

Minutes

Agenda Item x

24th July, 2008, at 11.30 am

Sandwell Council House, Freeth Street, Oldbury

Present: **Representing Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority**
Councillors Bean, Brigadier Jones and Udall;
Representing Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Councillors Box, Holyoak and Minnery [substitute member];
Representing Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
No members present;
Representing Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Chattaway, C Davis and Hobbs;
Representing West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Councillors Eustace [substitute member] Hinton and Howard.

Advisors:
Chief Fire Officer Brown (Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service);
Chief Fire Officer Dartford (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);
Sue Phelps (Clerk) and Georgina Wythes;
Sioned Harper (representing the Legal Adviser);
Steve Worrall (Programme Manager).

Visitors: Philip Purssey, Sue Croughan, Neil Backes and Andrew Brodie
(West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Control Centre Limited).

Apologies: Councillors Bloomer, D Davis, Jones, Tolley and West.

11/08 **Election of Chair**

Resolved that Councillor Brigadier Jones be elected Chair of the Regional Management Board for the period until the commencement or the annual meeting of the Board in July 2009..

12/08 **Election of Vice Chairs**

Resolved that Councillors D Davis, Howard, Hobbs and West, as Chairs of their respective Fire Authorities, be elected Vice Chairs of the Regional Management Board for the period until the commencement or the annual meeting of the Board in July 2009.

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13/08 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reported that discussions were in hand between Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority and Warwickshire County Council with regard to a possible combination order.

14/08 **Membership of the Regional Management Board 2008/09**

The Clerk reported on the membership of the Regional Management Board for 2008/09. It was noted that Councillor Holyoak represented the Conservative Party.

15/08 **Governance Arrangements 2008/09**

The Clerk reported that the Regional Management Board had in June 2006 approved a document setting out its governance and organisation arrangements. No substantive changes were proposed to those arrangements apart from a reduction in the number of meetings which had already been agreed [Minute No 8/08].

Resolved:

- (1) that the governance arrangements approved by the Board on 5th June, 2006 [Minute No 22/06] be confirmed;
- (2) that the Programme Board be reconstituted for 2008/09 with the same membership and terms of reference as in 2007/08.

16/08 **Appointment of External Auditors**

The Treasurer reported that she had been in discussion with the Audit Commission since the establishment of the Board in 2004 as to the need for and nature of any external audit of the Board's activities. The Audit Commission had now concluded that the Board fell within regulations covering 'small bodies with no financial transactions' and as such, external auditors need to be appointed to carry out a light touch audit with no fee.

The Audit Commission had therefore appointed Clement Keys as external auditors to the Regional Management Board for the period 2007/08 to 2010/11. Agreement had been reached with Clement Keys that the completion of a 'short form annual return' together with a formal public advertisement satisfied the statutory audit requirements. A copy of the annual return was submitted.

Resolved:

- (1) that the appointment of Clement Keys as the Board's external auditors be noted; and

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- (2) that the 2007/08 Short Form Annual Return be approved and that appropriate public notice be given.

17/08 **Schedule of meetings 2008/09**

Resolved that meetings of the Regional Management Board and Programme Board be held as follows in 2008/09:

Meeting	Date and Time	Host
West Midlands Regional Management Board	24 th July, 2008 [Annual Meeting] 11 am	Sandwell Council House, Oldbury
Programme Board	23 rd October, 2008 10.30 am	Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
West Midlands Regional Management Board	22 nd January, 2009 11 am	Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Programme Board	23 rd April, 2009 10.30 am	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

18/08 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 24th April, 2008, be confirmed as a correct record.

19/08 **WMRMB Annual Report 2007/08**

The Board considered a draft Annual Report summarising the progress of the Board during 2007/08.

The Board discussed the purpose of the Annual Report. The Programme Manager indicated that the Fire Service National Framework 2006/08 required Regional Management Boards to demonstrate their progress and that the Annual Report was one means of evidencing this. It was suggested that the format of the report might be reviewed for 2008/09.

Reference was made to the annual efficiency statement and members asked for a full report in due course on what benefits had accrued to the region from cashable and non-cashable efficiency savings. It was suggested that some joint working may not currently be recorded as efficiency savings and that this needed to be addressed.

Resolved:

- (1) that the Annual Report 2007/08 be approved, subject to the inclusion of the efficiency statement data;

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- (2) that the financial outturn for 2007/08 be noted;
- (3) that the Programme Manager be requested to review the format of the Annual Report for 2008/09;
- (4) that the Treasurer be asked to submit a further report in due course with regard to the benefits that have accrued to the region from cashable and non-cashable efficiency savings.

20/08 **Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008/11**

The Board noted a report summarising the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008/11 and identifying the key changes compared with the 2006/08 framework.

Issues identified in the draft national framework had already been incorporated into the draft Programme Plan.

A further responsibility placed upon RMBs by the National Framework was a requirement to support delivery of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008/18.

21/08 **Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018 – Equality Impact Assessments**

Further to Minute No. 20/08 above, the Programme Manager reported that there was currently no agreed process at regional level to undertake equality impact assessments.

Resolved that the offer of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority to produce a WMRMB equality impact assessment template be accepted.

22/08 **WMRMB Programme Plan 2008/09**

The Programme Manager presented a revised draft Programme Plan for 2008/09 setting out proposals for the delivery of this Region's activities to meet the requirements of the new Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008/11, based on a portfolio of four overarching strategic project streams: Resilience, Resources and Development, Procurement and Shared Services. It was proposed to operate the project streams on a task and finish basis where appropriate, and Brigade Managers would act as Senior Responsible Owners.

The Programme Budget was £80,000 for 2008/09 which equated to £16,000 per constituent authority.

Reference was made to the proposal set out in paragraph 10.2 of the Plan to

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deliver the Shared Services Project through an external independent organisation at an indicative cost of not more than £10,000. The Treasurer indicated that the resources set aside in the budget were for a feasibility study and that a full report would be submitted to the Board following the study which would highlight any opportunities for shared services. Each constituent authority would then have to decide if it wished to take up these opportunities.

Members emphasised that a successful shared services arrangement would depend on buy-in from constituent authorities and that the feasibility study should take into account the views of constituent authorities on participation in shared services as well as what opportunities were available. Concerns were expressed that the feasibility study may duplicate work already being carried out across the five constituent authorities or may not look at opportunities for collaboration outside the fire service, for example, with adjacent local authorities. It was also suggested that there may be resources available through the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership for the feasibility study. Members and Chief Fire Officers indicated that they wished to see the consultant's brief before making a decision in this matter.

The Programme Manager indicated that efficiencies through shared service arrangements were a key driver under the National Framework document which required regional management boards to review opportunities for efficiencies by close working at regional level. The proposed review would address this requirement of the Framework.

Resolved:

- (1) that the proposed consultant's brief for the shared services feasibility study be circulated to all members and Chief Fire Officers for comment and that a further report be submitted in due course;
- (2) that subject to (1) above, the draft Programme Plan and Programme Budget be approved.

23/08

Date of next Meeting

22nd January 2009 [Host: Shropshire]

(Meeting ended at 12.15 pm)

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