

## Agenda Item: 9

**TO:** Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

**FROM:** Assistant Director Operational Support and Combined Fire Control -  
Wayne Swales

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### COMBINED FIRE CONTROL UPDATE

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Fire Authority with an update on the position of Combined Fire Control (CFC) and the future direction of the function.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Authority is asked to;
- 2.1.1 note the significant progress made to date and current position of the CFC function,
- 2.1.2 review and provide comment on the proposed next steps for CFC as outlined in Paragraph 6 below.

#### 3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 **Political** – CFC enables the taking of emergency calls, dispatching of appropriate resources, communications, and coordination activities. There may be interest in the progress of associated projects and the impact(s) they may have on our partner agencies and the public perceptions of the change to our provision post Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS) departure from the collaboration.
- 3.2 **Economic** – the budget deficit realised from the loss of the collaboration with SFRS may impact the Service.
- 3.3 **Legal** - Section 7 of the Fire Services Act states that a fire and rescue authority must make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel.

3.4 **Social** – the system and the control function used to mobilise our resources is a critical entity, the public perception may be impacted should we experience any disruptions to our service delivery.

#### 4. **Equality Impact Assessments**

4.1 Due to the discriminative nature of fire, those with certain protected characteristics are more likely to suffer the effects. Throughout our projects we will continually undertake equality impact assessments to ensure we identify areas which may affect people differently.

#### 5. **Background**

5.1 Since 2011, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) has been providing a highly efficient and effective CFC function to the communities of both Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. The receiving and handling of calls has been provided from the CFC based at Service Headquarters in Huntingdon.

5.2 The control room operated using a system provided by Remsdaq and Frequentis. This system served our control room well for approaching 40 years, but the ageing technology required significant upgrades to ensure it was compatible with new and emerging technologies, including the Emergency Services Network (ESN). The collaboration agreed to jointly procure a new technical solution; in 2019 Systel solutions was awarded the contract.

5.3 In June 2023, SFRS announced their intention to separate from the highly successful collaboration to initiate the establishment of a standalone SFRS fire control. Outside of the significant financial impacts to Suffolk residents and ourselves, this also raised significant concerns around SFRSs commitment to the 'go-live' with Systel. Many of the teams that we had been working with within SFRS left the organisation which in turn presented a significant risk to the project that was never fully mitigated by SFRS both in terms of capacity and skillsets.

5.4 The risks and concerns were repeatedly raised with SFRS senior management, as it was evident that SFRS were not ready to cut over to Systel on the mutually agreed date. Where possible CFRS took over responsibility for SFRS activities as it was unlikely that they would be able to complete them for example, the required integrations.

5.5 In June 2024, the planned 'go-live' was delayed by three months as it was evident SFRS were not sufficiently prepared. Due to the lack of progress by SFRS in that time to rectify the issues identified and the need for 'go-live' to happen in September 2024, CFRS initiated business continuity planning with SFRS to ensure mitigations would be in place should not all activities be completed.

5.6 Despite reassurances from SFRS, the predicted risks materialised quickly on the 'go-live' date, with SFRS having to operate snow-ball arrangements (manual station alerting) and have three Officers in the control room 24/7 to

support effective mobilising. An action plan was initiated by our Service for the critical activities required and daily meetings were held to establish progress against these and agree when business continuity arrangements could be exited.

- 5.7 In September 2024 we went live with the new mobilising system in CFC. This was the culmination of the five-year project, replacing the entire system that allows us to receive 999 calls, log incidents, identify resources, dispatch and communicate with crews; it is one of the most complex and critical systems that we have. The Service has been working alongside Systel as our supplier during this time to continue to integrate the system within both Cambridgeshire and Suffolk alongside identifying and resolving identified areas of improvement. We have engaged throughout this period with Systel with supplier visits both to their headquarters in France, and through on-site visits to our service headquarters.

## **6. Current Priorities**

- 6.1 With the implementation of the new mobilising system provided by Systel, the exit of SFRS from the collaboration, and the known budget pressure resulting from that, there is a need to review and transform the current model of operation within the control room function. This will realise a more efficient, effective, and futureproofed delivery of the function using modern technology and ways of mobilising our resources to meet the changing needs of our communities. We have identified and put in place key areas of priority to meet the needs of our control function for the future. This is to be achieved through the launching of two projects;

- **P157 Control Works Project**

Following the implementation of the Systel mobilising system, several enhancements have been identified to further develop system efficiency. The upcoming version of the operating system, AEGIS, is a significant mandatory upgrade encompassing multiple software system upgrades which will further improve the system.

The mySTART+ application is currently used by Officers as an operational viewing platform, (OVP), to monitor ongoing incidents. This was implemented with basic functionality but now the system is in use, capacity exists to conduct a full review of any other functionality or benefits the app can offer.

The current provider of telephony within the Systel solution has given Systel notice that they will no longer be providing the service, and a replacement telephony supplier is required to maintain business continuity. Given the systems deep integration with Systel, this transition must be carefully managed to ensure uninterrupted emergency service provision.

SFRS expects to 'go-live' with its own mobilising system and control room this month. CFRS will need to manage this with a comprehensive transition plan to ensure operational service is maintained to Cambridgeshire communities whilst also providing resilience for SFRS and ensuring data security post-contract.

- **P158 Control Review Project**

This project will seek to identify and implement ways to improve and modernise how we deliver our fire control function utilising our modern mobilisation system. We will seek to align the function with the wider organisational ways of operating to drive positive cultural change.

Throughout the project it is key that we ensure colleagues in fire control are engaged and communicated with on any changes and involved in activities that will support the drive for positive cultural change.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact Officer
Programme and Project Management documents – various  Fire Authority Reports and Minutes - various	Hinchingsbrooke Cottage  Brampton Road  Huntingdon	Assistant Director Service Operational Support and Combined Fire Control – Wayne Swales  07554 425128  <a href="mailto:wayne.swales@cambsfire.gov.uk">wayne.swales@cambsfire.gov.uk</a>