



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

EMERGENCY SERVICES NETWORK (ESN) UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 11 November 2016

Purpose of Report:

This report provides an update on the progress of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) programme by Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) is intended to provide the next generation communication system for the three emergency services and other public safety users as the contract for Airwave expires by 2020. This system will be called the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and provides integrated critical voice and broadband data services for the emergency services.
- 1.2 The programme has three key objectives it aims to achieve:
 - Better – integrated service, functionality and coverage;
 - Smarter – more flexible and pay only for what is used;
 - Cheaper – address budget pressures and leverage market forces.
- 1.3 The Fire Authority previously received a financial information and sign off pack which provided information about participation in the ESMCP and that the lead government department was committed to provide all reasonable transition funding, this agreement was signed and returned to Department of Communities and Local Government prior to the 25 March 2016 deadline, committing the Fire Authority to ESMCP.
- 1.4 The East Midlands under the current, national programme timescales are due to transition by winter 2017 as one of the first areas nationally. Like all ICT projects, ESN is an extremely complex area of work, both in detail and project structure and these timescales are under frequent review.
- 1.5 East Midlands Fire Services have established a regional programme board with representatives from all Services and ACFO Parkin as the lead officer on behalf of the East Midlands Fire. An Area Manager is seconded from Lincolnshire as the regional Fire programme manager, with a major day-to-day role on behalf of the East Midlands and works closely to the ACFO.
- 1.6 ACFO Parkin attends Regular Fire Customer Group (FCG) meetings; this forum is the sounding board for the Fire sector to feed into the national programme team within the Home Office.
- 1.7 Alongside the ESN work, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) have already commenced work as part of the previous Authority agreed ICT strategy to demonstrate compliance with the Public Services Network (PSN) as this will better prepare the Service to deliver ESN and a team have been recruited to discharge the highlighted actions for PSN compliance.
- 1.8 PSN compliance will ensure that the Service has a robust ICT infrastructure, with greater levels of security; this will require additions to policies and procedures, but more crucially, a change to working practices for all members of staff to maintain compliance.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 An Information Technology Health Check (ITHC) has already been completed by an external supplier on the Tri-Service Control partner networks; this forms the basis for the remediation work each Service needs to complete prior to connecting to the ESN.
- 2.2 This check has been funded by the Home Office and work is now on-going with Home Office accreditors to see which elements of remediation work may be funded centrally; however, initial indications are that elements are highly likely to fall to individual Services to fund.
- 2.3 Fire are still unclear as to the scope of work required to enable connection to the ESN or whether this will be the same as PSN; significant variation in the work and timescales to achieve compliance may be highlighted in future months. For example, if PSN is required this could take up to two years and circa £500k in funding to deliver, the regional programme manager is working with individual Services and our regional point of contact for the Home Office to provide the clarity necessary.
- 2.4 NFRS are not unique, a large number of Fire Services nationally also face the same issue of not having PSN compliance already; however, a central government perception exists that Services would have PSN and this further applies pressure on the programme budget to fund local Services to gain compliance.
- 2.5 Short notice periods for Services to reply to the Home Office programme requiring a financial commitment, places pressure on established governance arrangements and members will appreciate these are beyond the control of the Service as this is a major nationally led project. While this is not anticipated as likely to be a frequent issue, Members should be aware that the national timescales may require decision outside planned committee meeting cycles; officers will ensure this is kept to a minimum wherever possible.
- 2.6 Regular updates will now be provided to inform members of actions taken by officers ensuring that NFRS are seen to fully support the national timescales and the commitment agreed to by the Authority in the sign off.
- 2.7 A Service project team has been set up to deliver ESN locally and this will be under existing arrangements for project management, led by the Area Manager Corporate and supported by teams across the organisation, the Central government funding allocated to NFRS will be used to assist the project in delivering ESN.
- 2.8 Currently a number of phases in the national programme are behind schedule; however, no overall slippage has been announced that will extend the target date for delivery to commence across the East Midlands beyond 2017. This slippage is beyond the control of the emergency services, but has been included in the regional and local risk register and will be closely monitored.

- 2.9 The demands placed upon NFRS are significant and the national slippage may mean a tighter delivery schedule for the East Midlands, placing pressure upon resources, the internal project team will keep this under review and ensure the Service is able to meet that demand.
- 2.10 Any consequences for not meeting timescales are unclear for local Services, but these potentially have major financial implications nationally for the Home Office programme and could mean these are shared with ESN partners throughout the life of the contract.
- 2.11 Services are not expected to transition from the current Airwave system to ESN unless they have the confidence and assurance that the ESN will provide the necessary resilience for emergency services to communicate effectively and secure the safety of its staff.
- 2.12 Clear collaboration opportunities exist in the delivery of ESN across the East Midlands, including procurement, equipment installation and long-term systems management. This is a key expectation of the government programme to ensure that commercial benefits are delivered both nationally and locally. The East Midlands ESN Fire board are working closely to identify opportunities and the regional programme manager is working with their Police counterpart to expand emergency service collaboration.
- 2.13 The National Audit Office (NAO) have now published their report into the national programme highlighting key areas of concern, these have been divided into commercial risk and technical risk. For example, it is estimated that the financial cost of the national programme running over by one year could equate to £475 million and the current lack of replacement devices means the emergency services are yet unable to know what functionality ESN will provide and leave a reduced period available to ensure resilient communications are tested and available where needed.
- 2.14 A recent national planning event was hosted at NFRS headquarters to consider the current national programme timescales and results from the event are to be taken back to the Home Office team for consideration and discussion with key suppliers. The business change leads for Police, Ambulance and Fire have been asked to address concerns that the original business case made to Authorities within the sign off pack and detailed earlier in this report will not be met.
- 2.15 Given the level of complexity and risk potential, officers will provide updates at future committee meetings to ensure members have sufficient overview of progress and assurance that NFRS continue to be engaged and deliver ESN safely.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 An earmarked reserve of £200k has already been established for the work required to prepare for PSN compliance, this will be monitored as the Service receives greater clarity over future costs of ESN and how they will be divided between government and the Authority.
- 3.2 No reply has been received yet from Home Office as to what funding will be received to fund the remediation work following the ITHC and this will remain a key risk.
- 3.3 The ESN programme will only fund the like for like replacement of the current Airwave infrastructure e.g. radios, although Services are able to fund any additional elements of functionality themselves. The current level of clarity as to what replacement devices will be available and what services can be accessed through these will continue to impact on the Authority's ability to plan for the future financial impact of ESN.
- 3.4 The Authority will continue to receive transition funding from government for the preparation and implementation, for FY2016/17 £52k has been received and will go some way to fund the personnel required to deal with the work demands.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report does not present any immediate implications, but the ESN programme does have requirements for staff training and these will be addressed as part of the implementation phase across the East Midlands and offers potential opportunities for wider collaboration.
- 4.2 Future resources may need to be established to maintain compliance for connection to the Emergency Services Network and Public Services Network requirements that will provide national assurance. Business cases will be made within the Services existing policy framework and reported to the Authority should the need be identified.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken because this report does not amend existing policy or service provision.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The ESN programme presents a high-risk potential for the Authority dependent on external factors beyond its day-to-day control, the main issue being slippage at a national level (5 to 10 months in the NAO report) and the expectation that Services will still be able to deliver in reduced time.
- 8.2 On-going Tri-Service Control implementation issues have a direct implication for NFRS and its Tri-Service partners to be able to connect to ESN and impact of national slippage upon NFRS are being dealt with under existing governance and project management arrangements.
- 8.3 Service Risk Manager is engaged with ESN and has already reviewed the East Midlands ESN risk register, it is further included within the corporate risk register.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Require a further update report at next quarter's committee meeting.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER