

## **16. Retained Duty System (RDS) Implementation Plan**

### **Purpose of report**

1. To provide Authority Members with an overview of the Retained Duty System (RDS) Review and Implementation Plan.
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### **Recommendations**

#### ***The Chief fire Officer recommends that:***

- i) Members of the Authority note the extensive research that officers of the Service conducted to produce the Retained Duty System Review.*
- ii) Members of the Authority support the contents of the Retained Duty System Review three year Implementation Plan.*
- iii) The CFO reports back to the Authority at the conclusion of each phase (annually) to update members on the progress against the three year Implementation Plan.*

### **Background**

2. A dedicated team was established to review the current Retained Duty System (RDS) system and working practices in 2008. This team carried out an in-depth examination of areas such 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, nearly all RDS managers and a large proportion of the RDS firefighters. The review team consisted of a lead wholetime officer who had many years' experience dedicated to managing RDS staff and two members of RDS staff (seconded full time to the review team).
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 in with the modern working and living practices of our society. The team also considered the demographics of our communities, which had altered significantly in recent years, as well as the ability for people to balance their work and life commitments with the requirements of a Fire Service (RDS) career.

### **The Review Process**

5. The review took place between September 2008 and March 2009.

6. The review team interviewed and gathered information not only from staff within HWFRS, but also many other Fire and Rescue Services (15 other UK FRs) and similar non Fire and Rescue organisations (such as the Territorial Army, RNLI etc), families of RDS staff, Employers of RDS staff, a European fire service, ex-employees and unsuccessful RDS applicants.
7. The review recommended sixty areas for change, covering five broad areas; availability, hours of work, recruitment and retention, training, structure and culture.
8. A three year “RDS Implementation Plan” consisting of 24 objectives was produced (attached) based on the evidence provided in the review and in consultation with Officers, RDS staff and representative bodies.
9. The plan then underwent further extensive representative body consultation throughout 2009 and has been refined based upon this.

### **The Three Year Implementation Plan**

10. The three year Implementation Plan consists of a first year with sixteen objectives that are mainly focussed around management, operational availability and human resources issues. The second year consists of the training and development related issues and the final third year focuses on the reviewing and completion of these objectives.
11. The objectives in the Implementation Plan ensure that all areas of the Service are fully engaged with improving the RDS Service and supporting the staff who work this duty system.
12. A main area of work within the plan (year one, objective one) is the implementation of an RDS “Electronic Availability System” that will be supplied by “Gartan Technologies”. Gartan will also be supplying a finance/payroll module to the Service in tandem with the availability system. Gartan currently provide the RDS availability management systems for over 16 other FRs in the UK.
13. The Implementation Plan commenced its roll out for delivery on 1 April 2010. The objectives of the plan were individually incorporated into the Service’s planning process in late 2009 for inclusion in each Department’s business objectives for this year (2010-2011). There are also two corporate projects from the year one objectives of the Implementation Plan to support its delivery to provide a measure of quality assurance.
14. The objectives in the Implementation Plan have been primarily resourced from within current capacity and funding. Additional funding was sourced partially from the loss of an Area Manager post in 2009. Internal capacity to deliver the plan has been allocated through the normal business planning processes.
15. Support for the delivery of the Implementation Plan is through the newly formed post of “RDS Manager” which has been created from restructuring middle manager posts within West District. This provides a full time dedicated RDS manager for the Service to provide support, consultation and management of RDS resources and policies.

## **Conclusion/Summary**

16. The Implementation plan will provide RDS staff with management and availability systems that will support them effectively and enable them to manage themselves in an efficient and structured manner. The Service will benefit from an accurate and effective availability system that provides up to date information on RDS appliance and crew availability. This will restore a measure of balance and flexibility with both the work commitments and life balance.
17. Consideration of RDS staff and their needs will be firmly embedded in the Service's structure and culture through the creation of the RDS managers' post. Improvements will also be sought in many other areas such as recruitment, retention and general management and support of the RDS staff.
18. It should be noted that this level of change to the RDS system may cause some anxiety within the RDS staff. The Service is committed to maintaining the ethos and goodwill within our RDS staff and ensuring they are supported throughout this process.
19. Firefighter Safety is paramount and much of the review will underpin the current systems designed to ensure that the RDS staff are safe and competent in their role. The review and Plan both acknowledge the fundamental role the RDS have in delivering a quality service to our communities and it is envisaged that this will only be strengthened in the next three years.

## **Corporate Considerations**

20. Funding for the Implementation Plan is from within existing resources.

## **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 – RDS Implementation Plan

### **Contact Officer**

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