



Falkland Islands Government

Office of the Legislative Assembly
Gilbert House, Ross Road
Stanley, Falkland Islands
Telephone: +500 27451
e-mail: assembly@sec.gov.fk

27 June 2024

Mr Andrew Newman
Chairman
Public Accounts Committee
Stanley

Dear Andrew

Response to the Public Accounts Committee – Emergency Services Digital Mobile Radio Project (letter dated 28 September 2023)

The Public Accounts Committee letter and recommendations on the Review of the Emergency Services Digital Mobile Radio Project was submitted to the House under Motion 13/2023 in October 2023.

The review made four specific recommendations, the Motion (09/24) accepted the response from The Governor (in Council) submitted in Executive Council report 104/24 and this was upheld by the Assembly. A copy of the transcript of the meeting will be made available to the PAC when completed and Executive Council report is attached.

Recommendation One: Tightening training plans, record-keeping and roles and responsibilities for new equipment

The PAC recommends that in order to ensure value for money a well-thought through programme of training is made mandatory, as are responsibilities clearly allocated when new technology or equipment is procured.

- a) The review identified better value for money would have been gained if detailed training for the technology had accompanied the purchase of the technology and equipment and been part of the contract as the responsibility of the service/technology provider. Training plans may include such information as: training format; officers responsible for delivering or arranging training; officers who are to undergo training; training deliverables; relevant timelines and ongoing arrangements to deliver refresher and new staff training.
- b) Further, the PAC would suggest that FIG ensure roles and responsibilities with regards to new equipment be made clear, written down and kept. Such roles may include responsibly for training, maintenance, service standard reviews and contractor management. Such documents are likely to address some of the issues that arise from high staff turnover.
- c) The PAC review highlights the crucial importance of training records being kept, particularly in situations where use of equipment is relied upon to save and preserve life.

Response:

A considerable amount of time has passed since the original procurement of the digital radio project. During this time several major changes have been made within FIG. The move to ProActis e-procurement provides a more robust tender process and recording to be in place which can include initial training and ongoing refresher training as part of the procurement process or can include a train the trainer programme.

Procurement training is being added to the FIG induction process and specific more detailed training will be provided to those who need it within their role with FIG.

Whilst the Directorate of Emergency Services & Island Security is now operating on a more collaborative and collegiate basis than previously. Any future cross-functional projects such as a new communications system, will be delivered using a network of key personnel who are responsible for project delivery (and training) in their respective area of business, working together, to ensure any new system of service is functional across the relevant areas of service delivery.

The Emergency Services do hold extensive information on training and development within the individual services particularly relating to use of equipment for protecting life. In the past this has not always been extended to the importance of communications equipment and training. Some services do have individuals tasked with managing and delivering communications training and this is being extended to all element of the directorate to ensure regular, standardised training is put in place.

This training requirement will be mandated within individual staff members personal development plans and tested within annual exercises.

Recommendation Two: Matching technology to Falklands reality and high-churn departments

The PAC recommends that procurement of equipment and technology should go through a sense-check to ensure it is appropriate to the needs and nature of operating that equipment in the Falklands. Whilst it is important that it is 'future proofed' it is even more important that it is 'present proofed'.

The review, in recommending the above, suggests that in considering such procurements an assessment of whether ongoing knowledge of and familiarity with the equipment is likely to suffer in high churn departments. Furthermore, in order to ensure value for money in the procurement of equipment and technology, it is vital that all users of any system understand how that system is going to work on the ground. Cross-department capital projects must meaningfully involve all relevant departments throughout the process, or risk failure.

Response:

The procurement of technology can be extremely complex. It is dependent on a robust procurement and complete through life process that addresses the initial design scope and specifications, procurement, training, maintenance & support until end of system life.

By moving to ProActis the FIG online procurement system the tendering process is well documented and different technology options can be scored against one another and weighted for key aspects of the service, training delivery and ongoing support and spares availability to ensure the best mix of technology, training and support within a given project can be achieved while providing value for money.

This procurement process is linked directly to the contract award process which can be used to deliver support and training through the life of the contract if it is required.

The project owner will work with DCS to ensure relevant stakeholders are consulted regarding the specifications to ensure that staff-turnover and suitability of “kit” are robustly defined within the contracting process.

Recommendation Three: Renewal of Maintenance Contracts and Planning for Obsolescence

The PAC recommends the FIG ensure timely renewal of maintenance contracts and where technology or equipment is set to become obsolete replacement plans are acted upon before unserviceability ensues.

In light of the state of emergency services communications equipment prior to the Digital Mobile Radio system being bought, the PAC stresses the importance of ensuring that maintenance contracts are renewed accordingly and, if technology is set to become obsolete or reach the end of its usable life, that a replacement plan is acted upon well before the equipment becomes unserviceable to ensure value for money is achieved.

Response:

DCS have undertaken considerable work to complete contracts register with in FIG to manage contract life cycles and individual directorates manage their own risk registers and plan for equipment lifecycles within their department budgets and applications for capital expenditure.

Each directorate tracks live Operations & Maintenance contracts for equipment support to ensure items remain operational and will highlight future obsolescence.

This work also feeds into the FIG Corporate risk register and is assessed according to severity of risk and potential impact and enable prioritisation.

Recommendation Four: Radical improvement in Electronic Information Retention

The PAC recommends that FIG adopt a basic standard for the archival of electronic communication which our report found to be wholly inadequate for good governance.

The PAC noted the difficulty in gathering information due to the natural churn of FIG officers. This was exacerbated by poor archiving of electronic information. A basic standard for archiving of electronic communications so as to ensure that these are filed according to subject matter and not deleted upon the departure of officers is essential to help FIG officers new in post as well as requests for information from the PAC or other parties as part of good governance.

The PAC notes ExCo Paper 25/23 ‘Corporate Record Retention and Destruction Policy’, given the PAC’s constitutional governance role the PAC recommends that FIG consider whether all documents relating to tender bids be considered ‘statutory/legal’ as per the description in ExCo 25/23 (page 10) and retain those documents as a matter of course. Financial Instructions do not contain any instructions with regards to the retention of tender documents at present.

Response:

Over the past five years FIG has improved and developed its records management procedures, policies, and conducted staff training to raise awareness of the importance of managing corporate records.

Regarding retention of records, each government department now has a records retention schedule. This document outlines what records should be captured, why, and for how long they are stored for before either being securely destroyed or transferred to the Jane Cameron National Archives for permanent preservation. This covers all formats and media, including electronic information.

Going forward FIG will be developing practices further and progressing plans for a dedicated electronic document records management system which will centralise and support the effective capture, retention and long-term digital preservation of all electronic records including those deemed archival value by the JCNA. All the above is undertaken in line with professional standards and best practice. This has been included in FIG IT Strategy and will be in place by Q3 2025.

DCS will always use ProActis, FIG's online procurement system, for tenders of this size, creating a record of processes, documents, queries, clarifications and outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cherie Clifford', is positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely,'.

Cherie Clifford
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Cc: Chief Internal Auditor