

## **Report of the Head of Corporate Services**

### **Strategic Fire Alliance – priority projects update**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To update Members on progress in delivering priority projects developed by the Strategic Fire Alliance between Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services.
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#### **Recommendation**

***It is recommended that Members note progress on projects to date.***

#### **Introduction and Background**

2. At the Fire Authority meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Members were updated on progress in delivering the Strategic Fire Alliance programme of four priority projects.
3. The four projects are as follows:
  - a. Fire Control: scoping the future requirements for ensuring a resilient Command & Control function,
  - b. C/IRMP: reviewing options for aligning integrated risk management planning processes,
  - c. ICT: developing organisational arrangements for the provision of Information & Communications Technology functions, and
  - d. Procurement: reviewing procurement strategies within both Services to examine the potential for alignment.
4. The following section provides a further progress update on each project. It also includes an update on a proposal to update the joint Communications Strategy for the Fire Alliance.

#### **Programme Update**

5. Members will be aware that since the last report, there has been a rapid escalation of the COVID-19 global pandemic. All areas of the United Kingdom have been badly affected, and both Services continue to be closely involved in dealing with the impact. Inevitably, some key resources assigned to delivering the Alliance projects have had to be redirected to assist with the ongoing operational response to the pandemic.
6. Nevertheless, there has been progress on each project and highlights are set out below.

## *Fire Control*

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7. With key resources diverted to support operational activities in relation to COVID-19, at their meeting in May 2020 the Alliance's Programme Delivery Board agreed to defer the project, but keep it under review.

Subsequently, at their meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> September, the Delivery Board appointed a new Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) to ensure the delivery of the project. Over the forthcoming months, the SRO will review progress to date and propose recommendations on how the project should be moved forward. Review findings and recommendations will be reported back to the Delivery Board at a later date.

## *C/IRMP*

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8. Good progress continues to be made for both the CRMP and Shropshire FRS's IRMP for 2021-25, both of which are due to 'go live' on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. Officers from both Services have continued to work together in preparing the two Plans.
9. The following table provides an update of the key stages and progress to date.

Period	Key Stage	Progress Update
January to July 2019	Agree Service Performance Measures for each Service	Complete
April to July 2019	Consider appropriate targets for the 2020-21 extension year of the current C/IRMPs	Complete
April to December 2019	Current Service performance analysis for each Service	Complete
June to December 2019	Risk analysis of initial C/IRMP proposals in collaboration with independent supplier	Complete
September to December 2019	Round of internal C/IRMP workshops – "Setting the scene"	Complete
May 2020	PCC Election	This has been deferred until April 2021.
May to June 2020	Draft C/IRMP proposals agreed for consultation	Complete
6 July 2020	C/IRMP Consultation launch with ongoing programme of publicity, meetings and press releases.	Complete
August 2020	Public focus groups	Complete
25 September 2020	Consultation closes	Complete

September to November 2020	Equality Impact Assessments to be prepared	On track
September 2020 – March 2021	Process to collate, monitor and report on Performance Indicators to be established	On track
December 2020	Consultation results to respective Fire Authorities/PCC	On track
January 2021	C/IRMPs to be updated	On track
February 2021	Final approval on C/IRMP documents by respective Fire Authorities/PCC	On track
April 2021	Publish C/IRMP 2021-25	On track

## ICT

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10. Since the last update, progress has been made in delivering the future vision and roadmap for ICT in four key areas. Highlights are set out below:

### *Fire Alliance ICT Strategy 2020-2025*

11. The strategy document encompasses the key elements of infrastructure, ICT procedures, procurement and organisational structure. The document has been written, and has now been finalised and approved prior to publication.

### *Wide Area Network (WAN) Project*

12. The project team have investigated the concept of SD-WAN as an alternative to the current technology deployed, known as an MPLS, in order to securely connect users to applications from multiple locations. To enable the team to better understand whether SD-WAN is appropriate, they have engaged with technology experts to determine if the technology is a good fit for the Alliance.
13. To bolster the knowledge and understanding of SD-WAN, the team were due to attend a workshop in Peterborough during August 2020, but this had to be switched at the last moment to a video meeting, due to the provider not being able to give assurances around social distancing. The workshop will hopefully be rearranged shortly in a more secure and COVID-19 safe environment. The project team are engaging with other subject experts to ensure a balanced and objective appraisal of the technology.
14. The project team have also been gathering information, which will form part of the specification document. This will include items such as locations, postcodes, existing line speeds and, where available, line utilisation data. The team are also collecting information about any future plans for station usage to ensure appropriate bandwidth and capacity is built into the specification requirements.

### *Helpdesk System Project*

15. Three solutions have been appraised and tested by both Services' ICT Service Desk teams and a preferred solution has been identified.

### *Software Analysis*

16. An exercise is currently taking place to analyse the software used by both Services. This includes input from functional managers and ICT managers to determine if there are opportunities to align software across the Alliance, providing financial and functional benefits for the short, medium and long term.

### *Procurement*

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17. With the exception of the procurement of Fire Hoods, there has been no further progress on this project, as resources are diverted to support operational activities in relation to COVID-19. As a result, there is no update as yet on potential savings for Quarter 3, 2020-21.
18. A new Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) has been appointed, and commenced a review of this workstream in September 2020. Findings will be reported back to the Alliance Programme Board at a later date.

### *Communications Strategy*

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19. At their meeting in February 2020, members of the Alliance Programme Board requested an updated version of the Communications Strategy and supporting Deliverables Plan. Work on this has been delayed, given team members' increased workload with the ongoing COVID-19 situation, prioritisation of the CRMP and IRMP consultations and annual leave.
20. At their meeting in August 2020, the Alliance Programme Delivery Board prioritised work on the strategy and a resource has now been identified to carry the work forward. It is proposed that the Communications Strategy should mirror the same format adopted for the new CRMP and IRMP. Work on the Communications Strategy commenced at the end of September 2020.

### **Conclusion/Summary**

21. While there have been delays in delivering the programme of projects, progress continues to be made. The extent of future progress remains subject to change, given the ongoing COVID-19 situation. Updates on progress and any issues arising will continue to be reported regularly to the Alliance Programme Board and Programme Delivery Board.
22. Members are recommended to note the overall progress on the projects. Further updates will continue to be brought to future Fire Authority meetings.

### **Corporate Considerations**

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Some resources have been redirected to support operational activity during the current unprecedented COVID-19 circumstances.
<b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	The projects are designed to address the Government's Fire Reform agenda as embedded in the <a href="#">Fire and Rescue National Framework</a> .  Fire Alliance Strategic Plan
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Risk Assessments will be undertaken as part of any project management processes recommended.
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Both Services have undertaken public consultation on their respective risk management plans. Consultation arrangements are in line with Government guidance.
<b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Data collated during the C/IRMP public consultation will inform the final C/IRMP documents, due to be published in April 2021.