

## **12. Annual Report on the Progress of the Retained Duty System (RDS) Implementation Plan**

### **Purpose of report**

1. To provide the Policy and Resources Committee with an annual report on the progress of the Retained Duty System (RDS) Implementation Plan.
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### **Recommendation**

***The Chief Fire Officer recommends that this report is noted by the Committee.***

### **Introduction and Background**

2. A dedicated team was established to review the existing Retained Duty System (RDS) management and working practices in 2008. This team carried out an in-depth examination of such areas as: availability of staff and appliances, work-life balance, resilience, recruitment, training, development and management.
3. The review team engaged extensively with every RDS station and a significant number of RDS firefighters and managers. The team compromised a lead officer with considerable RDS experience and two RDS staff seconded on a full-time basis.
4. The team highlighted a number of key issues such as how the basis for an RDS Service reliant on “traditional” communities and lifestyles did not always fit with the modern working and life-styles of our society. The team also considered the demographics of our local communities, which have altered significantly in recent years, as well as the ability for people to balance their work and life commitments with the requirements of an RDS Fire Service career.
5. Interviews and information gathering has been obtained from HWFRS staff and other Fire and Rescue Services, in addition to which other organisations have been contacted such as the Territorial Army and RNLI.
6. A three year RDS Implementation Plan consisting of 24 objectives was produced based upon the evidence provided in the review and in consultation with officers, RDS staff and representative bodies. As a consequence, the plan has undergone further refinement and is set out below.

## **Year One Objectives**

7. **To introduce an Electronic Availability System to record availability of RDS appliances and personnel across the Service, also capable of providing a range of management and reports and linking directly to a Finance module.**
  - This has been completed and the project now closed down.
  - The Availability system went live on 29 November 2010 and has provided a greater range of flexibility for the RDS in forecasting their weekly availability.
  - It has also ensured a greater degree of resilience for the Service as availability has improved in most areas.
  - Fire Control now have a real time, accurate availability forecast of appliances across the Service which means that they are able to mobilise the nearest available appliance at all times to respond to incidents, leading to improved service to the Community.
  - Managers at all levels now have a suite of reports that can be generated to assist in improving performance.
  - The finance aspect of the system went live on 1 April 2011 and has been welcomed across the Service.
  - It provides accurate reports directly to the Finance Department which ensures timely, accurate payments to staff.
  - It also now provides Finance and Service Delivery with accurate information on levels of spending in every area of RDS work, which can now be used in future budget allocations.
8. **To put in place a banded system for availability to replace the existing cover types. The banded ranges of cover to be linked to a suitable contract profile for individual staff.**
  - This process was delayed during year 1, but the Service is currently part way through this process. At the end of the process, it is expected that the Service will be able to identify specific areas of understaffing, and linked to the recruitment strategy, will be in a position to actively recruit to fill specific gaps.
9. **To further explore the opportunity to offer pro-rata payments for availability based on 120 hours.**
  - The background work for this point has been completed, but the further implementation has been suspended until point (a) above is complete.
10. **To provide a range of contracted hours, from within existing resources, to RDS Managers per month to enable them to undertake key management tasks relating to their Station.**
  - A review of the administration tasks expected from the RDS managers has been undertaken and five hours per week has been agreed as a suitable contracted number of hours.
  - This has been implemented and monitored by the new Gartan RDS Payroll system which allows for smarter allocation and forecasting of future RDS budget.

11. **To provide Clusters and Districts with a package of hours from within existing resources to support both unplanned work activity and for planned activity such as recruitment.**
  - This area of work has not been implemented at this time due to budgetary constraints and will be carried over into the next year.
12. **To review and consult regarding the '8 hour' rule, prior to the start of a shift, being placed on Wholetime/RDS personnel.**
  - This objective was with reference to the Wholetime staff that also undertake RDS duties during their periods of being off duty at their wholetime location.
  - Previously these staff had to book unavailable for RDS duties 8 hours before the start of any wholetime duty period.
  - Following consultation and a review of the Wholetime/Retained policy, this rule has now been removed.
  - This now allows these staff to be more flexible with their hours of RDS availability and assist in ensuring RDS appliance availability in those locations where they provide RDS cover.
13. **To further analyse the strong community links forged by the RDS and consider removing from all RDS stations the requirement to undertake workloads created by Community Safety to allow for more time to be spent on training and performing the intervention role.**
  - This objective is complete. Following a restructure to the Community Safety Department, specific roles have been created to assist in removing this area of workload from RDS stations.
  - All areas of CFS work in RDS station areas is now coordinated centrally from HQ with dedicated staff undertaking this work.
  - This now allows the RDS to concentrate their time on more efficient training time to discharge the operational intervention requirement of their role.
14. **That a link is established and maintained between HR and Marketing/Media to identify key timing opportunities for raising RDS awareness through media management, advertising and marketing of the RDS to maximise recruitment potential.**
  - This link is established and the two departments have strategies in place to coordinate recruitment in line with the four initiatives undertaken each year by the Service.
  - This is proving a successful link and also involves the Positive Action Committee targeting our unrepresented groups during the processes.
15. **To appoint RDS Recruitment Champions from within the RDS to support recruitment and to act as mentors to potential applicants and to support RDS awareness sessions.**
  - A range of staff, both Wholetime and Retained have been appointed as Recruitment Champions across the Service.
  - These staff are used to attend recruitment awareness sessions across the Service to inform potential new applicants as to the requirements of the firefighter role map and the expectations of the RDS.
  - This has proved a success as this provides potential recruits with the necessary insight into the Service from existing serving staff.

16. **A suitable level of budget from within the existing resources is identified and allocated for RDS recruitment to provide a range of recruitment resources.**
  - This objective is still in progress, but a grant achieved from CLG through the Positive Action Committee is in place to assist in this area at this time.
17. **To monitor success rates of psychometric testing in the National Firefighter Selection Tests (NFFST) process and to provide suitable levels of support in regards to numeracy and literacy through partnership with local Adult Literacy providers.**
  - The monitoring of psychometric tests is a continual ongoing process, but the results have already been used by the Service to alter the current process and remove part of the written requirements. This has proved a success and assisted in more applicants being successful.
  - With regards numeracy and literacy support, a pilot was undertaken with Herefordshire College, who provided support to candidates across the two counties.
  - This proved to be difficult and the College experienced issues in facilitating these events.
  - As a result, potential candidates are now 'signposted' to colleges in both counties and are invited to attend courses at these locations should they feel the need.
  - This process is being monitored.
18. **To conduct a full equality and diversity impact assessment of the results of NFFST to establish whether NFFST supports diversity targets and RDS recruitment.**
  - This is a continual process monitored by HR and the Positive Action Committee and the results used to inform recruitment processes.
19. **To liaise with HR to develop a policy to ensure that all Service leavers have access to a properly conducted and evidenced exit interview.**
  - A policy for exit interviews has been completed and all leavers are invited to undertake one.
  - Further work in this area is ongoing with the view of the RDS Manager completing these to identify and monitor potential common themes for the reasons for staff to leave.
  - This information will then be fed back to HR and Service Delivery.
20. **To create flexible options to deliver a comprehensive range of training to ensure safety of all RDS staff by providing an average additional one hour for training per week and up to eight training days per year.**
  - The budget for this has been agreed and this objective has been delivered since April.
  - In just the short time it has been in use, there has already been an increase in the percentages of competency across the RDS locations.
  - Five additional days have been agreed for this financial year with a view to explore increasing this to the eight days in coming years, dependant on the forthcoming expected budget constraints.

21. **To consider the removal of the requirement for successful completion of Paper 1 (Fire Safety) of the IFE examination for RDS staff, at Watch Manager level, to reflect their intervention role.**
- This has been removed and the RDS promotion process is currently under review.
22. **To review the structure, initially within West District to provide additional managerial supervision and support directly to RDS Stations.**
- The structure of West District was reviewed during 2009/10 and alterations were made to employ RDS Technicians and RDS support Watch Commanders.
  - The technicians are used to undertake day to day equipment testing and maintenance, electrical test registers stations tests as well as assisting in delivering training materials to stations in time for their training night. This is to name but a few of the examples of where they are providing direct support to the RDS stations.
  - The Watch Commanders prepare, risk assess and deliver the training to the stations as well as carry out all risk inspections within the station areas to inform the Service Risk department and the stations to inform specific training and highlight potential risks.
  - This again is an example of where they are providing direct support to the RDS locations.
  - Both of the above posts have proved to be successful.
23. **To create, through a structural review, the post of a Service RDS Manager to ensure future needs and demands on the RDS are managed effectively.**
- This post was implemented following the review of West District in paragraph 22.
  - Whilst still an asset to be used in Herefordshire, the RDS Manager is responsible for the delivery of the three year implementation plan across both counties.
  - The post is also responsible for the standardisation of the RDS across the Service and exploring the day to day issues that arise Service wide with regards to the RDS and providing potential solutions.
  - The post holder also provides Service level support to all departments within the Service including the Station Commanders that manage RDS units.

## **Year Two Objectives**

24. **Year 2 commenced in April 2011 and has the following objectives to achieve:**
- To create and maintain a database of employers from within the RDS which is reviewed annually.
  - To provide regular contact with potential RDS employers, via the local manager, throughout the recruitment process. This contact will aim to create a partnership arrangement between the local manager, RDS employer and applicant.
  - To continue to work towards the challenging diversity targets to ensure that both BME and females are attracted to the RDS.

- To liaise with the Service Training and Development Centre and the Approved Centre to provide support, feedback and assistance in relation to the shared objectives forming part of the training review.
- To explore options to provide or develop additional levels of resilience and consistent levels of officer support.

## **Conclusion/Summary**

25. Year 1 of the Implementation Plan has been successful and the Service is now experiencing the benefits of the areas delivered. Real time RDS appliance availability has now improved the service that we are providing to the communities we serve. Other achievements are providing better support to the RDS within the Service, which now allows us to plan and discharge improved training to our RDS staff which in turn improves their safety, competence and operational efficiency.

## **Financial Considerations**

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
To provide Clusters and Districts with a package of hours from within existing resources to support both unplanned work activity and for planned activity such as recruitment.	Yes	7.4

## **Legal Considerations**

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are no legal issues e.g. contractual and procurement, reputational issues that require consideration	No	Non Applicable

## **Additional Considerations**

26. The table below sets out any additional issues arising from the proposals contained in this report and identifies the relevant paragraphs in the report where such issues are addressed.

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
<b>Resources</b> (e.g. Assets, ICT, Human Resources, Training & Development, Sustainability).	No	Non Applicable
<b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (e.g. IRMP, Authority Plan, Equality & Diversity, Partnerships, Environmental Impact).	No	Non Applicable
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (e.g. risk management and control measures, risk register score).	No	Non Applicable
<b>Consultation with Representative Bodies</b>	No	Non Applicable

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