

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SOUTH EAST FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES
REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 JULY 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:

Cllr L Barnard	Cabinet Member for Public Protection, West Sussex County Council
* Cllr P Jones	Substitute Member for West Sussex
* 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 Mrs J Heathcoat	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 Safer & Stronger Communities, Surrey County Council
Cllr I Ward	Cabinet Member for Environment & Neighbourhoods, Isle of Wight Fire Authority

* = Present

In Attendance:

CFO M Burrell	West Sussex
CFO I Cox	Royal Berkshire
CFO R Pearson	Surrey
CFO D Prichard	East Sussex
CFO D Smith	Buckinghamshire
DCFO B Feeley	Kent
DCFO M Smyth	Oxfordshire
David Howells	Hampshire
Sue Klein	East Sussex

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

CFO Russell Pearson was welcomed to his first meeting of the Regional Management Board as Chief Fire Officer for Surrey, having been appointed following CFO Myers recent retirement .

Councillor Peter Jones (West Sussex) was welcomed to the meeting as a substitute member in the absence of Councillor Lionel Barnard; along with DCFO Mike Smyth, substituting for CFO Parry (Oxfordshire); DCFO Bill Feeley, substituting for CFO Hendry (Kent); and David Howells, Director of Corporate Services, substituting for CFO Bonney (Hampshire).

It was noted that Councillor Ian Ward had been appointed as Cabinet Member for Environment & Neighbourhoods for the Isle of Wight, in place of Councillor Barry Abraham.

The Chairman and Members of the Board passed on their congratulations to CFO Bonney on his recent award of the Queen's Fire Service Medal and his election as Vice President of CFOA; and also to Paul Street on his substantive appointment to Chief Fire Officer for the Isle of Wight.

Members welcomed the recent appointment of Parmjit Dhanda as Fire Minister and noted his background as MP for Gloucester and active campaigner on fire issues.

25/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

Councillor Barnard (W Sussex), Councillor Ward (Isle of Wight), CFO Bonney (Hampshire), CFO Hendry (Kent), CFO Street (Isle of Wight) and ACO Kerr (Kent).

26/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 2)

There were none.

27/07 PROCEDURAL MATTERS (Item 3)

There were no questions from Members.

28/07 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Item 4)

It was noted that Councillor Mrs Stevens is the Executive Member for Safer & Stronger Communities at Surrey County Council.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the RMB meeting held on 4 April 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

29/07 MEMBERS' AWAYDAY (Item 5)

The Chairman welcomed Marianne Abley and Chris Bowron from the I&DeA to the meeting. Ms Abley informed Members of the plans for the Away Day being held on 11th and 12th September 2007 at Leeds Castle, Kent and stressed that the I&DeA was still a central part of CLG and was continuing to support the Fire & Rescue Service.

The Away Day would take a strategic look at individuals' strengths within the Board, different ways of working and how Members can work together to improve the effectiveness of the RMB.

Members were being asked to complete a questionnaire before attending the Away Day and were assured that this would remain solely in their own possession. Mr Bowron informed Members that, although the questionnaire might appear quite superficial, it was used elsewhere by all political parties, leaders, local councils, etc to help gain an insight into personal strengths and how individuals like to operate in the working environment.

There would also be an opportunity during the evening of the first day and the morning of the second day to discuss the RMB's way forward.

30/07 PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN (Item 6)

DCFO Feeley (Kent) presented a report that set out the progress made for the period April to June 2007 against each of the work streams in the regional business plan. It was noted that, in general, good progress was being made.

Councillor Rowlands (Buckinghamshire) asked whether an application to seek associate membership of the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) was to be made, and was informed that, if Members agreed, it would be. He felt that the Chairman of the RMB should make the application.

Councillor Jones (West Sussex) passed on Councillor Barnard's views that he could see no sense in seeking membership of a body whose future was uncertain and that it would be better for the RMB to concentrate on and further its own work.

Councillor Cartwright (Hampshire) and Councillor Cope (Kent) felt that, if there was anything to gain from membership of SEERA, membership should be pursued. Councillor Mrs Stevens (Surrey) suggested re-grouping following the Members' Away Day in September and also giving SEERA a presentation of the RMB's work at a future meeting of the Board.

DCFO Feeley emphasised the advantage of having a 'fire voice' on the Board of SEERA and Councillor Mrs Heathcoat (Oxfordshire) agreed that the RMB should have a high profile while SEERA was in existence. Councillor Murphy (East Sussex) and Councillor Rowlands agreed that there were significant advantages in bringing fire matters into major issues in the South East, such as housing development. Councillor Bryant (Royal Berkshire) cautioned against the possibility of the RMB acquiring more work through membership of SEERA and suggested that a report be brought to the RMB on SEERA's work.

Councillor Mrs Stevens suggested that the Progress Against Plan report be re-formatted to focus on deliverables and the added value being achieved. DCFO Feeley explained that the report encapsulated all workstreams and was now very structured, providing a commentary for noting and agreed that the suggestions would be discussed at a future Chiefs' meeting.

RESOLVED – That

- 1) the progress made be noted;
- 2) the recent newsletters issued by the South East Fire Improvement Partnership on the peer review brokering service and the launch of the SEFIP website be noted;
- 3) the appointment of the lead Member for the Improvement workstream to the regional Improvement and Efficiency Board be approved;
- 4) 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 be approved; and
- 5) the intention to seek associate membership of the South East England Regional Assembly be noted.

31/07 UPDATE ON RCC AND FIRELINK PROJECTS

CFO Burrell (West Sussex) gave a presentation updating Members on the Regional Control Centre and FireLink projects (slides and notes attached at Appendices A and B).

It was noted that the Isle of Wight had now decided to join the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) and this would be set up within the next few weeks. Decisions still had to be made about cost apportionment and the transfer of staff and it was noted that CLG would meet the costs of any redundancies and employment tribunals. A Director would be recruited as quickly as possible, with the initial costs being borne by Government, but CLG were reviewing the job description and person specification to try and attract more candidates. Legal clarification was still being sought regarding other membership of the LACC and once this was established nominations would be sought from FRAs.

It was noted that, although the Business Case had now been published, a further one was due out imminently with revised figures. CFO Burrell had drafted a reply to the CLG, setting out caveats to West Sussex signing up, and suggested that other Authorities use these or similar caveats, rather than signing up to a blank cheque. Councillor Rowlands (Buckinghamshire) also cautioned Authorities against committing themselves.

32/07 RESILIENCE AND ASSOCIATED FUNDING ISSUES

CFO Smith (Buckinghamshire) gave a presentation updating Members on resilience and associated funding issues. Government was assuming a new dimension relating to terrorism and the broader social climate and had established a New Dimensions Programme Board and appointed regional teams. There was now a Fire Resilience Co-ordinator, with two assistants, and it was noted that the South East was the only region to have completed all its site-specific risk assessments.

£300m had been spent to date by Government, but there was limited revenue for future years. The six national capabilities had been identified as:

1. mass decontamination (phase 3)
2. urban search and rescue – 85-90% complete
3. water and water safety – in scope but no funding available
4. command and control – National Co-ordination Centre in West Yorkshire, plus Incident Command Vehicle
5. logistics
6. long term management arrangements – management of New Dimensions assets for the next 16 years

It was noted that there were problems with funding the three operational capabilities, but there was capacity to respond to three catastrophic events in three different locations simultaneously. The programme arrangements should be complete by the end of March 2008 following which assets would be transferred to Fire & Rescue Authorities.

The recent flooding had identified further issues, with the NCC only mobilising the resources requested by authorities, rather than being able to be predictive and pre-emptive, but it was noted that they were now listening to advice from CFOA.

33/07 CORRESPONDENCE (Item 9)

The Chairman reported that there was no correspondence to note, but suggested that a letter of welcome be sent from the RMB to Parmjit Dhanda, the new Minister for Fire, inviting him to attend a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED – That the Chairman write to Parmjit Dhanda as above.

Copies of letters to Mr Dhanda, and also to SEERA and the Director of Fire & Resilience, are attached at Appendices D, E and F.

34/07 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS AND SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS (Item 10)

CFO Bonney had prepared a report suggesting items for future meetings of the RMB (Appendix C). It was noted that October's meeting could run into the afternoon, and appropriate arrangements would be made. Cllr Mrs Stevens requested that an additional item be added to October's agenda to cover feedback from the Away Day in September and Members suggested that January's presentation by SEERA should be a two way dialogue.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

35/07 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

The meeting closed at 12.33 hours.

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Chairman