

## ***NEWSLETTER-JUNE 06***

### **Pensions Update**

We know that members are confused by their pension options, which is why the RFU has sent every member a personal update of information on the current pension changes. Members now also have access to a "*Pensions Hotline*" from which they can obtain information on their own personal options. You are urged to use this in order to obtain advice on both your fire service and your private pension options.

### **Launch of Member Benefits**

Every RFU member has been sent personal details of an exciting new range of benefits that are exclusive to members, including:

- Free £20,000 accidental death cover, on/off duty - no deduction for any other payments received.
- Pensions advice hotline for fire service and any other pensions-see above.
- The opportunity to save thousands on existing financial arrangements-you can cover your RFU subs and much more.

Check out details on our website under "*RFU Money*" or telephone the contact numbers in the leaflets sent to you.

### **Retained Review Team**

We are very pleased to hear that the Department for Communities and Local Government (previously ODPM) are picking up the issues in the recommendations of the Review that was carried out in 2004/5. Despite some pockets of good practice in several fire and rescue services, there has been inadequate progress in resolving the many issues affecting the efficiency of the retained duty system.

Please send us your views - good or bad - on what is happening out there, so our representatives can feed them in to this renewed process.

### **Hertfordshire Dispute and Modernisation Update**

The FBU strikes in Hertfordshire continue; RFU members are covering their own communities.

The dispute in Hertfordshire raises wider issues about the ineffectiveness and lack of real objectivity in the IRMP process. We are told that Ministers cannot intervene in democratic decisions that have been achieved through the process of public consultation. Yet, those decisions are now being radically changed behind closed doors in negotiations over the current strikes. That is not democracy.

And again, it looks like RDS stations will go to the wall to prop up working practices that should be subject to independent scrutiny. This is not just an issue in Hertfordshire, but one that affects the whole of the Service, and needs radical change, which some thought was actually going to happen after the Bain report.

We are relieved to see that so far there has been no adverse effect on the public during the Hertfordshire strikes. In fact, as in previous national and local disputes, call levels have dropped to a negligible level. We do not accept the argument that

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the risk to the public of the proposed changes justifies the risk to the public from going on strike. We hope that the effect on the public during further strikes continues to be minimal - but on the other hand, this raises difficult questions about the level of resources needed when there are no strikes.

### **NJC Update**

Representatives from the RFU met with Representatives from the National Employers on 12<sup>th</sup> May, and discussed the following issues:

- *Continual Professional Development (CPD) Payments - we exchanged ideas on what such payments may cover.*
- *Bounty Payments - we thanked the Employers for acting promptly to our concerns.*
- *Rank to Role - we advised the Employers that this was another disaster arising out of the 2003 Pay Agreement, which failed to adequately address retained issues.*
- *Resilience and Contingency planning - we advised the Employers that the key to flexible use of RDS personnel during emergencies was the flexible use of RDS at other times.*
- *Pensions Reform - we advised the Employers of the views of our National Executive on the need for urgent and flexible pension provisions for RDS.*
- *NJC and Industrial Relations Reform – clearly continuing strikes by some FRS staff indicate we have some way to go on these reforms.*

### **Death of Member**

It is with deep regret that we report the death of a member in an off-duty RTC. RFU representatives attended his funeral and condolences have been sent to his widow and young family. Arrangements are being made to pay his dependents the £20,000 due under the RFU's free cover for members.

### **Vacancy for National General Secretary**

Derek Chadbon will retire in June 2007, after nearly ten years in the post of the RFU's National General Secretary. The National Executive Council is seeking applications/nominations from within the membership for a role that is vital during this unprecedented period of change in the fire and rescue service.

Derek's successor will need to be able to demonstrate that they have the necessary skills and abilities in order to provide the strategic direction of the RFU during challenging times. The paramount responsibility of this post is to support and lead the membership. The RFU has established a reputation for effective advocacy on behalf of RDS personnel, and the person taking up this post will need to be able to continue this work. They will need a successful track record of delivering change and the communication skills to influence and promote the interests of members at the highest levels of Government and through the many organisations in the fire and rescue service.

The post will be based at Attleborough, Norfolk, and the person who is successful will be expected to assume many of the duties in a designate capacity, hopefully towards the end of this year. Salary and other benefits will be subject to negotiation with the successful applicant. Interested members should contact Derek for an initial informal discussion on 01953 455005.