



Pager Magazine

The e-zine of the RDS within Hampshire's Fire Brigade Union – Unity is Strength

Issue 5 February 2011

Negotiation Update

Members are aware that over the last several months the FBU have been in various negotiations with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service relating to the services proposed RDS Contracts and Banded Retainer System. It is important to note that the FBU **will not** negotiate conditions outside of the Grey Book which will have a harmful impact upon its member's conditions.

Our pay and conditions are set out within the Grey Book and this has been agreed to by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service. Now they want to change their mind!

The Facts

HFRS wanted to introduce a salary scheme for tighter control upon staff and wages reducing employee's conditions, coming away from our current system. This was rejected by the FBU and our alternative proposals were discarded by the service! HFRS then wanted to create a banded retainer system for tighter control upon staff and wages reducing employee's conditions, coming away from our current system. This was rejected by the FBU and our alternative proposals were discarded by the service! HFRS have now introduced a Statement of Availability which they want employees to complete and sign for control upon its staff, this will be added to contracts!

The service are continuing to move forwards with their decision to change contracts and retaining fees despite the FBU's continued objections that their actions are outside the agreed Grey Book protocols.

What Happens Next?

The FBU are now preparing papers to be submitted to a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) with the National Joint Council (NJC). The NJC will make a decision and rule on the information provided and should this be deemed outside the Grey Book conditions the service will no longer be able to continue with their proposed banded contracts and retainers schemes.



WE NEED YOU

Moral is at an all time low within the RDS ranks of Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service the FBU are seriously concerned for its member's welfare and well being. We need your support in order to combat this repetitive assault upon our contracts and working conditions. Now is time that those who are not affiliated to the FBU should consider membership and join our growing numbers within Hampshire so that our voices are heard and the management of the service listen.

Annual Leave



On Thursday 27th January the FBU attended a negotiation meeting with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service at SHQ on the topic of RDS Annual Leave.

HFRS wants to change the way RDS book leave from 24hrs blocks down to 3hr blocks. HFRS also want to reduce the leave for employees who are staying on 75% contracts by 25%. **The FBU do not agree with the service.** The FBU wonder how management would react if those at SHQ were asked by the Fire Authority to reduce their leave by 25%...we think we know that answer. **We want to hear your view?** Why not email us and have your say at retained.chair@hantsfbu.org.uk . All emails will be treated as confidential.

Branch Committee Meeting for RDS

Every first Thursday of the month the RDS Section of the Hampshire FBU hold a branch committee meeting at station 32 Eastleigh from 19:30 – 21:30. Branches should ensure that one member should attend to get the most up to date information from your union.



Banded Retainer Leave

HFRS are now attempting to change the annual leave afforded to each RDS employee who agreed with the services proposal to accept a banded retainer system. It is the services intentions to only allow employees annual leave pro-rata to their availability which will mean, for the majority of employees, a substantial cut in the total days of annual leave compared to their current allowance.

HFRS Proposed Annual Leave entitlement for RDS employees			
Banding	Av weekly hours	Hours	%
100	144	840	35/28
80	119	694	28/21
60	93	543	21/14
40	67	391	14/7

For RDS employees that will be contracted to the banded (100%, 80%, 60% and 40%) system will have their annual leave entitlement proportionally based on the contractual hours worked. The hour's column in the table is calculated using the same calculation applied to part time employees. Full entitlement is 35 days per year and this is equivalent to 840 hours. (35x24hours = 840). The proportional calculation: (actual hours worked/144x840(full time equivalent) 840) 119/144x840 = 694.

The percentage column has been calculated as an alternative to returning to RDS leave in hours. This is just applying the banding as a percentage of the total annual leave entitlement of 35 days. As with current leave entitlement this would be reduced for those employees that have served less than 5 years. The FBU do not support this proposed annual leave calculation by HFRS and the FBU is opposed to all proposals relating to the HFRS Banded Retainer System. The FBU are concerned at the use of the term 'Part Time Workers' – this term is becoming used more and more by the service!

Phased Alerting



The Phased Alerting trial remains on hold at this time. HFRS have stated to the FBU that they neither have the budget or resources to implement a new phased turnout system that will work sufficiently to alert fire fighters to all types of incidents and stand by calls. It is worth noting that Hayling Island and Bordon who were originally chosen to trial the system are still being alerted by a dual toned pagers, one style of alert tone for the WT and a second tone for the WL. HFRS have told the FBU that Phased Alerting is not expected to be visited again until at least 2013/14



Smoke
Detector
'sniffing out the truth'

Smoke Detector had a break in December and January but we are back with gusto this month.

Rumours abound at the moment with so many service changes hitting our members hard. While HFRS managed to get an increase in its annual government allowance we hear rumours that allegedly came from a senior manager within HFRS saying that HFRS are looking to axe the jobs of at least 200 fire fighters.

Smoke Detector has heard from reliable sources that a number of watch managers and crew managers are not happy with the current 'Statement of Availability' that HFRS have implemented. This request is having a negative impact on the RDS moral at all levels. It would seem that the service is happy to upset all ranks of RDS now.

www.hantsfbu.org.uk

www.hantsfbu.org.uk

Bryan Stanislas – retained.chair@hantsfbu.org.uk
Tel. 07789 382649

Dick Hewett – retained.sec@hantsfbu.org.uk

HFBU Email accounts update: All RDS HFBU Branches now have an HFBU email account.
Please email retained.chair@hantsfbu.org.uk for your stations FBU email details.

Banded Retainer Contracts

Statement of Availability:

The HFBU understand that management have the right to manage and this includes being able to know when employees are available for cover. During negotiations in 2010 the FBU provided a possible solution for HFRS to gauge the cover needed for its RDS stations. That idea has been developed further by HFRS into what we know as the Statement of Availability form. HFRS are introducing a 'Statement of Availability' to all RDS staff. All RDS employees will be required to complete a form and return it to their watch manager. This form will require the RDS employee to state what hours that they intend to be available for cover. Self employed RDS fire fighters may find this particularly difficult to complete as they may not know when or where they will be required to work their normal job. Historically the retained fire fighter has been employed on an adhoc basis providing 'good will', something the service seems to no longer desire. Once the forms are completed the service wants employees to sign and for them to be witnessed by the station WM and then added to contracts.

It is the HFBU opinion that a witnessed signature constitutes a legal document which would enable HFRS to refer to should an employee not meet the cover that they have signed for. FBU have voiced concerns to HFRS and the FBU has suggested to the service that no employee should be made to sign this form and they have listened. HFRS will shortly be contacting watch managers informing them that signatures are not required by staff completing the 'Statement of Availability' forms. **Our members should complete the form as it is a fair management request however we advise our members not to sign.** If member's availability should change frequently we advise that a form should be used each time to give a true account of availability within the members contracted hours.

Should your WM request you to sign do not, please notify your FBU Rep straight away.

There is now a great deal of unrest throughout the RDS over the lack of information that was omitted from the HFRS letters balloting employees to vote on agreeing to a Banded Retaining System but also the lack of information given to Watch Managers who were the messengers of the service. HFRS said in their letter that it was not a ballot! The balloting of employees is a frowned upon practice of employers. A **ballot** is described within the dictionary generally as the following.... **a process of voting, in writing and typically in secret....** do we still believe the statement in the services letter was not a ballot!

Those employees who decided that they thought the services idea of a banded retaining system was a good idea but did not agree with being contractually bound to the service have been counted within the total YES vote and it is the FBU's understanding that it is the services intention to issue those individuals a new banded contract. The FBU have repeatedly challenged the service on this matter as those employees have not agreed in full and therefore should not count. Now these employees are becoming gravely concerned and wish to change their stance to a resounding NO. The FBU have requested that the service is transparent in their actions and requests and that they should contact those who part agreed asking that they either agree in full or vote NO. This will ensure that they stay on their current contract of employment.

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service did not tell anyone that should an employee vote no to the services Proposed Banded Retainer scheme that the employee would be able to remain on their current contract. In fact the service said that should an employee vote NO they would be subject to an interview and asked why they voted NO and then they would be asked to vote YES. It is **FACT** that HFRS management did not furnish the following information within the letter:

1. *Those who said NO would be left on their old contract.*
2. *Banded Retainers would affect Annual Leave.*
3. *Statements of Availability to enforced upon staff.*

The FBU are sure that if this information was included in the initial letter from the service a very different voting outcome would have been clear. The service is creating anything it can to save money by any means and it would seem that stealth is prevalent.

Dear Member,

January 2011

As you may be aware there have been significant issues affecting RDS in the last several months around pay, contracts and leave which has been proposed by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS). The Hampshire Fire Brigade Union (HFBU) is opposing these proposals from HFRS to move away from the Grey Book Conditions of Service in respect of RDS pay and Annual Leave, in particular the retainer fee and the percentage paid for such availability. HFRS are proposing the following:

HFRS Proposal

100% - represents cover between 120 and 144 hours per week. You will be expected to attend all calls within your agreed available times and you will ride the appliance for at least 70% of those calls

80% - represents cover between 94 and 119 hours per week. You will be expected to attend all calls within your agreed available times and you will ride the appliance for at least 70% of those calls

60% - represents cover between 68 and 93 hours per week. You will be expected to attend all calls within your agreed available times and you will ride the appliance for at least 70% of those calls

40% - represents cover between 30 and 67 hours per week. You will be expected to attend all calls within your agreed available times and you will ride the appliance for at least 70% of those calls

HFRS propose to pay the same percentage of the retainer fee as represented by the contract described above. The HFBU view is that personnel conditioned to the RDS system receive a minimum of 75% of the retainer fee. If they perform more than 120 hours they receive 100% retainer fee as laid down in the Grey Book. HFBU have no objection to contracts being described as 40%, 60%, 80% and 100% as long as the minimum retainer fee is 75%. With this in mind the HFBU intend to ask that the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) of the National Joint Council (NJC) support the pay and conditions which are laid out in the Grey Book and reject the proposals by HFRS. The HFBU will also be asking that any contracts signed by employees of HFRS with this clause in are revoked and returned to the agreed conditions of the Grey Book.

In addition to these proposals, HFRS now want to amend the leave entitlement of RDS personnel and depending on their contract give only that percentage of leave days. The HFBU view is that RDS personnel are entitled to 35 days leave (35 days x 24 hour block free from duty and paid.) This is reduced to 28 days for personnel who have not completed 5 years service as laid down in the Grey Book.

The rationale for maintaining the 35 days is simple in that a person on reduced availability could be giving that over a five day period each week. If they only receive 40% of the leave, this would prevent them from taking enough weeks off work to have a holiday that in most cases would tie up with their full time employment, regardless of who employs them in that.

However, using a WT/RDS as an example who only provides 40% availability that would mean they would only effectively be able to use 14 days or two weeks of their leave. The rest of the time when they are on leave from their full time contract they would be required to still provide cover for their RDS contract and potentially this means they would be discriminated against on the grounds of their part time working.

Leave is provided to give personnel sufficient breaks from their work commitment. ***Under the leave service order for HFRS, leave is provided as a health and safety requirement*** and is for the individual to use, they are not allowed to give it away. With the HFRS proposal it would appear HFRS do not recognise the same health and safety requirement for RDS staff.

HFBU is proposing to the NJC that leave for RDS is maintained as per Grey Book 35 days, 35 x 24 hour periods free from duty paid. This is reduced for employees with less than five years service. With this in mind the HFBU will be asking that the TAP of the NJC support the leave conditions laid out in the Grey Book and reject the proposals by HFRS. The HFBU are also asking that any contracts signed by employees of HFRS with this clause in are revoked and returned to the agreed conditions of the Grey Book.

Q. What does this mean to the average RDS employee?

*A. Nothing RDS will carry on as usual. The HFBU want to stop the Banded Retainer Scheme and the reduction in leave that HFRS want to impose on its employees as it is lesser conditions that are currently enjoyed by **ALL** RDS employees.*

All RDS are aware that when HFRS balloted its employees on the proposed banded retainer system, HFRS did not furnish all the information on what it was planning! HFRS did not tell the RDS employees that it would also cut the annual leave allowance and couple that with the fact that HFRS has also allowed those who said NO to stay on their old contract you can plainly see key information was in our view withheld. The HFBU will not negotiate inappropriate conditions which are below current for our members. If you have a view on this matter please contact retained.chair@hantsfbu.org.uk or retained.sec@hantsfbu.org.uk

Yours Sincerely

Hampshire Fire Brigade Union