

## **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 14<sup>th</sup> October 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 preparation of a joint Communications Strategy for the Fire Alliance.

#### **Programme Update**

5. Members will be aware that both Services continue to be closely involved in dealing with the impact the COVID-19 global pandemic. 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, and this has had an impact on some of the project work being delivered.

6. Since the last report, there have been some changes in personnel due to a number of recent promotions across both Services, and the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) roles for the following projects have been reallocated as follows:

C/IRMP	ACFO Dan Quinn, Shropshire FRS
Procurement	ACFO Jon Pryce, Hereford & Worcester FRS
ICT	ACFO David Myers (until 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2020) and then ACFO Simon Hardiman, Shropshire FRS
Fire Control	T/DCFO Keith Chance, Hereford & Worcester FRS

7. In addition, officers have discussed governance arrangements for the priority projects and have agreed that each Project would convene a Project Working Group under the terms set out in the Fire Alliance Strategic Plan 2018-22.
8. Progress updates on each project are set out below.

### ***Fire Control***

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9. Work is now ongoing to finalise the strategic options appraisal of sixteen options identified on the long list for provision of a Fire Control function. The appraisal will then identify a shortlist of options and a preferred choice.
10. The shortlist of options will be completed by December 2020 at which point, the shortlist and preferred option will be presented to the Alliance's Programme Board. Once the preferred option has been agreed by the Board, a full Business Case will be completed and presented by April 2021.

### ***C/IRMP***

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11. The public consultation stage of the C/IRMPs is now complete. Responses to the questionnaires, separate submissions and focus group outcomes have been analysed by Opinion Research Services (ORS), and the findings in relation to the CRMP 2021-25 consultation are reported elsewhere on your agenda. A CRMP Equality Impact Assessment has also been prepared, and is part of the report on the consultation findings. Findings in relation to the Shropshire FRS's IRMP 2021-25 consultation are also being presented to Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority. Following this, any revisions required for the C/IRMPs will be drafted prior to publication on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

12. The updated timetable is shown below.

Action	Timeline
C/IRMP Consultation launch with ongoing programme of publicity, meetings and press releases	6 July 2020 - complete
Public focus groups	August 2020 – complete
Public consultation reminder	4 September 2020 - complete
Consultation closes	30 September 2020 - complete
Equality Impact Assessments prepared	November 2020 - complete
Process to collate, monitor and report on Performance Indicators to be established	September 2020 – March 2021
Consultation results submitted to respective Fire Authorities	December 2020
C/IRMPs to be updated	December 2020 – January 2021
C/IRMP publication date	1 April 2021

## **ICT**

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13. Since the last update, progress has been made in the following areas:

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

14. Creating a single Wide Area Network, that combines two ICT infrastructures currently operating under different models, is a challenge. The project team are investigating a number of different technologies to determine if costs can be reduced and to enable innovation. The aim is to balance costs, resilience and capacity against future expectations for the greater use of technology and increasing community and Blue Light services use.
15. Once the investigations are complete, the strategic direction will be developed and a proposal will be put forward.

### *Helpdesk System Project*

16. The two Service's ICT Service Desk teams have tested and appraised three possible software applications to identify and select a solution that provides both Services with the opportunity to use a single application to support and work closely together. This is now moving to the implementation phase.
17. Over the next few months, the team expects to gain approval to implement the service desk software and begin to bring the two ICT departments closer together through the alignment of processes and practices.

### *Software Analysis*

18. A review of all software currently used across both Services, which included input from many stakeholders at all levels, has been completed. The review is now documented and available for discussion.
19. Once the software strategy has been published, agreement regarding priorities and budgets will need to be made and a plan of action drawn up. Joint specifications will need to be developed across functional areas of both Services to ensure the scope of work is not restricted, and to ensure there are improved efficiencies, providing resilience and capacity and ensuring a cloud-first approach to solutions is adopted.

### *Procurement*

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20. Representatives from both Services have now agreed a fully revised Procurement Plan, encompassing seventeen areas or items. The delivery of this plan will be coordinated by a newly formed board of Alliance stakeholders chaired by the Senior Responsible Owner for Procurement, ACFO Jon Pryce from Hereford & Worcester FRS. The board will be able to meet regularly and provide updates on areas of progress or where decisions are required.
21. It should be noted that some areas being explored may result in decisions not to procure jointly if there are no tangible benefits; however the process will be recorded and decisions and rationale documented, in line with the agreed Alliance Procurement Strategy. The revised Procurement Plan will begin immediately with an aim of being fully delivered by March 2022. However, the plan is flexible and can be adapted as the year progresses in line with new or emerging requirements, or national guidance and frameworks.
22. The first item in the plan (Smokehoods) has already been completed and is currently on order awaiting delivery. The specification for Smokehoods recently emerged as a requirement from the findings of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, and was jointly agreed in October and orders placed with the supplier. This will ensure that both Services are using the same piece of equipment on all front line appliances and will be fully interoperable between operational staff. Other more complex areas, such as ICT related hardware, have begun to be evaluated for commonality, and a plan is being developed to enable future joint procurement.

### *Communications Strategy*

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23. Work on preparing the Communications Strategy had been delayed, given team members' increased workload with the ongoing COVID-19 situation, prioritisation of the CRMP and IRMP consultations and annual leave.
24. With a resource now identified, it is expected that a draft for consideration will be submitted to the Alliance's Programme Delivery Board at their next meeting.

### Conclusion/Summary

25. 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's Programme Board and Programme Delivery Board.
26. 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</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Some resources are still 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?)	An EIA is not required for this programme update report.