

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY



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| REPORT REFERENCE NO. | DSFRA/11/33 |
| MEETING | DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY |
| DATE OF MEETING | 16 DECEMBER 2011 |
| SUBJECT OF REPORT | FIRE CONTROL PROJECT – PROGRESS REPORT |
| LEAD OFFICER | Director of Service Delivery |
| RECOMMENDATIONS | <i>that the report be noted.</i> |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | <p>The Authority has previously been informed of the three project strands associated with our fire control function: consolidation into a single unit; development of a new fit for purpose building; and collaboration with three other fire and rescue services to secure a new integrated operating system.</p> <p>This paper sets out progress in relation to each of these three elements.</p> |
| FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS | There are no direct financial implications as a consequence of this report. Any implications arising from the individual project plans associated with the fire control project have either been or will be reported to Members as appropriate. |
| OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS | None |
| EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT | There are no additional equality risks or benefits associated with this report. |
| APPENDICES | Nil. |
| LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS | Nil. |

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Service is undertaking a fundamental review of its Fire Control function, necessitated following the cessation of the Regional Control Centre project in December 2010 and the subsequent review and offer of funding by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).
- 1.2 To achieve the desired outcome the Service has instigated three projects in relation to Fire Control:
- the consolidation of our two existing controls into one new unit based at service headquarters;
 - the consideration of options for the future location of the fire control function, that will allow the Service to take advantage of commercial opportunities in the future as well as ensuring we have an appropriate command and support centre; and
 - to work in partnership with Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services to develop an integrated command and mobilising system which will deliver organisational efficiencies and increase system and operational resilience.
- 1.3 This paper sets out the progress the Service has made in relation to these projects and identifies future milestones and decision points especially those where Member involvement is critical.

2. CONTROL CONSOLIDATION

- 2.1 The plans to bring together our existing control rooms on our Exeter HQ site are on track for go live by 31 March 2012, the Authority having previously approved the potential redundancy costs at its meeting on 7 November 2011 (Minute DSFRA/51 refers). Staff who had expressed an interest in taking voluntary redundancy or early retirement have been contacted and detailed discussions are on-going. The process of appointing staff to the roles within the new staffing arrangements is underway and is expected to be completed by the New Year. System conversion training for those staff currently based at our Hestercombe House site is underway, this will be on-going up to and beyond 31 March 2012. Building work has commenced in relation to upgrading the server room, tenders have been let for the first stages of the building works and an ergonomic consultant has been engaged to support the design of the control room and work stations. Work is on-going to ensure that all financial efficiencies and non-cashable benefits are recorded and captured.

3. FIRE CONTROL BUILDING

- 3.1 Outline plans are being developed to determine the scope and extent of any new fire control facility. Options will be developed for consideration by Members within the Capital programme and options will be presented to a future Authority meeting for decision.

4. NETWORKED CONTROL SYSTEM

- 4.1 A business case was submitted to DCLG on 4 November 2011 for joint funding of £7,830,800 of which this Service would receive, subject to approval, £2,080,000. This was a collaborative bid between the Devon and Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services. Whilst any grant funding will not be announced until the New Year we are confident that, due to the unique partnership proposed, this bid has every chance of success. The principal benefits of this approach are the economies of scale and the increased resilience a networked system will provide.
- 4.2 Whilst approval is awaited, the next steps are to determine the system requirements and configuration to meet on-going needs of all four partners. Once these have been determined this will be reported to the Authority.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Since the termination of the Regional Control Centre project, the Service has been working to develop a sustainable future Fire Control model for DSFRS. The options available to DSFRS depend to a large extent on the funding that is available from CLG and we will be in a better position to advise Members once the outcome of our bid is known. It remains our intention to provide the very best level of service to the public of Devon and Somerset through a new Fire Control arrangement, working with partners to develop innovative and cross sector solutions if at all possible.

ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER PETER SMITH
Director of Service Delivery