

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

28 September 2010

Present:-

Councillors Walker (Chair) and Roberts (Avon), Kennedy (Cornwall), Gordon, Gribble (vice Boyd) and Healey (Devon & Somerset), Bulteel (Dorset) and Brig. Hall (Wiltshire).

Also in attendance:

Alun Williams (Audit Commission)(for item RMB/)

Apologies:-

Councillors Windsor-Clive (Substantive Member) and Parsons (Substitute Member) (Gloucestershire), Mrs. Fry (Substitute Member – Devon & Somerset).

RMB/14. Minutes

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

RMB/15. Workstream Highlights Report

The Board considered a report of the Regional Programme Manager (RMB/10/17) on progress since the last meeting on:

- 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
 - a fire and rescue services equality framework gap analysis; 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 required to resolve this.

Following a meeting of the South West Councils’ Chief Executives’ Group on 23 September, the moratorium on new spending commitments – including £71,000 relating to the fire programme – remained in place.

RESOLVED that 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/10/17, be noted.

RMB/16. Audit Commission Annual Governance Report and Annual Audit Letter 2009/10

(Alun Williams – Audit Commission – in attendance for this item)

The Board considered a copy of the Audit Commission’s Annual Governance Report and Annual Audit Letter 2009/10 summarising the Commission’s findings from its audit of the Board’s accounts for that financial year. The representative of the Audit Commission no material issues had been identified as a result of the audit and that consequently it was intended to issue an unqualified opinion both on the financial statements on which the audit was based (a revised copy of which, correcting minor errors, was contained in the papers before the meeting) and in respect of value for money (the adequacy of arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources).

Included with the Report was a draft Letter of Representation for signature, subject to Board approval, by the Treasurer and required by the Audit Commission prior to issuing the final opinion and conclusion.

RESOLVED

- that the Annual Governance Report and Annual Audit Letter 2009/10, together with the financial statements upon which the Annual Governance Letter was based, be approved;
- that the Letter of Representation be approved and the Board Treasurer authorised to sign and forward it to the Audit Commission to facilitate issue of the final conclusion and opinion on the Board’s accounts 2009/10.

RMB/17. Dissolution of the Board

The Board considered a joint report of the Clerk and the Treasurer (RMB/10/18) advising on progress to date with proposals to effect the formal dissolution of the Board following representations made to the former and current coalition governments.

The current Fire Minister, Bob Neill MP, had responded to the Board's most recent representations (Minute RMB/7(a) of the meeting held on 22 June 2010 refers) to indicate that participation in Regional Management Boards would henceforth be voluntary with fire and rescue authorities free to collaborate in ways and forums best suited to local circumstances.

In light of this, the paper set out issues that would need consideration to effect dissolution of the Board and an indicative timescale to secure this.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Board's earlier decision to progress formal dissolution be re-affirmed and that, as a result of this, the course of action and timetable to effect dissolution as outlined in report RMB/10/18 be endorsed;
- (b) that, in light of (a) above, future meetings of the Board scheduled for the remainder of the current municipal year (to June 2011) be cancelled;
- (c) that, in accordance with Section 6 and Schedule 4 of the Board constituting Agreement, responsibility for production and finalisation of the Board's Statement of Accounts for 2010/11 be delegated to the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority.

The meeting started at 10.30hours and finished at 10.55hours.