NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy and Strategy Committee

TRI-SERVICE CONTROL UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 29 April 2016

Purpose of Report:

To appraise Members of the progress with the Tri-Service Control programme.

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1   At the Fire Authority meeting on 14 December 2012, Members considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer confirming that the collaborative partnership bid from Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Authorities had secured £5.4 million grant from Government to progress the procurement of a replacement command and control system.

1.2   This successful bid led to the creation of the Tri-Service Control Project and subsequent tender for a supplier to replace the three legacy systems within the tri-service area. A further £247k was committed from each authority to bring the total project value to £6.1 million.

1.3   A report was presented to the Policy and Strategy Committee on 29 January 2016 providing an update on progress with the implementation of the new system and this report continues that information stream and considers progress and the next phase of the project.

2. REPORT

2.1   The overarching concept of the Tri-Service Control programme is that a single common mobilising system would be used in all three control facilities and interlinked by means of a network. The philosophy of this being that any of the control rooms can take calls and mobilise appliances and resources for each other, providing significant resilience and negating the need to operate secondary or fall-back control facilities, thereby generating an immediate efficiency. Since going live this aspect is utilised almost every week by one or more of the services as multiple calls are often received for single incidents.

2.2   As previously reported the project has faced slippage, however the main mobilising system has been in operation across the three services since September 2015. Since going live there have been a number of issues with the system where it has failed to operate as required. As with any new and complex system, these type of events were anticipated and planned contingency measures were put in place.

2.3   In the period since the last report detailed discussions with the supplier, Systel, combined with commercial pressure have culminated in the production of a comprehensive plan to rectify all of the outstanding critical problems and issues. This plan is due to be completed in May 2016 with the delivery of a major update to the system.

2.4   Work and commitment by the supplier has already rectified some of the critical items referred to above, in particular the technical aspects of the Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) regarding it's connection to the mobilising system via the 3G network. However it is recognised that the remaining items require to be fully resolved and additional time will be needed for end users, both Control and operational staff, to gain full confidence in the new system.

2.5   Discussions have taken place regarding the outstanding improvements and developments to be delivered before the mobilising system fully meets our specification and requirements. These are known as 'Phase 2', meaning the project will continue into the 2016 / 17 financial year, and that the programme is currently not in a position to be formally closed. These Phase 2 items include:

- Dynamic Cover Tool;
- Electronic Incident Management System (EIMS);
- Replacement Incident Reporting System (IRS);
- Ability to make adjustments to individual operator positions for equality reasons.

2.6   As previously reported, Members at the Finance and Resources Committee on 15 January approved the redesignation of the Fire Control Collaboration earmarked reserve of £220k to support phase 2 of the project to support dedicated Control, Support and ICT staff who are core to the delivery of the programme. A separate report at the same meeting identified that 'Mobilising' is currently the highest risk facing the service due to the both the Tri-Service and Emergency Services Mobile Communications (ESMCP) projects.

2.7   To facilitate the joint practices, common ways of working, configuration and training that are required to make a solution such as ours function efficiently and correctly a joint central Tri-Services Control team has been established. This consists of the Head of Tri-Service Control, 3 Control Watch Managers and an administrator. Aside from the contribution towards the joint costs of the head of Tri-Service Control, which was funded from earlier efficiencies, the remainder of the Nottinghamshire commitment has been funded from within existing means.

2.8   Within the overriding principles of the Tri-Service Control Programmes that the solution should be more cost effective than the aggregate of the previous provisions for all three Services. This has been achieved and an estimated long term annual saving of £1.1 million has been reported to DCLG.

2.9   To provide surety a Tri-Service agreement was signed by the three Chief Fire Officers in January 2013 that detailed roles, responsibilities and commitments of each Service to the project. This also detailed a governance and Officer meeting structure during both implementation and steady states. Throughout the programme a Strategic Board consisting of Principal Officers from all the three participating Services has met monthly to provide scrutiny and oversight and will continue to operate during the remainder of the contract.

2.10   The previous Programme Board has now been formally closed and replaced by an Operations Board consisting of an Area Manager from each Service plus the Head of Tri-Service Control. This will oversee much of the more regularised in-life management of the programme, with internal project structures continuing until completion.

2.11   A Supplier Board with representatives from the 3 Services and Systel meets regularly and will continue to operate until the P2 developments are delivered

2.12   Throughout the programme we have benefitted from support and guidance from Control and Mobilising specialists seconded to CFOA National Resilience (CFOA-NR) and funded by DCLG, whose advice has proved highly useful. Additionally monitoring has been undertaken by DCLG with frequent returns to them on the progress of the programme and estimates of savings and efficiencies that have been regularly published in the form of a summary of the national picture of Fire Control improvements.

2.13   Across the three Services concern from staff remains high, and in recognition of the sensitivities, briefings and discussions with staff and managers continue to take place along with regular dialogue with representative bodies.

3.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1   The main financial implications are identified within the body of the report, however between the 3 participating services it is estimated that we will generate annual savings of £1.1 million once steady state has truly been achieved.

3.2   A £220k earmarked reserve is in place to sustain resources to fully deliver and implement the remaining improvements and developments to the system.

4.   HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

There likely to be some new developments that requiring training before they can be implemented. Those for Control will be met largely in house, but any for operational staff will require training input which is catered for within the earmarked reserve

5.   EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

As the Service is a public sector body, it is subject to the public sector equality duty and, as it is proposing significant amendments to the establishment or to the service delivery model, it must have due regard to the need to:

•   Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;

•   Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;

•   Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Service has fulfilled this requirement by contributing to an equality impact assessment of the Tri-Service Control Programme.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that "it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area". This report does not contain any implications which would affect that duty.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority has a statutory duty to receive calls for assistance and mobilise a Fire Service. These duties are contained in Section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

7.2 Part 3, Section 21, of the same Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a Framework and it is this Framework that places a duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities Fire to collaborate with other Fire and Rescue Authorities, other emergency services, wider Category 1 and 2 responders and Local Resilience Forums to ensure interoperability. In this context it includes, but is not limited to, compatible communications systems, control rooms and equipment.

7.3 The concept and implementation of Tri-Service Control is conducive with those legal duties and does not place the Authority at any risk of breaking them.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

With the improvements to the new mobilising system, improved stability and delivery of further developments the high levels of corporate risk associated with mobilising should diminish into the future.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the content of the report and the progress made with the Tri-Service Control Programme.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

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