



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

MOBILISATION SYSTEM UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 14 July 2023

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on activities for the current Tri-Service and replacement call handling and mobilisation system.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of the report.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Systel, the current provider of the Service's call receiving and mobilisation system is a French based company with a small satellite office in Yorkshire. The provision is under contract for three fire and rescue services (FRSs), (Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Leicestershire).
- 1.2 The mobilising system is used by the Service to take calls (including 999 and emergency calls), take details of emergencies and mobilise an emergency response to incidents. It is an integral system to delivery of the emergency response to the community. The current mobilising system, Systel, reaches the end of its contract in October 2024.
- 1.3 Currently, the Service operates its mobilisation system as part of a Tri-Service, collaboratively working with Derbyshire and Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Services. A project has been underway since the middle of 2022 with the remit to procure and implement a replacement mobilising system.
- 1.4 In recent months the operating context of the Tri-Service has altered, increasing the risks to the current system and to the replacement mobilising system project. These risks being:
 - Leicestershire FRS has indicated its intention to withdraw from the Tri-Service arrangements from the end of the contract period. Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire FRSs have committed to continuing joint arrangements and to potentially use existing joint political governance arrangements.
 - Systel, the current mobilising system provider, continue to be under the supervision of the French Courts, due to financial and operating challenges.
 - An approaching Home Office deadline of December 2023 for a system modification to improve security, which has been further complicated by Leicestershire FRS's decision (see Sections 2.4 – 2.5).
 - Costs for the new system have not yet been quantified. The withdrawal of Leicestershire FRS is likely to create an increased proportional risk to Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire FRSs.
- 1.5 All of the above factors are interrelated and together they create significant operational and organisational risk.
- 1.6 The current replacement mobilising system project has been planning for a one-year extension to the current Systel contract. Consequently, there is potentially a year where Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire FRSs will be looking to continue to operate with the current Systel system without Leicestershire FRS.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Principal Officers from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire FRSs have met to discuss these risks and determine actions that need to be taken in order to urgently address the situation. As a result, a programme of works has been established that will be overseen by a joint temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer. The programme includes:
- Working in tandem with Leicestershire FRS for the remainder of the current contract period to continue to manage the day-to-day performance of the existing system and maintain the relationship with Systel.
 - Disaggregation of the Tri-Service – work to protect the interests of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire FRSs in terms of legal, technical, and financial implications, alongside ensuring appropriate contract extension arrangements are put in place.
 - Deliver the replacement mobilising system – incorporating the procurement and implementation of the replacement system, including driving efficiency through alignment of ways of working across both Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire FRS.

CURRENT MOBILISING SYSTEM

- 2.2 Existing Tri-Service arrangements are currently continuing with all three Services working with Systel to manage the day-to-day performance of the existing system, alongside a number of projects that will maintain and improve the performance of the system during its expected life.
- 2.3 The Tri-Service has committed to improving and investing in mobile data terminals (MDTs), which are located in frontline appliances and support the mobilisation of appliances, mapping, access to site specific risk information and other information key to firefighter safety and operations. The project aims to ensure that new MDTs are fitted to all frontline appliances by August 2023.
- 2.4 The Tri-Service, along with all other fire and rescue services in the UK and current mobilisation system providers, are required to undertake security improvements between current mobilisation systems and the radio network, Airwave.
- 2.5 The Home Office has stipulated this work be completed prior to the end of the year. As a consequence of the decision of Leicestershire FRS to withdraw from the Tri-Service, Leicestershire FRS will be seeking an alternative method, other than working with Systel, to meet the required system improvements. This adds both complexity and implications on existing ways of working between the Tri-Services.
- 2.6 Since 9 November 2022, when the Tri-Service received confirmation that the French Courts had approved for Systel to move under the protection of

“Redressement Judiciaire”, the Tri-Service has been working to maintain existing working arrangements.

- 2.7 In response to “Redressement Judiciaire” Systel have restructured, introducing a new management team/directors, who will oversee future operations.
- 2.8 Systel were back in the French Courts on 30 May 2023, which has seen an extension to the “Redressement Judiciaire” arrangements, until at least September 2023, when Systel return to the French Courts.

TRI-SERVICE DISAGGREGATION

- 2.9 As a result of the decision taken by Leicestershire FRS to withdraw from Tri-Service arrangements from October 2024, work is underway to ensure that the interests of both Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire FRSs are protected. Browne Jacobson solicitors have been appointed to represent the interests of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire FRSs.
- 2.10 Whilst Leicestershire FRS has committed to the existing contract until October 2024, in preparation for their new working arrangements and mobilisation system, works will need to be undertaken to ‘separate’ the existing integrations and working practices. The separation of existing functions and arrangements brings a high level of complexity, both in technical terms in separating the systems architecture and also implications to the ways of working for all three Services.
- 2.11 As work progresses to disaggregate the Tri-Service, Joint Control will need to amend business continuity management arrangements, call fail-over processes and call management practices in busy periods, such as spate conditions.
- 2.12 To oversee the Tri-Service disaggregation, a working group has been established, which will report progress and risks to the existing Tri-Service Executive Board, and a Members led Joint Collaboration Board.

REPLACEMENT MOBILISING SYSTEM

- 2.13 Since the middle of 2022, representatives on behalf of the Tri-Service have been undertaking work in support of a new mobilising system. The decision of Leicestershire FRS to withdraw from current procurement activities, resulted in minimal impact on intentions and timelines. However, whilst the complexity of any future system reduces, going from two control rooms to one, associated costs per Service may increase.
- 2.14 Procurement of a new system will be broken down into a number of separate contracts, or “lots”. The initial lot, Integrated Command and Control System (ICCS) and the Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD) was published for tender on 15 May 2023. The receiving of tenders and the process of evaluation will take place throughout the summer, with the successful supplier being announced in September/October 2023.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The capital programme approved by the Fire Authority in February 2023 includes a £2m budget for replacing the mobilising system in 2024/25. The report identified that this was an indicative figure, due to the withdrawal of Leicestershire FRS, along with difficulty in estimating future costs until the procurement process had commenced.
- 3.2 Until the contract is awarded, it is unclear whether the new system will be hosted within the cloud or from on premises servers. This changes whether the costs will be in the form of lease payments or capital up front payments, which in turn affects the accounting arrangements (ie: revenue or capital expenditure).
- 3.3 The procurement exercise is due to complete in the autumn and revised costs will be reflected in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which will be presented to Fire Authority in December 2023.
- 3.4 The ongoing project costs are being met from a mixture of current year revenue budgets and an earmarked reserve set aside for this purpose. Costs are higher than anticipated due to the withdrawal of Leicestershire FRS from the project, the sufficiency of the earmarked reserve is being kept under review.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are ongoing human resources and learning and development implications which require the Authority to ensure that its employees are suitably informed and trained to meet the requirements of the duty.
- 4.2 The Service contributes to a small Tri-Service Project Team, which would be impacted by any changes to the mobilisation provision, however, implications would be identified in future reports.
- 4.3 Personnel resources, skills and knowledge required to deliver the programme will be kept review to ensure the programmes changing needs are met.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as currently there is no change to policy or service provision.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a requirement for fire and rescue authorities to put in place effective arrangements for receiving and responding to calls for help and for obtaining information to exercise its functions.
- 7.2 Fire authorities are required under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Fire and Rescue National Framework to maintain and test business continuity plans.
- 7.3 The Government has powers of intervention under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Section 22. This section applies if the Secretary of State considers that a Fire Authority is failing, or likely to fail, to act in accordance with the Framework prepared under Section 21.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Systel mobilisation system is integral to the receipt of calls and the mobilising of fire appliances, any impact on this provision places the Authority at risk of failing to fulfil its legal duties.
- 8.2 There are significant existing risks regarding the Systel mobilising system which are documented in the Service's Corporate Risk Register.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Service is embedded in the Tri-Service collaboration and is committed to meeting the requirements of the current mobilising contract, working with its partners (Derbyshire and Leicestershire) to manage and mitigate risks to all three Services until October 2024.
- 9.2 Due to the Leicestershire FRS decision to withdraw from the Tri-Service, Nottinghamshire, along with Derbyshire FRS, have begun seeking alternative arrangements post October 2024, and have commenced a programme of works to desegregate the Tri-Service.
- 9.3 The Service is committed to working collaboratively with Derbyshire FRS and continuing its collaborative relationship in the procurement of a new replacement mobilising system.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of the report.

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

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER