



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: 10 November 2017

Purpose of Report:

To provide 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 FRS. An Area Manager is seconded from Lincolnshire as the Regional Fire Programme Manager (RPM), 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 strategic leads to feed into the national programme team within the Home Office. The ACFO has recently taken chair of the Regional Programme Manager Forum (RPMF), which brings together all national fire programme managers with meetings currently being hosted in Nottinghamshire.

- 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. This will also provide confidence in NFRS as a trusted partner, as it seeks to look for future collaborative opportunities.

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 continues work through all outstanding actions to support transition.
- 2.2 Since April's committee report, NFRS has been in discussion with the ESN central programme team to consider the ITHC as the remedial works required a Section 31 grant and was allocated to NFRS for £791K, including contributions for the tri-service control function. Officers are liaising with the regional programme lead and Home Office ESN accreditors to ascertain a more detailed understanding.
- 2.3 Monthly reporting for NFRS is now in place back to the central programme team and this itemises progress the organisation is making to deliver ESN locally and offers a good benchmark for 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. Members should be aware that the national timescales for transition are again under review, with a revised national plan available in the coming months, this is highly likely to see further delays.
- 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. The central programme team requested formal sign off from the Service to this code of connection, however, the detail of the code of connection is still not available for officers to consider and NFRS's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) remains unable, at this time, to recommend sign off to the Chief Fire Officer.
- 2.5 Regardless of this position, NFRS continues to address this area with its PSN work stream. This approach is still considered appropriate to address risk and ensure the organisation has a standard to work towards and is not seen as a reason to delay transition given the expected national delay.

- 2.6 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. The revised business case and transition plan when realised will be key to the Authority being better placed to consider any implications.
- 2.7 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. Home Office continue to re-affirm this stance and as such does not increase risk to the Authority on this point.
- 2.8 Clear collaboration opportunities exist in the delivery of ESN across the East Midlands, including procurement, coverage assurance, device management, training and equipment installation. This is a key expectation of the government programme team to ensure that commercial benefits are delivered both nationally and locally.
- 2.9 As fire lead for the East Midlands, the ACFO has regular meetings with the East Midlands Police lead and they are currently considering recommendations for collaboration prior to a future report being presented to Authority.
- 2.10 The central programme team have recently consulted upon ‘incremental approach’ to transition and the regional manager is working with their peers to better understand potential consequences. This may see proposed changes to order of transition for emergency services and the East Midlands is scheduled to be the second region under the current national plan. Officers will also monitor this closely as this could create additional or increase current risks for the Authority.
- 2.11 At a recent Fire Customer Group meeting it was communicated that the original ESN business case is now under review along with the national transition plan to which all User Organisations work to locally. On behalf of East Midlands FRSs, the ACFO has asked that confirmation be given that any outcome of the business case review be shared with Fire Authorities as a matter of urgency. The business case forms the basis under which the Authority signed up to the principle of transition to ESN in March 2016.
- 2.12 Increased anxiety in relation to future funding is now being shared with the central programme team from across the emergency services nationally and the impact this has upon each user organisation in its ability to plan longer term.
- 2.13 During November the Public Accounts Committee will again be held to focus upon the ESN programme and will be monitored by officers to understand any implications for NFRS and reported to members as appropriate.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 An earmarked reserve of £200k was established for the supporting work required to prepare for PSN compliance, this is now seeing significant spend against it and will be kept under review 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. As per numerous previous reports, clarity is still required as to what replacement devices will be available and what services can be accessed through these devices. The national plan has been reviewed and some progress is being made on the availability of handheld devices for procurement, however, fixed/vehicle mounted devices appear to remain a problematic area in relation to what will be available and when.
- 3.3 The Authority will continue to receive transition funding from government for preparation and implementation. However, the latest payment is delayed due to the scrutiny required and ministerial sign off, this is still expected in the next few weeks. This aspect should be of particular interest to committee as it works towards reducing budgets and continues to place a degree of uncertainty for the Authority to best manage resources. Members should also take note of the current query for the central programme to confirm what is meant by ‘time-based’ vs. ‘activity’ based funding and where any new burdens, for example, ESN service management, transfers from a nationally funded model to locally funded model, officers are working to gain clarity on this matter.
- 3.4 As previously reported, the programme of work has increased placing demands upon the Service, these will only be partially funded from government and this will need to be closely monitored, particularly as the programme timeline extends and is highly likely to be extended further following another national plan review being completed. This theme of technological demand continues to increase pressure on the service and will form part of a future paper to committee.
- 3.5 The recent announcement from the central programme team to review the national plan and business case, with the likelihood that a further delay will result clearly means funding will be required beyond the previously timescales. Officers will be working with the ACFO and regional programme manager to ascertain future funding commitments and updates will be included in further reports to the Policy and Strategy committee.

- 3.6. On behalf of the East Midlands FRS, the ACFO has been asked to initiate a full review of the regional programme structures and approach, to ensure they are fit for purpose to assure transition to the ESN and provide value for money. This work is expected to follow behind the national fire gateway review being led by the NFCC central team, progress will be reported to members on its completion in early 2018.

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 have now been collated and being discussed with police and ambulance services to consider.
- 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 and members will need to consider longer term implications as further delays are anticipated.
- 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 An East Midlands lead for training has now been identified from Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, who will be liaising 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 and delivery of the proposed national training strategy for ESN.
- 4.5 Delays to transition timelines have a potential to impact upon the retention of employees and in some organisations, has seen a delay in appointment to posts that will support transition to ESN. This is under review in NFRS and is dependent upon future funding decisions that the Authority may need to consider, balanced against the need to deliver ESN.

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 and more recently indications are now later than previously reported.
- 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. With the East Midlands programme review exercise being initiated the review of risk will be included in that review to inform members in a future report.
- 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. A previous report already highlighted a new item of potential risk as ‘Incremental approach’ and officers have again sought clarity on what implications this may have.
- 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.
- 8.6 With the continued delay in transition timelines and funding, it is recommended that the risk of ESN to NFRS is seen as increased and the ACFO will look to ensure that this is reflected in the Services governance arrangements. The CFO will receive information directly through the NFCC and these will inform the Services position in future.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A collaboration workshop took place sponsored by the East Midlands Police and Fire strategic leads which included all East Midlands Police, Fire and Ambulance representatives. With work between Police and Fire offering the most potential at this stage.
- 9.2 Initial outcomes of the workshop have now been collated and five areas of potential collaboration, including training, device management, coverage assurance, and procurement and equipment installations have been reported and reviewed by the strategic leads. Theme leads for each area are now required to develop more detailed business case for consideration, it is envisaged that these will be drafted by early 2018.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this 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