

18 September 2009

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## **FiReControl update**

### **Summary**

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

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

1. Note the update and consider any implications for the LGA's position on FiReControl.

### **Action**

LGA officers and FiReControl Adviser to action as necessary

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## FiReControl 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 FiReControl. 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 FiReControl was discussed at the Fire Forum on 26 June where CLG provided an update. It was noted that the new Ministers at CLG were keen that the costs and benefits of the scheme be fully evaluated, including potential contingencies should the project face further delays. Following the presentation, several Members noted that they had significant concerns over the ongoing delays in the project and how new timescales could be believed following previous delays. Members also raised concerns about the need for contingency planning, increasing costs, costs of empty buildings and timing with regard to the Olympics.
  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 existing control rooms upgraded to ensure the communications benefits are delivered by local control rooms without the need for regionalisation. At the time of Parliament going into recess 111 MPs had sign the EDM.
  4. On 15 July the Fire Minister announced a second delay of ten months to the programme, the first delay was announced in October 2008. This means that the first FRs would not switch over to the Regional Control Centres before spring 2011, with the last switch over by the end of 2012. The Minister

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confirmed that the Government would meet all the upfront costs associated with the project and adhere to the principle that no FRA will bear any additional cost as a result of FiReControl implementation, although he expected many FRAs to make savings once the new network is established.

5. At its meeting on 20 July Committee Members received an update and issues raised by Members included that Fire and Rescue Authorities would have to pay toward the FiReControl scheme (for example, by covering the cost of staff migration), contingency plans and delays that had been experienced thus far. The Committee agreed the issue be remitted to the new Committee in September for further discussion.
6. 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 FiReControl adviser, Dave Webb, will also have a view.

## **Financial Implications**

7. The Government has committed that any costs arising from the FiReControl programme will be fully met by CLG under New Burdens principles, although some FRAs suggest that is not their experience. This includes development and implementation of the new ICT infrastructure and grants for any agreed net additional costs incurred by authorities in implementing the change. The total implementation cost is circa £380 million. A total of £43 million has been paid to FRAs for implementation costs to date and an additional £58 million has been indicated over the remaining two years of the CSR07 period (2009-10 and 2010-11).

## **Implications for Wales**

8. There are no implications for Wales.

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