

<p><b>Minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board</b></p>
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**24th September, 2004 at 11.00 a.m.**  
**at Shire Hall, Warwick**

**Present:**      **Representing Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority**  
Councillors G. Davis and Taylor  
**Representing Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority**  
Councillors Austin [Chair] Hartin and Lt. Col. Littlejohns  
**Representing Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority**  
Councillor D Davis  
**Representing Warwickshire County Council**  
Councillors Haynes, Hobbs and Shilton  
**Representing West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority**  
Councillors Hinton and Hogarth.

**Advisors:**    Chief Fire Officer Brown (Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service);  
Chief Fire Officer Doig (Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service);  
Chief Fire Officer Kerr (Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service);  
Chief Fire Officer Sheehan (West Midlands Fire Service);  
Chief Fire Officer O'Dwyer – (Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigade).

F N Summers (Clerk);  
L Bateman – (Treasurer);  
J Gregory (Legal Advisor).

**Visitors:**    Jean Cole, Government Office West Midlands;  
Roger Byrne, Imran Farooqi, Dermot Paddon and Marie Winkler of the FireControl Project National Team.

**Observers:**    Deputy Chief Fire Officers George and Maltby and Messrs Pellowe and Rotchell.

**Apologies:**    Councillors Banks, Bather and Eustace and Mrs Jebb.

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22/04     **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair referred to the difficulties in meeting timescales for responses to consultation documents issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister which did not always fit well with programmed meetings of the Regional Management Board or Fire Authorities.

The Chair announced that it was proposed to organise an away day to allow Board to discuss issues in more depth in an informal setting. The away day would be held on Tuesday, 26th October, 2004, the scheduled date for the next meeting of the Programme Board meeting.

23/04     **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 30th July, 2004 be confirmed as a correct record.

24/04     **End of Tranche Review 1**

The Board received a report setting out progress with the Modernisation Programme and the seven existing projects within the Programme for the period 30th July to 31st August 2004.

The Programme had recently been expanded by the addition of three new collaborative projects dealing with the Regulatory Reform Order, the Civil Contingencies Bill and Reducing False Alarms, for which the preparation of project initiation documents was in hand. Progress on these projects would be reported in the next End of Tranche Review.

The programme was on target in most of the key areas. Some slippage was anticipated on the Mutual Assistance, Human Resources Management and Fire Control Staff Redeployment projects, but this was not seen as critical to the overall success of the projects at this stage in the Programme. It was expected that momentum in the Programme would pick up following the recent resolution of the firefighters' pay dispute.

Reference was made to the need to keep staff informed about developments in the FireControl Project. It was suggested that the RMB needed to address how this might be achieved in a co-ordinated way across the region. The Chair suggested that this matter could be discussed further at the forthcoming away day.

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**Resolved** that the end of tranche report be noted.

25/04     **Approval of Regional Management Board Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders**

The Treasurer reported that joint working had already taken place between the Treasurers of the five constituent Fire Authorities to ensure that the working of the Regional Management Board (RMB) was underpinned by robust financial arrangements, and that mechanisms were in place to ensure that the financial impact of RMB working on each Fire Authority was addressed.

As part of these negotiations, discussions had taken place on the need to have a standard financial framework for all projects operating at a regional level. This would require each Project Manager to work to a standard set of Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders to ensure consistency of approach and economies in monitoring and audit processes.

It was recommended that the Board adopt standard Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders, which each Fire Authority would then be requested to adopt for project managers in its employ to adhere to whilst working on RMB projects.

**Resolved:**

- (1) that the Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders attached as an Appendix hereto be adopted by the Board;
- (2) that each constituent Fire Authority be recommended that any necessary exception to Standing Orders be made, and that the RMB Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders be adopted for project managers in its employ to adhere to whilst working on RMB projects;
- (3) that the ongoing joint working of the Fire Authority Treasurers to ensure that the financial consequences of RMB project working on the constituent bodies is addressed, be noted.

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26/04     **Correspondence Relating to the Regional Management Board**

The Clerk reported receipt of Circular 37-2004 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Circular announced the publication of a draft National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service in England. Regional Management Boards and Fire Authorities were invited to comment on the draft Strategy. The closing date for the consultation was 3rd December, 2004.

The Board received a presentation highlighting the main provisions of the draft Strategy and its anticipated impact on the Regional Management Board.

A number of areas of concern for Fire Authorities and Regional Management Boards were identified.

The draft Strategy highlighted the need to appoint consultants as a matter of urgency to undertake a regional procurement assessment, unless it transpired that this work could be undertaken in-house by suitably qualified staff.

**Resolved** that further discussions take place at the forthcoming away day on the draft National Procurement Strategy.

27/04     **Update on the Industrial Dispute over Fire Service Pay and Conditions**

The Board were pleased to note the successful resolution of the firefighters' pay dispute.

Reference was made to the services of Councillor Tina Jebb of the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority who had worked hard to seek a resolution of the dispute.

**Resolved** that the thanks of the Board be conveyed to Councillor Jebb for her part in the negotiations seeking to resolve the recent industrial action, and that she be invited to attend future meetings of the Board as an observer.

28/04     **Presentation by the FireControl National Team**

Officers of the FireControl National Team attended the meeting and

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gave a presentation on progress with implementation of this national project.

Members asked questions of the National Team on the following matters:

- What was being done to inform members of the public about the initiative, and to allay any concerns in the transitional period;
- Issues relating to recruitment, retention and union membership of call centre staff;
- The financial impact of the proposals on Fire and Rescue Authorities;
- The robustness of project management processes for national modernisation initiatives.

The Chair thanked the members of the national team for attending the meeting and invited them to make a further presentation to the Board in due course. Members would have the opportunity to discuss this matter further at the forthcoming away day.

(Meeting ended at 1.10 p.m.)

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Contact Officer: Georgina Wythes</i> <i>Democratic Services Unit</i> <i>Sandwell MBC</i> <i>0121-569 3791</i></p>
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