

Report No: RMB/19/07
Meeting Date: 11 July 2007
Agenda Item No: 6

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

PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN 11 JULY 2007

KEY ISSUE/DECISION

The Regional Management Board is asked to note the progress made against the current regional business plan. It is also asked to approve an appointment to an outside body and note an update on developments in relation to associate membership of the South East England Regional Assembly.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report sets out the progress made for the period April-June 2007 against the each of the work streams in the regional business plan. In general good progress is being made.

CONSULTATION

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to

- i. note the progress made;
- ii. note the recent newsletters issued by the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (**appendices 1 and 2** refer) on the peer review brokering service and the launch of the SEFIP website;
- iii. approve the appointment of the lead Member for the Improvement workstream to the regional Improvement and Efficiency Board;
- iv. approve the appointment of the Chairman of the RMB to the regional Improvement and Efficiency Board in the event of absence of the Chairman of the Improvement workstream;
- v. Note the intention to seek associate membership of the South East England Regional Assembly.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Progress against the regional business plan continues to be made as set out in the report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Management Board is asked to note the progress made against the current regional business plan. It is also asked to approve an appointment to an outside body and note an update on developments in relation to associate membership of the South East England Regional Assembly.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

Review of work streams

All work streams of the Board have progressed well so far this year, as set out in the paragraphs below.

Procurement – Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Regional procurement is beginning to build real momentum. The Regional Procurement Manager and the Deputy Chief Officer of Oxfordshire have been visiting all FRAs in the region explaining their role. The Regional procurement Manager has found excellent deals on the marketplace, and through a simple newsletter has made colleagues aware of them. This has started to raise the profile of the opportunities available, and will be continued.

The process of tendering for work and services has been simplified by giving FRAs access to an electronic portal, operated by the South East Centre of Excellence (SECE). This allows tender opportunities to be posted free of charge and expressions of interest to be collected. The Peer Review process discussed in the Improvement work stream update was tendered via the portal, which has delivered a much wider list of potential suppliers, and at no cost to the lead authority.

Work has commenced on the skills audit for procurement staff, which will in time allow generic training to be procured to increase skills across the region. FRAs have provided additional spend data to compliment that already supplied for spend analysis purposes. This has highlighted some areas of significant expenditure across the region, and these have the potential to generate significant savings in the medium term through collaborative procurement.

Human Resources – Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

The regional Human Resources strategy agreed by the RMB in April 2007 has been agreed at individual authority level by several FRAs.

Progress against items set out in the regional business plan is steady. There is a need to secure provision of Phase 1 firefighter training for all FRAs in the region. Representatives of the HR work stream have met with the Fire Service College and they are due to provide a cost for delivery of the Phase 1 firefighter development in line with the existing Hampshire programme.

The group fully support the principle of Centres of Excellence for the development of training and is undertaking an analysis of potential areas to focus on. Initial agreement is to look at Incident Command Support. This has prompted the need to have closer liaison with the SE Resilience Working Group.

All FRAs have now indicated their preference for when they would like to have their peer review on equality and diversity. This work is progressing well, and an interim report on emerging issues will be presented to the Board in October.

Training - Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority

The group is undertaking an assessment of existing cost models for training, as suggested in the regional training review. Stage 1 is to apply a relevant but simple cost model across the region by October 2007. Stage 2 is to develop and apply a sophisticated model by April 2008.

The group is developing an e-learning strategy that complements the work being undertaken by the Fire Service College and maintains existing flexibility of services to pursue their own needs.

Hampshire and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Authorities have jointly opened a joint fire behaviour training centre which also accommodates Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) training, and is based at HFRS Headquarters in Eastleigh.

Compartment fire behaviour training is delivered to all operational personnel within Hampshire. The Training Centre also provides live fire training for other fire services and agencies. This new facility for multi-compartment live fire training, jointly funded by both Hampshire and West Sussex FRAs, will enhance the training to all roles who respond to operational incidents and the provision of accredited instructor training within this field. East Sussex FRA also provide a similar facility at their Training Centre and also make its courses available to other FRAs.

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

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) awarded the IS Infrastructure contract to EADS in March 2007 and in April the generic transition plan was released. Each FRA then received an individual transition plan which gave tailored information regarding dates for completion of activities in order to migrate over to the new RCC.

The general principal of the transition phase is that all FRAs must continue operating their control function until it is transferred to the RCC. Shortly before cutover, the CFO and Regional Control Centre Director (RCCD) will need to take an operational decision to transfer the FRA's control function to the RCC. To enable this to take place, they must be assured that all key activities have been completed. Progress against the plan is automatically uplifted at the end of each month using a monitoring tool.

There are two checkpoints – six and twelve months following contract signature (October 2007 and April 2008) and five gateways which lead up to cutover.

Media and Communications – East Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority

The workstream has developed a website for the Improvement Partnership, which is available at www.sefip.gov.uk. This site will host all improvement documentation, as well as all agendas and documents related to the meetings of this board. From 1 July 2007, all FRAs will be able to redirect their respective websites to this site to discharge their responsibilities for making RMB

documentation available to the public. A SEFIP briefing note on this issue is attached at **appendix 1** for Members' information.

Good progress is being made in relation to media handling training for Members and Officers. A project plan is currently being developed, and London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) has also expressed an interest in being involved. Minutes of the FirePro meeting are now to be routinely circulated to the CFOs of all authorities, to ensure that information is shared on a wide basis.

Improvement – Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

The peer review brokering service has been launched and one FRA has taken the offer of a subsidised review of an area of service. As this is a critical element of future audit and assessment processes as Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is superseded by Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), FRAs are encouraged to take advantage of this service, as it is an excellent way of demonstrating to external assessors commitment to improvement, self-awareness and how open the FRA is to external scrutiny and challenge. The recent SEFIP newsletter on this issue is attached at **appendix 2** to this report for Members' information.

Members will be aware that the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) is hosting an event at Leeds Castle on 11/12 September for all RMB Members. Further detail on this event is elsewhere on this agenda in the form of a presentation by the IDeA.

A further bid for access to fully-subsidised national improvement projects has been submitted and is currently being considered along with the other bids from improvement partnerships in the region. Work on a new bid for further capacity building funding will begin during the summer.

Joint training for Members between FRAs for common subjects such as financial management is being progressed using capacity building funding.

In the last update, Members were informed that the SECE had taken on the 'gatekeeper' role for capacity building funding. Since this time, CLG has approved the transfer of central capacity building funds to regional improvement partnerships and all improvement partnerships in the south east, the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and the IDeA have been and are continuing to discuss how sound governance can be developed for access to this funding stream without increasing burdens unnecessarily.

Each Improvement Partnership in the South East and the Centre of Excellence have similar governance arrangements with Member and senior officer leadership in place which are tailored to the needs of each partnership, and these continue to be the focus for accountability. The representatives of the Improvement Partnerships and of the Centre of Excellence have proposed a joint Member/officer board drawn from each partnership as offering the simplest and least onerous arrangement, whilst providing the governance and single point of focus previously provided by GOSE. This will be overseen by a Members board, which will meet in the initial stages on a quarterly basis. The Chairman of Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority (KMFRA), as the RMB lead for the improvement work stream will meet with the other Improvement Partnership Member leads to develop the proposals and effectively engage with CLG in the implementation of the white paper. As this is in effect an appointment by the RMB to an outside body, it is necessary for the Board to formally make this

appointment, and the Board is asked to approve this action. The Board is also asked to nominate a Member to act as a deputy if the Chairman of the Improvement work stream is unavailable. The Board is recommended to appoint the Chairman of the RMB to this role.

The Improvement and Efficiency Board, as it is likely to be known, will be supported by the Audit Commission and IDeA and it is anticipated that it will be the conduit for further capacity building funding for local government and FRAs in the South East.

Officers from the region have been engaged with a discussion with GOSE to assess whether the RMB could gain associate membership of the South East of England Regional Assembly (SEERA). They have advised that this is a matter for the Board to progress with SEERA, as there are no barriers to membership as far as the government office is concerned. At the current time, there is no fire representation at SEERA level. The benefits to the Board are that associate membership would be helpful as it allows engagement at an earlier stage in development planning for the South East. Members will be kept informed of developments in this respect.

CFS Progress Update

Members will recall that in agreeing the Board's business plan for 2007/10 that a new work area of community safety was added. This area will be led by Surrey Fire and Rescue Authority. A meeting will be held shortly between the programme manager and Surrey FRA to determine the extent of work under this area, and if a reappraisal of priorities are felt to be required, Members will be updated through the next performance update report.

The intention of this work area is to share good practice occurring in the field of Community Safety on a wide basis. Two notable pieces of work are brought to Members' attention, both of which have been led by Kent Fire and Rescue Service. Firstly, a new education film for Key Stage 4 pupils has been developed. This hard-hitting film, called 'Rush' was premiered on 20 June 2006 and was well received by partner agencies. Members may wish to view the film at a future meeting of the Board. It will be also shared with all FRAs in the south east in the near future.

Secondly, work on domestic sprinklers has been conducted. The intention of this piece of work was to break down some of the misconceptions of automatic fire suppression equipment, and to promote their installation wherever they may help to save lives and reduce risk. The results are interesting and point to a lack of awareness of the benefits of these systems amongst partner agencies. A full report will be brought to the Board in the near future to highlight the outcomes of the research.

Resilience – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Work in this area has progressed according to plan. Project plans are being developed for projects contained in the 2007/10 business plan.

Following completion of the national Operational Assessment of Service Delivery process the government has published its findings with a review of the process and a large number of examples of notable practice which were identified. Overall good levels of performance were recorded by the audit teams with the majority of FRAs performing well [a quarter performing well (the highest rating),

a small proportion performing adequately, no services were recorded as performing inadequately].

The initial feedback on the service provided by the new fleet contractors for New Dimensions fleet maintenance is very encouraging. Stories of rapid responses to defects as well as on site maintenance work being carried out on a bank holiday weekend reinforce the general feeling.

The regional coordination team are keen to assist FRA with resilience exercises within the region. They also offer an exercise planning service by the coordination team which have been offered to both the SE resilience group and the SE Regional asset user group. The regional coordination team are pleased with the response to this offer from across the region and are already involved with assistance on a number of different exercises supporting a variety of tasks as requested by the host FRS

IMPLICATIONS

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.

CONCLUSION

Members are asked to

- i. note the progress made;
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- iii. approve the appointment of the lead Member for the Improvement workstream to the regional Improvement and Efficiency Board;
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