

Minutes

**28<sup>th</sup> July, 2006 at 11.00 a.m.**  
**at Shire Hall, Market Square, Warwick**

**Present:**

- Representing Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority**  
Councillor Bean;
- 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 Eustace, Hinton and Hogarth.

**Advisors:**

- Deputy Chief Fire Officer Brice (Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service);
- Deputy Chief Fire Officer Dartford (Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service);
- Deputy Chief Fire Officer Phillips (Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service);
- Chief Fire Officer Sheehan (West Midlands Fire Service).
- Chief Fire Officer Taylor (Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service).

- Mike Griffiths (Representing the Treasurer);
- Chris Jukes (Programme Accountant)
- Elizabeth Marginson (Communications Officer);
- Greta Needham (Legal Adviser);
- Sue Phelps (Clerk) and Georgina Wythes;
- Steve Worrall (Programme Manager).

**Observers:**

- Sarah Duxbury, Warwickshire County Council;
- Allan Rotchell, West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service;
- Martin Reohorm, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service;
- Steve Stokoe, North East Regional Management Board;
- Tina Thomas, Government Office West Midlands;
- Tony Walsh, West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service;
- Allan Woods, Government Office North East.

**Visitor:** Pauline Mack, Audit Commission.

**Apologies:**

- Councillors G Davis, Eade and Brigadier Jones;
- Chief Fire Officers Brown, Doig and Hayden;
- Linda Bateman (Treasurer).

26/06 **Election of Chair**

**Resolved** that Councillor Hinton be elected Chair of the Regional Management Board for the period until the commencement of the annual

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meeting of the Board in 2007.

27/06      **Election of Vice-Chair**

**Resolved** that Councillors D Davis, G Davis, Hobbs and Hartin, as Chairs of their respective Fire Authorities, be elected Vice Chairs of the Regional Management Board for the period until the commencement of the annual meeting of the Board in 2007.

28/06      **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Stockley to his first meeting of the Board. The Chair reported that he had sent letters of appreciation to Councillors Banks and Haynes who were no longer members of the Board, thanking them for their contributions during their period of service. He also referred to the retirements of Nigel Summers and John Gregory, formerly Clerk and Legal Adviser respectively, and to their valuable contribution to the work of the Board.

He indicated that the Chairs of the constituent fire authorities would be meeting early in October, supported by the Programme Manager, to explore how to achieve better collaboration between the authorities. They intended to meet on a regular basis in the future.

It had also been agreed that in future Vice Chairs would attend the Local Government Association Regional Chairs meetings with the RMB Chair on a rota basis, and that in the event of the Chair not being available, two Vice Chairs would attend.

29/06      **Membership of the Board**

The Clerk reported on the membership of the Regional Management Board for 2006/07.

30/06      **Governance Arrangements 2006/07**

The Clerk reported that the Board at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2006 (Minute No 22/06) had approved a document setting out its governance arrangements. No substantive changes were proposed for 2006/07 except in relation to the establishment of a Joint Consultative Forum.

It was necessary to review the appointment of elected members to positions as Senior Responsible Owners for thematic project boards in the light of changes in membership and office in the constituent Fire Authorities.

The Clerk reported that the Board had been endeavouring to fully engage with key

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stakeholders since its inception, and in particular with representative bodies. Following discussions with the representative bodies it had been agreed to establish a Regional Joint Consultative Forum (JCF). A draft constitution for the JCF was presented, which had been the subject of consultation with the representative bodies. If the Board was minded to approve the establishment of the JCF, it was proposed that the Chairs Committee on Stakeholder Engagement be dis-established.

Thematic project boards had also been asked to make arrangements to engage with representative bodies in their work, and evidencing stakeholder engagement was one element of their regular presentations to the Programme Board.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that, subject to (3) below, the governance arrangements approved by the Board in Minute No 22/06 be confirmed;
- (2) that the Programme Board be reconstituted for 2006/07 with the same membership and terms of reference as in 2005/06;
- (3) that a Joint Consultative Forum be established with the constitution attached as Appendix 1 hereto; that the Chair of the Regional Management Board be appointed as Chair of the JCF; and that the Vice Chairs of the Board be appointed as Vice Chairs of the JCF, to attend on a rota basis;
- (4) that elected members be appointed to serve as Senior Responsible Owners on thematic project boards as follows for 2006/07:

#### **Thematic Project Board**

#### **Member**

|              |                            |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| Fire Safety  | Councillor Brigadier Jones |
| Performance  | Councillor Hogarth         |
| Procurement  | Councillor Chattaway       |
| Resilience   | Councillor Bloomer         |
| Fire Control | Chair of the RMB           |
| Resources    | Councillor Morgan          |
| Response     | Councillor Stockley        |

- (5) that the Chairs' Committee on Stakeholder Engagement be dis-established;
- (6) that the Programme Manager be authorised to amend the Programme Plan 2006/08 and any other relevant documents to reflect the decisions set out in (1) to (5) above.

(Councillor D Davis declared a personal interest in the above insofar as it relates to the JCF.)

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31/06     **Schedule of Meetings 2007**

The Board considered a proposed schedule of meetings of the Regional Management Board and the Programme Board for 2007.

**Resolved** that the proposed schedule be referred to the constituent Fire Authorities and their Chairs for comment and that a further report be submitted to the next meeting.

32/06     **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2006, be confirmed as a correct record.

33/06     **Finance Review to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2006**

The Board received a report on spend against the approved budget for the period ended 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2006.

The Board was informed that the bid for £150,000 to the Regional Centre of Excellence to fund a Procurement Manager and associated training costs for three years, had been unsuccessful. It was now proposed to fund a post of Procurement Manager and associated training costs from the RMB budget.

In addition it was estimated that external audit fees of £1,000 would be incurred for which there was no provision.

**Resolved :-**

- (1) that the allocation of £1,000 from the RMB contingency to fund external audit fees for 2006/07 be approved;
- (2) that the funding of a Procurement Project Manager from the RMB budget be approved in principle; that a report be submitted to the Treasurer's Group on the business case for such an appointment; and that a further report be submitted in due course to the Programme Board for final ratification.

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34/06     **Annual Report 2005/06**

The Board considered a draft Annual Report for 2005/06, together with proposals for the production of a summary version of the report for distribution to stakeholders.

**Resolved:-**

- (1)     that the Annual Report 2005/06 as now submitted be approved, subject to inclusion of reference in the foreword to the 2005/06 Vice-Chairs and the five constituent Fire Authorities;
- (2)     that the amended Annual Report be circulated to constituent Fire Authorities;
- (3)     that the production of a summary document be authorised, and that the format thereof be submitted to the next meeting of the Programme Board for final approval.

35/06     **Regional Fire Control - Legal Advice on the Establishment of a Local Authority Controlled Company**

Further to Minute No. 21/06, the Board considered recommendations from the Legal Adviser on the appointment of external legal advisers to assist the Board in establishing a local authority controlled company (LACC) to deliver and run the Regional Fire Control Centre. The timescale for the establishment of the LACC was January 2007.

A meeting of the Fire Lawyers' Working Group was due to be held in London on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2006, where the possibility of making a national appointment of external legal advisers for this purpose was to be considered.

The Board was also informed that a Company Secretary would be needed to run the LACC, and that Warwickshire County Council was prepared to provide this service for a period of six months from the formation of the LACC whilst an external provider was sought, free of charge if funding from central government was not forthcoming.

**Resolved:-**

- (1)     that the proposal for the joint appointment of external legal advisers on a national basis with the same firm advising individual regions on a call-off basis be supported;
- (2)     that if (a) above is supported nationally, the appointment of such external legal advisers as recommended by the Fire Lawyers Working Group be agreed, subject to appropriate exemptions from

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tendering being in place;

- (3) that in the event of (a) above not being supported nationally, Eversheds Solicitors be appointed to advise the Board on issues of specific relevance to this region subject to appropriate exemptions from tendering being in place;
- (4) that a further report on the funding and budget arrangements for payment of the external legal fees to be brought back to the next meeting of the Board, having been considered by the Treasurers' Group and the Programme Board;
- (5) that Warwickshire County Council be tasked with taking forward the formal appointment arrangements for external legal advice;
- (6) that, unless the costs of providing company secretarial services are borne by central government, the offer from Warwickshire County Council to provide company secretarial services free of charge to the LACC from its formation for an initial period of 6 months be accepted, with a review of these arrangements to take place in Spring 2007.

36/06 **Meeting of the Programme Board**

The Board approved the notes of the meeting of the Programme Board held on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2006.

Reference was made to the cancellation of the visit to the region by the Parliamentary Secretary of State, Angela Smith, due to have taken place on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2006. Members referred to the inconvenience caused and expressed their disappointment that the Minister was unable to attend.

37/06 **Performance Framework 2006/07**

The Board received a presentation from Pauline Mack of the Audit Commission with regard to the inspection regime that would be applied to Fire Authorities and the Regional Management Board in 2006/07. The process would commence in August 2006 and final reports would be available in March 2007.

Concern was expressed about the burden such inspections placed on Fire Authorities and the effects on service delivery; and the differing inspection requirements for some authorities.

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38/06 **Correspondence relating to the Regional Management Board**

The Clerk reported receipt of an acknowledgment from the Department of Communities and Local Government in respect of the Board's response to the recent consultation on Fire Control Governance.

The House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee Report on Fire and Rescue Services had also recently been published. It was proposed to refer the report for consideration by the Programme Board at its September meeting.

39/06 **Date of next meeting**

Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 at 11.00 am (West Midlands)

(Meeting ended at 12.32 pm)

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