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To: SEFIP Board – 3 October 2012
Subject: PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN
Classification: Open

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY

This report sets out the progress made against each of the work areas in the SEFIP Business Plan 2012/15. There are three key issues in this report to which Members' attention is drawn:

- i. The successful award of grant funding for the Ways of Working project;
- ii. The plans to create an administrative hub for the Ways of Working project; and
- iii. The joint procurement of fire engines using a common specification.

CONCLUSION

Members are requested to:

- i. Note the progress made against the SEFIP Business Plan 2012/15

COMMENTS

Background

1. The current SEFIP Business Plan was agreed by the Board in April 2012. This report sets out the progress made against each of the work areas in the Business Plan.

PROGRAMME UPDATE

2. Members will recall that the Fire & Rescue Authorities [FRAs] in the South East benefited greatly from funding from the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership [RIEP]. However, this funding stream has now ended, and it was agreed that SEFIP should exit from the RIEP, which would allow FRAs in the South East to access any framework contracts it was creating without any risk of conflict of interests developing, nor any accusations of double voting due to the way that Members are nominated to Combined Fire Authorities by Constituent Authorities. In light of this, a final payment of unspent RIEP grant has been made to the RIEP, and our relationship with them has, therefore, formally ended from a partnership point of view.
3. However, on a business point of view, there are some useful framework agreements available to FRAs through the RIEP. For example, Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority sourced its contractors for its new station build programme through the RIEP's framework agreement, which was a much simpler procurement process.

PROGRESS AGAINST THE BUSINESS PLAN 2012/15

Improving interoperability and operational efficiency

4. The Ways of Working Collaborative Partnership, which currently includes thirteen Fire Authorities, has been awarded £1m grant funding from the government. £160k of this is ring-fenced to support alignment, with similar work being undertaken in the North West (Merseyside) to possibly create a national best-practice model. A number of Fire Authorities across the country have shown interest in this workstream, especially the national incident types which underpin the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
5. The grant provides sufficient funds in the remainder of this and the next financial year to support the forming of a full-time project team of seconded officers dedicated to developing SOPs and training packages. The grant will also support the foundation of an administrative hub based in Surrey, which will bring much needed capacity to help manage the project and create the document management and maintenance systems.

6. The inclusion of FRAs outside of the South East and the awarding of the grant has heightened the need for effective governance. A stakeholder group has already been set up with representative CFOs from the South East, to provide guidance to the project. This group is currently considering what governance arrangements need to be put in place, including the representation of Fire Authorities outside of the South East.
7. The CFOA National Operations Guidance Board is considering how the SOPs developed in the South East are taken into account as the national operational guidance is refreshed by London Fire Brigade.
8. All FRAs in the South East are in the process of reviewing or changing their approach to emergency call handling and mobilisation. Work has commenced to share specifications and processes to ensure that any new systems support greater compatibility and interoperability. A seminar was held in May 2012, which identified seven current mobilising projects and identified areas where achieving common approaches was essential. Following an LGA sponsored seminar in July 2012 to explore these issues, a meeting has been arranged with the two CFOA National Resilience secondees to explore any opportunities for support in this area. It is proposed to include a post dedicated to coordinating mobilising issues within the Core Ways of Working project team, possibly funded by mobilising grant allocations.
9. The standard template used for cross border mutual support arrangements (Section 13 and 16 agreements) has been refreshed to ensure that it adequately describes liabilities and protects Fire Authorities. A number of Fire Authorities in the South East have now signed new agreements and the template is being considered for adoption as the national model.
10. Fire Authorities across the South East coordinated resilience arrangements during the Olympics. The concept of operations proved to be effective with all Services reporting successful operations throughout the games period. De-briefs are now being held at local resilience forum level and feedback is being provided by individual Services to the national Olympic Committee. The South East Operational Response and Resilience Group (SEORRG) has agreed to conduct a workshop in the Autumn to ensure lessons learnt can improve individual and collective contingency and event planning.
11. Business continuity (BC) arrangements have been tested through a programme of peer reviews. The reviews compared business continuity arrangements against BS 25999 and the South East Framework Document. Overall, the FRAs in the South East are well advanced with BC planning. Further audits in the future will be considered to ensure arrangements continue to improve in line with the requirements identified in the National Framework.

EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Procurement

12. The project to jointly procure fire engines using a common specification where it is practical and efficient to do so is progressing well. A mini-competition was carried out using the Fire Service Consortium in May and contracts were placed in July 2012. Although on this occasion only 4 vehicles were purchased (Kent and West Sussex) it is estimated this has achieved a saving of £18-20K per vehicle. The exercise was considered to be a good pilot and lessons have been learnt for future contracts. Opportunities for jointly procuring fire engines in the future will continue to be explored.
13. A workshop was held in June 2012 to investigate the potential use of light response vehicles. Devon & Somerset FRS provided information about their recent project which has introduced light response vehicles. DSFRS took a needs-lead approach to the project which resulted in the introduction of a tiered operational response. The day identified that a number of SE FRAs were either intending to review or have reviewed incident response approaches, with a number interested in light response vehicles. Further research will be undertaken, including the sharing of research, and any opportunities for shared procurement of future vehicles will be explored.
14. The current contract for workwear is due to expire in September 2013. The contract has proved very successful with 25 Fire Authorities using the contract. This has resulted in a £10k volume rebate which will easily cover the legal costs for procurement of the next contract. The European tender process will commence in October 2012. West Midlands FRS is likely to join the South East consortium for this procurement which will increase the quantity by approximately 2,000 firefighters and should achieve further discounts.
15. In March 2012, SEFIP provided training on EU Procurement. The course provided an update on EU procurement legislation, identifying how the latest changes will affect local authorities. It also looked at latest case histories, new potential areas for challenge and changes in procurement law in the pipe line. The course was well attended by all nine SE FRAs, with participants from a range of disciplines, including procurement, transport, ICT and Fire Officers.
16. The Regional Procurement Manager is supporting Hampshire in the joint procurement of a new fire control solution with Dorset, Wilts and Devon & Somerset. He is also in contact with project managers of the Thames Valley and East/West Sussex projects and will provide procurement guidance as required.

Shared Services

17. West Sussex and East Sussex Fire Authorities continue to take every opportunity to share services where this brings efficiencies. Elsewhere, the focus has been on control and mobilisation, covered in detail above.

Equality and Diversity

18. All of the Fire Authorities in the South East are at a minimum of Level 3 of the Equality Standard or its equivalent under the new framework. As reported verbally at the last meeting, East Sussex has achieved Excellence. A sub group under Human Resources & Diversity Group continues to share best practice across the region. The primary focus has been supporting the development of the equality impact assessments for the Ways of Working project.

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Communication and shared learning

19. Kent Fire & Rescue Service is undertaking innovative research into how people behave when faced with a fire in their home. The approach being taken and the initial findings were shared with the SEFIP Board in April. SE CFOs agreed that their Services would participate in the research to enable a wider data set to be used. The results of the research are being shared with other Services through the South East Community Safety (Prevention) CFOA group and will help to inform strategy and delivery across all mains areas of the Service.
20. Although the research is in its early stages, the validity of the approach has been demonstrated, and the results so far are already giving some important indications of, and insights into, people's behaviour and motivations. The initial findings are already informing and assisting service delivery in Kent and being shared with the Prevention Group.
21. The third incident command seminar is due to be held on 5 November 2012. A briefing note advertising the event is attached at **Appendix 1** for Members' information.

Other projects

22. SEFIP has provided new video conferencing functionality to all Services. This has been provided at very minimal cost and will prove more efficient than maintaining the previous hardware. The system has already proved very useful, with a number of meetings being undertaken remotely, saving both time and travel costs.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

23. There is no longer any requirement to report to government on savings generated through collaborative working. However, a running list of savings will be maintained and reported to the April meeting of the Board. The intention will remain to maintain a return on investment ratio of at least 1:5.

CONCLUSION

24. Members are asked to note the report.