



Report

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Agenda Item: 7	Date of Meeting: 25th January 2007
This report is: For decision	Meeting Venue: SCC Shirehall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire
Report Status: To propose the establishment of a Fire and Rescue Lead Officer post within the Government Office West Midlands.	

Report Title:

Proposed Fire and Rescue Lead Officer post within the Government Office West Midlands

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Summary:

On 31st December 2006 the Department of Communities and Local Government terminated the regional Business Change Manager (BCM) positions within England. The role of BCM has brought many benefits to WMRMB and perhaps principally created an important link between the region's fire and rescue services and the Government Office West Midlands. This report sets out proposals to maintain this important link though the establishment of a Fire and Rescue Lead Officer post.

Recommendation(s):

WMRMB are recommended to consider and adopt one of the following options (*as set out within this report*):

- Option 1 – **Do Nothing.**
- Option 2 – **Appoint a full-time Lead Officer post.**
- Option 3 – **Appoint a part-time Lead Officer post.**

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1. Background Details:

The role of Business Change Manager (BCM) is set out within the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006-08 (paragraph 8.13, p60). The role was initially created in 2004 as part of a regional network of BCMs, who were situated in the Government Offices.

They were expected to:

- a) represent the interests of the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in each region by providing a resource for Fire and Rescue Authorities to aid the development of Regional Management Boards. This included identifying and achieving business change benefits, both generally and in relation to the six key areas of work attributed to Regional Management Boards;
- b) support the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) improvement planning roundtable meetings following the assessment process in each Fire and Rescue Authority. They were expected to liaise with individual Fire and Rescue Authorities, the Audit Commission and other DCLG bodies. They also acted as the link between Fire and Rescue Authorities and DCLG Regional Directors of Practice and the DCLG/Local Government Association (LGA) Capacity Building Programme;
- c) work within the relevant Government Office to ensure that key stakeholders in the region support and understand the modernisation agenda by establishing links on crime and disorder reduction, neighbourhood renewal, social exclusion, resilience, local government performance improvement and housing.

With the disbandment of the BCM role the DCLG may have to reconsider other means to fulfill the role function set out above in 'a).' The 'roundtable' function described in 'b)' is now somewhat redundant, particularly in this region with all Fire and Rescue Authorities receiving a rating of 'Good' through CPA. However the links established between Fire and Rescue Authorities and DCLG Regional Directors of Practice, the DCLG/LGA Capacity Building Programme and the Government Office ('c)') is arguably still of value within this region.

To maintain these valuable links it is proposed that a new post of *Fire and Rescue Lead Officer to the Government Office West Midlands* be created.

Role Description

Whilst open to further discussion and development, the core functions of the proposed post would be to:

- Act as a Regional communication resource in respect of the relationship with DCLG
 - Advise on and share good practice
 - Act as a Regional link with the Audit Commission; in particular the Regional Service Lead and the Relationship Managers
 - Represent the Region's interests in liaising with the West Midlands Regional Centre of Excellence
 - Represent Regional Fire Service interests at the Strategic Control Group of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership
 - Work with the WMRMB Programme Office to support the WMRMB as appropriate
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- Identify and highlight potential funding streams to Regional fire partners
 - Act as Regional Fire Service Lead in the Government Office:-
 - promoting and raising the fire service profile in the regional government community
 - advising Government Office Leads re fire and rescue service engagement
 - exercising influence to recognise fire and rescue service contribution to blocks other than “safer and stronger communities”
 - providing advice in negotiating Local Area Agreement fire targets
 - disseminating information and guidance to Regional fire partners
 - Contribute to Ministerial briefings and visits as appropriate
 - Network with similar roles in other Government Offices in order to share intelligence

The post holder would act as an *asset* of the WMRMB Programme Office and would be responsible for submitting quarterly progress reports to the WMRMB Programme Board.

Options

WMRMB are requested to consider three options:

- Option 1 – **Do Nothing**. This is a viable option, but one that would diminish the influence of both WMRMB and its constituent Fire and Rescue Authorities within the Government Office.
- Option 2 – **Appoint a full-time Lead Officer post**. This option would provide the optimum solution to secure delivery of the role core functions as set out above.
- Option 3 – **Appoint a part-time Lead Officer post (circa 2.5 days per week)**. This option would provide a minimum solution to secure delivery of most of the role core functions (to be prioritised by WMRMB) as set out above.

Funding Arrangements

If either Options 2 or 3 were to be adopted, it is recommended that the post be funded for an initial period of twelve months to enable a full evaluation to be undertaken to determine the full benefits to be realised.

To capitalise on the tacit knowledge held by the previous BCM post holder, it is recommended that the former BCM be appointed as the *Lead Officer* for the duration of the evaluation period (with the post to be advertised if it continues into 2008/09).

Based upon existing national BCM salary scales, the indicative costs to implement the above options are set out in Table 1 below.

Option	Salary Costs - £	On costs (20%) - £	Total - £
1	0	0	0
2	44,708	8,941	53,649
3	22,354	4,470	26,824

Table 1 – Indicative Salary Costs for Lead Officer post

If Options 2 or 3 were adopted, the Government Office West Midlands have indicated that they would provide office accommodation for the post holder and the Regional Centre of Excellence have agreed provide a salary contribution of £2,000.

Scrutiny of the existing WMRMB Programme Office budget indicates that the costs of Option 3 could be absorbed within the existing financial arrangements operated within this region (with no additional contributions required from Fire and Rescue Authorities). This proposal would require full consideration and approval of the regional Treasurers' Group.

Pursuance of Option 2 would require a further review of the WMRMB's budget provision by the Treasurers' Group.

2. Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

3. Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications arising from this report, other than those set out above.

4. Background Papers:

There are background papers to this report.

5. Attachments:

There are attachments to this report.
