



AGENDA ITEM: 8

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

16th November 2009

RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM (RDS) RECRUITMENT

Report by Ruth Simmons, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report outlines a proposed approach to the recruitment of personnel, whose primary employment is with other public sector organisations, to the retained duty system.

Background

- 2 Members will be aware that the Service has difficulty in recruiting to some RDS stations particularly for providing daytime cover. RDS firefighters either commit to be fully or semi retained which represents being available for 120 and 90 hours per week respectively. The rigidity of these national conditions are unattractive to many people and this is thought to impact upon recruitment.
- 3 Retention is also problematic. In 2008-09 50 RDS firefighters left the Service which represents 8.72% of all RDS firefighters. For the same period the Service was able to recruit 38 individuals which equates to 29.25 full time equivalents.
- 4 In the Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales, 2008-2011, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) made a commitment to work with FRAs in encouraging more people to apply to join the Fire and Rescue Service as firefighters on the RDS. WAG committed to target public sector partners to encourage the release of employees for retained duty service.

Information

- 5 At the end of October, the Chair of the Authority attended a UK-wide conference where a toolkit was launched to assist FRSs engage with other employers for the purpose of improving RDS recruitment. It highlights the business benefits of releasing personnel to be 'on call firefighters' most notably that employees will be trained, and will develop experience, in:
 - First Aid training and trauma care
 - Risk Assessments along with other health and safety training
 - Leadership skills and team work
 - Self discipline, commitment and motivation
 - Specialist skills such as heavy goods vehicle driving.
- 4 NWFRS has already produced its own Employer Pack for use in recruitment campaigns, detailing the benefits to local primary employers of releasing personnel to the Fire and Rescue Service. Additional information contained in the pack paints a realistic picture of the likely demands placed upon employers in terms of daytime absence.
- 5 Recently the Service has refocused its recruitment strategy to engage with employers rather than individuals directly. However, within that strategy the approach has been generic and not specific to the Public Sector. Whilst the generic approach has been reasonably successful, the number of individuals currently employed by both NWFRS and the constituent Local Authorities is modest. It is now considered appropriate to develop a more targeted strategy with initial focus upon the constituent Local Authorities before extending the approach to other public sector partners.
- 6 The Clerk to the Authority has kindly agreed to lead on establishing a dialogue between the Service and colleagues from the constituent authorities and other public employers to identify mutual business benefits in serving the community through RDS partnerships.

- 7 The intention to target our efforts will be extended to cross-mapping areas where daytime RDS availability requires improvement and where there are Local Authority workplaces.

Recommendation

- 8 That Members note the contents of the report.