



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

JOINT FIRE CONTROL COLLABORATION PROJECT: CLOSURE REPORT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 27 November 2020

Purpose of Report:

To provide the closure report to Members on the Joint Fire Control collaboration project with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of the report.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name: John Buckley
Chief Fire Officer

Tel: 0115 9670880

Email: john.buckley@notts-fire.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Contact: Vicky Brown
(0115) 967 0880 vicky.brown@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In December 2019, Members approved the creation of a Joint Fire Control with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service based at Ascot Drive Fire Station in Derby. The Joint Fire Control went live in July 2019.
- 1.2 At the same meeting, Members also agreed the cost apportionment principles for the project along with the discharge of 'function', under Section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act, to "make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel" to Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority.
- 1.3 The Service's Sustainability Strategy 2020 identified that savings were required from collaboration for the Service to balance the budget by 2020. In addition, Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service also had to make financial savings over a similar period.
- 1.4 The Policing and Crime Act 2017 places a statutory requirement on the Service to consider collaboration agreements with other emergency services where it would be in the interests of efficiency, effectiveness and public safety.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Joint Fire Control has been operating from Ascot Drive Fire Station in Derby since July 2019. They are responsible for all mobilising arrangements for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services.
- 2.2 Members gave approval for Officers to enact redundancies and voluntary early retirements which resulted from the reasonableness criteria and role matching process, following the Service's policies and procedures.
- 2.3 Staff from the existing Fire Control were offered roles at the new Joint Control in Derby, redeployment within Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) or redundancy if it was not reasonable for them to travel to the new Control in Derby. The original Control establishment was 26 employees with 17.5 posts being made redundant due to the change of location.
- 2.4 As anticipated, the cost of the redundancy arrangements and pension strain has been met from the approved ear-marked reserve allocated to the project.
- 2.5 To mitigate the need for compulsory redundancies and to provide temporary resilience for additional training, the Joint Control has been over-established since July 2019. This arrangement has also proved to be beneficial during the current pandemic.
- 2.6 Six additional Control Operator posts have been employed since the start of the Joint Control in July 2019. In addition, four Control Operator posts have

been re-graded as Crew Managers to provide increased resilience within the management structure.

- 2.7 Due to the temporary over-establishment of Joint Control the initial financial savings within the first year have been reduced by £160k which is expected to improve over the next 12-24 month period. If the current over-establishment is required for the longer term, a report will be prepared for the Strategic Collaboration Board to consider any permanent changes.
- 2.8 The expected benefits of a Joint Control have been realised along with the closer co-operation on a number of regional and national projects such as operational guidance and the outcomes of the Grenfell inquiry which affect mobilisations. More detail can be found in the project closure document which is attached at Appendix A to this report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The costs for 2019/20 recharged to NFRS were staff severance costs of £565k and nine months of revenue costs totalling £746k. This included the investment of significant additional resources when the project first went live.
- 3.2 Costs have now settled down and ongoing revenue costs are anticipated to be £780k per year. There are also costs of £34k per year which is NFRS's contribution to the cost of utilities at the Joint Control. These were not included in the original costings.
- 3.3 Total annual costs are therefore in the region of £814k. This is higher than expected as additional staff have been taken on to provide sufficient cover, including two posts to provide sickness cover.
- 3.4 The original business case sited costs of £642k per year per authority. After inflating this for wage inflation, 2019/20 comparative figures are £654k per year.
- 3.5 The estimated savings for 2020/21 are therefore expected to be in the region of £190k per year. This will improve as long-term sickness levels reduce and the additional staffing is no longer required.
- 3.6 The savings identified in the original business case were £350k per year.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this is a closure report.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

The Joint Control is collaboration with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service and demonstrates the Authority's appetite to engage in collaboration in the interests of efficiency, effectiveness and public outcomes.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the content of this report.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

PROJECT CLOSURE REPORT

Project Name	Joint Fire Control Project		
Project Sponsor	CFO McDermott / CFO Buckley	Report Date	13/7/2020
Project Lead	DCFO Rick Roberts/ AM Bryn Coleman	Project Start Date	05/07/2018

Project Background

In October 2011 Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire Authorities submitted a 'Resilience and Efficiency Grant Bid' to DCLG where £5.4m of funding was achieved for the Tri-Control project. As a result of this successful bid the Tri-Control function has been implemented and running since 2015.

The equipment, systems and processes used in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire Control Rooms are practically the same. The Tri-Services use the same Systel mobilising system and Virgin network, as a result Derbyshire directly mobilises Nottinghamshire appliances when they are the nearest and quickest and Nottinghamshire does the same with Derbyshire.

Since the introduction of Systel all three Services have been on a journey to harmonise their practices and ways of working. As a result, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Control Rooms now operate in very similar ways.

One of the advantages of the Systel system is the 'failover' capability. Failover ensures that if one Control Room fails due to a technical issue or 'call inundation', calls automatically failover to another Control Room in the Tri. This capability is tested regularly and has been successfully used in real situations a number of times.

Project Milestone / Objectives Achieved

The objectives successfully achieved were;

- Create a legal framework and governance structure to deliver Derbys/Notts control function in line with legal duties.
- Fully involve and engage with staff throughout the process.
- Deliver appropriate public consultation and engagement.
- Sensitively undertake the HR/staffing process to ensure the right staffing model is delivered.
- Review, combine and retrain agreed ways of working prior to move.
- Agree apportionment of costs and expenses.
- Identify and implement appropriate technical solution.

Project Milestone / Objectives unsuccessful

More work is still to be completed on the administration and delivery of joint training of the control room staff.

This has been identified by all relevant parties and has been included into a further project to ensure that it is addressed satisfactorily.

Project specifications as stated in the Fire Authority Report (Business Case) Expected Benefits

Have the benefits set out in the business case been realised?

The expected project benefits were as follows;

- Financial savings for both NFRS and DFRS. This has been achieved from the outset of the project despite the uplift in establishment to facilitate the project. All financial information is given later in the report.
- Harmonisation of ways of working. This has been completed and both services now have working practices which are sympathetic to the joint ways of operational working that DFRS and NFRS are both employing. There is ongoing work to be completed around the joint acquisition and maintenance of competence, which is being undertaken through a further project.
- Catalyst for future collaborations and improvements. The joint Fire Control project has enabled NFRS and DFRS to work closer together on a number of areas which were previously not considered, including procurement of fleet and delivering of operational training and exercises. The strategic collaboration board is now a permanent fixture in collaborative works between the two services and this is underpinned by quarterly joint SLT meetings which drive the collaborative agenda forward. Collaboration is also part of the IRMP scheme of works for both organisations.

Unexpected Benefits

Have any unexpected benefits arisen from this project? If so, identify what these are and how did they arise?

- There have been many benefits realised that were outside of the scope of the initial project implementation document.
- Closer working on significant regional and national projects has become easier and more effective through the joint working of Fire Control. Projects such as the Emergency Services Network and the Grenfell Tower project have been worked on together under one Fire Control and this has ensured their efficiency has increased.
- During the recent Covid-19 crisis, the Fire Control team have worked together to ensure that business continuity has been maintained throughout the event. Also, any incidents of particular interest have been communicated more effectively to the relevant services due to the closer joint working.

Efficiency Savings

Predicted savings on the project so far are slightly below of what were predicted, however this will be for a temporary period whilst the establishment is still running over to allow for the continued collaborative working and up-skilling of Fire Control operators.

Below is a summary of all of the relevant costs of the set-up of the Joint Fire Control as well as indicative figures for year one.

			Year end		
			Adjustment	Total	Overall
	DFRS	NFRS	To Finalise	NFRS	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Exit Costs Severence	209,196.21	399,569.79	21,246.00	420,815.79	630,012.00
Exit Costs Pension Strain	171,975.32	165,521.96	6,453.36	171,975.32	343,950.64
Set up Costs	9,462.00	0.00	9,462.00	9,462.00	18,924.00
Share Staffing July to March	683,130.00	720,835.00	-17,886.00	702,949.00	1,386,079.00
Revenue Running Costs		25,290.00	0.00	25,290.00	25,290.00
	1,073,763.53	1,311,216.75	19,275.36	1,330,492.11	2,404,255.64

Lessons Learnt

What went well?

The time taken to undertake the project was efficient and the project was delivered on time and to budget.

The staffing at the time of joining was good and fully up to establishment to ensure the transition was smooth.

What could have been improved?

Communication with staff prior to the joining of Control was highlighted as a potential improvement which is now being addressed.

It was suggested that more go-live training could have been held to ensure that all operational discrepancies could have been solved prior to the go-live date.

The significant impact on other departments, such as payroll and finance should have been considered.

Issue Management

Joint training of the operators within the Control Room has been identified as an issue which is currently being addressed. The lack of familiarity of policies and ways of working were highlighted, particularly after the initial findings of the Grenfell Tower report were released.

A collaborative project to identify these issues and put a plan in place to mitigate them is now underway with a project finish date of March 2021.