

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Item 6

27 April 2012

Networked Fire Control Services Project

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 This paper outlines the progress on the Networked Fire Control Systems Partnership (NFCSP) to replace the current HFRS fire command and control system. This is one of the Service's most business critical systems. It also sets out the associated refurbishment of the existing fire control suite to accommodate the new system and the improved ways of working that it will bring.
- 1.2 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) recently announced the distribution of the Resilience and Interoperability grant. Hampshire and our three partners in the NFCSP will receive £7.2 million or £1.8 million each. This is based on our business case for the partnership project and includes all the necessary hardware and software for a new networked fire control system. We expect to achieve a better price by purchasing collaboratively rather than independently.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee notes the DCLG funding allocation of £1.8 million and agrees the plan to replace the existing system as part of the Networked Fire Control Systems Partnership, including the proposed joint procurement of the system.
- 2.2 The Committee recommends to the Authority that the capital costs of the Fire control system (£878,000) be added to the 2012/13 capital programme.
- 2.3 The Committee recommends to the Authority that the proposals for the refurbishment of the fire control suite be added to the 2012/13 capital programme and the cost of £500,000 to be met from the Improvement and Sustainability Reserve.

3 Replacing the HFRS fire control system

- 3.1 On the 20 December 2010 the Fire Minister, Bob Neill MP, confirmed that a national programme to establish regional controls (the FiReControl project) was to be scrapped. This was reported to the Authority on 9 February 2011.
- 3.2 After the closure of the FiReControl project, the Department for Communities and

Local Government (DCLG) began the process of reviewing the project and consulting with fire and rescue services (FRS), and other interested parties, for their views on priorities for the future provision of control services in England.

- 3.3 As part of the consultation DCLG made it clear that it supported collaboration and securing efficiencies. The Control Options Appraisal Project (COAP) within HFRS enabled us to identify a preferred option and led to a partnership with Dorset, Wiltshire, and Devon and Somerset FRS. This was set out in the report to the Authority on 15 June 2011 and has provided the basis for the Networked Fire Control project to replace the existing HFRS control system, and to link it with other FRS control rooms for resilience. It will enable us to secure efficiency gains through joint procurement as well as operational benefits.
- 3.4 The project has both an internal and an external element. To facilitate this there is both an external strategic project board, with senior representatives from all four partner services, and an internal HFRS project board to manage the Hampshire specific issues.
- 3.5 HFRS, in conjunction with the three other partner FRS in the NFCSP, has recently been awarded a total of £7.2 million from the Department for Communities and Local Government Interoperability and Resilience grant.
- 3.6 The Networked Fire Control project is being undertaken by the partnership. The partners are currently preparing a technical specification and there are agreements being drawn up to enable a joint procurement to be undertaken by the end of 2012. System installation is expected to be complete by July 2013.

4 Refurbishment of the fire control rooms

- 4.1 The existing fire control suite needs to be refurbished in advance of the new command and control system being installed. The current control rooms (including the major incident room) are inadequate, especially in terms of accessibility, and are not compliant with equalities legislation, most notably for disabled access.
- 4.2 Hampshire County Council's architects have therefore been employed to produce proposals for the refurbishment and five options were presented to the HFRS NFCSP Board in January 2012. The options were also shared with control staff and the response team with responsibility for the major incident room (MIR) to seek their views. The preferred option provides improvements to the fire control area, especially in terms of improved accessibility, and an additional break out room for the MIR and fire control teams. This option had the second lowest cost.
- 4.3 Details of all of the options are available, if required, and plans will be shown at the meeting of the Committee.
- 4.4 The fire control will need to be temporarily relocated during the refurbishment period. Training rooms at service HQ are considered to be the best place to relocate the control; this will have an impact on training. It is estimated that the work will take up to 16 weeks so alternative training rooms will be required. It is intended that the refurbishment work will begin in January 2013.

5 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

- 5.1 Following the demise of the Regional Control Centre project, the procurement of a replacement fire control system became essential. This will support our aim of making Hampshire safer, and the networking of the control systems with other FRS will reduce costs, further improve resilience and aid interoperability.

6 Risk analysis

- 6.1 The current command and control system is now 14 years old and is obsolete. The current maintenance contract is extremely expensive because of the age of the equipment and both the hardware and software are prone to error and malfunction.
- 6.2 As well as being an operational necessity the replacement fire control system has been identified as producing revenue savings in 2014-15. If the NFCSP does not go ahead these savings will not be possible.

7 People Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The current fire control suite is not fully accessible particularly for anyone with physical mobility difficulties. As examples, the corridors are not wide enough for a wheelchair and there is no means of accessing the office area without climbing stairs.
- 7.2 All of the refurbishment options considered would ensure full accessibility and this will enable us to recruit people to fire control who would previously have been unable to work there. Additionally the new rooms will comply with all legal requirements: equality and diversity, and health and safety (including ergonomic measures)
- 7.3 A full people impact assessment will be completed for this refurbishment.
- 7.4 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with equalities and human rights legislation.

8 Resource implications

8.1 Finance

The networked project has successfully bid for the government Interoperability and Resilience grant; Hampshire's share of this is £1.8 million. This funding is expected to cover the purchase of the fire control equipment etc as well as some maintenance and support costs. It is not intended to cover building works and so HFRS will need to cover these costs separately.

The project is assumed to generate savings to contribute to the financial challenge board's savings target. These arise particularly from a reduction in ongoing maintenance and support costs which are relatively high for the current system. It is believed that the implementation of the new fire control system may save over £275,000 per year. The system may also enable selective paging of

retained firefighters which could save up to a further £100,000 per year but this has not been assumed at this stage.

Considering the programme over the period 2011-12 to 2018-19:

	£'000
Completion of network and radio link	487
Command and control system	1,330
Project management - total	652
Contingency	100
TOTAL COSTS	<u>2,569</u>

Funded by:

DCLG grant	1,800
Savings from existing system cost above the Financial Challenge target	756
	<u>2,569</u>

	£'000
Capital expenditure	878
Revenue expenditure	1691
TOTAL	<u>2,569</u>

The new system is expected to show savings beginning in 2013/14 (from removing the costs of the current system).

The cost of the refurbishment is estimated as:

	£'000
Structural / construction works	359
Ergonomic study	20
Specialist furniture and fittings	30
Fees	55
Contingency	36
TOTAL	<u>500</u>

The full cost of the work is estimated at £500,000 and it is recommended that this amount is met from the Improvement and Sustainability reserve.

8.2 Physical resources

Training rooms have been identified as the most suitable location for a temporary fire control. During the temporary relocation some additional office space will be required for control managers. It is envisaged that this could be found at SHQ without any additional cost.

8.3 Information and Communications Technology resources

HFRS ICT staff are involved in the partnership to specify the replacement system.

Training rooms will require the appropriate IT wiring, temporary furniture etc. The ICT department is represented on the HFRS NFCSP Board and are fully aware of the requirements.

8.4 Human resources

The NFCSP project team is already in place and no additional requirements are envisaged.

9 Consultation

- 9.1 Affected staff groups have been consulted on these proposals including the relevant departments within HFRS, the NFCSP project team, the Equality and Diversity team, and the Health and Safety team.

10 Background papers

- 10.1 The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

NFCSP Resilience and Interoperability grant bid
SMT Report on NFCSP 6 February 2012
HCC Architects' options report

Note: The list excludes: (1) published works; and (2) documents that disclose exempt or confidential information defined in the Act.