



**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:** 02 February 2018

**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 originally completed by an external supplier on the Tri-Service Control partner networks; this formed the basis for the remediation work each Service needed to complete prior to connecting to the ESN and the Service continues work through outstanding actions to support transition. Due to delays, additional ITHCs will be required, funding for these are likely to be funded by NFRS.
- 2.2 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, uncertainty over the re-plan continues to frustrate progress in some respects, however, focus will remain upon the command and control areas.
- 2.3 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, as per numerous previous reports, the detail of the code of connection is still not available in detail for officers to consider and NFRS's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) remains unable to recommend sign off to the Chief Fire Officer. It was anticipated that newly recruited information security specialists within the central team would be able to offer advice in this respect, they have since left the ESN programme.
- 2.4 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 and significant national delay.

- 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. The revised business case and transition re-plan when realised will be key to the Authority being better placed to consider implications.
- 2.6 It has been reiterated by the central programme team, including the November 2017 Public Accounts Committee, 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 specific point.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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, the additional factor of re-plan could also see this amended.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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. Decisions over extending employment contracts are one example that UOs are now discussing due to uncertainty around timescales.
- 2.12 During November, the Public Accounts Committee once again sat to focus upon the ESN programme, assurances were provided at that committee that no emergency service will be required to transition before ESN is proven, therefore not placing communities and employees at risk.

- 2.13 A new area for Members to consider on the basis of the significant delays will be any requirement to replace communications equipment before the delivery of ESN and the impact this may have upon the Authority's financial planning. This aspect was specifically mentioned in the Public Accounts Committee, in that, these are considered a matter for UOs standard delivery of services, however, uncertainty from ESN clearly has a direct impact upon the governance of the Service, for example, should it make longer-term procurement decisions that later require additional funding due to ESN delays.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 An earmarked reserve of £200k was originally established for the supporting work required to prepare for PSN compliance, significant spend against it has been used in conjunction with government transition funding to address remediation plans. This has focused upon assuring the infrastructure of NFRS is ESN ready, increased timescales will clearly protract the financial implications for the Authority.
- 3.2 The ESN programme has always set a clear expectation that government 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. At present only one handheld device has satisfied the national procurement process, therefore reducing choice for User Organisations (UOs), it remains unclear on the options for vehicle mounted solutions.
- 3.3 The Authority will continue to receive transition funding from government for preparation and implementation. However, the 2017/18 payment was only received at the end of November 2017 following ministerial sign off. This aspect is of concern as the Authority works towards reducing budgets and continues to place a degree of uncertainty for the Authority to best manage resources.
- 3.4 Members should continue to take note of the 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.
- 3.5 As previously reported, the programme of work has increased demands upon the Service, these will only be partially funded from government and this continues to be closely monitored, particularly as the programme timeline extends and is highly likely to be extended further following the national re-plan exercise. This theme of technological demand continues to increase pressure on the service and will form part of a future reports to the Finance and Resources 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 many 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 and was further included in the ICT update report to the Finance and Resources committee 19 January 2018.
- 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 Continued delays to transition timelines have increasing 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 as 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 an escalating high-risk potential for the Authority solely dependent on external factors beyond its day-to-day control, the main issue being slippage at a national level following announcement that a re-plan is underway, anecdotally this may result in at least a 2-year delay.
- 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, this will continue to place a protracted demand upon the organisation, with a separate report to the Finance and Resources committee 19 January 2018 also highlighted the risk from ESN and likely resource requirements to better manage this specific risk.
- 8.3 The Service is engaged with ESN regionally 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. Within the East Midlands a programme review exercise is being initiated to consider the structure in place and whether this is fit for purpose and offers value for money. The review of risk is a continuous exercise and used to inform Members in reports.
- 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 transition' 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. As the project delays continue and financial pressures impact upon the Service this risk will require close scrutiny.
- 8.6 With the now significant delay in transition timelines and funding, it is recommended that the risk of ESN to NFRS is at an increased level and the

ACFO will look to ensure that this is reflected in the Services governance arrangements. The CFO will also receive information directly through the NFCC and these will inform the Services position in future.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 A second collaboration workshop sponsored by the East Midlands Police and Fire strategic leads is scheduled for February 2018, building upon the 2017 workshop. Five areas have been developed over the last year, including: training, procurement, devices, installation and coverage assurance, business cases are progressing in all areas.
- 9.2 Following discussions with the East Midlands strategic police lead, agreement has been reached to introduce a joint strategic board and terms of reference are currently being finalised. NFRS are fully engaged in the regional approach and lead on the coverage assurance themed area of work.
- 9.3 Future collaboration between Fire and Police will prove complex, not least given this spans 10 separate organisations, however, Members will be aware of the statutory duty to collaborate following introduction of the Policing and Crime Act 2017. This collaboration will not hold any one of the organisations to mandatory inclusion and any future commitments will be reported to Members for consideration and decisions as appropriate.

## **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**