

ESSEX POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



Meeting	Strategic Board meeting	Agenda Item	
Meeting Date	17 September 2019	Report Number	
Report Author:	DCFO Rick Hylton		
Presented By	DCFO Rick Hylton		
Subject	ECFRS Control Systems Strategic Review		
Type of Report:	Decision		

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner:

1. Sets aside the decision recorded by Decision Sheet 062-18 to enter into a joint procurement for Control systems for ECFRS with Essex Police, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Services
2. Agrees to ECFRS moving forward with a full procurement of a mobilising and communication system that will enable implementation in line with the current Airwave Network Upgrade Programme and Emergency Service Network (ESN) timescales
3. Extends the current contracts with Remsdaq and Frequentis to ensure ongoing support for the current CAD and ICCS until implementation of a new system.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service [ECFRS] need to replace the existing Control systems by 2022 due to changes in the national Airwave network, compliance with the timescales for the Emergency Services Network [ESN] and the conclusion of the existing contracts for Control systems. In April 2018, the Emergency Services Collaboration Strategic Governance Board ratified an earlier decision by the Service Leadership Team [SLT] to achieve the replacement by entering into a collaborative joint procurement for Control systems with Essex Police, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Services.

The report recommends an alternative approach for the provision of Control systems for ECFRS that would ensure these risk critical systems are in place by the key deadline of 2022 and, in doing so, the report asks that the original decision on the collaborative procurement is set aside.

BACKGROUND

Fire and Rescue Service control systems are fundamental to ensuring an effective fire and rescue service response to an emergency. They act to enable an emergency to be reported, to allow for the location and type of incident to be identified, for the closest appropriate resources to be mobilised in terms of both type of and weight of response and, furthermore, act throughout the incident as a command centre for the recording of information and support to the incident ground. Unlike other emergency services, Fire Control operators not only take calls, they also mobilise resources. In addition, Fire Control operators provide ongoing support and information to the incident ground. The environment has greater reliance on data messaging than voice, especially in relation to the mobilisation and monitoring of assets and vehicle movements.

ECFRS currently have Control Systems with Remsdaq (CAD) and Frequentis (ICCS). This is a joint arrangement with Bedfordshire FRS, of which ECFRS receive 33% of costs and have good levels of resilience as a result of immediate fallback. This enables both control rooms to receive calls and mobilise resources across both Services. The current contracts for this system were due for termination in November 2019 (ICCS) and January 2020 (CAD) however, cognisant of the time it would take to procure a new system, it has been agreed to upgrade (support maintenance) and extend the contracts until January 2021 (Decision sheet 185/18 refers).

The technical constraints around connectivity to the Airwave network beyond 2022 in line with the Airwave Network Upgrade Programme, the compliance requirements of the Emergency Services Network and the expected requirements around procurement mean that ECFRS need to replace the existing contracts/arrangements by 2022. The decision to procure ESN compliant Control Systems in collaboration with Essex Police, Kent Police and Kent Fire & Rescue Service was made as the result of the Control Systems Options paper presented to SLT on 22 March 2018. The collaborative option of a shared Control Room was identified in the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner's Local Business Case. The Essex Emergency Services Collaboration Strategic Governance Board (EESCSGB) subsequently ratified the SLT's decision on 10 April 2018.

As well as highlighting savings, the Local Business Case also identified opportunities for greater information sharing between Police and Fire and the further potential to enable cross function working and ultimately a better service to the public.

For ECFRS the option also provided continuation of resilience currently provided by Bedfordshire FRS with the inclusion of Kent FRS as another FRS on the same CAD platform.

Early on in the initiation of the project, Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) indicated they intended to explore all options when existing contractual arrangements with their suppliers of command and control systems come to a natural end. As a result of this information and a greater understanding of the added complexity of obtaining the common Police platform, the operational effectiveness of the original proposal was re- evaluated.

OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

Dublin FRS and KFRS are current the only two FRS' that are STORM users. Dublin FRS are now replacing STORM with Systel systems as part of the all-Ireland procurement. With Kent FRS indicating that all options will be explored, this could leave ECFRS as the only Fire customer of what is essentially a Police system which brings into question any potential future product development for this system in the Fire market. Equally, if Kent FRS procure a replacement CAD (other than Sopra Steria), the key operational benefits of Resilience and Business Continuity that a common CAD would give ECFRS with Kent FRS, would not be realised. A diminished Fire customer base with Sopra Steria will also preclude ECFRS from making an equivalent arrangement with any other FRS.

This would place at risk the business continuity arrangements currently in place and make it unlikely that ECFRS could secure these moving forward. Furthermore, it is likely that the complexity of the solution would mean that the 'fire functionality' would be compromised.

In conclusion, since the original proposal was approved in March 2018, these changes have in effect resulted in there being little operational benefit with proceeding with a direct award to Sopra Steria and in the event that this was pursued is likely to impact negatively on the business continuity and resilience arrangements desired by ECFRS.

Alternative Approach for the provision of Control systems for ECFRS

The alternative proposal is for the procurement of Fire-specific control systems in collaboration with one or more other Fire and Rescue Services. This option would provide ECFRS with functionally compatible Fire systems and potential collaboration opportunities with one or more partner FRS'.

The independent procurement option does not necessarily deliver the level of savings identified in the Local Business Case as this was predicated on both Essex Police and ECFRS being on the same CAD platform. It is however, possible depending upon the successful supplier, to consider other collaboration options or indeed revisit this option if the current Police supplier were to be successful in the tender process.

Operational benefits – the independent procurement option with a Fire specific CAD would present ECFRS with the opportunity to maintain resilience arrangements through partnering with other FRS'. Part of the implementation process for this option would be to work with other FRS' as soon as possible to explore collaboration opportunities. In procuring a new solution ECFRS would look towards developing a framework that would enable other FRS' to procure from, and hence increase the opportunity for, wider collaboration and resilience either immediately or in the future.

The independent procurement option weakens the opportunity to improve inter-operability and share risk and incident data between ECFRS and Essex Police in favour of a more cost effective way of obtaining fire mobilising functionality that meets fire mobilising requirements and specification, enabling current business continuity arrangements to be met. The independent provision of Control Systems by ECFRS in collaboration with other FRS' offers future opportunities to support a fire collaboration and shared control agenda.

BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

Since the original collaborative proposal was approved in March 2018 a number of changes and developments have occurred which directly impact on the expected benefits of the proposed solution to ECFRS' need to replace its Control systems. Whilst the most significant impact is on the resilience and business continuity arrangements there are also impacts on time, the legal position and the overall costs.

In light of this, an alternative option is proposed of the independent procurement of a Fire specific CAD and ICCS which would ensure the Service can be assured it is procuring a system that will meet its requirements through a full tender process. This option also provides the opportunity for collaboration with other FRS' thereby assuring the resilience and business continuity arrangements, a reduced cost of implementation and a comparable implementation timescale to that of the collaborative option.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of the proposed option, is circa £3.5 million over the next 5 years. This has been accounted for within the Medium Term Financial Plan. Any increase in this figure following any procurement process would initiate a reconsideration of the solution.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

None identified at this stage. A full Equality Impact Assessment would be undertaken as part of the procurement process.

WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

If approved, the workforce would be engaged in the development of the requirements and specifications for the new mobilising system. This is an advantage over the current option, as due to the nature of this solution, ECFRS requirements are limited to the extent to which one supplier can meet them.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommended option would require the Service to comply with a full OJEU tender. Advice will be taken on the most appropriate route. If the current solution is pursued, legal advice will need to be taken on how ECFRS procure and access contracts that reside with The Kent Police and Crime Commissioner or Kent Police.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

Fire Control and mobilising systems are inherent in ensuring the correct resources are mobilised when requested by either the public or other agencies to respond to emergencies or by our crews to provide support and resilience to ongoing incidents. As such these systems support safe systems of work and our requirements under the health and safety at work act 1974.