

9 June 2010

South East Fire and Rescue Services Regional Management Board: update following meeting held on 7 April 2010

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 The last meeting of the Board was held on 7 April 2010 and was attended by Councillor Frank Pearce. He was accompanied by the Head of Finance and Office Services, Wendy Lambert. This report highlights some of the key issues discussed at the meeting.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3 Appointment of Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk for 2010/11

- 3.1 The outgoing Chair, Councillor Cope (Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority), reported that he had enjoyed his year and highlighted the Board's achievements. He drew particular attention to the effective partnership working across the region which had produced some very useful results. He referred to the challenges that lay ahead, most notably sustaining the delivery of fire and rescue authorities' excellent work at a time of tightening financial constraints.
- 3.2 Cllr Mrs Heathcoat (Oxfordshire County Council) was appointed as the Chair for 2010/11; and Cllr Bryant (Royal Berkshire) was appointed Vice Chair. CFO Parry (Oxfordshire) agreed to be the Clerk to the Board for 2010/11 with administrative support continuing to be provided by East Sussex.
- 3.3 Councillor Heathcoat informed members that this would be CFO Parry's last meeting of the SERMB as he would be retiring before the next meeting, and thanked him for his support over the years.

3 Business Plan 2010/13

- 3.1 Members approved the regional business plan for 2010/13, setting out the Board's aspirations for the coming years, a copy of which can be obtained via <http://www.sefip.gov.uk/viewDocument.jsp?document=2067>. It was noted that the revised format had adopted a more focused approach, concentrating upon

the following three key areas:

- Improving emergency mobilising
- Reviewing efficiency and effectiveness
- Improving performance

3.1 In order to co-ordinate, commission and monitor all the activity within the Plan, it was agreed that the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) would take full responsibility for the programme management function. In the past, Members will recall that each theme within the Plan was allocated to a lead Elected Member and Officer. However, it was recognised that greater co-ordination of the programme of work and commissioning arrangements, along with a need for greater scrutiny, was required. It was therefore agreed that the SERMB would act as a pseudo-scrutiny panel, providing assurance that the outcomes within the Plan are being delivered. Chief Fire Officers within the south east will also be expected to perform a scrutiny function and will be asked to agree the appropriate delivery process when approving a project. The five possible ways of delivering projects within the Plan include; by an individual fire and rescue authority, by a sub-regional group of fire and rescue authorities, an existing Chief Fire Officers' Association work stream operating in the region, the use of a consultant and by drawing upon regional resources from Improvement and Efficiency South East. It was agreed that Councillor David Rowlands would be added to the Officer Stakeholder group, as RMB Member representative, overseeing the commissioning of projects.

3.2 It was recognised that tougher financial settlements would place individual fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) under increasing pressure to deliver services in a cost effective way. It will therefore become evermore important for FRAs in the South East to identify opportunities, where this makes economic sense, to work collaboratively across the region. In addition to the objectives contained within the Plan, the following priorities for the SERMB were agreed:

- To work together to manage emergency mobilising effectively and efficiently;
- To generate collaborative efficiency savings and return on investment for constituent fire and rescue authorities;
- To work together either as a whole or in sub-regional clusters to drive improvement, and to support each other through peer review;
- To actively promote the successes of the Board to key stakeholders and to actively lobby key stakeholders to improve national fire and rescue policies and processes.

4 Progress against the Board's Action Plan

4.1 The Board considered a progress report against each of the work areas in the regional business plan 2008/11 for the period January to March 2010. This included; community safety, response and resilience, improvement, human resources and training and improvement. The significant points of note were:

- Standardising Operating Procedures - To date, 79 standard operating procedures have been identified and 45 have been written, of which four have been approved by the response and resilience group. This work is due for completion in December 2010.
- Second Customer Insight Survey - Work has commenced on the second survey, which has been extended to include road safety and focuses much more on behaviour and attitudes to risk. The full results will be available in August to aid with future IRMP work.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - Following an evaluation of tenders by a team of procurement, technical, legal, financial and health and safety experts, Cosalt has been selected as the preferred supplier. The contract is expected to be signed on 3 June.
- Regional Work Wear – Following the award of the contract to Hunters Apparel in August 2009 for a regional uniform solution, 16 FRAs outside of the SE requested information on the Framework. Of these, 10 FRAs have since signed up to the framework. This additional spend is expected to attract an additional 1% off the contract price creating an estimated cashable saving of a further £40k over the four years of the project.
- Fire Service Spend Data – The Regional Procurement Manager is part of the national CLG/Firebuy group looking at fire service spend data and the development of national/regional procurement strategies. The Regional Procurement Manager will be following up and reporting back to the SE on any possible regional/local actions and savings that come out of this work.
- Notable Practice – Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service were pleased to put forward a case study highlighting the work that had been undertaken to reduce the number of fires in thatched properties in Hampshire (Appendix A).

4.2 Board were pleased to note the significant efficiency savings generated within the South East as identified below:

RMB	2008/09 Confirmed Reported Savings (£)	2009/10 Forward (estimated) Savings (£)
East Midland	£ 16,000	£ 113,000
East of England	£ 95,000	£ -
North East	£ 291,000	£ 570,000
North West	£ 394,000	£ 391,000
South East	£ 539,534	£ 804,000
South West	£ 415,000	£ 608,000
West Midlands	£ 445,000	£ 18,300
Yorkshire and the Humber	£ 138,000	£ -
TOTAL	£ 2,333,534	£ 2,504,300

5 FiReControl Project Update

- 5.1 CFO Max Hood (West Sussex) updated Members on progress. He stressed that it was still the SERMB's preferred option to deliver FiReControl (Plan A) but, should there be slippage until after the Olympics in 2012, Members would have to be assured that there were enough resources available to continue to deliver services in the interim. Board were advised that work was ongoing with Plan B (regional/sub regional working), and Plan C (local contingency plans for those Services whose control and mobilising systems might not survive any further significant delays). Clearly, we now await clarification of the future direction of this project under the new administration.

6 Equality and Diversity

- 6.1 The Board were advised that Royal Berkshire had now attained Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, bringing the region's total to seven out of nine authorities having achieved Level 3. It was noted that the region's target of five FRAs achieving 'excellent' under the new framework (as referred to in the 2010-13 Business Plan), would be a challenging one which would require working with other partners in fire and rescue services outside the region.
- 6.2 Sharing good practice continues to be a benefit of working together within the region. Hampshire were delighted to be able to submit three case studies (attached as appendix B), focusing on equality and brand identity, overcoming language barriers at incidents and working with young people.

7 Other Matters

- 7.1 A discussion took place regarding the future of Regional Management Boards. Board felt that they would wish to continue with a similar arrangement if RMBs were to be disbanded as a result in a change of administration. It was agreed that a paper would be brought forward to the next meeting in July on the future of the SERMB.
- 7.2 Board considered the future of 'Total Place' and specifically where fire and rescue authorities fit into the process. It was suggested that CLG be invited to the next meeting in July to explain how 'Total Place' affects fire and rescue authorities, especially Combined Fire Authorities. It was also agreed that an invitation would be extended to the new Fire Minister for Fire.

8 People Impact Assessment

- 8.1 There are no issues arising from this report and it is considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the People Impact Assessment for this project.

Background Information (Section 100D of Local Government Act 1972)

The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

- Agenda, reports and draft minutes of the South East Fire and Rescue Services Regional Management Board meeting held 7 April 2010.

Secretarial/WP/Corporate/HFRA 2010 06 09 Regional Management Board Update cel/07/04/10