

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
SOUTH EAST FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES  
REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 JULY 2008 AT 11.00 HOURS  
AT SURREY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE HQ, REIGATE**

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Regional Management Board at its next meeting.

**Members:**

Cllr P Evans	Cabinet Member Public Protection, West Sussex County Council
* Cllr P Jones	
* Cllr Dr P Bryant	Chairman, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
* Cllr M F Cartwright	Chairman, Hampshire Fire & Rescue, Fire Authority
* Cllr B Cope	Chairman, Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority
* Cllr Mrs J Heathcoat	Cabinet Member Community Safety, Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr M Murphy	Chairman, East Sussex Fire Authority
* Cllr T Kemble	
* Cllr D Rowlands	Chairman, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority
* Cllr Mrs H Clack	Executive Member Safer & Stronger Communities, Surrey County Council
Cllr B Abraham	Chair, Isle of Wight Fire Authority, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities
* Cllr D Williams	

\* = Present

**In Attendance:**

CFO M Burrell	West Sussex
CFO B Feeley	Kent
CFO R Pearson	Surrey
CFO D Prichard	East Sussex
CFO D Smith	Buckinghamshire
CFO P Street	Isle of Wight
DCFO M Smyth	Oxfordshire
ACFO P Southern	Royal Berkshire
David Howells	Hampshire
Charles Kerr	Kent
James Finch	SEFIP
Sue Klein	East Sussex

## **17/08 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (Item 1)**

Councillor Mrs Helyn Clack was welcomed to the meeting as the new member for Surrey, replacing Councillor Christine Stevens and she, in turn, welcomed Members to Surrey FRS HQ. Councillor Peter Jones was welcomed as a substitute member for West Sussex, Councillor Ted Kemble as a substitute member for East Sussex and Councillor David Williams as a substitute member for the Isle of Wight. It was noted that CFO Charlie Hendry had been seconded to CFOA with effect from 21 June 2008, while he undertook the role of President of the Association for the ensuing year, and that Bill Feeley would be acting as CFO for Kent during this period. ACFO Paul Southern (Royal Berkshire) and David Howells (Hampshire) were also welcomed to the meeting.

Councillor Rowlands (Buckinghamshire) referred to the Chiefs' and Chairs' Development Away Day held on 23 June 2008. This was the fourth development event for Members held by various agencies in recent months and Members were disappointed at the lack of briefing beforehand and the quality of the facilitators; Members suggested that Chiefs and Chairs should have an input into the agenda for any future development days. The event itself was well organised and James Finch was thanked for this.

Councillor Rowlands had attended a recent FiReBuy update meeting in Hereford and met with Councillor Les Byron. He thanked him, on behalf of RMB members, for his work over the years as Chairman of the LGA Management Committee and Fire Forum.

## **18/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 2)**

Councillor P Evans (West Sussex), Councillor M Murphy (East Sussex), Councillor B Abraham (Isle of Wight) and CFO J Bonney (Hampshire), CFO Iain Cox (Royal Berkshire) and CFO J Parry (Oxfordshire).

## **19/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)**

Councillor Peter Jones (West Sussex) declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 14, Regional Control Centre Update, as Chairman of the SEFRCC.

## **20/08 PROCEDURAL MATTERS (Item 4)**

There were no questions from Members.

## **21/08 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Item 5)**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the RMB meeting held on 2 April 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

## **22/08 MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 6)**

CFO Feeley (Kent) had written to Parmjit Dhanda MP regarding the Automatic Fire Sprinkler Pilot Project, and the MP's response was noted. Members discussed ways of bringing more pressure to bear on planning committees, and builders and developers to install sprinklers in new buildings, including the use of local authorities' new Powers of Well-being and the engagement of other Members and Partners. It was also suggested that Mr Dhanda be invited to see examples of sprinkler installations to help influence a change in government regulations.

Councillor Evans (West Sussex) had suggested that 'retiring' vehicles could be brought in as reserves (minute 12/08) and CFO Burrell confirmed that, with the ability to 'alias' radios, this would now be possible.

## **23/08 CORRESPONDENCE (Item 7)**

Members noted the correspondence between Councillor Evans (West Sussex) and Parmjit Dhanda MP regarding the level of scrutiny and audit being experienced by Fire & Rescue Services and the letter from Mr Dhanda to CFO Feeley (Kent) regarding the Automatic Fire Sprinkler Pilot Project.

## **24/08 PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN (Item 8)**

Charles Kerr (Kent) presented a report that set out the progress made for the period April to June 2008 against each of the work areas in the regional business plan. It was noted that, in general, good progress was being made.

Authority was sought for the Chairman to submit the Board's Annual Efficiency Statement to meet the deadline of 19 July 2008 and it was agreed that Members would receive copies of the submission by e-mail.

Councillor Cope (Kent) reported that the Improvement & Efficiency SE Members' Board [**not** SEFIP] had undertaken a review of its governance structures, and that the outcomes when implemented would lead to a significant improvement.

**RESOLVED** – That:

- 1) the progress made be noted;
- 2) the power to approve a submission for the backwards and forwards looking Annual Efficiency Statement be delegated to the Chairman of the Board for submission by 19 July 2008; and
- 3) the community safety good practice case studies be noted.

## **25/08 REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD BUSINESS PLAN 2008/11 (Item 9)**

James Finch (SEFIP) presented a report that set out the RMB's business plan for the coming years, and those projects which were to be reported to the Board on a regular basis. He commended the updated SEFIP web-site to Members of the Board.

Following discussions with Councillor Murphy (East Sussex) Mr Finch suggested amending the fifth priority to read: 'to maintain the political **accountability** of the Board to constituent FRAs' and members agreed to this.

Members also discussed a further concern raised by Councillor Murphy and agreed to amend the first part of the second priority to read: 'to work together either as a whole or in clusters, **as appropriate...**'

Councillor Cartwright (Hampshire) drew attention to a change in the figures presented for Hampshire's fire stations on page 27 of the report. Mr Finch agreed to amend these and include a note explaining that these figures were for the previous year

**RESOLVED** – That:

- 1) subject to the above amendments, the regional business plan be approved for final publication subject to minor alterations to text agreed with the Chairman of the Improvement work area; and
- 2) the equality impact assessment made of the Plan be noted.

**26/08 SOUTH EAST FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITIES' PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2008/11 (Item 10)**

DCFO Smyth (Oxfordshire) presented a report that set out the proposed SE FRAs' Procurement Strategy for 2008/11. This strategy was necessary to focus regional procurement efforts on the key issues in the South East where concerted action would 'add value' for each Fire and Rescue Authority by enhancing capacity, avoiding duplication and addressing common challenges together.

Councillor Heathcoat (Oxfordshire) would chair the new Strategic Regional Procurement Advisory Forum which would act as the gatekeeper and clearing house for high-value, collaborative procurements. Councillor Bryant (Royal Berkshire) asked about the Forum's relationship with FiReBuy and was informed that it was a national vehicle to achieve best value and should be used where possible. Councillor Cartwright (Hampshire) mentioned the review of national procurement strategy currently being undertaken by government, which appeared to suggest that FiReBuy's future was less than certain and Councillor Rowlands (Buckinghamshire) proposed inviting FiReBuy to the next RMB meeting to update members.

**RESOLVED** – That:

- 1) the regional procurement strategy be approved;
- 2) it be noted that the Lead Member for Procurement would chair the Strategic Regional Procurement Advisory Forum (SRPAF); and
- 3) FiReBuy be invited to the next RMB meeting to update members.

**27/08 SOUTH EAST FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITIES' COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY (Item 11)**

CFO Prichard (East Sussex) presented a report seeking Members' approval of the SE FRAs' Communications Strategy for 2008/11. This had been prepared to ensure that key messages from the region were communicated effectively to key stakeholders and it supported the delivery of the new business plan for the Board detailed above.

**RESOLVED** – That:

- 1) the South East Fire & Rescue Authorities' Regional Management Board Communications Strategy 2008/11 be approved; and
- 2) the South East Fire Improvement Partnership be used as the Board's brand for future communications with key stakeholders.

**28/08 IT'S HOW WE DO BUSINESS: OPERATIONAL DIVERSITY EVENT OUTCOMES (Item 12)**

CFO Feeley (Kent) presented a report regarding the recent success of the operational diversity conference arranged by the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP). The event had been attended by more than 150 delegates and a variety of speakers presented at the event from a range of organisations – members of the Board wished their thanks to be formally recorded. Feedback from delegates had been very positive with over 50% returning feed-back forms and expressing high levels of satisfaction.

The event had increased Councillor Bryant's (Royal Berkshire) awareness that it was as important to provide operational equality to 'customers' as it was to provide equality and fairness within the workplace. The Chairman highlighted to members that Equality & Diversity would now be a standing agenda item, and asked them to bring examples of good practise within their authorities to the next meeting in October.

**RESOLVED** – That:

- 1) the SEFIP newsletter on the outcomes of the event be noted;
- 2) the speakers be formally thanked;
- 3) the organisers be formally congratulated on a successful event;
- 4) the addition of equality and diversity as a standing item on RMB agendas be approved; and
- 5) Members bring updates to the next meeting of the Board showing examples of good practice within their Authorities.

#### **29/08 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (Item 13)**

CFO Feeley (Kent) presented a report that updated members on the National Framework for Fire & Rescue Authorities 2008/11, and the National Equality & Diversity Strategy for Fire & Rescue Authorities 2008/18.

**RESOLVED** – That the publication of the following be noted:

- 1) the National Framework for Fire & Rescue Services for 2008/11; and
- 2) the National Equality & Diversity Strategy for Fire & Rescue Services 2008/18.

#### **30/08 REGIONAL CONTROL & FIRELINK UPDATE (Item 14)**

CFO Burrell (West Sussex) gave a presentation that updated Members on the Regional Control Centre and FireLink projects (Appendix 1). It was noted that the title of the recently appointed Director of the RCC may be changed to avoid confusion with the elected Directors of the Company.

The Business Case appendix for the South East had been released the day before the meeting and showed a projected saving for the Region of £1.486m. CFO Burrell had received confirmation that this would not be used to 'top-up' regions where there was a projected short-fall – the government would do this. He had also declined to give an RMB response to the release of the Business Case.

CFO Burrell would bring a paper to the next meeting regarding RMB/LACC governance issues surrounding customer service. CFO Prichard (East Sussex) proposed having an urgent special meeting of Chiefs and Chairs to discuss issues arising from the Business Case, including costs, service level agreements, IRMPs and the provision of services – James Finch would canvass members and arrange a day-long meeting for August.

#### **31/08 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS (Item 15)**

Wednesday 8 October 2008, 21 January and 1 April 2009.

#### **32/08 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (Item 16)**

There were no items for which the press and public were excluded.

The meeting closed at 12.40 hours.

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Chairman