

**15 September 2010**

**Firelink and FireControl Projects - Update**

**Report by the Chief Officer**

Contact: T/Assistant Chief Officer Bob Ratcliffe 02380 644000 Extension 2013

## **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 (CLG).
- 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 The Authority acknowledge this project update.

## **3 Introduction and Background**

### **3.1 Firelink Project**

The installation of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) commenced in December 2009, and completed on schedule at the end of March 2010. As part of this project further work has recently been completed to install a WI-FI system to all fire stations. This system automatically updates all vehicles fitted with MDTs whilst they are parked on their stations. This ensures timely and accurate updates such as; premises information, water supplies, and hazardous materials.

- 3.1.2 CLG has recently published a draft Circular regarding the future charges associated with the Firelink radio scheme. The view of CLG is that Authorities have been benefitting from the use of the Firelink radio system since the conversion of their fire vehicles without charge (Hampshire end of March 2010).

These draft charges are an additional budget requirement for the Authority and are detailed within section 4 of this paper.

## 3.2 **FireControl Project**

- 3.2.1 Whilst the future of the project continues to be the subject of debate at a local, regional and national level, the date for the South East RCC to 'go live' remains as March 2012. The first of the nine regional Services to switch to the RCC are Hampshire and West Sussex.
- 3.2.2 Following the recent change in government, the Fire Minister Bob Neill, speaking at the Fire Service National Conference in June, confirmed the government's requirement of the project contractor EADS, to deliver the project on time, on cost and on quality.
- 3.2.3 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.

## 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 recently wrote 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 sub-committees.

- 3.4.2 Following legal advice and agreement at the last Fire Authority meeting, the Authority has confirmed it's response on these points as:

- (1) The revised Articles have been considered and contain technical revisions required to remain consistent with updates in company law.

These are not contentious 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.

3.4.3 A meeting of the LACC took place on 10 September 2010, a verbal update will be provided to Members at the Authority meeting.

#### **4 Financial Implications**

4.1 The additional budget requirement associated with the Firelink radio scheme equipment was determined by comparing the difference between the Airwave service costs and the operational costs of the Services previous radio scheme (legacy system). These costs were submitted by the Service and were subject to a separate verification process, this work was completed during 2007-2008. The proposed date for commencement of charging aligns with the original project dates for 'cutover' to Regional Control Centres, for Hampshire this date is June 2011.

4.2 Subject to final confirmation the additional Firelink service fees for Hampshire are:

- 2011/2012 = £235,000.00
- 2012/2013 = £283,000.00

Fees will be subject to annual indexation linked to the retail price index (RPI), in April each year. These additional costs have been considered by the Service's Directors and will be incorporated within the Authorities future budget setting report.

4.3 CLG 'new burden' funding for the FireControl project team is usually provided as an annual payment. For this current financial year CLG made a payment for 6 months (until the end of September). In response to a question from the south east regional project team, CLG have confirmed they will only be making monthly payments beyond September.

#### **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.

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