



Report

Notes of the WMRMB Programme Board

Thursday, 23rd October, 2008, at 2.00 pm
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service HQ

Present:

Cllr Tom Bean	Hereford & Worcester Combined Fire and Rescue Authority [Observer]
Cllr S J Clee	Hereford & Worcester Combined Fire and Rescue Authority [Observer]
Cllr Richard Hobbs	Warwickshire County Council
Cllr Peter Howard	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Brigadier Jones	Hereford & Worcester Combined Fire and Rescue Authority [Chair]
Cllr T Tolley	Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
Cllr Stuart West	Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Chris Enness	DCFO 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
Lynda Bateman	Treasurer
Mike Griffiths	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service
Stephen Haynes	Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service
Neeraj Sharma	Representing the Clerk
Christine Walker	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Steve Worrall	Programme Manager
Georgina Wythes	Sandwell MBC

Visitors

Philip Purssey	Regional Fire Control Director
Ged Bowles	REIP
David Neil	REIP
Ged Edwards	Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service

Action by

14/08 Apologies

Councillor D Davies;
CFOs Brown and Dartford and Sue Phelps.

15/08 Notes of the Programme Board

The notes of the meeting held on 13th March, 2008, were received as a correct record of the meeting.

16/08 Matters Arising

None.

17/08 Minutes of the Regional Management Board

The minutes of the Regional Management Board held on 24th July, 2008 were received for information.

18/08 Correspondence

The Clerk submitted information on the dates of forthcoming meetings of Chairs and Vice Chairs of Regional Management Boards at the Local Government Association, to be held as follows:

Chair/
Vice Chairs to note

28th January 2009
2nd April 2009
29th July 2009
20th October 2009

19/08 National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service 2008/11 - Consultation

The Board considered a draft response to the consultation on the National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service 2008/11 which had been prepared on behalf of the Region by the Procurement Project Board. The consultation document was circulated for information.

There had been mixed views from constituent fire authorities on a number of the questions raised by the consultation document and it had therefore been difficult to draw together a meaningful regional response. Each constituent authority would be submitting its own response to Government on the consultation document.

Resolved that a composite regional response be not submitted, and that the Programme Manager be requested to collate the responses made by each constituent fire authority and that they be circulated to each authority for information purposes.

Chief Fire Officers/
Programme
Manager

20/08 Shared Services Workshop - Feedback

The Board was advised that a workshop for Chief Fire Officers and principal officers had been held during the morning, facilitated by David Neil and Ged Bowles from the West Midlands Improvement & Efficiency Partnership [WMIEP]. The workshop was held to discuss what areas of common and specialist services currently undertaken by constituent fire services in the region could be considered for a further detailed review to satisfy the requirements of the National Framework 2008/11, which indicated that

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Regional Management Boards must have clear aims and objectives and, where needed, costed plans to deliver on their core business, including:

- integrating common and specialist services
- introducing regional personnel and human resource functions
- developing a regional approach to training
- introducing regional procurement within the context of the National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service.

Ged Bowles of the WMIEP indicated that his organisation had been established to provide support to local authorities and fire and rescue authorities in achieving improvement and efficiencies, and funding was available from the Department of Communities and Local Government for this purpose. The morning workshop had looked at what factors helped or hindered progress in these areas.

David Neil indicated that the workshop had looked at a number of areas where joint working was a possibility including procurement, recruitment and personal development training. Peer assessment work had been identified as a priority for continued development as part of the improvement agenda which could be supported from WMIEP capacity building funding. Such funding would enable the backfilling of posts of officers engaged on regional working, and project officers could also be supported with skills training and resources from IDEA. It was proposed to develop these proposals in consultation with the Programme Manager and to report back to the Regional Management Board in January 2009.

WMIEP/Programme
Manager

Mr Neil also advised that funding was available for member development and one place per constituent authority was available on a leadership academy to be held at the Fire Service College. Chief Fire Officers were dealing with the nominations for these places, for which individual Fire Authorities would contribute 25% of the cost.

Chief Fire Officers

21/08 WMRMB Thematic Project Boards – Progress Review
Representatives of the following thematic project boards submitted progress reports.

[a] Procurement

Mike Griffiths presented the report on behalf of the

Procurement Thematic Project Board.

The project board had completed 42 out of 47 of its objectives. The remaining objectives related to matters dependent on national procurement arrangements which had yet to be determined.

The draft National Procurement Strategy for Fire and Rescue Services 2008/11 contained references to regional working and suggested that the focus should be on strategic activities rather than operational purchasing. The draft strategy suggested that there should be regional discretion as to how this work was carried out, rather than the prescriptive approach taken in the previous framework document.

The regional board had worked in collaboration on many issues and was currently working on a Respiratory Protective Equipment project which should bring significant operational and procurement benefits to the region. However, in view of the substantial progress made on its objectives, it was proposed that the project board operate in future as a practitioners' group, meeting regularly to ensure consistency and to ensure that potential collaborative procurement issues were dealt with appropriately.

The Board noted the progress achieved to date in the delivery of regional procurement against the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2006/08.

Resolved:

- (1) that the formal closure of the Regional Procurement Project Board be approved; and Steve Worrall/
Mike Griffiths
- (2) that the establishment of a Regional Procurement Practitioners' Forum be approved.

[b] Fire Control

Philip Purssey, Director of the West Midlands Regional Control Centre (RCC) presented a report on behalf of the Fire Control Thematic Project Board.

Mr Purssey indicated that the RCC building had been open since July 2008 and was currently occupied by the Local Authority Controlled Company Project Team and the Fire Control Project Team.

There had been some delays with the national roll out of

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the fire control system, but assurance testing had taken place two weeks ago and the results were awaited. If this was satisfactory the national roll out could commence. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service which would migrate first to the new Control Centre was currently involved with system testing.

The LACC had commenced stakeholder events for staff, and elected member visits were also in hand. Progress on the transition plan was good, and well in advance of other regions. Completion of the LACC Members' Agreement was still outstanding, as was the lease for the Control Centre, which was the subject of negotiation with the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG). There was still work to be done on out-of-scope activities. Training for LACC directors had been arranged nationally.

The first phase of the FireLink radio project had been signed off, but Phase B would need to be finalised before the RCC could 'go live'.

Human resources issues were being progressed and consultation had commenced with representative bodies.

Members expressed concerns about uncertainties around the final business case for the Regional Fire Control project and the financial implications for the region and constituent fire and rescue authorities; and about potential delays in implementing the roll out of the project.

The Treasurer reported that Circular 41/2008 had been received from the CLG seeking the views of Fire and Rescue Authorities on CLG's preferred option for apportioning Fire Control shared costs amongst regions on the basis of the council tax base.

The Treasurer indicated that the consultation paper did not seek views on the presumption in the business case that these additional costs should be met regionally, whereas the national Finance Group were of the view that these related to national resilience and should be funded by CLG. She also indicated that the circular failed to explore the possibility of apportioning costs on the basis of population or Formula Based Grant, both of which were more robust than the Council tax base in reflecting individual region's circumstances and needs.

A draft regional response, which had been drawn up by the Treasurers' Group highlighting these points and favouring population base as the apportionment model, was circulated for consideration. It was suggested that the

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points with regard to the contribution of the RCC to national resilience and the responsibility of CLG to fund such activity could be strengthened.

Resolved that subject to the points made above, the draft response be approved.

22/08 European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme – WMRMB Regional Visit to Finland

The Programme Manager reported that the European Commission had approved the allocation of funds to facilitate a visit by representatives of the West Midlands Region to Finland for the purposes of reviewing the lessons learned from the regionalisation of Finland's fire control rooms in 2004. A presentation on the findings of the visit would be given to the Regional Management Board at its meeting in January, 2009.

Programme
Manager

23/08 WMRMB: 23rd January, 2008

It was noted that the next meeting of the West Midlands Regional Management Board was scheduled to be held on 22nd January, 2009 (Host: Shropshire).

Resolved that the meeting of the Regional Management Board be rescheduled to **Friday, 23rd January, 2009**, to accommodate member commitments.

Programme
Manager/
Georgina
Wythes

24/08 Date of next Programme Board meeting

To be confirmed.

(Meeting ended at 3.03 pm)

*Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes
Democratic Services Unit
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
0121-569 3791*