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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "John Bonney".

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Thank you for your letter of 18 January requesting feedback with regards to item 48/07 paragraphs 4, 6 and 7 from the South East RMB meeting on 10 October.

Taking the points in order from the minute:

Item 48/07 – para 4: Firelink

Several improvements have been made to Airwave's project management structures (for example a new top management team and the overall project team increased by 50 % at their own cost) that are expected to result in improved implementation within the regions and closer collaboration between the supplier, the regional delivery teams and the individual FRSs'.

Checking with my team here, we believe Cllr Murphy's comments refer to the costs associated with EMC testing of vehicles to specification 13. The implementation of Firelink includes testing the radio installation to ensure it meets with the appropriate standards (specification 5) at no cost to the FRS. However, Firelink implementation test strategy does not include EMC testing of vehicles to specification 13 (this testing was available free-of-charge from PITO but is now not available free-of-charge from the National Police Improvement Agency).

Item 48/07 – para 6: Pathway Group

On 24 October I wrote to Chief Fire Officers about the establishment of a Pathway Group. I wrote again on 21 December with the findings and recommendations of the Group.

The role of the Pathway Group (Les Byrom - LGA, Steve McGuirk - CFOA, Sir Ken Knight and myself) was to examine and scrutinise the proposed costs of providing a joint support for the services offered by the Organisational Development Centre at the Fire Service College and Firebuy and determine the FRSs priorities for 2008/09.

The Group recommended that FRAs be invited to contribute £17,200 each for 2008/09 to provide joint services to support the implementation of the Learning and Development Strategy and maintain Fire Gateway. These services would include providing a contact point for queries and help

for the National Firefighter Selection (NFS) tests, holding and issuing test materials and advice on aspects of ADCs. In addition CLG would be contributing £100,000 for some outstanding work around the NFS process, in particular the validation of the process and further work on impact assessment.

Item 48/07 – para 7: Fire Protection Policy

As we move into the new Spending Review period, in addition to the ongoing efficiency gains committed to fire prevention programmes, fire prevention has been considered as a pressure in the level of Revenue Support Grant provided for Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Home Fire Risk Check grant was only ever intended as pump priming and not an ongoing direct grant funding stream. Ministers expect to see Fire and Rescue Authorities target their resources based on risk and to ensure that their Integrated Risk Management Plans reflect those risks and the discussions they might have with partners in Local Strategic Partnerships as Local Area Agreements are confirmed for 2008/9 onwards. The revised Building Regulations and the supporting Approved Document B (Fire safety) came into force on 6 April 2007, with a new provision for sprinklers in certain residential care homes and tall blocks of flats over 30m, but not all new dwellings as this could not be justified.

In terms of non-domestic premises Approved Document B (AD B) as for some time provided for the installation of sprinklers for life safety purposes in many situations, such as in shops where the compartment is over 2,000m². The revised document also includes a new limit for the compartment size in single storey warehouses above which sprinklers should be provided.

AD B also suggests that sprinklers may be provided as a compensatory feature in a range of situations, such as in lieu of an alternative exit from tall houses, to allow for increased travel distances within buildings or reduced distances between buildings.

I hope the above clarifies the points raised in the minutes. If you require any further information please do not hesitate to ask.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Betts', with a stylized flourish below the name.

PETER BETTS