

REPORT TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY**DATE: 30th June 2008****REFERENCE: DWE/CCR/02/02****SUBJECT: Project Fireguard – Update for Members****SUMMARY:**

Project Fireguard is the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) national project to put in place arrangements for the provision of emergency fire and rescue cover, to discharge statutory requirements, and, thereby, to maintain business continuity and the provision of emergency fire and rescue services to the public during times of major staff absence.

In May 2007, the Fire Authority approved the Service's participation in Project Fireguard and, since then, officers from Mid and West Wales have represented Wales on the Project Board and the Service on the Liaison Officers' Group.

The attached paper provides Members with a brief update on the current position of the Project and the next stages.

OBJECTIVES		IMPLICATIONS	
More than an Emergency Service		Operational Risk Management	✓
Trusted & Respected		Community Risk Reduction	
Saving Lives, Protecting Communities	✓	Learning & Development	✓
Managing within Budget		Service Control	
Allocate Resources to Priorities	✓	Civil Contingencies & Resilience	✓
Efficiency Savings		Finance & Procurement	
Alternative Funding & Resources	✓	H.R.	
Managing People	✓	ICT	
Risk Reduction Planning		CCMS	
Partnership Working	✓	Transport	
Effective & Empowered People		Health & Safety	
		Premises	
		Sustainability & Environment	
		Welsh Language	
		Legal	
		Governance	
		Equality & Diversity	
		Representative Body Consultation	✓

COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS ON THE ABOVE OBJECTIVES/IMPLICATIONS:

Project Fireguard aims to put in place arrangements for the provision of emergency fire and rescue cover in circumstances where normal operations could otherwise be compromised by major staff absence. The implications are, therefore, specific to the operational objectives of the Authority. However, participation in the final contract will have wide ranging implications, e.g. legal and financial, and these will be discussed with the appropriate officers in time.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members are asked to note the progress made by officers working on Project Fireguard.

Members are also asked to note that a paper on the decision to participate in the final contract will be presented to Members on the 22nd September 2008.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT:

Fire Authority Paper on Project Fireguard, May 2007.
Project Fireguard Invitation to Submit Final Tenders Documents.
Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales (2005) (Revised 2007)
Draft Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales (2008)

Report Author(s) and Designation	Area Manager Wyn Edwards Head of Civil Contingencies and Resilience
Telephone Number	01267 226828
Extension	4428

Project Fireguard

Members may be aware of the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) national project, known as Project Fireguard. The project is, currently, at a key stage in its progress.

Members will know that fire and rescue authorities have responsibilities under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, to meet all normal requirements and to plan for "emergencies", so that they are able to continue to perform their functions, as far as is reasonably practicable, in such circumstances.

In May 2007, the Fire Authority chose to support Project Fireguard, which seeks to find a national solution that could be applied at a local or regional level for those participating fire and rescue services, bringing together over thirty fire and rescue services in England and Wales. The Project's aim is to put in place arrangements for the provision of emergency fire and rescue cover to discharge the statutory requirements, and, thereby, to maintain business continuity and the provision of emergency fire and rescue services to the public, in circumstances where this could otherwise be compromised, for example by an outbreak of pandemic influenza, a catastrophic or widespread incident, a natural disaster, or industrial action. The need for fire and rescue services to address this issue became particularly crucial when Central Government made it very clear that they no longer consider a modern fire and rescue service should rely upon the Armed Forces to provide emergency cover. This is clear in the current (2005 – revised 2007) Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales, which states:

Contingency planning for any future industrial action

Drawing on the experiences of the national industrial action, new and more effective arrangements for the provision of emergency fire and rescue cover have been developed. Fire and Rescue Authorities will, in future, play a significant part in contingency provision, including the supply of appliances and equipment and the effective deployment of available personnel.

Surprisingly, no mention is made of contingency planning for major staff absence in the recently published Draft Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales. Concerns over this have been raised in our response to the consultation on the Draft Framework document.

Area Manager Edwards from MWWFRS represents the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services on the Project Board and updates the CFOA (Wales) group on a regular basis. Group Manger Bennett represents the Service on the Liaison Officers' Group. North Wales FRS has recently joined the project, and South Wales FRS officers are considering participation.

The first stage of the project was to use the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) to invite the market to participate. A number of interested parties expressed an interest in participating. Three parties finally submitted official tenders.

Officers from MWWFRS have been heavily involved in the assessment and scrutiny of these final tenders, and the Project Board will soon be releasing the agreed recommendations to individual Fire and Rescue Services. It is, of course not possible at this stage to know what the outcomes will be.

No decision on Members' commitment to the final contract has yet been made by the Authority. A further paper, presenting the final 'package' along with costs of participation, will be presented to the Authority