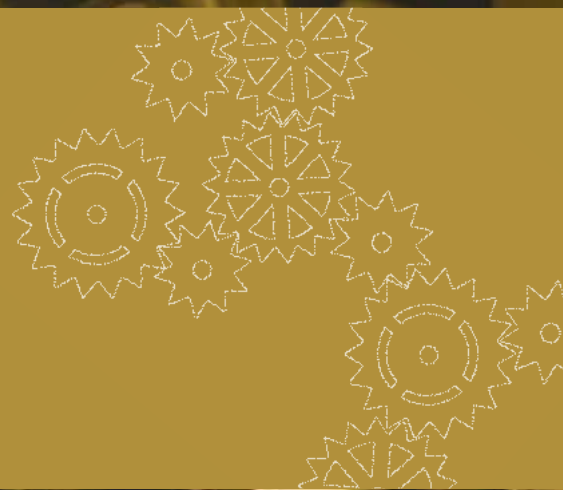


South East Fire and Rescue Services'
Regional Management Board

BUSINESS PLAN
2007/10



CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to introduce the second formal business plan for the South East Fire & Rescue Services' Regional Management Board (RMB). Over the last two years, the south east region has delivered much of which it can be proud. Consistent policies across the region have been introduced in relation to grievance and discipline. Good practice guides for community fire safety and working in partnership have been produced and appear to have been well received. We have also completed a review of training provision across the South East.

We have also actively lobbied government on behalf of constituent authorities and made plain our concerns in relation to the regional control centre. We continue to be concerned that we have not been able to see the full business case, which means we are not able to test the financial savings we should be achieving through the move to a resilient regional control centre. Nevertheless, we are committed to making the best of the transition period for our existing control room staff, in a time of upheaval for them.

The aim of this plan is to set out how the RMB will meet the expectations of the government, over the period 2007/10, and the improvements or efficiencies projects will deliver. I believe it represents a challenging programme of activity for the year which will drive the region forward. The Board has also taken the opportunity to set for the public and our stakeholders clear priorities for the coming years. These are the projects which are critical to the success of the Board, and will require all constituent authorities to continue to work together to achieve them.

Cllr Michael Cartwright

Chairman – SE Regional Management Board

ARRANGEMENT OF THE BOARD

The RMB was established in 2004 by the nine Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in the South-East; Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Royal Berkshire, Surrey & West Sussex. Its membership comprises the Chairman of each of these authorities. The Chair of the RMB is appointed annually and is currently Councillor Michael Cartwright (Hampshire). Clerking services are provided by East Sussex.

The work of the RMB is divided into eight work streams. The work streams are:

- ◆ Community Safety
- ◆ Human Resources
- ◆ Improvement
- ◆ Media and Communications
- ◆ Procurement
- ◆ Regional Control and FireLink
- ◆ Resilience
- ◆ Training

INFLUENCES ON THE RMB

A number of influences can be identified in relation to the RMB:

- ◆ **National Framework**

The government expresses its expectations of the fire and rescue service in the **National Framework**.

Its expectations as set out the current framework are that Regional Management Boards should:

*'..... deliver **improvement** in the Fire and Rescue Service. They must have clear aims and objectives and delegated powers that are appropriate to those aims and objectives.'*

'...be able to demonstrate continuing and measurable progress towards meeting the requirements in each of the key areas... and that they have the capacity – in terms of both resources and expertise – to deliver in those key areas.'

There is much in the National Framework that all FRAs believe will further the role of the service and lead to better outcomes for the public. However, the Board will ensure that its concerns in relation to the fire modernisation agenda are raised with government as appropriate.

◆ Regional Government Offices

The work of the regional government offices [in this region the Government Office for the South East (GOSE)] drives a significant portion of the business of fire and rescue authorities. For example, it leads on the civil resilience agenda. Historically, government offices also provided the role of business change manager to support FRAs implement the modernisation agenda, although this post has now been deleted.

◆ Centre of Excellence

As part of changes announced by the government in the recent **white paper**, the role of administering



The South East Region

improvement partnerships at a regional level has transferred from the regional government offices to the relevant Centre of Excellence [in the case of the south east, the South East Centre of Excellence (SECE)]. Under these new arrangements, SECE also act as the gatekeepers to the capacity building fund to which the RMB made a successful bid in 2006. At a national level the government is withdrawing from central control of improvement funding. This is an example of the government allowing local government the freedom to manage its own affairs without central control, which was also alluded to in the white paper and subsequent Bill.


The intention of the centres of excellence is to support the delivery of efficiencies across local government, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, particularly in the areas of non-operational procurement and corporate services. They also provide funding for some efficiency projects.

Other organisations such as the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Local Government Association (LGA) also remain key players in the improvement agenda.

◆ Local Political Geography

There are three different types of fire and rescue authority in the South-East. Buckinghamshire, Kent, Hampshire, East Sussex, and Royal Berkshire are Combined Fire Authorities; Surrey, Oxfordshire, and West Sussex are County Council fire authorities. The Isle of Wight is part of the Island's unitary authority. Furthermore the South-East is the largest government region, and the one with the weakest regional identity. This influences the degree to which working regionally is appropriate and there will be occasions where sub-regional solutions may need to be adopted to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.





Aim and Objectives

The aim of the South East Fire and Rescue Services' Regional Management Board remains as:

'to optimise collaborative working to achieve savings, efficiencies and economic benefits, making the communities of the Region safer through providing efficient, cost effective and economical emergency services, without compromising local considerations, in line with recommendations of the National Framework.'

The RMB's objectives are to:

- ◆ maintain the individual political accountability of the constituent authorities of the RMB;
- ◆ deliver effective outcomes from issues arising from the National Framework;
- ◆ capitalise on collaborative opportunities outside the National Framework;
- ◆ manage the work of the RMB using appropriate techniques, at a level commensurate with the scale of the project; and
- ◆ publicise its achievements and raise its profile when appropriate.



Priorities

The RMB's key priorities for 2007/10 are to:


- ◆ maintain the individual accountability of constituent Fire and Rescue Authorities, and their ability to meet local risks through

Integrated Risk Management Plans;

- ◆ continue to support the management of the transition from local to regional control centres and transfers arrangements for control staff as far as is reasonably practicable;
- ◆ raise the profile of the Regional Management Board to ensure that it is positioned to access funding available at a regional and sub-regional level;
- ◆ harness the work of the procurement work stream to drive efficiency across the region in procurement and shared services; and
- ◆ improve the region's performance against the equality standard for local government by December 2008 to level 3.


An exception is the Regional Control Project, which is run according to a methodology closely defined by the government.

Programme management facilities are provided by Kent Fire and Rescue Service, who provide access to a team with a broad range of roles and responsibilities. This gives a robust core to support the increasing work-load of the RMB.



Programme Organisation

The programme has been established to cover the key areas identified by the National Framework. Each project has been allocated to a lead Authority, and an elected member. The Chief Officer of each corresponding Authority acts as the principal adviser to the work stream.



Programme Management

The programme management arrangements adopted by the RMB are appropriate to the scale of the projects being delivered. Whilst the mechanisms are compliant with the principles of Prince2, there are few projects which require more than a simple project management approach.

Previous work stream activity.

After operating for two years, this is an appropriate time to take stock of progress and the way forward, in the light of experience. The intention of this plan is to capture those packages of work that are critical in moving the Board forward. Some projects have moved up in priority, meaning that previous commitments may now be less urgent and will be progressed as opportunities arise. Progress will be noted against these projects as this document is rolled forward in subsequent years.

In June 2006, it was agreed that work streams should be realigned to reflect current issues and the completion of one of the key work streams. It has become clear, since this realignment, that Community Safety activity is not well reflected on a regional basis. In line the 2004 Act, it is right that the RMB takes a strategic view of community safety at a regional level, and should receive reports relating to it. In light of this, a new work stream has been added for the 2007/08 business year to drive this area of activity.

Managing Risk

It is important that as the Regional Management Board conducts its business it is cognisant of the business risks it may encounter in delivering projects. It is the responsibility of the lead officers on each work stream to identify and manage risks to project success, and to make appropriate reference to these in the project plans developed for each area of activity.

The Improvement Team will over the coming business year continue to develop the approach to managing business risks across the region, at a level appropriate to the needs of the board and scale of the projects being undertaken.


Equality and Fairness

It is the responsibility of constituent FRAs to ensure that equality and fairness implications of projects are considered. Under the Race Relations Act 2000, each FRA must have in place mechanisms which allow it to ensure that adverse impact is not caused by proposals put forward. Impact assessment is included on the standard template for RMB reports. Members will ensure that impacts in relation to equality and diversity are sufficiently covered in papers they consider at Board meetings.

In case of a query or comment...

The document is divided into the eight regional work streams. Each section begins with a review of the previous year. Following this the plans for the coming year are presented.

If you have a query in relation to this Plan please contact one of the Improvement team – contact details are shown at the end of the plan.



Human Resources

Achievements to date

A regional human resources strategy has been produced, and individual FRAs are in the process of reporting this strategy to constituent bodies to embed it at local level. As the strategy is a high-level framework, with little that is contentious, the work stream is now working on implementation and support for constituent authorities.

The capacity building bid in relation to assisting all FRAs in the South East meet level three of the equality standard by 2008 has progressed well. Authorities will each receive consultant support during the coming financial year in relation to the equality standard project, which will also deliver an action plan which authorities will need to put in place and resource to ensure success.

Regional policies on Assessment Development Centres (ADCs) are being developed at the current time, which compliments previous work on common grievance and discipline policies. A capacity building fund bid in relation to supporting the implementation of National Firefighter Selection (NFS) and ADC processes has been approved. This will include the use of shared expertise and the application of consistent standards and processes, enabling FRAs to continue to develop IPDS across the region, enhancing the investment made in staff development and assisting in reaching Members' aspirations in relation to diversity.


The Regional Coordinator will build upon existing agreed, harmonised policies and procedures and ensure that participating Authorities are supported in meeting their individual ADC and Firefighter Selection needs. This will include a web based service providing information on scheduled ADC and recruitment events, enabling sharing of resources and an opportunity to identify available slots for candidates. This will bring a consistent approach to the region and will include a Quality Assurance programme for all ADC and NFS activities.

Further areas for development will include regional procurement of ADC and NFS components aimed at achieving optimum value for money in this key part of the personal development process.

Although each authority will implement local or shared ADCs at Supervisory and Middle management levels a regional strategic ADC will be scheduled for the autumn of 2007. This will be the first in a rolling programme of events at this level and will enable a fully harmonised approach and a cost effective service for authorities who need to identify potential candidates for the most senior posts.

Aims for 2007/2010

- ◆ **Equality & Diversity:** improving performance across the region in meeting the equality standard for Local Government - Using capacity building support to fund a gap-analysis of FRAs to assist them to meet the level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by December 2008;
- ◆ **Development and Implementation of National Firefighter Selection and Assessment and Development Centre processes** - this project will develop, as part of the Regional HR strategy, a collaborative approach to the implementation of the National Firefighter Selection Tests and the Assessment and Development Centre processes. It also build leadership capacity across the region, and continue to develop and improve recruitment processes to deliver efficient and effective outcomes for South East FRAs.



Training

Achievements to date

The principal outcome from the training work stream has been the regional review of training. External consultant support was used to consider the form and function of training delivery across all nine FRAs in the region, with a view to seeking efficiencies. The review of training was considered by the RMB at its meeting in October. An implementation plan is currently being developed and is reflected in the aspirations for the coming year, supported by capacity building funding.

Following an extensive selection procedure, a contract has been successfully let for training for technical fire safety staff on a regional basis. This has delivered significant cost savings to FRAs in the south-east compared to previous working arrangements.

Aims for 2007/2010

- ◆ Learning and Development Strategy - This project will take forward the development of a learning and development strategy for South East FRAs, concentrating initially on:
 - Stage 1 Fire-fighter development
 - Centres of Excellence
 - The implementation of the training costing model
 - E-learning





Achievements to date

The South-East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) was formed in January 2006 as a vehicle to allow the RMB to apply for Capacity Building Funding. This bid was successful and the partnership now has a broad role of coordinating regional improvement activity across all work streams, as well as seeking new and innovative practice, and supporting Member and officer development programmes. It has produced several newsletters which have been circulated to Members of the RMB, Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) and work stream leads, as well as influential colleagues at regional and national government level.

As part of the remit of 'environmental scanning', the Improvement Partnership has actively sought new forums from which to obtain and also share good and innovative practice, such as the Inter-Authorities Group. The partnership is also beginning to plan the next bid for improvement support from government, especially in the context of issues arising from the white paper for local government and the subsequent Bill.

Aims for 2007/2010


- ◆ **Facilitation and shared learning: Web-site -** This project will develop a web-site on which innovative practice can be shared, work stream progress and success can be highlighted, and RMB agendas and minutes can be made available. It will be accessible

to all South East RMB authorities, and publicised to the wider local government family

- ◆ **Peer challenge and review -** This project will work with the IDeA and others on building opportunities for Members and officers using either existing training and development courses or bespoke packages developed with providers.

This project will also deliver in partnership with the IDeA and others a peer review capability in the region. This is a key part of the future of performance assessment for FRAs arising from the Audit Commission's revised framework





Media and Communications

Achievements to date

A communications plan was agreed by the RMB in June 2005. Although a good start, it requires revision to take account of experience and significant change to the work of the RMB. It needs to ensure that the Board is able to communicate its successes and concerns to maintain public confidence, and ensure that it is well regarded by relevant stakeholders.

Briefing notes are regularly produced which share knowledge and learning with SE FRAs. These are helpful in ensuring that key messages are shared across the region, and will be continued.

Aims for 2007/2010

- ◆ **Communications strategy** - This project will develop a robust communications plan for the RMB, building on the existing strategy, allowing messages to the media to be managed controllably, as the profile of the RMB raises. It will then deliver the communications plan as the year progresses
- ◆ **Website** - This project will develop a business case for the delivery of a single electronic service delivery platform for all FRAs in the South East for elements of activity such as e-learning

Procurement



Achievements to date

The region remains supportive of the principle of FireBuy as a route to driving efficiency savings across the fire and rescue service, and will monitor closely the progress that FireBuy makes towards achieving this. The procurement work stream has been actively working with FireBuy on several key projects. The Alternative Risk Transfer (ART) project is continuing, and has the potential to generate significant savings for participating FRAs, a number of which are within the region. The RMB also looks forward to the successful conclusion which meets the needs of all Fire and Rescue Authorities, of the integrated clothing project.

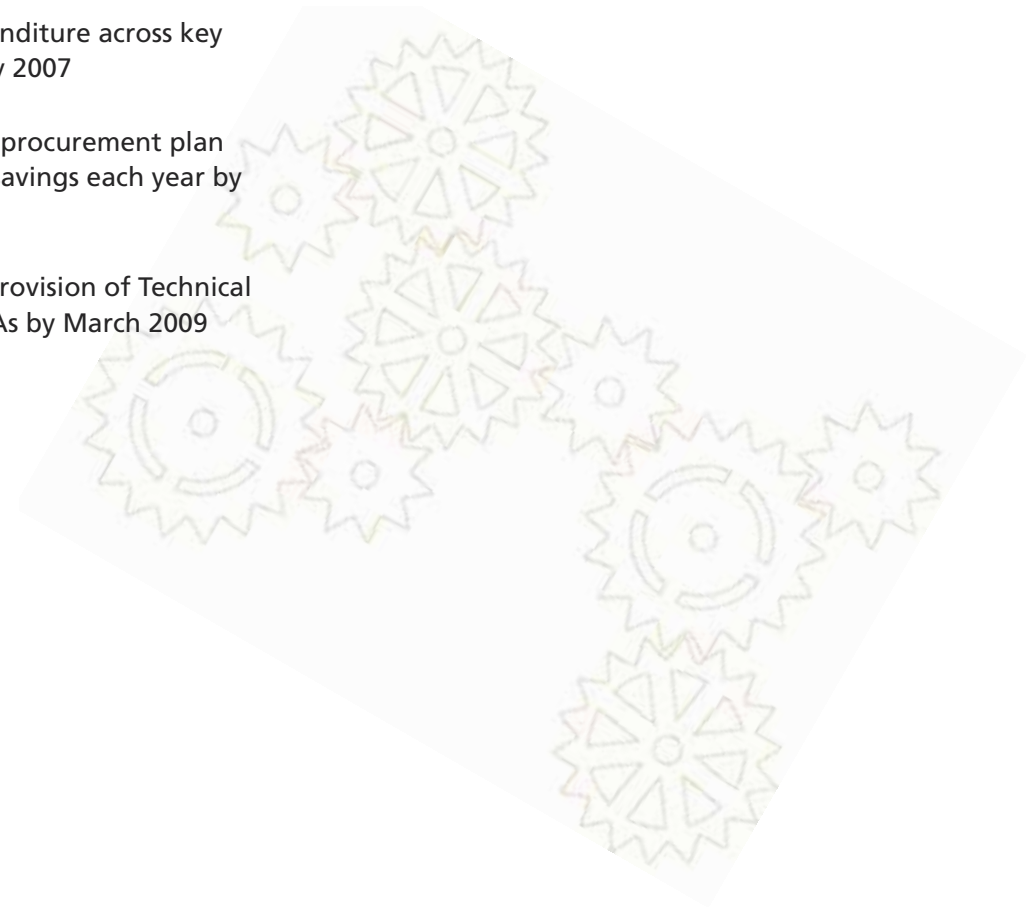
A Regional Procurement Manager has now been appointed. The development of an annual procurement plan with targets and savings is underway. Progress against the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government is good, and a number of items have been met. Outstanding items will be delivered by the Regional Procurement Manager as part of their action plan. A procurement skills needs analysis will be completed next year, and a package of training will be developed as part of this project.

Each FRA in the South-East has been given access to the Bluelight contract portal, which will be funded by FireBuy for a period of three years. This will allow FRAs to evaluate the portal as a method of achieving significant savings when inviting companies to tender for work. Its benefits are that it allows FRAs to create, publish and manage the

tendering process electronically. It also broadens the supplier pool available to FRAs. Conversely, the process will widen the availability of local suppliers to potential customers outside their immediate area.

Aims for 2007/2010

- ◆ Conduct a skills audit of key procurement staff and Members by March 2008
- ◆ Lead on analysis of expenditure across key headings by FRAs by July 2007
- ◆ Produce a rolling 3-year procurement plan setting out targets and savings each year by November 2007
- ◆ Lead a review into the provision of Technical Services within the 9 FRAs by March 2009





Resilience

Achievements to date

The resilience work stream has closed a number of its planned activities for the business year. For example training on Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) has been delivered by FRAs, along with mass decontamination training.

Future plans are to ensure that resources (staff and appliances) are used effectively across the region, whilst maintaining the political accountability of the constituent FRAs. This means that opportunities to look at cross-border working arrangements, location of non New Dimensions equipment, and the use of incident command level four staff will be taken as they arise.

Aims for 2007/2010

- ◆ **Improve the use of specialist resources on a regional basis** – Phase 1 - Will record and map the locations of specialist resources and assets [outside New Dimensions equipment] across the region and share this information with FRAs. This information will be reviewed in order to identify options for improving regional resilience, ensuring the effective deployment and standardising the descriptions of specialist resources.

Phase 2 - Will produce 4 regional response mobilising plans to enhance regional resilience and support for campaign

incidents involving the deployment of specialist resources.

- ◆ **Improve the use of specialist uniformed staff on a regional basis** – this two-stage project will seek to improve regional resilience through developing a protocol for cross-border sharing of specialist and senior officers.
- ◆ **Assess annual IRMPs of constituent FRAs for opportunities to improve cross-border service delivery to the public** – this project will assist in the implementation of the RCC in 2009, by drawing out from IRMPs opportunities to improve cross-border working arrangements and operating procedures to ensure interoperability.
- ◆ **Develop a regional approach to business continuity planning** – this project will agree on a regional basis the areas which need to be considered in developing business continuity plans for FRAs in the South East.



Community Safety

Achievements to date

Improving the safety of the public is a key element of the work of Fire and Rescue Authorities, and the requirement to provide safety information is part of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the National Framework.

Work streams were realigned for the 2005/06 business year, which led to the closure of the Common and Specialist Services work stream. Since this time, it has been recognised that community safety is an area where FRAs would benefit from sharing good practice between each other. For this reason, the community safety work stream has been added to the RMB's work plan for 2007/10.

The intention of the projects set out in the plan are to give a solid base from which further projects can flow. If progress is quicker in some areas, this may give opportunity for further projects to be undertaken by the work stream.

Aims for 2007/2010

- ◆ **To promote the installation of domestic and non-domestic sprinklers** - This project will use an existing procurement exercise to share outcomes and learning from a media campaign around the installation of automatic fire suppression systems, using innovative methods.

- ◆ **Road Safety Promotion** - This project will seek opportunities throughout the year to share good practice across the region in relation to road safety.



Regional Control Centre and Firelink

Achievements


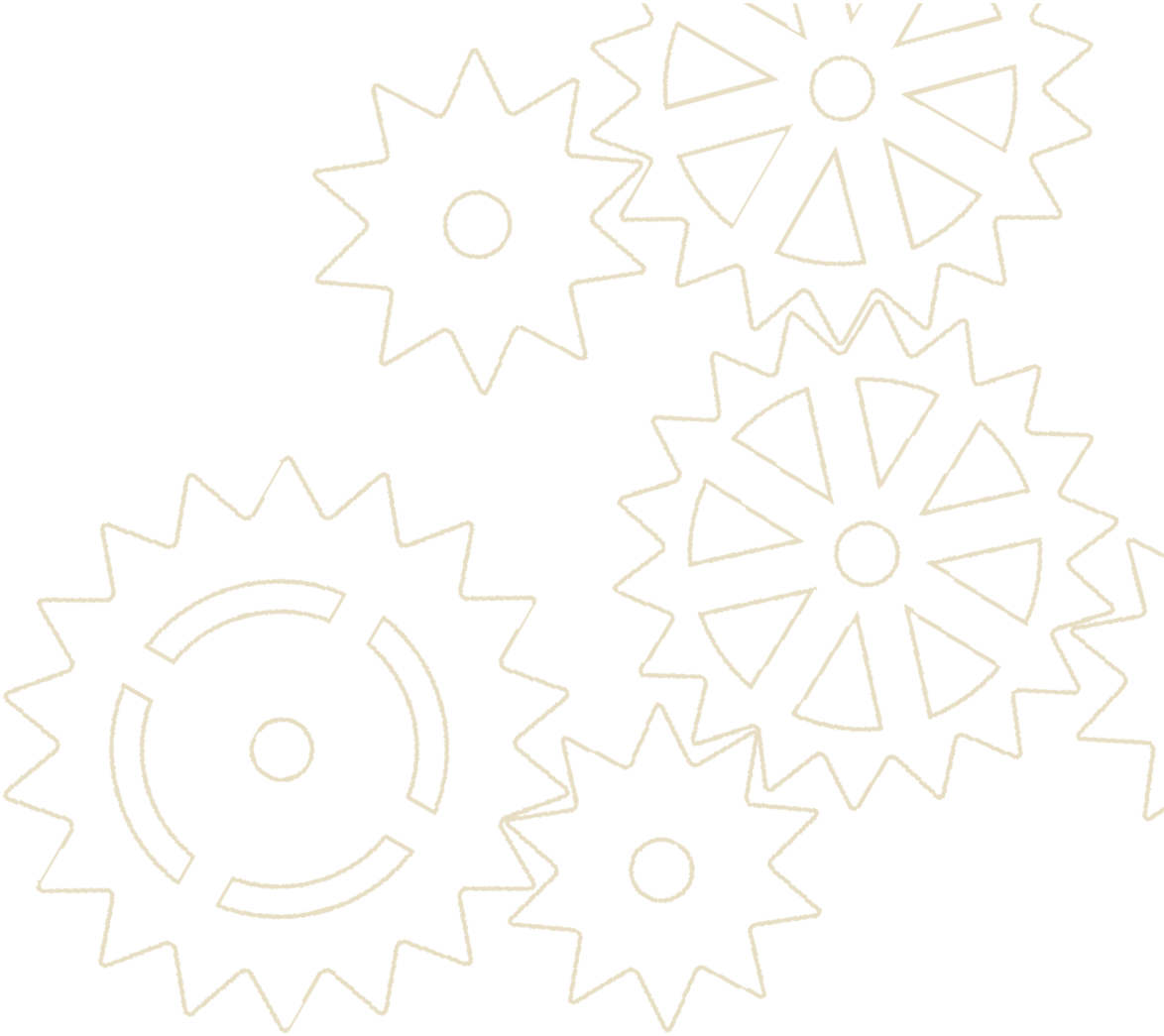
The Board has actively lobbied government on behalf of constituent authorities and made plain its concerns in relation to the regional control centre. It continues to be concerned that it has not been able to see the full business case, which means that FRAs are not able to test the financial savings which should be achieved through the move to a resilient regional control centre. Nevertheless, the Board are committed to making the best of the transition period for existing control room staff, in a time of upheaval for them.

The location of the South East RCC has been selected as Fareham, Hampshire. A lease has been signed which will allow building work to commence in October 2006. The region has approved the creation of a shadow Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) which will operate the RCC, and has made recommendations for the board of directors.

Aims for 2007/2010

- ◆ **Governance issues** - This project will ensure that strong governance arrangements underpin the RCC. It will follow on from the set-up of the shadow LACC with leading on the recruitment process for the RCC director and other staff-related activities.

- ◆ **Building issues** - This project will monitor the build progress and related issues of the RCC for the RMB, and report issues to Members of the RMB and LACC.
- ◆ **Award of infrastructure contracts** - Following the award of key infrastructure contracts for Mobilising systems; Mobile Data Terminals (Software); this project will monitor the implementation of changes to FRS systems and data
- ◆ **Out-of-Scope activities** - To ensure that best practice is adopted and, where possible, a collaborative approach is made with the 'out of scope' activities.
- ◆ **Convergence** - To deliver the convergence products identified by the Transition Plan to ensure safe and common working procedures throughout the Region and England.
- ◆ **Firelink** - To successfully implement the National Radio System ensuring seamless communications throughout the Region and England.



Customer Comments

The Board welcomes any views on the contents of this plan or the way in which it delivers its services. If you have any comments on this report or would like to contact us about any other issue please contact us via our website which can be found at www.sefip.gov.uk

Alternatively you may write to:

South East Fire Improvement Partnership
c/o Kent Fire & Rescue Service
FREEPOST NAT 9369
Maidstone
ME15 6BR

If you would like a copy of this plan in a different format, please telephone 01622 692121

