

15 September 2010

South East Fire and Rescue Services Regional Management Board: update following meeting held on 14 July 2010

Report by the Chief Officer

Contact: Dave Curry, Director of Service Delivery – tel: 02380 626832

1 Summary

- 1.1 The last meeting of the South East Fire and Rescue Services Regional Management Board (SERMB) was held on 14 July 2010 and was attended by Councillor Frank Pearce. He was accompanied by the Director of Service Delivery, Dave Curry. This report highlights some of the key issues discussed at the meeting.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Authority note the report and, in particular, the principles agreed by Members regarding the future of the South East Regional Management Board.

3 Correspondence

- 3.1 The Board noted a letter received from the previous Minister for Fire, Shahid Malik MP, in response to the SERMB's call for a legislative framework to be introduced in England relating to the mandatory installation of sprinklers in all new homes (appendix A). Following the change in administration, it was resolved that the Chairman of the SERMB would write to the new Minister for Fire, Bob Neill MP, setting out Members' concerns that building regulations in England do not require the installation of sprinklers in new residential buildings. It was noted, however, that local lobbying by individual FRSs may need to take place in light of the Minister's statement at the Fire Conference that the sector should be making its case to the business community.

4 Progress against the Board's Action Plan

4.1 Business Plan 2010/13

The Board received a report which formally commissioned projects in the business plan 2010/13. Members were advised that project commissioning documents, which have been completed for the majority of the projects in the plan, identify the outcomes sought from each project.

4.2 Future of Regional Management Boards

The future of the Regional Management Board has been a topic of debate at recent meetings of the Board. Members agreed that successful collaboration and the availability of funding from the improvement and efficiency partnership had enabled significant progress to be made across the region, particularly in relation to procurement and equality and diversity. However, it was recognised that the future of the partnership of the nine FRAs in the region would be different if there were to be no external funding available. In light of these issues, and the possibility that there would no longer be a requirement for RMBs to exist, Members agreed to the following principles for the future of the Board:

- If RMBs were dissolved, the South East would consider reinstating the Chiefs' and Chairs' meeting which was held before RMBs were created in 2004;
- If projects come forward with a robust business case and the opportunity for savings and return on investment, that FRAs will look, where possible, to provide some level of investment to save funding;
- That SEFIP be authorised to look for alternative funding streams where appropriate to match fund any FRA contributions to projects.
- That SEFIP will remain a member of the Improvement and Efficiency Partnership for as long as the regional structure remains for other parts of local government, or any replacement mechanism which develops.

Following the meeting of the SERMB on 14 July, the government announced that FRAs are no longer required to work through Regional Management Boards (RMBs) on the elements of core business as set out in the National Framework document. However, they will still be expected to work collaboratively in order to seek a more effective provision of public services to achieve efficiency savings, but this does not need to be determined by regional boundaries. It will be at the discretion of each region to determine whether or not to continue with RMBs on a voluntary basis. In light of this recent announcement, a meeting will take place on 6 October to discuss future arrangements for the South East region.

4.3 Discharge of the National Framework

The previous government set out its view of what it expected Regional Management Boards to deliver within the National Framework 2008/11. At the meeting held in April, Members asked to be updated in terms of progress made against core business as identified within the Framework document (see appendix B). It was recognised that the SE regional business plan covered more than the requirements in the Framework and Members were assured that the previous administration's key expectations were being met. Clearly the requirements, as defined in the National Framework document, will no longer be enforced given the government's position on the future of RMBs.

4.4 Annual Efficiency Statement 2009/10

Board approved the annual efficiency statement for 2009/10, attached as appendix C.

5 FiReControl Project Update

5.1 Roy Beavis (RCC Project Director) provided an update on FiReControl. It was noted that the next two years would see an acceleration in the activity and delivery of FiReControl outputs and that the region was in good shape to deal with the challenges ahead. Board were asked to note the following points:

- The direction of FiReControl following the change in administration currently remained unchanged.
- The Regional Project Team was attempting to clarify future requirements, particularly data for migration, in order to facilitate resource planning within FRSs.
- The legal framework for FiReControl had been published and a workshop of SE legal representatives examined the framework on 24 June.
- Normal project outputs continue, with national and regional ways of working being identified as critical to project success.
- A briefing for Members on FiReControl [and the future of the SERMB] will take place on 6 October.

Board requested a timeline identifying the project's current position and where this sits in relation to the overall direction of travel. It was agreed that this would be circulated prior to the next meeting.

6 Equality and Diversity Update

6.1 Board noted that authorities who had achieved level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government could migrate across to the new level of 'Achieving' within the Equality Framework without the need for a further peer review. Five authorities within the region, including Hampshire, will now be working towards the next level, 'Excellent'.

6.2 Members were made aware of a new web portal (myUKinfo.com) which provides migrant workers with access to information (in a range of languages) about working and living in the UK. The portal is a cost-effective way of providing safety information related to fire, road safety, flooding and the work place in the migrants' own language. Kent Fire and Rescue Service, through its membership of the partnership, have provided generic safety information which can be shared by all FRAs in the region.

7 Shirley Towers Investigation

7.1 Deputy Chief Officer Dave Curry delivered a presentation on the investigation process following the incident that took place at Shirley Towers on 6 April 2010. The presentation made no reference to the circumstances of the incident but,

rather, the methodology and management structure of the investigation.

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 have 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 14 July 2010.

Sec/WP/Corporate/HFRA/2010 2010 09 15 Regional Management Board Update cel/jmw/23/8/10

Appendices:

Appendix A: Letter received by Shahid Malik MP (former Minister for Fire) reference the mandatory installation of sprinklers in new residential buildings.

Appendix B: Requirements of the National Framework 2008/11 on Regional Management Boards

Appendix C: The Annual Efficiency Statement for 2009/10