

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SOUTH EAST FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES
REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY 2007 AT 11.00 HRS
AT SURREY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE HQ, REIGATE**

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Regional Management Board at its next meeting.

Members:

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| * Cllr B Abraham | Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Isle of Wight Fire Authority |
| * Cllr L Barnard | Cabinet Member for Public Protection, West Sussex County Council |
| * Cllr Dr P Bryant | Chairman, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority |
| * Cllr M F Cartwright | Chairman, Hampshire Fire & Rescue, Fire Authority |
| Cllr B Cope | Chairman, Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority |
| * Cllr R Pascoe | |
| * Cllr R Jelf | Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Oxfordshire County Council |
| * Cllr M Murphy | Chairman, East Sussex Fire Authority |
| * Cllr D Rowlands | Chairman, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Combined Fire Authority |
| * Cllr Mrs C Stevens | Executive Member for Community Safety, Surrey County Council |

* = Present

In Attendance:

CFO J Bonney	Hampshire
CFO M Burrell	West Sussex
CFO I Cox	Royal Berkshire
CFO C Hendry	Kent
DCFO M Smyth	Oxfordshire
CFO D Prichard	East Sussex
DCFO R Pearson	Surrey
Actg CFO P Street	Isle of Wight
ACO C Hedger	Buckinghamshire
ACO C Kerr	Kent
Sue Klein	East Sussex

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members of the tragic death of Brian Wembridge and Geoff Wicker of East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, who had died while attending a fire at Festival Fireworks depot at Marlie Farm, Ringmer on 3 December 2006. Members, officers and members of the public stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

Councillor Richard Pascoe was welcomed to the meeting as a substitute member in the absence of Councillor Bryan Cope; along with DCFO Russell Pearson, substituting for CFO Myers; DCFO Mike Smyth substituting for CFO Parry; and ACO Clare Hedger, substituting for CFO Smith.

1/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Councillor Cope (Kent), CFO Myers (Surrey), CFO Parry (Oxfordshire) and CFO Smith (Buckinghamshire).

2/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 2)

There were none.

3/07 PROCEDURAL MATTERS (Item 3)

There were no questions from Members.

4/07 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the RMB meeting held on 18 October 2006 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

5/07 FiReBUY PRESENTATION (Item 5)

Councillor Barnard welcomed Liz Barron and Terry Brewer to the meeting, which they had been invited to attend in order to update Members on the results of FiReBuy's funding ballot. They also updated Members on progress with various FiReBuy projects and copies of their powerpoint slides are attached at Appendix A.

Members then took the opportunity to question Liz and Terry and voice their concerns:

Councillor Murphy asked about the Integrated Clothing Project; Euro 5 Chassis and the poor range of displays at the Fire Conference. CFO Prichard mentioned that the project was currently costing FRAs money – it should be self-funding and he would only recommend buying through FiReBuy if it was the cheapest option.

Councillor Stevens stressed the importance of communications and wanted clarification on national/regional and local responsibilities; and formula funding. DCFO Pearson was keen not to lose some of the local solutions available.

Councillor Pasco echoed CFO Prichard's concerns and CFO Hendry mentioned that the Local Government settlements for the next few years would be tough, so increased collaborative purchasing would be required. He supported a 'soft landing' approach to the introduction of FiReBuy and was also concerned about maintaining a viable market in what was a relatively small market. ACO Kerr thought that FiReBuy had done well in setting up the Insurance Mutual, bringing great savings for Kent.

Councillor Rowlands asked about the results of the Funding Ballot, and was concerned that FiReBuy still did not know where their funding would be coming from – he invited the team to visit Buckinghamshire FRS to address concerns about funding from 2008. He also queried what was meant by “vehicle average price in line with expectation”. ACO Hedger asked whether there was a revised FiReBuy agreement to sign up to, following the significant issues raised over the draft agreement.

Councillor Jelf endorsed Councillor Rowlands comments and DCFO Smyth pointed out that economies of scale could only be achieved if a common specification could be agreed for fire appliances.

Councillor Bryant was worried that the Government would use FireBuy to restrict choice and stifle innovation. Individual FRSs needed the freedom to buy the best for their own brigades and they needed to know funding details. CFO Cox pointed out that FRSs should be telling FiReBuy what was required and what they could afford, not the other way round.

CFO Bonney was keen to see FiReBuy succeed, agreeing with CFO Hendry that, if FiReBuy had not been established, FRSs would be inventing a procurement solution and entering into collective general agreements. Councillor Cartwright agreed with CFO Bonney and CFO Hendry and suggested that FRSs should subscribe to the Insurance Mutual for five years initially, rather than three.

Councillor Barnard's big concern was funding, and CFO Burrell thought that the concept was good, although the practicalities for County FRSs were difficult because of their insurance contracts.

Acting CFO Street was reluctant to change his arrangements for his fleet repair programme and was concerned that care be taken in deciding the choice of vehicles being made available. Councillor Abraham was concerned that small players could be driven out.

Terry Brewer then addressed these concerns:

- People from the Fire & Rescue Service were working on the Integrated Clothing Project to improve firefighter safety and affordability
- Euro 5 Chassis were not yet available
- There were a lot of Fire Conferences going on, resulting in fewer displays at each
- FRAs should look at the whole life costs of goods and services purchased
- FSP contracts were coming to an end, so would have to work on arrangements
- The National Procurement Strategy makes clear who is responsible for purchasing what and FiReBuy would specify boundaries for national/regional responsibilities and fire service items
- Where there is an operational need for local solutions FiReBuy will ensure they are obtained
- To maintain viable markets FiReBuy will balance SMEs and global players
- FiReBuy are not in favour of top-slicing as an option and want the funding formula to be visible, to enable FRSs to choose whether to use it
- “Vehicle average price in line with expectation” meant that prices had gone up in line with inflation
- There was a lot of concern over the Members’ Agreement and it had been proposed to replace it with individual access agreements for each project – a paper would go the FiReBuy’s Board in the next few days
- A lot of vehicle differences were cosmetic and could be got rid of to save money

- The £20,000 spent by FiReBuy on firekit was from the Government and would not impacts on FRSs
- It was hoped that companies would approach FiReBuy and work with CFOA when planning to develop new products, to check viability
- The suggestion of a five year contract for the Insurance Mutual would be fed back – there had been some interest from County Council Brigades

Councillor Barnard thanked Terry and Liz for their presentation and for answering so many concerns 'off the cuff'. He suggested that Members and officers contact them direct with any further queries.

6/07 LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTROLLED COMPANY GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS (Item 6)

CFO Burrell gave an oral update on the LACC arrangements (notes attached at Appendix B) and confirmed that the DCLG was very happy with the letter he had sent outlining the SE RMB's position. He thanked the officers of each authority and the Project Board for their work in getting the LACC to its current position.

Members agreed that it would be inappropriate to run the seminar on 5 March if the full Business Case was still not available. Councillor Rowlands suggested that, if the Business Case was still not available for the next meeting of the RMB on 4 April, it may be necessary to convene an additional meeting of the Board to look at the detail and consider the future role of the RMB. Concerns were also raised regarding skimming control room staff to crew a 'national network' while other staff were being trained.

As a result of more money being released to fund transitional costs it was agreed that individual FRAs would receive their full allocations and be re-charged by West Sussex for their share of the project costs.

It was noted that Angela Smith, the Minister for Fire, would now visit the Fareham site in May and was agreed that a minimal attendance be provided from the RMB.

CFO Hendry thanked CFO Burrell for his work on the project and informed the Board that members of Kent FRA had requested a name change for the LACC – this would be decided by the LACC once it was set up. Discussions were still going on at national level regarding the role of the Chief Executive.

7/07 SOUTH EAST HR BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS (Item 7)

CFO Bonney presented a report that informed Members of the success of the South East Human Resources Partnership and made recommendations for the future of the partnership. The partnership had been created following the RMB meeting in 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 was seen as a way of mitigating these costs and voluntary membership of a proactive partnership arrangement a means of achieving that collective approach.

The partnership had attracted some capacity building funding and had proven to be an effective mechanism in moving forward a complex project for the benefit of all fire and rescue services in the region. Expanding its work into other areas would capitalise upon this early success and enable further progress.

RESOLVED – That

1. the success of the HR Partnership concept be noted;
2. the continued membership of all South East FRS's be noted; and
3. the work done so far by the NFS and ADC Project be endorsed.

8/07 PROGRAMME UPDATE (Item 8)

ACO Kerr presented a report that set out the progress made for the period October–December 2006 against each of the work streams in the regional business plan. It was noted that, in general, good progress was being made. A newsletter regarding sharing best practice had been attached to the report as an appendix.

A business planning day with representation from all the work streams had raised awareness of the interactions between the work streams, resulting in improved communications and the prospect of improved outcomes. These would be delivered via the new business plan to be brought to the meeting of the Board in April 2007.

RESOLVED – That the following be noted:

1. progress made;
2. the recent newsletter issued by the South East Fire Improvement Partnership; and
3. the work being undertaken to develop the business plan for the period 2007/08.

9/07 CORRESPONDENCE (Item 9)

The Chairman had replied to Angela Smith as requested by Members at the last meeting of the RMB but had not yet received a reply.

He had also responded to the FBU's concerns regarding communications with the Board.

CFO Burrell had withdrawn his letter regarding re-charging as a result of more money being released to fund transitional costs. It was agreed that individual FRAs would receive their full allocations and be re-charged by West Sussex for their share of the LACC project costs.

10/07 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS (Item 10)

4 April 2007, commencing at 11.00 hours, at Surrey Fire & Rescue HQ, Reigate. Members agreed that officers should present a report to the meeting, outlining suggestions for reviewing the constitution of the RMB

Members also agreed dates for meetings for 2007/08, attached as Appendix C.

NB – October's meeting has been re-arranged to 10 October following the agreement of members.

11/07 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items for which the press and public were excluded.

The meeting closed at 12.47 hours.

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Chairman

SOUTH EAST FIRECONTROL PROJECT

Notes for RMB 17th January 2007

1. **Setup of the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC)**
 - Memorandum & Articles agreed by 4 FRAs
 - Letter sent to Richard How of DCLG on behalf of SE RMB
 - Next steps:
 - Agree Members' Agreement and Cost Apportionment
 - WSFRS to fill out paperwork for signature
 - Other supporting tasks e.g. Directors' Insurance
 - Develop induction programme for Directors, to include key decisions to be made regarding HR etc.
 - Other Regions
 - Tranche 1 (NE, EM) imminent (SW – Avon has formally refused to join)
 - WM – expecting to file papers at Companies' House this week
 - Others – following later

2. **Infrastructure Services Contract and Business Case**
 - IS Contract winner due to be announced end Jan/early Feb
 - Full Business Case will then be made available, with appendices
 - FBC will be discussed at the seminar with Cllr Willmott scheduled for 5th March (N.B. if FBC not available 1 week prior, we may cancel)
 - The underlying cost assumptions will be reviewed with FRSs for several weeks
 - FRSs need to be sure they are quoting the right costs – will be developed as part of the Benefits Management work with Joint Project Board and FRS Coordinators.
 - OGC Gateway Review passed (with minor recommendations) – report is on the FiReControl website or can be circulated.

Transition Work

- Once IS contract signed, there will be release of information (though not all at once. E.g. the Detailed Design will take 3-4 months to develop). However, detailed plans with contracted dates will be produced – each FRS in the SE will work to a slightly different set of dates depending on which Batch they are in.
- FRSs have been asked to comment on the national Cutover order, which for info is:
 - Hampshire (Batch #4)
 - West Sussex (#5)
 - RBFRS (#6)
 - Oxon (#7)
 - Kent (#9) (If anyone asks, London is #8)
 - East Sussex (#10)
 - Bucks (#11)
 - Surrey and Isle of Wight (#12)

- RPDs will be asked to approve the transition approach, using an initial skim of control room staff to crew a "national network" into which FRSs transfer their calls whilst their own staff are being trained. Will be raised at Joint Project Board this month.
- Amongst other work, a Pre-Cutover Checklist will be developed, and a paper on Transition Governance.
- The Regional Project Team will be trying to validate the proposed staffing numbers for the RCC.
- FRSs will be doing an impact assessment on the resources needed for data migration – this will give us a better view on what funding and timescales will be required.

3. **Funding and the recent Funding Circular**

- The good news – more money than expected
- However, until we have done more detailed impact assessments we cannot tell whether it will be sufficient for 2007/8.

4. **Firelink**

- Milestone 1 signoff approval requested of PUG last week, but further work needed on the design, particularly with respect to the control room. However, agreement is felt to be very close.
- Some approaches to cost apportionment have been suggested, but more information has been requested by Fire Finance Working Group on whether costs can be broken down to FRA level.
- Concerns at practitioner level about the approach and costs – awaiting clearer information from the Firelink team nationally.

5. **Accommodation**

- Building work has started on 7 of 8 RCCs
- NE is due for Practical Completion in April, EM and SW soon afterwards. LACC will be expected to sign lease within 5 days – RPDs are querying the legal issues.
- Facilities Management OJEU documentation being prepared (but LACC will decide how to do procurement)
- London procurement – tender documents were issued to short-listed bidders in December, to be returned March.

6. **National Policy**

- DCLG are developing cross-project workgroups to look at resource needs, risks, Health & Safety issues, etc.
- Angela Smith did NOT visit the Fareham site in December, instead visiting East Sussex.

Appendix C

REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

Agreed dates for 2007/08 meetings

Date of Meeting	Wed 11 July 07	Wed 10 October 07	Wed 16 January 08	Wed 2 April 08
Request Agenda Items and Papers (at least 4 weeks before meeting) and at the latest by:	Wed 13 June 07	Wed 12 September 07	Wed 5 December 07	Wed 5 March 08
Closing date for Draft Agenda & Papers. Due by close of play for distribution the following day (allow at least one working day and possibly weekend for consideration in advance of SE CFOs meeting).	Thurs 21 June 07	Thurs 22 September 07	Thurs 20 December 07	Thurs 13 March 08
SE CFOs Meeting - 1400 hours - Surrey.	Tues 26 June 07	Tues 25 Sept 07	Thurs 3 Jan 08	Tues 18 March 08
Closing Date for Final Papers & Agenda for Distribution - 1300hr deadline (allow 2 clear working days following SE CFOs meeting for amendments by CFOs and to chase any outstanding papers, etc)	Fri 29 June 07	Fri 28 Sept 07	Fri 4 January 08	Fri 21 March 08
Agreed Dates for Call Over Meetings at 1030 hours. To be attended by Chair and his Chief Fire Officer, Vice Chair and his Chief Fire Officer, and Clerk. To be held at West Sussex HQ - Chichester.	Mon 2 July 07	Mon 1 October 07	Mon 7 January 08	Mon 24 March 08
Publish Papers (5 working days before mtg) and place on websites.	Tue 3 July 07	Tue 2 October 07	Tue 8 January 08	Tue 25 March 08
Date of Meeting - Surrey	Wed 11 July 07	Wed 10 October 07	Wed 16 January 08	Wed 2 April 08

