



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 25 February 2011

Purpose of Report:

To seek approval from Members for the disestablishment of the Regional Management Board and the re-adoption of the six functions delegated by the Fire Authority.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The government published its White Paper, “Our Fire and Rescue Service” in July 2003 and the draft National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service in November 2003. Paragraph 4.17 of the White Paper and 2.19 of the draft Framework detailed the expectations of the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), for the establishment of nine Regional Management Boards to be responsible for the implementation of key aspects of the Fire Service agenda. This has been enforced through subsequent variations of the National Framework.
- 1.2 The East Midlands Regional Management Board (RMB) was established as a joint committee of Derbyshire Fire Authority, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority, Lincolnshire County Council, Northamptonshire Fire Authority and Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority, with effect from 1 April 2004.
- 1.3 The Board was formally constituted by a written agreement dated 8 April 2003, signed by all five FRAs, which also included specific delegation for six key functions and policy areas. These were:
 - Ensuring resilience to emergencies, especially potential chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack.
 - Specialist or common services, where appropriate, such as fire investigation.
 - Establishing regional control rooms.
 - Introducing regional based procurement or procurement to National Standards.
 - Developing regional strategies and delivery.
 - Introducing regional personnel management and human resources management functions.
- 1.4 On 28 July 2010, the Minister for the Fire and Rescue Service, Bob Neill MP, announced that the current government would no longer be enforcing certain aspects of the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services. One of these elements was the requirement for the provision of RMBs.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 As a consequence of the Minister's announcement, representatives of the Fire and Rescue Authorities on the RMB tasked the Chief Fire Officers of the region to report back on current work and identify a path for the dissolution of the RMB. During this period it was also announced by the Minister that the Regional Control Centre project would be closing down.
- 2.2 On 20 January 2011, the RMB met and considered a report from the five Chief Fire Officers that proposed dissolving the RMB in its current format, but put forward a proposal for the establishment of an East Midlands Fire Forum, where collaborative working under the principle of a Lead Authority model could be progressed. This would also ensure that the Services would meet the Minister's expectations of information sharing and identification of 'best practice'.
- 2.3 The report also identified how the existing work streams could be either maintained or closed down as appropriate. This included the Joint Partnership Forum which had provided a single point of engagement with trade unions over project work across the region.
- 2.4 Having considered the report, the members of the RMB agreed unanimously to the dissolution of the Board and to the establishment of a Regional Forum. An indicative date of 7 April 2011 has been identified as when the new body can meet and commence its work. A further report will be brought to the Fire Authority as to the agreed terms of reference in due course.
- 2.5 The intended date for the dissolution of the RMB is 31 March 2011. However, before this can be agreed there are some formalities that must be achieved before the RMB can cease its work.
- 2.6 At its inception, the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority agreed the delegation of the six functions as listed in Paragraph 1.3 above. Therefore before the RMB can be dissolved, the Authority must agree to take back responsibility for these specific areas.
- 2.7 It is important to update the Fire Authority on the specific status of this work so that an informed decision can be made.

Resilience

- 2.8 In terms of the objectives set by the resilience work stream, much of this has now been concluded. The New Dimension asset programme was delivered through this project and Communities and Local Government (CLG) are now closing down any legacies. There are some outstanding issues regarding the incident command vehicles, but Nottinghamshire is directly involved with CLG and have an Officer seconded to the project. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has structured itself to engaging within the Regional Resilience Forum and the Local Resilience Forum. Re-adopting

responsibility within this area will present minimal risk to the Fire Authority and it is recommended that this is approved.

Common Services

- 2.9 In truth there has been some significant successes in this work stream, and the Services involved will ensure that the right procedures and protocols remain. For example, there is a joint funded regional approach to fire investigation managed by Derbyshire, there is an implementation currently taking place which involves a common financial system for Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. With the proposal for the RMB to morph into a Fire Forum incorporating collaboration and joint initiatives, it is unlikely this work will suffer and it is more likely that it will be enhanced. Therefore by agreeing to take this back, the Authority will not be affected adversely.

Regional Control Centres

- 2.10 Following the announcement by the Minister on 20 December 2010 this work is now being formally drawn to a close. There are implications for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service which will be subject to further reports which will be presented to the Fire Authority in due course.

Regional Personnel and Human Resources Function

- 2.11 Due to the nature of the role of human resources within any organisation, progress within this work stream was limited. Some early collaboration on policy formulation and specific disciplines, such as health and safety, did bring around some benefits. However, each of the Services' human resources functions largely operate independently and have in place infrastructures to support their own unique organisation. Therefore there will be no transitional or long term implications of the Service taking back any delegations with respect of human resources and personnel functions.

Regional Training

- 2.12 Significant progress has been achieved with regard to this reference, particularly in the areas of recruitment and selection, assessment and development and tests of future potential. There is now an established network within the region of training officers and staff which is likely to continue. The concept of partnership working within the training arena is something which will be key if all Services are to maintain their standards whilst meeting economic challenges. Training has already been identified as an area where the new Lead Authority concept will work well and therefore the RMB implications will be minimal.

Regional/National Procurement

- 2.13 The concept of the benefits of regional procurement were largely based around the concept of Firebuy and the provision of national contracts. With the government announcing the closure of Firebuy there are a number of actions currently taking place, not least the moving of national contracts to

Lead Authorities wishing to take them on. Whatever the solution the principle of collaboration has been key to Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's approach in obtaining best value and the Service believes it should not be restricted regionally to its own options. Therefore this element will not present any risks to the Authority moving forward and may offer greater opportunity.

Summary

- 2.14 On the basis of this assessment it is therefore recommended that Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority agree to the formal dissolution of the RMB and also to taking back those areas delegated in 2004 when the RMB was first formed. It is also recommended that the Fire Authority support the principle of an East Midlands Fire Forum, which will work under the principles of collaboration as identified by the Minister in his letter to Fire and Rescue Services on 20 October 2010.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority's contribution to the RMB in 2010/2011 was £111,134. A review of all of the existing financial commitments of the Board is being undertaken. The financial liabilities of the Board cannot be accurately determined until the future direction of all projects is agreed as there are contractual and staffing implications and possible redundancies to consider which the Board will be required to fund.
- 3.2 It is therefore anticipated that the already agreed contributions for 2010/11 will be required in full and 'cash' savings from the dissolution of the Board will occur in the 2011/12 financial year. It is hoped that all of the necessary work will be concluded by 31 March 2011, so that any surplus funds can then be returned to the five individual Services.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is already dealing with significant human resources implications arising out of the closure of the Regional Control Centre project which has the potential to result in up to eleven staff redundancies. There are limited employment issues which fall directly on the Service as a result of the other work streams, although there will have to be collaboration on posts through the RMB legacy.
- 4.2 It is hoped that the human resources impact can be as minimal as possible, although further redundancies over the next two years cannot be ruled out.
- 4.3 In respect of learning and development there will have to be a re-assessment of the levels of engagement within neighbouring Services and in what areas. For example, it is highly unlikely that there will be significant recruitment

across the region over the next two years, although there will still be a requirement for staff development to ensure operational availability.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There has been significant collaboration in recent years regarding equality and diversity issues between the Services, not least in respect of recruitment and retention. Careful assessment will be undertaken so that no one sector of the organisation will be disproportionately affected.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 As the Minister announced in July 2010 that he will not be enforcing the provision of RMBs, then the need to comply with that element of the Framework is reduced.
- 7.2 Although the current Framework is in place until December 2011 at the latest, and is produced under the provisions of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, there is little risk to the Service.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The risk management implications of the closure of the RMB are largely laid out within the content of this report. By putting in place a correct extrication strategy and dealing with the legacy issues appropriately, then it is felt that these will not present a significant risk to the Fire Authority.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members agree to:

- 9.1 The dissolution of the RMB.
- 9.2 The taking back of the delegated responsibilities as identified in Paragraph 1.3 of this report.
- 9.3 To engage with a Regional Fire Forum on the principles of collaboration and joint working.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER