

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

22 June 2010

Present:-

Councillors Roberts and Walker (Avon), Gribble (vice Gordon) and Healey (Devon & Somerset), Jones OBE (vice Butleel)(Dorset), Windsor-Clive (Gloucestershire) and Brig. Hall (Wiltshire).

Substitute Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 3(2):

Councillor Wren (Wiltshire).

Apologies:-

Councillors Kennedy (Cornwall), Boyd and Gordon (Devon & Somerset) and Bulteel (Dorset).

RMB/1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Walker (Avon) be elected Chairman of the Board until its Annual Meeting in 2011.

RMB/2. Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 22 March 2010 be signed as a correct record.

RMB/3. Election of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Healey (Devon & Somerset) be elected Vice-Chairman of the Board until its Annual Meeting in 2011.

RMB/4. Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to consider whether they had any **personal/personal and prejudicial interests** in items as set out on the agenda for this meeting and to declare any such interests at this time.

At this stage Councillors Brig. Hall and Wren each declared a **personal but non-prejudicial** interest in those items relating to South West Fire Control Ltd. – the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) with overall governance responsibility for the South West Regional Control Centre – by virtue of their being, respectively, an Alternate Director and Authority-appointed Director on the Company.

(SEE ALSO MINUTES RMB/5, 6, 7 AND 9(a) AND (b) BELOW)

RMB/5.

Firelink Cost Apportionment in the Event of Over-Usage of the System

(Councillors Brig. Hall and Wren each declared a **personal but non-prejudicial** interest in this item in so far as it related to South West Fire Control Ltd. – the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) with overall governance responsibility for the South West Regional Control Centre – by virtue of their being, respectively, an Alternate Director and Authority-appointed Director on the Company).

The Board considered a report of the South West Regional Firelink/Firecontrol Project Director (RMB/10/10), together with a presentation by the Regional Firelink/FiReControl Project Director and Steve Brealey (the South West Regional Delivery Manager) on options for the apportionment amongst the south west fire and rescue authorities of any additional costs arising from use of the Firelink radio system.

For the main part, fire and rescue authorities were protected from any additional costs associated with the system by entitlement to New Burdens funding from central government. The system operated by the allocation, regionally, of traffic units and a possibility existed that overusage by one or more fire and rescue services (for example, in responding to a major incident) may result in the regional Traffic Unit allowance being exceeded thereby generating additional cost which would need to be met by the south west fire and rescue services.

In determining how such an additional cost might be apportioned amongst the individual fire and rescue authorities, a number of options had been explored and three were presented to the Board for consideration:

- Option 1 – the cost of the additional traffic unit allowances be met from the fire and rescue authority/authorities incurring the costs;
- Option 2 – the apportionment of the cost of any additional traffic units amongst the individual fire and rescue authorities pro-rata to the number of radios used by each authority; and
- Option 3 – partly based on the number of radios but relating these to actual peak usage to determine the apportionment of the charge for any additional traffic units.

Both the Regional Project Board and the Executive Management Group had, following evaluation of the options, expressed the view that the third option was preferable as it recognised the inter-dependence of the fire and rescue authorities in relation to radio traffic management and should give each fire and rescue service a strong incentive to effectively manage radio traffic usage.

In the course of debating the report, Option 1 was advanced as the option to be commended to the constituent authorities for approval although this did not receive majority support. The Regional Firelink/FiReControl Project Director reminded the Board that, as the initial traffic unit allowance and any costs for over-usage would be determined on a regional basis, it would be necessary for all the fire and rescue authorities in the region to agree a common approach to the apportionment of any costs arising from over-usage.

Following further debate on the issue it was

RESOLVED by the majority of those present and voting to recommend that each South West Fire and Rescue Authority should adopt Option 3 for the apportionment of any costs associated with over-usage of the Firelink system.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE RMB/4 ABOVE)

RMB/6.

Feedback On Meeting Of Regional Management Board Chairs And Vice-Chairs, London, 17 June 2010

(Councillors Brig. Hall and Wren each declared a **personal but non-prejudicial** interest in this item in so far as it related to South West Fire Control Ltd. – the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) with overall governance responsibility for the South West Regional Control Centre – by virtue of their being, respectively, an Alternate Director and Authority-appointed Director on the Company).

The Chairman reported on issues discussed at the meeting of Regional Management Board Chairs and Vice-Chairs held in London on 17 June 2010, specifically:

- the FiReControl/Regional Control Centre project. There was still uncertainty over the future of the project and concern had been expressed at the perceived failure of the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to consult, at Member level, on the potential for further delays to the project. There were still considerable problems relating to the technology proposed for the project and consequently a number of other regions were now considering other options to FiReControl. It was anticipated that a parliamentary announcement over the future of the FiReControl project would be made prior to the forthcoming Fire Conference in Harrogate;
- ongoing concerns over the possibility of further increases in contributions towards the Firefighters Pensions Scheme. This matter would be subject to further discussion at a future meeting of Regional Management Board Chairs and Vice-Chairs to be held later in the year.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE RMB/4 ABOVE)

RMB/7.

Workstreams Highlights Report

(Councillors Brig. Hall and Wren each declared a **personal but non-prejudicial** interest in this item in so far as it related to South West Fire Control Ltd. – the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) with overall governance responsibility for the South West Regional Control Centre – by virtue of their being, respectively, an Alternate Director and Authority-appointed Director on the Company).

The Board considered a report of the Regional Programme Manager (RMB/10/11) on progress since the last meeting of the Board on:

- the review of future governance arrangements;
- those projects being supported by the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SW RIEP), 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;
- a regional fleet options review;
- an e-recruitment project;
- an Early Learning Fire Safety (ELFS) project; and
- expressions of interest being sought by SW RIEP for the next round of its capital innovations fund; and
- a summary of progress made since the last meeting of the Board by those workstreams addressing the following issues on a regional basis:
 - Business Improvement and Efficiency;
 - Climate Change and Sustainability Practitioners Group
 - Community Safety;
 - Equality and Diversity;
 - Procurement;
 - Human Resources Management and Development;
 - Regional Control Centre; and
 - Service Operations and Resilience.

Appended to the report was a summary of “red” milestones against the projects together with an indication of the action to be taken to resolve this.

With regard to those projects currently being supported by the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SW RIEP), the report indicated that, pending the outcome of the new Government’s expenditure review, SW RIEP had placed a moratorium on any new capital or revenue expenditure commitments other than those projects with a firm legal commitment in place by 28 May 2010. The moratorium would be reviewed on 23 July by the South West Councils Chief Executives Group in light of the Budget announcement on 22 June 2010 but the worst case scenario was that there would be no RIEP funding available for 2011/12, with the £75,000 of uncommitted funding available for 2010/11 either being withdrawn completely or substantially reduced.

In relation to future governance arrangements, reference was made to the response received from the former Fire Minister, Shahid Malik MP, to the representations made by the Board, following its meeting on 28 January 2010, seeking the views of the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to the proposed dissolution of the Board in favour of a more informal South West Forum of Fire Authorities (Minute RMB/29 refers). The former Minister had responded to indicate, amongst other things, that CLG would shortly be undertaking a review into the effectiveness of regional management boards but that, pending the outcome of this review, the government would expect such boards to continue given certain obligations placed upon them by the 2008 – 11 National Fire and Rescue Service Framework.

Since that time, however, the new Coalition Government had assumed power and, given the stated intention in its Programme for Government to “stop plans to force the regionalisation of the fire service”, it was suggested that the Board may wish to make further representations enquiring as to the status of the proposed review and re-affirming its wish to formally abolish the Board if possible.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Chairman be authorised to make further representations on behalf of the Board to the new Fire Minister enquiring as to the status of the proposed review of regional management boards and re-affirming this Board's desire for formal dissolution if at all possible;
- (b) that, subject to (a) above, the progress of workstreams and the programme of work supported by the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SW RIEP), as indicated in report RMB/10/11, be noted.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE RMB/4 ABOVE)

RMB/8.

Regional Website

The Board received for information a presentation by the Regional Programme Manager on the new regional website (www.swfire.org.uk). The website was currently being rolled out to workstreams in phases and to date 216 users had been allocated user names and passwords. Board Members would shortly be issued with user names and passwords.

The site was intended as an information repository for regional programmes and to facilitate the sharing of best practice amongst fire and rescue services in the region. The site featured a public area populated with information such as Board agendas and minutes, together with a private, password-protected area, containing other information which the contributor could elect to make public. Those with access to the site would be able to specify to which Groups they wished to respond and elect to receive information about those Groups. The site also featured a training section providing usage instructions and a "Getting Started" section.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE RMB/13 BELOW)

RMB/9.

Board Financial Outturn, Accounts and Annual Governance Statement 2009/10

(a) Board Financial Outturn 2009/10 (Including Draft Statement Of Accounts)

(Councillors Brig. Hall and Wren each declared a **personal but non-prejudicial** interest in this item in so far as it related to South West Fire Control Ltd. – the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) with overall governance responsibility for the South West Regional Control Centre – by virtue of their being, respectively, an Alternate Director and Authority-appointed Director on the Company).

The Board considered a report of the Treasurer to the Board (RMB/10/12) providing a final outturn position against the approved budget including contribution of required contributions from each constituent authority for 2009/10.

The final outturn indicated actual net spending of £147,054 against an approved net budget of £165,700. The surplus of £18,646, when added to the budgeted surplus of £5,500, gave a total of £24,146 available to carry forward to 2010/11.

The Board at its budget setting meeting on 28 January 2010 agreed, amongst other things, that any underspend from the 2009/10 financial year should be carried forward to the current financial year to enable constituent authority contributions to remain frozen at the level set in the 2006/07 financial year (£171,200 total) (Minute RMB/31 refers). Consequently, the 2010/11 financial year represented the fourth consecutive year that constituent authority contributions had remained unchanged.

The report also detailed costs in 2009/10 associated with the FiReControl (Regional Control Centre) project funding for which was met by the Department for Communities and Local Government (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 2010 and available for carry forward to 2010/11 was £1,236,365.

Appended to the report was a draft 2009/10 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 (CIPFA) 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 2010 and how the Board was funded;
- the Statement of Movement on the General Fund reconciling amounts required by statute to be included in the Income and Expenditure Account but which did not impact on the determination of the revenue budget requirement;
- the Balance Sheet recording assets and liabilities of the Board as at 31 March 2010; 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 for the Board as its gross income during 2009/10 had exceeded £1m. The Regulations also required the draft Accounts to be approved by 30 June 2010. 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 2010.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the draft Statement of Accounts for 2009/10, as appended to report RMB/10/12, be approved and the Chairman authorised to sign it on behalf of the Board;
- (b) that the surplus of £24,146 achieved against the approved budget for 2009/10 be noted.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE RMB/4 ABOVE AND RMB/9(b) BELOW)

(b) Board Annual Governance Statement 2009/10

(Councillors Brig. Hall and Wren each declared a **personal but non-prejudicial** interest in this item in so far as it related to South West Fire Control Ltd. – the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) with overall governance responsibility for the South West Regional Control Centre – by virtue of their being, respectively, an Alternate Director and Authority-appointed Director on the Company).

The Board considered a report of the Clerk to the Board (RMB/10/13) to which was appended an Annual Governance Statement 2009/10. 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 (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement required to accompany the Board's 2009/10 Statement of Accounts, as set out at Appendix A to report RMB/10/13, be approved and the Chairman and Clerk authorised to sign it on behalf of the Board.

(SEE ALSO MINUTES RMB/4 AND RMB/9(a) ABOVE)

RMB/10. Annual Benefits Report 2009/10

The Board received for information a report of the Regional Programme Manager (RMB/10/14) summarising benefits realised in 2009/10 from the programme of regional collaboration together with indicative forecast benefits for 2010/11.

The benefits review undertaken to inform the report had identified a number of areas requiring to be addressed (e.g. not all workstreams were taking a systematic approach to the identification and realisation of benefits; the benefits of the collaborative programme were not generally reflected in fire and rescue services' business plans and corporate objectives) and the report outlined measures proposed to address these Issues.

The report identified savings from each of the regional workstreams in 2009/10. The total of the estimated savings - £1.36m - were slightly less than the forecast of £1.458m contained in the previous Annual Benefits report, with the majority of the savings being non-cashable.

Appended to the report was, amongst other things, the Annual Efficiency Return to the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) from the Board. This Return was both backward looking (to 2009/10) and forward looking (to 2010/11). CLG had advised that only cashable savings (defined as efficiency measures that could lead to a reduction in Council Tax) should be recorded on the Return and it was noted that, as the bulk of savings from the regional collaborative programme were of the nature of increased capacity, they did not fall within the CLG definition of cashable savings.

RMB/11. Climate Change Annual Report

The Board received for information a report and presentation by the Regional Programme Manager and Chair of the Climate Change Practitioners Group (RMB/10/15) on progress in relation to climate change strategies made during the 2009/10 financial year and on action proposed for the current year.

All south west fire and rescue authorities had taken part in the 2009/10 Carbon Trust's Local Authority Carbon Management Programme (LACM) and had taken a collaborative approach to developing their individual Carbon Management Plans. Each authority had now approved its own Carbon Management Plan 2010 – 14 and which contained targets to reduce carbon emissions by between 20% and 30% by 2013/14 compared to 2008/09. Services already had projects in place to support their Carbon Management Plans, with further projects proposed for future years.

Evidence to date indicated that the carbon management programme was already producing savings for most south west fire and rescue services in energy usage although in compiling the annual report an issue had been highlighted as to the availability of accurate and up-to-date energy and fuel consumption data required to enable individual fire and rescue services to priorities and evaluate the impact of projects included in their Carbon Management Plans. Measures were in place to address this and a further report on the carbon savings achieved in 2009-10 would be submitted to a future meeting once the data issues had been resolved.

RMB/12. Proposed Board Meetings 2010/11

RESOLVED that the following dates for Board meetings in 2010/11 be approved, in each case the meeting to commence at 11.00hours at the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service headquarters:

- Tuesday 28 September 2010
- Monday 15 November 2010
- Wednesday 26 January 2011
- Thursday 24 March 2011
- Thursday 23 June 2011 (Annual Meeting)

RMB/13. Regional Communications Strategy

The Board received for information a report of the Regional Programme Manager (RMB/10/16) on revisions to the Regional Communications Strategy initially approved at the meeting held on 7 November 2007 (Minute RMB/25 refers).

The Strategy was intended as a guide for workstreams on message and communication tools available to them in addressing key audiences. The Strategy was not intended to be prescriptive. The changes in the revised Strategy reflected, amongst other things:

- the maturity of the regional collaborative programme;
- the development and launch of the regional website;
- the need to identify and share best practice in a structured way; and

- the need to improve overall effectiveness and value for money of the regional collaborative programme through the use of modern communication techniques.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE RMB/8 ABOVE)

The meeting started at 11.00hours and finished at 13.10hours.