

Progress update on emergency and public safety services spectrum management reform

The Public Safety Spectrum Policy Group (PSSPG) advises the Cabinet Official Committee on UK Spectrum Strategy (UKSSC) and Ofcom on the broad spectrum requirements needed to meet the current and future needs of UK emergency services and public safety (E&PSS) users.

The PSSPG undertook in the Government's *Forward Look* programme to report on proposals to reform management of spectrum used by emergency and public safety services (E&PSS) with firm options and resource requirements by autumn 2007.

In a paper presented to UKSSC on October 2007, PSSPG set out a Recommendation "Future Management of Spectrum Allocated within the UK for Dedicated Emergency and Public Safety Services Use". The following text summarises that Recommendation;

The PSSPG identified various options for the future management of E&PSS¹ spectrum. In line with the Government's response to the Audit, the options considered each involve;

- (1) the public sector users playing a more active role in managing the spectrum that they use;
- (2) the wider introduction of market mechanisms in the public sector through directly engaging with the market through spectrum trading and increased sharing with others i.e. commercial users, in order to achieve greater efficiency;

The PSSPG evaluation panel short-listed three options

- *Option 1 - individual E&PSS users to coordinate individual spectrum requirements*
- *Option 2 - individual departments to coordinate the entirety of their E&PSS users' spectrum needs*
- *Option 3 - a single entity to coordinate spectrum on the behalf of all ES departments and users*

The Group considered the options in the light of the Government's commitment to the Cave implementation programme - maximising spectrum efficiency and ensuring the provision of spectrum for the emergency and public safety services. The Group recommended that the optimal approach to spectrum management in this sector would have the following characteristics,

- A single public entity to coordinate the entirety of the E&PSS spectrum requirements.
- The single entity should be a neutral entity comprising of representation from all relevant E&PSS users, sponsoring departments and agencies.

- The day to day administrative/executive spectrum management functions should be facilitated by a commercial third party contractor.

The PSSPG has agreed an outline plan for establishing the future spectrum management organisation and has commissioned a consultancy study to define resources and the governance structure of this future spectrum management organisation. The final report is expected by Autumn 2008.

PSSPG also committed in the government's *Forward Look* to publish on the www.spectrumentaudit.org.uk website by the end of 2007 information about scope to release some spectrum into the wider market. However, this will not be decided until the study is completed and PSSPG has a better understanding of the new market mechanism.

¹ E&PSS in this context refers to only Police, Fire and Ambulance services.