

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

URGENT DECISIONS RECORD

URGENT DECISION NO. 01/10

Appendix: Fire Control Resilience Project Urgent Decision Proposal

Purpose

1. To request an urgent decision to allow the Service to proceed to tender for a replacement mobilising system.

Proposal

2. H&W FRS has been working for many years now to support progress on the national FireControl Project in accordance with the Service's National Framework document. Unfortunately, the project continues to be subject to delay, increasing cost and uncertainty driving increasing risks to the Service's current call-handling capability. It should be remembered that the RCC project was initially due to be delivered in 2007.
3. The Service's mobilising system is now 15 years old and has already been kept running 5 years beyond its originally anticipated renewal date. Whilst the equipment maker has agreed to support the system until December 2014 and the system supplier is renewing its commitment to support the system on an annual basis, at present costs attached to this are increasing year on year with system spares now very scarce across the country. In addition, annual maintenance extensions are now subject to increasing demands from the supplier for additional component renewals and replacements which are proving increasingly expensive.
4. During the past few months uncertainty over the future of the national project has grown. A Government announcement following the issuing of a letter of material breach of contract against Cassidian is imminent, and has been promised before the Christmas break. The Minister referenced this at his meeting with Chiefs and Chairmen on 15th December.
5. In August 2010 a project was commenced to scope the options available to the Service to reduce the risk attached to running an increasingly obsolete system and explore opportunities to deliver an interim solution. A detailed specification for an interim system has been developed and market tested for pricing through OCG buying solutions. The outcome of this process has suggested that the Authority could procure a replacement for its ageing system. This approach would:
 - significantly improve the functionality of current mobilising arrangements
 - provide a resilient transitional system should the national project continue but be subject to further delays
 - provide a viable, robust alternative solution should the national project be cancelled, and

- offer improved efficiency and resilience options through significantly strengthened fallback and potential shared call-handling arrangements with neighbouring FRSs
6. Replacing the mobilising system would also provide an opportunity for the Control function to be moved into FRA Headquarters. This would provide significantly improved working conditions for Control staff as well as delivering increased flexibility for the Asset Management Plan as regards the Worcester fire station site.
 7. The initial market testing process and financial analysis compares favourably with current indicative costings for the RCC. The final costing will not be able to be established until the proposal has been put through a full tender process.
 8. An urgent decision is requested to allow the project to proceed to a formal tender process to provide final, firm costings to support a decision regarding the options available to the Authority at the earliest opportunity.