



## Report

### Notes of the WMRMB Programme Board

Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2008, at 10.30 am  
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service HQ

#### Present:

Cllr Derek Davis	Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
Cllr Brigadier Jones	Hereford & Worcester Combined Fire and Rescue Authority [Chair]
Cllr Richard Hobbs	Warwickshire County Council
Cllr Peter Howard	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Stuart West	Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue 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 & Rescue Service
Alan Taylor	CFO Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service
Neil Backes	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Lynda Bateman	Treasurer
Sue Croughan	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Peter Dartford	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Mike Griffiths	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service
Sioned Harper	Warwickshire County Council
Sue Phelps	Clerk
Sian Stroud	Warwickshire County Council
Tina Thomas	Government Office West Midlands
Steve Worrall	Programme Manager
Georgina Wythes	Sandwell MBC

#### Visitors

Andrew Brodie	Communities and Local Government
Philip Purssey	Regional Fire Control Director
Cllr Lt Col Denis Allen	Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority

#### Action by

##### 1/08 Apologies

None received.

##### 2/08 Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that this would be the last RMB meeting attended by Alan Doig who would be retiring shortly as Chief Fire Officer for Staffordshire. Peter Dartford was to succeed

## Programme Board – 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2008

him as Chief Fire Officer. Members expressed their best wishes to Mr Doig for a long and happy retirement.

Members also expressed their best wishes to Sian Stroud who was taking maternity leave shortly.

### **3/08 Minutes**

The notes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2007, were received as a correct record of the meeting.

### **4/08 Matters Arising**

None.

### **5/08 Correspondence**

None.

### **6/08 WMRMB Thematic Project Boards – Progress Review**

Representatives of the various thematic project boards submitted progress reports.

#### **[a] Procurement**

Mike Griffiths presented the report on behalf of the Procurement Thematic Project Board for the period December 2007 to February 2008.

Members discussed progress made by the Regional Procurement Project but concerns were expressed that this function could be more proactive and that procurement was more effective in regions where a regional procurement unit had been established. A national consultation exercise was due to take place shortly which would also include a review of Firebuy, and it was felt that any further consideration of this matter should be deferred until the outcome of the consultation was known.

#### **[b] Fire Control**

The Board welcomed Philip Purssey to the meeting. Mr Purssey had recently taken up his appointment as Director of the West Midlands Regional Control Centre [RCC]. He presented a report on behalf of the Fire Control Thematic Project Board.

The RCC building was now complete, and the Local Authority Controlled Company [LACC] that would oversee the operation of the Centre had now been established. The centre was due to be operational in October 2009. The project was currently running to target.

Mr Purssey outlined the next steps for the project; the scope of the operation; the technology capabilities; and indicative staff numbers and roles. He also set out a proposed prioritised work programme for the LACC. Potential risks to the project were also outlined.

Members asked for more information on progress with the human resources elements of the Project and whether common terms and conditions of employment were proposed for all nine regional control centres. Mr Purssey indicated that all nine centres were represented on a networking group so there were opportunities to discuss communality but this was not necessarily appropriate for all aspects of the operation. There might be variations between centres on terms and conditions of employment and staff drift was possible but was not seen as a major problem. There would be national operational standards which would provide some consistency. This region was leading the way on a staffing model but it was anticipated more operators would be needed than the national model suggested. This might impact on the business case for the project which still had not been finalised.

The Board was reminded that the West Midlands Centre might be asked to become operational by August 2009 which was a little earlier than programmed.

Members were reassured that the IT systems for the Centre would be sufficiently flexible to cope with the different operational requirements of the constituent Brigades and were technologically sound.

Concerns were expressed about communication with stakeholders and particularly the constituent Fire Authorities. Mr Purssey assured members that work had commenced on a communication strategy and that he was in the process of arranging visits to each Fire Authority. The regional Fire Control Project Board would also assist with stakeholder communication.

Members discussed the role of the LACC Directors, particularly if national guidelines limited the discretion of the LACC, and with regard to the need for technical expertise. The importance of the input of Chief Fire Officers to the LACC on technical issues was emphasised. Members were informed that the role of the national project team was now reducing and that there were important decisions to be made by the LACC at regional level.

**7/08 WMRMB FRS Lead Officer Progress Report**

The Board noted the quarterly progress report of the Fire and Rescue Service Lead Officer for the period January to March 2008.

The Lead Officer had continued work on the regional bid for capacity building funding for the equality and diversity project; assisted with the fire service input to local area agreements; worked to raise the profile of the fire service at a number of regional workshops; and briefed Ministers on regional fire service issues.

This would be the final report from Tina Thomas as the Lead Officer as funding for this post would cease at the end of March 2008. She indicated that she would still report to the Board from time to time on Government Office issues.

**8/08 Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008/11**

The Programme Board noted a copy of the regional response sent to Communities and Local Government with regard to the proposed National Framework 2008/11.

**9/08 WMRMB Programme Risk Review**

The Board noted the report of the Programme Risk Manager and the contents of the Programme Risk Log.

**10/08 Finance Review**

The Board noted a report on spend to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2007 against the approved budget allocation for 2007/08, and actual time spent on individual projects for the same period.

It was noted that the budget for 2008/09 might need fundamental review depending on the outcome of the review of the region's partnership working arrangements and the requirements of the National Framework 2008/11 [Minute No. 11/08 refers].

**11/08 WMRMB Review 2008**

The Programme Manager reported that the National Framework recommended that RMBs take stock of how effectively they had delivered the core functions set out for them in the 2003 White Paper 'Our Fire and Rescue Service'. He accordingly presented the WMRMB Review 2008 which set out the findings and recommendations arising from an appraisal of this region's partnership working arrangements and the requirements of the new National Framework

## Programme Board – 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2008

2008/11. The review was conducted using a Government Partnership Assessment Toolkit. The results indicated that the WMRMB partnership was working well but that some aspects may benefit from further exploration, particularly with regard to positive outcomes. The report set out a number of recommendations for consideration.

Members felt that it was premature to come to any firm conclusion on changes in governance arrangements until the outcome of the consultation on the national procurement strategy and the new National Framework was known. It was felt that there were still benefits to be gained from regional working but that the frequency of meetings could be reduced.

### **Resolved:**

- (1) that no change be made to the existing governance arrangements with regard to membership of the WMRMB and the Programme Board;
  - (2) that for the period 2008/11 the WMRMB and the Programme Board meet twice a year on an alternating basis;
  - (3) that no action be taken at this time with regard to the remaining recommendations set out in the review report;
  - (4) that the Chief Fire Officer of West Midlands Fire Service and the Programme Manager prepare a draft Programme Plan for future consideration.
- CFO, WMFS
  - Programme Manager

### **12/08 WMRMB: 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2008**

It was noted that the next meeting of the West Midlands Regional Management Board would be held on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2008 (Host: West Midlands).

### **13/08 Date of next Programme Board meeting**

To be confirmed.

(Meeting ended at 11.55 pm)

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