

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

23 June 2009

Present:-

Councillors Fox OBE DL (Dorset), Gordon (Devon & Somerset), Healey (Devon & Somerset), Hughes OBE (Devon & Somerset), Parsons (Gloucestershire), Roberts (Avon), Walker (Avon) and Wren (Wiltshire & Swindon).

RMB/46 **Election of Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor Hughes OBE be elected Chairman of the Board until its Annual Meeting in 2010.

RMB/47. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 23 March 2009 be signed as a correct record.

RMB/48. **Election Of Vice-Chairman**

Councillor Healey **MOVED** (and Councillor Roberts seconded) that Councillor Walker be elected Vice-Chairman of the Board until its Annual Meeting in 2010.

Councillor Parsons **MOVED** (and Councillor Fox seconded) that this be **AMENDED** to defer the appointment of the Vice-Chairman until the next meeting of the Board pending appointments by constituent authorities of new Board Members following the local authority elections.

The amendment was put to the vote and declared **LOST** by 4 votes against to 3 for. Following this and there being no further amendments the substantive motion to elect Councillor Walker as Vice-Chairman was put to the vote upon which it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Walker be elected Vice-Chairman of the Board until its Annual Meeting in 2010.

RMB/49. **Declarations of Interest**

Board Members were asked to consider items to be discussed as part of this meeting and to declare any **personal/personal and prejudicial interests** they may have in any item(s) in accordance with their respective appointing Authority's approved Code of Conduct.

At this stage Councillors Fox OBE DL, Parsons and Wren declared **personal but non-prejudicial interests** – by virtue of their constituent Authority appointed Directorship (for Councillor Fox) and nominations as alternate Directors (for Councillors Parsons and Wren) on South West Fire Control Limited (the Local Authority Controlled Company [LACC] with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre) – in

- Minute RMB/50; and
- Minutes RMB/52 to RMB/55 inclusive in so far as these related to the FiReControl Project.

RMB/50. Firecontrol Business Case 2009

(Councillors Fox declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter by virtue of being a constituent authority appointee as a Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

(Councillors Parsons and Wren each declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter by virtue of being an alternate Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

The Authority considered a report of the Regional FiRecontrol Project Director (Clive Kemp) (RMB/09/14) on the latest version of the FiReControl Business Case issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in May 2009.

This was intended to be the last version issued prior to the “go live” date currently scheduled for 2010.

The Regional Programme Board had assessed the business case and its findings, together with a CLG-produced document itemising key changes from earlier iterations of the Business Case, were appended to the report.

In general, it was felt that CLG had taken account of representations made to previous iterations of the Business Case and significant improvements included:

- FiReControl payments (previously referred to as resilience payments – designed to fund those aspects of the Project which were in effect new and therefore would not previously have been borne by individual authorities) would now be made at an individual authority level rather than regionally;
- increased resource would be provided for data management;
- increased pensions liabilities had been recognised; and
- increased provision would be made for LACC Management and utilities costs, although the increase was not as much as would have been preferred.

It was felt, however, that there were still a number of areas where debate could still be held with CLG, not least relating to the duration of the FiReControl payments and resolving precisely what the costs/savings for individual authorities arising from the project would be. In this respect, while CLG had not formally requested responses to the 2009 Business Case, a response on behalf of the Board had been drafted and was appended to the report for consideration.

The Project Director also commented on the recent media speculation of further delays to the project. CLG announced an initial delay to the Project in 2008 following a limited review which did not feature individual fire and rescue services. New milestones and indicative timescales had been put in place following this initial review and CLG announced that it would review its new schedule in spring 2009. It now appeared that the new milestones had not been met within the indicative timescales and consequently CLG had asked Project Boards to consult with individual fire and rescue services on the implications of a further delay, of seven to ten months, to the Project.

In debating the above issue and the proposed draft response to the 2009 Business Case, Board Members indicated that they would wish reference made in the draft response to:

- the requirement for “New Burdens” funding to meet “out of scope” activities; and

- the detrimental effect that delays in the Project was having on those staff supporting existing control centres, those committed to the LACC and those involved with the regional and individual fire and rescue service teams implementing the project.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Regional Programme Board's assessment of the 2009 Business Case, as set out in Appendix C to report RMB/09/14, be endorsed;
- (b) that, subject to incorporation of those amendments as indicated above, the draft letter on the 2009 Business Case, as set out at Appendix E to the report, be approved and the Chairman authorised to submit it on behalf of the Board to the National Project Director.

RMB/51. Board Meetings

The Board considered a report of the Clerk (Mike Pearson – Devon & Somerset) (RMB/09/15) on options for meetings during the 2009/10 municipal year in light of statutory matters to be transacted, the provisions of the establishing Agreement and also with a view to achieving a better alignment to the Board's business cycle.

The Board discussed the merits of reducing the number of meetings to four per year and in this respect considered that, should a five meeting cycle be approved, this could be done on the basis of cancelling a meeting scheduled for a later date should this be considered appropriate.

RESOLVED that the following meetings of the Board be held during the 2009/10 municipal year, commencing at 11.00hours at Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters (unless otherwise notified):

- Wednesday 30 September 2009;
- Monday 9 November 2009;
- Thursday 28 January 2010;
- Monday 22 March 2010; and
- Tuesday 22 June 2010 (Annual Meeting).

RMB/52. Regional Management Board Financial Outturn 2008/09 (Including Statement of Accounts)

(Councillors Fox declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter, in so far as it related to the FiReControl Project, by virtue of being a constituent authority appointee as a Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

(Councillors Parsons and Wren each declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter, in so far as it related to the FiReControl Project, by virtue of being an alternate Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

The Board considered a report of the Treasurer to the Board (Kevin Woodward – Devon & Somerset) (RMB/09/16) providing a final outturn position against the approved budget including contribution of required contributions from each constituent authority for 2008/09.

The final outturn indicated a surplus of £26,511 when compared to gross spending for 2008/09 which, when added to constituent authority contributions for the year (£171,200) resulted in a total net surplus of £197,711. The Board agreed, at its budget setting meeting on 28 January 2009 (Minute RMB/ refers) that any underspend from the current financial year should be carried forward to 2009/10 to enable constituent authority contributions to remain frozen at the 2007/08 level (£171,200 total). The report also detailed costs in 2008/09 associated with the FiReControl (Regional Control Centre) project funding for which was met by CLG New Burdens grant and as such did not require any contribution from constituent authorities. The amount of New Burden funding unused at 31 March 2009 and available for carry forward to 2009/10 was £2,389,436.

Appended to the report was a draft 2008/09 Statement of Accounts for the Board. This had been produced in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (as amended) and followed the form and content as specified by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy Code of Practice. The Accounts included core statements on:

- the Income and Expenditure Account detailing the Board's expenditure analysis, details of any surplus/deficit as at 31 March 2009 and how the Board was funded
- the Balance Sheet recording assets and liabilities of the Board as at 31 March 2009; and
- the Cash Flow Statement providing details of the sources and application of the Board's funds during the year.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (as amended) required full accounts to be produced as the gross income for the Board during 2008/09 had exceeded £1m. The Regulations also required the draft Accounts to be approved by 30 June 2009. The draft Accounts, once approved, would be subject to audit inspection by the Audit Commission during the summer. The final Accounts would be accompanied by an audit certificate from the Audit Commission and were required by the Regulations to be published by 30 September 2009.

In debating the outturn and draft Statement of Accounts, Board Members commented on the effects of the recent economic downturn and particularly detrimental effects on funds held as a result of the collapse of the Icelandic banks.

The Treasurer commented that, while it was not possible to eliminate entirely any such risks, the Board had adopted a Treasury Management Policy (Minute RMB/45 refers) one of the aims of which was to safeguard investments as far as was practicable. The Board expressed the view that it may be beneficial were the draft Statement of Accounts to reflect this position.

RESOLVED

- (a) that, subject to incorporation of the amendment as indicated above, the draft Statement of Accounts for 2008/09, as appended to report RMB/09/16, be approved and the Chairman authorised to sign them on behalf of the Board;
- (b) that the surplus of £197,711 achieved against the approved budget for 2008/09 be noted.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE RMB/53 BELOW)

RMB/53. Annual Governance Statement 2008/09

(Councillors Fox declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter, in so far as it related to the FiReControl Project, by virtue of being a constituent authority appointee as a Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

(Councillors Parsons and Wren each declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter, in so far as it related to the FiReControl Project, by virtue of being an alternate Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

The Board considered a report of the Clerk (Mike Pearson – Devon & Somerset) (RMB/09/17) to which was appended an Annual Governance Statement 2008/09. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (as amended) required all bodies producing a full Statement of Accounts to produce an associated Annual Governance Statement, which replaced the former Statement of Internal Control.

The Annual Governance Statement had been prepared, in so far as this was practicable given the nature of the Board as a Joint Committee, with due regard to guidance issued jointly by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives.

RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement required to accompany the Board's 2008/09 Statement of Accounts, as set out at Appendix A to report RMB/09/17, be approved and the Chairman and Clerk authorised to sign it on behalf of the Board.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE RMB/52 ABOVE)

RMB/54. Annual Benefits Report 2008/09

(Councillors Fox declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter, in so far as it related to the FiReControl Project, by virtue of being a constituent authority appointee as a Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

(Councillors Parsons and Wren each declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter, in so far as it related to the FiReControl Project, by virtue of being an alternate Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

The Board received for information a report of the Regional Programme Manager (RMB/09/18) summarising benefits realised in 2008/09 from the programme of regional collaboration together with indicative forecast benefits for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

All individual fire and rescue services in the South West had benefited from the programme of collaboration. In 2008/09 the savings of £1.113m were less than initially projected (£2.589m) mainly as a result of no Authority implementing the e-market place solution (anticipated to generate savings of £1.47m). The Finance and Procurement Workstream had initiated a review of the potential benefits of this project to identify how individual fire and rescue services might best benefit from it.

Forecast savings for 2009/10 of £1.458m were also less than originally projected (£2.155m), again largely as a result of lack of take-up of the e-market place solution. The revised forecast was, however, cautious and did not include, for example, savings by individual fire and rescue services secured from identifying and adopting best practice arising from the extension of regional benchmarking or major projects only recently approved for the Human Resources Management and Development Workstream.

The report also summarised wider benefits from the collaborative programme which included networking, sharing best practice and securing funding from the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and the Carbon Trust for climate change initiatives.

RMB/55. Highlight Report

(Councillors Fox declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter, in so far as it related to the FiReControl Project, by virtue of being a constituent authority appointee as a Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

(Councillors Parsons and Wren each declared a **personal but not prejudicial** interest in this matter, in so far as it related to the FiReControl Project, by virtue of being an alternate Director of South West Fire Control Ltd., the LACC with overall governance responsibility for the Regional Control Centre).

The Board considered a report of the Chair, South West Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFO Standing – Gloucestershire) (RMB/09/19) on progress since the last meeting of the Board on:

- those projects being supported by the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, specifically:
 - an extension of the regional benchmarking/equality and diversity project;
 - a survey to determine lessons learned from the 2008 Local Area Agreement round;
 - development of a regional website; and
 - a regional fleet options review.
- progress in relation to the development of a Regional Climate Change strategy; and
- a summary of progress made since the last meeting of the Board by those workstreams addressing the following issues on a regional basis:
 - Community Safety;
 - Equality and Diversity;
 - Finance and Procurement;
 - Human Resources Management and Development;
 - Regional Control Centre;
 - Strategic Planning (Performance Management); and
 - Service Operations and Resilience.

The report summarised milestones for each of the workstreams, none of which were now showing “red” status.

RESOLVED that the progress made by each of the Board’s workstreams and the programme of work supported by the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, as indicated in report RMB/09/19, be noted.

The meeting started at 11.00hours and finished at 12.49hours.