

09 June 2010

Firelink and FireControl Projects Update

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 The Firelink (National Radio Scheme) and the FireControl Regional Control Centre (RCC) projects are national projects under the control of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- 1.2 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service's dedicated project team continue to manage the associated work with each project. The Service is also represented within the South East regional project team and associated working groups. Cllr Roger Price continues to represent the Authority as a member of the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC).

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That this project update be noted and endorsed

3 Introduction and Background

3.1 Firelink Project

The installation of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) which commenced in December, completed on schedule at the end of March.

This new equipment contributes to the improved provision of information at an incident. This issue is being closely monitored by the Health and Safety Executive following an inspection last year.

3.2 FireControl Project

- 3.2.1 The date for the South East RCC to 'go live' is March 2012. The first of the nine regional Services to switch to the RCC are Hampshire and West Sussex. The remaining seven Services will transfer to the new RCC over the following eight months and is due for completion in November 2012.
- 3.2.2 Whilst project work progresses to the current timelines, Services within the region continue to consider the maintenance of their existing Command and Control

systems in the event of further project adjustments. Hampshire's resilience plans for our current system extend to 2014. Early consideration is now being given to ensure our capability to provide a command and control system beyond 2014 should this be necessary. In addition, there is now a South East regional project to develop options for a contingency arrangement should the Fire Control project be abandoned by government.

3.2.3 As previously reported a Select Committee Inquiry regarding the FireControl project was conducted on the 8th February. The Select committee sought to establish:

- Progress with the project so far.
- The reasons for the cost and time overrun which the project has experienced.
- What, if any, changes need to be made to the Government's plans for proceeding with the project.

A submission was made to the inquiry by the South East Regional Management Board (RMB). Chief Officer John Bonney represented the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) at the inquiry.

3.2.4 The Select Committee report was published on the 01.04.2010 and is available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/352/352.pdf>

Whilst the Committee's findings and report were critical of the early management of the project. The Committee concluded that given the investment of public funds already committed, and the benefits that will accrue, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), should press ahead with the project.

In addition, the Committee called on the DCLG urgently to draw up and consult on contingency plans for any further failures in the FireControl programme to ensure ongoing safe and effective fire and rescue services cover across the whole country, whether or not the regional control centres are eventually delivered.

To date no further delays have been announced regarding this project. Work within Hampshire continues as part of the South East regional project plan.

3.3 **Out of Scope (Strategic Gap)**

This work is managed by the Service's project team and involves consideration of all roles and responsibilities currently carried out by our Control staff, other than the receipt of emergency calls and the mobilising of fire engines and officers. These additional responsibilities will not be transferred to the RCC and will have to be re-allocated within the Service.

3.4 **Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC)**

3.4.1 Constitutional Matters

The Company Secretary for the LACC has written to all fire and rescue authorities in the region seeking clarification of the Authority's position on three matters:

- (1) The proposed revised Articles of the LACC
- (2) Consideration to be given to how its appointed representative on the LACC is authorised to act and vote on its behalf as a corporate director.
- (3) Seeking the Authority's consent to a proposal that weighted voting in the LACC members' agreement (which aligns size of vote with population of fire and rescue service area) should not apply to decision making by committees.

3.4.2 Following legal advice, it is proposed that the Authority's response on these points should be as follows:

- (1) The revised Articles have been considered and contain technical revisions required to remain consistent with updates in company law. These are uncontentious and therefore acceptable.
- (2) The position is that the Authority's appointed representative is authorised to act and vote in accordance with agreed policy, and is able to seek clarification of this where necessary by reference to the Chief Officer and/or Chairman as appropriate
- (3) The Authority is agreeable to the extent that committees are given delegated authority to determine internal conduct matters under disciplinary and grievance procedures. The Authority would not be agreeable to a committee being given delegated authority to deal with any policy or resources matter on the basis that weighted voting would be dispensed with.

3.5 A meeting of the LACC took place on 21 May 2010 and a verbal update will be provided to Members at this meeting.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 At this time it is difficult to confirm what the additional financial implications will be resulting from the FireControl and FireLink projects. It is felt however, from currently available information, there may be an additional burden falling to the Authority regarding the charges associated with the use of the Firelink scheme.

4.2 Once the Regional Control Centre is fully operational it is anticipated that both the FireControl and FireLink projects will result in additional funding burdens for the Authority. Further information regarding the financial implications will be reported when known.

5 People Impact Assessment

- 5.1 There are no issues arising from this report and it is considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the People Impact Assessment for this project.

Background Information

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:

None

NB The list excludes: (1) Published works and (2) Documents that disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.