

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR LEICESTERSHIRE

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Report Of	POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
Subject	EMERGENCY SERVICES NETWORK UPDATE AND IMPACT ON BUDGETS
Date	THURSDAY 30 SEPTEMBER, 2021 – 1:00 p.m.
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Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on the progress and potential financial implications of the Home Office led National programme to introduce the Emergency Services Network, and transition from and shut down, the current TETRA Airwave radio network.

Overview

2. The Emergency Services Network is a Home Office driven replacement of the current Airwave radio solution. There is an expectation that all Forces and Emergency Services partners will adopt the new system once it is declared fit for purpose and meets the minimum standards for transition. Opting out as a stand-alone Force or region is not an option as Airwave will cease to exist upon conclusion of this process.
3. There is a regional ESN Programme team based in Nottinghamshire led by Supt Paul Burrows who has a number of thematic leads and subject matter experts directing various workstreams and acting as the intermediary between the Home Office, Office for Communications in Policing (OCiP) and the Force.
4. A significant number of key personnel and subject matter experts within the Force are also actively involved in the preparatory work to make Leicestershire ESN ready when the time comes including but not limited to IT, Control Room, Vehicle Fleet, Procurement, Training and Finance.
5. The Home Office Programme full business case was signed off in late July and it provides an update on delivery of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) solution. ESN will replace the current Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TETRA) system known as Airwave with critical mobile voice and data services for the emergency services of Great Britain. Following lengthy discussions and negotiations with suppliers and users, this business case draws a line under previous drafts. It updates the figures set out in the interim Full Business Case (FBC) of 2020 and replaces the original FBC of 2015.

6. The significance of the provision of reliable voice and data communications to the emergency services cannot be overstated. In the most extreme of circumstances, the reliability of the device and coverage can mean the difference between life and death. Equally important is the ability of the three Emergency Services (3ES) to work seamlessly together on the most serious of incidents in order to best protect themselves and serve the public. When fully adopted, ESN will enhance that capability.
7. With that in mind, the programme has consulted widely and in depth with users in the preparation of the full business case. Consequently, timelines have been amended to ensure a realistic and agreed delivery plan in which users and other stakeholders can have confidence. The 3ES will start to transition to ESN from 2024, and transition will complete around the end of 2026. Whilst the national programme team are working to deliver the technology in the shortest possible timeframe, the transition of users from Airwave to ESN needs to consider safety and operational imperatives above all else. For this reason, the timeline needs to allow for the flexibility to upgrade 88 control rooms and transition 300k users to the new service.
8. The case for continuing the ESN programme remains compelling despite the comparatively short timespan over which the benefits and savings are measured (to financial year 2036/37). The ESN solution and its benefits to the public, in both increased public safety and economical terms, will persist beyond 2037.
9. ESN will introduce a Mission Critical Push to Talk solution based on Long Term Evolution (LTE) technology to emergency services mobile communications, providing an integrated voice and data capability. Crucially, it reduces the reliance on bespoke infrastructure, and it will leverage mobile communications technology developments allowing the 3ES to benefit from wider commercial improvements in capability over the lifespan of the service. It is built on a commercial mobile network, meaning that it is therefore projected to be much cheaper to run than Airwave (with annual savings at circa £250m per annum; Leicestershire's annual running costs are approximately £983k). Core ESN capability has been proven to work, for example, amongst Immigration Enforcement staff who are already using it operationally.
10. The programme's Independent Assurance Panel (IAP) have looked at the emergency communication strategies that other countries are pursuing. They have interviewed the international standards organisation, ETSI, (European Telecommunications Standards Institute), and those responsible for emergency communications in nine other countries and concluded that Great Britain is following the right strategy. The IAP observed that there are no plans to develop advanced data communications capabilities within TETRA. The view of ETSI is that TETRA will effectively be obsolete by 2030.
11. The IAP review highlights the fact that all the administrations they have spoken with are in the process of replacing their TETRA capability or are about to start. There is no evidence that anyone is planning to retain TETRA beyond 2030, and a number will have fully implemented an alternate solution by 2025.
12. The review body concludes that retaining TETRA in any form is not recommended; 4G/LTE is the chosen path for ESN. A number of countries have been watching ESMCP and have learnt from the programme's evolution; from a time where there were no international standards to a point at which we now have devices in users' hands.

13. The Home Office Programme economic case considered the following options:

- i) Stop ESN and continue with Airwave indefinitely (do minimum).
- ii) Stop ESN, extend Airwave and start a new programme to replace it from April 2022 (discounted).
- iii) Deliver ESN incrementally, with a risk-based expected Airwave Shut Down (ASD) date of December 2026. The base case of ASD for this option is May 2026 (preferred option).

14. In Leicestershire, as part of the Regional ESN programme and in agreement with the National stance, the Force supported option (iii) above. Testing is going very well and early indications are that an improved, stable, reliable, fit for purpose network/service will be delivered to the 3ES community providing an integrated, safe and efficient state of the art communications platform.

Implications

Financial

The national ESN business case has only recently been released having been signed off by Government. ESN ultimately will deliver savings compared to maintaining the status quo. These projected savings are rather long term and in the context of our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will result in short term additional costs as reflected below. Until the detail of that revised business case is reviewed by the Regional and Leicestershire Teams, the impact on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) still cannot be assessed accurately. The current MTFP is based on the national transition to ESN being delayed until the latter part of 2021/22. A revenue provision of £0.3m has been included in the budget for 2021/22 onwards and a capital provision of £0.6m for 2021/22, rising to £5.2m in 2022/23. The costs were based on the latest national and regional estimates in December 2020. It is highly likely that the cost of the project will be higher than currently estimated and will be revised as and when more detail becomes available.

Funding is to include but is not limited to, provision for hand held and vehicle mounted devices/accessories/licenses/SIM's and incidentals; control room upgrades/installations and innovations; infrastructure and network implications; training and development; maintenance and Business as Usual costs and refresh costs over the coming years.

It is important to note the Settlement confirmed no extra funding will be provided to PCCs to meet the future revenue and capital costs of ESN. This therefore represents a significant financial risk.

Regional and local meetings are scheduled for an updated and informed refresh of financial implications and understandings and once these have been held a more complete picture will be available to the Force as a whole. A fuller picture will be available by the end of this year.

Legal:

N/A to this report

Equality Impact Assessment: N/A to this report

Risks and Impact:

N/A to this report

Link to Police and Crime Plan:

All aspects.

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