



Draft Minutes

23rd July, 2009, at 11.00 am

West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters, 99 Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present:

Representing Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority
Councillor Brigadier Jones;

Representing Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Councillors Hartin and West;

Representing Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Councillor Bloomer;

Representing Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Chattaway and Hobbs;

Representing West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Councillors Hinton and Ward.

Advisors:

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Enness (Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service);
Chief Fire Officer Hayden (Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service);
Chief Fire Officer Randeniya (West Midlands Fire Service);
Deputy Chief Fire Officer Ranger (Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service);
Chief Fire Officer Raymond (Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service).

Lynda Bateman (Treasurer);
Sue Phelps (Clerk) and Amarjit Sahota;
Steve Worrall (Programme Manager).

Visitors: Philip Purssey and Neil Backes.

Apologies: Councillors Bean, C Davis, C Jones and Minnery;
Chief Fire Officers Dartford and Fuller.

14/09 **Election of Chair**

Resolved that Councillor Brigadier Jones be elected Chair of the Regional Management Board for the period until the commencement of the annual meeting of the Board in July 2010.

15/09 **Election of Vice Chair(s)**

Resolved that Councillors Bloomer, Hobbs, Ward and West, 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 July 2010.

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16/09 Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He welcomed Councillor Ward to his first meeting as Chair of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Chair also welcomed Paul Raymond to his first meeting as Chief Fire Officer for the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

He also informed the Board that the Treasurer, Lynda Bateman, would soon be retiring. Members expressed their appreciation for the contribution to the work of the Regional Management Board made by Mrs Bateman during her period as Treasurer.

It was noted that the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) no longer had a Chairman and it was suggested that Councillor Ward, the appointee from West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority be authorised to deal with any urgent business arising before the next scheduled meeting of the Company

17/09 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 30th January, 2009, be confirmed as a correct record.

18/09 Notes of the Programme Board

The Board considered the notes of the meeting of the Programme Board held on 23rd April, 2009.

It was requested that the reference in the notes to 'West Midlands Fire & Rescue Service' be replaced with 'West Midlands Fire Service'.

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

19/09 Membership of the Regional Management Board 2009/10

The Clerk reported on the membership of the Regional Management Board for 2009/10.

20/09 WMRMB Programme Plan 2009/10

The Programme Manager presented a draft Programme Plan for 2009/10, setting out proposals for the delivery of this Region's activities to meet the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008/11, based on a portfolio of five overarching strategic project streams: Operational Response, Prevention and Protection, Human Resources, Performance and Improvement and Regional Control Centre.

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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. To secure synergy and consistency of approach the first four projects had been aligned to Chief Fire Officer Association's national business model.

It was also proposed that as a departure from previous years, progress against the Programme Plan would be managed and monitored by the Programme Board, and that the Programme Office function be disbanded.

Members were informed that for the period 2009/10, the implementation and management of the WMRMB modernisation Programme Plan would operate on a cost neutral basis, with no operating budget.

Any expenditure incurred to address Member and/or Fire Rescue Service officers' expenses to attend or host WMRMB, Programme Board and/or project board meetings would, as in previous years, be borne by each respective Fire Authority.

Clerking and secretariat functions during 2009/10 would continue to be undertaken by Sandwell MBC on behalf of WMRMB. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service would maintain the WMRMB website which would continue to act as the repository for all agendas, reports and minutes.

Concerns were expressed that the Regional Management Board would only meet annually and clarification was sought as to how issues raised would be dealt with and how the Programme Board was expected to be monitored.

The Chair informed Members that a special meeting of the Regional Management Board could be called if any significant issues arose. The Programme Manager also informed Members that the Programme Board did not have any delegated powers and any issues or recommendations would need to be reported back to the Management Board for consideration, not covered in the Programme Plan 2009/10.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the draft Programme Plan 2009/10, be approved;
- (2) that responsibility be delegated to Brigade Managers (acting as Senior Responsible Owners) together with the lead officer to scope, review and agree the key tasks necessary to deliver the Programme Plan's project streams;
- (3) that Brigade Managers and/or lead officers be requested to prepare and present progress reports/presentations to the Programme Board at three-monthly intervals;
- (4) that the formal close-down of the West Midlands Regional Management Board Programme Office, be approved.

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Governance Arrangements 2009/10

The Clerk reported that the five constituent Fire Authorities made an agreement relating to the Constitution and Standing Orders of the WMRMB which came into effect on 1st April, 2004. The agreement set out the constitution of the Regional Management Board and provided that it would hold a minimum of four meetings per year, including an annual general meeting.

The draft Programme Plan for 2009/10 had been drawn up following discussions with Chairs of the Fire Authorities and Chief Fire Officers and retained a regional emphasis aligned to the regional business streams but with a streamlined organisation and a reduction in meetings (Minute No. 20/09).

It was also reported that the current Treasurer, Lynda Bateman, would be retiring from her post with Sandwell MBC and Treasurer to the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority on 31st August, 2009. Sandwell MBC had indicated that the arrangement for the post at Sandwell MBC to include the role as Treasurer to the Management Board could continue. Stuart Kellas has been appointed as Treasurer of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority with effect from 1st September, 2009 and it was therefore recommended that he be formally appointed as Treasurer to the Management Board with effect from 1st September, 2009.

The Management Board placed on record its appreciation to Lynda Bateman for the hard work and contribution she had made during her time as Treasurer.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the governance arrangements for the West Midlands Regional Management Board as set out in the Programme Plan 2009/10, be approved;
- (2) that Mr Stuart Kellas be formally appointed as Treasurer to the West Midlands Regional Management Board with effect from 1st September, 2009;
- (3) that the Programme Board be reconstituted for 2009/10 with the same membership and terms of reference as in 2008/09.

22/09

Appointment of External Auditors – 2008/09 Audit

The Treasurer reminded Members that she had finalised discussions during 2008 with the Audit Commission as to the need for and nature of the external audit required by statute of WMRMB activities. The Audit Commission had concluded that the Board fell within regulations covering 'small bodies with no financial transactions' and as such, external auditors needed to be appointed to carry out a light touch audit with no fee.

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It was reported that for the financial years 2007/08 to 2010/11, Clement Keys had been appointed as the Board's external auditor. An agreement was reached in 2008 with Clement Keys that the completion of a 'Short Form Annual Return' together with formal public advertisement of that satisfied the statutory audit needs and no further work would be required.

Members were informed that the formal public advertisement would be published on 24th July, 2009.

Resolved that the 2008/09 Short Form Annual Return be approved.

23/09

Schedule of Meetings 2009/10

The Board considered a proposed schedule of meetings of the Regional Management Board and the Programme Board for 2009/10, in line with the Programme Plan for 2009/10. It was proposed that the Management Board should in future meet once per annum (the AGM) and that the Programme Board should meet on three subsequent occasions.

It was reported that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority had asked for the January Programme Board to be rearranged to enable its Chairman to attend. Offers had been received from Authorities to host the various meetings.

Resolved that meetings of the Regional Management Board and Programme Board be held as follows in 2009/10:

Meeting	Date and Time	Host
West Midlands Regional Management Board	23 rd July, 2009 [Annual Meeting] 11 am	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Programme Board	22 nd October, 2009 10.30 am	Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Programme Board	Date to be confirmed 10.30 am	Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
Programme Board	22 nd April, 2010 10.30 am	Warwickshire County Council

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WMRMB Progress Updates 2008/09

Resilience

The Regional Management Board received a presentation on the summary of performance of the WMRMB Resilience Project. The objective of the project was to review the effectiveness of 'cross-border' integration arrangements.

It was reported that progress had been made against the following: Regional Collaboration Forum, Memorandum of Understanding, New Dimensions, Training Exercise Strategy, Section 13 and 16 Agreement and Inter-Agency Liaison Officers.

The benefits that had been delivered were: shared use of resources, sharing best practice, improved operational effectiveness and efficiency, improved fire-fighter safety and ultimately improved the service delivery to communities.

RCC/Regional Fire Control Project

Members received a presentation in regard to an update on the FiReControl project. The objective of the project was to review and support the delivery of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Fire Control, as set out in within the Fire Rescue Service National Framework.

The Regional Management Board was informed of the project progress, as follows:-

- there had been a project re-schedule due to technical problems with developing the IT system to meet all systems;
- development of Solution Establishment Workshops to improve understanding of Fire and Rescue Service requirements;
- FiReControl station end equipment was fully operational in Staffordshire;
- planning work underway to facilitate installation of FiReControl mobile data terminals in Staffordshire appliances;
- Firelink – 100% regional network resilience now achieved;
- organisational structure and design had now been agreed;
- additional staffing in place within Fire and Rescue Services to support the delivery of the agreed regional Initial Staffing Pool plan;
- vision values and behaviours had been agreed;
- the building had been fully furnished and training rooms were functional;
- a 'put' option had been signed with the owners of the property that if during the contract the building became not fit for purpose, it would be brought back for £1. The put option was a mechanism whereby the LACC could return the lease to CLG when CLG defined that the building was no longer required. CLG would buy back the lease in this case for £1. Legal advice was still being sought over the viability of this option for the LACC in the Region;
- it had been identified that the building was not currently up to Disability Discrimination Act standards;

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- more staff were required than that recommended by CLG;
- the website was up and running and a facility had been set up for employees to ask questions and receive a response within 24 hours;
- the 2008/09 budget was in surplus by £43,000 but this would be needed to fund work stack.

Members expressed concerns about the continuing delays affecting the project and the risks posed by a potential change in Government.

Regional Improvement Group

The Management Board received a progress report on the WMRMB Regional Improvement Group (RIG). The RIG had been created to share expertise and knowledge for capacity building. To date, the following progress had been made:-

- the RIG had its inaugural meeting on 7th May, 2009;
- in preparation for regionally led Operational Assessment reviews, arrangements were made to train and accredit regional peer reviewers, with the training arranged by IDeA. A total of 14 members of staff from the region successfully completed the peer reviewer course;
- a three day regional critical-friend Operational Assessment peer review took place in Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service in July;
- the RIG had successfully secured grant funding of £175,000 from 'Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands' to support the sharing of expertise and knowledge within the region.

It was reported that the RIG planned to meet shortly to review the outcomes from the Fire Authorities Comprehensive Area Assessments and Operational Assessment reviews. Areas of notable practice and common areas for improvement would be considered and recommendations would be submitted to the Regional Management Board to draw upon the funding received to address areas for improvement.

The RIG also proposed to review the recently published guide on suggested national performance indicators for data collection by the Chief Fire Officers' Association.

25/09

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board would be the annual meeting in July 2010, at a date, time and venue to be arranged.

(Meeting ended at 12.39 pm)

Contact Officer: Amarjit Sahota Democratic Services Unit Sandwell MBC 0121-569 3189
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