

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/17/18
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY (ORDINARY MEETING)
DATE OF MEETING	12 JUNE 2017
SUBJECT OF REPORT	DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE – FIRE AND RESILIENCE “EXPORT” OFFER
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Fire Officer
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This report updates the Authority on the work the CFO has been undertaking, with the support of the Authority and on behalf of the National Fire Chiefs Council, with the Department for International Trade to develop a fire and resilience “export” offer.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Nil.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS (ERBA)	The contents of this report are considered compatible with existing equalities and human rights legislation.
APPENDICES	A. Presentation. B. Fire & Resilience Export Offer C. Joint International Fire Board Terms of Reference
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Nil.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At previous meetings the CFO has advised the Authority on work he has been leading, on behalf of the National Fire Chiefs Council (formerly the Chief Fire Officers Association) and working to the Department for International Trade (DIT), on the development of the Fire and Resilience "Export Offer". This paper provides an update on progress to date and outlines the operating principles that have been agreed.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This initiative arose from a scheduled visit to Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters by Hugo Swire MP in December 2015, the [then] Foreign Office Minister. The main aim of the visit was to enable the Minister to gain an appreciation of the work of the modern fire and Rescue service and during the visit the opportunity was taken to outline this Authority's commercial trading model. As a result of this discussion, Mr. Swire MP proposed a meeting with [then] department for United Kingdom Trade and Investment (UKTI) [now the Department for International Trade - DIT].
- 2.2 A meeting was subsequently arranged, attended by the Authority Chair, the Managing Director/CEO of Red One Ltd and the Chief Fire Officer in February 2016. At the meeting it was suggested by UKTI that there was need for greater coordination of the UK fire sector as it was characterised by a fragmented and disparate approach, underpinned by a competitive nature that was restricting potential overseas opportunities.
- 2.3 Following a series of meetings between the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) (now the National Fire Chiefs Council) and UKTI to attempt to provide greater consistency of effort, UKTI suggested that a lead officer might be able to provide the focal point for this work. CFOA subsequently asked that I undertake this lead officer role.
- 2.4 Whilst this work started before Brexit, its importance has increased since the vote to leave the European Union given the need to strengthen our export offer and in doing so strengthen UK businesses.
- 2.5 At its ordinary meeting on 26 May 2016, the Authority confirmed, unanimously, its support for the CFO in undertaking this role (and any other, appropriate external roles) given the importance of this work to both local and national efforts to play a leading role on behalf of the profession (Minute DSFRA/15 refers). It is noted that the Chief Fire Officer undertakes much of this work in his own time.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The initial focus for the work was to identify the scale of the export opportunity, engender widespread support for a more coordinated approach and to examine barriers to success. A presentation used to gain support from key stakeholders is reproduced at Appendix A.
- 3.2 The two main achievements to date are:
- the development and approval of a Fire and Resilience Export Offer, outlining the range of goods and services available from the UK fire sector (reproduced at Appendix B); and
 - the establishment of the Joint International Fire Board (JIFB) which coordinates activity and shares potential opportunities across the fire and resilience sector (terms of reference reproduced at Appendix C).

- 3.3 The Fire and Resilience Export Offer and includes a foreword from the Policing and Fire Minister Brandon Lewis MP. It aims to provide an overview of the type of goods and services that the UK can offer and will be supported by a suppliers' directory currently under development. The Export Offer was led by the CFO, working with key stakeholders to inform the model.
- 3.4 A key element in developing a UK wide offer has been the need to develop a more coherent 'supply side' and to ensure that UK businesses are able to scale up to meet the demand of some major external contracts. One of the main advantages of this coordinated approach is the ability to scale up to meet significant commercial opportunities that simply would not be able to be accessed by working alone at a smaller scale. It is worth mentioning that meetings have also been held with a number of prime contractors who may be willing to take a level of foreign currency and contractual risk that smaller suppliers may not be willing to take on.
- 3.5 To give a sense of scale, through his work, the Chief Fire Officer has had access to details of 84 High Value Opportunities, all of which are a minimum of £500m in contract value and which generally can be characterised as major infrastructure and development opportunities. With access to this information comes a responsibility to manage opportunities in an even handed manner to avoid perception that any one individual or organisation gains an unfair advantage over a competitor. This is vitally important as there remains a need to ensure the trust and confidence gained in bringing the disparate aspects together is retained. The separation therefore of the Chief Fire Officer from any trading activities undertaken on behalf of this Authority and UKTI (DIT) activities was essential. As a result of this separation, confidence that information and access to overseas opportunities is being shared in an even handed manner has been maintained and further enhanced. It should be noted that the Authority's arms-length trading company (Red One Ltd.) has its own Board of Directors and Executive Management team.
- 3.6 The Chief Fire Officer's role is to support Government in building supply-side capacity and bringing opportunities to the market. The role is not in any way responsible for responding to any opportunities that may be presented, this is a matter for individual businesses to consider whether to respond or not as the case may be.
- 3.7 The mechanism that has been developed to share these opportunities with those with an interest in or experience of exporting is the Joint International Fire Board (JIFB) which the Chief Fire Officer also chairs. It meets for three hours every three months in London.
- 3.8 An electronic communication mechanism is used to share the opportunity with all registered parties with an interest in or experience of exporting. It is an open forum where opportunities are shared simultaneously ensuring no one organisation has any advantage over another.
- 3.9 The JIFB aims to improve the UK supply side, it does not get involved in any way in putting deals together or discussing commercial matters that remain for the market to respond to (or not as the case may be).
- 3.10 A Strategic Steering Group comprising representatives of the Fire Industry Association, Fire Sector Federation, Fire and Rescue Service Trading Companies as well as DIT senior officials supports the Joint International Fire Board and plans are underway to co-ordinating a trade mission to Brazil, planned for September (outbound trade mission), as well as a number of inbound trade missions with delegates attending UK trade conferences.

3.11 Further updates will be provided to the Authority in due course but in the meantime the Authority is asked to note this report.

LEE HOWELL
Chief Fire Officer