

Minutes

Agenda Item 10

27th October, 2006 at 11.00 a.m.

Bickenhill Fire Station, National Exhibition Centre, Solihull

Present: **Representing Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority**
Councillors G Davis and Brigadier Jones;
Representing Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Councillors Hartin and Morgan;
Representing Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
Councillors Bloomer, D Davis and Stockley;
Representing Warwickshire County Council
Councillors Chattaway, Hobbs and Shilton;
Representing West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Councillors 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);
Deputy Chief Fire Officer Raymond (Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service);
Chief Fire Officer Sheehan (West Midlands Fire Service).

Lynda Bateman (Treasurer);
Sarah Duxbury and Sian Stroud (representing the Legal Adviser);
Sue Phelps (Clerk) and Georgina Wythes;
Steve Worrall (Programme Manager).

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

Visitors: Andy Hancox, West Midlands Regional Centre for Excellence;
Mark Martimore, East Midlands Regional Management Board.

Apologies: Councillors Bean and Eustace;
Chief Fire Officer Taylor;
Greta Needham (Legal Adviser) and Steve Haynes (Risk Manager).

40/06 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He indicated that copies of the summary Annual Report had been circulated to members at the recent RMB Chairs' meeting held at the Local Government Association and had been well received.

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He informed Members that Tim Needham of West Midlands Fire Service had received a national award in respect of an information technology project.

He reported that the Chairs of the constituent authorities had met on 9th October, 2006. A wide-ranging discussion had taken place that had been beneficial and such meetings would therefore take place every six months in future.

The Chair also indicated that an invitation had been extended to Regional Chairs and Chief Fire Officers to attend a Parliamentary Reception arranged by the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) to be held on 14th November, 2006. Only Members of Parliament from the WMFRA area would be present on this occasion although it was understood that the Fire Services Minister would also be there. It was suggested that in future years consideration should be given to arranging a regional event along these lines.

Resolved that planning for a regional meeting with Members of Parliament for 2007 be commenced and that a further report be submitted in due course.

41/06 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th July, 2006, be confirmed as a correct record.

42/06 **Meeting of the Programme Board**

The Board considered the notes of the meeting of the Programme Board held on 18th September, 2006. Reference was made to Minute No. 69/06 (Provision of a Technical Rescue Service) and an undertaking was given that comments made at the meeting by the Chief Fire Officer of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service with regard to the proposals would be added to the record.

Subject to the above, and the deletion of the name of Cllr Hogarth from the list of attendances, the Board approved the recommendations of the Programme Board held on 18th September, 2006.

43/06 **House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee Report on the Fire and Rescue Service**

The Programme Manager reminded the Board that the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee Report on the Fire and Rescue Service had been published in June 2006, and that a number of the recommendations related to Regional Management Boards. Government had issued a formal response to the Committee's findings in September, 2006, and the report outlined the responses in relation to regional working.

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The responses confirmed that Government had no plans to regionalise the Fire and Rescue Service, but expected Fire and Rescue Authorities to co-operate in the development of Regional Fire Control Centres and regional resilience, and to work together through RMBs to deliver efficiencies; that Government was committed to fully funding all New Burdens; and that measures would be put in place to monitor the performance of FireBuy.

The Board noted the report.

44/06 **Long Service Increment Payments**

Councillor Hartin on behalf of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority reported that his Authority had concerns regarding the delay in the determination of the Continuing Professional Development Scheme, and proposed that a regional submission be made to the National Employers to encourage resolution of this matter. A letter sent to the National Employers' Secretary on behalf of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority was circulated.

There was broad agreement with the concerns expressed in the letter, and it was recognised that constituent Fire Authorities may also have individual views that they wished to convey to the National Employers. It was agreed that all these views could be brought together into a regional response.

Resolved that the Chief Fire Officer [West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service] send an appropriate letter to the National Employers' Secretary on behalf of the Regional Management Board.

45/06 **End of Tranche Review 7**

The Board noted the End of Tranche Review 7. Considerable progress had been made that would provide positive evidence towards the direction of travel assessment in the forthcoming inspection regime.

Resolved that the Programme Manager send a copy of the report to the Fire Services Minister.

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46/06 **Project Progress Presentations 2007**

The Programme Manager reminded the Board that the Programme Board currently received presentations at each meeting from each Project Senior Responsible Owner and Lead Officer setting out progress to date. It was now proposed also to bring two project presentations to each Regional Management Board meeting on a rota basis to allow all members to give more detailed consideration to progress within each thematic project stream.

Resolved that the rota of project presentations to the Regional Management Board for 2007 be approved.

47/06 **EMRMB Back Office and Shared Services Project**

With reference to Minute No 62/06 of the Programme Board, Mark Martimore, Project Lead for the Common Services workstream of the East Midlands Regional Management Board (EMRMB) outlined the EMRMB proposals for a review of common and specialist services within their region, to be carried out by consultants via funding from the East Midlands Centre of Excellence, with a brief to develop proposals for regional working based on collaboration or a shared services model. The Programme Board had recommended that this region take up an invitation from the EMRMB to participate in the project by sharing best practice and lessons learned from the project.

Mr Martimore answered questions with regard to the review, including benchmarking against and relationships with public sector bodies outside the Fire and Rescue Service; the impact of local area agreements; the drive for Gerson efficiencies and the need to create capacity to invest in services; the effect of Regional Fire Controls on back office services; and the timescales within which improvements could be achieved and the possibility of quick wins.

The Chair thanked Mr Martimore for his presentation.

Resolved:

- (1) that Mr Martimore be asked to give a presentation to the Treasurers Group on the conclusions and recommendations of the study once the report is finalised;
- (2) that a further report be submitted to the Regional Management Board in due course outlining proposals that could be replicated to the benefit of this region.

48/06 **West Midlands Centre of Excellence**

Andy Hancox of the West Midlands Centre of Excellence gave a presentation on

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the work of his organisation and its input into the West Midlands Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership. The Regional Centres for Excellence had developed out of the drive for Gershon efficiencies but had now widened their remit, and worked to encourage collaboration; to support local authorities by providing capacity, funding and project management expertise; and to sign-post authorities to examples of good practice. The Centre was working to support the Partnership's workstreams, which included procurement, shared services and business process re-engineering. Mr Hancox indicated how these services could support individual Fire and Rescue Authorities and the Region.

Members indicated the importance of maintaining quality of services and re-investment as well as achieving efficiencies and best value; noted the involvement of the Chief Fire Officers' Association on the Partnership Board; and the contribution the Centre of Excellence could make to the peer review process in terms of benchmarking and review.

The Chair thanks Mr Hancox for his presentation.

49/06 **Establishment of a Local Authority Controlled Company**

The Legal Adviser provided an update on the legal work that had been undertaken in preparation for the establishment of a Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) to deliver and run the Regional Fire Control Centre.

The Legal Adviser reported that the Memorandum of Association would be in the same format for all LACCs. The Articles of Association and the Members' Agreement could include regional variations, and issues that needed to be determined by constituent authorities and the Regional Management Board before these documents could be finalised were outlined.

Once the documents were finalised they would be submitted to the external legal advisers in January 2007 for a final check, funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government, and the LACC would be established during the same month.

The Chairs of the constituent Fire Authorities had recently met to discuss the governance of the LACC and had agreed proposals for consideration by constituent Fire Authorities. They proposed that the Company be named 'The West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Control Centre Limited'; and that an interim arrangement be established whereby the constitution of the Company reflects the membership of the West Midlands Regional Management Board, until such time that the Regional Control Centre was fully operational. The Chairs had also discussed the issue of apportionment, and their views would be considered by a forthcoming meeting of the Treasurers' Group, who would report back to the Board with their proposals.

The Regional Lawyers continued to work on the legal documents and related issues.

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Resolved:

- (1) that each Fire and Rescue Authority establishes its own position on the issues that need to be determined with regard to the Articles of Association and communicates such views to the next Regional Lawyers' meeting to be held on 15th November, 2006;
- (2) that Warwickshire County Council's Law and Governance Division produce revised company documentation for circulation to the Lawyers' Group and the Regional Fire Control Project Board prior to the Lawyers' meeting on 15th November, 2006;
- (3) that the Regional Treasurers' Group considers the issue of apportionment and liaises with the Lawyers' Group to ensure that the Members' Agreement can be finalised to include a relevant apportionment formula;
- (4) that the Regional Lawyers' Group hold a further meeting on 14th December, 2006 to discuss any outstanding issues;
- (5) that each Fire and Rescue Authority approve the draft company documentation at a meeting to be held during December 2006;
- (6) that a special meeting of the Regional Management Board be held on a date to be agreed during December 2006 to consider a final draft of the company documentation;
- (7) that the Local Authority Controlled Company be established in January 2007, following consideration of the finalised company documentation by the external legal advisers.

50/06 **Visit to the Region by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State**

Further to Minute No. 56/06 of the Programme Board, the Programme Manager outlined the proposed arrangements made for Angela Smith, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, to observe the Programme Board meeting to be held on 14th November, 2006 and meet the Programme Board, Senior Responsible Owners and Project Lead Officers.

Resolved that the arrangements be approved.

51/06 **Ten Year Vision for the Fire and Rescue Service**

The Programme Manager reported that the Local Government Association Fire Services Management Committee had issued for consultation a draft document entitled 'Ten Year Vision for the Fire and Rescue Service' aimed at assisting Fire

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and Rescue Authorities to manage their workload and long-term planning. The final version of the document would be published in March 2007.

Proposals were submitted for arriving at a regional response to the consultation. The importance of obtaining views from employees on the ten-year vision was stressed.

Resolved:

- (1) that a Member Sounding Board be established, to comprise one representative of each constituent Fire and Rescue Authority [Cllrs Hogarth, Brigadier Jones, Morgan, Shilton and Stockley] and chaired by Cllr Hobbs, to consider and make comments on the draft document;
- (2) that the Member Sounding Board submit a recommended response to the consultation document for consideration at the next meeting of the Regional Management Board.

52/06 **WMRMB Programme Risk Review**

The Board noted the programme risk log.

The Chief Fire Officer [West Midlands Fire Service] reported that Government Office West Midlands [GOWM] had indicated that it was proposed to cease funding the post of Business Change Manager, currently filled on secondment by Tina Thomas, with effect from 31st October, 2006. Following some discussion on this matter, GOWM had agreed to extend funding of this post to the end of December 2006. It was hoped to fund the extension of the secondment locally to 31st March 2007.

Members expressed the view that the Business Change Manager was an important point of contact between the Regional Management Board and Government, and that this matter should be raised with the Fire Services Minister on her forthcoming visit.

53/06 **WMRMB Awareness Raising**

Further to Minute No. 34/06, the Programme Manager reported that a summary Annual Report pamphlet had now been produced and distributed to members, staff and key stakeholders. Arrangements were also underway to produce, at no cost, a WMRMB 2007 diary.

54/06 **Schedule of Meetings 2007**

The Board noted an updated schedule of meetings of the Regional Management

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Board and the Programme Board for 2007.

55/06 **Correspondence relating to the Regional Management Board**

None received.

56/06 **Date of next meeting**

Thursday, 25th January, 2007 at 11.00 am (Shropshire)

57/06 **Urban Search and Rescue Demonstration**

Further to Minute No 69/06 of the Programme Board, officers of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service demonstrated urban search and rescue equipment and techniques for the information of members.

(Meeting ended at 12.32 pm)

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