

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	4 NOVEMBER 2019
SUBJECT	EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME (ESMCP) UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	STEVE FOYE, DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR NOTE

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report follows the presentation from Home Office representatives of the ESMCP programme to members on the 04 July 2019.
- 1.2 The report updates the status of the National Programme (NP) and ESMCP South Central Region input into this. It has been a relatively short period since the last update to members and there no significant areas to update members on.
- 1.3 Home Office scrutiny of allocated funding and justification of spending at an individual FRS level has increased recently. RBFRS continues to monitor spending associated with ESMCP.
- 1.4 At a meeting of the 08 July 2019, the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee agreed to write collectively to the Home Office Permanent Secretary, Sir Phillip Rutnam, setting out the Committees concerns in respect to the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) and consequently, delivery of the Emergency Services Network (ESN).

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

That Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** this report.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 On the 04 July 2019, members of the Home Office Programme team and NFCC visited RBFPS to provide an update on the national programme and to answer questions from members. At this meeting, RBFPS officers provided an overview of the ongoing approach to assessment and deployment of ESN and engagement with the associated stakeholders. ESN is the planned replacement for the current Airwave service used by all Emergency Services in Great Britain, including the three Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services and TVFCS.
- 3.2 The visit from the Home Office Programme team gave members an opportunity to ask questions and register their concerns regarding the information that is available, the lack of clarity regarding costs and timescales, and the difficulties these bring in terms of ability for FRS' to robustly plan for adoption.
- 3.3 Whilst officers have continued to undertake work in respect to ESMCP, since the last update to the Audit and Governance committee, there have been limited developments on which to provide updates. Pertinent changes are detailed in paragraph 3.6 to 3.16 below.
- 3.4 At a meeting of the 08 July 2019, the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee agreed to write collectively to the Home Office Permanent Secretary, Sir Phillip Rutnam, setting out the Committees concerns in respect to the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) and consequently, delivery of the Emergency Services Network (ESN).

National Programme

- 3.5 The National Programme are now primarily working to bring the Full Business Case (FBC) for the ESN forward for consideration by the Minister. We do not expect the FBC to have been considered before the Audit and Governance Committee meeting in November. Current indications remain consistent that the FBC will be completed by December 2019, though the process for consideration and sign off would not be completed until April 2020.
- 3.6 The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts published a report on 17 July 2019 titled Emergency Services Network: further progress review. In this report it concluded that:
- “Despite extending the Emergency Services Network (ESN) by 3 years and increasing its budget by £3.1 billion, the Department has still not got a grip on whether it can deliver the programme”.*
- 3.7 The report went on to make the recommendation that:
- “The Department should set out, by October 2019 a detailed, achievable, integrated programme plan including a realistic date for turning off Airwave*

and the cost of any extension of Airwave that may be needed and update the Committee when this plan is ready”.

RBFRS ESN Adoption position

- 3.8 The National Programme current plan is for the cessation of the existing Airwave network at the end of 2022. In line with other Fire and Rescue Services, and Police and Ambulance Services, outline deployment plans have been provided to the National Programme. These deployment plans provide an indicative view of when Services might start adopting ESN and how long they expect that to take. This is to inform understanding of when Airwave would no longer be required. The National Programme language associated with airwave cessation has softened since the last update, and there is now some recognition that the final date of cessation may be later than 2022. It is important to note however that currently the 2022 date stands.
- 3.9 The National Programme are mapping all the deployment plans into one larger plan to establish the reality of when all services could migrate to ESN. This work is provided to inform the Full Business Case (FBC) and is assumed to also be required to respond to the recommendation from the Committee for Public Accounts as set out in paragraph 3.8 above.
- 3.10 It is the view of officers that deployment plan work will show that the current planned Airwave end date of Dec 2022 is likely to be unrealistic. We do not know how this might influence the FBC as sustaining Airwave brings additional cost.
- 3.11 RBFRS officers continue to have a preferred position that transition to full ESN is implemented no later than 12 months prior to the confirmed Airwave cessation date. This would allow for managing delivery in context of other commitments and create a prudent period of overlap between the old and new systems.

Governance

- 3.12 An ESMCP South Central (SC) Regional Programme Board continues to operate as one of a number of ESMCP FRS regions across the UK. The SC Board meets monthly and comprises senior responsible owners from the three Thames Valley FRSs alongside Hampshire and the Isle-of-Wight FRSs.
- 3.13 Hampshire and the Isle-of-Wight FRS's have indicated an intent to move to the ESMCP South West Region. Officers are working to complete this change within this financial year. This better fits with the Network Fire Services Partnership between Hampshire and the Isle-of-Wight FRS's, Dorset and Wiltshire FRS and Devon and Somerset FRS. Given the regional implementation model no longer exists, if the move happens, it will simplify governance for the Thames Valley with incremental adoption across the Thames Valley being aligned around TVFCS.

Control Room Work Stream Update

- 3.14 There are no updates in respect to specific TVFCS control room changes since the last update to the Joint Committee.
- 3.15 There has been a long-standing query for Buckinghamshire FRS (BFRS) as to whether they require a particular dedicated connection for their service, known as a DNSP connection. If needed it would be to support necessary operational device configuration and management, as well as corporate requirements. BFRS believe they will be disadvantaged in their ability to manage their links and devices to the ESN without one. The issue, which may affect a number of fire and rescue services is not yet resolved. The National Fire Chiefs Council team, working within the National Programme, have now taken on responsibility to resolve whether the link is needed and, if so, if the National Programme would fund it centrally.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 2 – We will ensure a swift and appropriate response when called to emergencies.
- 4.2 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.
- 4.3 Commitment 6 – We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Regional funding is overseen through the South Central Programme Board and services draw down funding to cover costs of work-streams leads and ancillary costs, such as attendance at meetings, workshops etc.
- 5.2 Separate full funding from the National Programme was provided for control room upgrades and DNSP connections into TVFCS. This funding is based upon the original regional delivery plan and full payment has been made to the providers without direct impact on FRS budgets. With the change to the incremental delivery plan, we are seeking assurance that additional costs incurred will be met by the National Programme.
- 5.3 Quarterly reporting of ESMCP Transition Grant spend is made to the National Programme. The level of detail requested and overall scrutiny of returns has markedly increased in recent months and we expect an on-going level of scrutiny on the use of grant funding. RBFRS Officers continue to monitor closely grant allocations and spending associated with the project.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Two risks are recorded on the RBFRS Corporate Risk Register concerning ESMCP and these take account of implications for both RBFRS and TVFCS. These risks are monitored and examined bi-weekly as part of the RBFRS SLT standing meeting agenda.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 We work in partnership with FRS colleagues and those in other emergency services in our own region and across the wider South East and South West ESMCP regions. We will adopt any opportunities to collaborate that further the aims of the Fire Authority with particular emphasis on a common Thames Valley approach.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

10.1 None.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 None.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Steve Foye, Deputy Chief Fire Officer 07887 8302