

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY



REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/12/25
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	5 NOVEMBER 2012
SUBJECT OF REPORT	NETWORKED FIRE CONTROL SOLUTION PROJECT (NFCSP) – UPDATE AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Fire Officer
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>(a) <i>that the Authority approves entering into the formal partnership agreement with Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services to provide an interlinked resilient fire command and mobilising system; and</i></p> <p>(b) <i>that, subject to (a) above, the remainder of this report updating on progress with the project be noted.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Authority has previously been informed that the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (“the Service”) has been working with Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services on the development of a new command and mobilising system that will be interoperable and provide a high degree of resilience. Each of the fire and rescue services (FRSs) has been awarded £1.8 million from the Department for Communities and Local Government to fund this project.</p> <p>To ensure the system is fit for purpose it is essential that the Fire Control facility be developed to allow for potential commercial expansion and improved incident support. While It was initially intended to secure this by the establishment of a new Control Room on the Service Headquarters site it has subsequently been identified, following the successful merger of the two previous control rooms, that the current accommodation for the merged control room can be upgraded to provide such a facility at considerably lower cost.</p> <p>Adoption of a formal partnership agreement with the other FRS is a key component of the intended future arrangements and is required for successful completion of the procurement process. Although procurement process could take up to 12 months in total, the desired intention is to complete it within six months for the system to go live date by 30 June 2013, with full networking by January 2014.</p>

	This agreement has now been drafted and deemed fit for purpose by the legal advisers to each of the fire and rescue services to the partnership. It is, therefore, commended for formal approval
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	<p>The costs of procuring and installing the new system will be met from the £1.8 million provided to this Service for the project by the Department for Communities and Local Government.</p> <p>The cost of re-developing the current Fire Control building is estimated as being £500,000. Budgetary provision already exists to meet these costs.</p>
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ASSESSMENT (ERBA)	Not applicable to this report.
APPENDICES	Nil.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Networked Fire Control Solution Project Partnership Agreement

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Authority has previously been informed of work between the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (“the Service”) and Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services to develop a new integrated fire control system.
- 1.2 It should be stressed that, under the project, each FRS will retain its own Control Room but the systems operated will be identical and capable of carrying out the full functionality of each of the other controls rooms, thus providing a high degree of resilience in respect of spate (high call volume) conditions and for business continuity.

2. FUNDING

- 2.1 In March 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) announced that each of the partners would receive £1.8 million in grant funding to develop the network. This funding has now been received and ring-fenced for the development of the Fire Control system.

3. FIRE CONTROL LOCATION

- 3.1 The Authority has also previously been informed of vacation of the former Control Room at Hestercombe House, Somerset, and its merger with the existing Control Room sited at Service Headquarters (SHQ). This was initially seen as the first phase in a longer term project that would ultimately see the development – linked to the networked fire control solution project – of new accommodation for the Control Room. This was considered necessary at the time to overcome technical difficulties associated with the current location.
- 3.2 The merger involved, however, some degree of refurbishment to the existing Control Room. This has overcome the previously anticipated technical difficulties meaning that it is now a more viable and cost-effective proposition to look to further develop the current Fire Control Room to accommodate the networked fire control solution.

4. PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

- 4.1 Critical to ensuring the success of the partnership is a formal agreement which provides confidence that the partners are committed to the long-term, and that suitable arrangements are in place to deal with all potential situations that may occur over the lifetime of the partnership. This formal agreement has now been drafted. It is rather technical in nature and runs to some 60+ pages in length. It has been, however, assessed by the legal advisers to each of the fire and rescue services to the partnership and deemed fit for purpose. A hard-copy of the full agreement, which is now commended for approval, is available to Members on request and can be viewed (together with the whole agenda for this meeting) on the agenda section of the Authority’s website.
- 4.2 The agreement ties the Service into the partnership for a minimum of eight years with an optional further 4 years. It covers this period of time to maximise the potential procurement benefits.

5. PROCUREMENT OF THE SYSTEM

5.1 To ensure that any system purchased is both fit for purpose and future-proofed, extensive work has been undertaken to clarify and clearly define the operational and technical requirements. This work has been subject to scrutiny both within the fire control environment and with operational staff.

5.2 Using this work as its basis, the procurement process adopted is as follows:

Stage 1

- the pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) (stage one) commenced on 18 June 2012 with a closing date is 26 July @ 12:00 noon;
- Following the closing date, responses to the PQQ will be evaluated and a short-list developed

Stage 2

- An Invitation to Tender (ITT) will be issued to the shortlisted suppliers with a designated closing date for return of tenders;
- All tenders returned by the closing date will be subject to evaluation;
- An award recommendation paper will be drafted for each FRS to sign-off with the intention of preliminary contract award (subject to standstill period) in December 2012 with final award (subject to there being no legal challenge) in January 2013.

6. “GO LIVE”

6.1 The full procurement of the new system could, potentially, last up to twelve months. In light of the considerable preparatory work referred to in paragraph 5.1 above, however, in developing the specifications it is hoped that the procurement process can be completed in a much shorter timescale. While this is dependent on prevailing market conditions and ability to engage positively with potential suppliers it is nonetheless hoped to complete the procurement process by January 2013 and to progress the project in accordance with the following timetable:

- phase 1 building works and alterations commenced by February 2013;
- system installation by April 2013;
- system testing and training by June 2013;
- system “go live” by 30 June 2013;
- phase 2 building works and alterations by September 2013;
- full networking “go live” by January 2014.

6.2 It should be noted that this is only an indicative timetable. This Service does not have a critical time path for the project but would wish to be supportive of other partner FRSs who do have such a time path for go live. As indicated, full network functionality is expected in early 2014 at which time this Service will be able to take calls and mobilise operational assets for all of our partner FRSs.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The networked fire control solution project is highly innovative and intended to deliver a much-needed state-of-art, resilient command and control function for this Service. A realistic implementation plan has been developed and the necessary formal Partnership Agreement drafted and endorsed as fit for purpose. This is now commended for approval.

LEE HOWELL
Chief Fire Officer