

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

PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN 16 JANUARY 2008

KEY ISSUE/DECISION

The Regional Management Board (RMB) is asked to note the progress made against the regional business plan 2007/10 over the period October to December 2007.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the progress made against the each of the work areas in the regional business plan for the period October to December 2007. In general good progress is being made.

There are several key issues in this quarter to which Members' attention is drawn. The government has amended Building Bulletin 100, which now includes a presumption that new schools will be fitted with automatic fire suppression equipment. This is a step forward in the campaign supported by the RMB to promote the installation of sprinklers wherever they may save life and reduce risk.

Members are also asked to note the progress being made in achieving further funding through the capacity building route. An update is provided in the report, but at the time of writing it appears that the bid approved by the RMB at the last meeting meets the requirements of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, and a decision on actual levels of funding for fire and rescue authorities in the south east will be forthcoming in Spring 2008.

Members will also wish to note that the Local Authority Controlled Company for the Regional Control Centre has appointed its Chief Executive.

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 letter from the Minister in relation to sprinklers in schools (**appendix 1** refers).

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

This is the third report on progress against the business plan for 2007/10. In general, it is clear that good progress continues to be made, with no areas of concern arising in the last quarter.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

Progress against Priorities

In the regional business plan approved by Members in April 2007, the opportunity was taken to set out a limited number of priorities. These are restated below, and comments against each are given:

- Priority 1 - to maintain the individual accountability of constituent Fire and Rescue Authorities, and their ability to meet local risks through Integrated Risk Management Plans

The desire to maintain the individual accountability of constituent FRAs is a consistent theme in the Regional Business Plan. No action taken by any work area has had any impact on this priority during the period October-December 2007.

- Priority 2 - to continue to support the management of the transition from local to regional control centres (RCC) and transfer arrangements for control staff as far as is reasonably practicable

Regional Control Centre and Firelink remain a key risk for the RMB. Further detail on the latest position in relation to the RCC is contained in the relevant section of this report, as well as elsewhere on this agenda.

- Priority 3 - 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

An update on the capacity building bid is contained in the report under the Improvement work area.

- Priority 4 - To harness the work of the procurement work stream to drive efficiency across the region in procurement and shared services

Momentum has been maintained and FRAs are taking advantage of offers available on the marketplace to, at the minimum, benchmark existing service provision, or change suppliers. A more detailed report is included elsewhere on this agenda.

- Priority 5 - To improve the region's performance against the equality standard for local government by Dec 2008.

Desk-top reviews of progress being made towards achieving level 3 of the equality standard for local government have now been completed for all FRAs by the consultant. Informal feedback following on-site visits has been given to two FRAs.

Review of work areas

- **Community Safety – Surrey Fire & Rescue Authority**

The business plan for 2007/10 commits the RMB to promoting the installation of sprinklers wherever they may save lives and reduce risk. Recently some FRAs have received a letter from the Minister of State for Schools and Learners Jim Knight MP, which notes that Building Bulletin 100 [Design for Fire Safety in Schools] has been published. This bulletin incorporates a new policy on the installation of sprinklers in schools, which makes clear the government's presumption that all new state funded schools will have sprinklers fitted. This is a significant step forward and one which the RMB's position will have in part helped to bring about. A copy of the letter is attached at **appendix 1**.

RMB Members were invited to the launch of Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority's (KMFRA) 'Safer with Sprinklers' campaign on 16 November 2007. The campaign promotes the installation of sprinklers in homes, particularly those occupied by vulnerable people. The initiative aims to promote sprinklers so that they are offered at the design stage and considered as a selling point. The day was also structured to dispel myths related to sprinkler systems and attended by key opinion formers from local authorities, registered social landlords and construction companies.

East Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority (ESFRA) has been developing an evaluation programme for community safety activity which will be shared regionally. The programme is aimed at evaluating the 'decay rates' of the impact of community safety advice and smoke alarm installations across 4 key risk groups over a three year period. Evaluations will commence in January 2008 in partnership with Brighton University. Discussions have also occurred with both Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority (HFRA) and an external contractor to finalise arrangements for modelling of rates of turnover in some classes of residential building, and establish other factors impacting upon the decay rates of safety investment in communities. This project will be funded by Capacity Building Funding and learning outcomes will be shared across the region. The end point of this project has been revised to take into account the proposal to support the project through additional CBF as part of the second bid.

Outside the region, Suffolk Fire & Rescue Authority has secured substantial funding for a larger quantitative and qualitative evaluation project on a wide range of community safety initiatives to which many FRAs were invited to participate. It has been agreed in principle to pursue wider participation in the region in the Suffolk methodology. HFRA is now taking this forward with the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) as part of the Community Safety work area.

The SEFIP website is building a library of examples of innovative community safety activity occurring in the region. It can be accessed from <http://www.sefip.gov.uk/safety/innovations.shtml>.

- **Human Resources – Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority & Training - Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Authority**

The government is consulting on a national Equality and Diversity Strategy for Fire and Rescue Authorities. The strategy is intended to deliver a 'step change' in an area of continuing poor performance at national level and was in part prompted by criticisms levelled at the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) by last year's Parliamentary Select Committee. It reflects also a renewed commitment to the issue in the draft National Framework (reported elsewhere on this agenda). A detailed report on the equality and diversity strategy is elsewhere on this agenda.

Locally, desk-top reviews of progress being made towards achieving level 3 of the equality standard for local government have now been completed for all FRAs. Informal feedback following on-site visits has been given to two FRAs. Emerging outcomes are beginning to be collated, and this has resulted in the scope and size of the capacity building bid referred in

the Improvement update below being increased. This is partially to provide support to FRAs on action planning, as well as bespoke development programmes for Members and officers. A further update on equality and diversity issues has been produced and is attached at **appendix 2** for Members' information.

The group working on the delivery of phase 1 fire-fighter development training has agreed the content for phase 1 courses which can be delivered by FRAs in a manner which meets local circumstances to suit the availability of training resources. Courses are designed to be run in a modular fashion and can be used for whole-time and retained duty system personnel. Assessments and a question bank have been created and agreed, which will be used by all FRAs to ensure commonality throughout the region. A quality assurance system has been agreed and applied to the courses based on existing models.

A working group to develop a centre of excellence for breathing apparatus training is being led by HFRA. Closer links with the Resilience work area are being developed to progress adoption of common operating procedures to enable common training to be developed.

Work on the centre of excellence for incident command training is currently on hold pending publication of the revised fire service manual volume 2 incident command and also agreement within the Resilience work area to adopt a common approach in the region.

A training cost model has been developed considering work from the Police, Surrey Fire & Rescue Authority (SFRA), HFRA and the Fire Service College. The draft model is with FRAs to ensure it includes all necessary aspects of training costs. The final model will be subject to external validation and then applied.

All FRAs have received a questionnaire to support research into the development of an E-Learning strategy. The draft strategy will be produced early 2008.

Using the Capacity Building Fund, a project is underway to identify the current and future water safety requirements in the region. Phase 1 of the project will identify all existing water safety training and establish best practice principles. Phase 2 of the project will look to develop a regional approach to water safety training for all SE FRAs, in collaboration with the Resilience work area.

Procurement issues in relation to the Strategic Assessment Development Centre have been resolved, and places are being taken up by FRAs.

- **Improvement – Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority**

All Members of the RMB recently received a letter from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) inviting them to attend a national leadership event to be held over two days on 19/20 February. A copy has been attached at **appendix 3**. This is the last event that will be available through national capacity building funding, and further events will need to be funded from the capacity building bid approved by Members at the last meeting. If Members do attend the 19/20 February session, they may wish to informally feed back the outcomes to their colleagues who could not attend.

Colleagues in Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority (OFRA) have recently undergone a peer review on their community safety work. This project was funded by capacity building money, and SEFIP is working with OFRA on ways to improve the process and share learning outcomes so that the peer review brokering service can be made widely available in the new financial year. Peer review remains a central pillar of future audit and assessment processes, and colleagues are encouraged to use the brokering service to gain access to high-quality accredited peer reviewers. Colleagues from OFRA found the experience a positive one, and officers involved would like to help with reviews in other locations. If any FRA would like a peer review on any area of business they can contact SEFIP.

New arrangements relating to access to capacity building funding were set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health White Paper. This brought about the amalgamation of Improvement Partnerships with the Regional Centres of Excellence into a body called the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP). In the South East, this has been complicated by local arrangements, whereby sub-regional partnerships cover counties or groups of counties as set out in table 1 below.

Table 1: Members of the RIEP

Partnership type	Members of RIEP
Sub-regional Improvement partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hampshire and Isle of Wight Improvement Partnership • Kent Improvement and Efficiency Partnership • Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Improvement Partnership • Royal Berkshire Improvement Partnership • Surrey Improvement Partnership • Sussex Improvement Partnership
Thematic Partnerships (South East Centre of Excellence work streams)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste • Social Case • Buildings Construction • Commodity Goods and Services • Corporate and Transactional Services
Regional Improvement Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South East Fire Improvement Partnership • Progress through Partnership (PTP)

Each partnership is represented on a Member Board. SEFIP is represented by the Chairman of KMFRA, as per the nomination agreed by the RMB in October 2007.

Members will recall that the RMB approved a bid for £960k of CBF. Informal discussions with the consultants conducting the equality and diversity peer reviews have highlighted that some common arising themes would merit a further sum of money being dedicated to this area. Therefore, in consultation with the Chairman of the Improvement work area, the bid

has been increased to £1.1m and was resubmitted to the RIEP before the 14 December deadline for evidenced proposals.

It is perhaps not surprising that significantly more funding has been requested by partnerships on the RIEP than is likely to come into the region arising out of the Comprehensive Spending Review. In the light of this, it appears likely that some partnerships may have to reduce the scale of their bids or seek to work collaboratively to achieve intended outcomes. There is no indication of how partnerships will be asked to scale their bid to the overall pot available. A decision on allocations to individual partnerships in the region is expected in Spring 2008, and the Chairman of the Improvement work area, will be lobbying to ensure that FRAs receive funding to meet the partnership's needs.

An important element of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy is the concept of support for 'struggling' councils coming from within the sector. In the context of fire, this argues that SEFIP should take a lead role on brokering improvement support for FRAs that require it. This is a role which SEFIP has been providing on an informal basis since its inception, and existing offers such as the peer review brokering service are proposed to be extended in the new financial year as a key tool in this respect.

The annual business planning event for practitioners was held on 22 November 2007. This event was an opportunity for colleagues to come together to consider the content of the coming year's business plan for the region. Chief Fire Officers will also meet to discuss the intentions of the plan, and to take forward some of the outcomes of the Members' away day held at Leeds Castle in September. It is planned to bring the business plan to the next meeting of the Board for Members' approval.

It is also intended that those Members who were unable to attend the September event will be able to have their personality profiles completed on a one-to-one basis, and the IDEa will contact relevant Members in due course.

- **Media and Communications – East Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority**

A draft communications strategy has been developed and considered by Chief Fire Officers. It is intended to bring the strategy to the next meeting of the Board.

The website www.sefip.gov.uk continues to be developed. The 'extranet' site is nearing completion. Testing of the facility started in December 2007, with an expected 'go live' in January 2008. This will provide an enhanced facility for news, events and document access as well as providing a 'closed' discussion area for practitioners.

The project plan for media handling training is in development; advice has been sought from the Regional Procurement Manager and the FirePro team will continue to be consulted. Training will take place during 2008, and will be available to officers and Members as appropriate.

A further SEFIP newsletter on current consultations from government and the Audit Commission, as well as current sponsored conferences available through SEFIP has been issued and is attached at **appendix 4** for Members' information.

- **Procurement – Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority**

A paper of quick wins in relation to regional procurement activity is elsewhere on this agenda. Workshops on the implications of European Union Procurement Regulations have been delivered to 35 officers and a business case workshop for 12 officers has been arranged for February 2008. Skill levels will continue to be monitored to identify the ways in which skills may be enhanced.

The spend analysis of the region has been updated recently. The initial spend analysis project was based on data collected by SECE) and highlighted major areas of spend in

vehicle procurement, maintenance and facilities management. Spend data from 5 authorities for 2006/07 is now being analysed to provide up-to-date information. As a result, detailed benchmarking of two areas of major commodity spend (car leasing and temporary agency staff) has commenced.

Terms of reference for the review of technical services have been considered by CFOs and the project is due to start in earnest soon. A project board to coordinate activity has been established led by OFRA.

All FRAs have access to the Bluelight portal providing contract information and tendering opportunities across emergency services. Additionally FRAs have access to the Local Authority Contract Store run by SECE with a database of contracts and suppliers. This allows FRAs access to all police and fire contracts available through the Bluelight portal and local authority contracts in the South East. Continued access has been provided through capacity building funding to April 2008.

Fire Service Circular 59/2007 announces the government's intention to review the national procurement strategy for fire and rescue services, and is due to report in March 2008. The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) has at the instigation of CLG, set up a task and finish group to look at the next strategy. The group is made up of representatives from FRAs, procurement professionals, Regional Centres of Excellence and the Fire and Rescue Suppliers Association. The review will consider future funding for national procurement following a consultation on options undertaken earlier in 2007 with FRAs.

A Procurement Capability Review of CLG undertaken by a team from the Office of Government Commerce looked at the full range of procurement functions undertaken by the Department. This included national procurement for the FRS and the role of Firebuy. CLG is therefore proposing to undertake a review of national procurement across FRAs, including the role of Firebuy, commencing in December 2007 and reporting in March 2008. The review will consider the future national procurement strategy for the FRS; how the national procurement role should be funded now and in the future; and the role, resources and performance of Firebuy.

- **Regional Control Centre & Firelink – West Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority**

The issue of the transfer of existing control staff under TUPE was considered at the last Board meeting. It was agreed that at the current time the LACC will take responsibility for redundancy of those control staff that are not able to transfer to the new arrangements, although a watching brief on other regions actions will be maintained, and if necessary this decision can be returned to.

The first Board meeting of the newly created company was held in early November. The main points were:

- The meeting will be quorate with 5 board members present.
- Each Authority is a Director of the Company; this gives flexibility in who can attend meetings.
- Applications from Members - All nine were agreed. It was also agreed that Officers could/should attend the meetings to provide advice; they would not however have voting rights.
- Members' Agreement - This needed to be revisited as amendments needed to be made.
- Appointment of Chairman - Chairman, West Sussex FRA, Vice- Chairman, Buckinghamshire FRA, alphabetical thereafter following on from Bucks.
- Appointment of Regional Control Centre Director– Appointment was made at formal interview following a regional Assessment Centre. It is expected that the appointee will take up his role in February 2008.
- Future Meetings and Scope - In the early stages of LACC it was felt that monthly meetings would be beneficial; the next meeting date would be notified to Members in due course.

The FiReControl Project Director recently wrote to all FRAs giving some information as to when the Data Capture Migration Toolkit (DCMT) could be expected. This was due for release in July 2007 but has now been delayed until February 2008 for this region. This has a significant impact for FRAs as data migration work is now expected to be completed in a much shorter timeframe.

The performance of the contractor to the project continues to cause concern. Following the successful completion of Checkpoint 1, FRAs have been planning and working towards the new Checkpoint 1A. In late November FRAs were informed that Checkpoint 1 would be removed as sufficient information had not been given to complete this Checkpoint by the contractor. Checkpoint 1A activities (which were originally under Checkpoint 1) have now been moved to Checkpoint 2.

At a recent regional FireLink meeting it was announced that there would a major rescheduling of dates. Although firm dates were not given it was alluded to that no Phase A vehicles would be fitted out until Easter 2008 and that the commencement of Phase B would be delayed until early summer 2008. This is now a year later than originally planned.

- **Resilience – Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Authority**

The New Dimension (ND) programme, as a collaboration between CLG and FRAs, has enhanced the ability of FRAs to respond to major disruptive events involving chemical, biological, radioactive or nuclear (CBRN) materials, collapsed or unstable structures, and to displace large volumes of water. The Government has stated in FSC 58/2007 that it is committed to funding the net new burdens resulting from the New Dimension programme. The roll-out of the capability, and the associated initial funding, is now reaching completion. Continuing funding support will cover elements of training, consumables, crewing for urban search and rescue, and maintenance of the capability to respond to level 4 incidents. For the short term, funding directly to FRAs will continue to be through Section 31 grants, with a view to transferring into Formula Grant in the next formula review, subject to consultation in the normal way.

The Fire Minister, Parmjit Dhanda, has also recently announced that an additional 48 New Dimension prime mover vehicles will be distributed across FRAs in England. This follows representations from a number of FRAs that the vehicles should be distributed to further enhance the capability.

Consultation on a common regional business continuity framework is not yet complete. Following the end of the consultation period comments will be taken into account and the final document prepared for presentation to the next meeting of Chief Fire Officers.

Early work has commenced on developing a vision for the future of the resilience agenda in the region. This is likely to seek enhanced interoperability of resources and staff between FRAs, while still ensuring that each FRA can meet local risks to life, as set out in Integrated Risk Management Plans.

IMPLICATIONS

Good progress is being made in 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.

It is intended that the next business plan for the RMB will be subject to an equality impact assessment. This will ensure that the programmes of activity set out in the plan do not have adverse impacts on key groups that cannot be justified. There have been no adverse impacts arising from current projects notified to the programme manager as part of the creation of this summary report.

CONCLUSION

Members are asked to:

- i. Note the progress made;
- ii. Note the letter from the Minister in relation to sprinklers in schools (**appendix 1** refers).