

20 July 2009

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## **Fire Control update**

### **Summary**

This paper seeks to update Members on the Fire Control project. Roger Hargreaves, the CLG project manager, will attend the Committee to brief Members on the latest developments.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the update and consider any implications for the LGA's position on Fire Control.

### **Action**

LGA officers and Principal Fire Adviser to action as necessary

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## Fire Control update

1. At its meeting on 11 May 2009 the Committee, in light of concerns about delays and increasing costs of the project and broader concerns in the fire community, agreed to review its position on Fire Control. Though various opinions were held, Members broadly spoke in favour of maintaining the existing position with some amendments. Officers were asked to draft and circulate a draft resolution to Members for comment. The wording was agreed as follows:

*The Fire Services Management Committee resolved to:*

- *continue to offer support to the implementation of Regional Control Centres;*
  - *engage with CLG to:*
    - *ensure FRAS are properly resourced to deliver the project;*
    - *to increase confidence of Fire and Rescue Authorities in the programme timetable;*
    - *offer robust challenge when necessary;*
    - *urge CLG to build business continuity ('Plan B') into the programme;*
    - *support existing control room staff;*
  - *afford effective oversight and review the programme regularly on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authorities ;*
  - *continue to promote good industrial relations, including promoting TUPE rights where applicable;*
  - *support the first tranche of cutover Fire and Rescue Authorities;*
  - *share emerging issues with others at an early stage.*
2. Subsequently Fire Control was discussed at the Fire Forum on 26 June where CLG provided an update. It was noted that the new Ministers at CLG were enthusiastic about the project but also keen that the costs and benefits of the scheme be fully evaluated. Ministers had also asked that all possibilities be explored regarding the scheme, including potential contingencies should the project face further delays. A Ministerial statement on the project is expected before the summer recess.

Following the presentation, the Forum commented as follows:

- Several Members noted that they held significant concerns over the ongoing delays in the project and how new timescales could be believed following previous delays;
  - Members asked whether discussions were ongoing between CLG and Fire and Rescue Services regarding upcoming local and national events, notably the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It was confirmed that such discussions were taking place regularly.
3. On 1 July Andrew Dismore MP (Lab, Hendon) put down an Early Day Motion noting concerns of the Fire Brigades Union and the Chief Fire Officers Association about the Project and calling for the project to be stopped and

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existing control rooms upgraded to ensure the communications benefits are delivered by local control rooms without the need for regionalisation. At the time of writing this report 31 MPs had signed the EDM.

4. In light of continuing developments, Members will wish to be sure that the LGA's position remains justifiable in terms of both positive and negative implications, not just for relations with the government and opposition but also with Fire and Rescue Authorities and partner organisations. The LGA Lead Adviser will also have a view. Members may wish to defer this matter to the first meeting of the new cycle in September.

## **Financial Implications**

5. Any costs arising from a change to the Fire Control programme will be fully met by CLG.

## **Implications for Wales**

6. There are no implications for Wales.

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