

Report No: RMB/30/06
Meeting Date: 18 October 2006
Agenda Item No: 9

REPORT TO THE SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN 18 OCTOBER 2006

KEY ISSUE/DECISION

The Regional Management Board (RMB) is asked to note the progress made against the regional business plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report sets out progress made against the regional business plan for the period July - September 2006, against each of the work-stream areas. In general Members of the Regional Management Board will be pleased to note that the progress being made is good.

CONSULTATION

Consultation has taken place with constituent FRAs in the South East region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to

- (i) note the report
- (ii) note the newsletters that have been issued relating to progress made by the South East Fire Improvement Partnership, as set out at appendices 1 and 2;
- (iii) note the continuing work to streamline business programmes and reporting arrangements

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Progress against business plan items in the region continues, as set out in the report. Additionally a new work-stream has begun and its initial impact has been good. Its longer term impact will be assessed in due course. There is also a need to allow the new approach to project and programme management time to bed in. However it is felt that the methods adopted, whilst Prince 2 compliant, have been scaled to a point that allows effort to be focused on generating efficiencies for Fire and Rescue Authorities in the South East.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

INTRODUCTION

Members of the Board received a report at the July meeting of the RMB which discussed realignment of work-streams and the closing of common and specialist services. The Improvement work-stream was added as a result of this realignment, and following the closure of the common and specialist services group. This report sets out the progress made against each of the key areas in the regional business plan, and the new area of Improvement.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

Review of workstreams

In the two years that the current arrangements have been in place many changes have occurred. Experience has also been gained in managing complex workstreams and working collaboratively on many issues and many projects have either become normal business, or have been successfully completed.

Resilience – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority

All projects within the Resilience work-stream are progressing well.

3 of the 5 modules of the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) training programme have now been delivered to all FRAs. Another module is due to be delivered during October and November 2006, with the final module being completed next year. The initial Mass Decontamination Unit training programme has been delivered to personnel in FRSs with an Incident Response Unit. All FRSs now have Powered Respirator Protection Suit Instructors who are trained and are developing training programmes to deliver to crews.

The interim Detection, Identification & Monitoring (DIM) training programme has been completed. DIM equipment vehicles are due to be delivered between October and December. The initial New Dimensions training programme and the awareness training has been delivered to personnel in FRSs. The South-East training package has now been forwarded for national approval. A number of exercises to support the Regional Resilience Forum are now taking place in order to ensure an effective multi-agency response to resilience events in the South East.

Procurement – Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Organisational arrangements for the delivery of the procurement function have been determined. The development of an annual procurement plan with targets and savings is in progress and will be finalised once the Regional Procurement Manager has been appointed. Progress against the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government is good, and a number of items have been met. Outstanding items will be delivered by Regional Procurement Manager as part of their action plan. FRAs are currently reviewing stores and distribution arrangements. The final review will be completed by the Regional Procurement Manager.

A procurement skills needs analysis will be completed next year, and a package of training will be developed as part of this project.

Interviews for the post of Regional Procurement Manager are due to take place in October after which projects should move forward rapidly.

Human Resources – Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

The South-East Human Resources Development Group has produced a draft South-East Regional HR Strategy which was considered by the group at its meeting in September. Following consultation with CFOs it is planned that the strategy will be taken to a meeting of the RMB for approval.

Regional policies on assessment development centres (ADCs) are being developed at the current time. A capacity building fund bid in relation to supporting the implementation of National Firefighter Selection and Assessment and Development Centre processes has been received and approved by the Stakeholder Group at the level of the allocation set out in the outline bid agreed by the Government Office of the South East (GOSE).

Data gathering and further research on options related to employee development is now complete. The development of potential options and a draft report has been produced. The final report is on schedule for completion in October.

Training - Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority

A capacity building fund bid in relation to supporting the strategic review of training (learning and development facilities and resources) has been received and approved by the Stakeholder Group, at the level of the allocation set out in the outline bid agreed by the Government Office of the South East (GOSE). A further capacity building fund bid in relation to conducting a peer review of FRAs in relation to assisting authorities to meet level 3 of the equality standard by December 2008 has also been approved.

A report of the review of training is elsewhere on this agenda.

Regional Control Centre & Firelink – West Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority

The location of the South-East Regional Control Centre (RCC) has been selected as Fareham, Hampshire. A paper appears elsewhere on this agenda which outlines the proposals for the Local Authority controlled company which will operate the RCC. A lease has been signed which will allow building work to commence in October. A high level impact assessment has been completed in which the estimated costs of convergence and transition were calculated. As expected the impact of standardising procedures vary greatly between FRAs. Formal responses were received from bidders for the Infrastructure Services contract which is due to be awarded by the DCLG in January 2007. Once this contract has been awarded dates for milestones of this project will become clearer.

Improvement – Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

The South-East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) has produced 2 newsletters which have been circulated to Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) and work-stream leads (**appendices 1 and 2**). The newsletters provide an introduction to the partnership and an overview of the activity that it has been involved in. Representatives of the partnership have visited CFOs and work-streams providing information of what the partnership can offer in terms of resources and expertise.

A bidding process has been developed to ensure that Capacity Building Funding is utilised effectively. This process focuses on the intended outcomes to be gained by conducting the project. The project outline templates were circulated, and returns taken to the Stakeholder Group to agree funding.

SEFIP has also agreed to work in partnership with East Sussex FRS on the development of a distinct Improvement website, through which collaborative work by FRAs, through either the RMB, CFOA or less formal arrangements can be publicised.

IMPLICATIONS/CONCLUSION

Good progress is being made against regional work areas. To maintain progress it is important that progress is closely monitored and reported to Members and senior officers on a regular basis, and at a level that is appropriate to the role of the recipient. The changes made to progress reporting launched in this document reflect this need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to agree the following

- (i) note the report
- (ii) note the newsletters that have been issued relating to progress made by the South East Fire Improvement Partnership, as set out at appendices 1 and 2;
- (iii) note the continuing work to streamline business programmes and reporting arrangements