

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Community Protection Overview And Scrutiny**

Date of Committee **27th March 2007**

Report Title **FiReControl – Project Update**

Summary This report provides members with a summary of progress made towards opening a Regional Control Centre in the West Midlands.

For further information please contact:

William Brown Strategic Director of Community Protection and County Fire Officer Tel: 01926 423231 williamsbrown@warwickshire.gov.uk	Stephen Haynes Acting Head of Service Support Community Protection Directorate Tel: 01926 423231 stephenhaynes@warwickshire.gov.uk
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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers County Council 12th December 2006 Item 3

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s)
- Other Elected Members Cllrs Richard Chattaway, John Wells and Michael Doody
- Cabinet Member Cllr Richard Hobbs
- Chief Executive

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Legal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Sian Stroud |
| Finance | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Sally Bentley, Oliver Winters |
| Other Chief Officers | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| District Councils | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Health Authority | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Police | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Other Bodies/Individuals | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Michelle McHugh |

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Further consideration by this Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To Cabinet | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To an O & S Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To an Area Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Further Consultation | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny

27th March 2007

FiReControl – Project Update

Report of the Strategic Director of Community Protection and County Fire Officer

Recommendation

For the Community Protection OSC to discuss the report.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on recent developments in the FiReControl project.
- 1.2 The FiReControl project was started in December 2003 by the government as part of the 'modernisation programme' for Fire and Rescue Services in England. The strategic intent of the FiReControl project is to replace local Fire and Rescue Service [FRS] Control Rooms in England with nine new Regional Control Room Centres [RCC] in purpose built accommodation and equipped with modern technology.
- 1.3 Normally each RCC will handle emergency calls from its region. However the RCC's will be networked so that they will be able to automatically support one another during major incidents, periods of high operational activity and in the event of a centre failure.
- 1.4 The following high level activities will be performed at each RCC with the assistance of each FRS as necessary:
 - Call handling
 - Resource allocation to incidents
 - Control room incident management
 - Resource management
 - Maintenance of FRS specific and national data
 - Support for FRS planning
 - Business Continuity Planning – fallback arrangements
 - Business support and administration

1.5 The expected benefits of the project are detailed in the Department of Communities and Local Government [CLG] document 'Concept of Operations' [February 2006] and are as follows:

- Greater ability to use control centre capacity nationally
- Increased levels of security and resilience to ensure continuity of service
- Economies of scale in call handling and incident management
- To ensure that every FRS in England has access to operational capabilities and thereby improve the effectiveness of control room and frontline operations
- Facilitate and enable further change within the FRS

1.6 Members have received previous reports on the implications and progress of the FiReControl Project in the West Midlands as the project has developed at a national level. Most recently the County Council on 12th December 2006 received a report on the proposed governance arrangements for the Regional Control Centre and approval was given to establish a local authority controlled company, which would manage the West Midlands Regional Control Centre from such time as the Regional Control Centre is ready to become operational. This is discussed further below.

2.0 Strategic Context

2.1 Over recent years there have been a number of reviews that have looked at the future of Fire Control Rooms. In 1999, the government commissioned Mott MacDonald to carry out a review of fire control rooms, resulting in a report that was published in April 2000.

2.2 Further work was carried out in 2003 and Mott MacDonald updated their report 'The Future of Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms in England and Wales'. The outcome was the recommendation that the Fire and Rescue Service move to a network of Regional Control Centres.

3.0 Legal Context

3.1 The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities to "make arrangements for dealing with calls and for summoning personnel". After the completion of the project this will remain a duty for each FRA but they will be deemed to have discharged the duty by using the Regional Control Centre.

3.2 The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006 – 2008 states that:

"Fire and Rescue Authorities, through Regional Management Boards, must work closely with the Government to ensure that the phased transition from existing control rooms to the new control centres is integrated with the roll-out of Firelink and delivered by the end of 2009/10".

- 3.3 Each FRA remains responsible for discharging all its statutory fire and rescue obligations, under the proposed Regional Control Centre model. As each Regional Control Centre is to be established as a company, wholly owned and governed jointly by the FRAs within the region (and no other parties), the FRAs will be able to stipulate that the control room functions are discharged to the standards necessary to meet their operational requirements and statutory responsibilities.

4.0 The Outline Business Case for the FiReControl Project

- 4.1 The outline business case [OBC] was prepared by the ODPM in November 2004. The purpose of the OBC is to:

- Define the business need for Regional Control Centre's
- Identify and appraise the investment options
- Define the procurement strategy to be adopted
- Confirm that the project is affordable
- Confirm that the project is achievable

- 4.2 A full business case has not yet been issued by the CLG and is expected within the next few months following the contract award for Infrastructure Services. The full business case will be presented to members for discussion once it is available, and ultimately every FRA within the region must give detailed consideration to, and be satisfied with, the financial implications of the new Regional Control Centre before the West Midlands RCC can become operational.

5.0 Project Update

5.1 Accommodation:

- The RCC in the West Midlands is being built at the Wolverhampton Business Park and the anticipated date of practical completion is December 2007.
- The build is making good progress and the latest report from the developers is that the construction is on time.
- CLG announced in Fire and Rescue Service Circular 63-2005 that they will pay the running and lease costs of the RCC until completion of the migration period for the Region. The migration period refers to the period up to the date when the final existing Fire Control room in the region closes and the RCC is providing a full service to the region.
- It will be necessary for CLG to take the leasehold interest of the West Midlands RCC building if the FRAs within the region do not agree that the local authority controlled company should take the lease at the point that the building reaches practical completion. There are a number of factors that might inform the region's decision as to the appropriate time to take over the lease, such as awaiting the implications of the full business case and clarification of a number of other issues within the project at a national level. If CLG takes the lease in the interim, this will not prevent staff from FRAs within the West Midlands region from occupying the building, however.

- The photograph below shows a view taken from the main entrance to the site toward the main RCC building. It was taken approximately 4 weeks ago.



5.2 Local Authority Controlled Company:

- The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006 – 2008 states that Fire and Rescue Authorities must ensure the local authority controlled company [LACC] who will run the RCC is established in the West Midlands by 1st January 2007.
- The LACC was established within these timescale and the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Control Centre Ltd will be responsible for the operation of the Centre at Wolverhampton.
- It has been established with five directors, all elected members, each representing one of the Fire and Rescue Authorities within the West Midlands.
- The five Fire and Rescue Authorities that make up the West Midlands Region – Hereford and Worcester, West Midlands, Warwickshire, Shropshire and Wrekin and Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire all have an equal vote in the management of the company and the decisions the company takes.

- The County Council on 12th December 2006 gave its approval to the establishment of the company on the basis that decisions of significance to the individual Fire and Rescue Authorities would continue to require the unanimous consent of all the FRAs within the region (and hence could not be taken by the company without the agreement of all five FRAs). Such key decisions include the principles for sharing the costs and risk of the Regional Control Centre between the FRAs, deciding on staffing arrangements for the Regional Control Centre and agreeing a business plan and budget for the company. These issues have yet to be determined, largely due to the project's progress at the national level.
- A Members' Agreement is currently under discussion, which will set out in more detail the operation of the company as between the five FRAs and will make contractually binding the principle that key decisions (including those outlined above) are subject to the unanimous consent of all FRAs.

5.3 Infrastructure Services Contract:

- On Wednesday 7th March 2007 the Fire Minister Angela Smith announced that the contract to supply the infrastructure for the national network of nine regional control centres will be awarded to EADS Defence and Security Systems.
- The national contract is worth £200 million over eight years.
- EADS Defence and Security Systems will be responsible for building and running the systems that will be used within the RCC.
- The staff at the RCC will use these systems to:
 - Identify caller location
 - Determine the nearest FRS resource capable of dealing with the incident,
 - Mobilise the nearest resources to the incident
 - Transmit essential information directly to the incident ground via the fire appliance.

5.4 Project Timeline

- The exact date when we will close our existing Service Control in Leamington and start to use the services provided by the RCC is yet to be finalised by CLG. A transition plan issued by CLG detailing outline dates when FRA's will start to use the services of the RCC in the region is expected to be issued in April 2007 but will then need to be further analysed at a regional level to scope the full operational implications. Members will be consulted on the emerging timetable for transition.
- At this point in time it is anticipated that Warwickshire will transfer during Q3 of 2009/2010.
- A risk assessment of critical systems has been carried out for our existing Service Control and a business continuity plan has been developed to ensure that we continue to provide a resilient service to the communities of Warwickshire throughout the transition period.

- The cost of running, maintaining and decommissioning our existing systems is one that WFRA must continue to meet.

5.5 Financial Implications

- The ongoing financial implications of running the RCC have yet to be finalised by CLG as noted above, and have yet to be considered by individual FRAs which must be satisfied with the financial and operational arrangements before agreeing to transfer their control room functions into the new RCC arrangements.
- There will be a service charge to Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Authority levied for using the RCC. This level of service charge is dependant on RCC cost apportionment within the region and the amount of the national common services costs that are apportioned to the West Midlands RCC by CLG.
- CLG estimate that the FiReControl project will result in national savings of 30% [£20million+] on annual running costs however it is not possible to provide a local estimate of savings due to current lack of detail concerning RCC costs.

5.6 Impact on Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

- This project will see the closure of our existing Service Control. There are 19 personnel who will be directly affected by this project. A regional HR working group, which includes a representative from Warwickshire, is currently looking at a range of staffing implications arising from the proposed RCC arrangements. A number of staff may be entitled to transfer automatically to the new company under the TUPE legislation. Those staff who are not able to transfer would be entitled to redundancy payments unless the Fire and Rescue Authority can offer suitable redeployment opportunities within the County Council. Members will be kept updated on the staffing implications of the project as these develop.
- CLG have made a clear statement that the RCC will operate in a way that supports the delivery of our IRMP.
- However it is clear that in order for the RCC to work effectively there will be a requirement for significant changes to WFRS operational procedures, business processes, data management processes.
- We will also need to develop management and business protocols in order to ensure that our ongoing contractual relationship with the RCC is effective.
- CLG have made it clear that the scope of the activities carried out in the RCC will not mirror the full range of activities carried out by personnel in our existing Service Control e.g. Help-on-call will not be supported by the RCC.
- These out-of-scope activities will need to be moved out of the control operating environment and new ways of delivering the same service identified and implemented.

- This change management programme will need to be resourced with people with the right skills to deliver the required changes on time. It will result in the need to embark upon a detailed training programme in the new ways of working. It will also be necessary to carry out alterations to some of our IT systems that currently support service delivery as well as introduce new systems that provide an interface with the RCC.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 There is no doubt that the FiReControl project will have a significant effect on the people and processes of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service. The implementation of FiReControl will require the effective management of change across all departments. Further reports will be brought to members on the issues outlined above as the project progresses.

William Brown
Strategic Director of Community Protection and County Fire Officer

Shire Hall
Warwick
March 2007