

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 Thursday, 26 March 2009 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor B. Forster
(In the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Carr, C.
Cooney, N.
Fergus, J.
Forbes, M.
Magee, C.

Porley, P.E.
Renton, R.
Rickerby, L.J.
Williams, M.
Wright, T.H.

IN ATTENDANCE

Bathgate, I.
Emmerson, A.
Hayton, I.A.
Hesler, B.
Hindmarsh, J.

Holmes, A.
Johnson, Ms. S.
Tilson, P.
Watts, P.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, N. Forbes, J. Reid, J.E. Smith, R. Styring, and L. Thompson.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor B. Forster, declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 4, as a Director of the North East Fire Control Company Limited.

3. Minutes

Mr. A. Emmerson indicated that he had been in attendance at the meeting held on 20 January 2009 and it was agreed that the minutes be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board held on Tuesday, 20 January 2009, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record, subject to the aforementioned amendment.

4. FiReControl Project Update

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 noted that a number of members from the Regional Management Board, lead by Councillor Foster and Chief Fire Officer Brian Hesler had had a meeting with the Fire Minister on 21 January 2009. Appendix A of the report provided members with an overview of the meeting.

The Board were advised of progress made since that meeting. On 19 March 2009, The Minister had visited Belmont Regional Control Centre. The amount of work being carried out in the region had been recognised.

It was noted that the Business Case had been released and Appendix C to the report provided members with the response of the RMB Chairperson on behalf of the Board.

In relation to Business Continuity Planning it was noted that the Regional Project Board were currently addressing regional contingency planning issues and examining the extent to which contingency arrangements needed to be in place. A further report will be submitted to the RMB once the work has been fully developed.

The Board were advised that, in relation to staff consultation the FBU were taking part and the process had been productive to date. However it was stressed that consultation was still in the early stages;

The Initial Staff Pool was almost complete and it was noted that the second phase of recruitment for the Initial Staff Pool, had commenced bringing a total number to be recruited to 40. Members were advised that all costs for the Initial Staff Pool would continue to be funded by CLG.

Fire and Rescue Service Circular 12/2009, which provided further information about the second payment for the financial year 2008/09 was issued on 3 March 2009. Whilst the final version had not been seen it had been felt that the proposed finance was insufficient and, with this in mind, representations had been made.

In relation to time scales members were advised that there still had not been any sight of the “end to end” system. A considerable amount of work was ongoing in relation to data collection, however in respect of individual authorities cutting across, the system could not go live until such time as data was collected from neighbouring fire services (including those neighbouring fire services in Yorkshire and Humber, North West and Scotland).

It was felt it would be very challenging to meet the deadlines and Members acknowledged that staff in the region continued to work at full capacity with a view to meeting deadlines.

In response to a query as to how far advanced discussions were with Scotland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire, members were advised that discussion had taken place at regional level. The areas referred to were at the back of the programme of roll out and were not as actively engaged as the North East. Some concern was expressed that there was the potential for cross border working to be compromised.

It was recognised that there was a need to be fully engaged at the outset but there were difficulties in achieving full engagement with all regions.

A view was expressed that the framework was not sufficiently robust and the question was asked as to what Ministers intended to do as it was felt there was a need for the issue to be addressed centrally.

In response to a query as to whether or not CLG had taken advice in respect of a further delay related to the employment rights of control staff, members were advised that CLG would meet any costs related to redundancy and staff would have full employment rights.

In response the Board were advised that Ministers had indicated that they held weekly meetings to monitor and progress the programme. Members stressed that there was a need to be proactive and that software and hardware had to be fit for purpose. Members were assured that their concerns had been raised.

RESOLVED:-

- (a) the content of the report be noted;
- (b) further reports be received by the Board, as appropriate.

5. Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership – Capital Bid

Ms. S. Johnson, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, presented the report which informed members of a collaborative bid submitted by the four NE FR's into the Efficiency and Innovation Capital Fund allocated to the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP).

It was noted that the NE RIEP had been allocated £1.5m to support capital projects that promote efficiencies and a further £5m to support systems innovation. Notification of the available funding had been received on 20 February and the RIEP had requested projects, with an accompanying business case, that fit with the core aim of collaborative partnership working to be submitted by 1 March.

Following the findings from the review by Sir Michael Pitt into the response and impact of the floods in Summer 2007, nationally the FRS is working together to improve the capacity of the FRS to deal with flood response and rescue. NE Chief Officers had been of the view that the Efficiency and Innovation Fund presented an opportunity to collaborate on enhancing the provision of flood rescue assets and training across the region.

The bid, a copy of which was attached to the report as Appendix A, had been approved by the RIEP to go forward as a project under the Innovation strand of the capital fund.

Members noted that the outcome of the bid was expected at any time.

Contained within the bid was a list of resources required one of which related to Type B Swift Water Rescue Team (SRT) and a request was made for a presentation to members on the facility.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the project bid into the RIEP Efficiency and Innovation Capital Fund to enhance the flood rescue capability of the NE FR's be endorsed; and
- (b) a presentation of SRT be arranged for members of the Board.

6. 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 item 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
7	3
	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

7. NEFRA 1 COLLABORATIVE PFI PROJECT UPDATE

Mr. A. Holmes, the NEFRA Project Director, presented a report informing members about the progress with the NEFRA Project and most importantly to inform them about the potential financial implications as a result of the current economic situation and its potential effect on the costs of funding for the Project and on the overall costs to the NEFRA Authorities.

Members noted that meetings held had been very positive and that there was a unanimous view expressed that all involved wanted to close the project as early as possible, which would result in the provision of an excellent facility.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the contents of the report be noted and the actions taken by the Authority to date be endorsed; and
- (b) a verbal update and further reports as necessary, following the meeting with CLG/Treasury in order to provide an update on the position be agreed.

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....