DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	**CSCP/08/5**
MEETING	**COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CORPORATE PLANNING COMMITTEE**
DATE OF MEETING	**6 NOVEMBER 2008**
SUBJECT OF REPORT	**REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRE UPDATE**
LEAD OFFICER	**Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations)**
RECOMMENDATIONS	***That the report be noted.***
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This paper updates Members on the current position of the FiReControl project, a government project integral to the national resilience programme. DSFRS is one of the first Fire and Rescue Services to transfer into the RCC, with a due date of October 2009. Although the management of the project for DSFRS remains on track and within the parameters set by the transition plan from CLG, there are a number of emerging issues that are delaying our continued progress. These have had the effect of compressing the project timetable to such a degree that it is considered the Service would be unable to meet the proposed deadline, all of which have been raised to CLG through the SW Regional Project Board. However, this position has now been superseded by the announcement that the national project timetable is to be realigned, although we await confirmation of alternative 'Cut Over' dates. Consideration is therefore being given to the financial and technical impact this decision may have upon the Service for the foreseeable future. Finally, Members will be aware that the Business Case has been circulated for consultation raising concerns regarding the financial assessment of the project. This has been reported to the Fire Authority and we await a response from CLG regarding the considerations and proposal made by Members.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	N/A
APPENDICES	N/A
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	N/A

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 The publication of the business case has raised concerns with Members regarding both the manner in which this was published and the financial position within the South West Region. More recently CLG have notified each FRS that the current project timetable is no longer achievable within current project constraints and although we are yet to be notified of the revised dates, this will inevitably have an impact upon the current workloads in support of the project and both fire controls. This paper therefore seeks to inform Members as to these events and the potential impact this may have upon DSFRS.

2 BUSINESS CASE

2.1 The most recent publication of the Business Case was unfortunately not published in full with Part 1, regional information, being circulated separately, and Part 2 yet to be circulated. The concerns around whether there is information in Part 2 that has relevance to DSFRS, has been dealt with by the Regional Project Board who made representation to CLG. We have been assured that there is no information that would adversely affect any decision required of the region.

2.2 With regard to the financial savings, the region was always sceptical whether the projected figure of 30% was achievable from the outset. As a consequence we have seen this figure steadily eroded since 2003. In fact the regional position is one that considers a deficit may be incurred once other aspects of this project have been factored in such as Out Of Scope Work.

2.3 A solution has been proposed for a centrally allocated resilience payment to be met by CLG offering regional savings, a point the Chairman has already made to CLG. Once this position has been clarified a further report will be presented to the fire authority.

3 PROJECT TIMETABLE

3.1 The project timetable has over recent months become significantly compressed due to a number of contractual issues between EADS and CLG. DSFRS are currently programmed to 'Cut Over' to the RCC in October 2009, with an earlier date to transfer our control arrangements to Avon FRS as part of the Initial Staff Pool in June/July 2009.

3.2 However, with a continuing number of programmed activities slipping, such as New Ways of Working, the replacement of Station End Equipment, data management; etc, this timetable was becoming unachievable. All these issues have been raised with the Regional Project Board and CLG. This position has also been reflected by other fire and rescue services across the country and CLG have now confirmed that the project will be subject to realignment, although we are yet to be advised as to the new dates. Regardless of proposed changes to the project time table the work for DSFRS continues.

3.3 However, in doing so a further impact assessment will be necessary on both fire controls to understand what, if any, a delay will have upon the current legacy systems, staff and skills retention within each fire control. In addition an early assessment will be made to understand the financial impact of this decision and the potential budget implications for 2009/10.

4 PROJECT TEAM

4.1 The establishment for the project team is supported through CLG New Burdens funding. This originally was developed prior to combination and supported each fire control respectively. Since combination these teams have been amalgamated along with the project plans although the reporting mechanism to CLG reflects each fire control, separately. The complex nature of this project requires significant lead in times for staff to become fully conversant with their areas of responsibilities and staff retention and skills is of paramount importance given that DSFRS is one of the first FRS to 'Cut Over' to the Regional Control Centre. Although the status of this team is under regular review, the normal movement of staff and retirements may have an effect with a longer project lead in time.

5 PROJECT BENEFITS

5.1 Despite the obvious concerns raised by the project delay and lack of financial savings it must be realised that this project provides real and tangible benefits to the Service.

5.2 The current mobilising arrangements within both fire controls, whilst fit for purpose are out of date and in need of replacement. Regardless of the FiReControl project the Service would have considered options for the amalgamation of both controls along with the procurement of a suitable replacement mobilising system, review of staffing and technical solutions. This would have been undertaken at considerable cost to the fire authority. The RCC therefore provides DSFRS an opportunity to replace existing arrangements at no additional cost other than that required to support our two fire controls.

5.3 The regional control centre will provide a range of improvements for DSFRS a few examples are as follows:

(a) Mobile Data Terminals

A fundamental part of the FiReControl project in terms of enhanced capability for frontline firefighters is the provision of the software for mobile data terminals (MDT), which are being provided through the Firelink project. MDTs will provide access to a range of data, from the within the appliance cab, such as Chemdata, hydrants, risk information etc. The MDT will also enable the data stored on the equipment to be automatically synchronised each time the appliance returns to station so it is guaranteed to be up to date and also enables data communication and status messaging between the appliance crew and the RCC.

(b) AVLS and Satellite Navigation

The MDT will contain a Global Positioning System (GPS) transmitter allowing the exact location of the appliance to be known. This will ensure that the nearest appropriate appliance or equipment will be mobilised. The topographical knowledge of fire appliance drivers and their crews using paper-based maps is the normal method for travelling to incidents. This knowledge will be enhanced through the provision of satellite navigation technology showing the quickest route to an incident and will be updated with road closure information.

(c) Caller Location Technology

Within the control room environment technology advances will enhance the range of information available to control room operators.

The Enhanced Information Service for Emergency Calls (EISEC) will allow the billing address of the telephone from which an emergency call is being made to be displayed to the Control Room Operator, augmenting their professional call handling skills and speeding up the task of confirming the caller's location. The technology can also be used to locate the whereabouts of a mobile telephone caller by identifying the network cell from which they are calling. This is particularly useful when callers are reporting incidents on the road network and are unaware of their exact location, for example on the motorway. This technology also assists in identifying hoax callers and reducing the number of times DSFRS is mobilised unnecessarily.

(d) Enhanced Capability - General

The Mobile Data Terminal will also provide crews with information on-board the appliance about the incident location, incident type and information regarding risks, building plans and chemical hazards associated with the incident. MDTs will also help direct crews to the incident, knowing where the appliance is in relation to the incident and showing the route/directions on a mapping system.

In the RCC the technology will include an address gazetteer covering all premises, road and landmark locations with tools for searching and matching, caller location services to assist in identifying where a caller is located and real-time appliance location information to determine the nearest available appliance. Incident addresses will be matched at premises level where possible, providing maximum accuracy.

6 SUMMARY

6.1 This is a complex and protracted national project that will provide tangible benefits for DSFRS and local communities. The project costs to date are being met centrally through CLG and New Burdens and the team are building a level of knowledge and understanding that will support progress despite revised 'Cut Over' dates. Clearly there remain issues regionally for Members regarding funding, cost apportionment and a commitment to the Business case. However, whilst there is some way to go to fully understanding the final costs to the project, technical solutions and operational protocols, the work being undertaken for a single regional fire control removes the development costs for DSFRS that would be associated with a local replacement programme.

TREVOR STRATFORD
ACFO Operations