

**Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
12 April 2012**

Improving WFRS Fire Control

**Interim Report Describing Progress and Rationale since Cabinet
13 October 2011**

1. Recommendation

That Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the report and resolve to support the approach being taken to improve the future provision of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) Fire Control.

2. Background

- 2.1 Cabinet received a paper on 13 October 2011, setting out potential options for the provision of an emergency Fire Control service for WFRS. Cabinet directed that WFRS would develop a separate business case for options 2 and 3 of the paper to be brought back to Cabinet for future consideration.
- 2.2 Both options 2 and 3 incorporate joint working with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS). Members will be aware that Cabinet endorsed the exploration of a strategic alliance business model to allow close working and joint strategic commissioning arrangements with NFRS and the development of a full business case. Whilst the joint working in relation to fire control is not dependent on the development of a strategic alliance it supports the principles.
- 2.3 Option 2 would provide a Fire Control facility within each County, but linked to provide resilience and a cost effective and efficient solution.
- 2.4 Option 3 would provide a single Fire Control Room for both Counties with the second Control Room unstaffed for fallback purposes only. Currently both counties each have a primary and a secondary Control Room - four Control Rooms in total.
- 2.5 WFRS finds itself in a critical position with its Fire Control systems, due to their age and risk of failure. The systems should have been replaced in the early/mid 2000's but were held together pending the arrival of the Regional FiReControl project which was cancelled by Government in December 2010.
- 2.6 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) opened a bidding process for Fire and Rescue Services to secure funds against an £81M grant to support all English Fire and Rescue Services, who like Warwickshire, have found themselves in a difficult situation with ageing systems.

- 2.7 Both WFRS and NFRS were successful in a coordinated joint bid to secure £1.8M of funding from DCLG for each service which was the maximum available. The funding cannot be used for premise related costs.
- 2.8 Command and Control systems for Fire and Rescue Services are very specialised with only a small number of suppliers with proven systems that they can offer. Northamptonshire have engaged Fortek to provide them with their VISION system. Fortek are also the suppliers of the current WFRS system.

The Service has an exemption to tender to procure the same system as Northamptonshire on the basis that for future joint working the systems will need to be fully integrated with each other and that the technology is well proven.

- 2.9 The new technology will provide for a great deal of extra functionality over the ageing systems and the new, modern system offers additional benefits not currently available. These include an upgrade of communication systems carried on fire appliances that reduce cost to the service and support management of incidents.

3. Options

- 3.1 Inline with requirements of Cabinet, officers are working up a business case for the provision of arrangements detailed in option 2 of the report submitted on 13 October 2011. It will be necessary for the two services to complete a phased migration in order to work together effectively and on that basis DCLG funding has been provided for option 2 only. Once option 2 has been implemented work will commence on a business case for option 3.

Detailed work is under way to develop the business case for option 2 and it is anticipated that it will include the following:

- 3.2 Option 2, phase 1 (imminent) - will provide for a data link between Northamptonshire and Warwickshire's control rooms to enable joint support arrangements. The Services will also upgrade their communications and mobilising systems in parallel, with joint procurements and mirroring of technologies. Work to develop this link is in progress and should be in place by summer 2012.
- 3.3 Option 2, phase 2 (late 2012-2015) - Provides two permanently staffed control rooms delivering efficiency by removing secondary control rooms and adjusting staff levels. This phase requires a period of harmonisation to provide full inter-operability i.e. the ability for Northamptonshire Control to mobilise and command Warwickshire resources and vice-versa.

Additional 'remote buddy' arrangements with a distant FRS would further enhance resilience by providing fire control support during, for example, large scale flooding incidents which could affect both Warwickshire and Northamptonshire simultaneously. Provisional discussions with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to explore the viability of this provision are in progress.

Detailed work between the two fire and rescue services will be required to ensure that this phase is delivered effectively. New technology will be

procured and embedded and ways of working determined in order to ensure successful joint operation.

- 3.4 Option 3 (2015 onwards) - Once the platform of a shared control facility is tested and proven, an assessment will be made of the potential to migrate to a single control room facility. This is subject to the approval of a business case at that time. This development could provide WFRS and NFRS with a single primary control room and single secondary facility which would be un-staffed. The challenge of moving to this option should not be underestimated. It will seek to provide many of the benefits that the National Fire Control project failed to achieve before its cancellation by the present Government.

4. Recommended approach

- 4.1 Option 2, Phase 1 (imminent to end 2012) - WFRS continue to upgrade the existing control room and align resources, policy and process with NFRS to enhance the joint resilience and efficiency of the Control function.
- 4.2 Option 2, Phase 2 (2013 to 2015) - WFRS will move towards joint resilience between two primary controls, upgrading as necessary, and dispose of the 2 secondary Controls.
- 4.3 Option 3 (2015) There will be an assessment completed (by NFRS and WFRS) to fully analyse the benefits of combining NFRS and WFRS into a single primary Control Room with a view to completing a business case in accordance with the requirements of Cabinet.

Appendix A of Item 5 – Indicative Project Costs

NOTE: Appendices A and B relate to the total project rather than just WCC's share of it.

The total cost of implementing the control project is £2,646,000 as detailed below. This includes software, hardware, and IT infrastructure - but not premises.

	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		Total	
	Capital £'000	Revenue £'000	Capital £'000	Revenue £'000	Capital £'000	Revenue £'000	Capital £'000	Revenue £'000
Data Centre - Robust and Resilient IT infrastructure	0	0	500	30	0	30	500	60
Systems replacement - End to end mobilising system refresh and enhancement	170	0	630	50	275	0	1,075	50
Data links - Enabling of shared working	0	0	0	15	111	0	111	15
Voice Communications Airwave Upgrade - Mobile data terminals integration with command and control	0	0	0	0	300	0	300	0
IT security code of connection compliance and implementation of security policy framework.	0	0	50	100	0	0	50	100
Project Management / Data preparation, alignment of business processes, policies and procedures.	0	30	0	130	0	130	0	290
Other Costs	0	0	0	0	0	95	0	95
Grand Total	170	30	1,180	325	686	255	2,036	610

Sources of Information - Airwave CFOA presentation, Supplier quotes, FiRe Control Call off catalogue, Current provision and FiReControl Financial returns.

Appendix B of Item 5 - Indicative Efficiency Savings

NOTE: Appendices A and B relate to the total project rather than just WCC's share of it.

- The table below details the savings that will be achieved during the transition to a fully linked control. Once fully implemented the linked control is forecast to deliver ongoing savings of £169,000 per year.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16 onwards
	Current Stand Alone Control £'000	Transitional Phase £'000	Apr - Jul 2013 Transitional Phase £'000	Aug - Mar 2014 Partially Linked Control £'000	Apr - Jul 2014 Partially Linked Control £'000	Aug - Mar 2015 Fully Linked Control £'000	Fully Linked Control £'000
Control Staff - FTE	18.5	18.5	18.5	16	16	13	13
Staff Savings - Reduction in FTE ¹	0	0	0	58	29	132	198
Staff Savings - Overtime ²				27	13	27	40
Data Links & Maintenance Costs ³		(42)	(26)	(53)	(26)	(53)	(69)
Total Savings	0	(42)	(26)	32	16	106	169

¹ Independent but fully integrated Control rooms enable demand led crewing matching staff availability to activity peaks.

² Overtime cover for training and sickness will be provided through global crewing arrangements.

³ Annual increased maintenance costs reduce from 2015 after the implementation of joint systems – reduction in maintenance costs.

11. Background Papers

1. CLG Consultation - Future of Fire and Rescue control services in England - 13 January 2011
2. WFRS response to consultation
3. Cabinet Paper - Proposals for investment in the Fire and Rescue Service in Leamington - 12 May 2011
4. SDLT Paper - Seeking SDLT approval to progress work surrounding Fire Control provision to the next stage exploring collaboration with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service - 20 July 2011
5. Cabinet Paper - Strategic Alliance - 8 September 2011
6. Cabinet Paper - Options for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service Fire Control Provision - 13 October 2011
7. Cabinet - Minutes of Meeting - 12 May 2011
8. Cabinet - Minutes of Meeting - 8 September 2011
9. Cabinet - Minutes of Meeting - 13 October 2011
10. Control and Mobilising Resilience - WFRS Bid to CLG - 4 November 2011
11. Control and Mobilising Resilience - Supplementary Paper to CLG - January 2012
12. CLG response to WFRS bid - February 2012

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