

# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



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**Meeting and date:** Executive Committee, 17 November 2021

**Report title:** Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme

**Lead Member:** Councillor David Hopkins

**Report sponsor:** Anne-Marie Carter, Head of ICT, Transformation and PMO

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**Action:** Noting

**Recommendations:** That this update be noted.

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## Executive summary:

This paper provides Members with an update regarding the latest developments in the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP). The last briefing was provided to Members in February 2021.

The ESMCP Full Business Case was formally approved by the Government's Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) on Friday 23 July 2021. A briefing regarding the Full Business Case is expected to be released by the Programme and will be made available to Members in a future paper.

Members may be interested to note that the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) recently launched a consultation on a proposal to make a market investigation in relation to the supply of the Airwave network and ancillary services in Great Britain. The consultation closed on 2 September 2021, and their report was published on 25 October 2021. The CMA have confirmed that a Market Investigation Referral should be made. Further developments will be reported as they become available to us.

An Independent Assurance Panel has been established to provide assurance and advice regarding several key topics that affect the strategic direction of the ESMCP. In May 2021, the Home Office requested the IAP to undertake a review of the Local user Resource model that forms the basis of the funding support provided by the Home Office to fire services to transition to the new Emergency Services Network (ESN).

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## Report:

The ESMCP Full Business Case was formally approved by the Government's Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) on Friday 23 July 2021. This is a key milestone and provides the needed cross-government support to move the programme into the delivery phase, however this is conditional on the programme meeting the challenges of cost, coverage scope and resilience. The programme will now pick up pace to roll-out ESN with transition now indicated as commencing no earlier than Spring 2024; and

enable Airwave switch-off by the end of 2026. A briefing regarding the Full Business Case is expected to be released and will be made available to Members in a future paper.

The Competitions and Markets Authority recently launched a consultation on a proposal to make a market investigation in relation to the supply of the Airwave network and ancillary services in Great Britain. This consultation closed on 2 September 2021, and their report was published on 25 October 2021. The CMA have confirmed that a Market Investigation Referral should be made, and an inquiry group has now been appointed.

A press release regarding the consultation including a link to the full consultation document can be seen at Appendix A. Both the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) have provided responses to the consultation, these can be seen at Appendices B and C. The report published by the CMA on 25 October 2021 can be seen [here](#).

An Independent Assurance Panel (IAP) has been established to provide assurance and advice regarding several key topics that affect the strategic direction of the ESMCP. In May 2021, the Home Office requested the IAP to undertake a review of the Local user Resource model that forms the basis of the funding support provided by the Home Office to fire services to transition to the new Emergency Services Network. One outcome of their report was a recommendation to establish an ESMCP Resources Board, which comprises representation from Home Office, the Programme, and the National Fire Chiefs Council. The Board has set up a Task and Finish Group to be chaired by the NFCC ESN Senior User which will meet for the first time in November. The first task that will be looked at is that of the roles of the NFCC led Regional Co-ordination Managers and the Programme Managers who are employed by each regional Board and how they can work together in a different way to deliver national work.

Members will recall the ongoing issue of whether the Service will require its own link into the Emergency Services Network via a link known as a Direct Network Service Provider (DNSP) link. A meeting between the Programme and representatives from all non-DNSP connected services took place in July and representatives from this service attended. Following this meeting, a further South Central (SC) regional workshop took place to agree an approach to take forward to the technical team within the Programme. This approach and a series of 12 questions have been submitted to the Programme and we await their response.

The acting Regional Programme Managers recently drafted an ESMCP presentation that was delivered to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee in July. This was largely for update purposes but also provided a background regarding ESMCP to any Members recently introduced to the ESMCP world. This presentation can be seen at Appendix D to this document.

The South Central region has run three recruitment campaigns for a replacement Regional Programme Manager (RPM), the first two with no success. The most recent recruitment process has successfully been completed, and it is planned that the new incumbent will take on the role later in the year. The interim arrangement to cover the SC RPM role utilising the Oxon and BFRS project managers continues.

**Financial implications:**

As the Programme now falls under the direction of the Crime, Policing and Fire Group within the Home Office, changes have been made to its monitoring process for LTR spend for 2021/2022. These changes are being monitored by the treasurer for the South Central region, however each service is now required to make an individual return to the ESMCP Funding team rather than the regional approach that had previously been agreed.

Infrastructure funding will continue to be directed through the Fire Directorate via a business case.

**Risk management:**

The South Central Programme team maintains a risk register on behalf of the South Central Programme Board. The Risk Register v21 was reviewed by the three TV FRS project managers on 12 May 2021.

In line with the quarterly review schedule, the risk register was due to be reviewed by 12 August 2021. However, the NFCC have been reviewing and updating their risk register and processes, and we have also been made aware that the Programme is reviewing their process. The South Central review will be completed with a review across all documents.

**Legal implications:**

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service have already signed up to the principles of the ESN. Officers will continue to monitor the progress of the Programme closely and will provide challenge to the process where it is felt necessary.

**Privacy and security implications:**

As the Programme remains in the 'Prepare' phase, there have been no privacy issues or security implications identified. This will remain under review, particularly when the Programme moves to the 'Mobilisation' phase.

**Duty to collaborate:**

This Authority remains an active participant of the South Central Transition Delivery arrangements. The governance and delivery models have now been established and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service officers are involved at each level. The principle has been adopted that information is shared across all three South Central services and where appropriate, joint responses to work requests are submitted.

The South Central region is also working with the South East region and Thames Valley Police on activities such as the Coverage and Assurance work in order to achieve a consistent approach and effective use of the limited resources available.

**Health and safety implications:**

There are no health and safety implications perceived at this time. There is constant review of this and any issues that may arise in the future will be referred.

**Environmental implications:**

There are no environmental implications perceived at this time. There is constant review of this and any issues that may arise in the future will be referred.

**Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:**

There have been no equality and diversity implications identified to date. As the programme progresses, further information, and a confirmed plan become available, then an Integrated Impact Assessment will be completed.

**Consultation and communication:**

The need to communicate and consult with all identified stakeholders is reviewed regularly. Once the Programme has entered its mobilisation and transition phases then regular communications will be established.

**Background papers:**

[ESMCP Update, Executive Committee 10 February 2021](#)

| Appendix | Title  | Protective Marking |
|----------|--|--------------------|
| A        | CMA Consultation   | None               |
| B        | NFCC response to the Competition and Market Authority consultation on the supply of the Airwave network in Great Britain | None               |
| C        | LGA response to the Competition and Market Authority consultation on the supply of the Airwave network in Great Britain  | None               |
| D        | Introduction to ESMCP  | None               |