

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 DECEMBER 2021	REPORT NO:	CFO/072/21
PRESENTING OFFICER	CFO		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DEB APPLETON	REPORT AUTHOR:	BILL ELLIOTT
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	DEB APPLETON IAN CUMMINS ED FRANKLIN KEV PILKINGTON (TELENT) HYWYN PRICHARD MARK RICE		
TITLE OF REPORT:	ESN READY AND DISPATCH COMMUNICATIONS SERVER INSTALLATION		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	BUSINESS CASE TO HOME OFFICE REF: CAP-2021-11-25VR11.3
	APPENDIX B:	PART 1: PROPOSAL FOR ESN DEPLOYMENT VR11
	APPENDIX C:	PART 2: D3000 TECHNICAL REFRESH PROPOSAL VR3.1
	APPENDIX D:	PART 3: DCS UPGRADE – ISSUE 4
	APPENDIX E:	FUNDING BREAKDOWN

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval to continue as a Home Office Emergency Service Network (ESN) Assurance Partner (AP) and approve Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) funding of an ICT technical refresh as part of the Business Case to make Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) ESN Technically Ready.
2. To inform Members of the need to install Dispatch Communication Server (DCS) as a requirement to continue use of Airwave beyond its expected end date due to delays to the national ESN programme.

Recommendation

3. That Members;
 - a. note the Business Case to make MFRS ESN Ready and that the Home Office will provide funding for some aspects of the associated Capita ESN Technically Ready Activities;
 - b. approve an ESN Ready Capital Scheme for £661,600 in 2021/2022, of which £195,658 will require MFRS funding. Note, however, this may reduce if the Home Office commits to funding a greater amount of the Telent expenditure;
 - c. continue to support MFRS in working with the Home Office as an Assurance Partner on this important national programme; and
 - d. approve a MFRS ICT Capital budget growth of £108k in 2022/2023 to install DCS.

Introduction and Background

4. **The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)** is a Home Office led national project which aims to deliver an Emergency Services Network (ESN) to replace the existing Airwave communications network used by the police, fire and rescue service and ambulance services in the UK.
5. In July 2020, following a series of discussions with the Home Office, MFRS accepted the invitation to become an Assurance Partner (AP) along with West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service (FRS), Cheshire Constabulary, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary and the Ambulance Radio Programme.
6. The role of an Assurance Partner (AP) is to assist in the development and testing of the ESN and associated devices as well as benefit from the enhancements and features the new technology aims to deliver.
7. Since becoming an AP, MFRS has led on a number of successful trials of early ESN products and has hosted numerous User Engagement events, with the next major test event taking place in the New Year.
8. MFRS was the first Emergency Service to connect a dedicated test environment to the ESN which, at the request of the Home Office, has enabled us to support other agencies including Scottish Police and Transport for London in their user training and operational testing activities over the last 12 months.

9. As an Assurance Partner MFRS will continue to play a major role in the development and user testing of the ESN and associated devices. Following the enhancements required within the Control room to become ESN Technically Ready, MFRS would coordinate and lead on a number of key aspects of the Operational Evaluation phase.
10. The Operational Evaluation phase aims to confirm the products' suitability within a single sector and multiagency operational environment. The outcomes of which would be changes to our way of working in order to benefit from the enhanced features of the ESN communications platform.
11. This then means that MFRS is in a position to benefit from extra ESN Programme support whilst carrying out ESN Ready Activities, which other FRS will not benefit from.
12. Further, MFRS will benefit from being the only FRS engaging with suppliers at this time and as such will not be subject to potential delays at a later date, as suppliers support a greater demand from all FRS.

ESN Technical Readiness

13. The next phase of Assurance Partner activities will require our Fire Control room systems to become ESN Technically Read" and be fully integrated into the ESN network.
14. At the request of the Home Office, our Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) & Integrated Communication Control System (ICCS) supplier, Capita, has worked with telent to develop a set of costed proposals which aims to deliver:
 - a. An ESN Technically Ready Fire Control solution
 - b. Upgrades, including hardware refresh, which will improve system availability and reliability
 - c. The replacement of end-of-life Airwave equipment with a DCS solution to maintain existing communications until Mass Transition by all Emergency Services in 2025
15. These costed proposals along with our Business Case (Appendix A – D) were submitted to the Home Office during November for review with a view to the Home Office providing funding.

Outcome of the Home Office review of the submitted Business Case

Parts One & Two

16. The Home Office has agreed to approve and fund certain elements of the proposal within Parts 1 & 2 which they consider essential to make our Fire Control and supporting systems ESN Technically Ready. (see Appendix A – Business Case to the Home Office). These funds will be drawn-down from the Home Office.
17. The Home Office has also identified elements of Part 2 citing that they constitute equipment which would form part of the normal roadmap of equipment refresh for MFRS. These elements are considered to be Business As Usual (BAU) by the Home Office and will not be funded.
18. Although not considered essential for the role of Assurance Partner, MFRS considers that it is appropriate to refresh these BAU elements ahead of their end-of-life to improve the reliability, minimise support intervention and reduce the risk of critical equipment failure during the Operational Evaluation period from 2022 to 2025.
19. Therefore, undertaking a technical refresh at the same time as being an Assurance Partner is beneficial to MFRS as it aligns resources with the National Programme, but also ensures that technical work that would otherwise be completed at a separate time that could clash with future ESN programme requirements, is completed at the same time as the Assurance Partner work, minimising risk to the Authority.
20. MFRS is therefore seeking potential ICT Capital budget growth of £195k in 2021/2022 to support ESN Technically Ready activities earlier than originally planned, identified as DS3000 Technical Refresh. Note, however this may reduce if the Home Office Fire Directorate commits to funding a greater amount of the expenditure for necessary Telent services..

Part 3

21. Delays in the national ESMCP programme will result in the existing Airwave equipment at SHQ reaching end-of-life, before its replacement with ESN.
22. Proposal Part 3 (DCS Upgrade – issue 4) details the work required to install DCS, which would ensure continued access to the Airwave network.

23. The Home Office have rejected our request for funding the DCS installation citing that it constitutes equipment, which would form part of a normal roadmap of equipment refresh for MFRS. The DCS is considered BAU by the Home Office and will not be funded.
24. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) have indicated that Fire & Rescue Services should install DCS before end-of-life December 2022. MFRS considers it appropriate to refresh these BAU elements at the earliest opportunity.
25. MFRS is therefore be seeking ICT Capital budget growth of £108k in 2022/2023 to install DCS.

Equality and Diversity Implications

26. After consultation with MFRS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), it has been determined that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for these technical improvements is not necessary. This is because the improvements are (1) part of the larger ESN project and (2) fundamentally focussed on the background hardware, software and processes only.
27. The improvements are therefore EDI 'neutral', and users will not notice a difference beyond minor improvements to audio quality and system response.

Staff Implications

28. The activities outlined in this report will ensure that Fire Control and operational crews continue to provide an effective level of incident management and response during the transition to the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and beyond.
29. Training needs will be identified and training delivered where required

Legal Implications

30. MFRS has a statutory duty to comply with its core functions under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, including, but not limited to, firefighting, road traffic accidents and emergencies. The role of Fire Control in answering emergency calls and mobilising resources assists MFRS in complying with this statutory duty.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

31. As MFRS continues as a Home Office Emergency Services Network (ESN) Assurance Partner (AP), work will be undertaken to bring the DS3000 Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) to an ESN Technically Ready state.

32. At the same time, there is the need to install a Dispatch Communications Server (DCS), in order to continue to use Airwave, owing to delays to the national ESMCP project.
33. In order to deliver the required investment this report is seeking the approval of new growth within the ICT capital programme over the 2021/22 – 2022/23 period. growth is requested on three lines under the heading of a new scheme called 'ESN-ready activities and DCS'.
 - a. ESN Solution Deployment
 - b. DS3000 Technical Refresh
 - c. DCS Install

The table contained in appendix E summarises the current estimated planned spend and funding sources. The total planned spend is £769,539, of which £303,616 will fall on the Authority. The revenue cost associated with this level of borrowing is £65,400 and can be contained within the current debt servicing budget.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

34. The reputation of the Authority could be compromised if Fire Control fails to provide a primary mobilisation service. In addition, the involvement of MFRS as an Assurance Partner has benefits to the organisation including those associated with being an early adopter of the technology and the reputational benefits of the willingness of MFRS to assist the national project.

Contribution to Our Vision: *To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.*

Our Purpose: *Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.*

35. The implementation will assist our duty to respond to all emergency calls with a level of response appropriate to the risk, and deal with all emergencies efficiently and effectively.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AP	Assurance Partner
BAU	Business As Usual
CAD	Computer Aided Despatch
DCS	Dispatch Communications Server
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
ESMCP	Emergency Services Mobile Communication Project
ESN	Emergency Service Network
FRS	Fire & Rescue Service

ICCS
MFRS
NFCC

Integrated Communication Control System
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
National Fire Chiefs Council