

South – East Fire Improvement Partnership

Issue 2



A warm welcome to the second update from the South-East Fire Improvement Partnership

Thanks to all of you who have sent us your comments on the first edition, we are grateful for the support, and I hope we have taken your suggestions into account in this issue.

There are number of topics we will focus on this time. We wanted to give you some information on what the partnership has been doing since the last issue and also thought it might be helpful to give everyone a brief update on the work in each regional workstream. We also wanted to provide you with some information on an important event that we are organising. To begin with however we thought it would be beneficial to make a distinction between SEFIP and Programme Management.

What's the difference between SEFIP & Programme Management?

Whilst both SEFIP and Programme Management for the Regional Management Board (RMB) are co-ordinated by the same team at Kent Fire & Rescue Service (KFRS), there is a distinction between the two.

Improvement is a workstream in its own right. SEFIP is 'owned' by all the 9 FRAs in the South-East, and will be able to assist with projects. But whilst SEFIP will be able to enhance

partnership and regional working though building communication networks, researching and notifying FRAs of examples of best practice and providing funding, the Improvement Team will not conduct project work itself for workstreams.

SEFIP will also look to develop programmes for Member development with the IDeA, and developing a mechanism for peer review & challenge which can be called upon by each FRA as required.

In contrast Programme Management is something which KFRS will provide to the

In this issue....

- What's the difference between SEFIP and Programme Management?
- What SEFIP has been doing
- Introducing the Business Planning Away Day
- An update of the work each regional workstream in conducting
- The governance arrangements of SEFIP

RMB. This will include writing the Regional Business and Activity Plans, monitoring & communicating project progress to workstreams, Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) & the RMB.

Who to contact for more information about SEFIP

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What has SEFIP been up to?

Visits to Chief Officers

Over the past few weeks representatives of SEFIP have visited all the Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) in the South East Region. At these meetings we discussed with CFOs the intentions of the partnership, what it has to offer, and how it intends to approach its work. We also discussed methods of reporting the progress of regional activities, old and new.

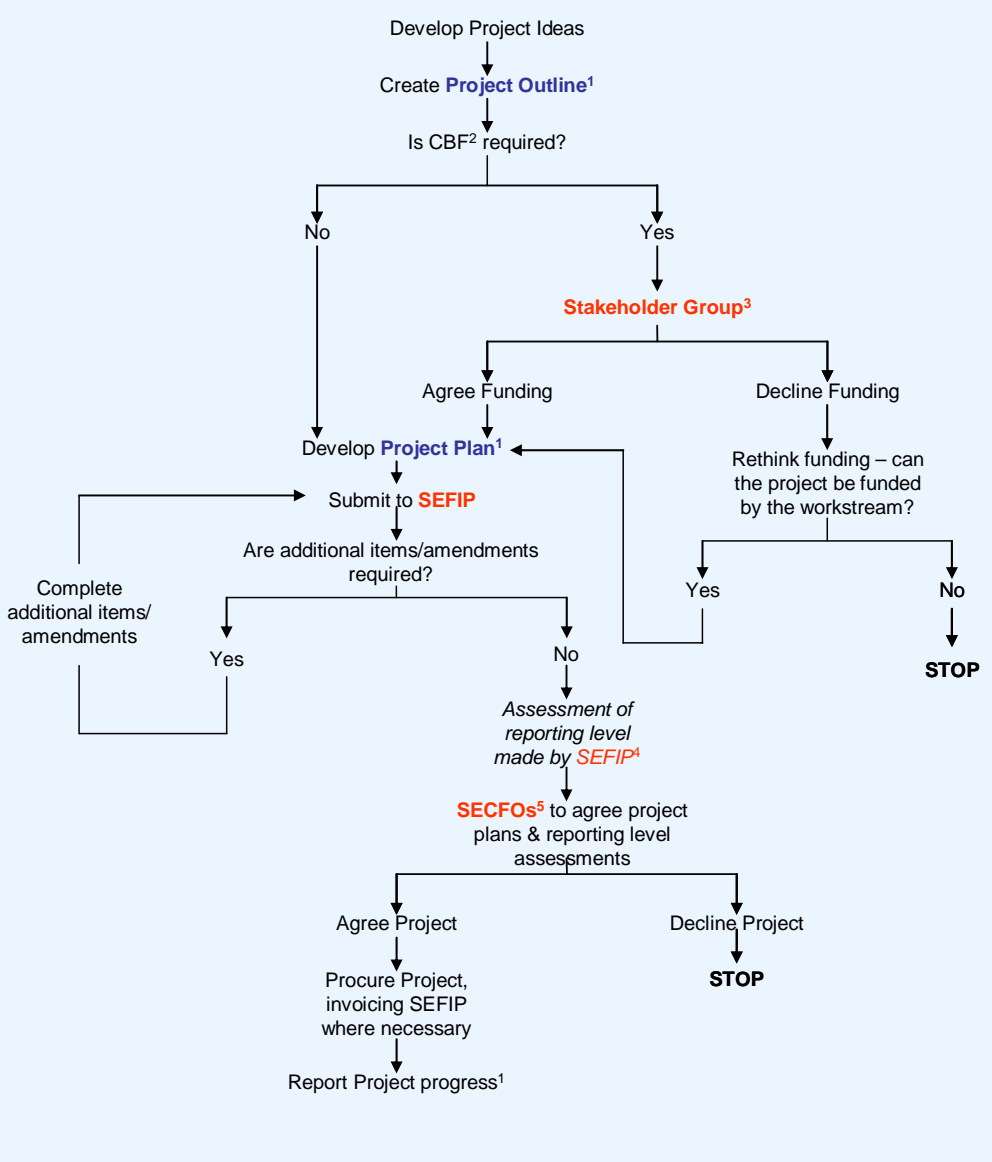
In general, CFOs felt the whilst previous work on monitoring the progress of regional projects was good, there was now a need to move on. CFOs were keen to receive progress updates which were concise and strategic whilst also providing a fuller view of what other workstreams were working on.

We have taken these comments on board and have tried to reflect these changes in the methods of reporting progress which you would have seen and completed recently. We are however committed to reviewing on a regular basis the performance monitoring services being delivered.

The SEFIP Stakeholder group

Since the last newsletter we have held our first meeting with the Stakeholder group, where we asked them to approve the governance arrangements around the partnership (see page 4). We also asked the Stakeholder group to approve the proposed procedure of applications for funding. This, along with the proposed project planning and management process is described in the flow chart at **figure 1**.

The funding and project planning processes we are proposing to use are quick and simple, and will be explained in



¹ Templates & guidelines provided by SEFIP
² Capacity Building Funding
³ Three CFOs make up the Stakeholder Group who are responsible for agreeing applications for CBF
⁴ In consultation with workstream leads SEFIP will make an assessment on whether project progress should be reported to the RMB, SECFOs or workstreams
⁵ SECFOs will be presented with the project plans that are due to report to either SECFOs or the RMB

Figure 1

further detail at the **Business Planning Away Day**.

The Stakeholder group also agreed the allocations of funding to the various workstreams and activities; we are arranging to make payments to lead authorities now.

What SEFIP has supported/achieved so far....

The partnership has agreed to support the development of a programme of peer review around diversity issues. This is designed to help all FRAs in the South-East meet level 3 of the

equality standard for local government by December 2008 CBF funding has also been allocated to support the recruitment of a Regional Procurement Manager (Procurement Workstream), and the delivery of the outcomes of the Regional Training Review (HR/Training workstream).

In order to meet the requirements of the Fire National Procurement Strategy, SEFIP will be providing funding for a training session in relation to the Blue Light Database. Details of this event will be

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communicated to all parties when confirmed.

SEFIP has paid for five FRAs to send staff to the Association of Procurement Practitioners Fire Service Conference in London in September 2006.

In collaboration with East Sussex, we have started to plan the development of a dedicated website on which FRAs will be able to share good practice regionally, from *any* relevant source e.g. Local Authorities or the private sector. The development of a South-East Improvement website will also allow workstreams to have easy access to workstream progress reports and other regional material.

Introduction to the Business Planning Away Day

One of the tasks of Programme Management is to draft the Regional Business Plan and the underlying activity plan. But to do this we want to make sure that Lead Officers and CFOs have the opportunity to consider the activities of all the workstreams, not just those on which they lead.

The idea of the Away-Day is to have a representative of each workstream present the projects they want to include in the coming year's activity plan. This will also provide each of the workstreams with the opportunity to get an overview of all regional activity. We will then help each work-stream develop their project plans there and then, or, if lead officers have already developed them, make sure that each is of an equivalent quality. The event will allow an initial sift to be conducted on the projects which are 'above the line' and those which are 'below the line' for CFOs to agree.

The event will be held at The Best Western Reigate Manor Hotel on 16 November. We decided upon this venue as it is conveniently located for the majority of FRs. CFOs have nominated those persons who they wish to attend, final programme details will be communicated to delegates shortly.

As with all that we are trying to do, we want to make project and business planning as painless as possible so we have completely redesigned both of these processes which will be introduced at this event. We hope this will be a productive day and that you will get a much stronger feel for what is happening in other workstreams

Project work in the RMB workstreams

As SEFIP aims to build communication networks and keep everyone informed of workstream activity, we thought it would be beneficial to provide an update of the projects that each of the workstreams are currently progressing. We have not provided an update on the Improvement workstream as this is achieved via this newsletter.

Procurement

The procurement workstream is currently working on 4 projects which feature in the RMB Business Plan. Due to the nature of procurement there is some degree of cross over with other workstreams. The procurement projects are focusing upon; the Regional Procurement Strategy, South-East Website Implementations, Hazardous Materials Database and Procurement Training. The recruitment process for a Regional Procurement Manager is currently in progress.

Human Resources & Training

The Human Resources (HR) &

Training workstream is currently working on 4 projects which feature in the RMB Business Plan. These projects focus upon various HR/Training issues including; Employee Resourcing, Employee Relations, Employee Development and Equality & Diversity. The HR/Training workstream has also been working on other projects such as the development of a South-East Human Resource & Development Working Group website.

Resilience

There are 7 projects that the Resilience workstream is working on that feature in the RMB Business Plan. These include; Site Specific Assessment, Urban Search & Rescue, Mass Decontamination, Detection, Identification & Monitoring Equipment, Command & Control, New Dimensions Training, and a Multi-agency response to resilience.

Regional Control Centre & Firelink

The location of the South-East Regional Control Centre (RCC) has been selected as Fareham, Hampshire. A paper is going to the October RMB 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.

Press, Media & Communications

The Press, Media & Communications workstream has no projects in the RMB Business Plan. The workstreams is due to begin developing the distinct Improvement website in partnership with SEFIP.

Governance Arrangements of SEFIP

1. The Actions of the Improvement Partnership will be monitored regularly by the Stakeholder Team;
2. The Stakeholder Team will consist of three Chief Fire Officers (or their representative). Each member of the Stakeholder team will serve for a period of not less than one year. Nominations and elections will be made by South East Chiefs at an appropriate meeting;
3. The Stakeholder Team will agree the partnership's priorities as part of the business planning process;
4. The Stakeholder Team will receive a report detailing how capacity building money has been used during the preceding reporting period, and also at the year end. This report will be made available on request to relevant government agencies.
5. The Improvement Partnership will ensure that all bids for capacity building funding meet either of the following criteria:
 - That the project links to the key priority areas of the partnership
 - That in the opinion of the Improvement Partnership, the project will lead to an improvement in performance.
6. In order to embed collaboration, all projects that apply for capacity building funding must involve at least two FRAs in addition to the conditions above, except in extenuating circumstances;
7. Officers of the Improvement Partnership will be able to approve funding immediately when the conditions set out at 5 and 6 are met, and the value of support is less than £2000;
8. If more than £2000 is requested this must be approved by the stakeholder team; in this instance, the improvement team will either report the issue to a meeting of the Stakeholder team **or** will contact the stakeholder team directly. In the event that one member is unavailable, a majority in support of the project will be sought;
9. If a project is not approved for capacity building funding, this does not necessarily mean that the project should cease;
10. Bids for funding should be made on the appropriate templates, which are available on request. These may be completed by SEFIP on behalf of the procuring authority.
11. In order to ensure good governance and facilitate accurate recording to meet the requirements of the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice, the following arrangements will be put into place.
 - The Improvement Partnership Grant will be paid into the bank account of Kent Fire & Rescue Service (KFRS) and will be recorded in its accounts as revenue grant income.
 - Individual Fire & Rescue Authorities will be responsible for commissioning and making payment for projects that are being funded by the Improvement Partnership, as agreed by the Improvement Partnerships manager. It will be the responsibility of the individual FRA to ensure all orders and payments are made in line with their own procurement and financial regulations. All costs must be appropriately coded to enable clear identification within the accounts.
 - Individual FRAs should invoice KFRS for reimbursement of costs incurred within the same financial year. Where this is not possible the amount committed must be notified in writing, so that appropriate accruals can be made.
12. Invoices should be forwarded to: The Finance Section, Headquarters, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Straw Mill Hill, Tovil, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6XB;
13. To expedite payment and enable reconciliation with the agreed schedule of projects covered by the grant details of what comprises the invoice total with copies of the original invoices should be forwarded to James Finch, Policy Manager (Planning and Review) at the address given above;
14. Payment will be made by BACs within 28 days of receipt of the invoice.

We hope that you have found this newsletter useful as always we will be happy to receive any comments you wish to make.