

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/17/5
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	24 MARCH 2017
SUBJECT OF REPORT	ON CALL AVAILABILITY PILOTS
LEAD OFFICER	Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Service Improvement
RECOMMENDATIONS	That the report be noted.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service is the largest employer of On Call staff in England and therefore places a high reliance on these employees in fulfilling its statutory duty. In an effort to improve On Call availability of personnel and subsequently appliances a number of pilots have been trialled under the governance of a project. The evaluation these pilots along with other evidence will inform a business case to be developed in line with the Service Integrated Risk Management Plan requirements to support Service Improvement.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	N/A
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	N/A
APPENDICES	None
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	None

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Devon & Somerset Fire & rescue Service (hereinafter referred to as 'the Service') is the largest employer of On Call staff in England with an establishment of over 1100 personnel. Over the years, a number of different contracts of employment have been offered to On Call staff ranging from pay as you go style contracts with an annual retainer to salary based contracts that are based on the level of activity for individual stations. In recent years there has been a focus on the availability of On Call appliances and how On Call staff are best rewarded for committing their time to supporting the Service.

2. **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In 2015, a project was initiated to review the current On Call arrangements with a view to enhancing staff and ultimately appliance availability. The project identified that there was a number of issues affecting availability and that further work was required to understand what elements could be addressed by the Service. A number of pilot schemes were initiated to look at various issues relating to payment for availability, improving emergency response times and supporting a better work life balance for On Call staff.

3. **CURRENT PILOT STATUS**

The status of the On Call pilot schemes is as follows:

3.1 **Pilot 1 – Payment for Availability**

Locations: Dartmouth, Cullompton, Seaton, Exmouth, Budleigh Salterton, Dawlish, Princetown, Salcombe and Chagford

Conditions of the Pilot include:

- Staff have to provide a maximum of 5 on duty;
- Paid hourly rate for availability;
- Higher pay during daytime hours;
- Paid by the minute for incidents;
- Pay for all on call staff ceases if the pump goes off the run;
- Staff paid for every hour that they provide on call availability.

Proposed benefits of this scheme are:

- The cost is easy to predict based on maximum numbers on duty;
- Staff like the scheme and perceive it as fair;
- All hours of cover are recorded and rewarded;
- Higher rates of pay during daytime (this is an incentive to cover the times where the Service typically has a shortfall in available personnel);
- All station staff get a more even chance of riding the pump (if you are on duty, you ride);
- Salary and pay can be used as a recruitment aid;
- Availability is rewarded, not activity, liked at quiet stations.

Status: as below

- Dartmouth, Cullompton, Seaton, Exmouth and Budleigh Salterton pilots, crews paid for availability given at a rate of £2 & £3 with minimum crew of 5 available at all times, still on going.
- Princetown are trialling the similar model (£2 & £3) with a crewing model down to 3 utilising RIU for a 6 month period from 1st December 2006.
- Salcombe trial as Princetown but with standard crewing.
- Dawlish Pilot has ended.
- Proposals to trial this pilot at Totnes, Ilfracombe, Lynton , Braunton & Combe Martin put on hold.

3.2 Pilot 2 – Demand led crewing

Location: Newton Abbott

The trial involved the provision of one full crew at Newton Abbott fire station between the hours of 1300 and 1800hrs. This was to increase turn out times at Newton Abbott who were failing ERS due to traffic congestion en route to station. This in turn allowed the Newton Abbott appliance to cover outlying areas towards Bovey Tracey and Moretonhampstead who were also suffering difficulties with availability during these periods.

Status: Completed, awaiting evaluation of trial.

3.3 Pilot 3 – Use of Wholetime crew

Locations: Plympton, Plymstock and Crownhill

This is the bolstering of the newly formed On Call sections with wholetime staff on a daily basis. The RDS staff on the station work to the traditional PAYG system.

Status: On going

3.4 Pilot 4 – PFCSO's (Police and Fire Community Safety Officers)

Locations: throughout North Devon

This is a concept that provides the up skilling of PCSOs to undertake a dual role of PCSO and On Call firefighters. When they are on duty in a station area (usually daytime), they will carry a DSFRS pager and respond when necessary. Transport is provided to enable best use of both roles. There is also the concept of further upskilling to include fire safety audits as part of their work.

Status: Ongoing. Under trial until September 2017.

3.5 Pilot 5 - Community Firefighters

Locations: Service wide

The provision of Community Firefighters working a 21 paid hours contract, with additional on call hours is now available as a central resource to support low availability.

Status: Ongoing

4. **ONGOING RESEARCH**

RDS survey

4.1 A paper survey form has been sent to all RDS staff in order that the Service is able to understand the depth of support or otherwise for a range of payment options. It also sets out to identify the current level of satisfaction with the service by our RDS employees and whether our existing arrangements are affecting recruitment, retention and ultimately Service Delivery.

4.2 It is intended that the outcomes of this report will form part of the evidence required (or not), to prove that a strategic change of direction is required by the Service, and a strategic outline case will be produced to support this.

Pay and Conditions issues

4.3 There are concerns within Pay and Conditions department that the current RDS pilot schemes cannot be processed through Gartan as they are out of scope for our existing arrangements. They therefore have to be processed manually which is taking two persons, two days per month to complete. The department have little capacity to deal with any more trial stations unless some changes to Gartan can be made or the payment model is simplified.

Cost of the pilot schemes

4.4 All of the current payment for availability trials are aligned to the £2-£3 models. Although not yet thorough, the evidence to date suggests that this would require a significant budget increase if this was to be rolled out Service wide.

4.5 Modelling has been done to indicate costs if we explore models with lower hourly rates. This of course makes the schemes progressively cheaper for the organisation; but by implication makes the schemes less attractive for our staff.

4.6 Work is still on going to identify the “true” cost of running our stations which will include:

- Wholetime standby;
- Group Support Team standby;
- Community firefighter standby;
- Other support.

4.7 This work is necessary to enable us the benchmark our current expenditure against any perceived increase that the pilot schemes may require.

4.8 A number of these costed options will form part of the strategic outline case.

5. **NEXT STEPS**

5.1 The project will progress to:

- Review the outcomes of the survey and prepare a report;
- Complete a range of cost models;

- Find the best resolution for Pay and Conditions issues;
- Find the best solution for using Gartan for pilot schemes;
- Draft a strategic outline case for consideration

6. **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The On Call Availability project has demonstrated that there is a wide variance in the way staff are contracted to the on call duty system. Initial feedback from the user groups and historical evidence suggested that a review of the way in which On Call staff are rewarded for their commitment would be welcome. The evaluation of the pilot schemes and other evidence gathering will inform the basis of a business case to be progressed in line with the Integrated Risk Management Plan requirements currently being developed.

7. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 That the report be noted.

GLENN ASKEW
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