

North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board

BOARD MEETING

At a meeting of the **North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board**, held in the Authority Rooms, Tyne and Wear Headquarters, Nissan Way, Washington on Tuesday, 20 January 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor B. Forster
(In the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Carr, C.
Cooney, N.
Porely, P.E.
Renton, R.
Rickerby, L.J.

Smith, J.E.
Thompson, L.
Williams, M.
Wright, T.H.

IN ATTENDANCE

Bathgate, I.
Bennett, A.
Hindmarch, J.
Holmes, J.A.

Hesler, B.
Johnson, S.
Mallaburn, L.
Watts, P.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Forbes, N. Forbes, C. Magee and J. Reid.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor B. Forster, declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 10, as a Director of the North East Fire Control Company Limited.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board held on Tuesday, 16 September 2008, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record

4. RMB Audited Accounts for 2007/08

Mr. A. Emmerson, Treasurer to the Board, presented the report which informed members of the audited statement of accounts for the Regional Management Board (RMB) and sought approval of the final audited accounts for 2007/08.

Members noted that there had been no changes to the accounts which were approved by the RMB in July 2008.

RESOLVED that:

The final audited statement of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2008 be approved and the Issues Arising Report submitted by the Author be noted.

5. RMB Budget and Constituent Authority Contributions for 2009/10

Mr A. Emmerson, Treasurer to the Board, presented the report which sought the views of Members with regard to the construction of the Regional Management Board (RMB) budget for 2009/10 and the level of contributions required from each of the Constituent Authorities.

Constituent Authorities were asked to contribute £10k each to the RMB every year. The only expenditure charged directly from the RMB had been in respect of services provided by the treasurer and clerk, which had resulted in an underspend each year, culminating in a carried forward balance of £148k.

As there were no plans to spend from the RMB budget, other than money set aside for regional projects, it was suggested that the authorities should not make a contribution next financial year, 2009/10.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the basis for the budget for the RMB be approved;
- (b) no further contributions were required in 2009/10; and
- (c) the balance be carried forward to fund future approved regional projects.

6. REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP

The Board received a presentation from Martin Ryan, RIEP Director and Susan Johnson, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service. (attached to the signed minutes)

The report provided an update to members on the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and sought approval in relation to:

- FRA involvement in the governance of the programme.
- A Regional Leadership project for the RMB members and FRS Chief Officers.
- A statement of support to ANEC's work on the impact of the current economic recession on public services.
- Representation by the RMB on the Members Sounding Board for the RIEP programme.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Councillor B. Forster, Chair of the RMB, be nominated as the representative from the RMB, to attend appropriate ANEC meetings to ensure involvement of the RMB in the governance of the RIEP Programme;
- (b) the project outline for the Regional Leadership Programme be approved and delegate to Chief Officers, in consultation with the Chair, to finalise the project through to commissioning;
- (c) Councillor B. Forster, Chair of the RMB, be nominated as a representative from the RMB on the Members Sounding Board for the RIEP; and
- (d) Chief Officers be requested, in consultation with the Chair, to provide a statement of support to ANEC on the NE FRAs' contribution to addressing the issues associated with the economic downturn.

7. OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND PEER REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

Mr B. Hesler, Chief Fire Officer, Northumberland Fire and Rescue, presented the report which sought approval from the Regional Management Board to allocate up to £25k from the RMB budget balances to fund the training and accreditation of up to 24 peer assessors drawn from the four North East Fire & Rescue Services.

From April 2009 the performance assessment framework for all FRS's in England would change. The current assessment would be replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment and a Peer Assessment.

FRS's would be required to carry out a self assessment using the Operational Assessment toolkit which was currently being finalised. The Audit

Commission would require an external review of this self assessment to ensure that the operational performance of the FRA Service Delivery was robust. The Board noted that Peer reviewers could not audit FRA's within their own region.

24 Peer Reviewers were required for the North East Region, 16 officers and 8 members, who would be trained up to IDEA standards. The Board was advised that no funding was provided for training and there was no reduction in the Audit Commission charge.

It was estimated that reviews would require three days on site for examination of evidence, carried out by a team of 5 – two officers, one peer with a corporate or performance background, one elected member and a review manager from IDEA. It was noted that FRA's must engage in this process of operational assessment (Op A) with the alternative being a direct assessment by the Audit Commission.

It was expected that training would cost approximately £1k per person with a total cost of £24-25k for the region. It was suggested that the cost should be allocated from the RMB budget as there had been a large underspend.

In response to a question raised in relation to members training, the Board was advised that it would be arranged nationally at a charge per person. Further information would be reported to the Board as soon as it was received.

Authorities would be contacted and nominations for peer assessors would be sought. A member suggested that back bench members may be interested in taking up the role as members of the Board already had a heavy workload. It was agreed that members would need to be committed if they took on this role. The Board was advised that Members would be paid up to £300 per assessment.

RESOLVED that:

Up to £25,000 from the RMB budget balances, be approved, to fund a project to train and accredit up to 24 peer reviewers from the four NE Fire and Rescue Authorities.

8. RMB WORKSTREAM – OPERATIONAL RESPONSE COLLABORATION

Mr Alex Bennett, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which informed the Board of the need to formalise existing operational response collaboration as the fourth workstream that would be reported back to the members of the Board.

There were dramatic examples of collaborative working across the four fire authorities and neighbouring fire authorities in relation to mutual aid and flooding.

There was a need to formalise the work currently conducted on through Section 13 and 16 Mutual Aid agreements. Mutual Aid agreements were being refreshed imminently to reflect current risks which would be built on by examining future possible areas to extend collaboration.

It was proposed that this work would be considered by the existing NE Operational Response Group consisting of Senior Officers. The terms of reference would be amended to incorporate; current and future key areas of response collaboration.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the content of the report be noted; and
- b) the adoption of Operational Response Collaboration as the fourth reportable RMB workstream be approved and the role be allocated to Northumberland Fire Authority.

9. PFI PROGRAMME FOR THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE: ROUND 6 FEEDBACK AND NEXT STEPS ON INITIAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST, NEFRA 2 COLLABORATIVE PFI PROJECT

Mr Alan Holmes, NEFRA Project Director, in introducing the report stated that following the announcement of the outcome of the Round 6 Expressions of Interest (EOI's), three Fire and Rescue Authorities were identified as submitting EOIs. There were very strict criteria focussing on affordability and deliverability.

The Board was advised that the allocation of PFI credits was approximately 50% of the initial request for £119.5m. The three authorities were allocated; £30M to Surrey and Staffordshire and £60M to NEFRA 2.

The Board noted the next steps that needed urgent consideration and decision by Chief Officers and the Authorities/RMB, which included the agreement of allocation. As CLG had reduced the PFI credit by 50% of the level requested, it was agreed that each authority would assume a reduction of 50% of their apportioned expected PFI credits at EOI stage.

A common DVD would be used in all consultation. Design and Environmental Champions would be appointment to the project, which was welcomed by Members. There would be a Risk Manager with a risk register approach to the project.

In response to a query in relation to officer time, the Board noted that the £650k did not quantify officer time. Joanne Bell, representative from the Lead Authority would be appointed as the design champion; who had championed NEFRA 1.

Approval was requested for a relatively minimal amount of money to fund the preparation of the outline business case and guidelines of future costs, which would be reported back to the RMB.

The Board were advised that the three authorities would pay the cost of officer time, according to the capital expenditure. Some officers would spend full time taking the project forward. There was a shared liability on the project.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the round 6 PFI Project (NEFRA 2) to date be endorsed;
- b) the contents of the report, including the allocation of credits, be approved;
- c) the compilation of a mini Outline Business Case, for presentation at a future meeting of the RMB and submission to CLG, be approved;
- d) the appointment of advisors be delegated to the Chief Officers Board, up to submission of the mini OBC; and
- e) further reports as appropriate be received, detailing progress and any requirements to procure professional advice.

10. FIRE CONTROL PROJECT NORTH EAST REGION

At this point, Councillor Brenda Forster, Chair of the RMB, declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in the item as she was a Director of the Company.

The report provided the Board with an update on progress in respect of the FiReControl Project and the establishment of the Regional Control Centre in the North East for consideration by Members.

The Board were informed that the Minister for Fire announced a delay in the commencement of dates for the migration into the Regional Control Centre (RCC), of approximately 9 months.

The roll out order would remain the same with Tyne and Wear cutting over first in July 2010, Durham and Darlington in October, and Northumberland and Cleveland in November.

Whilst there was a substantial delay, there still remained a lot of outstanding work to do which would require a significant effort by all parties.

CLG had published the first part of the business case – the regional annex. Members noted that part two of the business case had been released by the CLG for full consultation, which would end on 27 February 2009. The responses would be considered by the Chair of the RMB.

The RMB members had been canvassed in relation to the delegate visit to the Minister of Fire. There would be 45 minutes available where members could ask questions in relation to timescales and cost implications for the process.

Performance standards would be applied for the three areas which would be set by the Minister and by the project itself. Members could comment on this when further consultation would take place later in the year.

There had been a number of changes on the national project Senior Management Team as well as within the Fire and Resilience Directorate. Shona Dunn had taken over from Peter Betts as Head of Fire and Resilience Directorate. Roger Hargreaves commenced in October as the National Project Director. The Board were advised that the new appointments were positive, more open and transparent, and believed in partnership working.

Following confirmation from CLG that they would meet the cost of the initial staff pool, recruitment and training had commenced for phase one and two, ensuring half would be in place by January 2009.

The Board were advised that the regional People Management Group had been established to facilitate the delivery of the HR change within each GRS and ensure successful TUPE transfers of staff to the Regional Control Centre. It was anticipated that TUPE transfers would formally commence at the start of 2009. Advice was being sought in relation to TUPE transfers due to the geographical area of the region.

RESOVLED that:

- a) the contents of the report be noted;
- b) the response to the formal consultation on the full business case be delegated to the Chief Fire Officers and the Chair of the RMB;
- c) the business case seminar proposed with senior officials from the CLG National Project Team be deferred;
- d) senior members of the CLG National Project Team be invited to attend a future Regional Management Board to meet with members; and
- e) further reports as appropriate be received.

11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that:

- (a) under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the Agenda as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and
- (b) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

Agenda Item	Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A
12	3

	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

12. REPORT REGARDING ROUND 6 PFI CREDITS

Mr. A. Holmes, the NEFRA Project Director, presented a report informing members about the Expressions of Interest, submitted on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authorities of Cleveland, County Durham, Darlington and Northumberland.

RESOLVED that the RMB endorse:-

- (a) the NEFRA 2 Project;
- (b) the collaborative authorities round 6: NEFRA 2 Project;
- (b) the delegation of authority to progress the administration and organisational issues; and.
- (c) the authorities decision to allocate appropriate expenditure.