

**MEETING: 15 DECEMBER 2008**

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**SUBJECT: FIRECONTROL PROJECT: UPDATE**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY,  
THE FINANCE OFFICER**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report informs Members of the rescheduling of the FiReControl project and provides information with regard to the status of the FiReControl Gateway 2 activities, which the project team is required to report against to Communities and Local Government (CLG).

## **2 RESCHEDULING THE PROJECT**

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the proposed 'go-live' date for this Authority to migrate all emergency call taking and incident management facilities to the Regional Control Centre was originally scheduled for October 2009. Members will also be aware of the numerous issues surrounding the short timescales this date presented in terms of delivering the necessary information, equipment, IT solution and training to ensure the national system delivers an effective service.
- 2.2 Having taken these factors into account, on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2008, the Minister responsible for the Fire and Rescue Services, Sadiq Khan MP, made the following written statement in Parliament:

*"I wish to inform the House about the progress of the FiReControl project, which will establish a linked network of highly resilient fire control rooms across England to replace the current stand-alone facilities.*

*Major emergencies in recent years have shown us the very real challenges we face in today's world. The Fire and Rescue Service is central to our ability to be able to respond to these and the Government is determined to support it by investing around £1 billion to ensure that it has the necessary capabilities and resilience. The FiReControl project is an important part of this investment.*

*FiReControl will give all Fire and Rescue Services access to systems and technology that only a few currently benefit from. It will result in greater resilience and collaboration, better information and incident support for fire-fighters, and a better service to the public – both day to day and during major incidents.*

*The Government is investing £380m in FiReControl and remains strongly committed to it. Good progress has been made on a number of fronts, including the completion of eight new highly resilient Regional Control Centre Buildings,*

*the establishment of eight Local Authority Controlled Companies which bring together all relevant local partners, and the development of a strong network of regional project teams working to ensure the project is a success in their areas.*

*However, FiReControl is a complex and demanding project and as such is subject to rigorous ongoing review. Since I took up my post as Fire Minister a thorough review of all aspects of the FiReControl project has been completed, and a number of difficulties with the ICT and other dimensions of the project were identified. These issues will result in some delay, and the FRS rightly expects us to address these in full.*

*As a result I can announce today that the project is now aiming to achieve cut over to the first three Regional Control Centres in the North East, East Midlands and South West in summer 2010 - nine months later than previously expected, with the full system expected to be in place by spring 2012 - five months later than originally planned. I want to emphasise however that, as with any project of this nature, we will only have certainty about the timing of these later stages of the project once earlier stages have been completed successfully.*

*...I am also committed to ensuring transparency around the project wherever practical. So I am today publishing Part 2 of the 'FiReControl Business Case', and seeking views during a period of consultation. Part 1 of the Business Case was published on 8 July 2008 and was placed in the library of the House. Part 2 will be placed in the library of the House later today".*

- 2.3 Following the above announcement, the Chief Fire Officer can confirm that the new proposed 'go-live' date for this Authority is July 2010.
- 2.4 Members are also advised that this new date remains a challenge to deliver against given the amount of outstanding work. However, assurances from Government in respect of equipment and system delivery, and the fact that the Minister has stated the date will be subject to a closely monitored milestone schedule, provides some degree of confidence that this can be achieved.

### **3 GATEWAYS AND CHECKPOINTS**

- 3.1 As intimated by the Minister the FiReControl Project is an extremely complex and demanding undertaking which, to be successful, requires a significant amount of work to be successfully completed by several different groups in a co-ordinated and controlled manner.
- 3.2 To ensure that this work is properly undertaken and to ensure that key stakeholders are provided with adequate assurances of this, a transition plan has been developed which sets out, in detail, what needs to be achieved by whom and by when, in order for the project to be delivered successfully.
- 3.3 These activities have, in turn, been grouped into seven checkpoints and gateways for each individual Fire and Rescue Service and each of the nine regions. They are built around key dates in the project timetable which are currently as follows:-

- Checkpoint 1: Contract signature and 6 months (October 2007) – reported to Members in November 2007; (Minute 76 (i) 2007 refers)
  - Checkpoint 2: Contract signature and 12 months (April 2008) – reported to Members in April 2008; (Minute 135 (i) 2008 refers)
  - Gate 1: Cutover minus 18 months (April 2008) – reported to Members in April 2008; (Minute 135 (i) 2008 refers)
  - Gate 2: Cutover minus 12 months (October 2008 now revised to July 2009);
  - Gate 3: Cutover minus 6 months (Jan 2010);
  - Gate 4: Cutover minus 3 months (April 2010);
  - Gate 5: Cutover minus 2 weeks (June 2010).
- 3.4 At each of these key points the Chief Fire Officer, or nominated Principal Officer, will be asked by CLG to confirm that all of the associated activities relating to the Fire and Rescue Service have been delivered to a standard which will enable the project to move on towards final completion.
- 3.5 By adopting this approach, it is intended that evidence will be provided to support the decision making process of the Chief Fire Officer in respect of confirming, or otherwise, that the Fire and Rescue Service is ready to cutover to the Regional Control Room.
- #### 4 GATEWAY 2 STATUS
- 4.1 In line with this approach, the Gateway 2 sign off stage was reached in October 2008, based upon the original schedule. As the necessary work was undertaken prior to the announcement of a revised schedule, CLG have insisted that the project team continue to assess the progress against Gateway 2, with the caveat that anything that has been signed off will not be re-evaluated in the future.
- 4.2 Within the Gateway 2 report there are thirteen areas of reportable work falling to this Fire and Rescue Service. In terms of progress for Gateway 2 the following can be reported:
- Areas of work completed – 2 – primarily involving the production of management and communication plans;
  - Areas of work in progress – 4 – focussing on out of scope activities, risk and transition planning;
  - Areas of work awaiting information – 7 – primarily about cut-over activities and implementing new ways of working.

- 4.3 With regard to all elements, evidence has been supplied to CLG to support the progress reported.
- 4.4 It should be noted that one of the 'in progress' workstreams will always be adjudged as such as it relates to the transition plan, which is a dynamic document subject to constant updating. One other workstream is only 30% complete and cannot be further completed without the release of supporting information from CLG, all the others are over 70% complete and well on course to being achieved.
- 4.5 The remaining seven areas of work have not been completed due to delays in the Infrastructure Services Contractor and/or CLG releasing the necessary information to progress these elements of work.
- 4.6 CLG acknowledge that the outstanding items are not within the control of the individual Fire and Rescue Services and are therefore logged as 'Awaiting Information' on the report prior to their final completion.
- 4.7 The extension in the timescale for completion of the work announced by the Minister is to be broadly welcomed as it formally acknowledges the outstanding workload which still requires to be completed prior to go live. However, even with this extension, the project remains a challenging one which will require significant effort on the part of all concerned to ensure that the new go live date is achieved. An assessment by the regional project team clearly indicates that all of this additional time will be needed in order to complete the necessary work to ensure a successful transfer to the RCC by July 2010.
- 4.8 CLG have been made aware of this issue, and have acknowledged the potential risk. Whether the actual risk comes to fruition will become clearer as soon as the Infrastructure Services Company provides the necessary information to allow these specific areas of work to progress within the Fire and Rescue Services.

## **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1 A risk assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the risk to the Authority has been minimised as far as practicable. The assessment has considered an appropriate balance between risk and control; the realisation of efficiencies; the most appropriate use of limited resources; and a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits. The risk to the authority has been assessed as high utilising the standard risk matrix based on control measures being in place. The complete risk assessment is available on request from the Chief Fire Officer.

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this specific report as all costs are underwritten by CLG.

## **7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this specific report.

## **8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this specific report.

## **9 CONCLUSION**

9.1 The Gateway 2 sign off stage has been reached and, with the exception of the areas identified above, this Fire and Rescue Service has undertaken the work necessary to enable the appropriate documents to be signed by the Chief Fire Officer.

## **10 RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 Members are requested to:

- a) Note the change in project timescales
- b) Receive further reports as each Checkpoint and Gateway date is reached.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- FiReControl Transition Governance Roles and Responsibilities Paper (RPT 0264)