

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	27 JANUARY 2020
SUBJECT	EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME (ESMCP) UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	TONY VINCENT, HEAD OF BUSINESS INFORMATION AND SYSTEMS (HBIS)
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report follows the relatively recent update of the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP), provided to members of the Audit and Governance Committee on the 04 November 2019.
- 1.2 The Full Business Case (FBC) continues to be under review by the Home Office National Programme. Officers are given to understand that final sign off will not happen before Spring of 2020.
- 1.3 At a meeting held on the 09 December 2019, the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee once again expressed disappointment in the lack of concrete information regarding costs, transition and timescales from the national programme and in response to a communication from the Permanent Secretary, Sir Philip Rutnam.
- 1.4 A feasibility study is being undertaken for limited adoption of Emergency Services Network (ESN) Connect, an early product from the programme that could provide a cost effective solution for replacement of station data lines and new hardware to replace current station end equipment. However, ESN work activity is primarily focused on delivery with work streams to prepare for the full ESN prime product and in response to national programme requirements.
- 1.5 Through quarterly reporting the ESMCP programme has increased scrutiny of grant funding. We anticipate sufficient grant funding for 2020/21 year given residual grant funding still held.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Audit and Governance Committee:

2.1 **NOTE** this report.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 ESN is the intended replacement for the current Airwave system, used by all emergency services for mobilisation and communication between control rooms and operational resources. It is being delivered through the ESMCP within the Home Office.
- 3.2 Whilst officers continue to undertake work in respect to ESMCP, since the last report to the Audit and Governance Committee on the 04 November 2019, there have been limited developments on which to provide updates, though pertinent developments and progress are detailed through this report.
- 3.3 An update report was presented by officers to the TVFCS Joint Committee on the 09 December 2019. It broadly reflected the update report presented to this Audit and Governance Committee on the 04 November 2019.
- 3.4 In September last year, the TVFCS Joint Committee wrote to the Sir Phillip Rutnam, the Home Office Permanent Secretary overseeing the ESMCP, to jointly express their concerns in regard to the Programme and delivery of the ESN. A response from the Permanent Secretary was presented to the TVFCS Joint Committee on the 09 December 2019, where the committee once again expressed disappointment in the lack of concrete information regarding costs, transition and timescales from the national programme.

National Programme

- 3.5 The National Programme continues work to complete a review of the Full Business Case (FBC) for the ESN for consideration by the Minister. This review has been on-going for over a year now though we do not expect the FBC to have been considered before the Audit and Governance Committee meeting of the 27 January 2020. Current indications are that the FBC, if supported, will not be signed off before the spring of 2020.
- 3.6 A range of pilots are now underway with different services and agencies testing, trialling or undertaking proof of concept work for specific products that make up the ESN.

Governance

- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 Agreement has been reached between the services that make up the ESMCP South Central Region for the movement of Hampshire and Isle-of-Wight FRS's to

the ESMCP South West Region. Confirmation and support for this change is now being confirmed with the South West ESMCP Region and the ESMCP national programme, including any movement of grant funding dedicated to Hampshire and the Isle-of-Wight. This will take into account any financial commitments already made to the South Central Region so that Thames Valley FRS's are not negatively impacted. We expect this change to have been achieved by the end of March 2020.

- 3.9 The requirements of fire and rescue services are represented through the Fire Customer Group which is attended by the South Central Region Chair, DCFO Steve Foye or an alternate.

RBFRS ESN Adoption Position

- 3.10 The Airwave cessation date is currently programmed for the end of 2022. This said, National Programme language indicates a recognition that the final date of cessation may need to be later than 2022, though no formal programme position has yet been formed to this end and is not expected until the publication of the Full Business Case.
- 3.11 In the absence of any additional information from the national programme, RBFRS, along with Thames Valley Partnership organisations, continue to plan flexibly in order to ensure the maximum degree of readiness possible under the circumstances.
- 3.12 The fully delivered ESN is known as Prime, which, when implemented and adopted by all blue light services and other users, will mean Airwave will no longer be required.
- 3.13 Ahead of this, the programme is making available certain devices, components or products of the ESN system for early adoption and use. RBFRS is investigating the feasibility of a limited deployment of the ESN connect product, in conjunction with some recently announced gateway devices, to replace ageing outstation equipment at our fire stations. The solution could reduce and simplify technology required, may lead to a cost saving and may provide a pathway into limited ESN deployment for RBFRS ahead of the main ESN Prime product deployment.
- 3.14 RBFRS officers are in agreement, with the Thames Valley Fire Control and the other Thames Valley FRS's, of 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.

Work Stream Updates

Devices

- 3.15 A handheld device solution was identified by the National Programme through a procurement exercise in 2018. With the delay in ESN delivery it is possible other devices may come to market. Given the time that has passed since the

procurement of handheld devices, work is being undertaken to review and refresh device requirements. Findings will be subject to discussion at a national level in early 2020 and may lead to a change of specification.

- 3.16 A fixed vehicle device solution was subject to a procurement exercise during 2019 and two providers have been selected to now fully develop the fixed vehicle devices from the proof of concept shown at the procurement stage. Understanding vehicle device solutions will inform planning for how vehicles would be fitted out with ESN devices.

Control Room

- 3.17 The TVFCS control room is essentially ESN ready, following upgrade work completed by Capita in 2019. However, development of one element of the ESN system, known as KODIAC, may have created additional work for system suppliers (in our case Capita). If additional work is required it is currently unknown if the national programme will meet the funding further work within our control room systems.

Coverage Assurance

- 3.18 The programme has committed to ESN coverage commensurate with current Airwave coverage. Two devices will shortly be provided for all services that can be deployed in vehicles and used to indicate coverage assurance. Officers from the ESMCP South Central Region are working with colleagues in the ESN South East Region and across Blue light partners to coordinate coverage assurance activity. Whilst we will undertake a range of coverage assurance activity it remains the role of the National Programme and the network providers to confirm that coverage is fit for purpose and at least matches the current Airwave provision. Nonetheless, as an Authority and Service, we will want to be assured for ourselves that the coverage is fit for purpose, particularly at critical sites and inside of critical buildings, so involvement in this assurance work is important.

Training

- 3.19 There has been minimal work in regard to training development over recent months.

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 from the S31 transition grant funding to cover costs of work-streams leads and ancillary costs, such as attendance at meetings, workshops etc. We provide a quarterly report to the national programme on

spend. In September 2019 queries were raised by the national programme with all ESMCP regions on specific areas of spend. This reflects the closer scrutiny of the national programme of transition grant spend. A regional response was made in regard to the items queried for the South Central region and the process was a useful clarification exercise given previous guidance on transition grant spend was far less defined.

- 5.2 Since the beginning of the 2019/20 year, quarterly reporting of spend of Regional ESMCP grant funding is made to the national programme. Through the ESMCP South Central Board officers monitor closely grant allocations and spending associated with the programme with a forecast that there is sufficient residual grant funding to cover regional ESMCP project costs for the 2020/21 year. As such we do not anticipate any S31 grant funding for ESMCP for the 2020/21 financial year.
- 5.3 Separate infrastructure funding from the National Programme was provided to the RBFRS for control room upgrades and other IT infrastructure requirements, such as DNSP connections into TVFCS. This funding was based upon the original regional delivery plan and, where work has been completed, full payment has been made to the providers without direct impact on FRS budgets.
- 5.4 On the 17 December 2019 all services received a letter from the Home Office Director of Fire and Resilience, Luke Edwards, setting out new arrangements for spending of ESMCP infrastructure funding. It included a "Mini Business Case" template that services should submit to the national programme to confirm agreement with any spend before it is made. The template is very straightforward and will maintain clarity with the programme on the use of infrastructure funding by the service. This said there are no apparent spending thresholds for this process and no detail on the expected approval process lead time. Therefore, whilst the additional administrative burden looks relatively low for the Service, the programme could be in receipt of many requests and this has the potential for delay in activity whilst we await approval of spend. This risk has been highlighted through the Fire Customer Group.

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 also 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

Tony Vincent
Head of Business Information and Systems
Tel: 07787 263320

