

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

PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN 8 OCTOBER 2008

KEY ISSUE/DECISION

The Regional Management Board (RMB) is asked to note the progress made against the regional business plan 2008/11.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the progress made against each of the work areas in the regional business plan 2008/11. There are several key issues in this quarter to which Members' attention is drawn:

- i. Copies of the Regional Management Board's Business Plan and the related procurement strategy are available on request in hard copy;
- ii. A method to increase understanding of communities through the use of a simple survey and market segmentation techniques has been developed;
- iii. Consultation has recently taken place on the development of a new equality standard for local government which reduces the number of levels from five to three.

CONSULTATION

Consultation has taken place with the constituent Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in the South East Region to develop the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the report and its appendix.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Progress against the regional business plan has been made as set out in the report.

INTRODUCTION

1. This is the first report on progress made against the Regional Management Board's Business Plan 2008/11. Since the plan was approved in July 2008, colleagues have been developing their project plans and, where these have been submitted to the programme manager, they are now available in the secure extranet of the SEFIP website. Equality impact assessments of each project plan have also been requested. Not all projects' plans have yet been completed, but it is anticipated that a complete set will be available soon.
2. Work to complete project plans is important as it shapes what the intended outcomes of the project will be and its scope. However, it does mean that, in terms of progress, there is less to report than would be usual at this stage of the year. Nevertheless, there is little to report that is of concern in terms of underperformance. Comments on each work area of the Board are provided in the paragraphs below.
3. Members of the Board should have received their personal copy of the business plan from the programme manager. If any Member would like further copies, these can be supplied on request. Copies of the regional procurement strategy, also approved in July 2008, will be available at the meeting.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

Review of work areas

- **Community Safety – Surrey Fire & Rescue Authority**

4. Work on the evaluation toolkit for community safety activities has now been concluded and FRAs are encouraged to use it. This is especially important in the context of forthcoming use of resources and value for money judgements being made of each FRA under the new performance framework for fire & rescue services. This requires FRAs to be able to demonstrate that they achieve outcomes for the public for the investment they make in community safety activity.
5. Improvement & Efficiency South East (IESE) has committed £60k for an innovative survey using Experian's Mosaic segmentation tool to provide data from a regional survey giving robust information within an area of a fire & rescue service. This is important for FRAs as the triennial BVPI satisfaction survey has been replaced by the Place Survey, with field work undertaken between September and December 2008. The survey has only one question relating to fire & rescue services at a time when the government is putting the emphasis upon understanding customers and engaging with communities. This is clearly demonstrated in "Understanding people's attitudes towards fire risk" (Fire Service Circular 46/2008) in which the first three recommendations are:
 - fire safety messages should be tailored to the issues of concern to each section of the community,
 - repeated with sufficient frequency to maintain awareness of fire as an issue and
 - the UK population should be segmented to support further development of targeted fire safety messages.

6. Levels of satisfaction with Fire & Rescues Services vary widely across the region and the need for improvement is highlighted both in Audit Letters and the IESE target of improving levels of satisfaction with authorities by 1% per year.
7. Understanding customer perceptions and being able to differentiate between communities (population segments) is essential to delivering messages effectively. The old satisfaction survey, whilst effective at measuring overall satisfaction, did not provide enough responses for meaningful segmentation. Pooling responses across the region is needed for robust data, and a segmentation model applicable across the region to analyse the data in way that is useful to individual FRAs.
8. A regional survey questionnaire is being developed in partnership with the market research provider through an existing contract. The existing questionnaire for the best value survey is being used as a starting point. A telephone survey is proposed rather than a postal survey to facilitate stratification of the sample (so that each FRA will have a direct measure of the level of satisfaction with their service) and boost the sample for hard to reach groups where needed. Analysing the data with Experian's Mosaic public sector segmentation model will gain the value of a single robust sample whilst permitting results to be mapped to the demographic of each FRA. It is proposed that the questionnaire is developed to enable field work to take place during January and February 2009. Earlier field work was considered but would conflict with the timetable for the Place Survey and individual FRA consultation processes for Integrated Risk Management Plans. Annual surveys will be needed to track the performance against the regional improvement partnership strategy.
9. Outcomes will be that FRAs can target their community safety activities to those most at risk, using a robust dataset.

• **Resilience – Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Authority**

10. An important piece of work being progressed by the response & resilience group is the development of a vision for regional resilience to support the transfer to the regional control centre and deal with issues such as interoperability. A draft vision document has been prepared and circulated to CFOs and will be brought to the next meeting of the Board.
11. At its meeting in April 2008 the RMB agreed a business continuity framework for adoption across the Region. Since then, British Standard 25999 for Business Continuity was published and has been considered carefully in recent months, in particular the likelihood that the Government will place this British Standard within the review of the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) as the standard to which all category A responders should be responding. This standard might impose a range of additional key elements which, if included in the CCA, all FRSA's will need to have due regard to.
12. It is, therefore, timely for the Contingency Group which reports to the Response & Resilience work area to re-visit the Business Continuity Framework to identify those key areas in principles of BS 25999 that should be included in the framework and to make any necessary amendments prior to any further collaborative work beginning on producing common templates etc. At the same time, the new published Integrated Risk Management Planning guidance from the government will also be considered. This will ensure that the region reflects on up to date guidance

and will be well prepared for any change in legislation. It will also hold each FRA in good stead for any subsequent audit against the key principles of BS 25999.

13. Work to develop common standard operating procedures continues. A list of key operating procedures has been determined based on sub-regional working groups in the past year, that includes Highrise, Breathing Apparatus, ship firefighting, operational support/incident ground catering, wildland firefighting, bulk foam review, equipment disposal, and blue light response. These areas are also being considered alongside the numerous convergence outcomes necessary in respect of cutover to the Regional Control Centre (RCC), particularly those where unified mobilising policies will be required. A workshop comprising of the Head of Operational Response from each FRA was scheduled for 29 September 2008 to advance this work further.
14. Work undertaken previously in respect of mapping special appliance disposition is currently being updated and will be re-issued as a reference document for FRAs during the next month.
15. Supporting improvement in FRAs by peer review is a key priority for the Board. Under the banner of response & resilience, a peer review group has been established and potential training providers for business continuity internal audits have been identified. A programme of Business Continuity Peer Reviews for 2008/11 was approved at the September meeting of the South East Response & Resilience Group, commencing in March 2009 through to November 2010, following which it is anticipated that a new programme of reviews will then be produced. An interim 'learning outcomes' document will also be produced part way through the process.
16. Following excellent early work by the region, the Premises Risk Information project in the RMB plan has now been elevated to a national project and Bill Welsh [Kent] has now been seconded to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisers' Unit to carry out the work. Therefore it will no longer be formally monitored by the programme manager for the Board, but learning outcomes will be shared via the website as they emerge.
17. The Board is asked to note that no determination has yet been made as to whether an operational assessment of service delivery will be carried out during the current financial year.
18. The Board is also asked to note that Buckinghamshire FRA organised the third annual New Dimensions Briefing Day on 14 September 2008. The event, which was attended by the RMB Chairman and other Members of the Board, was extremely well received. It was also attended by a number of other agencies who were given the opportunity to view any assets available for operational use within the region. A total of 168 delegates attended the event. A request has been made to extend these arrangements to create a multi agency 'showcase' event in 2009 and work has commenced to determine how this can be achieved.

• **Improvement – Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority**

19. The South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) has coordinated a peer review of Buckinghamshire FRA's human resources function using the peer review brokering contract and two officers from a south east FRA. SEFIP will seek to learn lessons from this review, as well as the review

completed last year on community safety in Oxfordshire and the review in Suffolk on operational assurance. It is an expectation under IESE's Improvement & Efficiency strategy for the region that each member authority undergoes some form of peer review over the current three-year planning period. If any FRA would like a review, please contact a member of the improvement team who will be able to help.

20. Improvement & Efficiency South East is the umbrella organisation which all improvement partnerships in the region report to. Each partnership is represented at board meetings by a member, in the case of SEFIP by the Chairman of the Improvement work area. Over the course of the summer, it is expected that a new chair will be elected via a secret ballot. For the first time, a vice-chair will also be elected.
 21. Supporting the Members' Board is a Chief Executives' group. Following successful lobbying by the Chairman of the Improvement work area, fire will now have a seat at this group. It is likely that the Chief Executive/Chief Fire Officer of Kent will be the normal representative at this group. Fire & Rescue will also be a member of the performance improvement group, which controls allocations of capacity building funding from this part of IESE strategy. The representative from fire is likely to be the Chief Fire Officer from the Isle of Wight.
 22. Contact has been made with SEFIP by the Regional Control Centre Director for information on the Local Authority Controlled Company to be made available on the SEFIP website. The SEFIP stakeholder group was keen to assist the Director as an interim position, on the expectation that in due course the RCC itself will wish to have its own registered domain name and presence on the internet.
- Human Resources – Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority and Training - Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Authority**
23. Work related to improving how FRAs deal with incidents involving water rescue culminated in a water rescue seminar hosted by HFRA. This brought together practitioners and providers of equipment to share good practice and ideas. A briefing note will be available on the SEFIP website soon.
 24. An event called 'Equality in the Dock' was put together by Hampshire FRA in partnership with SEFIP and Hampshire County Council. The event was open to all Fire & Rescue Services in the South East, local authorities, educational establishments and voluntary and community organisations in Hampshire. The focus of the event was to address the barriers of attitude, access, and discrimination faced by people from minority ethnic backgrounds, women, disabled people, people from the gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender communities, older and young people and due to their religious background or beliefs in all areas of employment. Importantly it also examined why it makes organisational sense to develop a diverse workforce and how this can be achieved. A briefing note on the outcomes is attached at **appendix 1** for Members' information.
 25. A final update on the diagnostic assessments of each FRA in relation to meeting level three of the equality standard for local government is elsewhere on this agenda.

26. The other important area of activity which is coming to fruition is the recruitment portal for the first stage of fire-fighter recruitment. Excellent work by Royal Berkshire has led to the development of a website which will manage fire-fighter recruitment in a much more efficient way by reducing expenditure and officer time used in the process. SEFIP funding has been made available to support the initial development and there is a very minimal ongoing cost which FRAs are asked to support. The benefits to FRAs are that a huge volume of paper-based activity will be removed from FRAs, along with real-time management information being produced.

- **Environment**

27. Video conference facilities have now been installed at Buckinghamshire and Kent, and are currently being installed at Isle of Wight and Hampshire's Rushmoor site. So far, using a model developed by SEFIP, it is estimated that this has saved nearly £6k in its first 3 months of use.
28. The first meeting of the environment work area was held on 19 September and focused on developing project plans for the coming period.

- **Procurement – Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority**

29. The Regional Procurement Strategy was approved in July 2008 and the first Strategic Regional Procurement Advisory Forum is to be held on 14 October 2008. A risk register has been developed and will be displayed on the SEFIP web site. All FRAs have agreed to use the IESE contract portal as a contracts data base and a standard tender evaluation model is in development and will be available along with the national fire appliance tender templates developed by the Regional Procurement Manager.
30. The first SE Regional Shared Service workshop was held at the Fire Service College on 1 August 2008 facilitated by the Head of Oxfordshire County Council Shared Service, building on the early discussions with Chief Fire Officers. This workshop identified the scope of shared services set out to build the agreement necessary to take the project forward to the next stage. A second workshop was held on 26 September 2008 to examine the options, enabling a report to be prepared for Chief Fire Officers on the potential ways forward.
31. The skills template has been circulated to all SE FRAs; this information will refresh the current skills matrix enabling skills gaps to be identified and generic training arranged.
32. Six FRAs have updated their procurement expenditure for 2007/08. These details will be consolidated and analysed to identify where collaborative working can generate savings.

- **Media and Communications – East Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority**

33. Following approval of the communication strategy key messages are being identified with lead officers on RCC, Response & Resilience, Community Safety and Equality & Diversity work areas. Planning has commenced for 4 RMB newsletters which focus on the 'joined up working' theme featuring the benefits of working together and capacity building.

34. The ESFRA Media & Publicity Officer is acting Chair of FirePro, the regional communication officers group, and the timetable for the media handling training has been established.
- **Regional Control Centre & Firelink – West Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority**
35. In the absence of detailed information from CLG and their supplier (EADS) the project team is considering how best to monitor and ensure consistency of FRS data migration work, and individual FRAs are continuing to develop their IT strategies. More information will be available at two workshops planned for late October; however, as there is still no firm timetable for CLG/EADS deliverables to FRAs, it is difficult to estimate the size of the task and progress.
36. The approaches for the delivery of out of scope activities and the potential for collaboration are under discussion and new ways of working are being developed in conjunction with the South East Response & Resilience Group to ensure safe and common working procedures.
37. The Firelink project is progressing with all control room installations complete (with the exception of those requiring C-Soft upgrades), and preliminary vehicle installation of up to 8 vehicles in each FRS. Confidence in the equipment installed is good, with voice quality reported as being excellent. Due primarily to paperwork delays, Milestone A has not yet been signed off. The implementation schedule continues to be somewhat unreliable and uncertainties over the joint (with FiReControl) implementation of Mobile Data Terminals may lead to more significant issues for FRAs than have been experienced so far.

IMPLICATIONS

38. At the end of August, the balance of expenditure by SEFIP stood at approximately £72k. All funding is allocated to projects, and assuming all projects spend their full allocation, there will be no carry forward for 2009/10. However, in reality, it is likely that some projects will slip across financial years or priorities will change. Therefore, there is flexibility to support new or emerging priorities, or to increase allocations to particular areas as the needs demand.

CONCLUSION

39. Members are asked to note the report and its appendix.