

Combined Control Room Project

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report updates Members on preparations to create a 'virtual' combined fire control room, operated from two locations – Shrewsbury and Worcester. The project is a formal collaboration between Shropshire and Wrekin and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authorities (SWFRA and HWFRA), managed via the previously reported and approved Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note progress made to date in terms of measures taken to implement a 'virtual' combined fire control room.

3 Background

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) currently operate their own control rooms, call handling and mobilising systems. Both HWFRA and SWFRA have procured similar mobilising systems from the same supplier, using the same systems integrator as a contractor to link all new and legacy elements within each respective Service.

A successful bid¹ for Government grant funding, awarded in 2012, was based on a MoU that broadly describes the aspirations of both FRAs to align the two new systems. The aim is to create a single common system, which can be operated from control rooms located in both Worcester and Shrewsbury.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6233/2197049.pdf

Common operating procedures and ways of working would need to be developed to enable each FRS to take calls and mobilise the other's resources seamlessly at any time. Once implemented, the new system will provide each FRS with an immediate and fully operational fall-back arrangement. This will enable the closure of current secondary control rooms with some identified savings.

For both FRAs the deployment of a fully integrated solution with common operating procedures offers improved resilience and broader operational benefits. This will support enhanced interoperability with partner agencies within the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum. The approach will also allow for the deployment of the nearest incident commander / specialist officers (irrespective of their host FRS) for improved safety of firefighters and for greater resilience at large / multiple incidents.

Full alignment is initially expected to take up to 24 months and preparations to scope out the various elements of work that would realise both FRAs' aspirations are now underway.

The scoping work carried out to date has identified the following assumptions, upon which the initial bid application and MoU were based:

- a) That the procured command and control systems and all other dependant systems will be successfully implemented into both FRSs;
- b) That a viable technical integration solution exists; and
- c) That resources allocated to the programme in terms of the bid are sufficient to deliver the overall programme aspirations.

4 Progress to Date

The following key areas of progress have been achieved:

- a) The newly procured command and control systems have been deployed within each respective FRS control room.
- b) Interim fall-back arrangements are now in place between the two control rooms.
- c) A joint Programme Board, with representatives from both FRSs, was set up in September 2012 to oversee and monitor the progress of all works associated with the MoU deliverables.
- d) A Programme Brief has been drafted and will be considered at the next Board meeting scheduled for 28 February 2013. The Brief transfers the aspirations of the MoU into a clearly agreed scope, made up of defined projects and work-packages. Progress made in respect of this area of work is being formally reported to the Government and the most recent submission is appended to this report.

- e) The grant funding received has enabled the creation of a small project team to be formed within SFRS, with some initial reviews now underway in conjunction with counterparts in HWFRS.
- f) A plan of works has been designed to ensure that the current command and control system used in SFRS is fully embedded, leading to the removal of most legacy equipment (including previous mobilising system and station end equipment).

5 Financial Implications

There are no additional financial implications associated with this report. The costs necessary to create a 'virtual' combined control room are funded via a Government grant awarded in 2012 to each fire and rescue authority.

6 Legal Comment

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 prescribes a statutory requirement² for Fire and Rescue Authorities to 'make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel' (Section 7 (2) (c), Section 8 (2) (c) and Section 9 (3) (c)).

7 Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

8 Appendix

Department for Communities and Local Government Submission:
Fire Control Project Update 25 January 2013

9 Background Papers

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Memorandum of Understanding

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Memorandum of Understanding Continuum

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/part/2/crossheading/core-functions>

**Department for Communities and Local Government Submission:
 Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authorities Fire Control Project Update
 (25th January 2013)**

High Level Summary

Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire & Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authorities currently operate their own control rooms, call handling and mobilising systems. The two fire and rescue authorities have now procured and implemented command and control systems from the same supplier using the same external contractor as a systems integrator. The fire and rescue authorities' plans are to fully align the two new systems, using the services of that systems integrator, to create a single virtualised data-centric system which will be capable of being operated from control rooms located in Worcester and Shrewsbury. By sharing the use of legacy communications control interface ports already owned by Shropshire and Wrekin, the system will provide the capability (equivalent to SAN H) for both fire and rescue authorities to communicate by voice and data using the Airwave network. Common operating procedures and ways of working are being developed which will enable each fire and rescue authority to take calls and mobilise the other's resources seamlessly at any time. The new system will provide each fire and rescue authority with an immediate and fully operational fallback arrangement. This will enable the closure of current secondary control rooms. Additional remote fallback arrangements will be established with another fire and rescue authority (which uses the same command and control system).

	Mobile Data Terminals	Real Time Incident Messaging	Status messaging	Automatic Vehicle Location	Call line Identification	Integrated Geographic Information System	Shared Gazetteer	Service access name 'H'	Partnering with Automatic Systems Failover	Reduction in control rooms Secondary Controls
Hereford and Worcester October 2009 baseline	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Shropshire and Wrekin October 2009 baseline	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO

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Hereford and Worcester, current position December 2012	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	partial	NO
Shropshire and Wrekin current position December 2012	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	equivalent	partial	NO
Hereford and Worcester, Shropshire and Wrekin projected Future Position (as notified July 2011 – please update as necessary if projected benefits have changed)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	equivalent	YES	YES

For both fire and rescue authorities the deployment of a fully integrated solution with common operating procedures offers improved resilience and broader operational benefits. This will support enhanced interoperability with partner agencies within the West Mercia local resilience forum. The approach will also allow for the deployment of the nearest incident commander/specialist officers (irrespective of their host fire and rescue authority) for improved safety of fire-fighters and for greater resilience at large/multiple incidents.

Full alignment is expected to take up to 24 months, although both services became live with the new stand-alone systems during 2012.

Due to initial capacity and technical issues (*related to both organisations fully integrating their respective new command and control systems into legacy infrastructures/networks/systems during 2012*) it is anticipated that there will be some slippage at the latter stages of the programme. Expected full completion is envisaged to be during March 2015.