

Minutes

Agenda Item 17

25th January, 2007 at 11.00 a.m.
Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury

Present: **Representing Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority**
Councillors Bean, G Davis and Brigadier Jones;
Representing Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Councillors Eade and Hartin;
Representing Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
Councillor Stockley;
Representing Warwickshire County Council
Councillors Chattaway and Hobbs;
Representing West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Councillors Eustace, Hinton and Hogarth.

Advisors:
Chief Fire Officer Brown (Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service);
Chief Fire Officer Doig (Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service);
Chief Fire Officer Hayden (Hereford and Worcester Fire and
Rescue Service);
Chief Fire Officer Sheehan (West Midlands Fire Service).
Chief Fire Officer Taylor (Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service);

Lynda Bateman (Treasurer);
Sian Stroud (representing the Legal Adviser);
Sue Phelps (Clerk) and Georgina Wythes;
Steve Worrall (Programme Manager);
Louise Goodhead (Programme Support Officer).

Observers: Peter Dartford, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service;
Tina Thomas, Government Office West Midlands;

Visitors: Liz Barron and Terry Brewer, Firebuy

Apologies: Councillors Bloomer, D Davis and Morgan;
Steve Haynes (Risk Manager).

1/07 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2/07 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th October and 1st December, 2006, be confirmed as a correct record.

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3/07 **Notes of the Programme Board**

The Board considered the notes of the meeting of the Programme Board held on 14th November, 2006.

Resolved that the recommendations of the Programme Board as set out in the notes be approved.

4/07 **Draft LGA Ten Year Vision Statement for the Fire and Rescue Service**

Further to Minute No 51/06, the Programme Manager reported that the Member Sounding Board [comprising Cllrs Hobbs, Hogarth, Brigadier Jones, Morgan and Shilton] had met to formulate a response to the Local Government Association consultation document 'Fire and Rescue in 2017: Rising to the Challenge'.

The observations of the Member Sounding Board were submitted for the Board's consideration.

Resolved that the observations of the Member Sounding Board be approved as the basis of a formal response on behalf of the Regional Management Board to the Local Government Association.

5/07 **Proposed Fire and Rescue Lead Officer post in Government Office West Midlands**

Further to Minute No 52/06, the Programme Manager reported that the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had terminated the funding of the regional Business Change Manager (BCM) posts in England from 31st December 2006. It was felt that the role of the BCM had brought many benefits to this Regional Management Board and created an important link between the region's fire and rescue services and Government Office West Midlands.

To maintain these valuable links it was suggested that a new post of Fire and Rescue Lead Officer to the Government Office West Midlands be considered. Fire and Rescue Circular 4/2007 emphasised the need for Fire and Rescue Authorities to make alternative arrangements, in the light of the departure of Business Change Managers, to access the DCLG Capacity Building Programme and the resources of the Regional Centres of Excellence. It was suggested that the Lead Officer could: act as a regional communication resource with the DCLG; act as regional link with the Audit Commission, the West Midlands Regional Centre of Excellence, and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership; support the Programme Office as necessary; identify funding streams; act as regional lead to Government Office West Midlands, and other appropriate duties.

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There were three options open to the Regional Management Board: to do nothing; to appoint a full-time Lead Officer post; or to appoint a part-time Lead Officer post.

There was provision in the Programme Office budget to finance a part-time appointment, and the Treasurers' Group was shortly due to consider the possibility of funding a full-time post.

Resolved that approval in principle be given to the appointment of a part-time Lead Officer post for 2.5 days per week, and that a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Programme Board on the outcome of the deliberations of the Treasurers' Group.

6/07 **End of Tranche Review 8**

The Board noted the End of Tranche Review 8.

7/07 **Progress Presentation – Performance**

Ged Edwards, the Lead Officer for the Performance Project Board, gave a presentation on the work of the project. All workstreams had now been completed, and permission was requested to decommission the Performance Project Board. The project had carried out successful work with regard to peer challenge in respect of the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the Operational Assurance assessment; and had produced a regional Best Value review template. A strong network of key staff and working relationships had been developed across the region, and it was suggested that the Board should be closed down to formally conclude its assigned activities, but that further opportunities to enhance performance should be explored.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Performance Project Board be formally de-commissioned;
- (2) that the Board be re-established subject to the recommendations of the Lead Officer, should further performance-related opportunities be identified; and
- (3) that the Lead Officer report to the next meeting of the Programme Board with proposed opportunities.

8/07 **Progress Presentation - Procurement**

Mike Griffiths, the Lead Officer for the Procurement Project Board, gave a presentation on the work of the project to December 2006. The project had already delivered a number of benefits including cashable and non-cashable savings; access to the blue light portal; and a draft three-year procurement plan.

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The project had been cited as an example of best practice in Fire and Rescue Circular 50/2006.

The future work programme for the project board included collaboration in respect of the national RPE contract, review of Technical Services research and development arrangements; supporting the ICP evaluation process; and continuing engagement with Firebuy.

9/07

Presentation - Firebuy

Liz Barron, the Chief Executive of Firebuy, attended the meeting, accompanied by Terry Brewer, the Chief Executive Officer, and gave a presentation on the work of Firebuy.

They indicated that funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government would cease with effect from 31st March, 2008, and a consultation was ongoing with regard to future funding for the organisation. Firebuy was making representations for a staged withdrawal of government funding to allow for a smoother transition, and asked for support from Fire and Rescue Authorities on this point.

The Board was updated on progress on each of Firebuy's workstreams. A number of projects had already been delivered, including the bluelight database; fireground radios; and bulk purchase of smoke alarms. Work was in hand on major projects including the establishment of an insurance mutual company, and a possible access to a telecommunications PFI project with British Telecom and the Ministry of Defence.

Firebuy was keen to keep in close contact with Fire and Rescue Authorities and a number of suggestions on how to maintain those links were given.

Ms Barron and Mr Brewer went on to answer members' questions.

They indicated that it would be possible to share information with fire and rescue services on the evaluation of protective clothing.

Members expressed some concerns about the work of the national project leading to lack of competition and restriction of choice, and possibly deleterious effects on British industry. Mr Brewer reassured members that there would be a choice of firms and equipment available to fire and rescue authorities. Suppliers would need to reach the required standard of product at the best available price.

Firebuy representatives were encouraged to take advantage of the purchasing expertise of Fire and Rescue Authorities that had been built up over many years.

The Chair thanked Ms Barron and Mr Brewer for their attendance.

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10/07 **WMRMB Programme Risk Review**

The Board noted the programme risk log. The major current risk was Regional Fire Control and the impact of this was currently being assessed.

Reference was made to risks relating to lack of capacity, and it was suggested that these should be taken into consideration when considering requests for additional funding.

11/07 **Correspondence relating to the Regional Management Board**

None received.

12/07 **Date of next meeting**

Thursday, 26th April, 2007 at 11.00 am (Staffordshire)

(Meeting ended at 12.45 pm)

<p><i>Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes</i> <i>Democratic Services Unit</i> <i>Sandwell MBC</i> <i>0121-569 3791</i></p>
