

MEETING: 26 MARCH 2012

SUBJECT: COMMAND AND CONTROL – THE FUTURE

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE FINANCE OFFICER

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the progress being made with regard to the command and control replacement project.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the cancellation of the FiReControl project in late December 2010, Members will be aware that this Authority's command and control system can be maintained until 2014 and that a full review of the function has been agreed as part of the IRMP process.
- 2.2 Members will also be aware that central Government has made available funding of up to a global sum £81 million (approximately £1.8m per fire and rescue authority) allocated via a bid process for fire and rescue authorities to upgrade or replace command and control systems as well as associated sub-systems including local plans for collaboration and efforts to improve resilience and efficiency through greater shared use of IT infrastructure and applications.
- 2.3 At the meeting in September 2011, the Authority approved that the Chief Fire Officer make the necessary arrangements to replace the command and control system; present an appropriate bid for funding from central Government; and noted that this would be done in collaboration with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service.

3 FUNDING THE COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEM

- 3.1 The Chief Fire Officer is pleased to report that, following the submission of a comprehensive bid for grant funding in line with Government requirements, the Government has approved such funding to the amount of £1.8m for this project.
- 3.2 The Chief Fire Officer can also report that the funding provided is likely to cover all costs associated with the replacement of the command and control system including associated sub-systems for this Authority. In addition, as Members will be aware the bid was made as a joint endeavour with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service and it is understood that they have also been awarded a further £1.8m for their requirements making a total of approximately £3.6m to deliver this joint project.
- 3.3 Actual funds are to be made available before the end of March 2012, and the Chief Fire Officer with the Finance Officer are making the necessary arrangements.

- 3.4 Attached for the information of Members is a summary of the national picture with regard to fire control rooms in England, which also helps to explain some of the added functionality to be provided for this Authority with the new system.

4 PROGRESS TO DATE

- 4.1 Members are advised that the implementation of a new command and control system and ensuring the system is fully embedded into the normal working practices of the Authority could take up to three years to complete and, following approval in September 2011 (Minute 34 of 2011 refers), a joint procurement process commenced with an entry being made in the European Journal asking for expressions of interest (under the prequalification questionnaire route), the closing date being 4th November 2011.
- 4.2 Following evaluation of the pre-qualification questionnaires, five consortia have now been invited to tender for the replacement command and control system, with 16th April 2012 being the closing date for tender return. It is envisaged that full tender evaluations will take place during early summer 2012. This timescale will enable the replacement system to be fully functional by mid-2013 providing an adequate buffer for contingencies.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The provision of the command and control function sits at the heart of the Authority's service and, following the failure of the national FiReControl project, it is crucial that the replacement of the existing facility is undertaken in an effective and efficient manner.
- 5.2 Undertaking this joint procurement, which will also establish a foundation for further joint working in the future, is undoubtedly a more complex undertaking than simply procuring a stand-alone facility and then operating as such, but it has the potential to realise greater efficiencies in the medium to long-term.
- 5.3 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 medium 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 The Chief Fire Officer contends that grant funding of approximately £1.8 million for the replacement of the Authority's command and control system as well as associated sub-systems to include local plans for collaboration and efforts to improve resilience and efficiency through greater shared use of IT infrastructure and applications will enable this Authority to meet all current and medium-term mobilisation and resource management requirements.

7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

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

8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

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

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Note that the Authority has been awarded grant funding of approximately £1.8m to fund this project;
- b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- Future of fire and rescue control services in England – consultation - Summary of responses dated July 2011

