

**SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**5 JULY 2010**

**FIRE SERVICE COMMAND AND CONTROL ROOM**  
**The FiReControl and FireLink PROJECTS**

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

**Project Summary**

- **Project Review** 'The Coalition: Our Programme for Government' document includes a statement that the coalition 'would not force the regionalisation of the fire service'. Despite requests at all levels for clarification it is still unclear what this means for the FiReControl project. However, in the absence of clarity, and in view of the Select Committee Report that recommended continuation of the project, we continue working to the current plan. We do, however, anticipate that there will be a further delay to cutover, following the CLG project planning review, but this will require ministerial approval and the timing of any announcement is unknown. We are using a planning assumption that Oxfordshire's cutover will be early to mid 2013 (the current planned date is July 2012) which is within our current contingency planning window. Further delay will require reconsideration of current resilience arrangements for our current control function.
- **Consultation** South East Consultation arrangements continue. We continue to ensure that Control Room staff and Representative bodies are fully engaged in this process with our HR Partner and Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACO) visiting each watch. We are also in the process of carrying out a Role Matching exercise to allow our current control room roles to be compared with the equivalent jobs in the RCC. "Reasonableness" interviews for all staff, part of the TUPE<sup>1</sup> process, will be delayed until January 2011 (we were expecting these to take place in November 2010).
- **Early Station End Equipment (ESEE)** The installation of the FiReControl ESEE equipment at all our fire stations was completed in March 2010 and the project formally closed at the Joint Implementation Group meeting in May. This has been a successful programme which has replaced our former obsolete equipment with a modern system funded by central government under the FiReControl project. It not only improves the resilience of our current mobilising chain but also reduces both the workload and risk later in the project when the full Station End Equipment is deployed (ESEE includes most of the major components which will not need to be changed).
- **Current Resilience** Work to upgrade our existing call concentrator system (the software and hardware that "presents" and integrates incoming telephone and radio calls to the Fire Control Operator) continues with the target of having the replacement system in operation by the end of the year.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981'

- **Data Migration** We await the arrival of the Data Conversion and Migration Toolkit 2 (DCMT2) which is essential to allow both the migration of the bulk of our data into RCC compatible formats and to put in place on our network the software to allow wireless update of our MDTs. This is planned to complete testing in July but we do not anticipate having it available to be installed on our network until October at the earliest. Delays in this area of work are of concern and continue to be raised as major project risk at the regional level.
- **Ways of Working (WoW)** The first round of South East workshops to review documentation for the Combined Control Centre Operations (COPS - the new CLG process for Ways of Working) has been completed. A second round is now underway and we continue to support this important work to rationalise, where appropriate, process and procedure across the fire service. In addition, we are fully engaged in the SE Policies and Procedures group (SEOPAP) which is working to harmonise Pre-determined Attendance and Standard Operating Procedures across the 9 South East FRSs. The SE is very proactive in this area and other regions are showing great interest in the considerable progress that has been achieved so far.
- **Early Deployment of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs)** The roll-out of Mobile Data Terminals in our appliances continues to plan with the initial hardware deployment phase expected to be completed on time (16 July 2010). The detailed planning we put in place for vehicle movements, fitting and testing has once again proved beneficial with no degradation of fire cover to the public. The training programme for our fire fighters will be completed on 9 Jun 10 and feedback has been positive. We plan to implement phase 2 of this project in October which will add specific risk and Standard Operating Procedures data. At the same time a project with OCC ICT to put in wireless connectivity in fire stations to allow remote update of information which is vital to ensure that the information provided to crews is accurate. We expect this to be in place by the end of June.
- **South East Fire Regional Control Centre LTD (SEFRCC) Activity** The SEFRCC Board continues to push ahead with the development of the terms and conditions of employment for the Regional Control Centre employees and the subsequent Consultation of the policies as they are produced. At the last meeting the Board adopted the Health and Safety policy and procedures, prepared with the specific assistance of Oxfordshire and overseen by Cllr Rodney Rose who has lead responsibility for this area.

A major activity in the New Year will be 'Reasonableness interviews with all affected staff in the region which will also give staff a chance to consider the options open to them and to express their preferences. This is a very important piece of work and will give the first firm indication of the numbers of staff who anticipate moving to the RCC.

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Finally a copy of a presentation, which has previously been given to the SEFRCC Board, is attached to this report for Members' information. It gives an insight into the general arrangements for the RCC and the staffing and call volumes anticipated.

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