

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting to be held on 20 February 2017

'STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING OUR RETAINED SERVICE' RETAINED SUPPORT OFFICERS

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 deliver tangible improvements and further build on what is already an excellent retained service in Lancashire.

Following extensive engagement with Retained Duty System (RDS) staff, six Task and Finish Groups were established:

1. Introduce a new RDS Support Officer Role;
2. Appliance Availability;
3. Peer Support;
4. Technology;
5. Think RDS;
6. Communications.

The purpose of the paper is to provide an overview of the work which one of the Task and Finish Groups has recently completed re: introduction of a new Retained Support Officer (RSO) role. The group identified key areas upon which the role could focus that would reduce the modern day to day challenges associated with running an effective and sustainable RDS Unit and by doing so improving: recruitment, retention, appliance availability, training, gathering of operational risk information, liaison with administrative support and staff engagement.

The outcome is the introduction of 7 x RSOs posts into the Service.

Recommendation

The Authority is asked to note 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 deliver tangible improvements and further build on what is already an excellent retained service in Lancashire.

From the outset the intention was never to develop 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.

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1. Introduce a new RDS Support Officer Role;
2. Appliance Availability;
3. Peer Support;
4. Technology;
5. Think RDS;
6. Communications.

Each Task and Finish Group was assigned clear terms of reference and a set of deliverables. Collectively, across the six groups there were a total of 26 actions, of which 20 will be completed by 31 March 2017, with 6 being carried forward into a new programme for 2017/18. Engagement with RDS staff is already underway, to develop a year 2 programme, aimed at Strengthening and Improving our Retained Service.

Improvement does not always mean financial investment. Indeed, a great deal has been achieved this year by the Task and Finish Groups, 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 in support of RDS.

The purpose of the paper is to provide an overview of the work which one of the Task and Finish Groups has recently completed re: introduction of a new RDS Support Officer role.

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 which the CFA has previously approved. In broad terms this has been split between investment in the RDS Salary Review (led by the Director of Corporate Services) and the creation of 7 new RSO roles. In the case of the latter, the establishment of modern day RSO posts arguably presents 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 Task and Finish Group examined the existing role of the RDS Peripatetic Crew Managers and how the roles could be refined significantly to better support the RDS service of the future.

There are currently 4 temporary Peripatetic CM roles – one in Northern, Southern, Western and one covering both Eastern and Pennine Areas. Historically the Peripatetic CM has concentrated on maintaining appliance availability by locating at stations that need a rider/driver/Officer-in-Charge to repair a breach. The group concluded that the current approach does not reflect the emerging broader demands

that the role *could* deliver to create longer term more sustainable solutions. In short a re-modelled role will deliver significant value over and above the existing arrangements.

The group identified key areas upon which the role would focus that would reduce the modern day to day challenges associated with running an effective and sustainable RDS Unit and by doing so improving:

- Recruitment and Retention;
- Appliance Availability;
- Operational training;
- Operational risk information;
- Liaison with administrative support;
- Project delivery – e.g. following attendance at the RDS Recruiting and Improvement Group (RIG);
- Staff engagement.

A number of options were explored regarding the optimum number of RSOs, and therefore the size of the team and deployment. The number and disposition of RSOs and managerial arrangements is directly linked to the number of RDS Units and their geographic location. Collectively these factors dictate job size, travelling time; evening commitment and thus how effective the individual in role can ultimately be on a sustainable basis. An additional factor is that not all RDS stations stand alone, and although some are embedded in Wholetime (WT) stations depending on the nature of that WT duty system this does not necessarily equate to significant WT/RDS contact time and shared working (although good local working practices should mitigate this).

It can be seen from the table below that a simple disposition based on Areas would lead to significant disparity in job size and travelling commitments with consequent impact on effectiveness and sustainability.

Table 1: Disposition of RDS Units by Area

| Western | Southern | Northern | Pennine | Eastern |
|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| St Annes | Tarleton | Lancaster | Padiham | Great Harwood |
| Lytham | Skelmersdale | Hornby | Nelson | Hyndburn |
| Wesham | Ormskirk | Silverdale | Colne | Darwen |
| | Chorley | Carnforth | Rawtenstall | Longridge |
| | Bamber Bridge | Morecambe | Earby | Clitheroe |
| | | Bolton le Sands | Barnoldswick | |
| | | Fleetwood | Bacup | |
| | | Garstang | Haslingden | |
| | | Preesall | | |
| 3 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 5 |

*Bold text denotes RDS pumps co-located with WT pumps.

Following extensive examination regarding the optimum number of RSOs and their deployment the model shown overleaf was agreed by the Service’s Executive Board in December 2016.

The table below shows a total of 7 RSOs two of which will be allocated in Northern Area and two in Pennine Area and the four other Areas being allocated one RSO. This approach provides the optimum balance in terms of station responsibilities and travelling time for the RSOs as evenly as possible.

Table 2: Retained Support Officer Allocation by Area

| Western x1 RSO | Southern x1 RSO | Northern x1 RSO | Northern x1 RSO | Pennine x1 RSO | Pennine x1 RSO | Eastern x1 RSO |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 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 |
| 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 |

In year one (April 17 to March 18) a temporary Team Leader role has been established at Station Manager level. The Manager will be tasked with leading and developing the team in its embryonic stages. During the course of 2017/18 a further review will be undertaken regarding the longer term managerial arrangements.

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 the RSOs will compliment and add further value in how Lancashire FRS plans for and delivers its Retained Service going forward.

Environmental Impact

None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None.

HR Implications

The process of advertising and filling the 7 x RSO is yet to start however it is anticipated that the posts will have been filled and a team in place by 1 April 2017. The only post filled to date is the temporary Team Manager post. The individual occupying this post has extensive wholetime and retained service which is considered important however this is a one year temporary role subject to review.

Financial Implications

The 7 x Retained Support Officer posts (Crew Manager) and temporary Station Manager post (Team Leader) cost circa £0.3m which are reflected in the revenue budget 2017/18.

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

| Paper | Date | Contact |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Report to CFA | 20 th February 2017 | ACFO Russel |
| Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate: | | |