

Report of the Area Commander – Service Delivery

On-Call Retaining Fee

Purpose of report

1. To inform the Authority of a decision taken by SMB to increase the on-call retaining fee.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the annual retaining fee for on-call firefighters be increased, over and above the nationally agreed terms and conditions of service, as follows:

- ***Bands A to D attract an additional 20% increase***
- ***Bands E to F attract an additional 5% increase***

With the enhancement being reviewed in the event of any future significant increase in nationally agreed rates.

Introduction and Background

2. The basis of the Retained Duty System (RDS) has not significantly changed since its inception in 1947. Parity of pay, holiday pay, sickness pay and frequency of payments has changed but the 'pay as you go' nature of the system has not and is operated within Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS).
3. The Service is increasingly finding it much more challenging to recruit new entrants, in particular on 120hr and 100hr contracts, and alongside this, retaining those staff for the duration of their working life. One of the identified main issues is that people are more transient now with regard to both their personal and work lives.
4. It was the intention around ten years ago to create flexibility with the introduction of banded contracts so the Service would be able to attract a higher number of staff on less weekly hours to address this issue. However, the dramatic drop in those providing 'full cover' has been stark and this is replicated across the UK.
5. An on-call questionnaire carried out in 2018 demonstrated that our on-call staff felt undervalued, with one of the main reasons being that they feel they are underpaid for the commitment that they give to maintain appliance availability. Also, due to the decrease in operational activity over recent years on-call pay has significantly decreased for this element of their role, leading to a reduced financial incentive for staff, lower morale, and staff retention.

6. The on-call service is a flexible model operating 24/7 365 days a year which we accept as a Service. However, there is a growing concern that the payment for the commitment provided is not keeping up with market forces and is not offering sufficient remuneration for the loss of time spent on social and family related activities, thus creating difficulties for recruitment and retention.
7. In response to these issues, the Senior Management Board (SMB) received a paper on 18 December 2018 setting out a case to use the year on year underspend from the on-call budget to increase the payment paid for retaining staff to respond. This underspend varies year on year, historically being circa £150 to 200K. In 2018/19 it was reported at £0.174m. The exact figures generated are laid out in Appendix B totalling £0.200m.
8. The proposal demonstrated how the Service could increase the overall retaining fee above the nationally agreed minimum standard set out in the NJC circular 1st July 2018 Appendix A.
9. Following a number of discussions with staff and representative bodies it was agreed that an increase could be achieved as follows:
 - **Band A and B**
120+ and 120 hour contracts will attract an additional 20% over and above that laid out in the NJC circular 1st July 2018
 - **Band C and D**
100 and 80 hour contracts will attract an additional 20% over and above that laid out in the NJC circular 1st July 2018
 - **Band E and F**
50 and 40 hour contracts will attract an additional 5% over and above that laid out in the NJC circular 1st July 2018
10. It was universally accepted by all involved (Fire Brigades Union, Fire Officers Association and the Fire and Rescue Services Association, formally known as the Retained Firefighters Union) in the discussions and negotiations that HWFRS is meeting Section 4 of the Grey Book – Conditions of Service Framework, Part B, Rates of Pay, Annual retainer set out below.

Annual Retainer

- Subject to meeting the requirements at paragraph 14 of Part A, an employee shall be paid the annual retainer set out in circulars issued by the NJC.
- The annual retainer for an employee providing full cover (which is defined as cover of at least 120 hours per week) is 10% of the appropriate annual basic pay.

- Where an employee provides cover for less than 120 hours per week the fire and rescue authority may set a lower annual retainer subject to it being no less than 75% of the annual retainer of an employee providing full cover.
 - The annual retainer for an employee providing cover as part of the day-crewing duty system shall be 5% of the employee's full-time annual basic pay.
11. The increase set out above was agreed and recorded at the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), in that the above percentage differential is being met, and the difference between bands A&B and E&F created by the additional pay commitment made by HWFRS is over and above that laid out within the Grey Book and NJC circular dated 1 July 2018.

Conclusion/ Summary

12. The Service faces some difficult challenges over the coming years around staff recruitment and retention where it employs on-call staff to deliver frontline services. The challenges are being brought to bear on the Service in part by social demographics, some by the austerity placed on the jobs market, and wider budgetary constraints placed on the Service.
13. There are a number of pressing issues that relate to on-call staff from retention due to opportunities for recruitment, leisure market forces, the steady decline in operational activity, management skills needed to support and lead on-call units and parity with wholetime colleagues.
14. It is apparent from direct feedback to managers by on-call staff that they are currently feeling undervalued and under paid. The pay increase linked to the banded aspect of the retaining fee across the Service demonstrates to the on-call staff that they are being listened to as part of the on-call questionnaire and is the first step towards making on-call staff feel more valued.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Small changes required updating Service policy and also contracts. In addition the financial commitment to uplift the base retaining fee – minor impact on budget as the funding will come from the normal underspend of between 150 – 200K
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Linked to 'Our Strategy' under the people foundation ensuring we have the right people with the right skills in the right place to deliver high quality fire fighting services

Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	N/A
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Consultation has taken place with the relevant representative bodies
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	No issues identified

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Appendix A

Retained Duty **System** (NJC - 1st July 2018)

	<i>Full Annual Retainer</i>	<i>Day Crewing Retainer</i>	<i>Rate per Hour</i>	<i>Disturbance per Occasion</i>
	£	£	£	£
Firefighter				
Trainee	2,291	1,145	10.46	4.02
Development	2,386	1,193	10.90	4.02
Competent	3,053	1,527	13.94	4.02
Crew Manager				
Development	3,245	1,623	14.82	4.02
Competent	3,385	1,693	15.46	4.02
Watch Manager				
Development	3,458	1,729	15.79	4.02
Competent A	3,554	1,777	16.23	4.02
Competent B	3,785	1,893	17.29	4.02

Appendix B

	<i>New Rates</i>	<i>Old Rates</i>	<i>On Cost</i>
LSI CPD	34,787.64	34,787.64	0.00
Attendances	42,262.68	42,262.68	0.00
Disturb Allow	101,670.60	101,670.60	0.00
Turnouts	439,370.04	439,370.04	0.00
Retaining Fee	1,166,951.16	1,002,830.64	164,120.52
Station Work	224,786.64	224,786.64	0.00
Retained Train	231,698.16	231,698.16	0.00
Retained Drills	833,598.00	833,598.00	0.00
Holiday Pay	185,287.08	185,287.08	0.00
National Insurance	61,183.92	59,697.96	1,485.96
06 Pen- Ers Sup	-28,754.88	-25,790.76	-2,964.12
RDS M Pen ERS	-18,884.16	-14,924.52	-3,959.64
2015 Fire Fight	810,109.20	768,608.64	41,500.56
		Cost	200,183.28