

Union Membership

We are aware that a number of personnel on the RDS are currently not in any union. This could be due to a number of reasons, apathy or the belief that 'unions' do not have the same 'values' as themselves. One thing is certain, nobody in the British Fire Service is immune to, accidents, bullying and harassment, or even the effects of poor management. It is our belief that all personnel on the RDS should be a member of an organisation (even if it is not the RFU) which will act as insurance cover should the unforeseen happen. Membership of the RFU is the vehicle for making changes within your brigade for the benefit of all of us on the RDS.

Get involved

With our imminent seat on the new NJC, Fire Services will be requesting RFU representation on all fire service matters and provides RDS personnel access to the process of change. If you are interested in representing the RFU locally or nationally, please contact a member of your local committee or RFU HQ.

Fire Service Morale at an all-time low

Pay dispute - update

It would seem that the threat of strike action is upon us once more, with both sides of the current NJC failing to come to agreement over the wording of 'stand-down' time. This will subsequently hold-up the release of the outstanding 3.5% pay increase owed to fire service personnel as part of Stage 2. These monies will eventually be back-dated to 7 November 2003.

Stage 3 of the June 2003 agreement remains conditional on completion of outstanding negotiations between the FBU and the National Employers on grievance and disciplinary procedures and verification by the Audit Commission. This pay increase (4.2%) will be backdated to 1 July 2004.

Fire Service Morale

The on-going 'soap-like' wrangling between the FBU and the National Employers is dragging morale within the service down to an all-time low. The vast majority of retained personnel are totally fed up with this whole episode and are wishing that it would come to a conclusion so that they can look forward to the "Retained-friendly Fire Service" that has been promised to them and looking forward to professional representation at the highest level nationally via the new NJC. The only plus point of the current situation is that the RFU have not been party to the national breakdown and that things can only get better when we are part of the new NJC.

Strike Action?

We believe that the ballot for strike action is likely to be a close call in comparison to 2002. Personnel on the Retained Duty System (RDS) who did take strike action in 2002/3 (approx. one-third) are less likely to support the FBU this time around, WHY SHOULD THEY-FOR WHAT POSSIBLE GAIN? This will definitely reduce the effects of industrial action outside of metropolitan areas. FBU membership in all areas has seen a dramatic decline over recent months to the benefit of the RFU and FOA.

So what are the RFU doing?

We have been working vigorously behind the scenes ensuring that Retained views are heard where it really matters. As you know from past newsletters due to our contribution to the Commons Select Committee, Bain Review, The White Paper, Fire Service National Framework document and the Retained Review Team, not to mention our seat on the Practitioners' Forum (group which advises the Fire Service minister) the RDS is no longer an afterthought when compiling modernisation plans. All the above documents are available on the

RFU website. Anyone questioning the role of the RFU over the past 2 years should refer to these publications.

120 hours

We would like to clarify a couple of differentials between the FBU and RFU policy's which have come to light recently.

- Firstly it is the RFU's belief that RDS personnel should be allowed to provide more than 120 hours availability if they so wish. At a recent national meeting the FBU made it clear that 120 hours should be an absolute maximum.
- Secondly is the issue of Community (Fire) Safety (CFS). At the same meeting the FBU stated that CFS should not be performed by Retained personnel, there were plenty of 'others' to do this.

The RFU's stance is that CFS (which is part of a firefighter's role-map) should be the duty of all firefighters, irrespective of the duty system they are employed on. It is our belief that is a cynical attempt to divert this part of our role map away from RDS personnel to justify other duty systems.

Poor Management/Bullying & Harassment

The RFU are aware of the large increase in cases whereby our members are suffering due to poor management and/or bullying and harassment. While it was made clear within the Bain report and the subsequent White Paper that some elements of brigade management left a lot to be desired, we are hopeful that the ODPM's new management training course will overcome these problems which are affecting RFU members.

As an organisation we will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment directed at our members and brigades need to be reminded of their duty of care to all staff and adhere to their own policies.

Recognition & Membership

Yet another Fire Service has granted the RFU recognition, with Nottinghamshire being the latest FRS to support the RFU's aims and objectives for the benefit of Retained personnel. Gradually one by one Fire Services around the country are contacting either local or national officials suggesting the RFU should submit updated recognition requests. These agreements will ensure the RFU voice is heard within areas where previously the silence was deafening.

Not before time the penny has finally dropped leaving disillusioned and disgruntled Retained FBU members reflecting on the fact that they have been badly let down by their union with non existent hope of any change in attitudes.

Over the past month we have been swamped with requests by non-members to visit their stations to outline the benefits of joining the RFU, a union with no conflicts of interest.

Retained Review Team

The Retained Review Team finally produced its findings and proposals which it believes will improve recruitment & retention issues nationally. Sensing the impact on other duty systems the FBU pulled out of the RRT stating that the body had 'expanded above and beyond its remit'.

The document can be viewed via the RFU website. We will let you be the judge as to whether the document supports your views on how to improve the RDS. We welcome your comments at rrt@rfuonline.co.uk