

## **LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**

Meeting to be held on 18 June 2018

### **STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING OUR RETAINED SERVICE: RETAINED SUPPORT OFFICERS - ONE YEAR ON**

Contact for further information:

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#### **Executive Summary**

In April 2016 a programme of work was initiated aimed at **Strengthening and Improving our Retained Service**. The focus was to develop a programme, which would year on year, deliver tangible improvements and build upon what is already an excellent retained service in Lancashire.

The programme which is now entering its third year, has led to improvements being made in a number of key areas. Delivery of the programme is through Task and Finish Groups, which report into the RDS Recruitment and Improvement Group [RIG]. Progress against the programme is reported via Update Bulletins, the seventh of which was issued in April 2018.

The purpose of the paper is to provide the Authority with an update on one specific key area – Retained Support Officers [RSO]. Members will recall that an investment of £300K was made at the time which enabled the introduction of 7 RSO posts into the Service. One year on, it is timely, to share with the Authority what the RSOs have achieved to date and plans for the future.

The role of a RSO is to support the modern day-to-day challenges associated with running an effective and sustainable RDS Unit and by doing so, improve recruitment, retention, appliance availability, training, gathering of operational risk information, liaise with administrative support and enhance staff engagement.

The paper will be accompanied by a short presentation which will be delivered at the CFA meeting.

#### **Recommendation**

The Authority is asked to note and endorse the report.

#### **Background**

In April 2016 a programme of work was initiated aimed at Strengthening and Improving our Retained Service. The focus was to develop a programme, which would year on year, deliver tangible improvements and further build upon what is already an excellent retained service in Lancashire.

From the outset the intention was for this not to become a 'one-off' programme of work, moreover it was about delivering a step-change in approach, whereby undertaking work to 'strengthen and improve our retained service' becomes a

continuum i.e. set a programme of work for the year ahead (commensurate with capacity and capability), deliver it, re-group and go again the following year.

Given the fact that the Service is now entering its third year, with a history of well documented evidence-led improvements which have been made, is testimony to the fact that the Service has and continues to deliver on what it said it would.

Improvement does not necessarily mean financial investment. Indeed, a great deal has been achieved in recent years, through simply working and thinking differently, in terms of how the Service plans and delivers its retained Service and the necessary infrastructure that goes with it. Equally, where improvement requires investment, it was agreed that a business case would need to be developed, and subject to Service approval funding would be drawn from the additional £600K which the CFA approved as part of the budget setting process in 2016/17 for the RDS.

In terms of costs the paper is also intended to provide Members with visibility and assurance regarding how the Service has utilised the additional £600K investment with the CFA have previously approved. Members will recall that the additional investment which the Authority made in 2016/17 for the RDS was in broad terms split between investment in the RDS Salary Review and the creation of 7 new RSO roles. In the case of the latter, the establishment of modern day RSO posts has arguably presented the Service, with the single biggest opportunity to deliver year on year improvement and to create a long lasting legacy.

### **Retained Support Officer Role**

The table below shows the disposition of the 7 RSOs. Disposition is based on the number of RDS Units and there geographical location. This approach ensures the optimum balance in terms of station responsibilities and travelling time for the RSOs as evenly as possible<sup>1</sup>.

#### Retained Support Officer - Allocation by Area:

<b>Western Area x1 RSO</b>	<b>Southern Area x1 RSO</b>	<b>Northern Area x1 RSO</b>	<b>Northern Area x1 RSO</b>	<b>Pennine Area x1 RSO</b>	<b>Pennine Area x1 RSO</b>	<b>Eastern Area x1 RSO</b>
St Annes	Tarleton	Hornby	Lancaster	Rawtenstall	Earby	Gt Harwood
Lytham	Skelmersdale	Silverdale	Fleetwood	Bacup	Barnoldswick	Hyndburn
Wesham	Ormskirk	Carnforth	Garstang	Haslingden	Nelson	Darwen
	Chorley	Morecambe	Preesall	Padiham	Colne	Longridge
	Bamber Bridge	Bolton le Sands				Clitheroe
<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

The role of a RSO is to support the modern day-to-day challenges associated with running an effective and sustainable RDS Unit. During the last year the RSOs have focused on the following areas of improvement:

<sup>1</sup> No RSO in Central Area as there are no RDS Fire Stations in the Area.

- Recruitment and Retention
- Appliance Availability
- Operational Training
- Operational Risk Information
- Liaison with Administrative Support
- Staff Engagement

*\*A presentation will be delivered at the CFA meeting, which will cover the above in more detail, progress to date and plans for the future.*

## **Business Risk**

Provision of a RDS service in Lancashire is hugely important particularly given the context that 32 of the Service's 58 fire engines are retained. The provision of an infrastructure which provides support is considered to be essential. The introduction of RSOs has undoubtedly added further value in how Lancashire FRS plans for and delivers its Retained Service both now and in the future.

## **Environmental Impact**

None.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

None.

## **HR Implications**

None.

## **Financial Implications**

The on-going cost of the Retained Support Officer posts is built into the revenue budget.

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact
Report to CFA	18 June 2018	ACFO Russel
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate:		