

promoting better local government

To: Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England
Copies: Chief Fire Officers of Fire and Rescue Services in England

15 September 2006

Dear Colleague

Draft FiReControl Full Business Case

I am pleased to be able to inform you that the draft FiReControl Full Business Case will be published early in October. The document will shortly be reviewed by the FiReControl Finance Working Group (FFWG) – which, as you may know, is comprised of treasurers from each of the regional management boards – and will then be approved by Ministers. A copy will be sent to you on publication for review.

I know that the absence of a full business case for the project has been a significant concern for many colleagues. While the version to be published next month will not yet contain all the answers we have been waiting for, it is the next step in the publication of the full information required, and will provide an update on progress and information on the latest assumptions.

What has been updated?

Good progress has been made since the Outline Business Case for the project was published in January 2005. To give some examples:

- The responses received to the Invitation to Submit Outline Proposals (ISOP) procedure have shown that the market is confident that it can deliver the necessary solution. Ongoing discussions and negotiations with the potential bidders have helped to clarify both likely costs and the timetable for delivery of the infrastructure services contract;
- Clear benefit profiles have been developed and communicated to every region. A dashboard has been produced which will help identify, model and track these benefits, helping to ensure that the project really delivers the improvements we want to see;
- The accommodation procurement has been completed in all of the regions except London. This process has shown that previous cost estimates were very accurate, giving confidence in the processes and procedures used.

As already mentioned, however, a number of issues have not yet been finalised, and further work will be needed to refine the Full Business Case as these are resolved. As you are no doubt aware, while good progress is being made in negotiations on the infrastructure services contract, this has not yet been let. As a result, final costs are not at present available for this element of the project. Work is also proceeding on other important financial issues, such as establishing a cost apportionment model. The LGA and FFWG will continue to work closely with DCLG to resolve these issues as quickly as possible.

DCLG have confirmed that they will be pressing ahead on these outstanding points with the aim of issuing a final Full Business Case early in 2007. I shall, of course, ensure that you receive a copy of this as soon as it is available.

What next?

I should be grateful if you could ensure that this information is made available to all the members of your Regional Management Board. If you or they have any questions, please contact Graeme Pauley (Head of Finance Team) by email at graeme.pauley@communities.gsi.gov.uk. Alternatively, if there are any points that you would like the LGA to pursue on your behalf, please contact Claire Cooper, the LGA's Fire Programme Manager by email at claire.cooper@lga.gov.uk or telephone 020 7664 3132.

Following the publication of the draft Full Business Case, the National Team would like to offer elected members the opportunity to attend workshops to review the document and explore any questions or comments. These workshops are intended to be run on request and the location will be dependant on demand. Once the final Full Business Case is published in February 2007, full-day members' seminars will be run in all regions.

The dates set out below are available for workshops.

Draft Full Business Case

October 2006: 16, 17, 20, 25, 26, 27, 31

November 2006: 1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 20, 23, 24, 27, 29, 30

Final Full Business Case

February 2007: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28

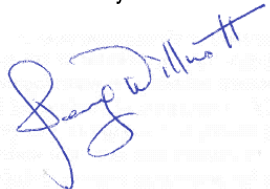
March 2007: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 30.

To assist with the organisation of workshops and seminars, please contact Vicki Paul (FiReControl communications) at vicki.paul@communities.gsi.gov.uk and indicate:

- a) whether you would welcome a *draft* Full Business Case workshop in October/November 2006 and, if so, which dates would be convenient; and
- b) your availability for a regional seminar on the *final* Full Business Case in February/March 2007.

I hope that you will find the draft Full Business Case a useful document, and that it helps to clarify some of the latest thinking within the FiReControl project.

Yours sincerely



Cllr. Jerry Willmott
Chair, Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority
LGA Representative, FiReControl