



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

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

# **TRI-SERVICE CONTROL UPDATE**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 28 April 2017

**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 8 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.
- 2.2 As previously reported, the project has faced slippage, however the main mobilising system has been in operation across the three 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 culminated in the production of a comprehensive proposal to rectify all of the 38 outstanding critical problems and issues. However, since that agreement, a series of unexpected system failures have delayed any future major changes to the project until it can be demonstrated that it can deliver a stable system and maintain a consistently good level of service.
- 2.4 In order to achieve this, several key objectives have been agreed by the Strategic Board before further enhancements would be permitted to take place. These are:

- All changes to the system are to be scrutinised to ensure that they have been tested, within the limits of the current test capability, and assessed for their risk to the FRS and system;
- A period of sustained good service must be demonstrated;
- The existing training systems will be reconfigured and enhanced to create a testing area where any new, fixed or enhanced functionality can be examined in detail for their impact, before moving them to the 'Live' service;
- An end to end view of the operational service will be documented as the basis for further developments, to be prioritised based on benefits to the Tri-Service.

- 2.5 To support this amended approach and deliver the Strategic Board's objectives, a new Project Manager has been appointed. They will work with the existing teams under a revised governance structure which will look to deliver the key work streams to achieve a stable and resilient command and control system. The internal project structure for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) will remain the same with a lead officer responsible for the Tri-Service project on behalf of NFRS.
- 2.6 Engagement from Systel has improved significantly since the last report, and a concerted effort to review the outstanding fault logs/requests has reduced the number from 450+ to 125. Monthly progress meetings with Systel began in April and the project team are exploiting new in-service video conferencing facilities between France and Nottingham to improve communications between the teams.
- 2.7 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 three fire controls outside of the control or remit of Systel and the local Support Services.
- 2.8 As part of future works to assist with the Emergency Services Network (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. The initial findings are that the three Service networks are well designed and have not produced any concerns. However, a number of improvements will be recommended to increase the network performance and provide future resilience benefits.
- 2.9 Discussions have taken place regarding the remaining improvements and developments to be rescheduled once the full operational design has been created. This means that the project will continue into the 2017/18 financial

year, and that the programme is currently not in a position to be formally closed. Possible areas for future development include:

- Dynamic cover tool;
- Electronic incident management system;
- Replacement incident reporting system;
- Ability to make adjustments to individual operator positions for equality reasons.

- 2.10 As previously reported, on 15 January 2016 the Finance and Resources Committee approved the redesignation of the fire control collaboration earmarked reserve of £220k to support further development of the system 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 ESN projects.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 Within the overriding principles of the Tri-Service Control programme, the solution should be more cost effective than the aggregate of the previous provisions for all three Services. This has been achieved and an estimated long term annual saving of £1.1 million has been reported to Central Government.
- 2.13 To provide surety, a Tri-Service agreement was signed by the three 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 three participating Services has met monthly to provide scrutiny and oversight, and will continue to operate during the remainder of the contract.
- 2.14 The Tri-Service Strategic Board have now stopped meeting formally with colleagues from West and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services (who are also implementing the Systel product). This was as a result of the two projects being too diverse in their requirements. Meeting Systel at the same time was not achieving a balanced delivery against the individual requirements of each Service. Liaison continues with West and South Yorkshire to ensure the UK product is developed consistently and the supplier is better managed to deliver against expectations.
- 2.15 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.

- 2.16 A joint meeting is held bi-weekly with Head of Control, ICT Project Manager, Heads of ICT and Systel to review progress and approve any proposed major changes to the system.
- 2.17 Throughout the programme, the Service has benefitted from support and guidance from control and mobilising specialists seconded to the Chief Fire Officers Association National Resilience and funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, 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.
- 2.18 Across the three 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. A communications plan is currently under revision, however a better end user focused interaction with staff has improved morale and information exchange in the Control Rooms.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The main financial implications are identified within the body of the report, however between the three 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 additional key 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**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report as it is only intended to provide an update to Members on the progress of a project.

### **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 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. A full risk assessment has been undertaken by the new project manager.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

The three organisations are working together well, and notwithstanding that there are issues with the system, significant savings and improved operational resilience have already been realised.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the contents of this report and the progress made with the Tri-Service Control Programme.

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

None.

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