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

# TRI-SERVICE CONTROL UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:**                        01 November 2016

**Purpose of Report:**

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

## CONTACT OFFICER

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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 08 July 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. With the heavy rain experienced during mid-June this resilience has enabled each Service to handle calls on behalf of each other during periods of localised high demand, and also to receive calls and process information for West Midlands Fire Service when they were inundated in line with national protocols.

2.2 As previously reported, the project has faced slippage; however the main mobilising system has been in operation across the 3 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 types of events were anticipated, and planned contingency measures were put in place.

2.3 Detailed discussions with the supplier, Systel, in February 2016 combined with commercial pressure have culminated in the production of a comprehensive plan to rectify all of the 38 outstanding critical problems and issues. To date, 26 items have been successfully resolved with resolutions for the remaining 12 due over the coming weeks. This plan was due to be completed in mid-May 2016 with the delivery of a major update to the system, but this has been delayed due to technical difficulties encountered in several areas. The resolution of the outstanding items is still on-going, however; the Tri-Service team are in close liaison with Systel, to ensure they deliver a revised programme for the final items of the roadmap.

2.4     In October 2016, the lead NFRS officer for Tri-Service Control programme was seconded to the national Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) as the Business Change Lead for Fire. This has resulted in a change of personnel on the project at a local level and a new lead officer for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

2.5     Whilst engagement from Systel has improved significantly since the last report, and there appears to be a concerted effort to review the outstanding fault logs/requests, the impact of unsuccessful efforts to improve performance have further served to knock confidence in the system. In addition, it has also diverted Tri-Service resources away from moving the system forward to more reactive and remedial work activities by the team.

2.6     It is pleasing to report that the overall stability of the core mobilising system has improved along with some of the technical aspects of the Mobile Data Terminals (MDT), in particular its 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. Since the last report, the system has continued to experience several problems with the network, linking all 3 Fire Controls, which have been outside of the control or remit of Systel. In all of these instances, the system performed as required and provided a mobilising capability (albeit with some reduction in functionality or speed) in line with system degradation protocols. These network issues are subject to ongoing dialogue with the network provider.

2.7     As part of works to assist with the ESN project, a review of the network infrastructure and some ways of working with Systel is underway which will identify benefits of any future roadmap / work packages.

2.8     Discussions have taken place regarding the remaining improvements and developments to be delivered before the mobilising system fully meets specification and requirements. These are known as 'Phase 2', meaning the project is highly likely to continue into the 2017/18 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.

2.9     As previously reported, Members at the Finance and Resources Committee on 15 January 2016 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 both the Tri-Service and Emergency Services Network (ESN) projects.

2.10 To facilitate the joint practices, common ways of working, configuration and training that are required to make a solution such as this function efficiently, the jointly funded central Tri-Services Control team continues to make good progress.

2.11 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 3 Services. This has been achieved and an estimated long term annual saving of £1.1 million has been reported to Central Government.

2.12 To provide surety, a Tri-Service agreement was signed by the 3 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 3 participating Services has met monthly to provide scrutiny and oversight, and will continue to operate during the remainder of the contract.

2.13 The Tri-Service Strategic Board has now joined with the West and South Yorkshire Boards who are also implementing the Systel product. This ensures the UK product is developed consistently and the supplier is better managed to deliver against expectations.

2.14 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.

2.15 A Supplier Board with representatives from the 3 Services and Systel meets regularly and will continue to operate until the Phase 2 developments are delivered.

2.16 Throughout the programme, the Service has 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. This has now ceased and monitoring of progress is now undertaken by the Home Office with support from the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisers Unit (CFRAU).

2.17 Across the 3 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 annual savings of £1.1 million will be generated 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 are likely to be some new developments that require 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

5.1 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.

5.2 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 have 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.

John Buckley
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**