



## Report

### Notes of the WMRMB Programme Board

Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006 at 10.30 am  
Whitehouse Hotel, Wellington, Telford

#### Present:

Cllr Len Bloomer	Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
Cllr Derek Davis	Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
Cllr Godfrey Davis	Hereford & Worcester Combined Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Nigel Hartin	Shropshire and Wrekin Combined Fire Authority
Cllr David Hinton	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
[Chair]	
Cllr Peter Hogarth	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Richard Hobbs	Warwickshire County Council
Cllr David Morgan	Shropshire and Wrekin Combined Fire Authority
Cllr Barry Stockley	Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
William Brown	CFO Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service
Alan Doig	CFO Staffordshire Fire And Rescue Service
Paul Hayden	CFO Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
Frank Sheehan	CFO West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service
Alan Taylor	CFO Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
Lynda Bateman	Treasurer
Claire Carter	Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
Peter Dartford	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Ged Edwards	Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
Louise Goodhead	Programme Support Officer
Mike Griffiths	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service
Jon Hall	Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
Ray Kings	Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
Sue Phelps	Clerk
Bob Russell	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Stuart Smith	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Sian Stroud	Warwickshire County Council
Tina Thomas	Government Office West Midlands
Christine Walker	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Steve Worrall	Programme Manager
Georgina Wythes	Sandwell MBC

#### Action by

#### 72/06 Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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**73/06 Apologies**

Apologies were received from:  
Cllrs Chattaway, Brigadier Jones CBE;  
SHaynes, C Juckes, E Marchinson, P Murphy and  
G Needham.

**74/06 Notes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2006**

Received as a correct record of the meeting.

**75/06 Matters Arising**

None.

**76/06 Correspondence**

None.

**77/06 Regional Fire Control – Local Authority Controlled Company**

The Clerk indicated that it would be necessary to hold an extraordinary meeting of the West Midlands Regional Management Board to consider and make recommendations to constituent Fire Authorities with regard to the establishment of a local authority controlled company to manage the West Midlands Regional Fire Control Centre.

**Resolved** that the extraordinary meeting be held on Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2006 at 1 pm at the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters.

**Clerk**

**78/06 Finance Review**

The Board noted a report on spend to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2006 against the approved budget allocation for 2006/07, and actual time spent on individual projects for the same period.

The Treasurer reported that the Fire Control Project Team had requested funding of £3,600 to meet the cost of Microsoft Project training required to support future planning and transition work linked to the national project. It was recommended that the request be approved and funded from the Programme Office Contingency Fund should specific funding not be made available by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

**Resolved** that the recommendation be approved.

**Treasurer**

**79/06 Review of the Resilience Project**

The Project Manager submitted a report on the work of the project to date. The project brought together the Civil Contingencies and New Dimension workstreams. Progress on New Dimension work had been very much dependent on the priorities of the Department of Communities and Local Government [DCLG].

A total of 64 work packages had been issued, with 41 completed, and the remainder due to be completed by the end of April 2007. It was envisaged that a further six workpackages would be issued which would take to the end of 2007 to complete. One further known asset, enhanced command support capability, was expected to be issued by the DCLG. The long term capability management of New Dimension assets also needed to be resolved.

The Project Board at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2006, recommended that this project should run for a further six months, to complete current work and steer new workstreams into the first quarter of 2007.

The Programme Board noted the achievement of all constituent Fire and Rescue Services in the work undertaken to implement New Dimension assets across the region and the mutual benefits delivered; the remaining elements to be delivered by the project in Civil Resilience and New Dimension work and the timescales involved; and the possible implications for the Project Board arising from Long Term Capability Management.

**Resolved** that the Resilience Project Board continues delivery of the project, with the assistance of a full-time regional project manager, until 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2007, and that a further review be presented to the Programme Board on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

**Project  
Manager  
[Steve Pearce]**

**80/06 Local Area Agreement Workshops**

Tina Thomas, Business Change Manager, Government Office West Midlands, reported that the 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' Local Government White Paper had emphasised the role of Local Area Agreements in responding to local priorities. Fire and Rescue Services had the potential to make a significant contribution to local priorities for community safety, and there were already excellent examples of good practice and leadership within the Region. It was proposed to hold LAA workshops facilitated by Government Office West Midlands, to share this experience and existing good practice.

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Members were supportive of this development, and outlined action already taking place in constituent authorities in collaborating on LAAs in delivering services to localities and involving young people.

**Resolved** that the principle of holding LAA workshops be approved, and that the Business Change Manager be tasked with canvassing support and developing a workshop programme in line with stakeholder responses.

**Business  
Change  
Manager  
[Tina Thomas]**

### **81/06 WMRMB Awareness Raising**

The Programme Manager reported that the Annual Report summary pamphlets had now been printed and circulated to members, staff and key stakeholders. A 2007 diary had also been produced, in partnership with Telent, the company involved with the FireLink project, to raise further awareness of the WMRMB, at no cost to the Board.

Suggestions were made as to additional information that could be included in any future editions of the diary.

Hits on the WMRMB web site were steadily increasing, and it was anticipated that this trend would continue as a result of the publication of the annual report, the summary pamphlet and the diary.

### **82/06 WMRMB Programme Risk Review**

The Board considered the Programme Risk Log. Risk reference 6.1.1 relating to non-attendance at Project Board meetings was highlighted, particularly in relation to the Resilience Project Board.

Reference was also made to risk reference P.1.1 and the impact on the Programme of the withdrawal of funding nationally for Business Change Managers' posts. It was noted that the WMRMB post was to be funded by the West Midlands Fire Service to the end of March 2007. The Chair indicated that he had written to the Minister for the Fire Service with regard to the withdrawal of funding for these posts and had raised this matter at the Regional Chairs' meeting hosted by the Local Government Association.

**Resolved** that a further report be submitted on proposals for the future funding for the WMRMB Business Change Manager's post.

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### **83/06 Items for WMRMB: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007**

Noted.

### **84/06 Date of next Programme Board meeting**

Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2007 at 10.30 am (Host: Warwickshire)

### **85/06 Visit by Fire Services Minister**

At this point the Fire Services Minister, Angela Smith MP, joined the meeting accompanied by her aides. The Chair introduced the Minister to those present.

### **86/06 WMRMB Thematic Project Boards – Progress Review**

Representatives of the seven thematic project boards submitted progress reports for the period August to November 2006. The presentations are available on the WMRMB web site at [www.wmrmmb.co.uk/about-wmrmmb](http://www.wmrmmb.co.uk/about-wmrmmb).

#### **[a] Performance**

Cllr Hogarth and Ged Edwards presented the report on behalf of the Performance Thematic Project Board. The Board's work was now practically complete and it would be meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2006 to discuss decommissioning. A full report would be made to the Regional Management Board at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

Members noted the excellent work carried out by this project in achieving all its objectives.

#### **[b] Resilience**

Further to Minute No 79/06 above, Cllr Bloomer and Bob Russell presented the report on behalf of the Resilience Thematic Project Board.

Members noted the important contribution of resilience to the modernising agenda. Some concerns were expressed, however, about funding arrangements for Long Term Capability Management of New Dimension resources.

#### **[c] Fire Safety**

Jon Hall presented the report on behalf of the Fire Safety Project Board, which was in the process of being decommissioned, having achieved all of its objectives.

Reference was made to the impact of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 on individual Fire and Rescue Authorities and the need for Government to ensure that the business community were aware of these new provisions, for instance, through regional roadshows. This project had

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ensured a common consistent approach across the region at a level that had not been achieved previously.

### **[d] Human Resources Management**

Councillor Morgan and Christine Walker presented the report on behalf of the Human Resources Management Thematic Project Board. A number of project objectives had been completed.

Work was now in hand on the implementation of the Regional Equality Strategy. Delays had been experienced with the national processes for recruitment and progression of operational and control staff; and in meeting national targets for employment of under-represented groups. Consideration of the costs and benefits of operating occupational health on a regional basis was outstanding, as was a review of consultation with stakeholders and representative bodies.

### **[e] Response**

Cllr Stockley and Stuart Smith presented the report on behalf of the Response Thematic Project Board. Much of the Project Board's work was either completed or on target. A consultant had now been appointed to progress the review of current and future integrated risk management planning in the region.

Members expressed disappointment that it had not been possible to move forward with the fire investigation protocols, and noted that this matter would be looked at in more detail when the project came before the Regional Management Board.

### **[f] Procurement**

Mike Griffiths presented the report on behalf of the Procurement Thematic Project Board. The procurement work stream was on target and had delivered a number of cashable and non-cashable savings. The project had been cited as an example of best practice in a recent Fire and Rescue Service circular.

### **[g] Fire control**

Ray Kings presented the report on behalf of the Fire Safety Thematic Project Board. The Board was progressing its work with regard to the regional roll-out of the national Fire Control and Fire Link projects. It was emphasized that the DCLG was currently driving the deliverables and the pace of both projects.

Members referred to progressive discussions that had taken place on governance of the proposed local authority controlled company to be established to manage the regional fire control but expressed some concerns about funding

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issues. They asked for reassurance that individual Fire and Rescue Services would not incur costs in excess of the current cost of their individual Fire Control arrangements.

Reference was made to the successful collaboration that had been achieved between the five West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services, and the Board's support for the Regional Fire Control in terms of community safety was affirmed. Members asked for reassurance that the representative bodies were also prepared to support regional fire control.

The Chair thanked Senior Responsible Owners and Lead Officers for their presentations.

It was now proposed to suspend updates to the Programme Board from the Performance and Fire Safety Thematic Project Boards until further notice as their respective Programme Plan objectives for 2006/08 had been delivered.

It was also proposed to bring forward two presentations to the full Regional Management Board each quarter, to raise awareness of the benefits delivered by individual projects.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that the recommendations made within the reports to counter slippage be approved; and that the Programme Manager be authorised to amend the Programme Plans accordingly;
- (2) that presentations in respect of the Performance and Fire Safety projects be suspended until further notice;
- (3) that project presentations be made to the full RMB during 2007 as follows:

Programme  
Manager

Procurement Performance	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2007 [Shropshire]
Resilience Response	26 <sup>th</sup> April 2007 [Staffordshire]
Fire Control Resources [HRM]	26 <sup>th</sup> July 2007 [Warwickshire]

### **87/06 Statement from the Fire Services Minister**

The Minister thanked the Board for the invitation to attend this meeting and for the informative presentations. She apologised for having to cancel her last visit.

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The Minister indicated that the presentations were good evidence of how the constituent Fire and Rescue Services were working together. She also noted that the benefits of partnership working were borne out in the results of the recent CPA inspections.

The Minister stated that the public needed to be made more aware of the range, depth, commitment and professionalism of the Fire Service and that she would be promoting this. She hoped that her strategy for involving young people would also have an impact on reducing arson and crime.

She thanked those present for their contribution in reducing deaths and injuries caused by fire, noting that the current incidence was very low and that this represented a great achievement.

The Minister noted the issues raised by various speakers with regard to the project presentations. She reported that Government was currently looking at the position with regard to New Dimension and how it could be managed most effectively. The promotion of equality and diversity issues was also important to achieve a quality service that reflected the community it served. Consultation was ongoing on this matter and Regional Management Boards would be asked to respond.

The Minister indicated that the new Regional Fire Control Centres would be a good professional working environment that would benefit community safety. She was prepared to meet with representative bodies to discuss any concerns they had. She would be publicising the benefits of the new arrangements to the public, press and stakeholders. It was hoped to finalise the financial arrangements for the regional control centres as soon as possible but there had been some slippage nationally on the project. She emphasised the need for strong leadership such as had been demonstrated by the West Midlands Regional Management Board to drive forward the Regional Control Centres.

The Chair on behalf of the Programme Board thanked the Minister for her attendance.

Meeting ended at 12.30 pm

<p><i>Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121-569 3791</i></p>
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