Report of Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Director of Prevention and Assets

Replacement Mobilising System Reserve Budget

Purpose of report

1.   To seek the Authority's authorisation to begin spend against the Fire Control Reserve to procure a replacement mobilising system for Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS).

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Recommendation

It is recommended that Officers are authorised to utilise the agreed Fire Control reserve to procure a replacement command and control system for the Service.

Introduction and Background

2.   The main principle behind HWFRS's Response Strategy is to mobilise the most appropriate resources to an incident considering the incident type and the potential risks that may be known or suspected and to arrive as promptly and safely as possible.

3.   The current command and control system in use in HWFRS and in Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is the SEED system, provided by Lampada. It went live in September 2012 and despite significant effort from the Services, there are still a number of issues with the system. The system is also now ten years old and would normally be considered for replacement at this stage.

4.   In addition to the long term system issues, integrations with key software and support systems have been only able to provide limited functionality. Despite the ethos of agile development, the current system has not kept pace with advances in technology or flexed when other software that it uses is superseded or becomes obsolete. In order to more effectively address the outcomes of the Kerslake and Grenfell reports, the Service needs access to more advanced functions such as the ability to transfer incident details electronically from fire control to other emergency services and fireground incident commanders which is not provided with the current system.

5.   As the current system is not now meeting the Service needs, a complete user specification has been produced in conjunction with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, and a full business case was presented to SMB in December 2021. SMB agreed that a more reliable, flexible and resilient system with increased functionality that comes from a more comprehensive solution is required to better deliver the core strategies, to support the work of the control staff and mitigate risks to firefighters, the public and the organisation as a whole.

6.   A full summary of the risks and issues associated with continuing with the current system is contained within the business case previously approved by SMB.

7.   The requirement for a replacement command and control system has long been recognised and a Fire Control Reserve was allocated by HWFRA in February 2019.

Timelines

8.   The project to procure a new command and control system will be jointly acquired with Shropshire FRS and will enable complete mobilisation of any asset from HWFRS and SFRS independently from either Service control room (Hindlip and Telford). SFRS has agreed that they will procure the same command and control system but not necessarily in the same timescales as Hereford and Worcester. However the intention is to procure the system to provide resilience across the two control room sites (Phase 2), once they move their control room from Shrewsbury to Telford.

9.   It has been agreed to provide a proven and tested system and not one in development or untested in a UK Fire Service. It is therefore anticipated that an 'off the shelf' command and control system could be live in HWFRS control room by the end of 2023, if procurement is initiated in February 2022. At the latest it would be anticipated that the product would be fully live by the end of 2024.

Conclusion/Summary

10.   This paper seeks permission from Members to begin utilising funding against the Fire Control reserve to secure an appropriate replacement command and control system.

Please note that the full business case and risk assessment have not been included in this paper due to commercial sensitivity ahead of any procurement process.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Financial – request to spend against agreed budget
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Response Strategy – a replacement mobilising system is required in order to provide high quality sustainable services.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	A risk assessment of continuing with the current SEED mobilising system has been carried out. The new mobilising system is required to mitigate the risks identified to an acceptable level.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Stakeholders within HWFRS and SFRS
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Not applicable
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	Not applicable