

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 19 June 2019

Subject: Control Room Merger between Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

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For: Information

Purpose

1. This report updates the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) on the progress made with the control room merger between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) following a request by the CFA at its meeting on 6 February 2019.

Recommendations

2. CFA is asked to note:
 - a. The arrangements in place for tri-service control, resilience and business continuity planning at the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service to meet the statutory duty to make provision to handle calls and mobilise resources following the creation of the joint control facility for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services;
 - b. That the new arrangements in place for the joint control facility for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services will have no financial impact on Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

Executive Summary

3. In December 2018, the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services secured agreement from their CFAs to create a joint control facility to service both services; combining the current two control rooms into one. Development of this facility remains on target for a 'go-live' date of 1 July 2019.
4. At its meeting on 6 February 2019, the CFA requested that:
 - a. a future report be presented to the CFA at its meeting in June 2019, but that Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire CFAs be informed that any

additional costs falling on this CFA as a result of the merger will not be met;

- b. the same report identifies best practice in the country in respect of emergency services merger on control rooms and other shared support services.
5. Further discussions have been held with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire FRS and assurance is provided to the CFA that their control room would not be expected to handle calls for all three services with normal crewing levels.
6. Arrangements are in place to provide the required level of resilience to allow the CFA to satisfy its statutory duty to make provision to handle calls and mobilise resources.
7. All costs associated with changes made to Leicestershire Control Room, to assist in resilience arrangements for the Joint Control, are being met by the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Joint Control project.

Background

8. The Combined Fire Authority was advised at its meeting in December 2018 of a proposal for a merger between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services. The merger would result in Nottinghamshire's control room closing and calls for both services being handled within Derbyshire during normal working. The CFA was informed that this joint control would impact on Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service due to the tri-service control room arrangements already in place within the sub-region. At its meeting in February 2019, the CFA was advised that Leicestershire FRS would not be expected to undertake additional work as a result of this merger.
9. The merger was approved by both Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire CFAs during December 2018, to be achieved during the 2019/20 financial year with a target date of June 2019 for being operational. The project remains on target and will go-live as a Joint Control for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire on 1 July 2019.
10. Concerns had been raised by the CFA previously around the impacts on the Leicestershire Control Room should the Joint Control facility become unavailable, and a requirement arise for Leicestershire to handle all calls and mobilisation for the Tri-Service area with normal staffing levels.

Business Continuity

11. A range of Business Continuity plans have been put in place to both Leicestershire Control and the Joint Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Control to ensure that each CFA are able to maintain their statutory duty to make provision to handle calls and mobilise.

12. In event of a loss of the Joint Control, call handling and mobilising responsibility will remain with the Joint Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Control until a sufficient number of staff have transferred from the Joint Control to Leicestershire Control. This will remove the impact on Leicestershire Control having to operate for the three Tri-Service partners under business as usual staffing levels.
13. As far as practical, business continuity plans have been tested, with final tests to complete after the go-live date to account for changes in the equipment architecture.
14. Reciprical arrangements are in place with the Joint Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Control to support Leicestershire Control during periods of business disruption. A capability is provided for Leicestershire Control to relocate and operate from the Joint Control facility in Derby should this be necessary in extreme circumstances.
15. Tri-Service business as usual arrangements remain in place, providing resilience across the two Control facilities for call handling and mobilising during any immediate peaks in demand.
16. Input into the operation of the Joint Control facility and its support arrangements for Leicestershire Control will be maintained through the current Tri-Service structure.
17. During the enabling works at the Joint Control facility located at Ascot Drive in Derby, Derbyshire Control relocated its operation to Nottinghamshire and operated as an interim Joint Control for a period of 12 days. During this period there was minimal impact on the operation of Leicestershire Control and this provides an initial indication of how business as usual operations will proceed.

Technology

18. As part of the Derbyshire and Leicestershire project enabling works, upgrades are being provided to the training area, and the number of workstations available within Leicestershire Control for use by Joint Control staff should the necessity arise for them to relocate.
19. Completion of the upgrades can only be accomplished after the go-live of the Joint Control on 1 July 2019. After this date, equipment will become available from Nottinghamshire which can be re-used within the Leicestershire Control.

Financial Implications and Benefits

20. All costs generated by any changes necessary within Leicestershire Control to accommodate a relocation of staff from the Joint Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Control will be covered by the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Joint Control project funds. There will be no financial impact on Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

21. The upgrades provided to Leicestershire Control will improve operational capability by having a greater number of fully operational workstations available for use. Should an increase in incident related activity or a significant major incident occur our capability is improved to use additional Leicestershire Control staff to assist or to operate as a separate unit to manage a major incident.
22. An improved capability for delivery of training, both structured and informal, will also be available with the increase in equipment provided.

Best Practice Elsewhere

23. The National Fire Chiefs Council is currently looking at the provision of fire control solutions across the UK following the collapse of the central programme. At the time of this report, there is no identified best practice.

Report Implications / Impact

24. Legal (including crime and disorder)

The CFA has a statutory duty to make provision for handling emergency calls and mobilise resources.

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

All costs associated with upgrading the Leicestershire Control facility to improve resilience capability are being met by the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire joint control project. There will be no financial impact on Leicestershire FRS.

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

The CFA has a statutory duty to handle emergency calls and mobilise resources. Any changes to the existing way of doing so will affect the likelihood of being unable to do so until such time as all business continuity plans have been fully tested and embedded.

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

Changes will be made to Control staff contracts to allow working from either Control location during business continuity events.

28. Environmental

None identified.

29. Impact upon Our Plan Objectives

Fire Control either enables or supports the following aspects of the Response Strategy:

- manage calls to fires and other emergency incidents
- provide a 24/7 response to local, regional, national and international incidents
- supply the appropriate resources and attend incidents to meet the needs of our communities
- meet our community's expectations in resolving emergencies

Background Papers

Report to December 2018 CFA meeting titled "Impact of Proposed Control Room Collaboration By NFRS and DFRS"

https://leics-fire.gov.uk/my-calendar/?mc_id=123

Report to 6 February 2019 CFA meeting titled "Proposed Control Room Collaboration between Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service".

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/your-fire-service/decision-making/cfa-meetings/>

Appendices

None.

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