

**SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
14 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**FIRE SERVICE COMMAND AND CONTROL ROOM – THE  
FiReControl AND FiReLink PROJECTS**

**Report by Assistant Chief Officer Colin Thomas (Oxfordshire's Senior User  
for the FiReControl and FireLink Projects and Joint Regional  
Project Board Member)**

**Purpose/Background**

- Regular update for Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee.

**Project Summary**

- General assessment – The Fire Minister announced a further rescheduling (delay) of the FiReControl project in July. As a result the planned date for Oxfordshire's cutover of Control Room service to the South East Regional Control Centre (RCC) is now July 2012. This is immediately before the start of the Olympics which is being considered within the South East Regional project. The further delay raises the level of risk of maintaining our current Control Room service as much of our software and some equipment is now aged and we expected the RCC to take over these services much earlier. We have informed CLG that we will re-evaluate our risks over the coming weeks and give them a considered response once we have had a chance to examine the issues in conjunction with other Fire and Rescue Services. FireLink Phase B, the fitting out of our vehicles with the new digital radios was completed in June. The radios are working well but some general issues remain that have been highlighted to the project team and reassuring responses received. However, the issue of lack of clarity of the usage charges for the system remains a concern. Current planning information indicates that FireLink Phase C, the early fitting of mobile data terminals in our appliances is likely to start in April 2010. The national Microsoft Project plan, which has been out of date for several months, has now been issued by CLG. We will re-cast our plans in line with it and link this into our assurance process over the next 2 months.

**Ongoing Work**

- **Consultation** The Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) that runs the RCC has started the formal consultation process with representative bodies and staff. We are fully engaged with this to ensure our staff have access to all the information and that their views are represented to the LACC during the consultation period. The Company is adamant that this process will be a genuine consultation where views expressed are carefully

considered before the terms and conditions for employment and other wider issues are finalised.

- **Early Station End Equipment (ESEE)** The enabling work to upgrade the electrical infrastructure in our fire stations in preparation for the Early Station End Equipment (ESEE) continues apace with 22 stations completed at the time of writing and by 14 September we expect to have completed the programme. The installation of the FiReControl equipment in our fire stations is planned to start on 11 January 2010 and should take around 12 weeks to complete. We have now been advised that the contracted support for the system is now in place; we had delayed our installation until formal support was available, so we are confident in the dates given. We met with the contractor on 12 August 2009 to start the detailed planning for this installation programme.
- **Data Migration** We continue work to migrate our Gazetteer Data using the CLG provided Data Conversion and Migration Toolkit 1 (DCMT1). A long awaited update for this system is planned for 28 September which will update the National Land and Property Gazetteer information (NLPG) which is significantly out of date making the work to match our data to the new system extremely tedious. A project to provide an on-line up-to-date version of NLPG on our OCC network has been agreed by ICT. This will allow us to align much of the other data we must migrate for RCC use to the NLPG before we start the process, greatly streamlining the work. Nonetheless, the Gazetteer data will take us about a year to prepare for the RCC using our one operator. To give a scale to the task we face, the Gazetteer is only one of 11 data sets we need to process.
- **Ways of Working (WoW)** This activity is the work to align the processes and procedures across all the FRSs in England to allow effective regional and national working. This is essential for the RCCs to work. Paperwork / information to support this is now flowing from CLG and it is hoped that this process will now proceed as there is much to be done. To try and move the work on the SE region CFOs initiated work to start to harmonise processes across our 9 FRSs. As a result, the SE Operations Process and Procedures Working Group has been set up and has already produced an agreed regional set of incident types and associated Pre-determined Attendances (PDAs). Working is now underway to achieve the same harmonised results for Standard Operating Procedures. This work should assist the Ways of Working activity. This is a wide ranging element of the change programme which will be very resource intensive.
- **Internal Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)** A significant number of activities, many currently carried out in our Control Room, will not be supported by the RCC. In addition the level of information that the RCC will need to accurately mobilise our resources to incidents will demand much more data than we currently use. We therefore **need** to determine the most effective organisation to meet these requirements, essential for effective FRS management. To that end, all the SE FRSs have been tasked to carry out a BPR of the necessary processes to determine how these tasks should be

met, regionally, sub-regionally or within the FRS. It is planned to have carried out the initial BPR by November 2009. We have also raised a project with ICT to look at ways of integrating data from our current disparate data systems and identifying the best way to interface electronically with the RCC to reduce the level of manual input that would otherwise be required. We seek results from this latter piece of work by mid 2010.

- Early Deployment of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs)** Oxfordshire requested inclusion in the early deployment of MDTs by the FiReControl project. These computer-in-cab devices will initially carry mapping, chemical hazard and auto crash recovery information, greatly increasing the level of information to fire crews at incidents. To this we will add our local special risk information on specific properties and businesses where additional hazards exist and Standard Operating Procedures that crews use to deal with specific dangers and types of events. All this will help enhance the safety of our personnel and the public. This system is major improvement in providing a safe system of work for operational staff and will be of particular interest to the Health and Safety Executive who are undertaking an inspection of the Service in November. The initial installation is scheduled to start in April 2010 and will take approximately 11 weeks. Detailed planning has commenced to ensure a smooth roll-out without disruption to our operational capability.

Colin Thomas  
 Assistant Chief Fire Officer - FiReControl & Firelink Senior User

## Glossary

DCMT1 (2)	<i>Data Conversion and Migration Toolkit 1 and 2 – Computers and software to translate our data to RCC standard formats</i>
EADS	<i>European Aerospace and Defence Systems – lead FiReControl company.</i>
ESEE	<i>Early Station End Equipment replacement programme</i>
IRS	<i>Incident Reporting System</i>
JIG	<i>FRS Joint Implementation Group</i>
MDT	<i>Mobile Data Terminal</i>
PDA	<i>Pre-Determined Attendance at incidents</i>
WoW	<i>Ways of Working (this used to be called Convergence – the process of harmonizing procedures across FRSs)</i>
ACO	<i>Assistant Chief Fire Officer</i>
DCO	<i>Deputy Chief fire Officer</i>
FCM	<i>Fire Control Manager</i>
BPR	<i>Business Process Re-engineering</i>
NLPG	<i>National Land and Property Gazetteer</i>

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