

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 2 October 2024

Subject: Mobilising System update

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

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For: Information Only

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to update on the progress of the new mobilising system and to inform the CFA of the go-live date of the new system.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the CFA
 - a. Notes the significant work that has been undertaken to develop, prepare, test and deliver the mobilising system into the Service;
 - b. Notes the planned “go-live” date of 09:30 on 9 October 2024;
 - c. Commends the Project Team in the delivery of such a significant, technically complex and time constrained project to a high standard and positive outcomes.

Executive Summary

3. The replacement of a mobilising system is an immense and wide-ranging activity. It holds significant risks both to the Fire and Rescue Service but also the community if not managed carefully and diligently.
4. Significant work has been undertaken and achieved within a very ambitious timescale.
5. The new mobilising system, associated hardware, testing and training has been completed and the Service is now ready to transfer over to the system.
6. The planned go-live date is 09:30 on 9 October 2024. This is ahead of schedule and within the required deadline.
7. This has only been permissible due to some exceptional work and effort by the Project Team in challenging timelines and circumstances.

Background

8. On 30 November 2022 the CFA approved the procurement and installation of a new mobilising system.
9. The “mobilising system” is a critical system for ensuring that emergency calls can be received, and fire engines and officers mobilised to incidents. It is made up of a number of component parts:
 - 9.a. ICCS – Telephone switchboard that takes calls and is able to route them as needed. It also provides a secure link into the emergency services radio system (Airwave).
 - 9.b. Mobilising system or Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) – A computer system that creates incidents, locates them on a mapping system, holds specific premises information (risk information), presents incident information and key tasks, obtains real time or live appliance and officer locations, works out the quickest attendance and offers fire engines and officers to the operators to mobilise. It then sends the signals to stations and officers (see paragraph 9c and 9d).
 - 9.c. Station End Equipment (SEE) - This is the equipment located at stations that receive the mobilisation signals and then alerts the crews by audible tones at the station, activation of lights around the station (for health and safety reasons) and sends a signal to On-Call Firefighters and officers alerters/pagers.
 - 9.d. Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) – These are the computers mounted to the fire engines. They receive mobilisation messages, allow data exchange between fire control and the fire engines, store risk critical information such as procedures, chemical information and crash data software (showing locations of batteries, airbags and other safety systems) in all cars, and premises information (for known risks) and maps as well as hydrant locations.
10. Due to several factors and concerns, a project was commenced within the Service in November 2022 to seek a new system and supplier that met the needs of the community, the Service and would continue to do so into the future upon the conclusion of the current contract running until 23:59 - 31 October 2024.
11. With the support and approval of the CFA, this work commenced as a single Service, leaving the current Tri-Service arrangement at the end of the contract.
12. This timeline was incredibly ambitious. It included the development of system requirements, procurement, technical development and integrations, extensive testing, training of staff, hardware rollout and deployment within the control room environment and all 20 station sites, creating resilience and fallback arrangements.

Activity undertaken

13. The project team is incredibly proud to inform the CFA that all activities have been completed on time and to a high standard.
14. The procurement process was run in compliance with all legal requirements and best practice guidance. This was reviewed by the Procurement Review Unit within the Cabinet Office, who agreed the process was correct and delivered in full compliance.
15. A contract was direct awarded to Motorola Solutions and signed on 22 June 2023. All necessary documentation and notifications were published shortly thereafter and in compliance with required timescales.
16. Extensive activity has been taken since that time by many members of the Service, in partnership with Motorola solutions. This is highly technical and complex in nature, but the CFA should be aware of the immense activity undertaken.
17. All elements of the system are in place, running with full connectivity and integration into other ICT systems (crewing/availability, data warehouse, risk information etc).
18. The “system” has been extensively tested to ensure it meets the specified requirements or better. The testing was conducted by a mixture of ICT, Fire Control and Operational staff at various stages of the project ensuring staff involvement and engagement at all stages.
19. Full system and network compliance and certification has been achieved with the Home Office, allowing secure connection to the “Airwave” network and the future Emergency Services Network (when available).
20. New fallback and overflow agreements have been agreed with Bedfordshire and Essex Fire and Rescue Services. These two-way arrangements ensure that in the event of a major incident, spate conditions or resilience circumstances, calls will continue to be taken and actions taken accordingly to mobilise fire engines and officers.
21. Fire Control staff training has been delivered with positive results and feedback received on all elements of the system along with the user experience. Staff feel it will enable them to undertake their roles and mobilise fire engines with increased speed, flexibility and confidence.
22. Operational staff have received training on the elements contained within the fire engines and again, similar positive feedback has been received.
23. With the positive feedback, testing outcomes and full integration of the system the full “go-live” of the system is planned for 09:30 on 9 October 2024. This is

three weeks ahead of schedule and confidence is high that it will work well in the operational environment.

24. The go-live will be supported by Control teams, project team, specialists from the Motorola team along with senior leaders of the Service. In the unlikely event of any failures, the Service will have the ability to revert to the current system up to the contract completion at 23:59 31 October 2024.

Future developments

25. Given the criticality of the mobilising system and the associated risks, there will be some additional elements of the full system that will not go live on 9 October 2024. This is the new command support system (with a high level of training input being required) and some additional functionality enhancements (differing radio channels and talk groups). These are all enhancements to the system and will not negatively affect the functionality. These will be brought online in early/mid-2025.

Report Implications/Impact

26. Legal (including crime and disorder)

All legal implications regarding procurement and development of the system have been successfully mitigated without issue.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, places a requirement for authorities to make provision to take calls and summon personnel. This risk remains evident and will be the paramount concern on the go live. Confidence levels are high that the transition will not affect Service delivery and if necessary, fall-back arrangements are in place.

27. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

All financial implications have been addressed through the procurement process and budgets allocated by the CFA accordingly.

28. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, places a requirement for authorities to make provision to take calls and summon personnel. This risk remains evident and will be the paramount concern on the go live. Confidence levels are high that the transition will not affect Service delivery and if necessary, fall-back arrangements are in place.

29. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

Staff engagement and feedback throughout the project has been high and with incredibly positive feedback.

30. Environmental

No environmental issues related.

31. Impact upon Our Plan Objective

The mobilising system (and its components) holds a very key role in many of the operational objectives of the service, such as managing calls and attendance times for fires and other emergency incidents, provision of a 24/7 response to local, regional and international incidents, supplying the appropriate resources to attend incidents to meet the needs of communities and meeting the communities' expectations in resolving emergencies.

The introduction of the new system is also envisaged to speed up call handling times and improve the Service offered to local communities.

Officers to Contact

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