



**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:** 28 April 2017

**Purpose of Report:**

This report provides an update on the progress of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) programme by Nottinghamshire Fire and 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 (March 2016) 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 An update report was initially presented to the November 2016 Policy and Strategy committee meeting and highlighted that further reports would be provided at subsequent meetings to ensure that the Fire Authority is fully briefed on the ESN work as a critical national project.
- 1.5 East Midlands fire services have an established regional programme board with representatives from all Services and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) as the lead officer on behalf of 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 with the ACFO.
- 1.6 The Area Manager Corporate leads on behalf of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) project structure, co-ordinating key roles across the organisation and works closely with East Midlands colleagues to seek opportunities for mutual support to deliver the ESN.
- 1.7 The ACFO 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.
- 1.8 Alongside the ESN work, NFRS has 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.

- 1.9 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) was completed by an external supplier on the Tri-Service Control partner networks; this formed the basis for the remediation work each Service needs to complete prior to connecting to the ESN and the Service has recently received its funding to support transition.
- 2.2 Since November's report NFRS has been in discussion with the ESN central programme team to consider the ITHC, the remedial works required a Section 31 grant and this has now been allocated to NFRS for £791K. More detailed work needs to take place to understand the amounts received and how they will fund each element of the ITHC to prepare the organisation, and officers will be working closely with the regional programme lead and Home Office to ascertain a more detailed understanding.
- 2.3 Monthly reporting is now in place nationally to the central programme team and this itemises the progress each user organisation is making to deliver ESN locally and offers a good benchmark to NFRS to ensure they remain on track for transition. This process has also been used to register the areas still awaiting guidance from the national programme team to enable work to be completed locally, as yet this is not adversely affected progress, but does present future risk the longer the Service awaits decisions and guidance.
- 2.4 The Home Office has confirmed that the ESN code of connection would be applied and this would seek to be at a level that the current Airwave system applies. Formal confirmation has still not been received as to what the scope will be and given this position NFRS continues to address this area with its PSN work stream. This approach is considered to be appropriate to address risk and ensure the organisation has a standard to work towards.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 It has been reiterated by the central programme team that 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.

- 2.7 Clear collaboration opportunities exist in the delivery of ESN across the East Midlands, including procurement, device management, training, equipment installation and this is a key expectation of the government programme to ensure that commercial benefits are delivered both nationally and locally.
- 2.8 As fire lead for the East Midlands, the ACFO has regular meetings with the East Midlands Police lead and they are in the process of instigating a research exercise to consider long term opportunities, beyond transition.
- 2.9 Following national planning events, timescales have been amended so that transition has moved from Autumn 2017 to mid/late 2018, however a number of key milestones will still need to be met, specifically the availability of hand held and vehicle mounted devices.
- 2.10 In recent weeks the central programme team have issued new guidance in relation to 'enrolment' and requested each user organisation sign up to these. This has presented a number of concerns for user organisations and collective legal advice has been received to inform how enrolment should be approached. It still remains the final decision of the Chief Fire Officer to ultimately recommend transition to ESN.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 An earmarked reserve of £200k has already been established for the supporting work required to prepare for PSN compliance, this will be reviewed as the Service works through its remediation plan.
- 3.2 The ESN programme will only fund the like for like replacement of the current Airwave infrastructure – eg: radios – although Services are able to fund any additional elements of functionality themselves. Clarity is still required as to what replacement devices will be available and what services can be accessed through these devices, however the national plan has been reviewed and progress is being made on the availability of handheld devices for procurement, vehicle mounted devices are yet to have the necessary clarity for Services.
- 3.4 The Authority will continue to receive transition funding from government for preparation and implementation. In recent weeks the Service has received £891K, of which £791K is for direct costs for Nottinghamshire and £100k is for the region as a whole. As the programme moves forward a higher level of resources in the Service will need to be committed for which these will only be partially funded from government and this will need to be closely monitored, particularly as the programme timeline has been extended.
- 3.5 A recent request that potentially creates increased financial risk relates the 'enrolment' process, specifically the 'Framework Agreement' to which Home Office have offered some reassurance, however collective legal advice has been sourced on behalf of East Midlands fire services and will form part of the next update to committee.

## **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The ESN programme has 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, this area formed part of the March workshop and the outcomes of that are being collated.
- 4.2 ESN continues to place increasing demands upon most support departments, this has resulted in a number of fixed term arrangements being put in place, specifically across the Procurement, Corporate and ICT functions. These have all been delivered within the Service's existing policy framework, but it is anticipated that capacity will need to increase further in the build up to transition to ESN.
- 4.3 Consideration of the longer term implications of both PSN and ESN are already beginning to highlight additional skill requirements, for example, information security, which is currently being delivered with a fixed term appointment.
- 4.4 It is planned that a lead for all training will be regionally based and this post holder will need to liaise with NFRS in the coming months to ensure a consistent approach is taken and the learning and development team will need to consider ESN support as part of its business plan.

## **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 crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal 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 – eg: Autumn 2017 to mid-2018.
- 8.2 Tri-Service Control implementation issues have a direct implication for NFRS and its Tri-Service partners to be able to connect to ESN and the

impact of national slippage upon NFRS is being dealt with and additional resources are being committed to existing governance and project management arrangements.

- 8.3 The Service Risk Manager has engaged with ESN and has previously reviewed the East Midlands ESN risk register, it is further included within the Corporate Risk Register, which has been reviewed and informed Service department leads to ensure risks are communicated and work is planned to manage and or mitigate risk.
- 8.4 Regular project meetings are led by the Area Manager Corporate and these monitor changes in any areas of risk and update both the Service project and inform the regional lead to monitor progress made by Nottinghamshire.
- 8.5 Members should be aware that the ESN places a demand upon the organisation and 'Programme Governance' is a key risk highlighted within the latest update to the Corporate Risk Register and officers are obliged to monitor the capacity of the Service to ensure they deliver upon its commitments.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

A collaboration workshop has now taken place, sponsored by the East Midlands Police and Fire strategic leads which included all East Midlands Police, Fire and Ambulance representatives. Initial outcomes of the workshop are now being collated and these will be reported to the strategic leads for consideration.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the contents of the report and agree to receive further updates as the project develops.

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

None.

John Buckley  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**