

DELEGATED DECISION BY THE DEPUTY LEADER – 7 MARCH 2016
EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME
(ESMCP) SIGN OFF

Report by the Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

1. As a result of the end of contracts for the current Airwave communication system between 2016 -2020, the Government has been developing an integrated communication system for the three Emergency Services in the United Kingdom. This has been Home Office led and Fire and Rescue Services have been represented through CFOA and DCLG.
2. The programme has recently finalised the procurement of the new system (Emergency Services Network – ESN) which will be provided by two commercial companies (Motorola and E&E) and will utilise the Public Services Network via mobile network operators using 4G LTE for the transmission of voice and data traffic between emergency service resources.
3. The contracts have now been awarded and DCLG are seeking sign up from individual Fire and Rescue Authorities that wish to engage with the programme. DCLG have provided indicative costs for each FRS based on predicted costs and mapped these against the current and potential future costs of the current system.

Operational requirements

4. The specification of the new system has been developed with full engagement of the UK Fire and Rescue Service and ensures that there will be no reduction in the system performance.
5. The airwave network will not be available post 2020 when the existing contract ends and the radio bandwidth is no longer available. The only other options will be to procure a local communications system, which will not be interoperable with the other emergency services or for any deployment outside Oxfordshire. A local solution will not provide the security and primacy of use that the national programme will deliver.
6. Each Fire and Rescue Service will be able to set its own cutover criteria so we would not transition to the new network until we are satisfied that the new system meets the operational requirements for a communications system for Oxfordshire.

Significant Risks

7. Oxfordshire are third in the transition programme to cutover in Jan 18 and being this early in the programme means there is still significant work to start now to ensure readiness – *DCLG will provide transition funding from April 2016.*
8. The Technology is still in development and there is no working example of how the ESN will integrate with the mobilising system and the level of assurance that the market will be able to provide devices and vehicle installations - *The Home Office programme team are engaging with suppliers to ensure readiness , the risk sits at a central programme level as we will not commence transition until these issues are addressed.*
9. Coverage, the mobile network provider (E&E) have provided predicted coverage maps but these are only predicted and we will need to assure ourselves that the coverage is compliant with the user specification – *We will work with TVP and SCAS as their need for local coverage is in excess of our user requirements. We will not be required to cutover until our cutover criteria have been met. These criteria will be set by the individual Fire and Rescue Services.*

Financial and Staff Implications

10. DCLG will provide transition support funding to the South Central region and to OFRS. It is not certain whether this funding will be enough to support transition. We have not received the funding allocation for OFRS for the hardware refresh and the provision of the access to the ESN through an internet service provider.
11. OFRS has allocated the reserve funds that were in place for the refresh of the airwave devices to the ESMCP programme. This prudent financial planning should ensure that any local financial risks are mitigated.
12. The Sign – off pack only gives predicted costs and there are a number of assumptions that are included in these figures as the additional detail is not currently available. It does show that the switch to ESN will be cheaper than the existing net cost of the airwave system.
13. There will be no grant for ESN from DCLG/ HO so any changes in the future cost of the steady state delivery will need to be met by the Authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. **The Deputy Leader of the Council is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **support the Chief Fire Officer’s decision to participate in the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme. Subject to:**
 - (1) **all cutover criteria being met by the programme;**

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- (2) full breakdown of current and future charging mechanism being provided prior to transition;
 - (3) clarity of contract provision based on a “like for like” basis;
 - (4) costs not transferred to the FRS prior to sign-off of cutover criteria;
- (b) require the Chief Fire Officer to report to the Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue should the above criteria (1-4) not be met.

DAVID ETHERIDGE

Chief Fire Officer

Background papers: ESMCP Sign Off pack

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February 2016