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

THE SOUTH EAST HR PARTNERSHIP

17 January 2007

KEY ISSUE/DECISION

This paper seeks to report on the success of the South East Human Resources Partnership and to make recommendations for the future of the partnership. The partnership was created following the RMB paper dated 19th October 2005 and the aim of the partnership was initially to address the introduction of new National Firefighter Selection tests and Assessment and Development Centres for existing staff across the region. Both activities are fundamental elements of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) and have considerable resource implications. Therefore a collective approach is seen as a way of mitigating these costs and voluntary membership of a proactive partnership arrangement is a means of achieving that collective approach.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Good progress has been made so far with the partnership successfully delivering its year one objectives on the National Firefighter Selection (NFS) and Assessment and Development Centre (ADC) project, with all nine South East Services agreeing to continued membership for 2007/2008. The partnership has also been successful in attracting Capacity Building funds for the NFS and ADC Project.

The work of the partnership in these areas meets the requirements of the National Framework Document, specifically Chapter 2 Working Together: The Regional Approach, Chapter 5 Fire and Rescue staff and Chapter 6 Workforce Development. In addition the partnership has been instrumental in achieving the relevant objectives of the Regional Management Board Business Plan 2006/2007 and the South East HR Strategy.

Membership of the partnership is entirely voluntary and does not require the participation of all South East FRS's for progress to take place, however it is pleasing to note that a 100% uptake in year one has been endorsed by continued unanimous membership for year two.

The partnership has proved to be an effective mechanism to achieve results when individual services do not have the resources or capacity to address new or pressing issues. The work of the partnership could be the framework for other significant HR issues affecting the South East FRS's where there is a requirement to co-ordinate our activities and dedicate a regional resource to manage the project.

CONSULTATION

This proposal for the continued existence of the partnership and ongoing membership of all South East FRS's has been consulted upon with unanimous assent from Chief Officers and HR practitioners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the success of the HR Partnership concept.
2. To note the continued membership of all South East FRS's.
3. To endorse the work done so far by the NFS and ADC Project

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The partnership has proven to be an effective mechanism in moving forward a complex project for the benefit of all fire and rescue services in the region. The NFS/ADC Project is seen as having successfully delivered the first stage of the project and has been a reliable means of overcoming identified resource and capacity issues to the benefit of all HR Partnership members. Stage two of the NFS/ADC Project will consolidate our position, building on the preparatory work already completed and delivering NFS and ADC processes with regional consistency, common standards and quality assurance, whilst achieving cost saving through economies of scale.

Expanding the work of the HR Partnership into other areas will capitalise upon this early success and enable further progress.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: RMB Paper 19 October 2005

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

The South East HR Partnership was established in April 2006 with the aim of providing sufficient capacity to allow regional implementation of the NFS and ADC processes as required by the Integrated Personal Development System.

The partnership delivers by means of a two stage approach:

Stage 1

The appointment of a Human Resources Advisor / Project Manager to the partnership, this would be a two year secondment managed by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service. The objective in the first 12 months would be:

- To establish a formal partnership agreement between the collaboration partners.
- To develop an agreed business case for delivering Firefighter Selection and Assessment and Development Centre services for the collaboration partners, recognising the intended training facilities survey due to be conducted.
- To be involved in and knowledgeable of the work of the HRDG but not to be a resource for progression of the work plan.
- To establish a costing model for Stage 2 of the Human Resources partnership to ensure contribution reflects benefits derived from the service provided.
- Develop options for the provision of National Firefighter Selection and Assessment and Development Centres on a regional/sub regional basis.

Stage 2

The primary aim of Stage 2 will be:

- The establishment of a collaborative NFS and ADC processes, and regional coordination for all partners. It is anticipated that these activities will be resourced via a range of options dependant on individual partner needs and that options may include full or partial outsourcing to reduce the resource implications upon partner services. However, this would be subject to the development of an extensive business case.

Stage 1 of the project will come to a conclusion in April 2007 having successfully delivered the stated objectives and improved the regions capacity to deliver NFS and ADC's. April 2007 will see a milestone in the project life cycle and will signal the commencement of stage 2 to build upon the achievements of stage 1 and take the region forward from that point.

All Chief Officers of the South East have been consulted and are in unanimous agreement with the project continuing and with the on going work of the HR Partnership. Specific achievements of the project include;

- Provision of a dedicated NFS and ADC Implementation Project Manager.
- Negotiated reduction in fixed ADC costs for all partners.
- A Memorandum of Understanding regarding ADC's.
- A common ADC policy.
- Agreement to a collaborative South East region Strategic Manager ADC.
- A Memorandum of Understanding regarding NFS.

- A common NFS policy.
- The establishment (from April 2007) of a regional coordinator post for NFS and ADC.
- Considerable research and option generation on the subject of outsourcing elements or whole processes of NFS and ADC.
- Establishing a strong South East voice and influence on the National Assessment Unit (who oversee ADC and NFS policy issues).

OPTIONS

The business case for the creation of the HR Partnership was acknowledged and accepted as sound. The circumstances which lead to its creation still exist with many new or impending HR issues on the horizon, and many existing issues still unaddressed. The options for the South East around how to resource these new challenges are still limited and the continuation of the NFS and ADC Project into stage 2 offers the opportunity for other pieces of work to be progressed through the SE HR Partnership.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

The South East Human Resources Partnership has proven to be an effective and efficient mechanism for progress where individual services capacity and resources are limited or unavailable. All stakeholders have been positive about the speed of development and the ability of this mechanism to deliver in the area of NFS and ADC. Other regions and the National Assessment Unit in particular have been complimentary about the South East's approach and the results of the project. The initial contribution of £10,000 per service has been seen as a good investment and all services have agreed to the same level of funding for stage 2 of the project during 2007/2008. There are currently no formal agreements beyond year two of the partnership. The HR Partnership has been successful in attracting Capacity Building funding to the ADC and NFS Project for 2007/2008 and 2008/2009.

IMPLICATIONS

Costs

- Stage 2 of the NFS and ADC project will have a cost of up to £10,000 per partner. The project has also attracted a Capacity Building Fund contribution of £20,000 per annum for 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 as part of the funding for the regional coordinator post, which will take the project into stage 2.
- Any other areas of work will have an associated cost which would be determined once the work is identified and an initial scoping report is completed

Benefits

- Consistency of policy and implementation.
- Efficiencies through the collaborative approach i.e. advertising, shared human resource and purchasing.
- A consistent and auditable approach.

- Quality Assurance.
- Cashable savings or cost mitigation.
- Opportunity to research further areas of HR service collaboration

CONCLUSION

The South East HR Partnership has made considerable progress to address the highlighted issues around NFS and ADC and has successfully completed stage 1 of that project. Stage 2 of the project is critical with regional implementation of NFS and ADC's and the presentation of a range of sourcing options including collaborative or partnership working with external organisations. This stage will enable the anticipated efficiencies and cost mitigation to be made and will meet the requirements of the National Framework Document.

The commencement of stage 2 of the NFS and ADC Project and the expansion of the work of the partnership into other identified HR work areas makes sound business sense and should bring benefits to all. The business case for the partnership as the means of delivery is clear and no suitable alternative has yet emerged. The experience is very positive and reinforces the option for the HR workstream to consider other areas where this model would be appropriate and beneficial.