

Report No: RMB/15/07
Meeting Date: 4 April 2007
Agenda Item No: 9

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

REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD BUSINESS PLAN 2007/10 APRIL 2007

KEY ISSUE/DECISION

To approve the regional business plan 2007/10.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A regional business plan has been developed which sets out the Regional Management Board's (RMB) aspirations for the coming years, and those projects which are to be reported on a regular basis to the RMB.

The opportunity has also been taken to develop some simplified priorities for the region, which develop those agreed as part of the previous years' plan.

CONSULTATION

Consultation has taken place with the constituent FRAs in the South East Region to develop the plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to

Approve the regional business plan for final publication subject to minor alterations to text agreed with the Chairman of the Improvement work stream (**appendix 1** refers)

Note the SEFIP newsletter (**appendix 2** refers)

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important for the Board to have a clear vision of how it intends to discharge its duties under the national framework in relation to regional working.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

INTRODUCTION

A regional business plan has been developed which sets out the RMB's aspirations for the coming years, and those projects which are to be reported on a regular basis to the RMB.

The opportunity has also been taken to develop some simplified priorities for the region, which develop those agreed as part of the previous years' plan.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

The plan shows the key projects in each of the work streams of the RMB and draws attention to the key influences on regional activity at the current time. It also sets out the intended approach to risk management and equality impact assessment. Finally, comments from members of the public and other interested parties are invited, and a freepost address has been made available for this purpose.

The opportunity has been taken to set out a limited number of priorities which the RMB is asked to approve. These are:

- to maintain the individual accountability of constituent Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), and their ability to meet local risks through Integrated Risk Management Plans;
- to continue to support the management of the transition from local to regional control centres and transfers arrangements for control staff as far as is reasonably practicable;
- to raise the profile of the Regional Management Board to ensure that it is positioned to access funding available at a regional and sub-regional level;
- To harness the work of the procurement work stream to drive efficiency across the region in procurement and shared services;
- To improve the region's performance against the equality standard for local government by Dec 2008 to level 3.

The key concern of Members of the Board has been to maintain the political accountability of the constituent FRAs in the region, and the projects set out in the Plan reflect this priority. It is also likely that financial settlements in the future for FRAs will be increasingly challenging and it is therefore critical that regional working delivers efficiencies, as well as more effective service delivery to the public. It is also important that opportunities for accessing funding such as working with the South East Centre for Excellence (SECE), the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) are maximised.

Additionally, diversity will continue to be a challenge for FRAs, and setting an aspiration to move all FRAs forward in terms of their performance against the equality standard for local government will signal a clear commitment on the part of the RMB, which it has also provided financial support for, in the form of capacity building funding.

Closure of projects

The following projects will not be progressed as part of this plan:

- Completing the work on collaborative arrangements for health and safety (Common and Specialist Services work stream)

This project was an element of the old common and specialist services work stream, and an appraisal of the current situation reveals that many FRAs are now not in a position to progress this issue. However good progress was made in relation to health and safety peer assessments, which are nearing completion.

- Considering the costs and organisational benefits of operating occupational health services on a regional basis (Human Resources work stream)

This project is not being actively progressed at this time. FRAs are encouraged to investigate the contract recently issued by Kent FRS, which is available for others to join should it meet their organisational needs.

Work stream alignment

Community Safety activity has not been high in profile since the closure of the common and specialist services work stream. To counter-act this it is proposed that a new work stream of Community Safety be developed, and a pragmatic programme of activities put together for the coming year, although this may require further refinement as the year progresses and the work stream beds in. Discussions are on-going in relation to the lead FRA for this work stream.

Approach to risk management

The Board is asked to note that it is the responsibility of work streams to ensure that projects and outcomes they deliver do not have adverse impacts on societal groups that cannot be justified. Similarly, work streams are responsible for monitoring the risks associated with the projects. Members will wish to assure themselves that such issues were suitably reflected in reports brought forward to the RMB in future.

Publicity

A South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) newsletter has been developed, announcing the launch of the new plan. It is attached at **appendix 2** for information.

CONCLUSION

Members are asked to

Approve the regional business plan for final publication (**appendix 1** refers), subject to minor alterations to text agreed with the Chairman of the Improvement work stream

Note the SEFIP newsletter (**appendix 2** refers)