

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT CABINET PANEL

WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2015 AT 10:00

EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME

Report of the Director Community Protection (Chief Fire Officer)

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Executive Member/s:- Richard Thake, Community Safety and Waste
Management

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on progress and next steps in relation to the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP). It is also intended to highlight that the Programme may have a direct financial impact upon Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

2. Summary

2.1 The ESMCP is a cross-government programme providing a replacement for the existing mobile communications system used for the emergency services. It is currently in the final stages prior to contract award and is likely to utilise commercial 4G networks rather than via a private network as is the case at present.

2.2 At present the costs associated with this Programme remain unclear and an uncertainty is therefore included within the Integrated Planning Process for 2016/17 and beyond.

3. Recommendation

3.1 The Cabinet Panel is invited to note the contents of the paper and the current uncertainty around the costs associated with the Programme which may impact Hertfordshire County Council.

4. Background

- 4.1 The existing mobile communications system used by all three emergency services is the Airwave system. For fire and rescue services this is provided under the Firelink contract held by DCLG. The key drivers for the replacement of the existing provision are; the expiry of the current Firelink contract in 2019, the relatively high cost of the existing Airwave provision due to its use of a private network and the inability of the existing network to provide broadband data.
- 4.2 The objectives of the ESMCP Programme are therefore to:
- Replace the Airwave network using a commercial mobile network but with suitable enhancements to ensure high availability across the whole of the geographical area of the country to provide critical emergency use;
 - Provide integrated broadband data services and public safety functionality (for example press to talk much like a walkie-talkie);
 - Provide greater flexibility than is possible with the current provision to allow development over time with users only paying for the features they need; and,
 - Address budget pressures through the use of commercial networks and regular re-competition of contracts.
- 4.3 The scale of this national programme is significant and will ultimately provide a communications system for 50 Fire and Rescue Services, 44 Police Forces, 13 Ambulance Trusts and a large number of other responders and non-emergency organisations. It will include installation of equipment in approximately 230 control rooms and 45,000 vehicles with around 300,000 users of the system.
- 4.4 The ESMCP Programme has been underway for approximately 4 years. Throughout that period fire and rescue service interests have been represented by members of the Chief Fire Officers Association led by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer Darryl Keen. As a result HFRS interests have remained at the forefront of the Programme throughout.
- 4.5 The Programme is currently approaching the tender evaluation phase with main contract award expected in October 2015. Solution development and installations are currently planned to commence from July 2017. Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service will see transition commencing from late 2017.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 At this time there are no figures available for the costs of the system as a whole or the specific impact upon Hertfordshire. As such it would be inappropriate to make any recommendations around adoption of the system. However it should be noted that the current Airwave provision via the Firelink contract costs Hertfordshire approximately £348k, this is

offset by DCLG grant funding totalling approximately £265k resulting in a net cost to Hertfordshire of approximately £83k. At this time it is the view of HFRS officers that this is not likely to alter significantly but figures are not likely to be available until early in 2016.

- 5.2 However it is also important to note that the option of remaining on the existing provision beyond 2020 is not available due to expiry of the OJEU notice for Firelink.

6. Equalities

- 6.1 There are no equalities issues arising from this Programme at this time.