

**Report No:** RMB/13/08  
**Meeting Date:** 8 October 2008  
**Agenda Item No:** 9

## **REPORT TO THE SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRE PROJECT DIRECTOR  
8 October 2008**

### **KEY ISSUE/DECISION**

To seek the Board's approval to appoint a Project Director to manage the transition to a South East Regional Control Centre and implement both the Firelink and Incident Recording System projects.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report explains the project management arrangements that currently operate in the South East region to manage the transition to a South East Regional Control Centre. Given a number of circumstances, as explained below, the report recommends the appointment of a Project Director and revised management arrangements given that it can no longer be undertaken as a "reference" within the responsibilities of a principal manager.

### **CONSULTATION**

The proposal, which follows growing concern amongst South East Chief Fire Officers around the amount of work the three projects are generating and a need for succession planning, has been considered by Hampshire, West Sussex and Kent Fire and Rescue Services. The attached job description and person specification have also been approved by the South East Chief Fire Officers' group.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. That the Regional Management Board approves the creation of a 37 hours Regional Project Director post (as detailed in the attached job description and person specification) and endorses the selection process detailed within this report.
- ii. That the Regional Management Board gives authority to the selection board to adjust arrangements in light of candidate interest and market circumstances.
- iii. That the Regional Management Board confirms that the employment of the Project Director and team remains with West Sussex as the Regional Management Board work area lead on the Regional Control Centre.

## **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

As the three projects progress towards implementation, the workload generated by the Regional Control/Firelink project is growing. This is compounded by the size of the South East region, the establishment of the LACC and the appointment of the Regional Control Centre Director, with whom there is an increasingly complex liaison and co-ordination role. Additionally, in order to achieve greater efficiencies and minimise out of scope costs, South East Fire and Rescue Services are keen to ensure out of scope functions are, as far as possible, delivered through the RCC.

Finally, the RCC is very data dependent (its effective operation is highly reliant upon information generated and currently held by the constituent fire and rescue services). Because of this, the Incident Recording System (IRS) project is becoming increasingly important and interdependent with Firelink and Fire Control. By necessity, the IRS operates as a distinct project within each Fire and Rescue Service; however, there is scope and great benefit for better co-ordination across the region and in connection with the Fire Control Project.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Since the establishment of the Regional Management Board the work area lead for the Regional Control Centre and Firelink projects in the South East has fallen to West Sussex. The elected member representative from West Sussex formally occupies that role with the Regional Management Board. The officer advisor to the representative is the Chief Fire Officer of West Sussex who also fulfils a project director's role by acting as the main conduit between the South East project team for FiReControl/Firelink and its regional and national stakeholders. In some other regions this role is undertaken by a separate dedicated officer.

## **ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY**

2. When the role first began and responsibilities were allocated as part of the Regional Management Board's implementation plan for the Government Framework document, the Regional Project Director's, (RPD) workload was restricted to initial organisation of the projects structure in the South East and development of policy.
3. This workload has continuously increased to a point where the current postholder is dedicating up to three working days on average per week. This not only involves working with Authorities in the South East but a number of meetings at national level with CLG and other stakeholders.
4. Given that the current CFO in West Sussex is due to retire in December and his replacement is new to the region and understandably keen to focus attention internally on his Chief Officer role, it is prudent to consider whether we need to change the present arrangements. Research across other regions indicates that a number have already addressed this with the appointment of a regional project director with responsibility for Fire Control, FireLink (and in some cases IRS). These posts are funded through the new burden funding for the Fire Control project.
5. Given the timescales involved in selection for such a post, research has been undertaken by Hampshire on behalf of the region to develop a relevant job description and person specification, together with an indicative salary scale. These have been reviewed by Kent Fire and Rescue Service's Human Resources Director for quality assurance purposes.

6. The job description and person specification are attached as Appendix 1. The indicative salary range is to be formally assessed by the West Sussex Hay Job Evaluation process and the exact salary range confirmed. It is proposed, given the criticality and specialist nature of the post, that advice is sought to assist in accessing suitable candidates of sufficient calibre and capabilities. Hampshire has indicated its willingness to provide the logistical support to the selection process.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### Job Function and Reporting Arrangements

7. There is no intention at this point to make adjustments to the work area lead with the Regional Management Board which would remain with West Sussex. However, in anticipation of the establishment of a Customer Liaison Group, it is suggested that this body, together with the West Sussex Lead Officer, would provide the strategic scrutiny and steering function on behalf of the fire and rescue authorities in the region. This group would also provide a performance management role to the new Project Director and would co-ordinate with, but clearly be separate from, the joint project board which provides a specific technical overview for the fire control project.

### Selection Process

8. In order to ensure we select the best person for the role we would seek to undertake a fair and open process. The proposal for the process will be as follows:
9. The job description and person specification will be formally evaluated by West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service to finalise the pay scale and the terms and conditions of employment. These will need to be commensurate with those for staff employed by the Authority.
10. The post will be advertised both within the fire sector and externally.
11. The applications received will be considered against the requirements for the post detailed in the job description and person specification. The Interview Panel (see below) would be responsible for the short listing process.
12. It is suggested that the Interview Panel consists of the following; the newly appointed Chief of West Sussex FRS; Chief of Surrey FRS; Director of HR (HFRS). A member of the West Sussex HR team would also be involved in the process to ensure compliance with their standard HR procedures.

Consideration should also be given to including the Regional RCC Director as the senior supplier of future services.

13. The final decision would be subject to reference and medical checks, plus the relevant security checks.
14. The formal offer of appointment and contract would be issued by West Sussex County Council as the employer.

#### Next Steps

15. If the Regional Management Board accepts the proposals made, the following actions will be required:
16. West Sussex FRS will need to confirm the particulars of the post in accordance with their existing policies and procedures and the results of any post evaluation that is completed.
17. The content of the advert will be agreed between Surrey, Hampshire and West Sussex FRS (the Interview Panel) and we will seek to attract a diverse cohort of applicants.
18. Given confirmation of the budget provision, Hampshire FRS will progress the post to the point of appointment, in accordance with the details above. The details of the timeline will be agreed with the key participants.
19. West Sussex FRS will make the formal offer of appointment to the selected candidate and progress to employment.

#### **CONCLUSION**

20. Members are asked to:
  - i. Approve the creation of a 37 hours Regional Project Director post (as detailed in the attached job description and person specification) and endorses the selection process detailed within this report.
  - ii. Give authority to the selection board to adjust arrangements in light of candidate interest and market circumstances.
  - iii. Confirm that the employment of the Project Director and team remains with West Sussex as the Regional Management Board work area lead on the Regional Control Centre.