



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Executive Committee, 12 July 2023

Report title: Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme

Lead Member: Councillor Matthew Walsh

Report sponsor: Anne-Marie Carter, Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO

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Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the Emergency Service Mobile Communications Programme update be noted

Executive summary:

This paper examines the current Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) position and the expected impact on the South Central (SC) project team, with regard to workloads. It relies on the information provided by the national Programme being open, accurate and provided in a timely manner.

The document outlines the position adopted by the SC region regarding the future engagement with both the Programme and the team managed by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

With the current delays within the Programme and bearing in mind that their deployment team have now been stood down whilst the re-procurement of Lot 2 takes place, the SC board had requested a review of how the region look to engage with the Programme over the next couple of years. This was to ensure that the effort put into ESMCP is effective, beneficial, and balanced with other more pressing priorities.

The NFCC and Programme teams have asked each Service to maintain a strategic owner for ESMCP and, in addition, that the ESMCP reference is assigned to a suitable individual who will act as a single point of contact (SPoC).

The Thames Valley region already has an established SRO at strategic level; therefore, this governance can remain unchanged and there will be a single representative for the Thames Valley team at the NFCC ESMCP strategic meetings.

The SPoC position refers to a more tactical level of contact which is currently carried out by four Project Managers across the Thames Valley region. The future engagement will comprise the provision of a single Project Manager to represent all the Thames Valley fire services. The SPoC will cater for the small amount of local engagement from the NFCC/Programme and represent Thames Valley team across all the programme workstreams/meetings as required, and then engaging with their local Service contacts as necessary.

The current Thames Valley Project Manager will adopt this role ensuring that a level of regional contact will be maintained with the Programme and mitigates the risk of losing staff knowledge and experience when scaling back resources.

The Thames Valley Strategic lead and SPoC will ensure relevant communications and developments in ESMCP are managed accordingly, as well as maintaining a significantly reduced level of internal governance. Regular meetings between the project managers will continue, ensuring that information is shared and the SC Programme Board meetings will continue to be held in line with the dates of the Fire Customer Group meetings.

The position adopted from 01 April 2023 will provide assurance that Thames Valley Services remain engaged with the Programme and informed of progress whilst allowing local Services to utilise their resources in a more efficient way.

Financial implications:

The current Local Transition Resource (LTR) funding ceased as of 01 April 2023.

In order to mitigate the impact of this, the TV Project Manager role has been reduced from a four-day week working on South Central Fire ESMCP to one day per week. This is a local flexible agreement which means the time spent on ESMCP will vary but not exceed one day per week over the next twelve months to enable budgets to be made available to support the role.

The TV PM will also be seconded into the Home Office to support Fire Funding Policy with ESMCP for the remaining contracted three days per week. The Home Office will be funding the secondment. The TV PM employment contract will continue to sit with Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service during this period.

Each of the Thames Valley services will contribute an equal amount to the TV PM post for work conducted for Thames Valley on ESMCP.

Risk management:

The South Central Programme team maintains a risk register on behalf of the South Central Programme Board. The Risk Register v27 was reviewed by the three TV FRS project managers in February 2023.

There have been few changes to the current risks due to the limited movement of the Programme. However, there was one closure and one new addition to the register:

ESMCP043 – *Closed* - Funding shortfall in financial year 2022/23 onwards. Closed due to information released regarding the funding position as current financial year about to close

ESMCP045 – *Opened – Green* - Funding shortfall for remainder of delivery of Programme activities - Funding for LTR ceases 31 March 2023. No future model released leading to potential limitations in local resource availability

Legal implications:

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service have already signed up to the principles of the ESN. Officers will continue to monitor the progress of the Programme closely and will provide challenge to the process where it is felt necessary.

Privacy and security implications:

As the Programme remains in the 'Prepare' phase, there have been no privacy issues or security implications identified. This will remain under review, particularly when the Programme stands up again and moves to the 'Mobilisation' phase.

Duty to collaborate:

This Authority remains an active participant of the South Central Transition Delivery arrangements. The governance and delivery models have now been established and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service officers are involved at each level. The principle has been adopted that information is shared across all three South Central services and where appropriate, joint responses to work requests are submitted.

The South Central region is also working with the South East region and Thames Valley Police on activities such as the Coverage and Assurance work in order to achieve a consistent approach and effective use of the limited resources available.

Health and safety implications:

There are no health and safety implications perceived at this time. There is constant review of this and any issues that may arise in the future will be referred.

Environmental implications:

There are no environmental implications perceived at this time. There is constant review of this and any issues that may arise in the future will be referred.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

There have been no equality and diversity implications identified to date. As the programme progresses, further information, and a confirmed plan become available, then an impact assessment will be completed.

Consultation and communication:

The need to communicate and consult with all identified stakeholders is reviewed regularly. Once the Programme has entered its mobilisation and transition phases then regular communications will be established.

Background papers:

[ESMCP Update, Executive Committee 13 November 2021](#)

[ESMCP Update, Executive Committee 13 July 2022](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
A	South Central Region Position Update July 2023	None
B	ESMCP Chronology of events Oct 2022	None



Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme

South Central Region Position Update July 2023

Background information

The Full Business Case (FBC) for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) was formally approved by the Government's Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) on Friday 23 July 2021. This was a key milestone and provided the cross-government support to move the programme into the delivery phase, however this is conditional on the programme meeting the challenges of cost, coverage scope and resilience.

The early part of 2021 presented challenges for the Programme, as progress in delivering the technology has been slow. In addition, a concern was raised regarding one of the suppliers' main contractors' ambitions within ESN. This was further compounded, as in mid-2021, a challenge was received by the supplier from the Competition and Markets Authority regarding their association with Airwave and their performance in the delivery of the ESMCP.

The Programme has since announced that they will be moving away from the supplier (Motorola) and are preparing themselves for a re-lotting process which will be a full procurement of Lot 2 – User Services. A short chronology of events leading to this can be found at Appendix A.

The Programme has announced a further expected delay of at least 18 - 24 months due to the re-lotting and re-procurement process which must be followed as a result of Motorola parting company with the Programme. These are further delays to a Programme that was originally planned to be completed in 2019.

The Programme Deployment Team is being stood down and no longer undertaking deployment planning activities with local user organisation teams. It is not believed that these resources will be stood up again until mid-2025. This will allow for the successful bidder for Lot 2 to embed and for planning activities to recommence. The Programme recognises that although there may be a risk in losing momentum, it will be difficult for user organisations to continue to prepare for transition without indicative timelines.

The South Central (SC) ESMCP Programme Board had already requested that the Project Managers in the region start to look at different ways that we, as a region, could continue to engage with the Programme during this time but also ensure an efficient and productive use of Project Manager resources.

The NFCC central ESMCP team have provided an early impact assessment to local teams. Whilst this has sought to categorise the work during these delays, it has not ventured into quantification of the scale of each task or area of work, nor an assessment of the

resource required. However, it has been useful to the SC Team in that it has clarified the scale of involvement required at a local level during this interim period.

In early 2021, workloads for the SC region were in line with the Programme Business Case being worked to. This amounted to the Thames Valley Collaboration PM (TVPM) working to the agreed contracted hours and the Service PMs utilising approximately 15% - 20% of their time on ESMCP.

The focus of effort by the SC region has been:

- Re-establishing the Regional Programme Manager role as it had been vacant in the previous year with two of the PMs managing the role,
- Responding to Fire Funding Policy (FFP) requests as part of the Local User Resource (LUR) review,
- Responding to Programme and NFCC requests,
- Coverage assurance work,
- Fully engaging with the Programme workstreams,
- Fully engaging at a strategic level,
- Managing internal governance.

Over the past few months, the workload has diminished as the SC region completed and agreed a business case with the Fire Funding Policy team and the LUR requests have ceased. There has been a reduction in assistance requests from the Programme and the NFCC, as some Programme workstreams are now limited/suspended.

The current Local Transition Resource (LTR) funding ceased as of 01 April 2023. Therefore, for the foreseeable future, there will be no funds available for resources to work on ESMCP activities.

For the interim period, the NFCC central team will be maintaining the Fire Sector engagement with the Programme and provide the assurance that ESN will meet the needs of fire services.

Although most of the work will be managed by the NFCC team, there will be a need to liaise with local Services as and when required.

The NFCC/Programme has asked each Service to maintain a strategic owner for ESMCP and, in addition, that the ESMCP reference is assigned to a suitable individual or single point of contact (SPoC).

Future engagement of the Thames Valley region with ESMCP

In September 2022, when the delays first became apparent, the SC ESMCP board anticipated that resource changes would have to be made and commissioned the Project Managers to review how best to engage with the Programme for the duration of the delays. This was to ensure that any effort put into ESMCP is effective, beneficial, and balanced with other more pressing priorities within Services.

The SC project managers together with the Thames Valley (TV) project manager have been considering a number of options to enable the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for

the TV region to make an informed decision on the future engagement with the Programme over the next 2-3 years. It has been agreed that the region will continue with coverage activities only and will attend Fire Customer Group meetings.

The Thames Valley region already has an established SRO at strategic level; therefore, this governance can remain unchanged and there will be a single representative for the Thames Valley team at the NFCC ESMCP strategic meetings.

The SPoC position refers to a more tactical level of contact which is currently carried out by four Project Managers across the Thames Valley region. The recommendation from the future engagement paper refers to the provision of a single Project Manager to represent all the Thames Valley fire services. The SPoC will cater for the small amount of local engagement from the NFCC/Programme and represent Thames Valley team across all the programme workstreams/meetings as required, and then engaging with their local Service contacts as necessary.

The current Thames Valley Project Manager will adopt this role, freeing up the 3 local Project Managers to focus on other priorities within their Services. Maintaining a SPoC within the Thames Valley will ensure that a level of contact will still be maintained with the Programme and mitigates the risk of losing staff knowledge and experience when scaling back resources.

The Thames Valley Strategic lead and SPoC will ensure relevant communications and developments in ESMCP are managed accordingly, as well as maintaining a significantly reduced level of internal governance. Regular meetings between the PMs will continue to ensure that information is shared and the SC Programme Board meetings will continue to be held in line with the dates of the Fire Customer Group meetings.

The Thames Valley Project team are currently in the process of safely storing all previous work completed on the ESMCP to ensure nothing is lost, so that when the Programme restarts, previous work can be easily accessed and understood.

Programme Restart

The NFCC has confirmed that they will provide Services with 6-12 months notice regarding the point at which resources will be required to step up again, and that this will not be until mid-2025 at the earliest.

The expectation from the Thames Valley team will be, that at the point resources are requested to reconvene, the NFCC/Programme are in a position where they have:

- An approved signed off Full Business Case
- Suppliers they are confident can deliver
- Clear and evidenced timelines with a delivery plan
- A new resource funding model that has been agreed

[End]



Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme

Chronology of events - October 2022

- As a result of the end of contracts for the current Airwave communication system between 2016 - 2020, the Government has been developing an integrated communication system for the three Emergency Services in the United Kingdom. This programme is known as the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) and is Home Office (HO) led. The Fire and Rescue Sector is represented on the Programme through the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).
- The existing radio communications system is known as Airwave and is provided by Motorola. This system was introduced to the Fire sector in 2009 and was due to be replaced in 2019. Whilst the voice provision by this service is excellent, this system is not able to provide broadband data services. It therefore will not be able to support future technology so needs replacing. The Airwave system is also expensive in comparison with other services. EU legislation required a re-competition for the provision of contracts.
- The programme to deliver the new system (known as the Emergency Services Network or ESN) has been established for some years now and is the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme or ESMCP. It will utilise the commercial mobile network operators using 4G LTE for the transmission of voice and data traffic between emergency service resources.
- Contracts awarded by the Programme (held by the Home Office and not individual services) are:
 - Lot 1: *Delivery Partner - Deloitte* to provide project/programme management for the delivery of the new network
 - Lot 2: *User Services – Motorola* to develop and provide the devices to connect to the network
 - Lot 3: *Mobile Services – EE* to build the private ESN mobile network which will sit on top of the EE commercial network. **Note** – Motorola also completed the acquisition of Airwave in 2016.
- Since 2015, the South Central team have been fully engaged with ESMCP, supporting, and providing the Programme with information, opinion, and challenge. The Programme was originally scheduled for completion in 2019 with the proposed 'big bang' approach known as 'Plan A' and which was supported by a Full Business Case (FBC) at ministerial level.
- In 2017, the Programme realised that the delivery timeline was over ambitious and there had been a significant under estimation of the work and complexities involved to deliver ESN. The Programme went into what was known as a 'reset' to re-evaluate the way the Programme was being delivered.
- The Programme estimated that the 'reset' would take 3 months. Unfortunately, the Programme did not come out of the 'reset' until early 2019 with what was known as 'Plan B'.
- 'Plan B' took a more incremental approach to delivering the technology and provided an estimated timeline for completion by the end of 2022. This was supported by an interim FBC.
- Throughout this period, the South Central team engaged fully with the Programme by responding to any requests for information, engaging with all ESMCP workstreams and maintaining a robust internal governance structure.

- By early 2020, there was a realisation that the 'end of 2022' completion date was unachievable due to several ongoing challenges around the delivery of the Programme. The new Programme Director, John Black, decided to re-baseline the plan to provide user organisations with a more realistic and achievable timeline. A new and revised formal FBC was presented to user organisations during the autumn of 2020 which had two timeline options. The preferred option was to complete the Programme (Airwave switch off) by the end of 2026 with a contingency option which estimated completion by mid-2027. User organisations were asked to endorse the new FBC and to start preparing for delivery. User Organisations (UO) were promised an Integrated Programme Plan (IPP) on the back of the new FBC by mid-2021, which would have provided timelines for the deployment of each UO. This never materialised.
- The early part of 2021 presented more challenges for the Programme, as progress in delivering the technology was slow. This was further compounded, as in mid-2021, a challenge came into the Motorola by the Competitions and Market Authority regarding their association with Airwave and their performance in the delivery of ESMCP. The resultant outcome will not be known until the end of 2022, but the Programme has since announced that they will be moving away from the supplier and are preparing themselves for a re-letting process which will be a full procurement of Lot 2.
- Currently, the Programme is carrying out an impact assessment of the re-procurement and its knock-on effect. The Programme have confirmed that they are stepping down some teams working on the latter part of the delivery but will maintain the teams required to support the procurement process and maintain other critical parts of the Programme. Further detail on this has yet to be released by the Programme.
- The Programme plans for delivery will be shared in the coming months which will detail the activity that should continue (coverage, device developments etc) as they believe stopping them will only cause further delays. The date from when these plans will be made available has yet to be advised.
- The 'stop start' nature of the Programme has been difficult for the South Central ESMCP team to manage internally. The local Project Managers (PMs) workloads from ESMCP have increased at short notice and de-escalated as quickly, and much work from the Programme has been issued with very short turnaround times. In addition, updates to Service strategic teams tend to continually pass on information about delays and a negative environment has been building around the feel for the Programme for some time.
- The delays within the Programme have meant that more immediate projects within Services have been given priority and the PMs have needed to balance this with their interactions on ESMCP.
- The Fire Sector regions are assessing how to react to the delay, with the strategic short-term focus from the NFCC trying to ensure Services stay engaged with the Programme.

[End]