

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

23RD APRIL 2007

1 FIRECONTROL AND FIRELINK PROJECT – UPDATE REPORT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT Members note that Communities for Local Government (CLG) has advised Fire and Rescue Authorities of the updated timelines for the implementation of the Regional Control Centres (RCCs) in England and as a consequence of this delay the arrangements for enhancing the proposed interim Firelink communication solution provided for each Fire and Rescue Service (FRS).
- 1.2 THAT Members note that the planned cut over to the RCC for the West Midlands Region will now commence in January 2010 and be completed in September 2010. This Brigade's planned cut over date is March 2010.
- 1.3 THAT Members note that the planned Firelink installations in the Brigade are due to commence during August 2007 (Control Room) and be completed during September 2008 when the communications equipment is installed in the last operational vehicle.
- 1.4 THAT Members note that the CLG has established a Task Force to work with FRSs to enable appropriate interim Firelink communications facilities to be provided that meet the Brigade's operational needs and requirements.
- 1.5 THAT Members note that in view of the extended period that the Brigade's existing Command and Control system will be required to operate within, it will be necessary to undertake a further risk assessment to establish what measures are required to ensure that a resilient system is able to be maintained for a period of at least 4 years up to March 2011 (12 month post the cut over to the RCC planned for March 2010).

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1 This report is submitted to inform Members of the background for the CLG revising the timelines for the implementation of the RCCs, including the dates identified for the cut over to the RCC within the West Midlands Region and of the agreement to enhance the interim Firelink communications solution to meet the needs of FRAs.
- 2.2 This report also seeks to advise Members that in view of the extended timelines for cut over to the RCC it will be necessary to undertake a further impact risk assessment to determine what measures are necessary to ensure that a resilient command and control system is maintained by the Brigade.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Government (CLG) has recently signed the Infrastructure Services (IS) contract for the National FiReControl Project, which has been awarded to EADS Defence and Security Systems. This contract is worth over £200m over eight years to provide the IS for the Fire and Rescue Service. This represents a major milestone in the delivery of the FiReControl project and demonstrates the Government's commitment to the delivery of this project.
- 3.2 Now that the contract has been let, CLG has been able to provide further clarity on the national position for the planned roll out of FiReControl and Firelink within the nine regions of England. The information provided by CLG sets out the detail of the planned dates for the installation of the Firelink Communications equipment within each FRS Control Room, plus the first and last vehicle installation dates. CLG has also provided the planned cut over dates for each of the nine regions to the RCC on a FRS by FRS basis.
- 3.3 In the case of the West Midlands Region, the planned cut over dates to the RCC are set out below:

Cut Over Date to RCC

Staffordshire	January 2010
West Midlands	March 2010
Shropshire	May 2010
Warwickshire	July 2010
Hereford and Worcester	September 2010

- 3.4 CLG has acknowledged that the period of operation for the interim Firelink communication solutions to be provided for each FRS Control Room will now vary from 25 to 46 months up to the point of cut over. This position is far longer than had commonly been assumed.
- 3.5 Therefore, in view of the above, CLG has agreed that the standard interim Firelink communication in Control Rooms may need to be enhanced for some FRSs and that they will take responsibility for undertaking these enhancements and meeting the costs of appropriate enhanced interim solutions.
- 3.6 A Task Force has been established by CLG to work with FRSs to understand which option will provide the most appropriate interim solution to meet their specific operational needs and requirements. The Brigade has already advised the National Firelink Project Team that it is not happy with the interim proposals and has requested an early meeting to resolve the issue.
- 3.7 Further details about the RCC transitional plan arrangements and the implications for the Brigade will be advised to Members as they become available.
- 3.8 Members are asked to note that in view of the extended timelines for the planned cut over to the RCC it will be necessary to undertake a further risk assessment to determine what measures are necessary to ensure that a resilient command and control system is able to be maintained by the Brigade for a period of at least 4 years up to March 2011. A further report will be submitted to Members as soon as practicable.

4. **TRADE UNION CONSULTATION**

The Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) has been advised of the revised time lines for the cut over to the RCC. Members of Fire Control have been informed of the planned date for cut over to the RCC during face to face meetings or by the provision of a briefing note.

5. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out as this report is submitted for information only.

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report as the costs of enhancing an appropriate interim Firelink communications solution for the Brigade will be met by CLG.
- 7.2 The outcomes of the risk assessment identified at paragraph 3.8 may give rise to additional funding being required to maintain the resilience of the Brigade's current Command and Control System. This will be the subject of a future Committee report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CLG Correspondence to Chairs and Chief Fire Officers - 4th April 2007

F. J. E. SHEEHAN
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER