

There has been a long-term increase in response times over the last 20 years whilst the number of casualties, fatalities and extent of fire damage have shown a long-term downward trend over this period.

In 2015/16 the number of fire-related fatalities in England increased by 15% (an increase of 39 since 2014/15) and the number of non-fatals casualties increased by 1% (an increase of 56 since 2014/15) compared with 2014/15. Within the overall long-term downward trend, there have been previous year-on-year fluctuations in fatalities. It’s too early to say whether the increase in 2015/16 is a one-off fluctuation or a change in the longer-term trend.

The extent of damage (due to smoke, heat, flame and water) to dwellings and other buildings has generally fallen over the same time frame.

Dwellings:
- The average response time to dwelling fires involving casualties and/or rescues in England in 2015/16 was 7 minutes 34 seconds. This is unchanged compared with 2014/15 and an increase of 26 seconds since 2010/11 (Figure 5).
- The number of fatal casualties in dwelling fires has increased by 17.4% (34 fatalities) since 2014/15, whilst the number of non-fatal casualties (excluding those requiring first aid or precautionary checks) has decreased by 3.4% since 2014/15.
- In 2015/16 the average area of fire damage to dwellings (excluding those over 5,000m$^2$) in England decreased by 3.9% compared with 2014/15, while the average response time to dwelling fires decreased by 0.6% (4 seconds) over the same time.

Other buildings:
- The average area of fire damage to other buildings (excluding those over 1,000m$^2$) decreased by 1.0% since 2014/15, while the average response time to other building fires decreased by 0.1 % (1 second) over the same time (Figure 6).

Note that figures 5 and 6 use measures that exclude dwellings with more than 5,000m$^2$ of damage and other buildings with more than 1,000m$^2$ of damage because fires of these sizes can skew the averages; however, for completeness, other measures are available in tables 0204 and 0305, which accompany this release. It should be noted that this excludes less than 0.01% of dwelling incidents and 1% of other building incidents.

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Figure 5: Response times and outcome measures for dwelling fires, England, 1994/95 to 2015/16 (Index 1994/95 = 100); Source tables FIRE1002, FIRE0204

Figure 6: Response times and outcome measures for other building fires, England, 1999/00 to 2015/16 (Index 2009/10 = 100); Source table FIRE0305

*Please see technical note here on the discontinuity in series. Data for non-fatal casualties are only available since 2009/10.
4 Further Information

Guidance for using these statistics and other fire statistics publications can be found on the fire statistics collection page: www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics and all the fire statistics tables can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables

Media enquiries via Home Office news desk:
Office hours: 020 7035 3535; 7am-8pm Monday-Friday
Out of hours: 07659 174240

Statistical or public enquiries:
The responsible statistician for this publication is Georgina Smallridge.
To contact the Fire Statistics team:
Email: FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk;
Telephone: 020 7035 5022

The information published in this release is kept under review, taking into account the needs of users, burdens on suppliers and producers, in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Feedback and proposals for future changes, are welcome.

If you have any comments, suggestions or enquiries, please contact the team via email using FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk or via the user feedback form.

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