

Open Report on behalf of Nick Borrill, Chief Fire Officer

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 September 2018
Subject:	Fire and Rescue - Update on the Fire and Rescue Retained Duty System Review

Summary:

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (LFR) completed a review of its on-call Retained Duty System (RDS) in June 2016. An action plan was developed to implement the recommendations from the review with a target completion date of April 2018. In July 2017 LFR presented an update paper which outlined progress against the action plan.

This paper provides the final update of progress and outlines our plan to ensure future resilience of the on-call system.

Actions Required:

The Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider the completion of the action plan and provide feedback as appropriate.

1. Background

Lincolnshire relies heavily upon the Retained Duty System (RDS) to deliver its Fire and Rescue Service. 81% of LFR's frontline fire engines are crewed by staff conditioned to this duty system with RDS firefighters working at each of the County's 38 fire stations.

The purpose of the RDS project was to conduct a root and branch analysis of the current processes, practices and policies used in Lincolnshire relating to RDS and to determine if these were fit for purpose to deliver a sustainable and viable fire and rescue service for the future.

The project made 78 recommendations focussed on 9 key areas, namely:

- Recruitment and selection
- Structure of organisational development
- Strategy and policy
- Training phases 1-3 / Learning management system
- Resilience reserve and crewing levels

- Availability agreement
- Annual leave arrangements
- Electronic availability
- Payment system

Recommendations were assigned to one of the areas above with each recommendation being given a priority rating. The aim was to complete the project by the 30th April 2018.

2. Project Outcomes

Recruitment and Selection

Attraction

Early work conducted by the review team concentrated on the attraction of recruits into the Service with existing recruitment material being recognised as being in need of improvement. Key outcomes in this area include:

- Updated information packs for employees/employers
- Substantial improvements to the recruitment section of the LFR website
- New recruitment videos
- Recruitment boards at stations

Recruitment Tests

The team also focussed on reducing barriers to recruitment, a number of these relating to the written and physical tests. Primary areas of improvement include:

- New written tests and practice papers introduced and working well
- Adaptions to the physical tests including manual dexterity and use of a medicine ball for hose carry
- Increased locations for testing with satellite facilities at Skegness and Spalding
- A stronger link between the recruitment team and instructors to improve the recruits experience

Targeting Recruitment

The team identified the need to clarify what criteria led to a station being a recruitment priority and to improve consistency between the main stakeholders involved. Key outcomes include:

- Development of a Recruitment Planning Tool (RPT) to provide clarity around which stations are a recruitment priority. Stations are given a rating of 1 - 4 with prescribed work for all stakeholders depending on the rating.
- Targeted recruitment plans developed for level 1 & 2 stations
- Central recruitment database developed

- Increased targeting of specific groups/events e.g. RNLI and Lincolnshire show

RDS Employee Support

A number of methods to support and improve a RDS recruits' experience were explored. Key outcomes include:

- RDS link personnel identified at stations. This role provides support to recruits/potential recruits prior to undergoing the initial tests
- Feedback session introduced once candidates have entered phase one training. This feedback is then used to improve the process as appropriate
- Recruitment team and recruit instructors sharing more information on recruits performance to enable improved support.

Structure of Organisational Development (OD)

Recruitment Team/RDS Liaison

Prior to the review, the recruitment team consisted of a recruitment officer and a business support operative. From researching good work in other services it became apparent that LFR would benefit from a further provision of personnel in this team. The structure of the team has now been enhanced by 2 RDS liaison/support roles. Improved outputs include higher numbers of RDS recruits, improved divisional liaison and increased support to candidates.

Organisational Development Instructors (ODI) Rota

It was recommended that a new working pattern was sought for the training instructors within OD. The existing rota at the time of the review and the agreement that supported it were no longer fit for purpose. This was mainly due to the inflexibility of the rota and also the lack of weekends and evenings available to be worked by the trainers.

A Joint Working Group formed in 2017 has now delivered a more suitable rota pattern which commenced on 1st January 2018. This was reviewed in July 2018 and has highlighted improved instructor availability and increased morale in the training department.

Strategy and Policy

Station Dashboard

The station dashboard has proved to be a useful tool providing managers with station and individual performance information. Work continues to improve the functionality of the dashboard with current functions including:

- Individual station availability and efficiency

- Availability of individuals versus contract/agreed hours
- Provides gap analysis for recruitment and skills (drivers/supervisory managers)

Primary Employers

It was highlighted that a key area for improvement was the engagement and communication with primary employers of RDS personnel. Key outcomes include:

- Primary employers register maintained for each station to link in with recruitment campaigns
- Procedure developed to provide a standard approach to engaging with RDS primary employers
- Local information gathering on employers to support targeted recruitment
- Employers guide evolving/updated as business as usual
- Structured engagement strategy being produced to enable both employee/employer engagement
- Information on RDS trainee course content now available on LFR website to potential applicants, primary employers and new recruits

Training Phases 1-3 and Learning Management System (LMS)

Phase 1 - Acquisition

A number of benefits have resulted from the introduction of the new ODI rota. This has mainly been around the flexibility provided at weekends and evenings in terms of the initial course. Further work has developed a proposal to introduce a new RDS phase 1 course. This has been designed to complement the ODI rota and to make the training more accessible to RDS recruits.

The learning material on phase 1 was fully paper/folder based. Collaboration with Cambridgeshire FRS has enabled the development of electronic i-books to support learning during phase 1. Such has been the success of the I-pads that instructor hours have been saved. The interactive learning caters for more learning styles and is very popular with the students and instructors.

Phase 2 - Development

The Phase 2 development programme is now aligned to the Maintenance of Competence (MOC) training plan (phase 3) and enables development firefighters to complete the majority of development training and evidence collection during their weekly drill night. Version 4 of the phase 2 development folder is now complete which contains milestones for learners and assessors.

A business case for a new training and development recording system has recently been endorsed. This will contribute to the recording of training for phases 2 and 3. It will also link in with the Learn-pro Learning Management System.

Phase 3 - Maintenance of Competence

A significant number of the recommendations have been supported by the development of the LMS. Following engagement with RDS personnel during the review, it was recognised that the maintenance training had become too theory based and was a barrier to learning. The new MOC programme was developed to increase the practical training input supported by e-learning.

RDS supervisory managers have received 'train the trainer' sessions to enable better training delivery at station level. The MOC is quality assured by divisional staff.

Resilience Reserve and Crewing Levels

The following notable outcomes in this area include:

- The reintroduction of the 6th rider on RDS fire appliances to increase exposure and activity levels and enhance support on the incident ground
- The Pool of firefighters used to cover short term crewing deficiencies has been expanded to allow all appropriate operational staff the opportunity to cover at alternative locations to meet station needs
- A core list of work which can be completed by personnel providing strategic cover has been developed and is in use throughout the Service.

Availability Agreements

Agreements

- The format of availability agreements has been reviewed to ensure information is captured and held in a consistent format. There is now a requirement to ensure all new and existing agreements are collated and stored for entry onto the station dashboard.
- Work continues to link the agreements to the station dashboard so that better information can be provided on cover/availability.

Rostering Systems

- Guidance has been produced and communicated to RDS managers on the various rostering systems used at stations around the County. This is not mandated and has been developed as a suite of options to support stations.

Pay/Annual Leave Arrangements

Recruit First Payment

- The Service is unable to change the way RDS are paid as all are paid one month in arrears. Advances of pay can be requested at the end of their first

calendar month i.e. normal pay day. Changes around this recommendation are not being progressed at this time.

Payment of Annual Leave on an Average Monthly Basis

- A number of staff would prefer to save up their annual leave to take at a particular time with a meaningful amount of holiday pay. This would be dependent upon leave payments being based on the previous 12 months' activity. This is not in accordance with the current Terms and Conditions of Service (Grey Book) and would require a local agreement. Changes around this recommendation are not being progressed at this time.

28/35 Days to be Annualised into Hours

- RDS annual leave is calculated on the basis of the previous 3 months average and the Grey Book is specific about leave entitlement in weeks not days or hours. A local agreement would be required to vary this (see above)

Electronic Availability

The suitability of the existing 'Rappel' availability system and viable alternatives were considered and researched as part of the review. This resulted in two main outcomes:

- Recommendations on ways to improve the Rappel system. These included revised Rappel training documents and guidance notes which are now available in electronic format accessible by all users remotely. Status codes were also reviewed and communicated as appropriate.
- Comparison of Rappel against two alternatives. A comprehensive list of the essential/desirable criteria was produced by the team and Rappel, Firewatch and Gartan were scored on their suitability against each. The Gartan system was the clear leader and deemed to be the most appropriate choice for LFR. Most of the recommendations in this area are dependent on the procurement/implementation of Gartan which is being considered as part of a new LFR IMT strategy.

Payment System

The project has considered the benefits of introducing a new pay system to remunerate RDS personnel. A decision was reached to pause this element of the plan as: 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; and, although a number of possible salary scheme options have been considered no agreement has been reached by all relevant parties on a suitable scheme.

3. Conclusion

The challenges of recruiting and retaining personnel working the RDS remain complex. The work LFR has undertaken as part of its review 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. The various recommendations and work streams have helped, to an extent, to mitigate these societal pressures.

Government led initiatives to support the development and improvement of the RDS sector including the creation of a nationally led RDS firefighter brand (referred to now as **On Call Firefighters**) and support for a national marketing campaign are welcomed. These we will continue to support through the National Fire Chiefs Council On-Call working group.

LFR also recognises the need to maintain a focus on the on-call RDS system. In order to do this the Service has established an 'On-Call' Resilience Board to ensure that relevant personnel continue the good work started by the review. The Terms of Reference of this Board are attached at Appendix A.

4. Consultation

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

Yes

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

Full impact analysis of Action Plan carried out by Recruitment department. Any new actions will be assessed by the On-Call Resilience Board

5. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	On-Call Resilience Board Terms of Reference

6. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee report The Retained Duty System dated 14 December 2016	LCC website

Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee report - Retained Duty System - National Context and Local Action dated 25 July 2017	LCC website
--	-------------

This report was written by Debbie Yeates, who can be contacted on 07901796825 or debbie.yeates@lincoln.fire-uk.org