



Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Decision Report

Please ensure all sections below are completed

Report reference number: 009-21 <i>(Please contact Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for a reference number)</i>
Government security classification (e.g. Not protectively marked/Official - Sensitive):
Title of report: Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Digital and Data Strategy Decision Report
Area of county / stakeholders affected: Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Report by : Karl Edwards, Director of Corporate Services
Date of report: 15 March 2021
Enquiries to: Karl Edwards, Director of Corporate Services

1. Purpose of the report

(Set out the purpose of the report)

Essex County Fire Rescue Service is moving towards being a digital and data driven Service, embracing technology and information to deliver evidence-based decisions and efficient processes, enabling a first class delivery of services to the communities of Essex.

This report provides an overview of the ECFRS Digital and Data Strategy for the coming years. In addition to the infrastructure and systems the Digital and Data Strategy will focus on improving digital skills and empowering individuals in the workforce to use technology to enhance their ways of working.

There are opportunities for efficiencies across the Service that will be expanded into realisable benefits as part of the Digital and Data Strategy programmes of work.

The Digital and Data Strategy identifies the principles and mechanisms for modernising the Service, providing stable platforms and better capabilities to enable the Service to deliver against the priorities of the Fire and Rescue Plan and IRMP.

ECFRS's intention is to modernise the Service's technology infrastructure, transform the way our people work and access information, delivering improved efficiency and helping make Essex a safer place to live and work through technology. This will be delivered through a number of technology focused programmes detailed in this business case to be delivered over the next 3 years and bring ECFRS to the forefront as a modern, technologically driven organisation.

2. Recommendations

(Set out the decision and recommendation which is to be made as a part of the proposal)

The recommendations set out in this PFCC FRA Decision Report is requesting approval from Police Fire & Crime Commissioner to:

- Approve the ECFRS Digital and Data Strategy.
- Approve the financial investments identified to ensure that all programmes of the Digital and Data Strategy can be effectively delivered.
- To acknowledge that the ECFRS have over the last 18 months successfully stabilised their current ICT infrastructure and updated their digital environment, enabling areas such as remote working, Office 365 applications, moving to Windows 10 etc. This portfolio is a continuation of activity to deliver a data insights driven organisation.

3. Benefits of the proposal

(Specify the benefits of the proposal including financial or operational benefits. Highlight whether this proposal is linked to another decision or earlier paper. Also specify the consequences of not proceeding)

Within the Digital and Data Strategy, there are extensive benefits that the programmes and projects will deliver across ECFRS. These benefits will enable ECFRS to deliver business and operational services in a much more effective way.

The productivity gains and financial benefits will be identified at the programme and project planning phases and as we start to embark on the procurement and design of our requirements.

The benefits identified within the Digital and Data Strategy will be presented on a biannual basis to the Performance and Resources Board for future monitoring and scrutiny of delivery against all activities and financial spend.

It is anticipated that through implementation of the Programmes and Projects highlighted in the Data and Digital Strategy we will be able to improve our efficiency in areas across the Service.

A summary of the high-level benefits can be found in Digital and Data Business Case Appendix A

4. Background and proposal

(Set out the background, chronological history and relevant contextual information to support the proposal including what has happened so far and what is being proposed)

Over the last two years, investment has been made in the Service's ICT infrastructure to stabilise the environment and replace platforms and equipment that became end of life. This included

- Infrastructure: Azure (public cloud) landing zone in readiness for application modernisation
- New infrastructure components: SAN, core switch, replacement of VDI with RDS to deliver desktops
- Microsoft 365 platform
- Migration from Windows 7 to Windows 10
- User Devices: laptops, tablets, and thin clients

The Digital and Data Strategy provides a road map to modernise working practices, including replacing business critical applications, many of which are approaching end of life.

The Service is moving towards optimal use of digital and data technology and must address the current state in order to implement solutions to meet the demands of a modern emergency service and provide staff with robust working environment to equip the workforce appropriately.

To ensure that ECFRS has systems that enable efficient and effective working practices, programmes of work will evolve from the Digital and Data Strategy. These are essential to the future delivery of all services: within support functions, operational functions, and collaboration with partners.

To undertake such a large portfolio and programmes as those held within the ECFRS Digital and Data Strategy will require financial investment. This is essential to fund the critical expert resources required, capital purchases and urgently needed software and services replacements.

We will adopt an approach that empowers the users with skills, knowledge, and expertise to increase productivity across the Service.

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

(Set out any alternative options considered and rejected in favour of the recommendation(s) made. In some instances (e.g. where the recommendation is made to fulfil a statutory requirement), there may be no viable alternative. However, in most cases, there will be at least one alternative option, this being to do nothing / maintain the status quo).

Previous attempts to move ECFRS applications to the cloud have been unsuccessful due to inadequacies within the infrastructure. Therefore, no viable alternative options have been identified due to aging technologies currently in use.

As part of the analysis work undertaken within the Digital and Data Strategy, we have identified that there are urgent requirements to replace end of life legacy systems and applications with cloud hosted alternatives. In addition, it is essential requirement for a full network infrastructure refresh to take place to enable the Service position itself to be Cloud ready.

6. Strategic priorities

(Demonstrate how the issue is relevant to the strategic priorities of the Commissioner, as set out in the Fire and Rescue Plan, and/or the Integrated Risk Management Plan)

The Digital and Data Strategy and supporting Business Case highlights how the programmes and projects will align to the Fire and Rescue Plan Priorities, IRMP 2020-2024 and the Annual Plan.

7. Operational implications

(Outline any operational fire and rescue implications and how Essex County Fire and Rescue Service staff and officers, including unions and staff representative bodies, have been engaged or consulted in respect of the operational implications.)

Between July and October 2020, sessions were held with managers across the Service and the ICT Team to scope initial aspirations and then consult on the draft strategy. Feedback was largely positive. The current version of Digital and Data Strategy has been shared across these consultative groups.

8. Financial implications

(This section should set out the key revenue and capital finance issues arising from the report. Report authors, working with the CFO, will need to demonstrate that the decision is within existing financial and other resources and if not identify the source of any additional resources.)

The table below summaries the financial implications for the Digital and Data Strategy:

<p>In October 2019 the PFCC approved in October 2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1.6m capital• £1.591m revenue (1.3m earmarked reserves)• £1.247m internal staffing costs (existing budgets)• TOTAL £4.438m• (£1.247m) Removal of internal staffing costs funded from existing budgets• TOTAL COST £3.191m	<p>Spend to Date = £0.838m (See 6.5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £0.804m Capital + £0.034m Revenue <p>Remaining Spend = £3.939m (Table Below)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £2.092m Capital• £0.984 Revenue (Earmarked Reserve)• £0.863m Revenue (BAU Budget Impact) <p>TOTAL = £4.777m</p> <p>The investment cost to deliver the Data and Digital Strategy has increased by £1.586m. Savings equivalent to the amount of increase in BAU budgets will be identified as part of programme and project initiation.</p>
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9. Legal implications

(This section should set out the key legal issues arising from the report and include any legal advice if received)

ECFRS are ensuring that they work closely with the procurement and finance team to ensure that all legislation is being adhered to.

10. Staffing implications

(This section should set out any staffing or other resource implications. It needs to demonstrate that the decision complies with relevant employment legislation and / or policies.)

It is recognised that there will be additional resourcing requirements in order to deliver the Digital and Data Strategy. The resourcing has been costed into the Business Case (Appendix A – Business Case)

11. Equality and Diversity implications

(This section should describe the equality and diversity implications of the proposal and should attach and address any findings from the equality impact assessment if one has been carried out.)

Equality impact assessments will be undertaken to ensure that all end user needs and requirements are full considered and adapted where required.

12. Risks

(This section should describe the key risks relating to the proposal, and what would be undertaken to mitigate those risks.)

Implementation of the programmes and its constituent projects within the Digital and Data Strategy will help mitigate the strategic risks. This will allow the Service to move forward with the rationalisation and consolidation of the infrastructure, and the migration of all appropriate services into the cloud.

The Service will use the most up to date infrastructure and technologies available enabling us to address the current state. There is an opportunity to implement solutions to meet the demands of a modern emergency service and provide staff with robust working environment.

Should the Service continue to try and maintain its current infrastructure without modernising, the risks outlined in the supporting Business Case (appendix A) have been identified.

13. Governance Boards

(This section should describe the meetings that this proposal has been discussed at prior to the decision being presented to the Commissioner for decision)

The Digital and Data Strategy programmes and projects will comply with the Service and Programme Management Office's agreed approach to governance and will be accountable to the appropriate Boards and Senior Responsible Owner.

On approval of this PFCC FRA Decision Sheet and supporting Business Case quarterly updates will be provided through the Performance & Resources Board to ensure oversight against delivery of all objectives of the Digital and Data Strategy.

The strategy was discussed at the ECFRS Strategic Board on 15 March and was recommended for approval.

14. Background papers

(Please list sources of information e.g. documents that are not readily available to the public and that were used in the writing of the report. If key to the understanding of this decision add as an appendix to this report.)

Digital and Data Strategy Business Case – Appendix A

Decision Process

Step 1A - Chief Fire Officer Comments

(The Chief Fire Officer is asked in their capacity as the Head of Paid Service to comment on the proposal.)

.....I agree with the proposals.....

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Sign: Date:.....15/03/2021.....

Step 1B – Consultation with representative bodies

(The Chief Fire Officer is to set out the consultation that has been undertaken with the representative bodies)

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Step 2 - Statutory Officer Review

The report will be reviewed by the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority’s (“the Commissioner’s”) Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the Commissioner or their Deputy.

Deputy Monitoring Officer

Sign:



Print: Darren Horsman

Date: 17 March 2021

Chief Finance Officer

Sign: 

Print:Neil Cross.....

Date:15/03/2021

Step 3 - Publication

Is the report for publication? **YES**

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'none' if applicable)

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If the report is not for publication, the Monitoring Officer will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Step 4 - Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

- 1 Of Decision Sheet **NO**
- 2 Of Appendix **NO**

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

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Date redaction carried out:

If redaction is required, the Chief Finance Officer or the Monitoring Officer are to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign: Print:

Date signed:

Step 5 - Decision by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner or Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

I agree /do not agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign:  (PFCC)

Print: Roger Hirst Date signed: 18 March 2021

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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