Cornwall County Council
Public Protection Policy
Development and Scrutiny Committee

Review of RETAINED FIRE SERVICE - Single Issue Panel
December 2005
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Introduction by Andrew Mitchell

Cornwall relies heavily on the ‘Retained’ element of the Fire Service, with our retained firefighters outnumbering our Full-time firefighters by more than 2 to 1.

Members of the Public Protection Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee had the future workings of the Cornwall County Fire Brigade particularly the recruitment and retention of retained firefighters down as a piece of work that needed careful and urgent consideration. This piece of work became a priority after the concerns expressed by many of our firefighters following the pay settlement. Following this, the Single Issue Panel was set up.

The work has also coincided with the biggest changes to the Fire Service nationally in over 50 years such as the Modernisation Process and Integrated Risk Management Planning, all of which have an impact on the Fire Service generally and therefore on our employees.

Meetings were set up across the county where views from throughout the Brigade were expressed freely. There was no agenda as the members present were there to listen and enquire.

The views expressed at the different venues were very similar so the panel members were sure that these were valid across the Brigade and not localised to any particular area or station.

As with any scrutiny into areas such as morale, culture, pay and conditions any resulting changes will have a budgetary impact and there will be winners and losers when changes are implemented.

Some will also be of the view that the recommendations do not go far enough and others will hold the view they go too far. The members of the panel have been enquiring and un-biased in their deliberations and for that I wish to thank them as also to the witnesses who gave their time and knowledge – thank you.

I believe this has been a very positive start to what must be an on-going look at the Fire Service in Cornwall and how we treat our firefighters. The dedication and professionalism of all in Cornwall County Fire Service is undoubted, but we can always do better. The people of Cornwall do not distinguish between our firefighters when they attend an incident – neither must we as an employer.

“A major problem for the fire and rescue service is the recruitment of retained firefighters. Nationally it is about 20% short of the complement. […] The recruitment problems stem in part from the level of pay, the lack of a pension, the lack of development opportunities, and the often inflexible availability system-in short, a lack of recognition of their contribution”

Source: Evidence presented to Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions, Our Fire and Rescue Service Cm 5808, June 2003 p. 8.27
Background and Terms of Reference

Cornwall County Council is the Fire and Rescue Authority for Cornwall. Cornwall County Fire Brigade provides three main services:

- fire safety education;
- fire safety enforcement (fire safety enforcement covers the enforcing of various pieces of legislation including primary fire safety legislation); and
- fire and emergency response.

The Brigade has 31 fire stations, managed by three Divisional Headquarters. Two stations are staffed 24 hours a day, five are staffed 10 hours a day with a retained crew on call and have staff on call at other times. The other 24 are retained stations with staff always on-call, known as the Retained Duty System (RDS). A map showing the location of all fire stations in Cornwall is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Map of Fire Stations in Cornwall

Source: Cornwall Fire Brigade (2004)
Although the Brigade consists of 31 stations and seeks to provide a consistent service across Cornwall, each station has its own identity and characteristics and a degree of autonomy and flexibility in the application of Brigade-wide procedures and processes necessary in a varying and rapidly changing environment. The stations are supported by the Technical and Administrative Support functions, which are based at Brigade Headquarters in Truro. There is a Brigade vehicle fleet of forty-three fire appliances, two aerial ladder platforms, two rescue tenders, three water carriers, one command and control vehicle, one operational support vehicle, two environmental support vehicles and twenty-three light four-wheel drive vehicles. As of 01 October 2004, the establishment level of the Brigade was 732 with a strength of 711. This can be broken down into 197 full time firefighters with 8 vacancies (4.0%) and 412 retained firefighters with 13 vacancies (3.1%), 17 mobilising and communications centre staff and 85 administrative and technical support staff.

In recent years, staff turnover has varied and, for the retained element of the Brigade, turnover is given in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Retained firefighter turnover

![Figure 2: Retained firefighter turnover](image)

Source: Cornwall Fire Brigade (2004)
Table 1 gives annual turnover as a percentage of the approved establishment for retained firefighters.

Table 1: Turnover as a % of Approved Establishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of Leavers</th>
<th>% of leavers according to approved establishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005 (projection)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cornwall Fire Brigade (2004)

More detailed analysis of these figures, with reasons for leaving, is given later. These vacancy rates are similar to elsewhere in the Council and are lower than in some areas, e.g. children’s social workers (approximately 7%). Compared to nationally quoted figures and figures referred to elsewhere, the current vacancy and turnover rate in Cornwall is low as signified by comparing establishment and strength figures across England and Wales and with Brigades in the same ‘Audit Family’ as Cornwall and with others in the South West as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of Establishment and Strength of Retained Service as of 31 March 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brigade</th>
<th>Establishment</th>
<th>Strength (see note 1.)</th>
<th>% Shortfall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>3.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>14.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Wight</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>3.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>0.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shropshire</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>13.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>14.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwickshire</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>7.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit Family Total</td>
<td>1,892</td>
<td>1,721</td>
<td>9.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>19.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>14.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England &amp; Wales Total</td>
<td>14,910</td>
<td>12,216</td>
<td>18.1 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Note – In 24 hour units of cover

As reported to a Select Committee of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the retained service nationally:

“A major problem for the fire and rescue service is the recruitment of retained firefighters. Nationally it is about 20% short of the complement. [...] The recruitment problems stem in part from the level of pay, the lack of a pension, the lack of development opportunities, and the often inflexible availability system - in short, a lack of recognition of their contribution”

However that is not to say that the recruitment and retention of all firefighters is not a concern, as turnover and vacancy rates appear to be decreasing from the 2003-04 peak. It is becoming evident that local changes, particularly in the local economy, may have a significant influence on future patterns. At the same time, the Fire Service is facing significant changes in other areas, all of which combine to lower morale within a service where commitment and team work are essential.

In simple terms, Cornwall County Fire Brigade is ostensibly a retained service, with retained firefighters making up nearly 60% of service personnel. Retained firefighters are fully trained men and women living and working in local communities who are ‘retained’ on an on-call basis to act as firefighters. In the last 12 months the level of vacancies and unavailability due to leave and illness has meant that, on occasions, a retained appliance has had to be ‘taken off the run’, i.e. local station does not have enough personnel available (currently 5 personnel) to operate the appliance. From January to October 2004, this occurred on 72 occasions equating to 904 hours of fire cover. Across Cornwall, this represents approximately 0.4% of possible cover which, to those in the areas affected, is very significant.

The Fire Brigade has well developed and well respected performance management reports and the Service’s management teams receive a detailed report on performance on a monthly basis and has a de briefing after every major incident. Details of current performance are given in Appendix A.

The Changing Community

Clearly, the retained duty system is a fundamental cornerstone in providing an effective fire and rescue service in Cornwall, which is a rural, sparsely-populated county with a lengthy coastline. In recent years, socio-demographic and economic changes in Cornwall, particularly with changes in work patterns, have had a significant effect on the retained duty system as many people no longer work within their local community, making it difficult for them to be part of the retained service. This is having significant recruitment problems in many stations, particularly the more remote coastal stations within small communities e.g. Polruan, St Mawes.

It is also important to note that the nature of the ‘fire service’ has changed with emphasis placed on ‘community fire safety’, including fire safety education and enforcement as well as providing fire and emergency response. At the same time, hoax calls continue to be a problem and increased use of mobile telephones increase the likelihood of incidents being reported. In the last 3 years the number
of incidents attended each year has, somewhat surprisingly, remained almost static varying between 6,269 and 6,433. Changing lifestyles, such as reduced smoking by adults and less obvious things such as oven chips replacing the chip pan, may reduce fire, whilst changes in the environment appear to be increasing the call outs to gorse fires and flooding. Additionally, there is a general shift from ‘fire’ incidents to ‘rescue’ incidents, particularly road traffic accidents (RTAs). This may also be having an effect on the recruitment and retention of retained firefighters as there is some evidence that some personnel join the service to fight fires.

At the same time, Cornwall is facing many economic challenges, reflected by the granting of Objective 1 in 2002. Not only does the most recent figure from the Office for National Statistics show that the Gross Value Added (GVA) is at 55.3% of the national average, Cornwall’s economy is based on a high percentage of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), with over 80% of the workforce in Cornwall either self-employed or working for employers with less than 200 employees. Recent statistics show that from 1998 to 2002, the average weekly male earnings were consistently between 24% and 29% below the national average, though in 2003 there was an improvement to 21.6%. As yet it is not possible to say if this is a one-off or the start of sustained improvement fuelled by Objective 1 and other initiatives. Clearly, these factors have a significant impact as many retained firefighters will depend on their payments from being a retained firefighter to supplement their main income and will work for small businesses where it may be difficult for them to be released.

Representative Bodies

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Retained firefighters Union (RFU) both represent firefighters conditioned to the retained duty system at a local level and regularly meet with Brigade management to discuss issues relating the employment of firefighters. At a national level the FBU represents and negotiates on behalf of all firefighters (including retained) below the rank of Assistant Chief Fire Officer on the National Joint Council for Local Authorities’ Fire Brigades. It is at this level that national conditions of service are agreed, including the levels of remuneration. Almost all firefighters conditioned to wholetime duty systems are members of the FBU with significant numbers of firefighters conditioned to the retained duty system being members of either or both of the FBU and RFU. However a significant minority of firefighters conditioned to the retained duty system are not members of either representative body.
Her Majesty’s Inspector of Fire Service’s Report

Her Majesty’s Inspector of Fire Service report on the Cornwall County Fire Authority in 2002 made a number of recommendations. A key recommendation was that “The Authority should ensure the Brigade’s staffing levels are appropriate to meet current and anticipated future needs”.

Work by Central Government and Others

It goes without saying that the fire service is high on the Government’s agenda under the remit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). In addition to the well publicised pay dispute, the Government has undertaken some significant research and reviews of the fire service as reflected in the following:

- **Our Fire and Rescue Service** - White Paper (June 2003)
- **The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2004/05** (July 2004)
- **Fire and Rescue Service Act** (October 2004).

In addition to this, the Scottish Executive has undertaken considerable work reviewing fire services in Scotland. This is of particular relevance because of the similar nature of the service provided in the Scottish Highlands and in Cornwall.

Terms of Reference

On 04 September 2003, the Public Protection Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee approved the Terms of Reference (Appendix B) for a Single Issue Panel to undertake a Review of the Retained Fire Service. The key objectives were:

- To review, report and where necessary make recommendations for changes and improvement in the retained fire fighting establishment of the Cornwall County Fire Brigade.
- To consider the retained fire fighting establishment and its ability to meet current and future service delivery demands.
The membership of the Panel was:

A. P. Mitchell (Chairman)
Mrs O. Irons (Vice-Chairman)
C. Godolphin
P. T. Martin
M K. McTaggart
T. R. J. Nettle
P. C. Tregunna / D. Miller

**Process Followed**

**Panel Meetings and Witnesses Heard**

The Panel has met on seven occasions and has heard formal evidence from a variety of witnesses including ‘retained’ firefighters, ‘full-time’ firefighters, Chief Fire Officer, senior managers, Equality officer, Personnel officer and representatives of both the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU). Members have also been to a regional seminar to learn details of the South Wales model of retained duty.

**Questionnaire / Scoping Study**

Early in the process the Chairman of the Panel, Mr A.P. Mitchell, wrote to all firefighters in Cornwall enclosing a questionnaire and inviting them to be involved in the process. Only 45 responses were received but the issues raised by most people were very similar. These were categorised into a number of topics. A full transcript of the findings of this questionnaire is available separately.

**Workshops and Evening Meetings**

In addition to this piece of work, a full-day workshop was held at St Dennis Fire Station, involving a cross section of staff from across the entire County Council Fire Brigade. This was followed by three evening meetings with firefighters across the county in May 2004. Parallel to this work, a number of panel members had informal meetings with staff at fire stations across the county.
Meetings with Employers

In Autumn 2004, the Panel received evidence from interviews and informal discussions with a variety of businesses in Cornwall, varying in size from small companies with less than 10 staff to large companies with over 2000 staff, with a view to obtaining their views as to having ‘retained’ firefighters working for them. The Panel also received evidence from a representative of the Cornwall Economic Forum. For example, one large employer in central Cornwall has employed 18 retained firefighters, representing nearly 5% of the retained establishment.

Other Evidence

Work was also undertaken to compare retained firefighters with other services, such as reservists, special constables, lifeboat crew and auxiliary coastguards.

In addition to the above, the Panel was presented with a number of background reports and written evidence from work undertaken elsewhere in the UK (Appendix C).

Consultation on Draft Final Report

The draft report was widely circulated but unfortunately over very a limited timescale to ensure accuracy of information and that it reflected the evidence gathered.

Evidence Gathered Under Key Areas

The evidence gathered and issues raised are grouped under a number of inter-relating topics. These are:

Reasons for Leaving the Brigade

The Fire Brigade has been undertaking ‘exit’ interviews with retained staff who are leaving and these give a useful insight and place the evidence in context. Reasons given are summarised in Table 3.
Table 3: Reasons for leaving the Brigade 1999 - 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Request</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined Wholetime Service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resigned, Leaving Employer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement, Normal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement, Ill-Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resigned, Other Reason</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resigned, No Reason Given</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissal, Capability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement, Voluntary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Figure 3 demonstrates how the reasons have varied with time

Figure 3: Comparison of Reasons for Leaving

Source: Cornwall Fire Brigade Personnel Unit (2004)
Culture and Recognition

It should be emphasised that all evidence pointed towards retained and full-time firefighters having the same professional approach. Many retained firefighters stated that they had joined the service to serve their local community rather than for personal reward and welcomed new initiatives such as the Co-responder Scheme. It is important to note that in comparison with other agencies, retained firefighters are essentially ‘volunteers’ who get paid. Nonetheless, there was a strong feeling amongst retained firefighters that they were not treated as equals with full-time firefighters. The reasons given for this included the effects of the recent pay settlement, contractual gaps reinforced in the recent conditions of service, lack of feedback on consultation initiatives, together with lack of inclusion in decision-making processes and general communications within the service. Retained firefighters felt that they did not have a ‘voice’ in the decision making.

Communication issues within the service have also been identified in the recent staff survey and this is an area where the service is making efforts to improve the situation. Communications within a devolved organisation are difficult and the service relies on the use of ICT to communicate with retained firefighters. ‘The Bin’, a Brigade newsletter exists, but this concentrated on the ‘social’ rather than ‘technical’ issues. ‘The Bin’ is produced every two weeks and a paper copy is circulated to all staff via their local stations. This situation does present some problems in relation to access and availability because at a retained station, only the Station Officer has access and is relied upon to disseminate key messages.

There were concerns about the existing radio system in some areas, both for contact with main Fire Control and for contact between personnel at an incident. In relation to the first issue, it acknowledged that the existing system is now reaching the end of its design life, but a replacement system has to be introduced as part of the national Fire-Link project, the purpose of which is to procure a national system which is not due to be operational until at least 2007. In relation to communications at an incident, a new hand-held radio system is currently being introduced and will be completed by March 2005.

Impact of the Modernisation Agenda and Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP)

The modernisation agenda, combined with the new method of reducing risk and providing cover, known as the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), means that the Brigade is looking at availability to attend incidents and provide community safety initiatives across all of Cornwall. Clearly, this will have a major impact on retained firefighters who traditionally are paid a retainer, together with an hourly rate for training and for operational issues, i.e. attending incidents. Linked to this are initiatives to increase the services provided and help ensure closer liaison with other ‘emergency services’, a good
example being the Co-responder Scheme on The Lizard. In essence, this means that the Brigade’s drive to reduce calls and incidents which is seen as good for the community, can be perceived to be bad for retained firefighters as it reduces their income.

Diversity and Equality

Issues raised in relation to equality and diversity related to entry standards, conditions of service, retirement and a perception from some that full time firefighters had access to ‘better’ equipment. Although in the past, some of these aspects were true, e.g. free dental care was available for full-time firefighters, in Cornwall all firefighters have the same Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and all appliances are replaced on a rotational basis, regardless of whether the appliance is at a full-time or retained duty system station.

All involved, though, have welcomed the very positive effect on and benefit to the Service in having its own dedicated Equality Officer together with the training programme which was being rolled out across the service. In addition, the Equality Officer considered that bullying in the Fire Brigade was no better or worse than in other organisations, but unlike many organisations, the Brigade recognises it as a real issue. Consequently it should also be noted that the cost of the service does not just include the retained firefighters’ pay. Costs of initial training and provision of PPE can account to a further 30%. The Brigade considers incidents and allegations of all bullying seriously at all levels, whilst recognising the significant difference between firm management and bullying.

Pay and Pension

There were significant issues raised in relation to the recent pay settlement. Whilst retained staff now receive the same hourly rate as full-time firefighters, modification in standards had resulted in fewer call-outs for some stations, meaning that retained staff’s income, on an annual basis, could be less. It was clear that there was some confusion as to the overall effects of the pay settlement and that some misconceptions existed that needed clarification. Details of the pay rates for retained firefighters, taken from the National Joint Council for Local Authorities’ Fire Brigades Circular NJC/06/04, are given in Appendix D.

The Brigade, however, has instigated a system to ensure that all retained firefighters have an increased income to reflect the nationally-agreed figure of 7% from 7 November 2003 and an additional 4.2% from 1 July 2004. In some areas retained firefighters are receiving larger sums. Further details are given in Appendix E.

Issues were raised in relation to retained firefighters having to take annual leave from their main employers to attend training events.

Other issues were raised in relation to payment for ‘community safety’ work and regarding subsistence payments and catering when on duty.
In 2000 (and included back pay to 1996) the Brigade introduced a procedure whereby each retained firefighter now receives an annual leave entitlement of 4 or 5 weeks (dependent on length of service) when he/she does not have to be available to be on call, without affecting the retainer. This has implications on the establishment of the retained service as it equates to approximately 1.5 members of staff per station.

The issue of pensions for retained firefighters is a national issue, and, although very important, cannot be resolved as part of this work. It should be noted that the ODPM issued a consultation document ‘Review of Pension Arrangements for Firefighters’ in mid October and the Council will be issuing a response in due course.

**Work-Life Balance**

Many people raised issues in relation to work-life balance, reflecting earlier comments on changes in work patterns and centred around 24/7/365 cover and whether some form of shift system could be introduced so that personnel could have time when they knew that they would not be called out. It is worth noting that of the 72 occasions in 2004 when appliances were ‘off-the-run’, 30 were in August which is assumed to be linked to personnel being away on family holidays and that there are other particular ‘un-sociable’ times when there are additional pressures e.g. New Year’s Eve and Christmas Day. It was also noted that firefighting is consistently in the upper quartile of professions more likely to experience divorce, separation and matrimonial disharmony.

In relation to this and the above national issues, the ‘South Wales’ model has been investigated. It is acknowledged that this model could address some of the issues identified, but as yet the cost of introducing a similar scheme in Cornwall has not been fully ascertained and evaluated. A detailed study would be possible but it would be a time-consuming and costly exercise which may be difficult in the current climate.

**Recruitment Process**

Issues raised in relation to recruitment process included local issues and those from a national perspective. Local issues are linked closely with training and development and include the time taken to process applications, recruit people and provide the necessary training so that they were ‘competent to ride’. This is a recommendation of the Government’s response to the ODPM’s work.

On a more general note, issues were raised as to how opportunities were advertised within the county and whether there should be a national campaign tailored to local needs, similar to that for the reservist forces. This is a recommendation of the Government’s response to the ODPM’s work.
Training and Development

In relation to training and development, issues were raised regarding retained firefighters receiving 2 hours training a week, whilst full-time firefighters receive 12 hours a week. At the same time, more comprehensive training is needed to comply with the development of the competency-based training programme, known as Integrated Personal Development Scheme (IPDS). Issues were raised in relation to centralised training and training during the week which posed practical problems for those located in the eastern part of the county.

Issues were also raised about considering a more flexible approach to retirement, currently enforced at 55. This is a recommendation of the Government’s response to the ODPM work.

Employers’ Issues

It became apparent that many witnesses considered that this area was very delicate and needed careful consideration. Many retained firefighters had the full backing of their employer whilst others felt strongly that their employers should not be made aware that they were retained firefighters as they felt they would not be released for training or calls. In one case, a single employer employs 18 retained firefighters, representing nearly 5% of the retained service in Cornwall, but did not, however, receive any official recognition from the County Council. Indeed, some employers considered that the personal development, in addition to basic firefighting and first aid skills, as a result of being a retained firefighter was a very positive attribute.

It was also noted that it was important for both the Brigade and retained firefighters’ employers to understand the possible demands and work undertaken by retained firefighters to ensure that neither retained firefighters nor the public were exposed to undue risk in terms of issues contained within the European Working Time Directive (EWTD).

It was felt by many that more needed to be done to raise awareness of potential employers so that they can encourage their staff to become retained firefighters and that those employers who employed staff who were retained firefighters should be rewarded or recognised in some way. It was noted that the County Council as an employer does not have a policy for retained firefighters whereas it does for staff in the reserve forces or those who act as school governors. It was noted that in the Government response to the ODPM’s work it was stated that “Government and the Public Sector should set a positive example by encouraging staff to be retained firefighters”.

Comparison With Other ‘Volunteer’ Services

Issues in relation to retained firefighters were compared to other ‘voluntary’ services, in particular the Special Constabulary, the Armed Forces Reserves, Auxiliary Coastguards and Lifeboat Crew (see Appendix F). Whilst some direct comparisons could be made, it was noted that each agency needed be
considered in context. Some interesting characteristics and ideas were identified, e.g. communication mechanism in the Special Constabulary, where the Special Constabulary have a seat at the Authority’s management table. An apparent discrepancies in relation to income tax were also noted.

**Putting the Work into Context and Update on Other Significant Issues**

The Panel has undertaken the work at a very difficult time for the Cornwall County Fire Brigade. In recent years the Brigade has been involved in a massive Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which has resulted in the replacement of 10 stations a major refurbishment of two stations and the refurbishment of the other 19 stations. Whilst there was some disruption to personnel during the works it has resulted in a set of modern fire stations with significantly improved training facilities for all. Additionally, there have been the ongoing issues in relation to the national pay award, but locally the service has had to deal with two Audit Commission inspections, the renaming of the service, the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) which to some degree overlaps the work of this Panel, issues in relation to a regional fire control and a forthcoming Corporate Performance Assessment in spring 2005. All of these issues have put pressure on staff at all levels and to some degree or another have produced some internal and external work pressures. At the same time, a new Chief Fire Officer, Mr Matt Littmoden has been appointed and is due to take up the post on 01 April 2005.

At the same time, the Brigade’s well-respected performance management system has allowed the service to demonstrate that it is still achieving high levels of performance against the national performance indicators (Appendix A).

**Analysis of Issues**

From the issues raised it is clear that well-motivated, trained and recognised retained firefighters are essential to Cornwall. It is recognised that the nature of the retained system and its full integration within an efficient, economic and effective fire and rescue service faces a number of challenges: some from central government legislation; some from the changing nature of community fire service; some from changes in individuals needs and aspirations; and some from a strong desire within the service to continuously improve and adapt. Together these changes, many of which are ‘unknown’, will challenge the values of individuals, teams and the whole organisation and they will also have a significant impact on culture and morale.

Meeting these challenges will need careful planning and implementing as they may have significant resource implications but others are less tangible and relate to the value and cultures of individuals, groups and the organisation.
Key Recommendations

Many of the issues identified are in relation to the culture of the organisation and a perception that retained firefighters are treated differently to and not valued as highly as full-time firefighters. As such, organisational culture cannot be changed through one or a number of specific actions. It is a continual process that takes time, commitment, mutual understanding and a willingness to move forward by all involved. Notwithstanding that, it is envisaged that the recommendations listed below would play a significant role in changing the culture of the organisation.

The key recommendations, with commentary, of this review are:

A  Monitoring Organisational Culture

1. Undertake a regular process of recognised ‘organisational culture’ assessments, to identify key areas and monitor and manage performance of change management processes.

   For example, Trading Standards have used the widely recognised ‘nine factors’ organisational culture assessment to help them successfully reorganise the service.

B  Improved Communications and Involvement

1. Improve existing communication processes to ensure two way dialogue and offer a choice of communication channels.

   Information exchange with stations is based on ICT which can pose problems as only the Station Officer has access to the ICT link.

2. Investigate ways of increasing availability / access to ICT and the Fire Service intranet.

   It is likely that ICT will become an ever increasing tool for the training of retained firefighters, particularly on equality and diversity issues.

3. Investigate methods of developing the Brigade newsletter as a means of effective two way communication.

   ‘The Bin’ focuses on social issues, but does contain technical issues. An over-emphasis on technical issues may reduce interest and readership.

4. Develop an inclusive consultation and feedback plan for all major proposals for change to demonstrate clearly opportunities for the involvement of retained firefighters and how their views have been considered.

   Retained firefighters are consulted on major initiatives but it is considered that feedback mechanisms could be improved so that they can understand how their views have been taken into account.
5. Further develop existing processes for senior managers (including the four Principal Officers and the six Divisional Officers) to visit all stations on a regular basis.

   Between them, the Principal Officers visit each station at least once a year. Divisional Officers visit each station at least three times a year.

6. Investigate ways for the retained element of the service to feel more involved in day-to-day decision-making processes, including the possible formation of a retained firefighters forum, possibly outside of ‘normal’ working hours.

   It has been suggested that a group be set up to represent the views of retained firefighters and that they have a representative on the Command Group, the Fire Brigade’s senior management team, in a similar manner to the Special Constabulary. However, issues in relation to continuity and representation would need very careful consideration.

7. Developing existing communication channels to encourage two way communication and encourage less formal communication.

   The workshops and existing meetings held as part of the Panels work proved to be popular and effective and allowed for the informal exchange of information between staff and members, without senior ‘uniformed’ staff being present. An investigation needs to be undertaken to establish if such events could become a regular occurrence, but would need a commitment from elected members, staff at all levels.

8. Investigate ways of further raising public awareness of the importance of the retained element of the service and its contribution to the community.

   The Fire Brigade has a dedicated Press and Public Relations Officer and was established a good relationship with the local media.

9. Investigate ways of raising awareness in the business community of the retained service and the role they could play in encouraging staff to be retained firefighters.

   Refer to comments under ‘Employers’.

10. Lobby national government to instigate a national recruitment campaign and to acknowledge retained firefighting as a vocation which has the same legal requirements for employers to allow time off, similar to reservists and school governors.

   The idea of a national recruitment campaign is highlighted in the ODPM report.
11. Develop programme of open days etc at local fire stations to raise public awareness and attract new recruits.

   Successful pilots have already taken place.

12. Investigate targeted recruitment campaigns at public events e.g. Royal Cornwall Show

   Further research required.

13. Work with strategic partners to instigate local recruitment campaigns.

   Further research required.

14. Review and assess existing radio system whilst awaiting the implementation of the national Fire Link project.

   Current radio system can only be replaced as part of national Fire Link project.

15. Review and introduce an improved hand-held radio system for local incident management.

   Work underway and due for full implementation by March 2005.

C Assisting Employers

1. County Council needs to lead by example and develop a policy to encourage and enable staff to become retained firefighters (as part of the development of the People Strategy).

   The ODPM report specifically states that Local Authorities should lead by example. Like virtually all Local Authorities in the South West, the County Council has no specific internal policy in relation to employees across the Council being retained firefighters, though a number of staff are. This could be developed and integrated into the People Strategy and could be based on the existing policy for reservists.

2. The County Council should work with other public sector and private sector employers through existing partnerships and to encourage them to allow their staff to become retained firefighters.

   County Council has good relationship with other public sector and private sector employers through the Cornwall Partnership and Local Strategic Partnerships and is already looking at joint training and development in some areas.

3. Investigate ways of recognising / rewarding / providing incentives / compensating both existing and potential employers.

   This is a recommendation within the ODPM report, but local employers favoured recognition above financial reward or benefit.
4. Senior Person(s) to be specifically given role and responsibility part time, or recruit a new member of staff, to act as an Employer Liaison Officer, to identify key employers and act as an ‘ambassador’.

In order to develop the above, some detailed work needs to be undertaken and an ‘ambassador’ is needed. Good working relationships with key employers is essential as a change in policy by them would have a significant impact and result in a loss of 5% of retained firefighters at once. Need to set up a database to identify key employers.

D  Modify existing systems of work and reward system

1. Investigate a compensation scheme for retained firefighters required to take annual leave to attend training events.

   This is a specific recommendation within the ODPM report.

2. Investigate initiatives to offer support for firefighters’ partners e.g. child-minding.

   Some pilots are already underway.

3. In conjunction with the ongoing integrated risk management planning process, a review of the current establishment levels should be undertaken together with an investigation of an alternative duty / shift system to recognise commitment (availability) rather than cause (call-out) on a station-by-station basis. In this report, consideration should be given to the introduction of three pilots across the county where those stations have identified that they would welcome this change.

   There was a firm view of the Panel, senior staff and firefighters that the current establishment level is too low to keep an appropriate number of vehicles ‘on the run’ and to ensure that vehicles have more than the minimum number of ‘riders’.

   Integrated risk management planning will lead to a review of establishment levels but the Panel feels that this piece of work needs to be urgently undertaken. In addition, current establishment levels need to be reviewed in relation to the impact of retained firefighters receiving an annual leave entitlement. This is the basis of the ‘South Wales’ model and would need a very detailed piece of work to be undertaken linked to a review of the establishment, though it should be noted that the terms and conditions in the South Wales model go outside of the recently-agreed national conditions of service. The work would need to be undertaken in conjunction with work underway as part of the IRMP. It is clear from the evidence available that a blanket approach would not work across Cornwall due to local factors. A station-by-station approach, starting with three ‘willing’ pilot stations, will be more costly but is likely to identify a more practical solution.

4. Investigate a more flexible system than providing half / three-quarter / full-time cover to suit local need / availability.

   As above.

Policies in relation to European Working Times Directive exist but are complicated by the fact that the directive does not apply to the self employed.

6. Clarify procedures for reimbursement of retained firefighters who ‘turnout’ but ‘fail to ride’, the policies for payment of overtime and the processes for (and/or reimbursement for) provision of catering/refreshments at incidents.

Procedures are in place, but need to be clarified and communicated to all staff.

7. Investigate methods of enlisting those retained firefighters, who wish to do so, doing and being reimbursed for paid community safety work.

Further research required but a shift in emphasis is likely to have budgetary implications.

8. Investigate ways of allowing full-time firefighters to act as retained firefighters.

Further research required.

9. Investigate introducing a more flexible retirement age for retained firefighters.

This is a specific recommendation within the ODPM report and is currently being considered by the Brigade.

10. Investigate ways of using ‘retired’ retained firefighters for community safety work.

Further research required.

11. Keep abreast of national issues in relation to pensions for retained firefighters and lobby accordingly.

ODPM issued a consultation document ‘Review of Pension Arrangements for Firefighters’ in mid October and the Council will be responding in due course.

E Recruitment, Training and Personnel Issues

1. Investigate implications for IPDS of further training for retained service and ways in which it may be implemented.

Detailed research required.
2. Investigate method of providing more flexibility and choice (time and venue) in relation to provision of training, particularly the two week initial training.

Further research required.

3. Investigate methods of ensuring equality in opportunity for all firefighters, and the use of information and communication technology to undertake training and personnel development. Retained staff and, in particular Station Managers, must not be excluded from all training and advancement opportunities.

The Fire Brigade have a dedicated Equality Officer and significant progress has already been achieved. An ICT-based system is being purchased to help deliver equality and diversity training.

4. Provide 'team-building' opportunities for retained crews.

Further research required.

5. Improve feedback system for retained firefighters who have failed in their attempt to become whole-time firefighters.

All retained firefighters who fail in their attempt to become wholetime firefighters are offered a feedback interview.

6. Further develop process to undertake exit interviews with those who leave the retained service.

A basic process is already in existence, but may need further investigation and analysis under the personal request category.

7. Develop processes to include Station Officers in recruitment and selection processes.

This already happens at some stations.

8. Undertake surveys with people who have requested details on becoming retained firefighters but who have not pursued it – why have they not pursued it?

Processes need to be developed.

9. Review the current application process and provide more concise information pack.

Information pack is reviewed on a regular basis.

10. Investigate appropriateness of entry requirements to equalise opportunity and the varying medical entry criteria.

Further research required.

11. Member involvement must be increased.

All Members to be encouraged to visit their local Fire Stations on a regular basis.
12. Consideration to be given to a report from both the Fire Brigades’ Union and the Retained Firefighters Union being added to the Public Protection Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee agenda for Members to be updated and to question Unions and management on general issues.

*Procedures and protocols need to be established.*

13. Management to review any cost-cutting initiatives which specifically raise savings from the retained wage bill.

*The reasoning is that this could be a disincentive to the attraction and retention of retained fire fighters and could cost a lot more in the long term with the possibility of this cover ultimately having to be provided by more expensive full-time cover.*

*Areas of ‘inefficiency’ still need to be clearly identified (e.g. reduced turnout to automated fire signals) and an equivalent sum achieved in the savings could be reinvested in the retained service for the provision of services, such as fire safety work by retained fire fighters.*

**F Taking the Process Forward**

1. Ensure that adapted recommendations are taken forward.

*It is important that a detailed and costed action plan, with clear timetables is developed to take forward each of the recommendations in this report.*

2. Ensure that the findings of this piece of work and subsequent actions are widely circulated to all Brigade staff.

*Senior managers and members need to develop processes to ensure that the final report and the messages that it contains are circulated ‘on the ground’.*

3. Ensure that the action plan is implemented and regularly monitored.

*The portfolio holder and Chief Fire Officer need to give regular updates to future meetings.*

**Conclusions**

Cornwall County Fire Brigade can be proud of its performance by all of its staff but there are recognised areas for concern and improvement, many of which where considerable work is already underway. The outstanding issues should have their findings reported directly to the Public Protection Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee who can report to the Portfolio holder and Executive in due course.
Clearly not all of the above actions can be undertaken at once, as neither the resource nor capacity exists. The recommendations need to be prioritised.

It is imperative that a review of the current establishments, linked to the Integrated Risk Management Planning process is urgently undertaken. This needs to include a detailed analysis and evaluation of a flexible system based on the South Wales model. This will take dedicated resources and may ultimately result in no change. Nonetheless, it would be a valuable piece of work that is needed to ensure that the final decisions are based on the most robust evidence available.

**Acknowledgements**

The Committee would like to thank the following:

All those staff and members who responded to the questionnaire.

All those staff who attended the meeting at St Dennis Fire Station in March 2004.

All those staff and members who attended the three evening meetings held in May 2004.

Witnesses who gave evidence directly to the Panel including:

- Mr B.Crowle, Divisional Officer
- Mrs J.Hatch, Equality Officer
- Mr M.Howell, Chief Fire Officer
- Mr T.Nottle representative of Fire Brigade Union
- Mr N.Parkin, representative of Retained Firefighter Union
- Mrs G.Seymour, Personnel Officer
- Mrs K.Wills, Assistant Personnel Officer
- Mr M.Yates, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations)

Those employers who were interviewed including

- Mr J.Harrison, Deputy UK Kaolin Operations Manager, Imerys
- Mr M.Crawford, HR Business Partner, Imerys
- Mr R.Townsend, HR Business Partner, Imerys
- Mr T.Howard, Managing Director Baltic Pine
Others who helped provide evidence including:

- Mr A. Munson, Harbourmaster Newlyn
- Mr C. Sturman, Marine and Coastguard Agency

Staff across the Council including:

- Mr R. Andrew
- Miss C. Bransgrove
- Mr N. Cannicott
- Miss K. Hampton
- Miss E. Henderson
- Miss A. Messenger
- Mr P.J. Rickard
- Mr S. Rose
- Mr I. Thomas
- Miss A. Ward
- Mr J. Wood
Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

• **BA – Breathing Apparatus**
  A self-contained portable air supply (mask and cylinder) worn by fire service personnel in oxygen-deficient or toxic atmospheres.

• **Call out**
  Refers to when an on-call firefighter is paged to attend an incident.

• **Command Unit**
  A vehicle used for the management and control of incidents.

• **Establishment**
  An agreed number of staff for either a department, section or the whole Brigade.

• **European Working Time Directive –**
  A European Directive enshrined in UK law that stipulates the maximum number of hours which can be worked by an individual.

• **GVA – Gross Value Added –**
  Measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector in the United Kingdom.

• **FBU – Fire Brigades’ Union**
  Representative body recognised nationally and locally for negotiating conditions of service and other matters for all ranks of the fire brigade below Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

• **FTE – Full Time Equivalent**

• **Full cover / Three-quarter cover**
  This relates to the level of fire cover availability provided by a firefighter who is on call (via a radio pager). Full cover equates to an availability of 120 hours (out of 168 hours per week) and three-quarter cover of 90 hours.

• **IPDS – Integrated Personal Development System**
  IPDS is a development training programme that provides a national benchmark based on occupational standards that everyone can be measured against.

• **IRMP – Integrated Risk Management Plan**
  An IRMP is published, following consultation, by the Brigade to inform businesses and the community of how the Brigade intends to deploy its resources to best meet the needs of the community.
• **National Conditions of Service**

National Conditions of Service are the terms of employment under which all firefighters are employed. These are agreed at a national level for all UK fire services.

• **‘Off-the-run’**

Term used when equipment or personnel are removed from operational service.

• **On call**

A retained firefighter who is available to respond to an incident.

• **Retainer**

A payment made to retained personnel for being on call and available.

• **‘Rider’**

A firefighter attending an incident and ‘riding’ on a vehicle.

• **RFU - Retained Firefighters’ Union**

Representative body that only has a membership from firefighters conditioned to the Retained duty system.

• **‘Shout’**

Fire Brigade slang for an incident.

• **SME – Small / Medium Enterprise**

A small enterprise is one with more than five and up to 50 employees; a medium enterprise has between 50 and 250 employees.

• **Stand down**

Term used to denote firefighters being requested to book off duty.

• **Strength**

Number of personnel available compared to establishment.

• **Turn out**

To mobilise to an incident or the term applied to the payment received by a firefighter for attending the station and riding on an appliance to an incident.

• **RTA – Road Traffic Accident**

A highway incident that results in injury to person and/or equipment.
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<th>Ref</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>2003/04 performance</th>
<th>2003/04 target in last year’s plan</th>
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<th>2005/06 target</th>
<th>2006/07 target</th>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Strong Communities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 142i</td>
<td>Total number of calls (excluding false alarms) to fires, per 10,000 population</td>
<td>53.15</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52.03</td>
<td>51.05</td>
<td>50.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BV 142ii</td>
<td>Number of calls to primary fires, per 10,000 population</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>29.45</td>
<td>27.24</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 142iii</td>
<td>Number of calls to accidental fires in dwellings, per 10,000 dwellings</td>
<td>15.15</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>14.85</td>
<td>14.55</td>
<td>14.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 143i</td>
<td>Number of deaths arising from accidental fires in dwellings, per 100,000 population</td>
<td>0.4</td>
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<td>Reduce the incidence of accidental fire-related deaths in the home by 20% averaged over the 5 year period to March 2004 compared with the average recorded in the 5 year period to March 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 143ii</td>
<td>Number of injuries arising from accidental fires in dwellings, per 100,000 population</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 144a</td>
<td>Accidental dwelling fires confined to room of origin in major cities (‘A risk’)</td>
<td>not applicable</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 144b</td>
<td>Accidental dwelling fires confined to room of origin in smaller cities/larger towns (‘B risk’)</td>
<td>not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 144c</td>
<td>Accidental dwelling fires confined to room of origin in smaller towns and urban residential areas (‘C risk’)</td>
<td>92.81%</td>
<td>95.49%</td>
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<td>BV 144d</td>
<td>Accidental dwelling fires confined to room of origin in rural village areas (‘D risk’)</td>
<td>95.08%</td>
<td>92.94%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 144 (new for 04/05)</td>
<td>% of accidental dwelling fires confined to room of origin</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 145a</td>
<td>Percentage of calls to fires at which the number of appliances met the national standards for attendance</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BV 145b</td>
<td>Percentage of calls to fires at which the number of riders on appliances met the national standards for attendance</td>
<td>91.56%</td>
<td>89.93%</td>
<td>93.39%</td>
<td>95.26%</td>
<td>97.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BV 145c</td>
<td>Percentage of calls to fires at which the attendance times met the national standards for attendance</td>
<td>92.07%</td>
<td>92.30%</td>
<td>92.53%</td>
<td>92.99%</td>
<td>93.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BV 146</td>
<td>Number of malicious false alarm fire calls per 1,000 population</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.331</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 147</td>
<td>Average time taken to complete inspections for fire safety certificates (days)</td>
<td>83.61</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 149</td>
<td>False alarms caused by automatic fire detection apparatus, per 1,000 non-domestic properties</td>
<td>58.05</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>56.89</td>
<td>55.75</td>
<td>54.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV 150</td>
<td>Fire Brigade net expenditure per head of population</td>
<td>£37.35</td>
<td>£32.73</td>
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Appendix B

Public Protection Policy Development And Scrutiny Committee
4 September 2003

Terms of Reference for

Review Of Retained Fire Service – Single Issue Panel

Purpose of this panel / anticipated value of its work:

To review the Retained firefighter establishment of Cornwall County Fire Brigade and inquire into issues that impact upon it.

Key objectives:

1. To consider the retained fire fighting establishment and its ability to meet current and future service delivery demands.

2. To review report and where necessary make recommendations for changes and improvement in the retained fire fighting establishment of the Cornwall County Fire Brigade.

Scope of the work:

1. An analysis of current and future demands on the fire service.

2. Estimate of the required establishment staffing levels including key issues such as:
   - the future sustainability of the service in respect of recruitment and retention given the impact of social, economic and employment changes within the county;
   - the impact of the recent introduction of formal holiday arrangements;
   - the ability to achieve acceptable standards of training under the Individual Personal Development System;
   - the Authority’s expectations of the level of cover performance to be achieved by individuals; and
   - the Council’s commitment to family friendly policies and work/lifestyle balance.

3. Review of the current establishment staffing level.
Not included in the scope:

1. Nothing!

Terms of Reference prepared by: Mark Yates – Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Rob Andrew – Policy Development Manager, Chief Executive’s Department

Terms of Reference agreed: First adopted by IWPDSC on 18 September 2002

Panel structure: C Godolphin, Mrs O Irons, M K McTaggart, A P Mitchell, T R J Nettle, P C Tregunna,
(One Independent Group vacancy)

Portfolio-holder: Mrs J Ferrett – Public Protection

Panel Chair: To be confirmed

County Council Contact officer: Mark Yates – Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

Background:

Her Majesty’s Inspector of Fire Services report on the Cornwall County Fire Authority made a number of recommendations. Some of those recommendations are being addressed elsewhere but it is important that attention is drawn to recommendation 7 which states that “The Authority should ensure the Brigade’s staffing levels are appropriate to meet current and anticipated future needs”.

In June 2002 the Government issued the White Paper – Our Fire and Rescue Service which identified the need to improve the retained service. The paper set out areas for improvement, all of which may impact upon the number of retained firefighters required in Cornwall.

In setting out the basis for the review there are some key issues that will need to be considered as set out in the scope.

Information gathering:

Retained firefighters both serving and retired, senior officers and officers in charge of stations. Divisional Commanders. Representative bodies.
Methods Of Working

Members of the Panel will receive presentations, background information and make site visits as appropriate. The panel may wish to consider visiting a retained fire station as part of its work.

Witnesses to be invited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation/Position</th>
<th>Reason for Inviting</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retained firefighter</td>
<td>To give view as to the issues facing retained firefighters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Yates</td>
<td>Assistant Chief Fire Officer</td>
<td>To give an overview of the key issues facing the Brigade in relation to the retained source in Cornwall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisional Commander</td>
<td>To give views on day-to-day management of retained service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade Unions</td>
<td>To give Trade Union perspective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retained firefighter</td>
<td>To give employee perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Officer</td>
<td>To outline the personnel issues facing retained firefighters including an overview of the process of retained recruitment and problems relating to retention.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Sector employer of retained firefighter</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>County Council as employer of retained firefighter</td>
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</table>

Site Visits

Visit to be a retained fire station

Key Documents / Background Data / Research

1. Establishment levels including recruitment and retention figures.
2. Relevant section of Hull report.
3. Summary of Scottish Executive report entitled “Retained, Auxiliary and volunteer firefighters in the Scottish Fire Service”.
5. Other documentation as appropriate.
Timescale

Starting: Autumn 2003  Ending: Spring 2004

Outputs To Be Produced

1. Report including recommendations.

Reporting Arrangements

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<tr>
<td>Public Protection Policy Development and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scrutiny Committee.</td>
<td>26 November 2003</td>
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<td>Executive</td>
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Monitoring/feedback Arrangements

Portfolio holder to provide follow up report back to Public Protection Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on actions taken in response to accepted recommendations approximately six months after report to Executive.

Appendix C

Background Reports and Evidence Received

Establishment levels including recruitment and retention figures.

Relevant section of Hull report

Summary of Scottish Executive report entitled ‘Retained, Auxiliary and volunteer firefighters in the Scottish Fire Service’.

Relevant section of White Paper – Our Fire and Rescue Service

A review of the Fire and Rescue Retained Duty System facilitated by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2004

Government Response to ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee’s report on the Fire Service

‘Off the Run’: recruitment and retention of Retained Firefighters produced by the FBU
### Appendix D

Extract from National Joint Council for Local Authorities Fire Brigades circular NJC/06/04

**Firefighting Roles – Pay Rates From 1st July 2004 (Retained Duty System)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£ per annum</td>
<td>£ per annum</td>
<td>£ per hour</td>
<td>£ per hour occup</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Firefighter</strong></td>
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<td>977</td>
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<td>12.36</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1396</td>
<td>12.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competent A</td>
<td>2868</td>
<td>1434</td>
<td>13.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competent B</td>
<td>3099</td>
<td>1550</td>
<td>14.15</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>3224</td>
<td>1612</td>
<td>14.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competent A</td>
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<td>1661</td>
<td>15.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competent B</td>
<td>3556</td>
<td>1778</td>
<td>16.24</td>
<td>3.28</td>
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<td><strong>Group Manager</strong></td>
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<td>Development</td>
<td>3657</td>
<td>1829</td>
<td>16.70</td>
<td>3.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competent A</td>
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<td>1884</td>
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<td>Competent B</td>
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<td><strong>Area Manager</strong></td>
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<td>2217</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competent A</td>
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<td>2217</td>
<td>20.24</td>
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<td>Competent B</td>
<td>4781</td>
<td>2391</td>
<td>21.83</td>
<td>3.28</td>
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</table>

Column 1 shows the full annual retainer
Column 2 shows the retainer for employees on the day crewing duty system
Column 3 shows the hourly rate for work undertaken
Column 4 shows the disturbance payment per call-out
Appendix E

Analysis Retained Firefighters’ Pay

Retained firefighters’ pay consists of a variety of components. The pay agreement introduced new components and affected each component differently.

For example, prior to November 2003 a retained firefighter was paid an annual retainer, a sum for each drill night attended, turn-out rate for every time he/she responded to a “shout” and a different hourly rate when he/she actually attended an incident. A full hour was paid for any “shout” lasting for up to 75 minutes and two hours were paid when an incident lasted from 76 to 136 minutes. The second and subsequent hours were paid at a lower rate than the first. All rates of pay varied with rank.

Following the pay agreement a retained firefighter is paid an annual retainer, an hourly rate for each drill night attended (fixed at two hours), a disturbance fee for responding to a “shout” and an hourly rate for every time he/she responds to a “shout”. Only a half hour is paid when a firefighter responds to a “shout” but does not actually attend the incident and stays at the station for 30 minutes or less. As from September 2004 those firefighters who remain on duty for more than 2 hours will be paid a quarter of an hour’s pay for each completed quarter of an hour on duty.

The headline rate for the November 2003 Pay Award was 7%, but each component part was actually changed by a different percentage rate. In some cases, the amount paid after the pay award was less than that paid before for the same duty. However, such reductions were at least partly offset by the introduction of a new component, the “disturbance fee”. This is a fixed fee paid to every firefighter who responds to a “shout”. These anomalies meant that very few firefighters received an increase of exactly 7%. In fact, the changes in pay varied from an increase of 30% for one individual to a reduction of 1.5% for another!

A total of 39 retained firefighters received an increase of less than 7% for their work between 7th November 2003 and 31st March 2004 and these have been protected by means of a special payment. Every retained firefighter is guaranteed to receive at least the agreed pay award (7% as from 7th November 2003 and an additional 4.2% as from 1st July 2004). Every quarter, the pay of all retained firefighters is examined and recalculated using the pre-pay and the post-pay award rates. Any individual receiving an increase less than the pay award is protected by means of a special payment. This protection will remain for the duration of the pay agreement (3 years).
Variation of Pay Across Stations

**Average pay for Retained Firefighters**
(January - December 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Retainer</th>
<th>Drill Fees</th>
<th>Payment for attending Calls</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Station A</strong></td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>5,311</td>
<td>8,705</td>
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<td><strong>Station B</strong></td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>1,138</td>
<td>4,901</td>
<td>8,418</td>
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<td><strong>Station C</strong></td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>2,256</td>
<td>5,679</td>
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<td><strong>Station D</strong></td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>1,014</td>
<td>4,411</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above is a summary of the pay of four firefighters of the same rank at four stations.

The Annual Retainers are the same and the Drill Fees are very similar for each of the selected staff. (Please note that retainer is different to that stated in appendix D as the figure in appendix D was introduced in July 2004).

The Payment for Attending Calls totals vary so much because of the difference in the volume of call outs between Stations.

**Appendix F**

**Comparison Across ‘Voluntary’ Services**

**Reservists**

Reservists are paid by the Ministry of Defence whilst training and whilst mobilised. This is taxable income. When mobilised, the MOD has special financial arrangements with the employers to enable them to cover the absent personnel.

Most employers, particularly in the public sector, have policies in respect of employees being reservists.

There is a dedicated organisation SaBRE (Supporting Britain’s Reservists and Employers) sponsored by the Ministry of Defence. It is an important Ministry of Defence campaign designed to inform employers about the benefits of employing members of the Volunteer Reserve Forces. The SaBRE campaign aims to raise awareness of the Volunteer Reserve Forces among employers and decision makers, encouraging
them to support employees who are members of the Reservists. SaBRE provides employers with a certificate of recognition and the reserve forces invite employers to civic events.

Reservists receive a retainer and remuneration when called up. Recruitment campaigns are undertaken nationally.

**Special Constabulary**

Special Constables are volunteers and receive no direct remuneration but do receive some allowances for travelling etc. There is a selection process and all new recruits receive detailed training and tutoring.

In the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary they have their own rank structure and there is a ‘Specials’ Superintendent who has a free invitation to attend the force’s Management Forum whenever he/she wishes to do so.

Devon and Cornwall Constabulary has the highest percentage of specials of any of the 43 forces in England and Wales. Efforts are concentrated on retaining high quality specials as opposed to recruiting large numbers.

Many specials see it as a route to becoming a full-time constable.

**Marine and Coastguard Agency – Auxiliary Coastguard Volunteers**

Auxiliary Coastguards are a branch of the Marine and Coastguard Agency. They are classed as volunteers but are able to claim remuneration on an hourly rate and there is no annual retainer. All income is taxable. They receive all necessary Personal Protective Equipment and train on a regular basis and respond to incidents as required.

Recruitment is undertaken locally as and when required, often on a relatively informal basis. At present there are no recruitment concerns in Cornwall.

**Royal National Lifeboat Institution – RNLI**

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution provides a maritime rescue service to ‘save lives at sea’ around the entire coasts of Great Britain. It is almost entirely voluntary funded.

Lifeboat crew and shore staff are volunteers. Lifeboat crew receive remuneration when at sea, either training or attending an incident. They do not receive a retainer. Shore staff (2nd Coxswain and engineers) receive a retainer. No income is taxable.

Recruitment is undertaken locally as and when required, often on a relatively informal basis. At present there are no recruitment concerns in Cornwall.