



**EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE
COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME UPDATE**

REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This report provides members with an update on the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

BACKGROUND

2. Members have received previous reports explaining how the ESMCP will replace the existing communications service delivered by Airwave with a new national mobile communication service for the three emergency services and the other organisations that currently use Airwave.
3. The new system will be called the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and it will take advantage of the latest mobile technologies to provide national critical voice and broadband data services. It is a cross-government programme hosted by the Home Office (HO).
4. Whilst there is an expectation that the Service will move onto the ESN, as there is no alternative option available that could provide the interoperability or resilience required; the Authority has not yet entered into a final legal agreement to use the network. However, the Authority has agreed the Services 'intent' to move to the ESN and as a result appropriate funding has been received from government to progress local project management arrangements and preliminary information communication technology (ICT) upgrade/development work.
5. Under the original project plan fire and rescue services (FRS) were grouped into regions that would transition onto the ESN sequentially with the target date for all emergency services in the UK to have transitioned onto the network being December 2019. The north east region was initially expected to have completed transition by late 2018; however, the Authority were informed, through the last update report, that transition for all regions was to be delayed by at least nine months.
6. Since the last Authority update there has been some significant changes within the programmes expectations regarding timescales and transition capability. This paper details the current position and the implications for the Authority.

CURRENT POSITION OF THE ESMCP

7. The cost of the ESMCP and the delays in implementing it have been subject to scrutiny by the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee. The committee have been particularly concerned with the contingency arrangements the programme has in place as the delays to transition (detailed in section 5 above) will result in the existing Airwave contract expiring prior to the 'go-live' date for ESN. If this situation were to occur, it would leave the UK emergency services without a resilient communication system.

8. Motorola, who now provide the Airwave communication system, have been in discussions with the government for some time over extending the Airwave contract. Whilst they are confident that, with the appropriate upgrades, the current Airwave system can be extended, Motorola will need sufficient notice to upgrade the network/equipment prior to March 2020 when essential elements of the Airwave network reach their end-of-life.
9. As a result, the ESMCP is going through a 're-set' period; a new Programme Director has been appointed, Bryan Clarke, and he has asked for four options for future programme delivery to be considered. These are:
 - **Option A** to deliver all the technology at once and transition sequentially (current plan);
 - **Option B** an incremental approach with customers adopting ESN technologies when they are delivered and when the customer is ready for them;
 - **Option C** realising the benefits of a data only solution on ESN and look to source an alternative option to deliver mission critical voice services; and
 - **Option D** close down the ESMCP and extend the Airwave contract.
10. It is acknowledged that option A will be challenging to implement and impossible to deliver within the original timescales; therefore, an extension of the existing Airwave service contract will be required. Negotiations with Motorola over the length of the extension are on-going with potentially a 6-10 years extension being required. With an extension to the Airwave system it is felt that adopting an incremental or evolutionary approach (Option B) will be a more realistic option and is therefore the preferred choice. With Option B the ultimate aim would be for Services to use both data and critical voice services over the ESN.
11. After consideration, Option C was not seen as offering any significant advantages over option B, particularly with a 6-10 years extension of Airwave services.
12. Work is now being undertaken to fully explore the feasibility of Option B. This work will identify the appetite of the emergency services to adopt elements of the ESN; such as mobile data whilst still maintaining Airwave. Consideration will also be given to the associated resourcing and financial factors required to implement Option B.
13. It is anticipated that the work described in section 12 above will take approximately two months. The outcomes from this will be presented to the Home Office Permanent Secretary for a decision on whether to progress this option.
14. If the decision is to progress Option B, the re-planning work, the financial information and the Airwave extension costs will be included in a revised ESMCP business case which would go for ministerial approval in late autumn 2018.
15. Option D does remain a possible option dependant on the outcomes of the feasibility work that will be undertaken on Option B and the full programme costs identified in the revised business case.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (CDDFRS)

16. The delay in the implementation of ESN has a potential impact in four specific areas:
 - Funding for CDDFRS staff employed within the Service on the ESN project;
 - Funding for ICT upgrades required by the Service to implement ESN on an incremental basis;
 - Funding for the Service's use of the current Airwave network; and

- Funding for the Service's Airwave equipment (radios etc) that are coming to their end-of-life.
17. Government have provided an agreed level of funding to each individual Service to cover project management costs up to the end of March 2018; however, it is not anticipated that any further funding will be received for this purpose until the revised business case is approved in autumn 2018. This is not a concern for the Service as it has allocated the funding received in a very effective and efficient manner, utilising existing specialist staff (IT, command and control etc) on an ad-hoc basis with only one individual specifically allocated to the project team. Therefore, the Service will be able to sustain this post with no detrimental effect on the Service's budget until further funding is allocated from the programme in the autumn.
 18. The Service have identified the upgrades required for various ICT systems to enable transition onto ESN and funding has been received for this from the programme. This funding, along with the remaining project management funding is held as part of the Authority's earmarked reserves.
 19. The Service currently receives a Section 31 Airwave grant to cover the usage of the current Airwave network, with the 2018/19 grant received in April 2018. The letter that accompanied the grant indicated that the grant will continue in 2019/20; however, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) are in discussions with the HO to confirm that any potential changes to future arrangements do not financially disadvantage FRS when an extension of this service is agreed with Motorola.
 20. Work is also being undertaken by the NFCC ESMCP team regarding the refresh of the end-of-life Airwave equipment (radios etc) and the relevant support contracts for these.

NORTH EAST FRS GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

21. In 2014 a Regional ESMCP Project Board was established with a representative from each of the four north-east (NE) FRS. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) of County Durham and Darlington FRS (CDDFRS), as a member of the national working group for the ESMCP, has chaired the regional board since its establishment. CDDFRS are deemed the lead authority within the region; therefore, CDDFRS receive the regional funding provided by the programme and it is for the Board to determine how this funding should be spent/distributed.
22. With the imminent retirement of the DCFO a new regional representative for the national working group was required and this role will now be taken by the regional board member from Tyne and Wear FRS; who will also chair the regional board. However, CDDFRS will remain as the lead authority.
23. Keith Lazzari, CDDFRS' Head of Corporate Services has been appointed as CDDFRS representative on the regional board and will act as substitute for the new regional chair and represent the NE region at the national working group as and when required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

24. Members are requested to **note** the contents of the report.