

North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board

BOARD MEETING

At a meeting of the **North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board** held at Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Nissan Way, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear on Tuesday, 2 March 2010 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor B. Forster
(Chairman, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Cherrett, J.
Cooney, N.
Forbes, M.
Jones, B.

Magee, C.
Lindley, I.P.
Thomson, L.
Wright, T.H.

SUBSTITUTES

Thompson, J.A.

IN ATTENDANCE

Abbott, G.
Bathgate, I.
Bennett, A.
Capeling, T.
Chrisp, R.
Emmerson, A.
Hewitt, J.

Hindmarch, J.
Holmes, A.
Johnson, S.
Lilley, A.
McCletchie, C.
Stubbs, K.
Tilson, P.

A number of members from the constituent Authorities, who were not members of the RMB, were in attendance as observers.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors N. Forbes, P.E. Porley, L.J. Rickerby, G. Dunning and W. Woodhead.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors B. Forster and I. Lindley declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of any items relating to the LACC Board.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board held on Tuesday, 15 December 2009, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record.

4. NEFRA (1) Collaborative PFI Project – Progress Report – Construction and Post Service Delivery Phases

Members received an update from Ron Chrisp on the progress with the project to date. There had been some slippage due to adverse weather, but he was confident that this could be recovered.

Risks remained unchanged, work was ongoing on transfer of employees, a time capsule ceremony was being arranged and post delivery arrangements were being given close consideration. He also drew members' attention to the lead authority arrangements in section 8.0 of the report.

The Chairman thanked officers for their hard work.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the content of the report be noted; and
- (b) the Lead Authority arrangements from the point of service delivery be agreed as detailed in the report.

5. NEFRA (2) Outline Business Case

Alan Holmes presented the report and advised members about the submission of the OBC, which had met the deadline of 8 February due to the hard work of the representative authorities.

He highlighted the programme in section 3 of the report, which was demanding but achievable.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the submission of the OBC be noted;

- (b) the timetable for the immediate next steps in the Project Programme be noted; and
- (c) the organisation of an Open Day to bring the Project to the marketplace be approved.

6. NEFRA (2) Local Partnerships Gateway Review

Members were advised that the Project Board for NEFRA would consider the Report's recommendations and keep members informed of any risks or changes.

Ms Johnson advised that the major risks for NEFRA(1) were caused by circumstances beyond the control of any of the authorities or the RMB. Difficulties were caused by what was happening in the financial market generally. The RMB could only mitigate risks within their control. However if there were problems with issues such as PFI credits being withdrawn, there was very little that could be done to claw that back.

RESOLVED that the report be received, and RMB Chairs discuss with the Project Owner the "Actions to Consider" report and recommendations.

7. FiReControl Project North East Region – Project Update

The report provided an update on progress with the FiReControl project and the establishment of the Regional Control Centre in the North East.

John Hindmarsh referred to the National Audit Office review and the Select Committee hearing. The plan was still to go live in May 2011, which was a very tight time schedule.

The National Audit Office calculated the cost of cancellation as £8 million more than continuing with the project at the present moment in time.

Our region had submitted a memorandum to the Select Committee. This was a very balanced document and was available on the website shown at 2.1.2 of the report. John outlined the views of the FBU, CFOA, LGA, CLG and EADS. The FBU had been against the project from the beginning. The LGA had recently changed its position, and was now also opposed to the project. CLG and EADS continued to say that the project was deliverable for May 2011.

There was no date for the report of the Select Committee being produced, however members could anticipate the report being forthcoming by early April with the Government having two months to respond. This may result in problems with the Purdah period. He did not anticipate any response from the Government until after the election.

The CLG contract was out for consultation, which was due to end this week. Some concerns had been highlighted in the response.

Impact assessments would have to be undertaken. However, the plan remained for Tyne and Wear to go live by May 2011, with the other three authorities going live in

the latter part of 2011. All for Fire Authorities had commenced installing the station end of the project.

The Board had engaged consultants to look at business continuity issues. A report was being prepared for the full Board in July of this year.

Councillor Thompson queried whether there were any issues of concern around the IT requirements of the project and their effectiveness. John Hindmarch advised that this was being worked on now. A full network solution was not ready yet but should be available in its full version by October. It was hoped that a demonstration of the mobilising system could be given at the Fire Brigade conference the following week.

Ms Johnson asked if it was the view of the Regional Project Board that even if there was a fully working IT system by October, with a view to hitting the deadline for May 2011, the hand over would still not be feasible

Mr Hindmarch confirmed that, given the current situation, implementation by then did seem unlikely, but until the implications of the move to the Intergraph system and the data requirements for data terminals in cabs were clear, this could not be known for certain.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted and further reports be received as appropriate.

8. Feedback from the RMB National Chairs Meeting

The Chairman reported back from the National Chairs meeting in London on 8 February and advised that all members had agreed on the need for RMBs, particularly national RMBs. She circulated a letter from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Shahid Malik, which outlined responses to a number of questions the RMB had posed.

RESOLVED that the content of the report and the verbal update given by the Chairman be noted.

9. RMB Workstreams Update

The report was introduced by Iain Bathgate. Additional material had been circulated to members on the HR workstream.

Presentations on the four workstreams were made by relevant personnel.

Councillor Thompson asked for further detail on the cost of regional procurement which John Hewitt agreed to provide.

RESOLVED that the content of the report and the presentations on each workstream be noted.

10. Urgent Business

Report of the Treasurer – Review of the Risk Assessment and Effectiveness of the System of Internal Audit

The Chairman agreed that this matter could be dealt with as urgent business

The report informed the Regional Management Board of the outcome of the review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit including a review of risk, in compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations (England) 2003 as amended 2006.

Mr Emmerson confirmed that the system of internal audit, including assessed risks, was operating effectively, and advised that a further report would be made to members in due course.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

