

Replacement Command and Control System Implementation

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Executive Summary

This report updates members on the current position of the Command and Control (C&C) System implementation project and requests an additional increase to the revenue budget prior to award of contract.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Note the report; and
- b) Agree the additional uplift of the revenue budget as outlined in section 9 of the report.

3 Background

In February 2021, a draft options appraisal report was developed through the joint Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) and Hereford & Worcestershire Fire & Rescue Service (HWFRS) Fire Alliance Board.

The options appraisal considered the future provision of both Services' control rooms and their respective C&C systems.

In December 2021, the Fire Alliance Programme Delivery Board agreed a business case outlining that future provision would be best served by operating from two control rooms utilising a single C&C system.

This led to the development of a draft output specification for a replacement C&C system and the establishment of a capital scheme. Both Services agreed to fund £1.5 million each for a replacement C&C system. Provision was made in the 2022/23 capital programme and agreed by the Fire Authority in February 2022.

Throughout 2022, an output specification was developed, and peer reviewed. During this period, Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB) and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) approached the Fire Alliance and formally requested inclusion in the tender process.

Due to improved resilience, supporting Grenfell recommendations and maintaining / improving cross service working arrangements, it was agreed to include these two Services as optional lots within the tender documents.

A 3-month tender process commenced in January 2023 which resulted in two bids being submitted for evaluation. Following an evaluation exercise conducted by officers from the four Services, Motorola was awarded preferred supplier status in June 2023.

Work is currently taking place to finalise the contract with a sign off date in December 2023.

4 Elements of the C&C System

A C&C system consists of three main interdependent elements, namely:

Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) - mobilises resources via pagers / alerters / station end equipment. The system is used to update status of resources and input incident related information to record incident decisions.

Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) – provides telephony and radio system functionality which enable operators to make and receive telephone calls and transmit and receive radio messages to and from the incident ground.

Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) – ruggedised computers mounted in mobile vehicles that can receive mobilising information, risk information and guidance for operational crews.

5 Current Position

The Service currently operates a CAD and MDT system supplied by SEED (University of Hull) and an ICCS supplied by Motorola. The scope of the C&C project is to replace the current CAD system and to upgrade the existing ICCS onto a fully cloud based platform. This will give the four Services the ability to operate across a single platform, offering enhanced resilience and seamless fall-back arrangements.

In terms of the alliance between SFRS and HWFRS, the solution will offer a more reliable, flexible and resilient system with increased functionality. It can work independently (or together at times of high demand, critical incidents or spate conditions) to offer increased capacity, mitigate risks and improve control room provision across both service areas.

Within the tender submission there is also an option to replace the current MDT solution. However, further evaluation needs to be undertaken to determine whether the optional MDT solution offers an improvement on the current provision of MDT's. Officers are conducting further research to determine if the optional MDT solution is worth pursuing.

If this is a viable option, a business case will be developed as it will require further funding and increase the scope of the C&C implementation project.

Financial Implications

As the analysis of the tender submissions has progressed, it has become clear that the initial outlay is much lower than the capital programme approved; around £400,000 will be required to implement the system, rather than the £1.5m initial scheme.

Conversely, the original scheme did not recognise any ongoing revenue costs, and the main expenditure on the project will be subscriptions and hosting.

As a result, members are asked to consider the revenue consequences of the project and approve the additional funding required which is shown in the financial section below.

Due to the reduction in debt charges for the cost of the system, there may be resources available to create a new capital scheme for MDTs, should this be the recommended outcome following further evaluation.

6 Conclusions

Subject to members agreeing changes to the funding, it is envisaged that the contract will be signed off in December 2023.

7 Capacity

A C&C Board and Project Team have been established to provide governance oversight and support the implementation.

Following contract award, Motorola will issue a project implementation plan. Project management methodology will be adopted to ensure the appropriate level of resourcing is maintained throughout the project lifecycle.

8 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

The shared system will accommodate each control room acting independently and when required it can be switched via a profile to provide resilience. This will enable control rooms to take calls, mobilise and manage incidents on behalf of each other.

Services will maintain their own policies and procedures for mobilising, but the system will provide an opportunity for best practices and learning to be shared across all the Services.

A memorandum of understanding will be established to maintain this shared solution and guidance provided for new resilience arrangements.

9 Financial Implications

The table below shows the funds currently in the budget for the C&C and ICCS, and the costs associated with the replacement system.

	Yr1 24/25	Yr2 25/26	Yr3 26/27	Yr4 27/28	Yr5 28/29	Yr6 29/30	Yr7 30/31
Current budget	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000	115,000
New costs	200,000	203,000	311,000	321,000	331,000	342,000	352,000
Additional funds required	85,000	88,000	196,000	206,000	216,000	227,000	237,000
Increase per year	85,000	3,000	108,000	10,000	10,000	11,000	10,000

There are associated project costs for the replacement of the system; these will total £300,000 over two years, and Members are asked to approve the funding of these from reserves.

Replacement of the system was originally presented as a capital project (£1.5m) and a scheme with associated debt charges was included in the capital programme. The estimated upfront costs are likely to be around £400,000, therefore there will be a saving in debt charges within the revenue budget.

10 Legal Comment

The contract documents are currently with Legal Services for review.

11 Communications

A communications plan will be put in place as part of the project implementation plan, following contract award.

12 Community Safety

The collaboration with the four services will provide enhanced resilience, particularly in spate conditions providing the ability to scale up the control room, answer calls, and mobilise resources for any of the locations within the collaboration.

The system will provide robust guidance and procedures to support operators in mobilising for all services within the collaboration.

13 Equality Impact Assessment

An e-EQIA has been completed previously.

14 ICT

The new system will impact on ICT due to the integration of systems. The project implementation plan will be used to assess what is required and what needs to be completed.

The new solution will be cloud based and supported by Motorola; however internal ICT support will still be required.

15 Public Value / Service Delivery

The new system will support service delivery by providing enhanced resilience to the control room. For example, during a major incident or spate conditions the resilience provided by the other services would mean that service delivery would continue without interruption.

16 Training

Full training will be provided as part of the project implementation plan this will include all control staff, ICT and area command where appropriate.

17 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

18 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.