

Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities

***Monday, 13 December 2010 at 12.30 pm
County Hall***

Items for Decision

The items for decision under individual Cabinet Members' delegated powers are listed overleaf, with indicative timings, and the related reports are attached. Decisions taken will become effective at the end of the working day on 21 December 2010 unless called in by that date for review by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the reports are circulated (by e-mail) to all members of the County Council.

These proceedings are open to the public



Peter G. Clark
County Solicitor

December 2010

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Note: Date of next meeting: 10 January 2011

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Items for Decision

1. Declarations of Interest

2. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am on the working day before the meeting, ask a question on any matter in respect of the Cabinet Member's delegated powers.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

3. Petitions and Public Address

4. Conditions of Service/Remuneration Arrangements for Fire Fighters on the Retained Duty System (Pages 1 - 6)

Cabinet Member: Safer & Stronger Communities

Forward Plan Ref: 2010/172

Contact: Chris Stevenson, Business & Improvement Officer, Tel (01865) 855211

12:30

Report by Chief Fire Officer (**CMDSSC4**).

The Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) require the Chief Fire Officer to end the pay trial with effect from 31 March 2011; and***
- b) require the Chief Fire Officer to continue to explore ways in which Retained Duty System recruitment and retention can be improved.***

5. The Future of the South East Fire and Rescue Service's Regional Management Board (Pages 7 - 10)

Forward Plan Ref: 2010/198

Contact: John Lloyd, Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Tel: (01865) 855205

12:35

Report by Chief Fire Officer (**CMDSSC5**).

The Cabinet Member Safer & Stronger Communities is RECOMMENDED to:

- (a) agree to support the closure of the South East Regional Management Board at the appropriate time; and***
 - (b) agree to support the use of a South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) format in its place.***
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Division(s): All

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES 13 DECEMBER 2010

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE/REMUNERATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR FIRE FIGHTERS ON THE RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM

Report by Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

1. In 2009 a trial pay scheme was introduced with the aim of increasing commitment, recruitment and retention and competency within the retained duty workforce. The pay system works on a formula that front-loads pay, i.e. working on rewarding firefighters on 86.6% of declared availability, which includes the average number of incidents over a 5 year rolling period falling in their contracted cover (i.e. an individual providing 84 hours cover per week (half of available hours in a week) at station X, which has an average of 200 calls per year will, in theory, attend half the calls in their contracted hours, which equates to 100 calls). This figure of 100 is then multiplied by 86.6%, which takes in to account leave, sickness and courses. The remaining number of incidents is then further adjusted to reflect a turnout (where a retained duty system (RDS) firefighter is alerted and rides the appliance) or an attendance, where RDS staff will have been alerted and attended the station but failed to ride the appliance. Turnouts attract 1 hour of pay whereas attendance attracts 30 minutes of pay.
2. One of the risks initially identified with the scheme was that it could cost more because extra pay could be earned by doing extra hours e.g. for community safety work.
3. The Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities agreed to a three year trial of the scheme, with a review at the 11, 22 and 34 month stages. The scheme went live in September 2009 and the 11 month review commenced in July 2010.

Retained Pay Trial - Review Methodology

4. The review was undertaken using several methods, including a questionnaire to those on the scheme; a pay comparison of what a sample of people would have been paid on the old scheme compared to on the trial; the impacts on retention and unavailability and an audit review of the assessment methods.

Questionnaire to those on the scheme

5. A questionnaire was issued to the crews on the 8 stations and the return rate was circa 50%.
 - 61% of those who responded said their pay had reduced

CMDSSC

- 57% said their ability to plan their time off had not changed
- 69% said the scheme had made no difference to their ability to ride the appliance
- 48% said it had made no change to their ability to plan their finances but 46% said they could plan their finances better on the scheme
- 63% said the new scheme made no difference to their commitment and their availability
- 37% said the best thing about the new scheme was guaranteed pay but 29% said there was nothing better
- 57% said there was nothing worse about the scheme.

The results showed that the scheme did not, in the view of those who responded, make any difference to their commitment to the service or their chance to actually attend an incident and maintain their competence.

Pay comparison analysis

6. This covered the period from Sep 09 to Aug 10 and was a sample based on 2 people from each station on the scheme (i.e. 16 in total). This analysis shows that overall the scheme has cost circa £1,000 less overall for the individuals assessed in the analysis. However, some crew members have received less pay whilst others have received more. When the trial was initially agreed it was thought that the salary costs for retained fire fighters could increase by up to £400k. The pay analysis to date has shown no indication of increased costs. Holiday pay is affected by any extra hours worked and is calculated annually. The holiday pay rate is not determined by the actual hours worked but by the number of hours crew book as available for cover.
7. Because the scheme is based on a rolling 5 year average of station call out those who do less hours still get a salary based on the average number of station call outs over the last 5 years.
8. The pay analysis showed that the scheme is not costing more because the extra hours that people can work are being managed effectively. There are differences between individual pay though and the scheme appears to pay less to those who provide part cover although it is not clear why. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that many people on the new pay scheme are reluctant to provide additional fire cover as it is not sufficiently financially rewarding.

Retention

9. The number of retained staff leaving in 2009 and in 2010 to date, from the stations on the scheme is shown below.

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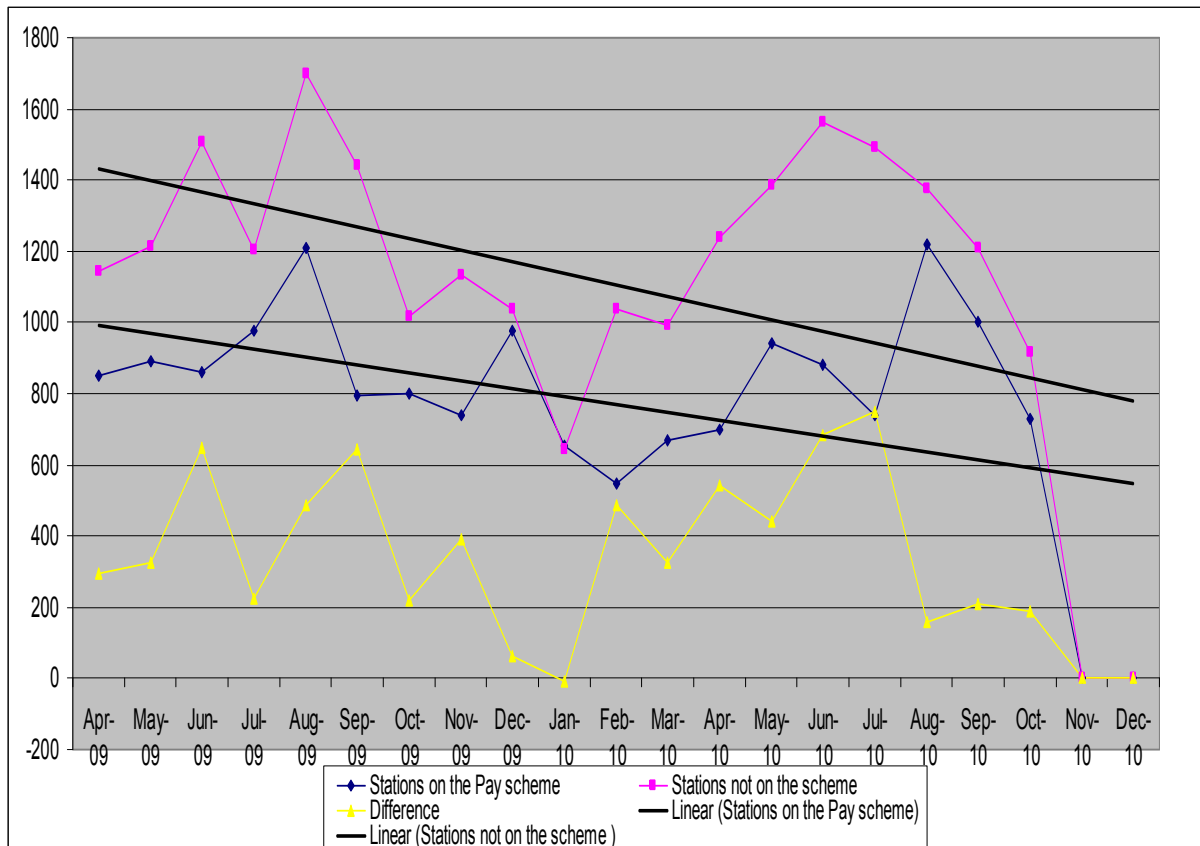
Station	2009	2010
Banbury	0	2
Kidlington	2	2
Deddington	0	1
Eynsham	2	1
Bampton	0	0
Henley	0	6
Wantage	1	1
Goring	0	2
Total	5	15

10. There is no indication in the reason for leaving of any links to the new pay scheme. The exit interview data has been checked with HR and of those recorded none referred to the pay scheme. With this in mind it is difficult to say that the data re leavers has any real significance in assessing the scheme. However, the question of whether the scheme had affected commitment to the service was asked in the questionnaire to those on the scheme and 63% said it made no difference to their commitment or availability.

Impact on unavailability of retained staff

11. The graph below shows the retained unavailability at stations on the scheme and stations not on the scheme.

Total hours of retained unavailability per month – see graph below:-



12. The above graph shows unavailability for those stations on the scheme (8 stations – in blue) and for the 16 stations not on the scheme (in pink). The linear trend lines for each of these groups show a move towards reduced unavailability on all stations which is positive. If the reduction in non availability was being positively affected by the conditions in the trial, it could be reasonably be expected that the rate of reduction (i.e. the steepness of the linear trend line) for the 8 trial stations would be greater than the reduction in those stations not on the scheme. This is not the case and the gap between the lines has closed over recent months which tends to support the proposition that the trial is not making an additional difference to reducing non availability. The analysis takes into account seasonal trends and recognises that there are other factors that impact. This includes the impact if one highly skilled retained firefighter leaves and the length of time it takes to train another person.
13. Bampton, Goring and Henley all now have retained service support officers (RSSOs) in place and this is also making a difference to availability. Henley in particular has shown decreases in retained unavailability since the RSSO was in place. Therefore the improvement could be due to that and not the pay scheme. It is very difficult to isolate any one component that affects unavailability.

Audit Review

14. Additionally, Oxfordshire County Council's audit team was asked to review the data analysis undertaken and comment on its accuracy and relevance. Their initial verbal feedback was that there was only limited information being presented to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to enable a decision to be made but they were not suggesting that there was anything new that could be added. The work undertaken on retained availability and pay comparisons has been checked by the auditor and she is satisfied with the methodology. One small issue was found on the pay comparison but this has been corrected and does not cause any issues.

Senior Leadership Team – Options Appraisal/Overall analysis

15. The SLT considered the data from the review of the scheme and options for the way forward.
16. It was clear that, as identified during the audit there was little data that could be used to assess whether the scheme is meeting its objectives of increased recruitment, retention and competence, in addition to rewarding commitment and improving work life balance. As a result SLT have undertaken a monitoring programme of trial effectiveness via station visits and have supplemented the information available by their professional judgement.
17. SLT considered that the questionnaire did not give a clear view either in favour of or against the trial but on balance, with the comments it was considered that the scheme was not widely valued by those on it.

18. The pay comparison showed that of the sample being considered there was no overall increase in the pay bill but there was concern at the fact that it was difficult to assess a longer term impact, especially if all stations were on the scheme.
19. Retention was considered difficult to assess because there is little information available from exit interviews and no specific questions were asked about how the scheme impacted. The information from the questionnaire gave more meaningful data re retention when 63% of those who responded said the trial made no difference to their commitment or availability.
20. The impact in terms of reducing unavailability is also difficult to assess because of other changes that have also impacted, e.g. retained service support officers. However, there is no clear evidence that the trial has reduced unavailability.
21. Considering all of the above, SLT was of the opinion, that there was insufficient positive information pointing to the benefits of continuing the trial. Therefore the decision made was to recommend that the trial be ended with effect from 31 March 2011.

Financial and Staff Implications

22. The trial was intended to improve recruitment and retention to the RDS system, engage with personnel, improve their current conditions of service and provide improved value and job satisfaction. The analysis above shows that the trial has not been shown to meet its objectives. The 8 stations currently on the trial would revert to the existing pay scheme from 1 April 2011. This lead in time would enable them to re-assess their contracted hours and ensure that the transition is managed effectively.
23. When the scheme was initially set up one of the greatest risks identified was financial. This was because of the opportunity to work additional hours to increase pay. A potential overspend on the budget was being forecast this financial year and in order to contain it, additional hours have been tightly managed. There have been no long term forecasts on the financial implications if all stations were on the trial scheme. This is difficult to undertake because the salary element of the scheme is based on a 5 year rolling average of incidents. This means that a high level of call outs in one year (e.g. because of flooding) can cause an increase in the base salary for the next 5 years. If all the stations were on the scheme then that sort of incident could have a significant impact on future salary costs.
24. .

RECOMMENDATION

27. **The Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities is RECOMMENDED to:**

CMDSSC

- (a) require the Chief Fire Officer to end the pay trial with effect from 31 March 2011; and**
- (b) require the Chief Fire Officer to continue to explore ways in which Retained Duty System recruitment and retention can be improved.**

DAVE ETHERIDGE
Chief Fire Officer

Background papers: Report to Cabinet Member 23 March 2009

Contact Officer: Chris Stevenson; Business and Improvement Manager.
Tel 01865 855211

November 2010

Division(s): All

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES 13 DECEMBER 2010

THE FUTURE OF THE SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES' REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

Report by Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

1. At the launch of the Fire Futures' strategic review of Fire and Rescue Services on 28 July 2010, the Fire Minister, Bob Neill MP, announced that he will allow more freedom for individual Fire Authorities to work on a collaborative basis in a way that best suits local needs and not determined by previous regional boundaries.
2. The South East Fire and Rescue Services' Regional Management Board (SE RMB) was established under primary legislation and under the terms of the RMB's constitution, there is no provision for the RMB to abolish itself. There is, therefore, a decision to be made by each Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) within the region on whether they will continue to collaborate and if so, how this will be achieved to maximise the benefits offered.
3. It is accepted that the SE RMB has worked well in recent years and has provided a number of significant projects and efficiency savings.

Background

4. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 required the relevant Minister to create a National Framework document that would provide Fire Authorities with the government's expectations and priorities. The National Framework 2008-11 confirmed the requirement for Fire Authorities to work collaboratively on a regional basis via the use of Regional Management Boards (RMBs).
5. The South East Fire and Rescue Services' Regional Management Board was established in 2004 by the nine Fire and Rescue Services in the South-East: Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Royal Berkshire, Surrey and West Sussex.
6. Its membership comprises the Chairman or Portfolio Holder of each Service. The Chairman of the Board is appointed annually and is currently Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities.
7. Board meetings are held every three months. Elected Members of the RMB are asked to act as the 'scrutiny' panel and to assure themselves that the outcomes they agree in their plan are being delivered. Chief Fire Officers also perform a scrutiny function, whilst also approving business cases for projects in the plan.

8. The South East was the first Regional Management Board in England to create a “fire only” improvement partnership and it is a model that has been picked up by the Fire and Rescue sector as a model of good practice.
9. Fire and Rescue Services in the South East have formed an improvement partnership – the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP). SEFIP is a member of the regional improvement and efficiency partnership – known as IESE, or Improvement and Efficiency South East. This group is able to approve funding for projects which SEFIP want to run. SEFIP is also the programme management function for the Regional Management Board. It reports to the SEFIP Stakeholder Group which is currently the Chief Officers of Kent, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Buckinghamshire. This group will approve the project plans once business cases have been approved.
10. SEFIP is a small team but it draws in significant support from Fire and Rescue Services to deliver projects on behalf of the Board. They also have an extensive resources section on the SEFIP website which includes briefing notes, newsletters, case studies of good practice and all papers from RMB meetings.
11. This approach has been proactive through joint initiatives, particularly around procurement, standardisation of operational procedures and equality and diversity.
12. To date, the SE RMB has achieved a number of notable successes including the following:
 - SEFIP website created and currently hosted by Kent FRS;
 - Created three year business plans with agreed expectations;
 - With regard to procurement, the nine Services within the South East already collaborate in terms of the selection and purchasing of work wear and are currently reaching the finishing stages of contracts covering respiratory equipment and fire kit;
 - The work wear contract is available to all English Fire and Rescue Services and has proved so beneficial that some 26 Fire Authorities now procure through this contract, which has delivered efficiencies and economies of scale and has avoided the need for 25 other fire authorities to endure the tendering process;
 - In 2008/09 SEFIP/RMB generated £534k of efficiency savings which led to a letter of congratulations from the government. In 2009/10 another £2.4m was generated;
 - Seven of the nine FRSs (including Oxfordshire) have achieved Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. In 2006, when the support started, no FRS was achieving this;
 - Working on a collaborative approach to fire investigation;
 - Developed shared community safety campaigns e.g. www.standbyourpan.com. This has been supported by a common approach to community risk intelligence using the data we all hold to improve what we know about the public we serve. The first regional customer insight survey [April-June 2009] has helped to guide community

safety interventions to the public using the most effective ways to get safety messages to people based on their lifestyle. The survey suggested that 25% of people have changed their behaviour as a result of what SEFIP members have said to them.

13. There is no direct financial implication to OFRS other than attendance costs at the meetings, which could be held anywhere in the South East Region (video conferencing is used whenever possible to minimise travel and cost). Administrative and other related costs were funded by the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP), which Oxfordshire contributed to. This arrangement would continue if the recommendation is accepted.

Financial and Staff Implications

14. There are no staff implications relating to this paper.
15. There is no direct financial implication to OFRS other than attendance costs at the meetings, which could be held anywhere in the South East Region (video conferencing is used whenever possible to minimise travel and cost). Administrative and other related costs were funded by the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP), which Oxfordshire contributed to. This arrangement would continue if the recommendation is accepted.

Background to the Recommendation

16. It is recommended that the Regional Management Board be wound-up at such time that the primary legislation is amended after each FRA has sought and achieved agreement in principle to this move locally. This could be progressed across the region in the coming months whilst accepting that any amendment to the legislation is unlikely to take place before Christmas 2010.
17. At a SE RMB meeting on 6 October 2010, it was agreed that the recommended approach would be to use the South East Fire Improvement Partnership to replace the SE RMB. The remit of the SEFIP would be broadly similar to the SE RMB but would no longer be constrained by the requirement to work regionally.
18. SEFIP has a website and an effective infrastructure in place that will enable it to continue the excellent work done in the past by the SE RMB. It also has in place contacts with similar schemes elsewhere in the country that can be used effectively to share good practice and potentially share efficiencies.

RECOMMENDATION

19. **The Cabinet Member Safer & Stronger Communities is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **agree to support the closure of the South East Regional Management Board at the appropriate time; and**

- (b) agree to support the use of a South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) format in its place.**

DAVID ETHERIDGE
Chief Fire Officer

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: John Lloyd, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Tel: 01865 855206 or 07775827270

November 2010