

Item 2

FiReControl

Purpose and Summary

This paper sets out progress that has been made on the FiReControl project since the Committee last met in July.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the contents of the report

Action

As determined by the Committee.

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FiReControl

1. There is increasing concern amongst FRAs and Members of the Local and Regional Delivery Group (LRDG) that since the Minister's speech in Harrogate on 29 June the FiReControl project has fallen into an increasing level of disarray with much confusion and a growing lack of confidence that the project will be delivered. This has been registered in a letter to CLG.
2. The Fire Minister has committed to hold EADS to deliver the project on time, to the right quality and to budget. However, milestones continue to be missed and the discussions between CLG and EADS based around the current contractual situation, and what is legally binding around timescales and sub-contractors, appear to raise the very real prospect that some fire and rescue services will be asked to initially accept a system that does not have full functionality (with an intention to provide that functionality at a later date). The LGA believes that no fire and rescue service should be asked to cut over to a system that does not fully deliver the functionality and performance that has been promised since the inception of this project.
3. The LGA will be seeking assurance from CLG about the commitment to deliver FiReControl as a complete package incorporating all the functionality necessary to satisfy LGA's support. CFOA and LRDG have both asked for further clarification about the timetable that was announced by the Minister on the 29th June and we do not consider the delivery of a system that would meet the needs and expectations of the FRS to be achievable.
4. The current contractual impasse appears to stem from the fact that EADS would not agree to update and amend the contract as the project has progressed. This commercial and legal difficulty between CLG and EADS will inevitably lead to further delays in delivering the project.
5. FRAs are generally eager to resolve current difficulties and work to a schedule that is achievable and will deliver a system that lives up to expectations. CLG's current commercial strategy is a matter for the Department, but it is clear that confidence in delivery is now at its lowest level and urgent action needs to be taken to restore that confidence and get the project back on track.

Conclusions and next steps

6. Members will wish to consider seeking an urgent meeting with the Minister to seek clarification on the current state of the project. The CLG Select Committee reported in April that it would want to examine this issue again. It would therefore also be timely for the FSMC to contact the Committee Chairman to press for an urgent inquiry.

Financial Implications

7. Any costs incurred by FRAs from the FiReControl programme should be fully met by CLG under New Burdens principles. Any changes to the timeline or design of the project would have significant financial implications which would need to be examined in detail.

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