Cabinet

8 April 2021

Fire Control Replacement Systems

Recommendations

That Cabinet

1. Approves the allocation of up to £1.86 million for the replacement of Fire Control Room Systems, as outlined in this report.

2. Authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to determine the allocation of funding as he considers appropriate between the Fire Transformation Fund and the Corporate Change Fund and in the event that any costs can be capitalised, the Capital Investment Fund.

3. Authorises the Chief Fire Officer to procure and enter into all necessary contracts to give effect to the proposals set out in this report on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   Fire and Rescue Service Control Room Systems (CRS) are fundamental to ensuring an effective fire and rescue service response to an emergency. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) is seeking £1.86 million investment to provide new CRS. The current systems - Capita Integrated Communications Control System - ICCS (DS3000) and Capita CAD (Vision 4) are past end of life and currently supported on best endeavours. This presents an ever-increasing risk to critical mobilising operations and is not a sustainable position longer term.

1.2   The need for a new CRS is also a fundamental and legislative requirement to enable WFRS to link to the central government's new Emergency Services Network (ESN) critical communications system. The new CRS solution procured, as one of the essential requirements, will ensure compatibility with the ESN system This will enable WFRS to embrace new and innovative technology and functionality to support essential functions.

1.3   The ESN will transmit fast, safe and secure voice, video and data across the 4G network and give first responders immediate access to life-saving data, images and information in live situations and emergencies on the frontline. ESN's high-speed mobile technology will mean communication between the emergency services will take priority over all other network traffic, even at peak times in busy urban locations. It will enable emergency services and

other first responders to share vital data, information and expertise quickly and securely from the frontline when it is needed most. There is a requirement on WFRS to comply with the Home Office (HO) national modernisation plan to replace the existing Airwave system used across police, fire and ambulance services in England, Scotland and Wales used for communications between control rooms with the government's new ESN system.

1.4 ESN will enable interoperability between all Blue Light services and partner agencies. This will enable the management of interdependencies with other partners, projects within WFRS and the region, and where possible seek efficient synergies. It will also greatly reduce the risk of cyber security vulnerabilities and downtime from failures and provide additional opportunities to optimise new applications and technologies leading to improved efficiencies in service delivery.

1.5 The move to ESN does not require individual emergency services to have the same control room systems but does require the ability to connect to and integrate into the new ESN. The current CRS in Warwickshire is unable to connect to ESN without significant upgrade.

1.6 An alternative option is to refresh the current legacy system. This has been considered however has been discounted as it would cost circa £1.5 million, but this would not provide the functionality, resilience and links to the national ESN project required.

1.7 A 'do nothing' option has also been considered. This option has also been discounted due to the significant operational risks that would be associated with retaining the existing control room operating system which is at end of life and would result in the system being run without the necessary systems maintenance and support in place. Any resulting failure of control and mobilising systems would result in an increase in the time taken to mobilise the correct resources (fire engines, special appliances and incident commanders) to an emergency incident. This is very likely to result in increased levels of damage to domestic and commercial property and could potentially result in increased severity of injury and or loss of life

1.8 The optimum solution to secure public safety and maximise resilience over the longer term is therefore to invest in procuring replacement CRS utilising the benefits of cloud technology and an integrated ESN roadmap. The proposal is to let a contract for a 5 year contract period but with flexibility to extend for a further period at the Council's discretion. It is acknowledged that with today's rapid changes in technology, ICT systems have a much shorter life span than previously and although innovation and flexibility will be critical factors in our selection it is likely that we will have the option to consider new technology which will be available in 5 years.

1.9 The new CRS will provide resilient and future proof functionality that meets the needs of WFRS whilst underpinning transformation, as well as aligning with the Council's Digital and Technology Strategy. It will enable operational and financial efficiencies with access to real-time data, resulting in streamlined

communications, reducing demand on control staff; improved availability and accuracy of information to ground crews at incidents increasing public safety; more efficient and dynamic use of resources resulting in improved response times; and reduced reliance on ICT support.

1.10 Supporting transitioning to ESN and the development of new ways of working will also allow WFRS to make the most of the latest technologies opening many areas of opportunity, including:

- Aligning with the WFRS property strategy to enable maximum flexibility in providing geographically remote, control room environments. Currently due to the extensive hardware and infrastructure within the control room it would be a complex and costly task to relocate. A cloud-based solution will provide the flexibility required by WFRS, in that it will facilitate any future relocation of the control room and minimise costs of relocation by relying on access to our secure network to connect to our cloud provider;
- Improved business continuity working e.g. operating from an alternative location in event of evacuation;
- Increased multi-level resilience, retaining incident response capability in the event of a control room IT system failure; and
- Opportunities to provide enhanced remote working.

1.11 This is a critical project and there are robust governance arrangements in place, with a skilled and experienced multidisciplinary project team, involving ICT, reporting directly to the Fire Continuous Improvement and Change Group led by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer. The project team will assess the most effective procurement route and evaluation criteria to be applied. The procurement will be based on an open, competitive process which will secure a value for money solution. Cyber security issues related to data being stored in the cloud will also be a key consideration for the project team and the stringent measures required to gain an ESN code of connection will ensure that the highest level of security standards are put in place.

1.12 A detailed bid has been evaluated by the Capital Investment Fund Technical Panel, consisting of experts from Finance, Legal, Property, PMO and Directorate Service Teams. The panel evaluated and endorsed the bid however it is recommended that revenue funding is sought to fund the procurement of the new CRS rather than capital due to the cloud-based functionality being procured.

2.   Financial Implications

2.1   The funding of up to £450,000 will be requested from the Fire Transformation Funding and the remaining £1.409 million for this scheme is requested from the Council Change Fund, which exists for investment in initiatives to improve

the internal systems, processes or structures within the organisation, to help it more effectively achieve its objectives through the organisation's Change Programme. Corporate Board has considered these proposals and supports the recommendation that Cabinet approves the allocation of funding for this initiative.

2.2   The balance in the Council Change fund is currently £4.756 million. There is a balance of £450,000 in the Fire Transformation Fund. The project is requesting £1.859 million for purchase and implementation of the cloud-based system, comprising of £1.62 million for software replacement and £0.239 million for backfilled/external staffing and legal charges to complete the project. This allocation also includes the first year of licence fee, while subsequent years will be funded through the service's core budget as allocated through the annual budgeting process. Once procurement is underway, WFRS and Finance will be able to establish if any of the cost can be capitalised and funded from the Capital Investment Fund, at which point the Council Change Fund can be refunded by the amount capitalised.

2.3   The bid includes a 10% contingency for project and software costs, so funding above the amount requested should not be required, but if this is the case in the future the service will look to reprioritise existing resources in the first instance; if this is not possible then approval of future funding will be brought forward to Members for consideration.

3.   Environmental Implications

3.1   The CRS will enable real time location, availability and mobilising of fire and rescue resources, leading to greater efficiency in the deployment of people and vehicle resources and reduced environmental impact. Where appropriate, any equipment decommissioned will follow the County Council's protocols.

4.   Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

4.1   Approval is sought from Cabinet to enable WFRS to commence procurement processes for the CRS as soon as possible.

Background Papers

None

	Name	**Contact Information**
Report Author: Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Ben Brook	benbrook@warwickshire.gov.uk
Chief Fire Officer	Kieran Amos	kieranamos@warwickshire.gov.uk
Strategic Director of Communities	Mark Ryder	markryder@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety	Councillor Andy Crump	andycrump@warwickshire.gov.uk

The report was not circulated to members prior to publication.