

**SUBJECT: EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS  
PROGRAMME UPDATE**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CLERK TO  
THE AUTHORITY)**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current progress of the National Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP).

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Members received previous reports (min 47/18, 20/19, 03/20 & 02/21 refer) explaining how the ESMCP (the Programme), will replace the existing communication service delivered by Airwave Services Limited (ASL) with a new national mobile communication service called the Emergency Services Network (ESN). This secure communications network is how emergency services and other partners will be able to communicate by voice and data. The present system focuses on voice only communications and whilst it is due to become end of life in 2022/23, negotiations are ongoing to seek a contract extension for continued support for the necessary technical systems until the 'go-live' date.

**3 ESMCP UPDATE**

- 3.1 Members will recall that the project was originally meant to be delivered in 2017 and its future was subject to review. July 2021 brought approval of the Programme's Full Business Case (FBC) by the Cabinet Office Major Projects Review Group (MPRG). The endorsement from the MPRG gives the cross-government support needed to move into the delivery phase of the project which is now anticipated to be delivered by 2026.
- 3.2 The Home Office, EE and Motorola Solutions are exploring changes to current arrangements to ensure that the programme is in the best possible position to deliver a fast, safe and secure critical communication solution.

- 3.3 Concerns have been raised in relation to the dual role of Motorola as both owner of the company providing the current mobile radio network (Airwave Solutions) and as a key supplier in the roll-out of the planned new Emergency Services Network (ESN). In July 2021, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published a consultation on whether to launch a market investigation into the mobile radio network for the police and emergency services.
- 3.4 In October 2021, having considered responses to the consultation, the CMA decided to refer the supply of the land mobile radio network services for public safety (and ancillary services) for a market investigation. This investigation continues.
- 3.5 ESN preparation work continues across all emergency services and within Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) against ever evolving national deployment plans.
- 3.6 The Mobilising and Resource Management System (MRMS) in our Control Room which manages our 999 calls, continues to undergo a grant funded upgrade to enable communication on the new ESN which is now scheduled to be completed by Q4 2022/23. Further detailed upgrade works will be required once full ESN connectivity is made available resulting in expected TWFRS transition from Airwave to ESN during 2024 (subject to national deployment confirmation).
- 3.7 In conjunction with Northumbria Police and North East Ambulance Service, a level of ESN Coverage Assurance Testing has been undertaken with assessment of external coverage across the TWFRS geographical operational area. TWFRS Critical Operational Locations (COL) testing has returned a 99% satisfactory coverage rate however TWFRS HQ is one of two In-Building locations which is currently deemed unsatisfactory due to poor signal strength. Further testing and the exploration of solutions to address unsatisfactory results will be undertaken in the coming months.
- 3.8 Members will recall that some essential Airwave equipment reaches 'end of life' in December 2022 and will need to be replaced with what is known as a Despatch Communications Server (DCS). The Service is presently engaged with Telent, our prime contractor to obtain costings for this work. As previously explained to Members, there is no grant funding available for this and the burden will have to be borne by the Authority for the provision and maintenance of this equipment.
- 3.9 Appropriate resourcing continues to be key in supporting transition activities and includes the project co-ordinator role which will be required until transition completion. The Chief Fire Officer has temporarily created this additional role on the Grey Book Establishment, however the powers of delegation limit the duration of such a temporary amendment to a period of two years.

- 3.10 This post continues to be fully funded via a Section 31 Local Transition Resource (LTR) Grant and it is requested Members approve to maintain this post on the establishment as a temporary role until such time that transition to ESN is concluded or until such time that Grant funding is removed for the role.

#### **4 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 A comprehensive risk log for TWFRS captures project risks and subsequently feeds into a North East Regional Fire and Rescue Service risk log. Risks, issues and updates are provided to and received from the ESMCP via the Fire Customer Group (FCG) and Regional Board.
- 4.2 Risks are regularly monitored and actioned as appropriate throughout the duration of the project.

#### **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no further financial implications, other than those previously identified, at this juncture.
- 5.2 The longer term financial impact of transition to the Emergency Services Network continues to be monitored by the Service as presently the Service benefits from a Section 31 Firelink Grant approx. £236k pa (2021/22). Home Office have confirmed that the Service will not receive an equivalent ESN grant once we have transitioned to ESN.

#### **6 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

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

#### **7 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

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

#### **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 Members are requested to:
- a) Note the content of this report.
  - b) Approve the temporary amendment to the Grey Book Establishment for the ongoing role of Station Manager B (ESMCP Project Co-Ordinator role) subject to grant funding until such time that the Service transitions to ESN.
  - c) Receive further reports as necessary.

