

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 6 February 2019

Subject: Proposed Control Room Collaboration between Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Author: Richard Calder (Area Manager Tri-Service Control)

For: Decision

Purpose

1. This report provides further information to the Combined Fire Authority on the background leading to the proposed control room merger between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services and the implications of this proposal on the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service. This information was requested by the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) at its meeting on 12 December 2018.

Recommendations

2. The CFA is asked to note:
 - a. The Fire Control merger between Derbyshire FRS and Nottinghamshire FRS.
 - b. That a future report will be presented to the CFA at its meeting in June 2019, on the detailed arrangements and impact on LFRS, once the merger is fully developed.

Executive Summary

3. At its meeting in December 2018, the CFA requested that further information be provided:
 - i. on the process that resulted in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) agreeing to operate a joint control room facility and why it was not proposed to involve the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) in this joint initiative;

- ii. on what discussions had been had recently with other emergency services within the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland area and regionally about control room collaboration and shared services, and their outcomes .
4. In December 2018, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire FRS secured agreement from their CFAs to create a joint Fire Control facility to serve both Services; combining the current two control room centres into one.
5. Additional assurance has been provided by Derbyshire project board to Leicestershire FRS that LFRS control room would not be expected to handle the Fire calls for all three services during failback conditions with normal crewing levels. Failback occurs when the control room receiving calls is overwhelmed due to call volumes or the control room mobilising system or telephony fails to operate as planned.

Background

6. The Combined Fire Authority was advised at its meeting in December 2018, that the CFA's of both Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire had agreed to a proposed merger of their two control rooms into one site in Derbyshire. The merger would result in Nottinghamshire's control room closing and calls for both services being handled within the Derbyshire FRS control room. This joint control merger may have an impact on Leicestershire FRS due to the tri-service control room arrangements currently in place within the sub-region.
7. This merger will be achieved during the 2019/20 financial year, the target date for being operational is June 2019.

Involvement of LFRS in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire FRS Collaboration

8. At its meeting in December 2018, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland CFA asked for further information regarding why the collaboration was between only Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire FRSS and did not include Leicestershire FRS.
9. In 2015/16, the Nottinghamshire CFA showed interest in a collaboration with Leicestershire FRS in a similar way that it is now progressing with Derbyshire. This original plan was not progressed because agreement couldn't be reached on a suitable Governance model. Leicestershire CFA preferred a lead authority model while Nottinghamshire CFA preferred that a Local Authority Controlled Company be established. The proposals were not progressed.
10. In December 2018, Nottinghamshire's CFA has now agreed to a lead authority model with Derbyshire FRS. No talks have not taken place to consider a three-way collaboration to create a single control room to serve all three services. We understand from discussions with the CFO's of Nottinghamshire FRS and Derbyshire FRS that their authorities were not minded to include LFRS in any proposals due to the issues that occurred in 2015/16 and their respective

organisations needed to progress without delay. The discussions to create a joint control between Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire have grown from increased joint work between the two Services and so did not include representatives from Leicestershire in the early phases, they have subsequently kept us informed of progress, since the authorities have agreed the business case.

11. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officers of the three services meet as necessary to discuss the tri-service control room performance and other strategic issues. Discussions on the 'what could be next' have taken place, but all CFO's believe that the complexities of a merger beyond three control rooms to two control rooms would be too difficult and place too much risk on our respective statutory function. Once the current proposals are in place and are operating at business as usual we can consider the options.

Collaboration with other Emergency Services

13. Leicestershire's CFA further asked if consideration has been given to control room collaboration between emergency services in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and regionally.
14. Formal tri-service collaboration discussion have not taken place before now. The joint venture between Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire FRS may be a trigger for conducting such explorative work. However, there is an existing contract in place between the three services that commits all parties to a Fire Control tri-service provision. The contract term is up to 10 years and commits all parties to equal contributions to the current supplier for the mobilising system (System). Advice on the Tri-service contract was recently sought from the County Council's legal team and that advice can be provided. None of the three services is currently able to fund an additional alternative Fire Control mobilising system.
15. Regional control room collaboration is not possible as Northants FRS are in a partnership with Warwickshire FRS and Lincolnshire FRS are in a partnership with the East Anglia/Humber side FRS. All these control rooms are part of the Emergency Services Network project being delivered by Government and changes to any partnership would be unlikely to receive support.

Options of working with other emergency service partners

16. A number of options have been considered for operating the LFRS control room, including:

Option 1 – Joint Working with EMAS

Joint working with EMAS would prove problematic. The two organisations are not coterminous and EMAS does not have a call handling function within Leicester, Leicestershire or Rutland.

Benefits;

May be a cheaper option if EMAS had the appetite to work with LFRS.

Dis-benefits;

May not be a cheaper provision.

Loss of control, call handling support and resilience than currently provided in the Tri-service.

EMAS control room function is not part of the incident resolution that LFRS Fire Control room supports. (Different operational doctrine).

System incompatibility with our station end equipment (pagers), turnout system etc. and appliance mobile data terminals and radios.

Costs;

No cost information is available.

This option is not worth pursuing, as we have a resilient system and contract in place.

Option 2 - Collaboration with Leicestershire Police

Leicestershire Police is coterminous and does have a call handling facility within the force area. The two control rooms currently operate significantly differently. Previous attempts at emergency services control room collaboration in other areas of the country have not progressed or have had limited success.

Benefits;

May be a cheaper option if the Police had the appetite to work with LFRS. The Police and Crime Commissioner has shown concerns that any collaboration with the Fire service was not part of his campaign.

Dis-benefits;

Could be more costly.

Loss of control, call handling support and resilience than currently provided in Tri-Service.

Police control room function is not part of the incident resolution that LFRS Fire Control room supports. (Different operational doctrine).

System incompatibility the Police control room work directly with officers and not stations/sites, therefore it is unlikely their system would be compatible with our station end equipment (pagers), turnout system and appliance mobile data terminals and radios.

Costs;

No cost information is available.

This option is not worth pursuing, as we have a resilient system and contract in place.

Resilience for existing tri-service fire control arrangements

17. Since the CFA met in December 2018, the CFO has held further discussions with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire CFOs around the options for ensuring business continuity and resilience .
18. It was our initial understanding that Leicestershire FRS would handle all calls for all three services in the event of the joint control facility in Derbyshire FRS becoming unavailable. If this occurred, staff from the control room in Derbyshire would physically transfer to vacant control positions in Leicestershire FRS until their control room became available again. This raised a concern that during the transfer period, Leicestershire control room would handle calls and mobilise resources for all three services with only four staff available. Leicestershire has now been assured by the project team in Derbyshire FRS that our control room would not be required to assume responsibility for handling fire calls for all three services until the additional staff had transferred from Derbyshire and were established in our control room.
19. Derbyshire FRS are developing business continuity plans that with risk assess and put controls in place to reduce impact to LFRS. We will be provided with these plans before the merger is completed.
20. The proposed merger could result in additional costs. Leicestershire's control room has up to seven fully functional workstations and a crewing model for four staff. the proposal would mean that only three of the transferred Derbyshire FRS staff would be able to work in our Control room, meaning a total of seven staff to handle calls and mobilise resources in the three service areas. Derbyshire FRS will be modelling the call volume impact as part of their business continuity plans.
21. There is space within LFRS control room for two additional workstations that would enable all nine staff to work if needed. Exact costs are not known and final costs would be dependent on whether existing equipment within the Nottinghamshire Control facility could be re-used. A request to the mobilising system supplier (Systel) for costs to upgrade has been made. Once costs are known we will discuss with Derbyshire FRS and Nottinghamshire FRS if and how the provision is needed against the continuity plan.

Report Implications / Impact

22. **Legal (including crime and disorder)**

The CFA has a statutory duty to make provision for handling emergency calls and mobilise resources.

23. **Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)**

Upgrading of a number of workstations in Leicestershire to nine would incur a cost yet to be fully determined and we are discussing any cost implications and benefits with our partners as part of the business continuity process.

24. **Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)**

The CFA has a statutory duty to handle emergency calls and mobilise resources. The Tri-service model is unique within the UK fire sector providing resilience in separate localities using the same core system and infrastructure. Any proposal in the paper above is detrimental to these resilience arrangements and would create unnecessary risk.

25. **Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)**

Any changes to the control function operating model would impact on the staff who work under the current arrangements and may require contract changes.

Any contract changes would need to be negotiated with the Fire Brigades Union.

26. **Environmental**

None identified.

27. **Impact upon Our Plan Objectives**

Tri-Service Fire Control Collaboration either enables or supports the following aspects of the Response Strategy:

- manage calls to fires and other emergency incidents
- provide a 24/7 response to local, regional, national and international incidents
- supply the appropriate resources and attend incidents to meet the needs of our communities
- meet our community's expectations in resolving emergencies

Background Papers

December 2018 CFA Paper - "Impact of Proposed Control Room Collaboration By NFRS & DFRS".

<http://www.leicestershire-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/control-room-collaboration-final.pdf>

Appendices

None.

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