



AGENDA ITEM: 10

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

20 July 2015

EMERGENCY SERVICE MOBILE COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME

Report by Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 This paper is to update Members as to the progress of the Emergency Service Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) and to remind members of the potential risks of this national project involving all the emergency services across the UK.

Background

- 2 As Members are aware; in all three Fire and Rescue Services in Wales, the provision of radio communication, through a nationally procured contract, will end in December 2016. A national replacement project known as the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) has been established by Her Majesty's Government and is being led by the Home Office to deliver a replacement service.

Information

- 3 The original paper that was presented to the Executive Panel on the 24 October 2014 included the following timescales for this project:
 - Outline business case approval April 2014
 - OJEU and PQQ issued April 2014
 - ITT (Invitation To Tender) issued Summer 2014
 - Tender return Autumn 2014
 - Tender and technology evaluation Winter 2014
 - Full business case approval Spring 2015

- Contract award Spring 2015
 - Mobilisation Spring 2015 to late 2016
 - Service commencement late 2016
- 4 We are now in the summer of 2015 and the national project team are currently evaluating the “Best and Final Offers” from the potential suppliers, so it is likely that the contracts will be awarded until October 2015. Currently this will not impact on the delivery of the project in Wales if we remain towards the end of the roll out plan.

Risks

- 5 Of more concern is the cost of the ESMCP, which according to the business case should be cheaper than the current Airwave system. However, a number of potential suppliers have withdrawn from the procurement process leaving one lot with only one provider, which puts that provider in a very powerful negotiating position.
- 6 In the meantime an extension to the current provider’s contract has been invoked to continue the provision of Airwave until the end of 2019. The cost of this contract is the same as is currently charged. In the past this expenditure has been supported by a specific grant from the Welsh Government of £1.64 million per annum across the three Fire and Rescue Services in Wales. North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority received £416k in 2015. This grant is due to end in April 2016. Officers are currently working with Welsh Government officials to develop the business case for continuing the grant until Wales has moved onto ESMCP by 2019.
- 7 The original concerns that the new system will not deliver acceptable operational capability including coverage and resilience in Wales, remain and it is being monitored by the Joint Emergency Services Group (JESG) and its associated workstreams.
- 8 JESG has also approved the joint funding of a project manager to assist in the co-ordination across all emergency services in preparation for the move onto ESMCP. It is expected to take three years of preparation before going live.

Recommendation

- 9 That Members note the information provided and are sighted on the risks associated with this national project.