

APPENDIX A

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9TH JULY 2015 QUESTIONS TO NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY

Question to the Chairman of the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority, from Councillor Gordon Wheeler

Four years ago, a National Audit Office report described John Prescott's *FiReControl Project* as a 'failure' which had wasted 'a minimum of £469 million' nationally. Even now, the unused Castle Donington control centre is costing taxpayers more than £4,000-a-day to maintain. A Fire Brigade Union spokesman said about the project: "We said it was too ambitious, it would overrun on costs and it was not needed."

Would the Chairman of the Fire Authority, as a former Director of the company created to operate this site, explain to this Council what role, if any, he has played in the efforts to resolve this expensive mistake, and will he join me in welcoming the news that potential bidders have now come forward to take the site on?

Response from Councillor Darrell Pulk, Chairman of the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority

I am sure that Councillor Wheeler as a prominent member of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority of many years standing is fully aware of the background surrounding the FireControl Project and roles and responsibility of fire authorities. For the benefit of other members, I will first give some detail as to the background around the project.

The project extended beyond just the commissioning of control centres and new IT solutions and was part of a new dimensions program following 9/11. FireControl aimed to improve the resilience, efficiency and technology of Fire and Rescue services by replacing 46 local control rooms with a network system to handle calls, mobilise equipment and manage incidents. Many of the existing controls were considered outdated and in need of replacement.

FireControl commenced in 2004 and was expected to be completed by October 2009. In 2007 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) contracted European Air and Defence Systems (EADS), now Kasabian, to design, develop and install the computer system underpinning the project. However the project was subject to a number of delays and costs escalated over its lifetime.

FireControl aimed to deliver a more resilient service with the support of the Fire and Rescue Service responding to major emergencies including terrorist incidents, natural disasters and industrial accidents. As I said this was in order to compliment the new dimensions program following 9/11 and provide the effecting mass coordination and contamination, urban search and rescue, high volume pumping and enhanced hazard material detection, identification and monitoring. It also aimed to enhance the capabilities which would ensure that all Fire and Rescue services and their staff had

access to the best supporting infrastructures and it would achieve greater operational efficiencies through economies of scale.

The coalition government cancelled the project in December 2010 after concluding that it could not be delivered to an acceptable timescale. At the point when that decision was made, the Department had spent £245 million on the project and calculated that completion would take the total cost to more than five times the original estimate of £120 million.

As with the inception of the project, Firefighters were informed of the decision rather involved with the decision when it was cancelled. The nine regional control centres were purpose-built by DCLG on sites determined by DCLG to house the new computerised equipment and were designed specifically for that purpose.