

Open Report on behalf of Nick Borrill, Chief Fire Officer

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	25 July 2017
Subject:	Update on the Fire and Rescue Retained Duty System Review

Summary:

In November 2016 Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (LFR) presented a paper which laid out its Retained Duty System (RDS) Improvement Strategy.

The strategy established an action plan to respond to the national report '*A professional View of the Challenges for Recruitment and Retention in the Fire and Rescue Retained (on call) Sector*' and to the findings of an extensive local review of the RDS as it operates in Lincolnshire.

The action plan aims to address 78 recommendations, grouped under 9 work streams, to improve the RDS and will be delivered in three phases, with a target completion date of April 2018.

This paper, in conjunction with a short presentation, will provide an update on progress made to date in relation to each of the work streams.

Actions Required:

The Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider the progress against the action plan and highlight any recommendations or further actions for consideration.

1. Background – LFR Operational Capability

LFR has 48 fire engines to respond to emergencies; 39 of these are crewed by personnel working the RDS. These personnel, who represent 81% of our operational staff, respond to emergency incidents on an "on call" basis providing an effective and efficient community service.

Our operational capability is further underpinned by Wholetime Duty Staff (WDS) who crew a further 9 appliances. This ensures a 24/7 emergency response footprint within the County.

2. Understanding the Challenges to the RDS

In recent years the maintenance of the RDS has emerged as one of the main challenges to fire and rescue services nationally and this remains so in Lincolnshire.

LFR invests a significant amount of time and resources into recruiting and training RDS fire fighters to ensure we can maintain appliance availability. Even with such a commitment there remain stations within the County that continue to struggle with shortages of personnel.

In 2014 the Service established a project team of 3 staff to review the RDS as it operates within Lincolnshire in an attempt to better understand the challenges in relation to recruitment and retention of personnel. The team were tasked with conducting a fundamental analysis of the RDS and to determine if the system remains fit for purpose to support a sustainable and viable FRS for Lincolnshire for now and in the future. In conducting the review the team met with various stakeholders both within the Service and from other brigades around the United Kingdom.

Informed by the national report '*A professional View of the Challenges for Recruitment and Retention in the Fire and Rescue Retained (on call) Sector*', the project team produced a final report in 2016. The report produced 78 recommendations for consideration.

3. Retained Duty System Improvement Strategy

In responding to the report's findings the Service established a cross organisational team to implement a strategy for improvement. The team developed a single plan of action to be delivered over 3 phases, the target date for completion being April 2018.

The plan of action is now organised into 9 work streams¹ as follows:

1. Recruitment and selection
2. Structure of organisational development
3. Strategy and policy
4. Training
5. Resilience reserve and crewing levels
6. Availability agreements
7. Annual leave arrangements
8. Electronic availability
9. Payment system

¹ In November 2016 the plan was based on 6 work streams, this has now been extended to 9

4. Progress and Achievements

The delivery of the improvement plan is largely on track to be delivered for the target date of April 2018. Below is a summary of the key achievements to date in each of the 9 work streams.

Work stream 1: Recruitment and Selection.

- A standard recruitment planning tool has been developed and is in use. This supports an understanding of recruitment requirements based on a simple mapping system that helps to identify and target priority areas.
- The Service has introduced a new written test, tailored to the needs of the RDS, and continues to support the national RDS group in developing a range of strength (fitness) tests.
- The entry process has been shortened by enabling written and physical tests to be taken on the same day.
- Marketing material has been updated, including brochures and the website, to raise community awareness of the RDS role. T-shirts are also being trailed at a number of stations to promote local recruitment.

Work stream 2: Structure of Organisational Development

- A recruitment and retention team has been assembled through the reorganisation of the training department. The team facilitates targeted recruitment plans and provides support and engagement to stations and personnel.

Work stream 3: Strategy and Policy.

- A simplified promotion process has been introduced to recognise the unique nature of the RDS.
- A robust exit interview process is now in place.

Work stream 4: Training

- A new Learning Management System (LMS) has been introduced which focusses on practical based training where possible.
- The LMS facilitates personnel to access training material via the internet (e-learning packages) to maximise flexibility.
- A flexible approach to RDS recruit courses has been introduced. This was successfully trailed at Bardney where we delivered a bespoke training course tailored to the needs of Rase Warehouse employees. This resulted in the recruitment of 4 firefighters for the station.

Work stream 5: Resilience reserve and crewing levels.

- We have reintroduced the 6th rider on RDS fire appliances to increase exposure and activity levels and enhance support on the incident ground.
- A resilience 'bank' has been developed to support the Service in providing adequate fire cover at all times.

Work stream 6: Availability Agreements

- Rostering systems have now been made available to stations where requested. The key benefit of a managed system of availability is that operational cover is maintained whilst enabling personnel to take planned periods of time off.

Work stream 7: Annual Leave Arrangements

- Potential developments in this area are directly associated to any changes which may arise from the adoption of a locally agreed salary scheme. The Service has decided to pause any progress in relation to the introduction of a salary scheme and in consequence further exploration of changes to annual leave arrangements will also not be progressed at this time.

Work stream 8: Electronic Availability

- An availability database has been established which includes skill sets and historical information. This database will support an understanding of any immediate cover arrangements required to support appliance availability. The system will also contribute to understanding future training needs at both station and at a Service level.
- A Station efficiency tool has been introduced to enable an equitable understanding of availability, based on actual staff levels.

Work stream 9: Payment System

The project has considered the benefits of introducing a salary scheme to remunerate RDS personnel. At this time the Service has decided to pause this element of the plan. The reasons for this are:

- Following discussion with other Services the evidence is inconclusive as to the benefits that have been realised from switching to such a system
- The staff group in Lincolnshire appear divided on the introduction of such a scheme of payment.
- Although a number of possible salary scheme options have been considered no agreement has been reached by all relevant parties on a suitable scheme.

5. Conclusion

The challenges of recruiting and retaining personnel working the RDS remain complex. The work LFR is undertaking aims to address a number of these but some, such as the reduction in call numbers and the demographic and societal changes within our local communities, remain beyond our influence.

Government led initiatives to support the development and improvement of the RDS sector including the creation of a nationally led RDS firefighter brand, support for a national marketing campaign and the introduction of centrally led incentives for employers to release personnel would be considered beneficial. These we would look to support through the national RDS working group.

6. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out??

Yes

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

A risk analysis is carried out for each element of the action plan as appropriate and recorded by the recruitment department.

7. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Community and Public Safety Scrutiny Committee paper - The Retained Duty System dated 14 December 2016	LCC website http://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=489&MId=4652&Ver=4

This report was written by Stuart Ruff, who can be contacted on 01522555675 or stuart.ruff@lincoln.fire-uk.org

This page is intentionally left blank